

Sanam Javed remanded
GUJRANWALA (INP): In May 9 vandalism cases, an anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Monday approved the physical remand of Pakistan PTI activists Sanam Javed. PTI activist Sanam Javed after completion of the physical remand was presented before the ATC seeking further physical remand of the accused. The court after hearing arguments from both sides sent the PTI activist to a four-day physical remand under police custody.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with the Chief Ministers of all four provinces prior to the meeting of National Economic Council.

The Frontier Post

Six killed in road accident
F.P. Report
KALLAR KAHAR:At least six people were killed after two vehicles fell into a ditch due a collision near Kallar Kahar Salt Range on Monday, media reported citing Motorway Police. The spokesperson of the highway patrol said that the victims died on the spot in the aftermath of the unfortunate accident, adding that preliminary information suggest that the incident took place because of the brakes failure.

NEC okays National Development Plan

— approves economic growth target for 2024-25

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Economic Council on Monday approved in principle the 13th five-year National Development Plan along with the annual economic growth targets for the financial year 2024-25 and macroeconomic framework for annual planning.

The NEC meeting, presided over by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, was informed that the key objectives of the plan included development of every part of the country, especially the less developed areas; increase in exports; promotion of the small and medium industry; social protection and poverty alleviation; increase in the capacity building of the work force; and a framework to protect from the impacts of climate change.

The NEC directed the Planning Ministry to ensure the positive role of the provinces in the national economy and to present a comprehensive framework to increase the exports. The ministry was also directed to include the provinces in the consultation process to achieve the overall economic growth target of the country.

The prime minister emphasized that the government would ensure the best utilization of the existing resource for revival of the economy and prosperity of the people. He further said that in all important decisions regarding the economy, the Federation would ensure consultation with the provinces and other stakeholders so that as a result of the collective vision for the development of the country, such decisions were made that were positive and involved the consent of all.

"The National Economic Council

is the biggest forum for important decisions regarding the country's economy, which will be used for important decisions for the recovery of the economy," he added. The prime minister also directed the National Economic Council to set up a committee which in consultation with the provinces and other stakeholders, should formulate the proposals to not only make the Council active but also to harmonize it with the modern requirements.

The meeting was informed about the performance and the annual development projects for the year 2023-24 and proposals for the upcoming fiscal year 2024-25. It was told in the meeting that the growth rate target for the upcoming fiscal year had been increased significantly. The prime minister on the occasion said that as the agriculture sector was the backbone of the country's economy, therefore consultation with the provinces for its development was very important.

He directed to ensure inclusion of the provinces' proposals regarding agriculture and other sectors in the plan. The Council was also informed about the national goals for the recovery of the economy and the measures to achieve them. The meeting was told that measures such as production of export products, innovation of agriculture sector, artificial intelligence and information technology sector in line with international standards, sustainable and renewable energy, effective use of water resources, development of youth and women, effective and speedy implementation of the second phase of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would ensure development of the country's economy in next five

years. The review of the development budget 2023-24 and proposed development budget 2024-25 was also presented in the meeting. It was told that in the upcoming development budget, priority would be given to the projects under CPEC, those of foreign investment and the ones close to completion.

Besides the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) would also be included in the development projects while the less developed areas of the country would be given priority in the development plan. A report on the performance of Central Development Working Part (CDWP) and Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) for the period April 2023 to May 2024 was also presented in the meeting.

Earlier, the participants of the meeting prayed to Allah Almighty to grant eternal peace to Captain Muhammad Faraz Ilyas Shaheed and other soldiers who were martyred in the terrorist attack in Lucky Marwat on Sunday. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, federal ministers Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ahsan Iqbal and Ahad Khan Cheema, Punjab Chief Minister Marryam Nawaz Sharif, Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CM Ali Amin Gandapur, Balochistan CM Sarfaraz Khan Bugti, Punjab Minister Marryum Aurangzeb, Sindh Minister Jan Khan Shoro, Advisor to the KP CM Muzamil Aslam, Balochistan Minister Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, State Bank of Pakistan Governor Jameel Ahmed and relevant high officers participated in the meeting.

Ready for 24-hour electricity supply: Awais

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari on Monday informed the Lower House of the Parliament that the country has surplus electricity and we are ready to provide 24-hour power supply to feeders with zero losses.

Speaking at the National Assembly forum, he said, "The system has enough generation and transmission capacity to meet the electricity demand, and we are ready to provide electricity 24-hours to consumers. However, this is not possible without controlling line losses and power theft."

Sardar Awais Leghari said that the country cannot afford to increase the circular debt further. "We don't provide electricity to feeders with high line losses because this adds to the losses in the power sector, which cannot be borne by the country's economy," he added.

The minister stressed that unless distribution companies, with the assistance of provincial governments,

change their course and control their losses, "load shedding will continue on these high-loss feeders." He pointed out the need to penalize areas where electricity theft is rampant. "We have directed the CEOs of distribution companies to improve their service quality and end power outage on no-loss feeders," he said.

Awais Leghari sought the cooperation of lawmakers in controlling electricity theft, stating that 24-hour electricity would be provided to their respective areas if power theft is controlled. He expressed concern that some areas in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, and Balochistan are not paying their bills. He also shared details of a meeting with the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and appreciated the Chief Minister for his cooperation in controlling power theft in the province.

Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Water Resources Musadik Malik informed the National Assembly that currently there is no shortage of water in the country, and all

provinces are receiving their full water share as per the agreed accord in the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) meeting.

While responding to a calling attention notice regarding a 29 percent water shortage observed in Sindh province during the early Kharif season and the diversion of flow into the Link Canal, the minister said that the IRSA meeting on May 13 decided that water would be provided to provinces according to their shares.

Musadik Malik said, "At present, there is no shortage of water, and all provinces are receiving 100 percent of their water share as agreed in the accord. IRSA included representatives from all provinces and that all decisions are made by consensus." Regarding the Link Canal, he mentioned that only provinces with canals can decide on the provision of water to canals. He also shared the water release figures to canals with the lawmakers. The minister further informed the lawmakers that there was no water shortage for the Kharif season.

PM attends funeral prayer of Shaheed Captain

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday attended Namaz-e-Janaza of Shaheed Captain Faraz Ilyas in Kasur who was martyred in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack in District Lakki Marwat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The funeral prayer was attended by Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, IG Police Punjab and a number of senior military officers, civil authorities and residents. The prime minister also met with the parents of shaheed captain and expressed condolences.

He announced to transform the native village of martyred officer as model village and renamed it as "Faraz Ilyas Shaheed". He told the parents that the sacrifice of their son would not go in vain and prayed for the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude. Under the Quranic teachings, a shaheed had an elevated place in Jannah, he said, adding that a large number of Jawans of armed forces had laid down their lives for the motherland.

The prime minister said that the nation was proud of its brave sons and the coward terrorists could not succeed in shaking their strong resolve. Separately, on X account, the prime minister said that he was deeply saddened by the martyrdom of Pak Army personnel including a captain in a targeted attack in District Lakki Marwat.

"The sacrifices of our brave soldiers and citizens is a debt on us that we must repay by relentlessly eliminating terrorism from our nation. Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families," he further posted. The late captain was laid to rest with complete military honours. The prime minister offered Fateha at his grave and placed a flower wreath. He also prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul. Shaheed Captain Faraz Ilyas, 26-year-old, belonged to village Rai Kalan, Kasur who laid down his life valiantly while performing his duties in Lakki Marwat.

SBP reduces policy rate by 150 bps to 20.5 per cent

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in its meeting on Monday decided to reduce the policy rate by 150 bps to 20.5 percent, effective from June 11, 2024.

The MPC noted that while the significant decline in inflation since February was broadly in line with expectations, the May outturn was better than anticipated earlier. The Committee assessed that underlying inflationary pressures are also subsiding amidst tight monetary policy stance, supported by fiscal consolidation.

This is reflected by continued moderation in core inflation and ease in inflation expectations of both consumers and businesses in the latest surveys. At the same time, the MPC viewed some upside risks to the near-term inflation outlook associated with the upcoming budgetary measures and uncertainty regarding future energy price adjustments. Notwithstanding these risks and today's decision, the Committee noted that the cumulative impact of the earlier monetary tightening is expected to keep inflationary pressures in check.

The MPC noted the following key developments since its last meeting. First, real GDP growth remained moderate at 2.4 percent in

FY24 as per provisional data, with subdued recovery in industry and services partially offsetting the strong growth in agriculture. Second, reduction in the current account deficit has helped improve the FX reserves to around US\$9 billion despite large debt repayments and weak official inflows. The government has also approached the IMF for an Extended Fund Facility program, which is likely to unlock financial inflows that will help in further build-up of FX buffers. Lastly, international oil prices have declined, whereas non-oil commodity prices have continued to inch up.

Based on these developments, the Committee, on balance, viewed that it is now an appropriate time to reduce the policy rate. The Committee noted that the real interest rate still remains significantly positive, which is important to continue guiding inflation to the medium-term target of 5-7 percent. The Committee also emphasized that the future monetary policy decisions will remain data-driven and responsive to evolving developments related to the inflation outlook.

Latest estimates indicate real GDP growth at 2.1 percent in Q3-FY24 against a contraction of 1.1 percent in the same quarter last year. While agriculture was already showing strong

growth, industry also witnessed positive growth in Q3. Also, initial growth estimates for both Q1 and Q2 for FY24 were revised upward. Taking into account the developments in the first nine months, FY24 growth is provisionally estimated by PBS at 2.4 percent against a contraction of 0.2 percent in FY23. Almost two-thirds of this recovery was explained by improvement in the agriculture sector. These developments are in line with the MPC's earlier expectations. For FY25, the MPC expects economic growth to remain moderate. This assessment takes into account the impact of expected moderation in agriculture output and ongoing stabilization policies.

The current account posted a surplus for the third consecutive month in April on the back of robust growth in remittances and exports, which more than offset the uptick in imports. During July-April FY24, the current account deficit narrowed significantly to \$202 million.

In the same period, exports grew by 10.6 percent, mainly driven by increased quantum of rice and HVA textile exports. Conversely, imports decreased by 5.3 percent during the same period due to lower international commodity prices, better domestic agriculture output and moderate economic activity.

Court extends PTI's leaders interim bail

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Special Anti-Corruption Court Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Salahuddin Khan extended interim bail of a provincial minister along with several members of the provincial assembly till 8th July in cases related to illegal recruitments, on Monday.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders including provincial minister Fazal Shakoor Khan, as well as other assembly members Fazal Muhammad, Khalid Khan, and Mujahid Khan were charged by Anti-corruption Establishment for malpractices.

Due to a lawyers' strike, the defendants' lawyers did not appear in court. The court granted an extension in the interim bail until July 8th. According to the prosecution, PTI's leaders are accused of illegal recruitments in the education department and causing significant financial losses to the national treasury, leading to the registration of cases against them in the Anti-Corruption Police Station in Charsadda and Mardan respectively.

ATC sent extortionist on physical remand: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Peshawar has granted a three-day physical remand of a suspect, Aziz Khan, to the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in a case of extortion.

Federal govt to present budget tomorrow

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government will present the budget for fiscal year 2024-25 on June 12 (Wednesday).

As per details, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb will present the budget formulated keeping in view the challenges faced by economy at domestic and international fronts. According to the government sources, the budget will be aimed at mitigating the people's sufferings, transforming the agriculture sector, promoting information technology (IT), and boosting exports.

In addition to fiscal management, revenue mobilisation, measures for economic stabilization and growth, the government has also claimed of reduction in non-development expenditures, job cre-

ation and people-friendly policies for the socioeconomic prosperity of the country in the budget. The preparations for the announcement of the federal budget for fiscal year 2024-25 continued in full swing in accordance with the prescribed timelines.

The budget is being prepared in close coordination among all the departments and ministries involved in the budget-related events, including the presentation of the budget in the Parliament and launching of the Economic Survey. It is pertinent to mention here that the budget is being presented when Pakistan is deliberating with the IIMF for a package of up to \$8 billion.

Meanwhile, The Economic Survey of Pakistan's pre-budget document presenting the state of the country's economy will be presented on Tuesday, a

day before the budget presentation. The survey would highlight the overall performance of economy during the outgoing fiscal year, providing a realistic feedback and basis for future planning.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb will launch the pre-budget document in the National Assembly, according to a statement issued by the finance ministry. The survey comes ahead of the federal budget 2024-25, slated to be presented on June 12 (Wednesday). Pakistan's Economic Survey will provide details about the major socio-economic developments, performance, and economic trends of various sectors of the economy, including agriculture, manufacturing & industry, services, energy, information technology & telecom, capital markets, health, education, transport and communication etc.

Pakistan's enemies perturbed over its rapid progress under PM: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting and National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Monday said Pakistan's fast-track progress under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had stunned its enemies in contrast with their dreams of its downfall economically.

The disgruntled elements were fully perturbed as the prime minister had charted the country on path of progress and development, he said while addressing a press conference. The minister said a so-called leader while being at the helm of affairs in 2018 had adversely affected Pakistan's relations with the brotherly countries thus causing serious problems on the diplomatic front.

On the other hand, the government led by PM Shehbaz Sharif had not only mended relations with the brotherly states, besides restoring the country's prestige in the global community, he added. Tarar said the prime minister's historic visit to China was "highly successful", which

had been marked by an unprecedented level of enthusiasm and mutual cooperation.

A multitude of issues, he said, were addressed during the visit, fostering the dawn of a new era in the bilateral relations of two countries which had been enjoying exemplary bonds for decades. Their unparalleled friendship stood steadfast against all odds over the years, he added.

The minister said the Chinese leadership congratulated Pakistan on securing a seat in the United Nations Security Council and achieving 182 votes in the 193-member General Assembly. China had played a significant role in helping Pakistan achieve the feat. Chinese President Xi Jinping during the meeting that lasted for over three hours, personally felicitated Prime Minister Shehbaz on the achievement, he added.

The prime minister, he said, had discussed the revival of Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) and the Mainline 1 (ML-1) projects during the meeting. A committee was formed to extend the ML-1 from Karachi to Multan and potentially beyond, he

added. The minister said a total of 32 B2B agreements were inked among various business enterprises of the two countries.

Moreover, he said, some 500 entrepreneurs attended a business conference where many agreements and memorandum of understandings (MoUs) were also signed to enhance business cooperation between the two countries. IT (information technology) exports would be enhanced with the visit of the prime minister to China, he said, adding that China had agreed to train 200,000 IT students.

Establishing smart cities were also discussed during the meetings, the minister noted. Tarar said that training of the youth would further increase IT exports by encouraging the tech start-ups to contribute to the national economy, positively. He said Pakistan's tech companies were competing with its foreign counterparts and it was the responsibility of the government to create a conducive environment for them.

"Pakistan-China friendship is in our blood," he said, lauding China for persistently supporting Pakistan

which was being reciprocated in the same manner. He said that the benefits of the upgradation of CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) would reach the people of both countries.

He said Pakistan had already achieved economic stability, witnessed a reduction in price hikes with inflation declined from 18 to 11 percent, and experienced overall economic improvement. The foreign exchange reserves had increased to \$14 billion, he added. Terming the CPEC a lifeline of Pakistan, he said the Chinese leadership had vowed to upgrade the flagship project and now its process was moving forward at fast pace.

Tarar said the prime minister had assured the Chinese leadership of full-proof security for the Chinese who had been working in Pakistan on different projects. The internal and external enemies of Pakistan were bent upon damaging the bilateral relations of Pakistan and China which had stood the test of time for over 70 years, he said, adding the country and its national interests were supreme

for the government which was committed to the welfare and well-being of its people.

He said Pakistan's prestige had been restored at the international level since PM Shehbaz Sharif came into the power. The investors from across the globe were signing agreements for making investment and doing business and trade with Pakistan, he added. He cited that a mobile manufacturing unit in Karachi had recently made a commitment to increase its production and exports by investing billions of dollars.

It was the sincerity and commitment of the country's leadership that helped gained the confidence of business community, he added. The minister said that the presence of military leadership in the high-level delegation to China showed Pakistan's commitment and seriousness to address the security issues faced by the Chinese in Pakistan. PM Shehbaz, he said, had assured the Chinese leadership of thorough investigation into the Besham Incident and that its would be taken to task. It was reiterated



ated many times during the meetings that a state-level security would be provided to the Chinese workers, he added.

The minister said PM Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Chinese Embassy in Islamabad and subsequent address to the Chinese workers in Besham to express solidarity with them was an unprecedented step. "We will leave no stone unturned to ensure security of our Chinese brothers," he remarked. Tarar lauded the security forces, law enforcement agencies and police for taking bold measures to ensure security of the Chinese workers in Pakistan.



LAHORE: A vendor diligently sells walnut tree peel, a traditional teeth-cleaning remedy, to eager customers seeking oral hygiene solution at outside the Dehli Gate. —APP Photo

Receptive to suggestions on budget: Rana Ihsaan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan said on Monday that the government was receptive to suggestions and constructive feedback from both allies and the opposition for making changes in the budget.

Speaking to a private news channel, he said the government is open to suggestions and positive comments not only from the allies but also from the opposition. Replying to a question, he condemned the abusive behavior and fake propaganda targeting individuals and state institutions, noting that measures were necessary to prevent such actions.

He highlighted recent achievements, mentioning that in May, the country saw record exports and remittances. He also noted that inflation has decreased to 11% and the State Bank's reserves have reached \$15 billion.

Govt implementing measures to control iron smuggling: Minister

ISLAMABAD, Jun 10 (APP): Minister of State for Economic Affairs Ali Pervaiz on Monday informed the National Assembly that the government is implementing measures to control iron smuggling at Taftan border area.

During the question hour in the House, the minister said that all out resources would be utilized to protect the production of the country's local industries including the iron industry.

The minister said that monitoring on both sides of the Iran-Pakistan border has been tightened to prevent iron smuggling on bordering areas.

Ali Pervaiz said that the only way to escape the clutches of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) program is

through reforms, quoting the examples from countries like Vietnam, Indonesia and India.

To another question, he said that appeals involving amounts over Rs 20 million would be decided by appellate tribunals instead of the Commissioner of Income Tax, adding that artificial intelligence and other methods are being used in the selection of audits.

Ali Pervaiz said that minimum wage should be reviewed considering the current inflationary period, adding that he would convey members' views on revising the minimum wage in the upcoming budget.

To another question, he said that Bank Al Habib is a private bank with its own board where employees can address their

grievances, adding that there is the institution of the Banking Ombudsman for such matters.

He said in terms of Section 183(1) of the Companies Act, 2017, the Board of Directors (BoD) of banks are responsible for the policy making and supervision of the affairs of the bank including human resource related policies.

The minister said that State Bank of Pakistan does not interfere in the human resource policies duly approved by the BoD of respective bank.

Ali Pervaiz said this position is also reflected in various judgments passed by the courts wherein it has been held that SBP has no jurisdiction to decide on service matters of the bank employees.

Ombudsman presents performance report

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif met with the Provincial Ombudsman Major (Retd.) Azam Suleman Khan here on Monday.

Matters related to administration, good governance, public grievances and their redress mechanism in the province were discussed during the meeting.

The CM was briefed by the provincial ombudsman about various steps taken by his department to resolve public complaints and disputes, and presented her an annual report in this regard. The CM also reviewed different recommendations for the improvement of services in the province. "We are committed to ensuring equal access to services by every citizen," she remarked.

Senator Pervaiz Rashid and Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb attended the meeting. Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Sajid Zafar Dal was also present.

APCA to hold protest on 12th June

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: All Pakistan Clerks Association announced holding of a protest demonstration in front of parliament house on 12th June in favor of their demands, on Monday.

This was called in a open letter written in the name Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur. In this regard a press statement issued stating that APCA will hold peaceful protest in front of parliament house to meet their demand of 100% increase in salaries.

Seven properties sealed

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Development Authority (LDA) on Monday conducted operations against defaulters of commercialization fee around Gulshan-e-Ravi and sealed 7 properties.

The sealed properties include medical stores, grocery shops, private schools, and other establishments.

The operation was supervised by Town Planning Wing's Operation Director, Ayesha Muttahir.

Millions of rupees commercialization fee was due on the sealed properties. Prior to the operation, multiple notices were issued to the owners of these properties.

No rules violation in chairing of Senate session by presiding officer: Gillani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Syed Yusuf Raza Gillani on Monday ruled that there was no procedural irregularity or violation of Rule 14 in chairing the session of the Upper House of Parliament by a presiding officer while the deputy chairman was available on June 7.

The chairman also advised the Senate Secretariat, that, in future, "the availability of deputy chairman in the Parliament Building might be ensured first before inviting any member of panel of presiding officers in absence of the chairman".

"This ruling flows as consequence of a letter written to me by the Leader of the Opposition stating therein that during sitting of the

Senate held on 7th June, 2024, Rule 14 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012 has been violated," the ruling said.

Chairman Gillani said that the current session of the Senate was summoned on 7th June, 2024, whereupon in pursuance of Rule 14 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012, Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Palwasha Muhammad Zai Khan and Manzoor Ahmed were nominated, in order of precedence, to preside over the sitting in absence of the chairman and deputy chairman.

"During sitting of the Senate held on 7th June, 2024, I was presiding the session but in view of pre-

scheduled urgent commitment, I had to leave the House. "At that time, Deputy Chairman Senate was not present inside the House so I invited Senator Palwasha Muhammad Zai Khan, the available member of the panel of presiding officers present at that time inside the House, to preside over the sitting.

"When Senator Palwasha occupied the seat and started the proceedings, in the meanwhile, Deputy Chairman Senate walked inside the House so the members raised objection in the House that member of panel of presiding officer cannot preside the sitting when Deputy Chairman is available in the House," he said.

LHC grants bail to lawyer convicted of misbehaving with judge

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday granted bail to a lawyer involved in misbehaving with a judge.

The court directed the lawyer, Zahid Mehmood Goraya, to furnish surety bonds of Rs 200,000 for availing the relief of bail, besides ordering him to ensure his appearance at each hearing. The division bench

comprising Justice Farooq Haider and Justice Shakil Ahmad heard the bail petition filed by Zahid Mehmood. The court also sought replies from the parties on the next date of hearing.

The petitioner submitted that he had been behind bars for the past two months after being convicted on charges of committing misconduct in court. He submitted that he

tendered an unconditional apology to the judge concerned and the LHC Chief Justice. He pleaded with the bench to grant him the benefit of bail. On April 8, 2024, LHC Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan handed down six months imprisonment to advocate Zahid Mehmood Goraya for misbehaving with a judge, besides imposing a fine of Rs 100,000.

Mayor chairs general meeting of KMC

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Monday chaired the general meeting of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) Council at the Council Hall of the KMC head office here.

Deputy Mayor Salman Abdullah Murad and Municipal Commissioner S.M Afzal Zaidi also attended the meeting.

During the meeting, a

total of five resolutions were presented. One resolution expressed deep sorrow and grief over the passing of Chairman UC-7

Liaquatabad, Shahabuddin, recognizing his services and dedication to the betterment of the community and the promotion of religion.

Literature festival highlights importance of study

Saqib Mushtaq

LAHORE: Literature festival highlights the importance of knowledge, literature and study. Pakistan-United States Alumni network (PUAN) Literature Festival is an attempt to give voice to the voiceless.

PUAN central Punjab chapter alumnus, Sadaf Usman, organized a chapter activity titled, PUAN literature festival on 8th June, at E-library, near Gaddafi Stadium Lahore.

The theme of the event was celebrating Similarities between American and Pakistani literature. The event was attended by students, professionals, literary enthusiasts and PUAN alumni with great enthusiasm.

Speaking on the occasion, acclaimed poet Rehman Faris talked about the common themes of humanity, justice, tolerance



and human rights explored by writers in both the countries. Giving references of Ernest Hemmingway, Maya Angelou, Mark Twain and Emily Dickinson, he presented how their works echo with the works of Faiz, Habib Jalib, Ahmed Faraz, Kishwar Naheed, etc.

A panel talk with Amna Kazmi, CEO of Alif Laila Book Bus Society, Aisha

Rashid, Lecturer of English Literature at Lahore college for women university and Rehman Faris explored why literature is essential for a society and how can the love of literature be kept alive in the era of today.

Hammad Niazi, another esteemed poet gave a talk on how to make the journey from an aspiring writer to a published

author. The highlight of the event was the recital segment by the PUAN members where they recited pieces of American and Pakistani literature and garnered appreciation from the audience.

The attendees highly applauded the efforts by the organizers and expressed their desire to attend more such events in the future.

As many as 540 wheelchairs distributed among special persons

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a significant stride towards enhancing healthcare accessibility, Dawood Global Foundation (DGF), in collaboration with Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), has successfully distributed 540 wheelchairs to various hospitals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The distribution ceremony gathering representatives from all 5 hospitals took place at DHQ Hospital.

The wheelchair distribution event, a collaborative effort between Dawood Global Foundation (DGF) and Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), saw the presence of esteemed personalities from both organizations and the medical community. Ms. Tara Uzra Dawood, President of DGF, and Mr. Arsalan Ahmad Khattak, Admin Officer at OGDCL, spearheaded the initiative. Dignitaries present at the event included landowner and industrialist Saeed Afridi as well as AC Customs Rahat Naseem.

The event successfully distributed wheelchairs to several hospitals across Kohat, Karak, and Lakki Marwat, ensuring enhanced mobility for those in need. In Kohat, DHQ

Hospital received 200 wheelchairs, accepted by Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad, while Liaquat Memorial Hospital obtained 30, handed over to Dr. Abdul Hadi. In Karak, DHQ Hospital and Women & Children Hospital were allocated 100 and 120 wheelchairs respectively, with Dr. Abdul Wahab and Muhammad Riaz graciously accepting them.

Lastly, DHQ Hospital in Lakki Marwat received 90 wheelchairs, accepted by Dr. Muhammad Ismail. This event underscores the commitment of DGF and OGDCL to community welfare and healthcare support, marking a significant step towards improving the quality of life for many individuals.

Speaking at the event, Tara Uzra Dawood, whose dream it is to distribute 10,000 wheelchairs across Pakistan, expressed her gratitude for the collaboration and emphasized the importance of such initiatives in improving the quality of life for individuals with mobility challenges.

"We are proud to partner with OGDCL in this noble cause. The provision of these wheelchairs will not only enhance mobility for the patients but also contribute to their overall

well-being," she said.

Arsalan Ahmad Khattak highlighted OGDCL's commitment to corporate social responsibility and community support. "OGDCL welcomes the Dawood Global Foundation delegation, and appreciates the initiative of DGF wheelchairs distribution. This is the initiative of poor and needy people which will be very helpful especially in health sector, hospitals, BHO's, Dispensaries etc, I pay thanks to President and the delegation of DGF for coming to Kohat and Southern Punjab and I assure DGF that any kind of support and cooperation required from OGDCL will be done."

Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad, Medical Superintendent of DHQ Hospital, Kohat, expressed his appreciation, stating, "The distribution of these wheelchairs, made upon our hospital's request, will greatly serve the public at large. We are thankful to DGF and OGDCL for their generosity and support in enhancing our healthcare services." The distribution of these wheelchairs is part of a broader effort to support healthcare institutions across the region, ensuring that patients receive the necessary assistance to lead more independent and fulfilling lives.

نوٹس اشتہار

بعدالتحریر سترجین یو ایس ایئر لائنز کی ایکسپریس فلیٹ 7 جات اپنا پرومپٹ کرکے
بمقام ہون، مقدمہ نمبر 49/1 سن 2024 آئیڈیو تارن پٹی 24-07-024 موان HBL ہائی گیت بارڈ ہون۔ موسیٰ خان
لنوام اللہ، معلم اشتہار بنام لنوام اللہ ولد محمد شہزاد مرقمیشی زیر در تکرار آدمیان پیش ہوں، ہوں سکر نظام ہزار سکی کام
سورانی تحصیل و طعن ہوں۔ مقدمہ نمبر سترجین میں بیگ کے آپ کے خلاف ہوئی دایاے مبلغ 1554519.34 روپے پر
مقدمہ اور (Mark up) دقت وصولی کی تم ہارڈ کیا ہے، لہذا آپ کو زیر پٹریں ڈرائنگ کیا جاتا ہے کہ آپ اشتہار کی اداعت
کے 30 دن کے اندر کے مطابق سیکش 10(2) داخل نشی ہوٹھو (یکوئی آف خالص) آئی ڈی نیس مجری 2001 حاضر ہو
کر برادر در تکرار اشتہار جواب ہوئی اجازت، دفاع مقدمہ عاجزی کریں، کہ کیل د آپ کے خلاف آگری ختمیدر سعادی
جائے۔ درخواست سٹیل جواب ہوئی امراد دستارizat، بیان ملتی قصور قی ختم ہو جو بدوس سے معلوم ہو سکے کہ دفاع مقدمہ کے
لئے کوئی مقول ہو موجود ہے۔ آپ کو برادر سٹیل کیا جاتا ہے کہ سعورت کتکاب کے خلاف کیلئے زکا وائی سلائی جائیگی۔
(آن تارن 23-5-024 پشٹ میر سے خط مقدمہ عدالت سے جاری کیا گیا)

MobilinkBank

PUBLIC NOTICE

Auction of Gold

Finance facilities were extended by Mobilink Bank against the security of deposit and pledge of gold to the customer mentioned below. The customer who has neglected and failed to repay the finance extended to them by Mobilink Bank along with the markup there on.

Details	
Branch	Haripur
Branch code	007
Date of auction	13 th June 2024
Time	02:00 PM
Call deposit	PKR 2000/-

Customer Name	CNIC #	Address
Malik Muhammad Yasir	37405-3385526-3	Chachah Post Office, Pind Gujran, Tehsil Khanpur, District Haripur.

Notice is hereby given to the customer in above mentioned that if payment of entire outstanding amount financed along with markup is not made by them to Mobilink Bank within 1 day of the publication of this notice, Mobilink Bank shall auction the gold ornaments and no further Public Notice shall be issued to call upon the customer to make the payments.

Mobilink Bank

SUIT NOTICE

In the court of Miss Ambareen Navid Judge Banking Court-I Peshawar Federal Judicial Complex, Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar
Case No: 62/1 of 2024 Date of hearing: 15-07-2024 suit for the recovery of Rs.1,141,410.87/- M/S Sindh Bank Ltd: GT Road branch Peshawar through its branch Manager Mr. Haris bin Zahid. **Notice Versus:-** 1- Fayaz Muhammad, 2- Rafi Ahmad Sons of Fida Muhammad, 3- Fazal Gul son of Wahid ullah. **All R/o:-** Village Mian Gujjar Tehsil and District Peshawar. Where as the plaintiff bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs.1,141,410.87/- Against you under section 10(2) of the Financial Institution (Recovery of Finance) Ordinance 2001, you are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/ publication of the notice in the newspapers. Failing which an ex-parte decree shall be passed in favour of the plaintiff Bank with costs. Issued today on 06-06-2024 under my signature and seal of the court.

Registrar | Banking Court-I, Peshawar

Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited

Soni Naderin Gais Pann Lipniz Limidz
Gas House, 21-Kashmir Road, Lahore.
www.sngpl.com.pk

PUBLIC NOTICE BY SNGPL

Beware of Illegal Gas Connections

It has come to the attention of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) Peshawar region that some miscreants are involved in providing illegal gas connections to unsuspecting members of the public. These activities are conducted in violation of the government-imposed ban on new gas connections in publicly developed areas.

Dangers of Illegal Gas Connections.

These illegal gas connections:

- **Pose Serious Safety Risks:** Installed by unqualified individuals, these connections do not conform to safety standards and pose significant threats to life and property.
- **Result in Disconnection:** SNGPL routinely disconnects illegal connections, causing inconvenience and financial loss to the deceived public.

Fraudulent Activities by Housing Schemes

We have also discovered that some housing schemes are laying gas pipelines themselves to increase land value, falsely claiming these pipelines are laid by SNGPL. These pipelines are:

- **Unsafe:** Not adhering to safety standards, they endanger residents' lives and properties.
- **Illegal:** Such activities are fraudulent and punishable by law.

Legal Actions Against Offenders

SNGPL takes a firm stance against illegal gas connections:

- **Disconnection and Penalties:** Any illegal gas connection identified will be immediately disconnected by SNGPL.
- **Legal Prosecution:** Owners or occupants of premises with illegal gas connections will face legal action, including imprisonment, fines and other penalties as per the law.
- **Accountability for Safety Hazards:** Those responsible for installing unsafe connections will be held accountable for any resultant safety hazards or damages.

SNGPL's Commitment to Safety and Legality

SNGPL is committed to ensuring the safety and legality of all gas connections. We completely disassociate ourselves from these illegal activities.

How You Can Protect Yourself

- **Verify Connections:** Always verify the legitimacy of any gas connection directly with SNGPL.
- **Report Suspicious Activity:** If you come across any suspicious activities or unauthorized connections, report them immediately to SNGPL.
- **Stay Informed:** Educate yourself about the risks of illegal gas connections and the importance of adhering to safety standards.

Contact Us

For verification, reporting, or more information, please contact SNGPL on 091-9217777 or contact at 1199. Your safety is our priority. Help us ensure a safe and reliable gas supply for everyone.

PID/L3826

To get your e-bill, please register yourself at www.sngpl.com.pk

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PESHAWAR: A man buying a goat from Yaqatoot area to be sacrificed on Eidul Azha. The sale and purchase of the sacrificial animals have gained momentum in city markets. — F.P. photo

The City School celebrates academic achievements



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The City School Hayatabad Campus Peshawar organized a prestigious event to honor the outstanding academic achievements of its students. The event celebrated the students' academic successes. The ceremony was graced by Vice Principal Ms. Romana Anjum and included active participation from the Junior Section Headmistress Ms. Saima Saeed, the school's teachers, and the students' parents.

The ceremony began with the recitation of the Holy Quran. On this occasion, the school children also performed the national

anthem and the City School's song.

Vice Principal Ms. Romana Anjum, along with the Junior Section Headmistress, distributed honorary shields and certificates to the top-performing students, acknowledging their significant achievements at the school.

In her address, Vice Principal Romana Anjum stated that The City School continues to improve its educational standards each year and equips students with the latest technology, which is why it surpasses other schools in the academic field.

She offered some key advice to the successful stu-

dents, wished them well, and encouraged them to continue participating with the same diligence and enthusiasm in their educational endeavors. She also congratulated the parents of the successful students and expressed hope for their continued cooperation with the school administration in advancing their children's academic activities.

During the event, Ms. Romana Anjum and Headmistress Saima Saeed also awarded honorary shields, certificates, and appreciation letters to the outstanding male and female teachers of the school, acknowledging their performance and contributions.

Pak-China cooperation to change regional dynamics

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) Lawyers Forum Khyber Pakhtunkhwa termed Pak-China cooperation will boost economy to pave way for employment in the country while lauded Prime Minister visit as success, on Monday.

This was claimed by PMLN lawyer forum Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Kifayatullah Khan, Senior Vice President Farhad Ali, Vice President Taimur Afridi, General Secretary Akbar Yusuf Khalil, Information Secretary Saleem Shah Hoti, Joint Secretary Muhammad Shabbir and Advisor Muhammad Atif Nazir, in a joint statement and added that China is expected to be a litmus test for Pakistan's economic progress. They said that the visit is aimed at strengthening bilateral economic relations and promoting business-to-business cooperation.

They said that high-level meetings of PM Shehbaz with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang, and other top officials would boost up discuss strategic partnerships, economic projects, and regional cooperation. PMLN leaders contended that a large number of Pakistani companies' participate in a business-to-business conference in Shenzhen would help explore opportunities for mutual growth and cooperation.

3-day annual Shandoor Polo Festival to begin on Friday

Chanzeb chairs meeting to finalize arrangements

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 3-day annual Shandoor Polo Festival in Upper Chitral will begin on Friday, June 28, 2024, in which Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur will attend as the chief guest, while polo teams from Chitral and Gilgit-Baltistan will participate on this 12,000-ft high Polo Ground, the highest in the world. In addition to the representation of the federal government of both provinces, foreign tourists are also expected to participate in this grand sports gala.

In this regard, an important meeting was held in Peshawar under the chairmanship of Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb, in which Secretary Tourism Mohammad Bakhtiar Khan, Director General Culture and Tourism

(KPCTA) Barkatullah Marwat and other relevant officials were present. Besides, Commissioner Malakand Division and Deputy Commissioners of Chitral Upper and Lower and Dir upper, Additional Chief Secretary of Gilgit-Baltistan, Local Administrative Officers and Sports Officials participated online.

After reviewing various aspects of arrangements as well as suggestions and recommendations put forth by the participants, necessary decisions were taken to finalize the foolproof arrangements in this regard.

Zahid Chanzeb clarified that the present PTI-led government is paying special attention to the development of tourism according to the vision of Imran Khan and the successful holding of Shandoor Polo Festival is in fact a test case not only for the tourism

department but also for the entire provincial government and administrative machinery of the government.

Zahid Chanzeb said that before the launch of this extravaganza, the clearance of all the relevant highways, security, availability of quality food items and fuel in sufficient quantity at the petrol pumps is the foremost duty of the concerned authorities and institutions. Not a single incident of negligence would be tolerated in this respect, he cautioned.

The Advisor Tourism also directed the concerned Deputy Commissioners to hold separate meetings with the players of the teams participating in the polo tournament and the local people and elite to take them into confidence amicably so that they could practically own it and make the festival a success story in all respects.

He also instructed for the players to put the best logos on the shirts so that the tourism and culture department has excellent branding and tourism in the province flourished.

"The increase in domestic and foreign tourists, the province's income, especially foreign exchange, is expected to be continuously increased, he asserted.

In the same way, he said, potable water, wash-rooms facilities and good sanitary arrangements are also indispensable in all the vicinity of the festival.

On this occasion, the officials assured the Tourism Advisor to work round the clock with all their abilities for the success of the Shandoor Polo Festival and clarified that they will not disappoint the provincial government at any stage because the development of tourism will help the province prospered and flourished economically.

Qasim commends role of Medical Transplantation Regulatory Authority

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah addressed a gathering at Khyber Medical Girls College on the occasion of World Transplant Day, lauding the efforts of the Medical Transplantation Regulatory Authority in curbing illegal organ transplant activities in the province. The Authority has initiated the registration of hospitals with facilities meeting international standards for transplantation.

The event was attended by notable figures including Islamic Scholar Dr. Qibla Ayaz, Deputy Director FIA Saadullah Mehsood, Dean of Khyber Medical College Dr. Zahid Aman, and Administrator of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Medical Transplantation Regulatory

Authority Dr. Asif Malik, among others.

In his speech, Minister Shah highlighted the successful collaboration between the police and FIA, which has effectively prevented illegal organ transplants and the trade of organs.

He noted the increasing trend of kidney and liver transplants, with kidneys often failing due to diabetes and high blood pressure. To address this, an initiative named "Live Well" is being launched.

Minister Shah emphasized the high prevalence of liver diseases in Pakistan, often necessitating liver transplants due to hepatitis.

He pointed out that approximately 10,000 patients require transplants annually in Pakistan, while only 1,500 to 2,000 transplants are

performed. This disparity highlights the urgent need for a posthumous organ donation program to bridge the gap between organ supply and demand.

Speakers at the event mentioned that countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran have established posthumous organ donation programs.

There is optimism that the transplant team will soon introduce an organ donation program in the region. The government is working diligently to modernize hospitals with intensive care units to support successful posthumous organ transplant programs.

The implementation of a donor card scheme has already taken place, and the public is encouraged to participate actively in making this initiative successful.

Hakim says protection of forests govt's priority

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Forests and Environment, Fazal Hakim Khan Yousafzai, has reiterated that the protection of forests and the environment remains our top priority, and no compromise will be made on it. Speaking at a meeting with journalists of the Swat Press Club, he stated that Swat holds a special place in his heart as it is his second home, and journalists from Swat have always raised their voices for the rights of the people in difficult times, which has contributed to establishing exemplary peace in Swat at present. He assured that the government's endeavor would be to utilize all possible resources to address the issues of the people and journalists of Swat. The expression of these sentiments came during a meeting with journalists of the Swat Press Club, chaired by its Chairman, Sherin Zada. Also present at the occasion were Arshad Khan, Secretary of Information and Public Relations Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, senior journalist Mahboob Ali, and Fazal Rahim Khan. The delegation briefed Provincial Minister Fazal Hakim Khan Yousafzai and Secretary of Information and Public Relations Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Arshad Khan about the issues facing the journalist community. Provincial Minister Fazal Hakim Khan Yousafzai assured that the issues of journalists would be resolved on a priority basis. He acknowledged the complete cooperation of Swat journalists with the provincial government during difficult times. He mentioned that the doors of our office and rooms are always open for journalists. He further stated that the journalist fraternity is playing an important and fundamental role in ensuring the provision of basic rights to the people by completing the government's agenda. He also urged the journalist fraternity to share with him any information about illegal activities, promising strict legal action against those involved.

CS chairs meeting of Bird Hazard Control Committee

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting of the Bird Hazard Control Committee was held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary at Civil Secretariat Peshawar on Monday. Air Vice Marshal Sajjad Noori, Additional Chief Secretaries, concerned Administrative Secretaries, Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners including Air Force, Police, Civil Aviation and other officials participated in the meeting.

Addressing the participants of the meeting, the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary said that birds, aerial firing and kite flying in the areas adjacent to the airports can cause air accidents which cause damage to the national exchequer.

Airports are our national assets and protecting precious lives and national asset is our collective national responsibility. We have to implement ban on flying of kites, elimination of littering, use of laser beam, ban on aerial firing and pigeon rearing from around all airports to protect our national assets.

On this occasion, Air

Vice Marshal Sajjad Noori said that many times birds collide with the planes during the flight, which causes damage to the planes, and more measures need to be taken to prevent this.

During the meeting, the officials of Pakistan Air Force while giving a briefing presented data on the damage caused by kite flying, high laser beam, bird strikes, and aerial firing and the preventive measures taken in this regard in collaboration with the civil administration. On this occasion, the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa issued orders to the relevant authorities and said that strict action should be taken against those who use kite flying, pigeon flying, aerial firing and laser beam users to prevent such unpleasant incidents and protect assets at airports.

Special arrangements should be made for cleaning in the areas adjacent to airports. On this occasion, instructions were also issued to conduct an awareness campaign. In the meeting, it was also decided to ban the use of high laser beam in Peshawar, Mardan, Nowshera and Kohat, while on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha, special attention should be paid to the clean-

ing of garbage and animal wastes around the airports along with other areas.

Used Car Imports: A Growing Threat to Pakistan's Economy

In recent times, Pakistan's local automobile industry has been grappling with a multitude of challenges that have severely hampered its production and sales. However, the sudden surge in the import of used cars and SUVs has exacerbated the industry's woes, posing a significant threat to its sustainability and the broader economy.

The primary catalyst behind this surge in used vehicle imports is the removal of certain taxation measures, which previously placed locally produced vehicles at a competitive disadvantage. With the withdrawal of Regulatory Duty (RD) and Additional Customs Duty (ACD) on used vehicles, these imports became more financially viable, thereby undercutting the market for domestically manufactured cars.

According to Mr. Abdul Waheed Khan, Director General of the Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association (PAMA), this policy shift has led to a staggering increase in used vehicle imports. For instance, SUV imports witnessed an unprecedented eightfold rise in recent months, with 6,685 units imported compared to just 946 units during the same period last year. Similarly, eco-pickups and minivans saw a substantial surge, with imports soaring from 1,300 units to 6,054 units.

The ramifications of this influx extend beyond market dynamics. Local automotive



manufacturers, who have invested heavily in capacity enhancement and the development of local vendor industries, now find themselves at a significant disadvantage. The unfair competition posed by the abundance of imported used cars not only undermines their efforts but also threatens the livelihoods of countless workers employed directly and indirectly in this sector.

Mr. Abdul Rehman Aizaz, Chairman of the Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts & Accessories Manufacturers (PAAPAM), underscored the detrimental impact of this trend on the local auto industry. He highlighted the significant contributions of the local industry to the economy, including substantial tax revenues and job creation. How-

ever, the surge in used car imports threatens to nullify these contributions, pushing local businesses towards closure.

The Chief Executive of Indus Motor Company, Ali Asghar Jamali, echoed these concerns, noting that used car imports have surpassed the production numbers of some domestic manufacturers. Despite facing challenges

and declining sales volumes, local manufacturers like Indus Motor Company have remained committed to their

The unchecked rise in used car imports has led to concerns about its economic implications

workforce and investment in the country.

However, the unchecked rise in used car imports has led to concerns about its economic implications. Nabeel Hashmi, CEO, Thermosole, an auto expert, pointed out the adverse effects on domestic manufacturers, exacerbated by factors

such as rupee depreciation and fluctuating international steel prices. With key OEMs facing significant declines in sales and production, the influx of used cars adds further strain to an already beleaguered industry.

In the midst of these challenges, it is imperative for policymakers to take decisive action to address the surge in used car imports. Mr. Aizaz called for a reassessment of policies to ensure sustainable growth and support for local industries. Urgent measures are needed to restore investor confidence and safeguard the future of the domestic automotive sector.

Additionally, there is a pressing need to promote alternative solutions, such as hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs), to miti-

gate the environmental impact of fossil fuel reliance. Mr. Jamali emphasized the potential of HEVs to address both economic and environmental concerns, highlighting investments made by companies like Toyota in local production.

Furthermore, statistics highlight the magnitude of the challenge faced by the local auto industry. The import of used cars has witnessed a staggering increase of 553% in the first ten months of the current fiscal year compared to the same period last year. Over 30,686 units of used cars were imported from July to April 2024, marking an exponential rise compared to approximately 4,702 units imported in the fiscal year 2022-23.

In conclusion, the surge in used car imports poses a significant threat to Pakistan's economy and the local automotive industry. Urgent action is needed to address this issue, including revisiting import policies and promoting local manufacturing. Failure to act swiftly could result in irreversible damage to an industry that plays a crucial role in the country's economic growth and stability.

As Mr. Aizaz aptly summarized, "The local auto industry demands urgent measures to support its sustainability and restore investor confidence in Pakistan." It is imperative for policymakers to heed these calls and take decisive action to safeguard the future of the domestic automotive sector. ■

Developed and released in public interest by SouthAsia Forum.

Tarakai announces revolutionary measures to boost literacy rate

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: KP Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Faisal Khan Tarakai unveiled groundbreaking initiatives to enhance the literacy rate of women across the province, with a special focus on the merged areas. The Education Department has launched several pivotal projects to provide educational infrastructure in these regions, leading to a significant increase in literacy. The Minister commended the Merged Areas Education Foundation for its remarkable achievements, including the establishment of 207 community-based education centers, 337 community-based schools, Training for 1,538 teachers, while Over 47,000 students are currently enrolled in these institutions.



In brief

PPP ladies team meets Rubina F.P. Report

SUKKUR: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Rubina Khalid on Monday met with the office bearers of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) ladies wing Sukkur to discuss about the ongoing and recently launched initiatives of the programme. Rubina Khalid said the programme played an important role in the economic empowerment of women and reiterated her commitment to serve the marginalised segments of the society through the programme. She said that the Benazir Income Support Programme is dedicated to provide essential support to the most vulnerable communities, particularly focusing on the economic empowerment of women. We are committed to enhancing the programme's reach and impact to ensure that no one is left behind, said Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Rubina Khalid. During the meeting, she highlighted the importance of skill development in lifting beneficiaries out of poverty.

Six die in road accidents

KHARIAN (INP): In two different road accidents in Kharian and Zhob, six people died and five were seriously injured on Monday. According to the details, three members of a family from Kharian died, and two others were badly injured in a road accident near Kakra Town. The victims' family, from Amara, a suburban area of Kharian, was on their way to Mirpur in a car when a dumper hit them on the road. The rescue team shifted the injured persons to the hospital, where the condition of both injured women was critical. The rescue team identified the deceased as the head of the family, Mian Tufail Jutt, his wife, and their son Aaqad, while his daughter-in-law and daughter were injured. In a separate accident in Zhob, a passenger bus crushed six people on Quetta Road. According to the channel, three of them died on the spot, while the other three were seriously injured. Rescue teams rushed to the accident site and shifted the three dead bodies and the injured persons to the trauma center.

Illegal cattle markets banned F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat has imposed section 144 in the district for thirty-day banning illegal cattle markets and collection of animal skins. A notification issued here said that the buying and selling of firecrackers, motorcycle one-wheeling, aerial firing, and display of weapons and swimming in rivers and dams would also be banned during the period.

Highway open for traffic F.P. Report

NARAN: The Babusar-Naran highway was opened for all traffic after six months of closure. The local administration said that police and local volunteers will continue to patrol for the safety and convenience of tourists. Babusar-Naran highway is closed every year for several months due to heavy snowfall, which now has been opened. It is pertinent to note that earlier in Mansehra district after a long closure of six months all the obstacles were removed and the touristy area Naran was opened for tourists.



HYDERABAD: Residents closed road during a protest against electricity cut off.

JI to take to streets for health facilities in Buner

F.P. Report

BUNER: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Buner chapter Deputy Emir and former candidate Provincial Assembly Engineer Nasir Ali Khan has expressed anger over the lack of health officers and facilities in the district Buner. He set one-week deadline for improvement in the situation otherwise threatened of protest demonstrations with Jamaat activists and general public on roads.

This he expressed while addressing an emergency press conference in the Buner Press Club with former district council member Zardad Khan on Monday. He demanded of the Deputy Commissioner, Minister of Health, Secretary of Health to take immediate and urgent measures to improve the situation before end the deadline. Engineer Nasir Ali Khan said that after a long time Buner district having no DHO and no MS in the DHQ hospital Daggar due to which the patients and the government employees are facing

difficulties.

Engineer Nasir Ali Khan expressed sorrow over acting charge to the DHO Kohistan and due to the lack of MS in the headquarters hospital Daggar the affairs are being run through DMS. He repeated the ugly situation caused worries to patients and government Officials' as their cases are pending.

Engineer Nasir claimed the poor patients and government officials are going through mental agony for their legitimate rights. He further said that there is a lack of basic facilities in all tehsil headquarters and other health centers across the district including DHQ Hospital Daggar due to which the poor people of Buner district are deprived of basic health facilities at government hospitals.

Engineer Nasir Ali Khan has taken a stand that due to the non-availability of treatment facilities in government hospitals, patients turn to private hospitals and are forced to earn treatment by paying hard earned money. Engineer Nasir Ali

Khan said that even in emergency, syringes are not available in District Headquarters Hospital Daggar and most essential medicines are not available and DHQ Hospital Daggar only refers to Peshawar, Refer to Mardan and Refer to Islamabad these days. He has termed DHQ hospital Daggar as a death cell where patients wait for death.

Engineer further said that MRI, CT scan, X-ray machine and other machinery are lying idle in the hospital. While the under-construction building of the District Headquarters Hospital Daggar is still in ruins. He claimed that DHQ Daggar Hospital Buner district system of nurses and duties are in disarray are nominal. He gave an ultimatum to the DG Health Secretary Health Deputy Commissioner Buner and the present government if reforms are not made in the health department in Buner district within a week, Jamaat-e-Islami will take the people to roads to rise voice for due rights.

Pashto film artist Khushboo shot dead

Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: Well-known Pashto film and drama artist, Khushboo was shot dead by unknown assailants in Akbar Pura area of district Nowshera.

Police informed on Monday that the body of Pashto artist was recovered from a field with bullet marks on her body. Her body was shifted to Mian Rashid Memorial Hospital Pabbi for post-mortem. However, police said reason behind the killing of the young film artist Khushboo was yet to be known. Police said Khushboo belonged to Swabi district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and was residing in Peshawar. A case was registered by the police on the complaint of Shehryar, the brother of the deceased artist.

CFC, Landi Kotal staff flayed F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Residents of Bazaar Zakha Khel, have held responsible CFC, Landi Kotal staff for nepotism and said instead of facilitating the tribesmen it has become a torment for them.

Addressing to a press conference in Landi Kotal press club Chairman Village Council (VC-28) of Bazaar Zakha Khel, Attaulah Afridi flanked by scores of elders said that CFC, Landi Kotal has failed to serve laymen in the center.

They maintained that after travelling for forty kilometers, when they reached CFC to receive necessary documents, the staff members rejected their applications on the pretext that all tokens had been issued and they returned back without having Identity cards and other important documents. The staff openly receive bribes and due to reason, the applicants of the Bazaar Zakha Khel ignore that it is injustice to them, they blamed.

They also came hard on parliamentarians and said during the election campaign, they reach the last village of the area for their own interest but when residents face any problem they turn blind eyes towards it. They demanded of the authorities to establish a separate NADRA center in Bazaar Zakha Khel so that they can avail the facility at their door steps.

Jirga against insecurity, target killing held

F.P. Report

BANNU: A grand jirga of Uthman and Ahmadzai tribes held against insecurity and target killing in the district from previous weeks while elected lawmakers along with people from every walk of life participated on the tribal leaders announcement, on Monday.

The grand jirga held at Fazl Qadir Shaheed Park, in which leaders of political parties, workers, former And the current members of the assembly took part and demanded indiscriminate action against all armed organizations in Benin, on the one hand because of bad security, on the other hand, because of the boycott of the polio campaign, thousands of children are being deprived of polio vaccinations.

Malik Mir Shamd Khan, Member of the Qaumi Assembly Maulana Seyed Nasim Ali Shah, Provincial Minister Malik Pakhtun Yar Khan, Former Provincial Minister Malik Shah Muhammad Khan Wazir, Chief of Jani Khel Malik Moweez Khan, Malik Zafar Hayat Khan, Chairman Tehsil Meriyan Pir Kamal Shah, Chairman Tehsil Domail Asrar Khan Wazir, former Nazim Domil Fidaa Muhammad Khan, Malik Nisar Khan of the Qaumi Political Alliance, Malik Zahraan Khan of PTI, Malik Omar Hayat Khan, former Speaker of the Provincial Assembly Haji Abdul Samad Khan, Grand Wazir, Former Provincial Assembly Speaker Maulana Ahmed Allah Haqqani, Mufti Islam Noor Ingleba, Amal Khan Mammah Khel and other leaders said that armed groups are active in Bannu district and adjacent areas and regular centers have been established in each tehsil.

There are places where judgments are imposed by force of law by interfering in the affairs of the parties. In this regard, the government and the administration are not aware of the responsibility of the divisional and district administration and the state to restore peace and security and have completely failed to establish the government right. announced, the speakers said that the unrest in Bannu district has reached such an extent that citizens of all

classes are feeling unsafe, and that every day, corpses are being abducted at gunpoint, which is the reason Because the people of Bannu are the victims of terror, the presence of offices of armed organizations in Bannu has created doubts in the minds of the people. It is not possible without a solution.

Jirga leaders announcing independent protest jirgas and movements for the restoration of peace and the end of unrest. The leaders of the Jirga made it clear that the provincial government, the divisional administration and the elected representatives have no power to guarantee security.

Meanwhile, a father was killed when his son was snatched from the clutches of members of an armed group in the area of Bannu in the area of Bannu. They arrived there to release the son, as a result of the discussion and repetition, Qadr Zaman was killed by firing. After the protest, the leaders moved the body to the village and buried it.

Moreover, Provincial Minister for Public Health Engineering Malik Pakhtoon Yar Khan said that the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is committed to the establishment of peace and order and the well-being of the people. All possible measures will be taken to restore the people's welfare and well-being. Addressing the peace meeting called by the people, did he say that he was not afraid even before raising the voice of peace for the people on the floor of the assembly. Who was represented and represented in the last sit-in and the voice of the people was loud and I will not back down from raising the voice even today Last day also we represented the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Bannu in the meeting of the provincial cabinet on peace and security, although this was not on the agenda. I also want to say that the problem of peace and security is common to all of us. There is no one person, soon the relevant authorities at the provincial level will talk about the current situation and the current situation will be informed. For the establishment of peace It will show white flags waving.

WSSCM finalizes Eidul Azha sanitation plan

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) has finalized three-day Eid ul Azha sanitation operation plan for 38 Neighborhood councils of Mardan.

Additional Secretary Development Local Government Fazale Akbar visited WSSCM. He also chaired the meeting regarding Eid ul Azha. The Manager Municipal Services informed the Additional Secretary Development that a comprehensive Eid ul Azha plan has been devised according to which Mardan city has been divided into four zones and collection points have been set up at New Ada, Par Hoti, Shamsi Road and Kaskorona. On the first day of Eid ul Azha, the Eid gahs will be cleaned and swept before Eid prayers while the cleanliness operation will be started from 12:00 pm and will be continued till the entire city is cleaned of waste and animal remains.

He told that high-tech modern machinery would be used in the cleanliness operation and animal remains would be shifted to a safe place for safe disposal. He was briefed that during the Eid operation, the complaint cell will be remained open till late night and in case of any inconvenience, the citizens are requested to record their complaints on helpline 1334, 0314-4228999, and 0937-840892.

He further added that 600

employees will be deployed and 70 different types of sanitation vehicle will take part in the Eid operations. Citizen Liaison Cell of the company has already launched an awareness campaign in all union councils for public awareness to dump waste at designated points. Distribution of Awareness brochures has been started in various parts of the city.

Additional Secretary Development Local Government Fazale Akbar expressed his satisfaction on the Eid ul Azha sanitation plan and stated that provincial government has already cancelled the holidays of all the staff and no negligence would be tolerated during the occasion of Eid ul Adha. He further stated that strict action will be taken against any official found absent. For the efficient and effective execution of the Eid ul Azha monitoring teams have been constituted. Biodegradable bags shall also be distributed among the citizens to manage animal remains and offalls.

Illicit trade social menace impacting law abiding setups: The ACT Alliance Pakistan convened a significant civil society and media dialogue in Mardan today to address the critical issue of illicit trade and its detrimental impact on the local, provincial, and national economies. The event brought together representatives from various sectors, including business leaders, media professionals, and civil society organizations, to

discuss the pressing economic challenges of illicit trade, tax evasion, smuggling, and counterfeiting.

Illicit trade in Pakistan has reached alarming levels, with an estimated \$68 billion in illicit activities occurring annually. Tax evasion accounts for over \$21 billion, while smuggling exceeds \$3 billion. Additionally, nearly 80 percent of products, particularly in town centers and rural areas, are counterfeited. These figures underscore the urgent need for collective action to address these pervasive issues. This emphasis on the urgency of the issue should make the audience feel concerned and aware of the immediate need for action.

Speaking at the event, President of the Traders Association Mardan, lauded the ACT Alliance's efforts in raising awareness and fostering collaboration to combat illicit trade. "The ACT Alliance's initiative to reach out to local communities and raise awareness about illicit trade is commendable. The traders' community in Mardan recognizes the challenges posed by illicit trade and is committed to cooperating to eradicate this menace."

The dialogue also shed light on sector-specific tax evasion figures, underscoring the magnitude of the problem. The petroleum sector faces tax evasion amounting to Rs996 billion, the real estate sector Rs500 billion, and the tobacco sector Rs310 billion annually.

tives and interests are considered in global policy-making.

Pakistan's election to the UNSC also presents an opportunity to strengthen its domestic institutions and governance. By aligning its policies with international standards and best practices, Pakistan can improve its administrative efficiency and transparency. This alignment can attract more foreign investment and aid, contributing to economic growth and development. Additionally, active engagement in the UNSC can inspire reforms in Pakistan's diplomatic and foreign policy apparatus, enhancing its effectiveness in international negotiations.

In conclusion, Pakistan's election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council is a historical achievement that holds significant promise for its political and economic stability. By leveraging this position, Pakistan can enhance its role in regional and global affairs, represent the interests of Islamic countries, and promote international peace and security. This achievement not only elevates Pakistan's international standing but also provides a platform to address critical global challenges, fostering a more stable and prosperous future for the country and the world.

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Dr. Asif Channer

PAKISTAN'S recent election to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a non-permanent member marks a significant milestone in its diplomatic journey. Securing 182 votes out of 193 in the UN General Assembly, Pakistan has once again demonstrated its robust standing in the international community. This achievement underscores Pakistan's commitment to global peace, cooperation, and stability. As Pakistan prepares to begin its two-year term on January 1, 2025, this success brings with it both opportunities and responsibilities that can influence its political and economic stability and its role in regional and global affairs.

This is not the first time Pakistan has been elected to the UNSC. Its previous terms were in 2012-13, 2003-04, 1993-94, 1983-84, 1976-77, 1968-69, and 1952-53. Each tenure has allowed Pakistan to voice its perspectives on critical global issues, from conflict resolution to humanitarian efforts. This consistent election record signifies the international community's trust in Pakistan's diplomatic capabilities and its balanced approach to international relations.

Pakistan's new role on the UNSC can contribute significantly to its political stability. Being part of the world's most powerful international body provides Pakistan with a platform to influence key global decisions. This can enhance its political leverage and bolster its international standing, potentially attracting more foreign direct investment and stronger bilateral ties. Moreover, active participation in the UNSC can help Pakistan address some of its domestic challenges by fostering a climate of peace and stability, which is crucial for political coherence.

Economically, Pakistan stands to gain from its enhanced global profile. The UNSC seat can be leveraged to foster economic partnerships and secure international investments. By playing a proactive role in global economic forums and peacekeeping missions, Pakistan can demonstrate its stability and attractiveness as an investment destination. Additionally, the credibility gained through this role can aid in negotiating better terms in international trade agreements and securing economic aid and development projects.

Pakistan's election to the UNSC is

particularly significant in the context of South Asia's geopolitical dynamics. As a representative of the Asia-Pacific region, Pakistan can influence discussions and decisions related to regional security issues, including the Kashmir conflict and the situation in Afghanistan. By advocating for peaceful resolutions and regional cooperation, Pakistan can enhance its leadership role in South Asia. This position also allows Pakistan to address concerns related to India's increasing influence and ensure that its strategic interests are protected.

As a prominent member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference OIC in representing the interests of the 57 Islamic countries. This position enables Pakistan to bring attention to issues affecting the Muslim world, such as the plight of the Palestinians, the Rohingya crisis, and other conflicts involving Muslim communities. By advocating for these issues on the global stage, Pakistan can strengthen its ties with other Muslim-majority countries and enhance its leadership role within the OIC. This solidarity can lead to greater political and economic coopera-

tion among Islamic nations, fostering a united front on international issues.

Pakistan's status as the only Muslim-majority country with nuclear capabilities further elevates its strategic importance on the UNSC. As an atomic power, Pakistan holds significant responsibility in promoting nuclear non-proliferation and advocating for disarmament. By actively participating in UNSC discussions on nuclear issues, Pakistan can contribute to global efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and promote the peaceful use of nuclear technology. This role not only enhances Pakistan's international stature but also reinforces its commitment to global security.

Furthermore, Pakistan's participation in the UNSC can help address some of the critical challenges facing the international community today, such as climate change, terrorism, and global health crises. By working closely with other member states, Pakistan can contribute to formulating comprehensive strategies to tackle these issues. This collaborative approach can enhance Pakistan's diplomatic relations and ensure that its perspec-

Pakistan's UNSC triumph: A new era



Israel white phosphorous attacks on Lebanon harming people

BEIRUT: As Al Jazeera reported in March, Israel continues to use white phosphorus munitions in south Lebanon, causing lasting damage and driving villagers away even as Israeli officials threaten a war across their northern border.

A new report released by Human Rights Watch (HRW) concurs, showing that white phosphorus attacks are "putting civilians at grave risk" and "contributing to displacement". More than 92,600 people have been displaced from their villages in south Lebanon since October 6, according to the International Organization for Migration.

"Israel's use of airburst white phosphorus munitions in populated areas indiscriminately harms civilians and has led many to leave their homes," Ramzi Kaiss, Lebanon researcher at HRW, said in the report. In their investigation, HRW also verified the use of white phosphorus munitions by the Israeli military in at least 17 municipalities across south Lebanon since October 2023, when Israel's war on Gaza began.

They verified the illegal use of airburst munitions over populated residential areas in the municipalities of Kfar Kila, Meiss el-Jabal, Boustane, Markaba and Aita al-Shaab. White phosphorus injuries can be severely painful and necrotic. Oxides can reignite in the skin unless the burns are covered immediately and kept covered to prevent any exposure to oxygen. Other symptoms may include severe respiratory problems, acute lung injury, severe eye damage, second or third-degree burns, or even severe bone diseases, such as the necrotic "Lucifer's jaw".

At least 173 people have been injured by exposure to white phosphorus between October and late May, according to Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health. Among those are verified cases of civilians who were rushed to a hospital on October 15 for asphyxiation after coming in contact with the phosphorus. And reported cases of white phosphorus continued into June. In a March investigation into Israeli use of white phosphorus in southern Lebanon, Al Jazeera was told by Lebanese experts that Israel was attempting to create a buffer zone by making the region uninhabitable and



impossible to cultivate. Agriculture accounts for up to 80 percent of south Lebanon's gross domestic product (GDP), according to the United Nations.

Al Jazeera's investigation found that Israel had dropped 117 phosphoric bombs on southern Lebanon, striking at least 32 towns and villages between October and March. The impacted area spanned nearly the entirety of Lebanon's 100km (62-mile) southern border. Israel's repeated use of white phosphorus has drawn the ire of international rights organisations. On March 19, Oxfam and HRW called on the Biden administration to "immediately suspend arms transfers to Israel." The documented use of white phosphorus has renewed calls from rights organisations to close the loopholes that see it used in populated areas.

"Israel's widespread use of white phosphorus in south Lebanon highlights the need for stronger international law on incendiary weapons," the HRW report said. The HRW report urged Lebanon to file a declaration with the International Criminal Court (ICC) to enable an investigation and prosecution "of grave international crimes...on Lebanese territory since October 2023". Neither Lebanon nor Israel are members of the ICC. The court would need a formal declaration from one of the parties to investigate. Lebanon recently walked back an earlier statement that it would give the ICC jurisdiction to

investigate Israeli war crimes on its territory post-October 7.

Lebanon's caretaker government voted in April for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to file such a declaration of jurisdiction. When the decision was withdrawn, some analysts speculated that Lebanese parties feared an ICC investigation might also hold them liable. Israel has a history of using white phosphorus in Lebanon, lending credence to the "buffer zone" theory, according to observers. "The Israeli army targeted civilians with white phosphorus in the 1982 invasion and, since October 7, there has been a lot of white phosphorus used on forests, plantations, olive and fruit trees," Mohammad Hussein, head of South Lebanon's Agricultural Union, told Al Jazeera in March. There were also documented uses of white phosphorus munition during Israel's siege of western Beirut in 1982.

After rights groups accused Israel of war crimes for its use of white phosphorus in its 2008-09 Gaza offensive, the Israeli military said it would stop using it as smokescreen munitions in built-up areas, with unspecified exceptions. "Stronger international standards against the use of white phosphorus are needed to ensure these weapons do not continue to endanger civilians," Kaiss said. "Israel's recent use of white phosphorus in Lebanon should motivate other countries to take immediate action toward this goal." — Aljazeera

Mexico ruling party wins lower house majority

MEXICO CITY (Reuters): Mexico's ruling Morena party and its allies have won a super-majority in the lower house of Congress but not the Senate, the party's president said, falling just short of the two-thirds majority needed in both houses to change the constitution.

Preliminary results from the June 2 vote, which elected Claudia Sheinbaum as Mexico's first woman president in a landslide, had showed her party, Morena, and its allies coming close but missing out on the two-thirds majority. Ultimately, Morena's coalition, which includes the Green Party and the Labor Party, will control 83 seats in the 128-seat Senate, just shy of the 85-seat super-majority threshold, Morena President Mario Delgado said in a social media post.

In the 500-member lower house of Congress, the ruling leftist coalition will have 372 seats, above the 334-seat super-majority threshold, Delgado said. "With a super-majority in the lower house and a majority in the Senate, we will deepen the transformation to keep building a country with well-being and shared prosperity," Delgado said. Mexico's INE electoral authority had said it would recount 60% of votes. Mexican opposition leader Xochitl Galvez, who lost to Sheinbaum in the election by some 30 percentage points, had called for a recount of 80% of the ballot boxes.

Uncertainty over the makeup of the next Congress, which takes office in September, roiled markets last week since both outgoing leftist President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and President-elect Sheinbaum signaled their support for sweeping reforms to the constitution. The potential reforms include the elimination of independent energy regulators, while consolidating power in the executive branch, in addition to an overhaul of the judiciary that would see popularly elected Supreme Court judges.

Australia's PM slams vandalism of US consulate

SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has condemned an incident in which the US consulate in Sydney was attacked with a sledgehammer and defaced with pro-Palestinian graffiti. Albanese said on Monday that protesters should "turn the heat down" and that such acts were "not the Australian way".

"The Middle East conflict is a difficult issue. It is complex. It certainly needs some nuance and isn't a matter of just sloganeering," Albanese said at a news conference in Canberra. "Measures such as painting the US Consulate do nothing to advance the cause of those who have committed what is, of course, a crime to damage property."

New South Wales Premier Chris Minns described the incident as "reprehensible." "It's an indication of a kind of coarsening of the public debate that no one needs in Australia," Minns said. "This kind of behaviour will be investigated and punished by NSW police."

Police said that security camera footage showed a hooded figure with his or her face obscured smashing windows at the consulate at about 3am on Monday. The consulate's coat of arms was also spray-painted over with two red inverted triangles, which are used by some protesters to symbolise Palestinian resistance. The consulate was previously vandalised with the words "Free Gaza" in April, while the US consulate in Melbourne was spray-painted in a similar incident last month. Australia is a close ally of Israel, but has become increasingly critical of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of the war in Gaza in recent months. In April, Albanese condemned Israel's explanation for the killing of Australian woman Zohi Frankom and six other aid workers in an air strike in central Gaza as "not good enough". — Aljazeera

Stranded migrants confront violence and despair

TUNIS (AP): For many migrants who've long dreamed of Europe, one of the last stops is an expanse of olive trees on North Africa's Mediterranean coastline. But in Tunisia, less than 100 miles (161 kilometers) from the Italian islands that form the European Union's outermost borders, for many that dream has become a nightmare.

Under black tarps covered with blankets and ropes, men, women and children seek shelter from sunlight and wait for their chance to board one of the iron boats that paid smugglers use to transport people to Italy. Having fled war, poverty, climate change or persecution, they find themselves trapped in Tunisia - unable to reach Europe but without money to fund a return home. Based on unofficial estimates, the UN's International Organization for Migration said it believes 15,000 to 20,000 migrants are stranded in rural olive groves near the central Tunisian coastline. Their presence is a byproduct of anti-migration policies being championed in both Tunisia and throughout Europe, particularly from right-wing politicians who made big gains in the European Union's parliamentary elections this week, according to early projections provided by the EU. The encampments have grown in size since last year as police have pushed migrants out of cities and ramped up efforts to prevent Mediterranean crossings. When police razed tents last summer in Sfax, Tunisia's second largest city, many migrants moved to the countryside near the stretch of coastline north of the city. Among them is Mory Keita, a 16-year-old who left a flood-prone suburb outside of

Abidjan, Ivory Coast, last September to link up with a friend already in Tunisia. Keita arrived at an encampment called Kilometer-19 earlier this year. Named for a highway marker denoting its distance from Sfax, Kilometer-19 is notorious for clashes between migrant groups, he said. "Machete brawls" regularly break out between groups that self-sort by nationality - including Cameroonians, Ivorians, Guineans and Sudanese. When police come, it's not to ensure safety, but to disband encampments by force, Keita said. "The truth is I'm afraid of where we are," he said. "Innocent people get hurt. The police don't intervene. It's not normal." Passportless, Keita said he paid a smuggler an initial sum of 400,000 Central African Francs (\$661) to take him through Mali and Algeria last year. He dreams of resettling in France, finding work and sending earnings back to his family in Ivory Coast. Keita made it onto a boat on the Mediterranean Sea in March, but Tunisia's coast guard intercepted it, arrested him and returned him to the nearby beach without any bureaucratic processing, he said. With European funds and encouragement, the coast guard has successfully prevented more migrants like Keita than ever before from making dangerous journeys across the sea. From January to May, it stopped nearly 53,000 migrants from crossing its maritime border to Europe, Interior Minister Kamel Fekih said last month. Less than 10,000 migrants successfully crossed from Tunisia to Italy this year, down from 23,000 in the same time period last year. That fulfills objectives that European leaders outlined last summer when they bro-

kered a 1 billion euro (\$1.1 billion) accord with Tunisia. Though the funds have not been completely disbursed, the deal included 105 million euros (\$114 million) for migration-related programs. NGOs such as the Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development have decried a lack of transparency and information about the programs. While fewer people landing on the shores of Italy looks like a success, the resulting logjam on the Tunisian coastline is fomenting anger and despair among migrants and Tunisians. Civil society groups have demanded the government expel migrants. Politicians have urged residents to form "citizen militias" to police the area.

"You brought them here and it's your responsibility to send them back to their home countries," Moamen Salemi, a 63-year old retiree from nearby El Amra, said at one of several recent anti-migrant protests. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said last month it was "very concerned by the increased targeting in Tunisia of migrants, mostly from south of the Sahara, and individuals and organizations working to assist them." "We are witnessing a rise in the use of dehumanizing and racist rhetoric against Black migrants and Black Tunisians," it said in a statement. Though migrants from sub-Saharan Africa have been a political flashpoint, the majority of those who have made it from North Africa to Italy this year have been from either Syria, Bangladesh or Tunisia itself. The government has for more than a year been accused of deporting migrants across its borders with Libya and Algeria, many of whom are later found dead.

Russia puts ex-Ukrainian PM on its wanted list

ROME (AP): Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's far-right party won European elections in Italy with a strong 28% of the votes, boosting her leadership at home and consolidating her kingmaker role in Europe.

Meloni's Brothers of Italy party confirmed its status as the country's most popular party, even improving its performance from the 26% it won in the 2022 general elections, according to projections by state broadcaster RAI based on almost 70% of votes counted. The victory in Italy's voting for European Parliament representatives provides a boost for Meloni, after almost two years in power, mainly at the expense of her governing partners in Rome.

In particular, Matteo Salvini's hard-right League emerged as one of the biggest losers in the EU vote. After finishing first in the 2019 EU election, with more than 34% of the vote,

the League got just 8.5% this time, behind its once junior ally, Forza Italia, which was over 9%. For the opposition, the main centre-left Democratic Party got 24.5%, followed by the populist Five Star Movement, which received only 10.5%, a seven-point decrease from the 2019 election. Meloni, who personalized her electoral campaign betting on her personal "brand," has now positioned herself as one of the most powerful figures in the EU, where far-right parties made major gains, dealing stunning defeats to two of the bloc's most important leaders: French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

"I'm proud that we are heading to the G7 and to Europe with the strongest government of all," Meloni said, commenting on the electoral results at her party's headquarters early Monday. She called the outcome "extraordinary"

and pledged to use it as "fuel" for the future. Despite its solid popular support, Meloni's conservative government needs a strong mandate to deal with the challenges ahead, especially given the fragile state of Italy's public finances and the prospect of a difficult budget for 2025.

"I think that Meloni gets out of these elections stronger, first of all because this is a government that has not lost consensus, which is quite unique in Europe," said Giovanni Orsina, director of the school of government at LUISS university in Rome. "Secondly, with the growth of far-right parties, Meloni is in a pivotal position between the far right and the European People's Party," he added. Based on the latest projections, Meloni's party will get from 23 to 25 seats in the European Parliament, up from six after the 2019 elections, when it was only a minor opposition party.

Macron gambles on snap election after European defeat

PARIS (BBC): President Emmanuel Macron has called snap parliamentary elections later this month in the wake of a big victory for his rival Marine Le Pen's National Rally in the European Parliament vote.

The far-right party is on course to win 32% of the vote, exit polls say, more than twice that of the president's Renaissance party. Announcing the dissolution of parliament, he said the two rounds of voting would take place on 30 June and 7 July, a few weeks before the Paris Olympics.

Mr Macron made the dramatic and surprise decision in a televised address from the Élysée Palace an hour after voting closed and exit polls had been declared in France's EU elections. His decision came not long after National Rally's 28-year-old leader, Jordan Bardella, openly called on the president to call parliamentary elections. "I have heard your message," the president told French voters, "and I will not let it go without a response."

"France needs a clear majority in serenity and harmony," he said, adding that he could not resign himself to the far-right's progress "everywhere in the continent". Now barely two years into his second term as president, Mr Macron already lacks a majority in the French parliament, and though this European vote in theory has no bearing on national politics, he clearly decided that continuing his mandate without a new popular consultation would place too much of a strain on the system. Ms Le Pen, who has twice been defeated by Mr Macron in presidential elections, immediately reacted, saying her party was "ready to exercise power, ready to put an end to mass immigration". Calling a snap election is a huge surprise for the country, and a huge risk for President Macron. He could have reacted differently.

He could have just kept going, explaining the far right's massive victory as a European aberration which would be corrected at more important elections. He could have trusted to the impending European football championship in Germany and above all the Paris Olympics to keep people's minds off politics for a couple of months. That was certainly how the Paris commentariat thought he would take his party's rout. But one can only assume the president had seen this coming, and planned his response in advance. Certainly the

sultation would place too much of a strain on the system. Ms Le Pen, who has twice been defeated by Mr Macron in presidential elections, immediately reacted, saying her party was "ready to exercise power, ready to put an end to mass immigration". Calling a snap election is a huge surprise for the country, and a huge risk for President Macron. He could have reacted differently.

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result was an almost exact replica of the polls, so he would have had plenty of time to consider his options.

The fact is that he is stuck. Without a majority, getting any bill through the National Assembly is already a struggle. With most of the country now so clearly against him, any new legislation - for example the upcoming budget - he could have proved explosively. So he has plumped for "clarity". If National Rally has the votes then, he says, they should be given the chance to govern. Obviously the president will hope his own Renaissance party can mount a fight-back at the elections on 30 June and 7 July. Or that other parties will do well better too. But he must appreciate that the odds favour another victory for National Rally. Maybe not one so sweeping as result, but enough for it to become the biggest party in parliament. At which point we might well have a Prime Minister Marine Le Pen, or indeed Jordan Bardella.

The Harvard graduating students denied their degrees over Palestine protest

BOSTON: More than two weeks have passed since the graduates' commencement ceremony for 2024 at Harvard University, but Asmer Asrar Safi is still waiting to receive the degree for which he spent four years studying. "The situation remains as is, unfortunately," he tells Al Jazeera from Boston, United States.

Besides Safi, who is originally from Lahore, Pakistan, another 12 students find themselves in the same situation: they are all graduating students at one of the most prestigious educational institutions in the world but will not be awarded their degrees for at least one year. Harvard Corporation, the university's top governing body, barred these students from receiving their degrees during this year's graduation ceremony on May 23 on account of their involvement in the three-week pro-Palestine encampment at the university last month.

"I am waiting for my appeals decision to come out," 23-year-old Safi, an international student of social studies and ethnicity,

migration and rights at Harvard College, says. "I am a Rhodes Scholar and trying to ascertain if I can matriculate at the University of Oxford given that my Harvard degree has been withheld for a year, even though I have met all the academic conditions for my programme and have completed my degree requirements." Shradha Joshi is another student who will not be able to receive her degree, despite having the backing of her faculty at Harvard College, where she was studying in the same programme as Safi.

"After having completed the appeal application on my end, we seem to be in a limbo as we wait for communication from the university. Students and faculty members are all quite confused by the ambiguity of the process, and the timeline for appeals is unclear," she told Al Jazeera. Born and raised in Texas, Joshi had been planning to pursue a master's degree in sociology in the United Kingdom, but says her future is now uncertain. "I was supposed to go to the

University of Cambridge with the Harvard-UK Fellowship, but my plans are now in flux due to my degree status. The lack of transparency and poor communication from administrators make it difficult to predict what our next steps will look like," she says. Like many other academic institutions in the US, Harvard University has found itself caught up in an increasingly angry debate about academic freedom and the right to protest over Israel's ongoing war in Gaza.

Having served as Harvard's president for just six months, Claudine Gay resigned from the position in January this year, following her appearance at a congressional testimony about "rising anti-Semitism" on the college campus in December 2023. In her resignation letter, Gay, the university's first Black president and only the second woman to take the role in its 388-year history, cited personal attacks "fuelled by racial animus". Her resignation came following pressure on her to step down as she also faced alle-

gations of plagiarism about her academic work which surfaced soon after the congressional hearing.

In April, students at Columbia University, an Ivy League college in New York, began an encampment on their campus grounds in protest against the Israeli war on Gaza. They demanded that their university divest from companies linked to or doing business with Israel. The protest movement grew rapidly across the country, with encampments appearing at more than 30 other universities, including Harvard, where the student protest encampment began on April 24. The demand by students at the Harvard encampment, much like the rest of the college campuses in the US, was for a full disclosure of Harvard's investments in companies linked to Israel and divestment from those companies. Following negotiations between the university administration and the Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine (HOOP) coalition, which was leading the protest, the encampment was disbanded on May 14. — Aljazeera

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Washington should stop enabling Tel Aviv's Gaza action

WHILE Tel Aviv tried to compare its "successful" rescue of four hostages from Hamas in Gaza's Nuseirat camp on Saturday morning to the "Entebbe raid" of 1976, when Israeli commandos rescued more than 100 hostages in Uganda, many Israeli people are more realistic about the exploit that according to Hamas claimed at least 274 Palestinian lives including 64 children.

The haste with which the Israeli military disclosed the details of the "heroic" rescue, following the four hostages arriving home safe and sound on Saturday afternoon, shows how eager the Netanyahu government is to convince the Israeli people that it can deliver on its promise to free the hostages held by Hamas.

Yet despite some fleeting euphoria over the rescue, nationwide anti-war protests continued. Such protests have become a regular occurrence in Israel over the past months. The protesters are demanding Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu step down accusing him of continuing the war in Gaza to hold on to power.

While the Netanyahu government's intention was to use the hostage rescue to boost support and ease the public's growing war weariness, the continuing protests are a telling sign that his government has not only lost the initial sympathy of the international community but also the support of more and more Israeli people, as the bloody military operations are increasingly seen as a means for the Israeli leader to remain in office.

Israeli war cabinet minister Benny Gantz quit the emergency government on Sunday over his dispute with Netanyahu's post-conflict plans for Gaza. "Unfortunately, Mr Netanyahu is preventing us from approaching true victory, which is the justification for the painful ongoing crisis," said Gantz, whose influence is widely seen as a counterbalance to that of the far-right members of Netanyahu's coalition.

That far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir demanded a place alongside Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant in the war cabinet immediately after Gantz's announcement is a worrying sign that the war cabinet will become even more bloodthirsty as Ben-Gvir is part of the right-wing Otzma Yehudit party that has threatened to quit and bring down the coalition government if Israel accepts a cease-fire proposal put forward by US President Joe Biden.

By launching the rescue less than two days before US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's eighth visit to the region, which sees him travel to Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Qatar from Monday to Wednesday to push for a cease-fire agreement that secures the release of all the Israeli hostages, the Netanyahu government is evincing Washington that it can rescue the hostages without a cease-fire.

That the US' intelligence assistance and military support are believed to have been indispensable for the bloody rescue mission on Saturday makes a mockery of Blinken's professed pro-peace visit.

That being said, instead of showboating, the top US diplomat should play his part in stopping the US from supplying weapons and other military assistance to Israel.

Dialogue antidote to clash of civilizations

MONDAY was the first International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations after the United Nations General Assembly on Friday adopted a resolution to designate June 10 as such. The resolution was proposed by China and 14 other countries.

The urgency for dialogue between different cultures is an evident need, so designating a day for dialogue among civilizations is of great significance for promoting harmony among peoples.

With geopolitical conflicts becoming increasingly severe and rivalry between major countries intensifying, addressing the deficits in global development, security and peace is a pressing concern. The military conflict between Russia and Ukraine shows no sign of even a temporary cease-fire, and neither does the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Instead, both are intensifying and have the potential to spread.

When there is growing global uncertainty and volatility, dialogue is indispensable if countries with different cultural backgrounds are to understand each other, or at least come to a consensus that there should be enough latitude for tolerance. Conflicts, military conflicts in particular, will only widen division and aggravate differences, and finally give rise to even more problems.

It is natural that countries should have differences, and it is possible for such differences to develop into conflicts. But that should not mean that such differences cannot be shelved or ironed out through dialogues and exchanges. Nor should it mean that cultural differences inevitably lead to conflict.

Rather as the ancient Silk Road highlights, it is exchanges between different cultures that help promote the development of human civilization. Cross-cultural dialogue is the basis for cultural exchanges.

Beijing put forward the Global Civilization Initiative, along with initiatives for global security and development, in 2023. That reflects China's understanding through experience that security is a prerequisite for development, and development is a guarantee for security. Rather than seeing the differences among different civilizations as the inevitable cause of a clash, it sees them as a means for civilizations to learn from each other for the good of humanity as a whole.

China has long sought to promote dialogue among different cultures, and it has been doing what it can to broker dialogues and negotiations between parties in conflict. It is through China's brokerage that Iran and Saudi Arabia have realized political reconciliation after many years of confrontation.

The UN's designation of June 10 as the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations should serve to increase the world's awareness of the importance of dialogue in addressing cultural differences and thus promoting world peace.

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Qalibaf the prime contender in Iran's presidential race

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami

IN the wake of President Ebrahim Raisi's death, Iran is set to hold a new presidential election on June 28. This election has drawn significant attention from observers keen to analyze the candidates' profiles, their chances and the influence of key political figures within the system.

This election comes at a time when Iran is experiencing unparalleled internal and regional tension. Domestically, there is a palpable sense of anticipation and uncertainty. Regionally, the once-covert Iran-Israel conflict has escalated into open, direct military confrontations, adding to the nation's turmoil.

The situation is further complicated by the departure of a major political figure who was known for his unwavering loyalty to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Raisi had successfully navigated numerous challenges, demonstrating complete obedience to the supreme leader's directives. His death leaves a significant gap, intensifying the already-complex dynamics as the country prepares for its next presidential election.

A final list of six candidates was announced by the Guardian Council on Sunday. It consists of: Mohammed Bagher Qalibaf, Saeed Jalili, Masoud Pezeshkian, Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, Alireza Zakani and Mostafa Pourmohammadi. This final list reveals several key insights.

Firstly, as expected, the Guardian Council, which is dominated by conservatives, announced a list dominated by those affiliated with the conservative faction in Iran. The one exception is the reformist Pezeshkian. While the vetting process is supposed to be unbiased, the final list proves once again that this is not the case, with the crowding out of reformist voices in favor of conservative figures known for their loyalty to the supreme leader and the political system.

Among the most notable hard-liners and close associates of Khamenei that are on the list are Qalibaf, the speaker of Iran's parliament; Zakani, the mayor of

Tehran; and Jalili, a former secretary of the Supreme National Security Council who is also a member of the Expediency Discernment Council.

Jalili is expected to be a prominent contender. He is a staunch ally of Khamenei and previously also led Iran's nuclear negotiation team. Jalili is closely associated with prominent cleric Ahmad Alamolhoda, the Friday prayer leader in Mashhad and father-in-law of Raisi. Jalili has run for the presidency twice before — losing the first time and withdrawing the second.

Qalibaf, a professor of political geography and former commander of the Revolutionary Guards, was reelected as parliamentary speaker at the end of May. Some observers attributed this victory to an intervention from the supreme leader's office to dissuade him from running for president, while others saw it as an endorsement of his candidacy to represent conservatives. Qalibaf is making his fourth presidential bid, having lost in 2005 and 2013 and withdrawn in 2017 to avoid splitting the conservative vote.

The second observation is that many media reports on the finalization of the candidates' list indicated confusion and disarray within reformist circles, despite the return to the political arena of prominent reformists. These included Eshaq Jahangiri, who served as vice president under Hassan Rouhani, and Abdolnaser Hemmati, the former central bank governor.

The reformists' situation worsened following the recent parliamentary elections, for which the Guardian Council disqualified a significant percentage of their candidates. This fueled fears of another round of exclusions and reinforced the perception that the supreme leader's efforts are geared toward selecting a new hard-line president.

Adding to their challenges has been the lack of a unified stance among the reformists regarding their strongest candidates. Some within the reformist camp are now advocating unifying behind Pezeshkian and encouraging their support base to turn out in large numbers on polling day. It

is believed that Pezeshkian's approval could be a strategic tactic by the regime to boost voting numbers on polling day and to give a veneer of openness and competitiveness to the election process, given that the regime has been suffering from a significant legitimacy deficit, which has worsened with the compounding socioeconomic crises and injustices inflicted on the Iranian people.

However, this could backfire in the event of a wave of support for Pezeshkian, similar to what happened in 2013, when Rouhani was not initially a genuine contender but a number of variables worked in his favor, leading to his surprise victory. This may be an unlikely possibility this time round, as Pezeshkian is not well known. A win for Pezeshkian would go against the trend of recent years of consolidating the regime and system with conservatives in an attempt to secure the succession process. But it is definitely something the supreme leader and other decision-makers will be keeping a close eye on.

The third observation is that, despite former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's significant popularity, he is not favored by Khamenei and was disqualified once again. Ahmadinejad has been described by those close to the supreme leader as leading a "misguided movement" and has been explicitly accused of trying to diminish the influence of the religious establishment. His public disagreements with the supreme leader's positions led to his interrogation in parliament, making him the first Iranian president to face such scrutiny for his statements, demands and proposals.

The decision to disqualify Ahmadinejad is based on the regime's principle of "the first mistake is the last" when it comes to former executive leaders. Consequently, many former leaders, including Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mohammed Khatami, Rouhani and the two Larijanis, have been sidelined from the political arena due to their perceived missteps.

The fourth observation is

the approval of many heavyweight conservative figures, mainly to encourage the conservative voting base to turn out in large numbers on election day. This would boost the legitimacy of the system and add some interest to the presidential campaign, given the fact that these figures have vendettas and personal grudges against one another, making the prospect of election debates exciting and interesting to onlookers and observers.

In addition, like past elections, there is a high probability that some of the conservative candidates could step aside in favor of someone like Qalibaf, who is viewed as the prime candidate to take the presidency. Therefore, it would not be surprising if Zakani or Jalili dropped out at some point in favor of Qalibaf, based on instructions from the supreme leader. Qalibaf also has the backing of the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, making his candidacy look strong. However, he is tainted by corruption charges and there is much pessimism over how a Qalibaf presidency would look, given his blend of conservatism and pragmatism.

In conclusion, the regime's overarching objective seems clear: to select a candidate aligned with the supreme leader's agenda, as per the equation Khamenei has been cultivating over the years. This involves positioning loyalists in key institutions and sidelining figures from the old guard to ensure a smooth succession process.

It appears that Khamenei and the IRGC are seeking a president who will not waver under regional or international pressure nor veer toward accommodating Western policies, as seen during Rouhani's presidency. Consequently, their preference leans toward a figure like Qalibaf, who will uphold steadfast stances and policies, particularly regarding the completion of Iran's nuclear program. However, last-minute changes in the calculations are the norm in Iranian politics, given the introduction of new variables and situations, so this is something to be aware of until the final outcome of the presidential race is announced.

The travelers headed toward the abyss

Ghassan Charbel

ONCE upon a time, a man named Saddam Hussein took a pivotal and dangerous decision. He ordered his forces to invade Kuwait and he headed to Basra to oversee the operations. Throughout that day, he did not reply to messages that urged him against hurtling toward the abyss.

One of the people who worked at the Iraqi presidential palace recalled those tense times. He recalled how Tariq Aziz returned from a party leadership meeting with worry written all over his face. He said he had tried at the meeting to shed light on the dangers that may result from the decision to annex Kuwait to Iraq. He added that Saddam remained quiet throughout the meeting, as if to say that the gatherers were in on the decision-making. Aziz's pleas were drowned out by the others and the decision was taken to invade Kuwait. Iraq and the region would pay a heavy price for the move.

I recalled this story as I watched the 80th commemoration of D-Day — the Allied forces' landing in Normandy, which was a turning point in the Second World War. The organizers of the event did not invite Vladimir Putin despite the massive price the Soviet Union paid in the fight that led to the defeat of Nazism.

The celebrations confirmed that the world is living in the most dangerous period since the Second World War. These days are more dangerous than the buildup to the Vietnam and Korean wars and even the Cuban Missile Crisis that almost led the US and Russia into nuclear war.

I know very well that Russia is not Iraq and that Putin is not Saddam. I know that the arsenal of Saddam's army cannot compare to the arsenal of Putin's army. This time, the stage and play are more dangerous. It is no trivial matter for a Russian soldier to be killed on Russian soil by an American missile fired by the Ukrainian army with Washington's blessing. It is no trivial matter for a Russian soldier to be killed by a shell fired by a German-made tank. It is no trivial matter for Putin and his aides to normalize talk about the use of nuclear weapons.

It is no trivial matter for the master of the White House to claim that the Russian leader was "not a decent man — he's a dictator." He also said that his country would never abandon Ukraine or President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was warmly embraced by officials at the D-Day celebrations as if they were commiserating him over his army's recent setbacks.

I will say it again: Putin is not Saddam and Russia is not Iraq. But did the master of the Kremlin believe that the West would stand helpless and rush to persuade him to accept a modest prize? His army is advancing in Ukraine, but will he be able to make it surrender while the West is pumping weapons and billions of dollars into its veins?

And what about the awakening of generals in NATO countries and their comments that a war with Russia is inevitable no matter how much it is being delayed?

What if the Chinese leader decided to crown his career by reclaiming Taiwan or tightening the siege around it? Can the world withstand this rapid advance toward the abyss? There is no doubt that the West mishandled the Russia that emerged from the rubble of the Soviet Union. It went too far in turning its weapons toward its border, reawakening old fears of a siege among its generals. The world is wrestling with the Ukrainian trap that is open to all dangers.

As we were watching the D-Day celebrations, Israel committed a horrific massacre in the Nuseirat camp. It is no longer easy to tally the Israeli massacres. We have run out of words to express the barbarity taking place in Gaza. The current Nakba is more terrible than the first one that placed the Middle East on the path of instability seven decades ago. It is more dangerous and its consequences more severe. It indicates what is in store for Gaza if Joe Biden's plan were to fail and if the chances for a long, open war were to increase. Its danger lies in the Israeli army's success in releasing four hostages, which may entice it to repeat this operation and therefore repeat the massacres and horrors.

There is no question that Israel is primarily responsible for the current conflict with the Palestinians, as it had closed all doors to peace, from the Oslo Accords to the Arab Peace Initiative. Let us set aside the analyses of the regional aspects of the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, its timing, Iran's role in planning it and its connection to normalization efforts in the region. The horror of the massacres does not allow us to debate such issues today.

The Nuseirat camp massacre was terrible. But we will witness many more massacres if efforts to stop the war fail and if a prisoner and hostage swap is not carried out. If the chances of the long, open war win out, then the next-day scenario in Gaza will be horrific. Can the limits of the war be maintained if the Israeli military machine forges ahead in its goal to crush Hamas regardless of the costs that it incurs? Can talk about the "rules of engagement" between Israel and Hezbollah be sustained if Israel goes ahead with its mission to sever the Palestinian arm of the so-called axis of resistance?

What about Iran if the war expanded? Did Yahya Sinwar believe that the Al-Aqsa Flood was going to lead to a long war? Was the operation really the spark that lit a limited war of attrition?

The Middle East must be prevented from hurtling toward the abyss at a time when the Ukrainian war is already doing so, with the outcomes and catastrophes becoming unpredictable.

Collateral genocide in Nuseirat

Belén Fernández

ON June 8, the Israeli military slaughtered at least 274 Palestinians and wounded nearly 700 more in a raid on the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. Concerned sectors of the international community responded with typical ineffectual handwringing; the European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell condemned the latest Israeli "massacre of civilians", declaring that "the bloodbath must end immediately".

Four Israeli captives held by Hamas were also rescued during the assault, which has sent Israeli social media into a jubilant tizzy of self-congratulation and genocidal fanfare. The internet is awash with sensational accounts of the rescue and the captives' weepy reunification with loved ones — and never mind all those dead Palestinians.

Indeed, the blatant disre-

gard for Palestinian life is hardly shocking in the context of a war that has officially killed more than 37,000 people in Gaza in just over eight months. The actual death toll is without a doubt far higher given the number of bodies remaining under the rubble.

Not that Palestinians have ever been humanised in the Israeli narrative — except, of course, when they can be exploited for propaganda purposes, like when Israel accuses Hamas of using Palestinian civilians as "human shields" and thereby justifies Israeli military attacks on hospitals and schools.

A glance at past episodes from Israel's perpetual "bloodbath" in Gaza would seem to confirm that, as per Israeli military logic, 200-plus dead Palestinians is perfectly acceptable "collateral damage" in the recuperation of four live Israelis. After all, Israeli life is endowed with a dispro-

portionate worth that works to distract from the fact that Israel kills Palestinians at an astronomically higher rate than Palestinians kill Israelis — who nonetheless remain the self-appointed "victims" throughout it all.

Recall Operation Cast Lead, for example, which Israel launched in Gaza in December 2008 and which killed more than 1,400 Palestinians over a period of 22 days, the vast majority of them civilians and 400 of them children. On the Israeli side, 10 soldiers and three civilians were killed.

Then in 2014, Israel's 50-day Operation Protective Edge reduced Gaza's population by 2,251 people, including 551 children, while Israel lost 67 soldiers and six civilians.

In prisoner exchanges, too, the superior value accorded to Israeli life has been displayed time and again; in 2011, captive

Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was released by Hamas in exchange for no fewer than 1,027 Palestinian prisoners.

Now, the slaughter in Nuseirat is not only the latest milestone in Israel's quest to inure the world to unrestrained depravity. It also symbolises Israeli efforts to disappear the Palestinians both literally and figuratively, as the victims of Saturday's raid are effectively erased via the celebratory ruckus.

In the aftermath of the attack, the Israeli military unleashed a barrage of social media posts that made no mention whatsoever of Palestinian casualties but did offer such captivating analysis as that the captives were held by "Hamas terrorists who only seek to cause pain and suffering".

For its part, the Jerusalem Post went as far as to complain about Arab

social media users who had undertaken to rain on Israel's parade. Noting that "the heroic Israeli operation that led to the release of four hostages stirred much discourse online", the Post lamented that "some Hamas supporters attempted to reduce the significance of the operation, accusing Israel of using humanitarian apparatuses to infiltrate the area [around Nuseirat] or claiming that the world is ignoring the alleged death toll of Gazans".

As for one of the world's biggest players, United States President Joe Biden praised the return of the four captives at a news conference in Paris, adding: "We won't stop working until all the hostages come home and a ceasefire is reached."

Which brings us to the question: How will a ceasefire ever be reached — or the "bloodbath" brought to an end, to borrow Borrell's words — when the US presi-

dent himself is essentially praising Israel for conducting said bloodbath?

Just one month ago, Biden warned that he would no longer be supplying offensive weapons to Israel in the event of an all-out assault on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip because, he said, "civilians have been killed in Gaza as a consequence of those bombs". And yet it is suddenly inconsequential that civilians continue to be killed, because it's all about the captives.

Just three days ago, on June 6, an Israeli attack on a United Nations-run school in the Nuseirat camp killed at least 40 Palestinians sheltering there. An Al Jazeera analysis of the weapons fragments revealed them to contain US-manufactured parts.

It seems Biden's warning has become collateral damage, too. Or perhaps genocide has just become totally normalised.

Far right confounds expectations in election whirlwind

WILL Europe ever be the same again? President Emmanuel Macron has called snap legislative elections in France after a crushing defeat for his party and other moderates in the European Parliament elections that concluded on Sunday. Far-right parties, including Marine Le Pen's National Rally, were runaway winners, taking about 40 percent of the vote.

The hard right also outperformed expectations in Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. The quasi-fascist Alternative for Germany managed an unexpectedly strong showing, despite an outcry over a TV interview, in which a party official doubted whether genocidal Nazi SS officers were criminals, and investigations into funds received from the Kremlin.

Far-right nationalists are already integral parts of coalition governments in seven EU member states and are dominant components of regimes in Hungary, Italy and Austria. With right-wing nationalists coming out on top in the weekend's Belgian general election, liberal Prime Minister Alexander De Croo was forced to resign. Six months after an election in the Netherlands, the far-right Party for Freedom last month finally succeeded in cobbling together a coalition described as the most right-wing in modern history. Bucking this trend, the fascists and xenophobes of the authoritarian right were at least temporarily cut down to size in elections in Poland, Portugal and Spain.

Right-wing populists' destabilizing impact on Western politics is defined by anti-immigrant hatemongering and fanciful attention-grabbing policies — such as seeking to reduce net immigration to zero, with damaging consequences on

economies dependent on cheap foreign labor and on revenue from foreign tourists, students and investors. Racist culture war narratives have poisonous consequences for social cohesion across multicultural, diverse societies, recalling the polarization and violent extremist tendencies of 1930s Europe before the Second World War.

In a symptom of the brutal toxicity of populist politics, Denmark's prime minister was attacked last week and the Slovak prime minister survived an attempt on his life. Conspiracy-mongering, disinformation and fake news pumped into election ecosystems, mostly from China, Russia and Iran, exacerbate democratic volatility and unpredictability. But has the world reached peak populism elsewhere? In a unique year for elections, with more than 4 billion people — over half the world's population — going to the polls in more than 40 countries, political trends have never appeared more erratic or fragmented.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi gambled heavily on provocative religion-baiting themes, seeking to mobilize the majority Hindu electorate, but his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party ended up with a dramatically smaller share of the vote. Ordinary Indians cared far more about living standards, competent governance and public services than they did about rabble-rousing Islamophobic diatribes.

A chastened Modi remains in power, but without an overall majority, far less the "supermajority" he had boasted of, and he will need to substantially moderate his agenda to retain coalition partners. A buoyant opposition described the outcome as a mandate to "save democracy."

Baria Alamuddin

Authoritarian strongmen have been struggling elsewhere, too. In Turkiye, significant opposition wins in local elections were a stinging rebuke to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. In Iran, there was a dire turnout for legislative elections in March and May, sinking to just over 20 percent in Tehran, and there is little public enthusiasm for this month's vote to replace the late President Ebrahim Raisi. Efforts to muzzle the media, reduce civil freedoms, hamstringing the judiciary and criminalize political opponents only mobilize people against antidemocratic elites. In Mexico, leftist candidate Claudia Sheinbaum won a landslide presidential election victory and in South Africa the corruption-mired African National Congress lost its electoral majority after 30 years of dominance throughout the post-apartheid era.

As recently as 2019, a jingoistic pro-Brexit narrative was a surefire vote winner in Britain. But public opinion has sharply reversed, leaving the opposition Labour Party all but guaranteed a majority after next month's parliamentary election. The Conservative Party has been outplayed by its own populist-right, culture-baiting, anti-migrant rhetoric. Labour now occupies the center ground, while the xenophobic Reform UK squeezes the Conservatives out of existence from the right flank.

However, the year's most titanic battle between democratic values and unabashed demagogic populism will occur in November. Donald Trump's self-serving, divisive record and his criminal convictions should have made his candidacy inconceivable, but because of Joe Biden's age, unpopularity and mis-

steps over Gaza, many observers regard a second Trump presidency — with all its accompanying traumas and risks — as highly likely.

Election results in recent months have been driven less by a public lurch toward the left or right and more by universal dissatisfaction with the status quo. In the US, most voters express scant enthusiasm for either candidate. The common denominator for voters — whether in Britain, India, South Africa, Iran or Turkiye — is anger over falling living standards and the failure of ruling elites to make a meaningful difference to people's lives.

As the Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan conflicts drag on, the planet has never been in greater need of far-sighted leaders willing to do what is necessary to address fundamental global issues of injustice, instability, inequality and environmental degradation.

Demagogues such as Le Pen, Trump and Viktor Orban have no answers to these challenges, despite ruthlessly exploiting the blind anger expressed by people who feel left behind by their political systems.

Electoral victories often come relatively easily for shameless populists, with deceitful, divisive political programs that mobilize supporters against immigrants, minorities and other disfavored demographics. These are dangerous and unpredictable times, driven by volatile public sentiments, and protest votes about the dire state of party politics risk making the situation infinitely worse.

Only citizens awakening to the populists' morally bankrupt, racist lies can pave the way for leaders who are genuinely committed to making the difficult decisions that are necessary to change the world for the better.

The fallacy of the ‘wrong side of history’ narrative

Gerald Nesmith Jr

OVER the past nine months, we have witnessed one of the most well-documented instances of genocide unfold in the Gaza Strip. Across the world, there has been a tremendous amount of mobilisation and genuine disruption in protest of this atrocity. The United States, too, has seen large demonstrations and protest actions against the government's unwavering support for the Israeli Occupation Forces and leadership.

In the midst of this, a longstanding and useless narrative has re-emerged. Many have denounced officials supporting Israel for being on the wrong side of history and actively being in favour of what will go down in the public record as a genocide. There is an expectation that somehow history will hold them to account.

But if the historical record was truly a concern for those in power, the president of the United States would not be taking questions about the genocidal carnage unfolding daily while chowing down on a double scoop of mint chip ice cream.

This idea is borne out of a need to soothe the Western conscience. And it is not out of a lack of awareness of history that this narrative takes hold; in fact, it's often the exact opposite. For those who learn of the many historical tragedies and atrocities that our current world order is built on, there seems to be a need for some type of higher justice. A justice more lasting than simply some bad polling for a few months and some scathing op-eds. But what the “wrong side of history” narrative really does is undermine our ability to engage with the very real conditions of the present.

To get to the point where we can move on from viewing history as a form of karmic justice for the most powerful members of our society, we must first understand our relationship with it. There is a tendency to treat history like a bullet-point presentation of the highlights and not the singular story of our existence on this planet. It is as if we are experiencing events in a vacuum, as if we do not actually exist in a context shaped by the past. This often leads to a superficial or incomplete perception of historical reality.

As James Baldwin wrote in a 1965 essay titled *The White Man's Guilt* for *Ebony* magazine: “people who imagine that history flatters them [...] are

impaled on their history like a butterfly on a pin and become incapable of seeing or changing themselves, or the world”. He is correct in this assessment but what he and many of us today fail to consider is just how far the most powerful members of our society will go to remove any of the heavy guilt of history from their shoulders.

A good example of what I mean is the legacy of Dr Martin Luther King Jr. During his lifetime he was wildly unpopular with the American public. It wasn't until years after his death that the minds of the majority slowly began to change.

Today some see the proliferation of Dr King's message as proof that history can provide the sense of justice that people are seeking. I believe this is untrue for two reasons. First, saying history vindicated MLK largely neglects the actual mechanism for change that he helped set up. It wasn't out of the goodness of their souls that the majority of Americans embraced MLK's message. Rather it was the day in and day out concerted efforts of the Black community that brought about that change.

Second, Dr King's legacy has been significantly diluted in the public arena to make it more palatable to the majority. A man, whose beliefs and philosophy were based in the radical anticapitalist and anti-imperialist tradition, has been reduced to a little more than the patron saint of white guilt.

The distortion of MLK's legacy is just one example of how history can be twisted to make it more easily digestible or useful to white supremacist power structures. This process has been brought to an extreme with recent efforts to rewrite Black history. In Florida, for example, local authorities changed teaching standards for Black history to the point that students are now taught that slavery brought “personal benefit” to Black people. And just as history can be used in the public realm to distort the memory and understanding of struggles against oppression, it can also be used to whitewash oppressors.

In recent years, we have seen how the legacies of leaders like George W Bush and Ronald Reagan, have been carefully rehabilitated. Instead of facing calls for accountability for war crimes during the so-called “war on terror”, Bush is now enjoying retirement, painting portraits, attending pub-

lic events and commenting on news developments as a respected former official.

Meanwhile, Reagan, whose atrocity portfolio stretches from funding death squads in Latin America to supporting the racist apartheid regime of South Africa, is celebrated by Democrats and Republicans alike for his moxie and past policies. It is not that the most powerful people among us do not care about their legacies when they make decisions. It is that they know they have the resources and sway to change public perception while they are alive or that the “civility” argument will be used to temper criticism after their death, regardless of all the crimes against humanity they may have committed.

It is dangerous to perceive history as the ultimate equaliser not only because it is not but also because it dampens motivation to engage in real initiatives for change by giving an easy outlet to our feelings of helplessness and anxiety.

We must realise that to ensure the maintenance of accurate accounts of history, we have to rely on our greatest tool: organising and the lessons from those who organised before us.

In his pivotal book, *A People's History of the United States*, historian Howard Zinn wrote: “The memory of oppressed people is one thing that cannot be taken away, and for such people, with such memories, revolt is always an inch below the surface.”

Indeed, memory and revolt are closely intertwined. Those who know and are aware of their own history, also engage in actively making it; they do not remain passive onlookers. Holding the powerful to account is not a fool's errand and organising is the way to do it. Joe Biden, Benjamin Netanyahu, and all of those responsible for the ever-rising death toll in Palestine are relying on the uncomfortable fact that when it comes to killing done in service of American interest, many in the West have very short memories.

Expecting history to hold these individuals accountable for actions they committed in service of a system of oppression is useless. It may bring temporary relief of anxiety, but ultimately, it paralyzes us at a time when urgent action is needed.

Injustice is not naturally remedied by history. It is challenged and fought by people who mobilise to dismantle systems of oppression.

Japan is the ‘destroyer of peace and stability’

Dr. WANG Xu

THE Chinese Coast Guard carried out rights protection patrols in the territorial waters of the Diaoyu Islands, on June 7, in order to safeguard national sovereignty, security and maritime rights and interests in accordance with the law. However, the Japanese side once again hyped it up.

Since the second decade of the 21st century, Japan has continuously changed the status quo of the Diaoyu Islands and created tensions in the East China Sea. China, in line with its responsibility as a major country, has continuously worked to maintain regional and maritime peace and stability. Japan's unreasonable hype will not help control and resolve disputes. Instead, its efforts will only backfire on it, exposing the fact that Japan is the “destroyer of peace and stability.”

The Diaoyu Islands are an inherent territory of China. China was the first to discover, name, and utilize the Diaoyu Islands, and has implemented long-term jurisdiction over them. From a historical, geographical, and legal perspective, China has indisputable sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands. Japan occupied the islands as a result of the Sino-Japanese War of Jiawu (1894). According to international legal documents such as the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Declaration, the return of the Diaoyu Islands to China is undis-

puted. Before Okinawa was reversed to Japanese control under the Okinawa Reversion Agreement on May 15, 1972, China had already expressed opposition to including the Diaoyu Islands in the “Reversion zone”. No country has the right to question China's sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands.

China has always exercised restraint in its maritime actions for the sake of regional peace and stability. It is Japan that is the “status quo changer” and “destroyer of maritime peace and stability”. The older generation of Chinese and Japanese leaders reached a consensus on “setting aside disputes”, but Japan has been lying and refusing to admit that there is a dispute between China and Japan over the sovereignty and territory of the Diaoyu Islands and its affiliated islands. After the boat collision in 2010, Japan violently arrested the Chinese captain. In 2012, the Japanese government ridiculously announced the “purchase of islands” and implemented the so-called “nationalization”. This is a serious violation of China's territorial sovereignty and a severe trampling on historical facts and international law. China's strengthening of patrols and safeguarding its rights on the Diaoyu Islands is aimed at countering Japan's unilateral strengthening of actual control.

In recent years, the Japanese

authorities has, from time to time, been creating trouble over the Diaoyu Islands issue, and has stepped up its involvement in the South China Sea situation, providing maritime capability assistance to the Philippines, deepening maritime operations cooperation with the United States and the Philippines, and even openly and rudely interfering in China's internal affairs, and repeatedly making irresponsible remarks such as “if there is trouble in the Taiwan Strait, it is Japan's trouble.” Japan's actions have seriously violated the four-point principled consensus between China and Japan, greatly undermined the peace and stability of the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait, and have become a source of danger in the region.

Japan's protest against China's patrol in the Diaoyu Islands is a typical case of the thief crying “catch thief”. Since 2020, Japan has allowed fishing boats to go to the waters of the Diaoyu Islands and hyped it up on the internet, breaking the tacit understanding between China and Japan to stabilize the situation in the East China Sea and the Diaoyu Islands. For some years now, such fishing boats have been getting closer to the islands and even staying longer there. Once an extreme situation occurs, it will deal a great blow to regional peace and stability. At the end of

April this year, five Japanese parliamentarians participated in the “investigation team” organized by the Ishigaki city government and sailed into the territorial waters of the Diaoyu Islands. Among them was Tomomi Inada, acting secretary-general of the LDP of Japan, who served as Japan's defense minister during the Abe administration. The political connivance of the Japanese authorities with the farce at sea is evident. It is worth pointing out that every time Japanese “fishing boats” and the “investigation boat” go to the waters of the Diaoyu Islands, they are “escorted” by the Coast Guard ships, which are equipped with weapons.

And the Ishigaki city government is even clamoring to “land on the islands”. It is self-evident as to which side, China or Japan, is “changing the status quo” and “escalating tensions”. China's strengthening of patrol and law enforcement in the waters of the Diaoyu Islands in accordance with the law is conducive to maintaining regional maritime security.

China does not provoke a threat, but we are not afraid of any. China's actions are a legitimate and reasonable response to Japan's unilateral escalation and provocation, demonstrating its determination to resolutely counter illegal acts that infringe upon China's sovereignty and resolutely safeguard our national territorial sovereignty.

Why were Western leaders silent on Jerusalem’s hate march?

Chris Doyle

AN event last week exemplified the chronic levels of anti-Arab racism, Israeli exceptionalism and Western double standards that have dominated the last eight months. The issue involves marches and protests.

In many Western cities, protesters have gathered in vast numbers on a frequent basis. London hosted the UK's 15th national march for Palestine last Saturday, with more than 200,000 people taking part, according to the organizers.

Opponents of these protests have routinely slammed them as “hate marches,” festivals of antisemitism and worse. Leading politicians have pitched in. Yes, there have been some unrepresentative outliers with vile antisemitic placards, but the overwhelming majority of protesters have peacefully called for a ceasefire in Gaza, in tune with the vast majority of the public. The protest camps at American and other universities have also been recipients of unwarranted bile and hatred.

Shift to Jerusalem. It was Jerusalem Day on June 5. This is the day when tens of thousands of Israeli Jews march to celebrate the capture of the eastern part of the city in 1967, the moment when the Israeli occupation began. Children are part of the march, boys and girls alike.

Sounds harmless? Think again.

This is what a true hate march looks like. Entering the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, thousands chant “Death to Arabs” and “May their village burn,” as well as a particularly gruesome revenge song. Some liken it to Northern Irish Protestants provocatively marching in Catholic areas or Ku Klux Klan marches in the US, but the Jerusalem version is arguably even more violent and intimidating.

Nir Hasson is an Israeli journalist for Haaretz who has routinely covered these marches. In an article entitled “I’ve Seen Every Jerusalem Flag March in Last 16 Years. This One Was the Ugliest,” his assessment was chilling. Given the record of previous years, this is quite some description.

Palestinians knew what was coming. Every year, they board up their shops. They cower in fear knowing that these thugs could beat the hell out of them. Hordes of Jewish youths dressed in white carried out their typical rampage through the Muslim Quarter. They threatened, bit and spat at Palestinians and journalists too. The last marchers left behind them piles of garbage by the Damascus Gate.

The leading symbol on the marchers' shirts was the Kahanist fist. The star of the show was the Kahanist-in-chief and convicted criminal Itamar

Ben-Gvir, the man who boasted in 1995, “We’ll get to him,” referring to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated by an Israeli extremist just weeks later. Ben-Gvir is, of course, a leading member of the Israeli Cabinet as national security minister. Surrounded by his thugs, he was in his element.

His message to Palestinians was chilling: “In every house in Gaza and the north — there are pictures of the Temple Mount (Al-Haram Al-Sharif) and pictures of Jerusalem. And we say to them that Jerusalem is ours. The Damascus Gate is ours. The Temple Mount is ours ... Today, according to my policy, Jews freely entered the Old City. And on Temple Mount, Jews prayed freely. We say in the simplest way, this is ours.”

It required Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to deny that the status quo at Al-Aqsa had been altered, as no doubt Ben-Gvir intended. He always looks to outflank Netanyahu with his base. This was one bit of arson that not even Netanyahu seems ready to indulge in right now.

This annual bout of ultranationalist triumphalism is facilitated by the Israeli authorities. None of these extremists get arrested. Nobody is held accountable. The police made it clear they would not arrest anyone for racist chanting. It is state

policy to facilitate this intimidation and to encourage Palestinians to leave the Old City so that Jewish settlers can become the majority.

What have all the world leaders said about such marches? Absolutely nothing. Not a word. While damning largely peaceful marches in their cities, they just ignore violent, provocative, racist rampages in the occupied part of the most-contested city on the planet.

In fact, these racist marches have become so normalized that much of the Western media also ignores them. Have Western leaders even sanctioned Ben-Gvir or his partner in crime, Bezalel Smotrich, the finance minister?

Is it any wonder that these leaders do so little as Israeli forces enact in Gaza the very chilling threats these Kahanist racists were screaming in Jerusalem? They want villages to be burned in the West Bank just as refugee camps are being burned in Gaza right now.

This mirrors the way in which Israeli lives are treated as more valuable than Palestinian lives. It explains the silence after the UN releases estimates that half of Gaza's population will face death and starvation by mid-July. Is it any wonder that Western leaders celebrated the rescue of four Israeli hostages while not even commenting on the more than 200 Palestinians killed in the process?

Young children deserve the best start in life

Amakobe Sande

IMAGINE a 3-year-old girl growing up in rural China. Her parents want to give her the best start in life but lack the knowledge and skills to do so. Luckily, the family has plenty of support. A village health worker visits her regularly at home to ensure she's had her health check-ups, is eating nutritious food, and her development is on track. In the nearby town, there are regular early childhood development (ECD) care group activities, where she gets to play with other children, and her parents learn how to provide nurturing and responsive care. This girl can go on to achieve anything in life.

But without the support and care, the girl's chances in life could be limited. As a child, she might struggle with her physical and mental health, or with her ability to learn at school. After growing up, she might not be able to find a job. She would be less likely to achieve her full potential in life.

Early childhood, during the first six years of life, is a critical window of opportunity to shape the trajectory of a child's development and build a firm foundation for their future. In the first few years of life, more than 1 million neural connections are formed every second, a pace never repeated again. For young children to achieve their full potential, they need five scientifically proven things: good health; adequate nutrition; early learning and stimulation; safety and security; and responsive caregiving with parents or caregivers who love them. At UNICEF, we call this the nurturing care framework.

Let's take the example of responsive care-giving. This is about a parent's or caregiver's ability to notice, understand and respond to their child's signals. It starts with simple things like making

eye contact, smiling, cuddling and giving praise. The caregiver can then start to notice the child's cues, such as signs of hunger, illness, emotional distress, or the desire to play. It's about finding everyday moments to communicate and play with children, such as during mealtimes and bedtime. The result is that parents can better respond to their child's needs, and that they both enjoy spending time together.

That is why early childhood development is one of UNICEF's priority areas of work in China, and why we recently launched a campaign, “Parent with Purpose, Nurture their Future”, together with the Center for Women and Children's Health of the National

Health Commission, China National Children's Center, China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption, and other partners. We want all parents and caregivers to understand the critical importance of the early years of children, and learn how to engage with their children during this time, in order to unleash their full cognitive, emotional and social potential. The campaign will therefore provide practical messages and materials about early childhood to caregivers nationwide.

We are also working on the ground across China to support vulnerable children and their families. For example, UNICEF, the NHC and partners are scaling up a program in 30 provinces that provides integrated ECD services as part of primary healthcare. This includes screening for risk factors, counseling, care group activities and paying home visits to vulnerable children. We are also working with the All-China Women's Federation to set up early childhood development centers that support early learning and care for young children, and positive

parenting sessions to prevent violent disciplining.

Another related issue in China is that of left-behind children. From UNICEF's experience, in many rural areas, most of the children who come to these care group activities live with their grandparents. In 2020, nearly four in every 10 children in China's rural areas were left-behind children, because their parents had migrated to cities for work. While our ECD programs are having a positive impact on these children, UNICEF is also calling for solutions to the underlying problems that lead to migrating parents leaving their children behind. Better services cannot replace the critical role of parents, especially during these vital early years. UNICEF's recent report, “Reimagining Social Policies to Support Families in China”, makes recommendations for strengthening support to enable families throughout China to provide nurturing care. These include workplace policies, such as parental leave and flexible working, which make it easier for working parents to care for young children; child benefits such as tax breaks, and benefits for families with children. Taken together, these measures can help keep families together.

Every child has the right to get the best start in life, including good health, nutrition, learning, safety and responsive caregiving. This can provide children with the opportunity to grow and develop to their full potential. And as these children thrive, their communities grow, making a more sustainable future possible.

UNICEF will continue to support the Chinese government, businesses and other partners to build stronger systems that support caregivers to provide the loving and nurturing care that every child deserves, from her or his very first days of life.



Businessman forum gains support for SCCI election



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Different traders associations and unions of Peshawar's Shoba Bazaar have placed trust on businessman forum leadership and pledged their support for the upcoming election of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI).

On Monday, a meeting chaired by SCCI president Fuad Ishaq at the chamber House was convened to discuss traders' issues and strategize for their resolution, said a press release here.

The meeting saw the participation of BF leader Ilyas Bilour, Anjuman-e-Tajran Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Haji Afzal, SCCI vice presidents Sanaullah Khan, along with former presidents of the chamber Zahidullah Shinwari, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Sherbaz Bilour, and former senior vice president Imran Khan Mohmand, BF senior leader Amanullah Mohmand, executive member Ismail Safi, All Pakistan Hotels and Restaurants Association Chairman Habibullah Zahid, Mutahidda Markazi

Tajran president Malik Mirajuddin Khan, Secretary General Khalid Mohmand, Pakhtooniyar, vice president Raza Khan, Old Auto-parts Association president Ghulam Nabi, and Tyre Association president Salahuddin, Farid Khan, Khalilur Rehman, Aurangzeb Khan, Ihsanullah Mohmand, Syed Ejaz Ali Shah, Zahir Shah, Fahad Shah, Fazal e Wahid, Saddar Gul, Faiz Rasool, Ishtiaq Paracha, Peshawar Shoba bazar Hotels, Auto-parts, decoration, mechanics associations leaders and office bearers.

Bilour, addressing the gathering, reaffirmed BF's commitment to serving traders and the business community impartially. He expressed confidence in BF's prospects in the upcoming elections, asserting their capability to secure victory.

Highlighting BF's track record of service spanning 25 years, Bilour emphasized its reputation as the preeminent forum for addressing the community's issues.

He credited BF's success to its dedication to serving traders and industrialists selflessly, ensuring their problems are effectively communicated to authorities and resolved promptly.

Bilour pledged to continue prioritizing the community's concerns and providing solutions.

During the meeting, business leaders and representatives detailed the challenges faced by their respective sectors.

Participants expressed unwavering confidence in BF's leadership and pledged their full support for the forum in the upcoming chamber elections.

Earlier, the SCCI president Fuad Ishaq said the Chamber had taken up issues of traders with tax authorities and relevant institutions efficiently and resolved them amicably.

He called IPPs a cancer for the national economy and demanded a report of IPPs submitted in the Senate of Pakistan should be made public and get rid of the nation from IPPs forever.



GILGIT: Prince Rahim Aga Khan cutting a ribbon to inaugurate HBL Microfinance Bank's Regional Headquarters in Gilgit-Baltistan. Chairman HBL Sultan Ali Allana, Chairman HBL Microfinance Bank Rayomond Kotwal, President & CEO HBL Microfinance Bank Amir Khan and HBL MfB's Board of Directors also present on occasion.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Two ships, SSL Brahmputra and Umm Babcarrying Container and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal and Port Gas Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile another Liquid Natural Gas carrier 'Al-Jassaiya' also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on Monday.

Six ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, SSL Brahmputra, Silver Ginny and Ian they are expected to sail on today.

Cargo volume of 98,845 tonnes, comprising 77,044 tonnes imports cargo and 21,801 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,568 Containers (354 TEUs Imports and 1,214 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 03 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two ships, Aisa Liberty and Al-Jassaiya & four more ships, Block Island, Lotus-A, Xpress Antila and MSC Lisbon carrying Palm oil, LNG, Steel Coil and Container are expected to take berths at respectively LCT, EETL, MW-1 and QICT on Monday, while two more container ships, Maersk Valencia and Kuala Lumpur Express are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Tuesday.

Tokyo stocks close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher on Monday as the yen fell further against the dollar, helping support market sentiment.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 0.92 percent, or 354.23 points, to 39,038.16, while the broader Topix index advanced one percent, or 27.46 points, to 2,782.49.

"Despite the unimpressive performance of the main US indices, a cheaper yen against the dollar worked as a tailwind for Japanese shares," IwaiCosmo Securities said.

A weaker Japanese currency helps exporters as it inflates their repatriated profits. "Speculation about the Bank of Japan's meeting (later this week) pushed up Japanese long-term yields," prompting the purchase of banking shares, IwaiCosmo added.

The central bank will hold a two-day monetary policy meeting through Friday, with some analysts speculating that it may reduce the scale of its bond-buying programme, part of its maverick monetary easing policies.

The dollar stood at 157.04 yen, up from 155.59 yen in New York overnight.

Megabanks were higher in Tokyo, with Mizuho Financial Group climbing 1.25 percent to 3,147 yen, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial adding 1.66 percent to 1,650 yen, and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial advancing 1.77 percent to 10,365 yen.

Toyota gained 1.65 percent to 3,272 yen. Panasonic added 1.65 percent to 1,358 yen.

Hitachi jumped 4.89 percent to 17,150 yen after a weekend report by the Nikkei business newspaper said that the firm plans to train 50,000 employees in generative artificial intelligence.

HBL MfB's RHQ GB inaugurated

F.P. Report

GILGIT: The HBL Microfinance Bank (HBL MfB) inaugurated its new Regional Headquarters for Gilgit Baltistan. The ceremony was attended by Prince Rahim Aga Khan, Chair of the Executive Committee of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED); Mr. Sultan Ali Allana, Chairman, HBL; Mr. Muhammad Nassir Salim, President & CEO, HBL; Mr. Rayomond Kotwal, Chairman, HBL MfB; and Mr. Amir Khan, President & CEO, HBL MfB.

The building underlines the Bank's commitment to sustainability, innovation, and local community development. A blend of modern architecture and local cultural elements, the building meets some of the highest international standards of green construction. It has earned the LEED Gold certification and EDGE Advanced certification, one of the first buildings in the country to achieve this. The LEED Gold certification from the US Green Building Council highlights the building's superior performance in energy and water efficiency, sustainable site development,

and indoor environmental quality. The EDGE Advanced certification, granted by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), underscores the building's commitment to resource efficiency, achieving significant energy and water savings. The building is well equipped to produce 40 percent of the overall electricity required for its day-to-day functions.

"The inauguration of HBL Microfinance Bank's Regional Headquarters Gilgit-Baltistan is a remarkable milestone for both the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the Bank," said Prince Rahim Aga Khan. "It is a major step towards AKDN's goal of achieving Net-Zero by 2030. As we continue our journey to a better and more sustainable future, this building serves as a symbol of continued progress, sustainability, and prosperity for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan."

Rayomond Kotwal, Chairman HBL MfB, remarked, "The inauguration of our Regional Headquarters, Gilgit Baltistan is a testament to our commitment to sustainable development and the well-being of the communities we serve. Gilgit holds a special

place in the journey of HBL Microfinance Bank, as we started here more than two decades ago. This building is a symbol of our dedication to fostering economic growth while preserving the region's environment. By integrating sustainable practices with local culture, HBL Microfinance Bank has set a new benchmark in environmental stewardship and corporate responsibility. We take pride in contributing to the development of the Gilgit Baltistan region and look forward to continuing our support for all Pakistanis."

Amir Khan, President & CEO HBL MfB, added, "The flagship Regional Headquarters Gilgit Baltistan exemplifies the strength, stability, and resilience of Pakistan's best microfinance bank. The Regional Headquarters not only boosts our operational capabilities but also represents progress and hope for the Gilgit Baltistan region. Throughout the project, particular attention was paid towards the area, which is why 27 percent of the total project cost was allocated to boost the local economy, through the onboarding of regional suppliers and the creation of employment opportunities."

PSX witnesses bearish trend, losses 501 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 501.46 points, a negative change of 0.68%, closing at 73,252.56 points against 73,754.02 points the previous day.

A total of 350,721,616 shares valuing Rs10.180 billion were traded during the day as compared to 559,550,615 shares valuing Rs20.208 billion the previous day.

As many as 434 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 133 of them recorded gains and 241 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 60 companies remained unchanged.

The top three trading companies were Pervez Ahmed Co with 57,418,499 shares at Rs 1.63 per share, Amtex Limited with 33,746,280 shares at Rs 4.56 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 31,276,558 shares at Rs 1.34 per share.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 49.02

per share price, closing at Rs 1,449.02 whereas the runner-up was Pakistan Industries Limited with a Rs 24.04 rise in its per share price to Rs 973.75.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 99.50 per share closing at Rs 18,100.50, followed by Sapphire Fibres Limited with a Rs 90.86 decline to close at Rs 1,408.55.

Rupee shed 17 paise against Dollar

Pakistan Rupee on Monday witnessed a devaluation of 17 paise against the US Dollar in the inter-bank trading and closed at Rs 278.37 against the previous day's closing at Rs 278.20.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market, however, were Rs 277.75 and Rs 280.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 3.43 to close at Rs 299.52 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.95, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.77, whereas a decrease of Rs 2 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 354.04 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 356.04.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 04 paise and 05 paise to close at Rs 75.78 and Rs 74.22.

Gold rates remain constant at Rs.239,400

The price of per tola price of 24 karat gold remained constant at Rs.239,400 on Monday, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold and 10 gram 22 karat gold also witnessed no change and was traded at Rs.205,247 and Rs.188,143 respectively.

Per tola and ten gram silver were also sold at the existing rates of to 2,750 and Rs.2,357.68, respectively.

The price of gold in the international market remained stagnant at \$2,292 the Association reported.

HABIBMETRO partners with 1Link and Kuickpay

F.P. Report

KARACHI: HABIBMETRO, 1Link and Kuickpay have entered into a tripartite agreement for bulk onboarding of online billers. This strategic collaboration promises to transform the onboarding process by making it fully automated with integrated systems.

The purpose of the agreement is to facilitate bulk onboarding of billers through HABIBMETRO using Kuickpay and 1BILL integrated platforms. It will

enable HABIBMETRO to simultaneously onboard multiple business customers onto the 1Link platform through a swift and efficient process.

During the ceremony, Khurram Shahzad Khan, President & CEO of HABIBMETRO, said, "We are confident that this partnership will significantly enhance the onboarding experience of our business clients. HABIBMETRO's collaboration with 1Link and Kuickpay will streamline the customer onboarding process by eliminating

the need for additional KYC and scrutiny."

The signing ceremony was attended by Khurram Shahzad Khan, President & CEO of HABIBMETRO, Aman Ullah Shaikh, Group Head Corporate Banking, HABIBMETRO, Jawad Shami, Head Transaction Banking, HABIBMETRO, Najeeb Agrawalla, CEO of 1LINK, Saqib Ali Kazmi, CEO of KuickPay and Arbab Ali Khan, Managing Director, KuickPay, along with their respective teams at the 1LINK Headquarters.

This initiative is another testament to HABIBMETRO's commitment to customer service excellence.

As a trusted institution in Pakistan's financial landscape, HABIBMETRO serves millions of customers through a nationwide network of over 540 branches, including 217 dedicated Islamic Banking branches in more than 200 cities. HABIBMETRO is a subsidiary of Habib Bank AG Zurich, which operates in 11 countries across four continents.

Silkbank reaffirms collaboration with Xpert Digital & Temenos — to elevate digital banking suite

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Silkbank, a prominent bank in Pakistan, reaffirmed its strategic relationship with Xpert Digital (XD), a leading global digital transformation company, to revolutionize its digital banking capabilities using the Temenos Digital banking platform. This collaboration will empower Silkbank to deliver a new era of customer-centric digital solutions.

This collaboration combines Xpert Digital's extensive expertise in digital innovation with Silkbank's commitment to delivering exceptional customer experiences. Together, they will focus on reimagining and enhancing Silkbank's digital banking suite, creating a more seamless, intuitive, and customer-first experience for its customers.

Xpert Digital will bring immense value to Silkbank's current offerings. Customers can look forward to a more personalized interface, improved accessibility, and a suite of innovative features that will make banking more convenient and enjoyable.

By leveraging Xpert Digital's proficiency in digital transformation, Silkbank is determined to deliver a top-notch banking experience that meets the highest standards of quality and innovation.

Adnan Siddiqui, Head of Information Technology, Silkbank said, "Today marks a significant day for



us in digital transformation. Silkbank reaffirms its relationship with Xpert Digital and Temenos to further expand its digital banking services. We chose Xpert Digital and Temenos because of their innovative and customer-centric approach. They have transformed top-tier banks in the MENA, Africa & APAC regions and we are eager to see how this collaboration will benefit the bank. Together, we are set to revolutionize the way banking is done at Silkbank, making it easier and more convenient for our customers."

Shazia Hammad, CEO, Xpert Digital said, "I am delighted to announce that Silkbank has once again reaffirmed their collaboration with Temenos and Xpert Digital. It is with great pleasure that I welcome Silkbank onboard for

this exciting journey. Through this renewed partnership, we are committed to revamping Silkbank's digital transformation platform. Our goal is to ensure that Silkbank not only enhances its digital banking capabilities but also gains a competitive edge in the region. We look forward to working closely with Silkbank and achieving remarkable milestones together."

Lee Allcorn, Managing Director - Middle East & Africa, Temenos said, "We are excited to once again be the chosen digital banking platform for Silkbank. Their dedication towards digital banking demonstrates a forward-thinking approach that we are proud to support. Our shared vision of delivering superior, customer-centric digital banking experiences drives us to continu-

ally innovate and excel. Together with Xpert Digital, we will support Silkbank in their journey towards digital transformation, ensuring they remain at the forefront of the banking industry with best-in-class technology and services in the region."

Xpert Digital (XD) is an ISO-certified, award-winning digital banking and digital lending implementation partner for global banks. With a proven track record of serving over 100 million users worldwide, XD has successfully implemented digital solutions for over 40 top-tier banks across 22 countries. XD takes pride in having a dedicated team of 150+ expert digital banking consultants, possessing deep expertise in Retail, Corporate, SME and Digital Lending solutions.

Women export display centre to be established

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FWCCI) will establish a Women Export Display Centre at Faisalabad in collaboration with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to facilitate 'Access to Market' for women products.

These products, particularly handmade articles, are high in demand in traditional and non-traditional markets abroad, said Mrs. Rubina Amjad, President FWCCI and Chairperson of FPCCI Standing Committee on Think Tank.

She was addressing the participants in a symposium on 'Digital Transformation of Women Businesses in Pakistan', organized by Think Tank Committee in collaboration with the FPCCI here today.

She said that Pakistan's export volume can go further high if we are able to facilitate and fetch best prices for women products, particularly handmade products, in international markets.

She said that as founder and current President of Faisalabad Women Chamber and now Chairperson of FPCCI Think Tank Com-

mittee, her main emphasis is that women doing business or start-ups must be facilitated and equipped with digital transformation that offers a pathway to overcome traditional barriers and achieve sustainable growth. By embracing digital tools and strategies, women entrepreneurs should enhance their competitiveness and market base in this planet of more than 200 countries, she added. She said that 'Access to Market' is the most important step for attention of policy makers and the government and policy makers should take it in letter and spirit.

Court Notice

In the Court of Hafeez Ullah Civil Judge-I, Topi, Warda Vs. Muhammad Iqbal, Suit No. 8/FC, Institution date 30-01-2024, hearing date 14-06-2024, Notice to Muhammad Iqbal Gondal son Muhammad Murad Gondal R/o Goth Muhammad Murad Gondal, P.O Sorah, City Kherpur 00971-561180331 Dependant. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the Court on 14-06-2024 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.

F.P. Report

KARACHI: ICMA International forged a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the prestigious Institute of Knowledge and Leadership (IKL). The MOU, ceremoniously signed by Mr. Muhammad Yasin, the Vice President of ICMA International, and Mr. Syed Nasir Kirmani, the GM of IKL, marks a significant leap forward in the realms of collaborative learning.

This groundbreaking agreement opens doors to a realm of futuristic learning opportunities, aimed at harnessing the collective expertise and resources of both institutions. By joining hands, the ICMA International and IKL are set to revolutionize learning engagements, fostering an envi-



ronment conducive to fruitful and effective collaboration.

Stay tuned as this partnership paves the way for innovative educational endeavors, promising a brighter future for learners worldwide.



In brief

PFF NC to ensure Pakistan team reach Tajikistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Normalization Committee Haroon Malik, on Monday said concerted efforts have been made to ensure that the Pakistan football team reaches Dushanbe, Tajikistan, for their away match in the FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifiers. Following the recent match between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, eleven members of the Pakistan football team, including seven players and four officials, have already arrived in Dushanbe, said a press release. However, according to FIFA rules and regulations, the team requires an additional nine players and two officials to be present at the venue to participate in the match. Malik emphasized the critical nature of the situation, noting that failure to reach Dushanbe in a timely manner could invoke specific AFC and FIFA rules, which would determine the outcome. Speaking on the matter, Malik expressed his concerns, saying, "The fact that the national team has not yet departed for Dushanbe is extremely distressing." He assured that all possible resources are being utilized to address the issue and ensure the team's arrival in Tajikistan. "We are in constant communication with the Tajikistan football authorities and FIFA officials to keep them fully informed of the situation," Malik said. He also mentioned that the PFF is coordinating with government officials at the highest levels.

Lamichhane to join WC squad

KATHMANDU (APP): Nepal's controversial Sandeep Lamichhane will join their T20 World Cup squad in the West Indies after missing matches in the United States because his visa was denied, the cricket association said Monday. "Nepali player Sandeep Lamichhane will leave for the West Indies for the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup and join the Nepali national cricket team," association secretary Paras Khadka said in a statement. The T20 World Cup is co-hosted by the United States and West Indies. Nepal had originally wanted to select former skipper Lamichhane, who had an eight-year sentence for rape quashed on appeal, but his US visa was denied twice despite intense lobbying. "I am now joining the national team for the last two matches in the West Indies and looking forward to fulfilling my dreams and the dream of all cricket lovers," Lamichhane posted on X, formerly Twitter. Spin bowler Lamichhane, 23, was once the poster boy for cricket in Nepal, but was convicted for raping a young woman in a Kathmandu hotel in 2022. That was quashed last month. Nepal lost to the Netherlands by six wickets in their World Cup opener. They play against Sri Lanka on Wednesday in Florida, before matches in the West Indies against South Africa and Bangladesh.

Swiatek reinforces No.1 spot in WTA rankings

PARIS (AFP): French Open champion Iga Swiatek cemented her place at the top of the women's game with her victory at Roland Garros, reinforcing her position as world No.1 when the WTA released its new rankings on Monday. The 23-year-old Pole beat Jasmine Paolini in a one-sided final on Saturday to claim a fourth French Open title which now puts her 3,707 points ahead of Coco Gauff, the woman she beat in the semi-finals in Paris.

We are still in the World Cup: Gary Kirsten



LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Head Coach Gary Kirsten has said that Pakistan's defeat against India in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup fixture from a position of ascendancy was a disappointing loss as they could not get across the line from the position they had got into.

Speaking during the post-match press conference after losing to India at the Nassau cricket stadium, he said it was disappointing that Pakistan were placed at 72-2 with 6-7 overs remaining but we faltered as we lost wickets at regular intervals and fell agonizingly short by 6 runs.

Pakistan sent the Indian team packing for 119 runs in 19 overs and needed 120 runs

to record their first win against the arch rivals at the World Cup 2024 but Pakistan lost the advantage and could only score 113-7 in the 20 overs. Responding to the reasons behind Pakistan's shocking defeat, the head coach held both the batsmen and the bowlers responsible for the defeat. Pakistan (0) are yet to play against Ireland and Canada and victories by big margins may ensure their presence as the 'poor decision making at important phases of the game in the Pakistan innings cost us the match, he said to a question, adding that Rizwan played a very good knock. He said with 80 runs in the pocket and run a ball not required, the middle order wilted and we lost the script.

With two defeats from two matches, Kirsten was of the view Pakistan team was yet to play two matches and was not out of the tournament

With the talk centered on Nassau cricket stadium pitch as a dangerous one, Kirsten disagreed with the idea of a small total put up by India, adding that taking the character of the

surface into consideration we knew it was good total, adding that "I think it was not dangerous, the odd one rose while it generally kept low and the fairly slow outfield made run scoring difficult. I would have said 140 was a good total on the pitch but the India did not put up the total and in difficult to score for both sides "it is sometimes fun to have games like this and not having time like not always about getting 230 and 240 runs games but sometimes you can have an entertaining game on a 120 chase"

On responsibility for the loss, Gary Kirsten said 'every-one is responsible for the poor performance against India, we accept the loss as the team has not done well and take the heat,' adding that we will do whatever we can to rectify this defeat. I have been here for twelve days, it is a new journey me understanding the players who can win games for Pakistan On Babar's captaincy, Kirsten said Babar captained really well today, adding that he marshalled his bowlers very well, spread them across very well and his bowling changes

were spot on. On Iftikhar Ahmed and Shadab Khan's performance, the head coach said these boys have played the T20I cricket for many many years for Pakistan, adding that it was up to them to decide how they are going to take the game forward Kirsten lavished praise on the bowlers for very good bowling display, adding that the bowlers bowled really well except for the 10-15 runs they leaked towards the end of the innings it was time to executing better as bowlers and batsmen I knew it was a good total

On his assessment of the loss and performance of the cricketers, he said he had joined the team merely twelve days back and he was looking into the environment and what the issues were. "These guys are playing for their country for many many years and that is why there are many disappointed faces in the dressing room the most important thing for me is to see every international growing and developing as a player and what the demands of international competition are the game is changing every year now and if you

are not up to it, you are not improving you are going to find out somewhere, " the Head Coach responded.

About the message to the batsmen at the water break during Pakistan innings, he said the message from all of us was look for the odd boundary and try to capitalize on loose balls and get as many ones as possible. He said the things were under control then we lost wickets and stopped scoring runs. We were on the track by the 15th over and then lost the plot.

On Pakistan's bowling performance, Kirsten said he was excited for the bowling performance, adding that we checked the stats of Pakistan bowling in the past 15 matches between overs 10-20 and they are up with the best in the world. On the bowling performance against India, he said we are a difficult side to contend with if we bowl like this, however, he was critical of the batsmen and wanted them to take responsibility. He said Imad Wasim was promoted up the batting order in order to have left and right hand combination, adding that the plan was to ward off India spin bowlers.

Pak team bags gold in CAVA U-18 Volleyball Championship

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan U-18 Men's team has achieved a remarkable victory by winning a gold medal in the CAVA U-18 Volleyball Championship.

The team secured the Gold Medal by winning with a scoreline of 3-1 sets, with set points of 20-25, 25-18, 25-23, and 27-25 against Iran.

Key performances by Muhmaad Yahya, Talal Ahmed, and Khizar Hayat played a crucial role in securing this win for Pakistan. Their outstanding skills and determination were evident throughout the match, significantly contributing to the team's success.

The leadership and preparation efforts were led by Team Manager Khalid Waqar, Treasurer of the Pakistan Volleyball Federation. The coaching staff, including Head Coach Saeed Ahmed Khan, Assistant Coach Muhammad Akram, and Analyst Muhammad Suleman, have been instrumental in guiding the team to this prestigious victory.

In recognition of their exceptional performances, several team members received individual awards including Best Setter: Talal Ahmed; Best Opposite: Hitter: Muhmaad Yahya; Best Middle Blocker: Jabran; Most Valuable Player (MVP): Muhammad Yahya.

With this victory, the Pakistan U-18 Men's Volleyball Team has qualified for the 15th Asian Men's U-20 Volleyball Championship, which will take place in Bahrain from July 28 to August 4. This accomplishment reflects the dedication, hard work, and talent of the team and its coaching staff, setting a new benchmark for Pakistan Volleyball on the international stage.

South Africa edge Bangladesh by four runs at T20 World Cup

NEW YORK (AFP): South Africa defeated Bangladesh by just four runs in another low-scoring game at the T20 World Cup on Monday, a result likely to spark fresh debate over the suitability of the pitch being used in New York.

South Africa were restricted to 113-6 in their 20 overs with Heinrich Klaasen top-scoring on 46 while fast bowler Tanzim Hasan Sakib returned a career-best 3-18. However, Bangladesh could only manage 109-7 in reply as South Africa wrapped up a third win in three Group D games. Chasing just 114 to win on the controversial drop-in strip at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, Bangladesh initially struggled in the face of the Proteas' pace battery.

They were 50-4 at the 10-over mark having lost Tanzid Hasan (nine) to Kagiso Rabada while Anrich Nortje accounted for skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (14) and Shakib Al Hasan (three). Spinner Keshav Maharaj sent back Liton Das for just nine.

However, Towhid Hridoy, who top-scored with 40 when Bangladesh defeated Sri Lanka in their opener, and 38-year-old Mahmudullah steadied the ship for the Tigers. The pair put on 44 for the fifth wicket before Hridoy was lbw to Rabada for 37, an innings which took up 34 balls and featured two fours and two sixes. Bangladesh took seven off the penultimate over but still needed 11 off the last to be bowled by Maharaj.

That became seven off four balls. With the pressure building both Jaker Ali and Mahmudullah were caught going for big heaves over long on. Needing six off the final ball, Taskin Ahmed could only produce a scrambled single. Earlier, Bangladesh restricted South Africa to 113-6 with Tanzim backed up by Taskin's 2-19 after Proteas skipper Aiden Markram won the toss and opted to bat. South Africa were struggling at 23-4 at one stage before Klaasen and David Miller, celebrating his 35th birthday, came to their team's rescue with a partnership of 79 for the fifth wicket.



NEW YORK: Kagiso Rabada struck early to dismiss Tanzid Hasan.

Rania, Hadia, Manahil & Sadia enter into semi-final in U17 Squash

PESHAWAR (APP): Top seeded Rania Qazi, second seeded Sadia Zahooh, third seeded Hadia Farman, and fourth seeded Manahil Aqeel entered into the semi-finals of the ongoing Khyber Pakistan U17 Age Group Junior Squash Championship being played here at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex on Monday.

Former World Champion Qamar Zaman, Director Blue Tone Squash Academy, former World No. 13 Mansoor Zaman and former World No. 10 coach Amjad Khan also witnessed the matches.

Besides the girls U17 category, the Championship is also carrying U9, U11, U13 wherein players of the various categories also reached the semi-finals through their respective matches.

In the Girls category U17, Rania Qazi defeated Mashal Khan in straight sets, the

score was 11-3, 11-3 and 11-6 as Rania Qazi fully dominated the proceedings and did not allow her rival to play with free hands.

In the other quarter-finals matches Hadia Farman recorded victory against Alishba Niaz in a thrilling four sets match and reached the semi-final. Hadia Farman won the first set by 11-9 but failed to click in the second won by Alishba Niaz at 5-11. After 1-1, Hadia Farman managed her position according to the situation and marched into victory in the remaining two sets by 11-9 and 13-11. Alishba gave tough resistance to Hadia Farman wherein both stretched to 13-11 by leveling the set at 5-5, 6-6, 7-7, 8-8, 9-9, 10-2 in a one-sided affair.

In the third quarter-final, Manahil Aqeel overpowered Maleeha Shah in straight sets, the score was 11-4, 11-9 and 11-5. Manahil and Maleeha Shah played well and gave each other a tough fight before Manahil Aqeel marched into victory.

The second seeded Sadia Zahooh beat Hiba Imtiaz by 3-0, the score was 11-6, 11-6 and 11-5. Sadia Zahooh has full control over her drops and accurate nick shots while Hiba was unable to respond well and thus Sadia Zahooh won the match by 3-0 and moved to the semi-finals.

In the U11 category Abdur Rehman, Aryan to clash in KP Junior Squash final. In the boys U11 quarter-finals Abdur Rehman Riaz defeated Haroon Afridi by 11-7 11-8 and 11-2 in a one-sided affair.

In the second quarter-final, Aryan Ahmad defeated Ahmad Shah Jahan by 11-8,

5-11, 11-5, and 11-2. Ahmad Shah Jahan fully dominated the match and despite losing the second set, overall managed his position to march into victory.

Anas Rafy eliminated Zubair Riaz by 3-0, the score was 11-2, 11-6 and 11-4, Fahad Arif defeated Muhammad Hussain Bakhish in a thrilling four sets battle, the score was 6-11, 11-8, 14-12 and 11-7.

In the U13 category quarter-finals Danish Sikandar beat Ayyan Mehboob 11-3, 11-5, 11-9, Sudais Nazir defeated Muhammad Yahya by 11-4, 11-6 and 11-4, Ahmad Safwan Gul beat Ahmad Ali Naz in another thrilling match, the score was 11-9, 11-8, 4-11, and 13-11 while in the last quarter-final Malik Muhammad recorded victory against Arman Ali by 11-3, 11-5, 7-11 and 11-8.

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Afghanistan chase football milestone on road to 2026 WC

Hong Kong (AFP/APP): Afghanistan hope to achieve a footballing milestone on Tuesday by snatching a spot in the third and final phase of Asian qualifying for the 2026 World Cup.

The team ranked 151 in the world are on the brink of history and a place at the 2027 Asian Cup under their English coach Ashley Westwood.

Once on the books of Manchester United, he took over the Afghan team seven months ago and has masterminded a significant upturn in fortunes for the footballing minnows. They play away at Kuwait on Tuesday in the final round of games in the second qualifying stage knowing they need to better India's result at Qatar to progress further.

Afghanistan held already qualified Qatar, the Asian champions, to a precious 0-0 draw on Thursday in a "home" game for the Afghans that was played in Saudi

Arabia. "When we took over in November just before the first game against Qatar, which we lost 8-1, (if) you told us that we'll be giving ourselves a chance of qualifying with one game to go, we wouldn't have believed it," Westwood said afterwards.

"The players are excited and we believe that we have a genuine chance of making history for Afghanistan in reaching the Asian Cup and third round of the World Cup qualifiers." India are also trying to reach the final stage of World Cup qualifying for the first time.

Igor Stimac's side currently occupies the second qualifying berth from Group A on goal difference from the Afghans. Just to complicate things, Kuwait are also in with a shot of progressing, with the group going right down to the wire. After Stimac saw his men held to a goalless home draw against Kuwait on Thursday, the

coach said: "We don't have time to feel sorry for ourselves because our chances are still alive.

"I need to do everything in the next five days to make the boys believe they will take us into the challenge against the Asian champions."

Indonesia breakthrough? -

Elsewhere, it is a straight shootout between China and Thailand for the second qualifying berth out of Group C.

China are in the driving seat in second place and needing only a point from their final game to guarantee advancement.

However, they must travel to Son Heung-min's table-topping South Korea while Thailand have a far easier task when they host basement side Singapore in Bangkok. As well as Qatar and South Korea, also already into the last qualifying round are: Japan, Oman, Iran, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, Australia and Palestine.

Balochistan, Punjab victorious in Blind Cricket matches

ISLAMABAD (APP):Balochistan and Punjab won their matches on the day-4 of PBCC Blind Cricket T-20 Super League 2024 at APS School Cricket Ground, Abbottabad on Monday.

In an exhilarating T20 match, the Balochistan Blind cricket team triumphed over KP in a nail biting finish, chasing down a formidable target of 213 runs with just one ball to spare.

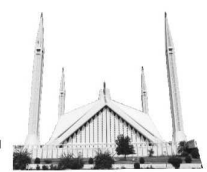
The match commenced with KPK Blind setting a challenging target, scoring 212 runs for the loss of 7 wickets in their allotted 20 overs. The standout performances came from Badar Munir (B2) and Muhammad Rashid (B3). Badar dazzled with a rapid 58 off 30 balls, including nine boundaries and one six. Rashid anchored the innings with a well-crafted 95 not out off 60 balls, hitting 14 fours. Bashir Khan (B1) and Mohsin Khan (B3) from the Balochistan side put up impressive bowling performances, taking two wickets each.

In response, Balochistan managed to chase the target in a sensational way, scoring 216 for the loss of 9 wickets in 19.5 overs. Niamatullah (B3) led the charge with a solid 61 off 46 balls, supported by timely contributions from Imran Sarwar (B3), who remained not out on 33 off 18 balls, and Naseeb Ullah (B2), who scored a quickfire 21 off 12 balls. The chase saw dramatic turns with crucial wickets falling at regular intervals. Talha Iqbal (B3) from KPK deliv-

ered with the ball, taking two crucial wickets, including that of the key player Niamatullah. In another match Punjab beat Sindh by 37 runs. Punjab Blind cricket team delivered an impressive batting performance, scoring a commanding 252 runs for the loss of 5 wickets in their allotted 20 overs against Sindh.

The Punjab Blind team exhibited an outstanding batting effort, with key contributions from Moeen Aslam (B2), Akmal Hayat Nasir (B3), and Mati Ullah (B3). Moeen Aslam was in exceptional form, scoring a blistering 51 off just 22 balls, hitting ten boundaries with a remarkable strike rate of 231.82. Akmal Hayat Nasir followed suit with a robust 68 off 44 balls, including ten fours and one six. Mati Ullah added crucial runs with a rapid 32 off 16 balls, while Israr Ul Hassan (B2) provided a solid finish, remaining not out with 24 runs off 13 balls. SanaUllah (B3) also contributed significantly towards the end, scoring an unbeaten 21 off just 8 balls, boasting a strike rate of 262.50. Idrees Saleem (B1) took 2 wickets, while Muhammad Salman and Safdar claimed a wicket a piece.

In reply, Sindh managed to score 215 runs in 20 overs for the loss of 6 wickets. Sindh chase was led by a valiant effort from Muhammad Safdar (B3), who scored a brilliant 58 off 36 balls, including nine boundaries and one six. Ayoub Khan (B2) provided solid support with 46 runs off 34 balls.



In brief

Son arrested for torturing mother

RAWALPINDI (APP): The police apprehended son for torturing his mother within the jurisdiction of the Airport Police Station on Monday. According to a police spokesman, the victim woman filed an application detailing the torture and threats to her life by her son, Ahmed Ali. The police registered a case under the Parental Protection Ordinance and took Ahmad Ali into custody. SP Potohar, Nasir Nawaz, has assured that all necessary legal procedures will be followed to ensure justice for the victim. He emphasized that violence against elderly parents is both unimaginable and deplorable. Nasir Nawaz reiterated the commitment of law enforcement to root out domestic violence, affirming that such acts against children and women will not be tolerated. He pledged that strict action would be taken to address and combat such heinous crimes.

Robber killed during robbery attempt

RAWALPINDI (APP): A robber was killed while his accomplice managed to flee from the scene in gunfire with police party during robbery attempt here on Monday. According to police spokesman, the police received information of a robbery in New Town area, the police immediately responded and chased the robbers, then the robbers riding on motorcycle opened fire at the police party, during the firing, one robber identified as Hasnain was killed while his accomplice escaped. SDPO, and SHO New Town, along with their team, swiftly rushed to the scene. A thorough search operation was conducted in the area to apprehend the escaped robber. City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani commended the brave efforts of the Dolphin Force in confronting the dangerous criminals. He emphasized the significance of safeguarding the lives and property of citizens, reiterating the commitment of law enforcement to bring perpetrators to justice. Hamdani affirmed that those responsible for the attack would not elude the grasp of the law.

ICT sets up five official cattle markets

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Eid-ul-Azha approaches, the Islamabad Capital Territory administration has established five designated cattle markets to ensure a smooth and organized experience for both traders and buyers. In this regard, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon visited these markets to oversee the preparations and address any concerns. In a recent visit to the Bara Kahu cattle market, the DC identified several issues impacting both traders and customers. He emphasized the importance of using only the designated markets and warned that strict action would be taken against those were involved in purchasing animals from unauthorized places. On the occasion, he assured that all necessary facilities have been provided in these five markets to support the trading process and ensure a hassle-free experience for everyone involved. Citizens are encouraged to visit these approved markets to purchase their sacrificial animals, ensuring compliance with the city's regulations and contributing to an organized Eid celebration. DC clarified that the ICT administration has set up official cattle markets in five locations: Sanghani, I-15, the Sultana Foundation, Zia Masjid, and Barakahu, to cater to the needs of citizens during Eid-ul-Azha and no one would be allowed to sale or purchase the sacrificial animals from outside these points.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Tax Ombudsman, Dr Asif Mahmood Jah, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. —APP Photo

Salik applauds successful completion of pre-Hajj flight operations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, announced the successful conclusion of the pre-Hajj flight operations with the departure of the final flight from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia.

The last Saudi Airlines flight, carrying 380 Pakistani pilgrims, marked the end of the month-long operation as it departed from Islamabad to the holy land on Monday.

In his message to all those who contributed to the success of this phase, the minister expressed his satisfaction with the successful completion of the

pre-Hajj flight operations.

"This achievement is a testament to the meticulous planning and coordination of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony and other stakeholders," he stated.

The minister emphasized that the smooth operation was the result of the tireless efforts of the ministry's staff, who worked diligently to ensure the comfort and safety of the pilgrims.

He also highlighted the various initiatives taken by the ministry to facilitate the pilgrimage, including the introduction of discounted long and short packages.

The minister expressed his gratitude to the pil-

grims, the airlines, and the ministry's staff for their cooperation and dedication in making the pre-Hajj flight operations a success.

He underscored the importance of the Hajj pilgrimage, which is a sacred duty for Muslims worldwide, and pledged to continue working towards ensuring a smooth and enjoyable experience for all pilgrims.

The flights were operated by various airlines, including Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Saudi Airlines, SereneAir, and AirSial, to transport pilgrims from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia.

ANF seizes over 262 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country seized over 262 kg drugs and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He informed that 1.2 kg heroin was recovered from the possession of a female passenger going to Bahrain at Islamabad Airport.

1 kg heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Dubai at Karachi Airport while 63.6 kg hashish and 72 kg opium were recovered from two suspects rounded up near Ravi Toll Plaza Lahore.

38.4 kg opium and 33.6 kg hashish were recovered from an accused arrested near Kala Shah Kaku Toll Plaza Sheikhupura.

52.8 kg hashish was recovered from an accused netted near Shahrah Faisal Karachi. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

IRSA releases 278,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 278,600 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 207,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1456.62 feet and was 58.62 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 77,600 cusecs and 135,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1187.10 feet, which was 137.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 41,000 cusecs and 55,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 155,500, 152,400, 132,700, and 69,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 52,700 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 5,600 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Govt all set to present people-friendly budget 2024-25: Muqam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Kashmir Affairs Amir Muqam Monday assured that the government would provide a people-friendly and development-oriented budget for 2024-25 that would provide relief to the disadvantaged and successfully implement its policies to serve the masses.

Talking to a private news channel, he said the scope of public welfare projects would be extended under public-private partnership and unneces-

sary expenditures further reduced.

He said besides big cities, balanced development of villages is also being ensured so that all facilities should be available to the youth and farmers living in rural areas.

He said the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has better days ahead where the common man will get full benefit from the prudent policies of the present govern-

ment. The minister also assured that the government would control inflation and the common man would get relief on priority.

Replying to a question, he said the next financial year would be the year of economic progress for Pakistan, adding economic conditions were difficult and the government was adopting a policy of utilizing available resources in the best possible manner.

FIA warns public on rise of online frauds

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) cyber crime cell Monday warned the public at large about the increasing ratio of online fraudulent activity in recent days.

According to the spokesperson, a public service announcement was issued by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to warn the public about a recent rise in online fraudulent activity.

Unauthorized individuals are impersonating FIA

officers and circulating fabricated notices through various electronic communication channels i.e. email, WhatsApp and other such social media platforms, said a press release issued here.

These deceptive notices falsely accuse recipients of criminal activity and often employ scare tactics by threatening legal action or demanding immediate financial compensation.

In some instances, scammers may attempt to elicit sensitive personal

information under the pretense of verification or compliance procedures. The FIA operates with the utmost professionalism and adheres to strict protocols in its communication practices.

All official communication is initiated only after prior investigation and with a clearly identified case number. It is important to note that the FIA will never request sensitive information, such as banking details, via such notices or phone calls.

Measles under control in Punjab: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Punjab Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare, Khwaja Imran Nazir said on Monday that the measles situation in the province was under control, with a significantly lower number of confirmed cases and fatalities compared to other provinces.

Speaking to a private news channel, he stated that while measles cases in Punjab were fewer than in other provinces, the vaccination campaign was inten-

sified to protect children from infectious diseases.

Khwaja Imran said out of over 10,000 suspected cases reported, 2,700 were confirmed, representing a 25% ratio, whereas only 28 deaths were confirmed with the disease, as per the National Institute of Health.

The minister emphasized that every child's life was precious and that the government was taking measures to ensure their safety. He clarified that a 2-3% death ratio

was natural in every disease, and the measles ratio was even lower.

The Punjab government is utilizing digital monitoring and clustering to combat the disease, with Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz focusing her attention on the issue.

The minister said clustering analysis had identified Bahawalpur, Jhang, and Chaniot as the most affected areas, while the rest of the districts had routine patients.

IIUI organises future leaders training program

ISLAMABAD (APP): Future Leaders Program commenced at International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI) which was designed, as per the directives of the President IIUI, for the Faculty members (Associate & Assistant Professors) aimed at cultivating and empowering emerging leaders for IIUI.

Under the guidance and spearheading of the Vice President (Research & Enterprise), Office of the Professional Training planned and executed this initiative to foster sustainable change and transformation by enhancing the leadership and management skills of the faculty.

Prominent figures spoke on key topics including leadership in governance and operations, maintaining standards and quality in teaching, research, and knowledge, and driving enhancements to build national and international

reputations.

The IIUI Future Leaders program comprises three distinct phases, each offering a comprehensive exploration of various facets of leadership and development. IIUI President Dr. Hathal Homoud Alotaibi addressing the participants, emphasized the pivotal role of leaders in transforming organizations and nations.

He noted that technological advancements, particularly in AI, have reshaped progress, urging visionary leaders to embrace change.

Dr. Hathal highlighted that effective leaders excel in time management, smart solutions, and adaptability. He underscored the importance of emotional intelligence in decision-making and future planning.

Dr. Hathal stressed the necessity of prioritizing tasks and maintaining an impartial focus to achieve success both in society and in the hereafter. He also emphasized the impact of

leaders' behaviors, innovative ideas, and the creation of a lasting legacy. He concluded by urging future leaders to build their teams wisely and to lead with wisdom and integrity.

During the inaugural session on leadership in governance and operations, General Retd. Zubair Mahmood Hayat, Former Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSC), emphasized the necessity of grooming senior leadership to ensure a bright future.

He highlighted the pivotal role of education in Islam, stating that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the greatest teacher and that education is key to the Islamic renaissance. General Retd. Hayat underscored the importance of truth, simplicity, and curiosity in leadership. He also stressed the need for the youth to be dynamic, relevant, and inclusive, and to embrace technology.

Committee emphasizes implementation for anti-rape act

ISLAMABAD (APP): A special committee on anti-rape on Monday emphasized the need for implementing anti-rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021 and collaborative efforts of the institutions in combating sexual violence.

Chairperson of the Special Committee, Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq presided over a pivotal meeting to review the Implementation of the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021 and discuss the development of the National Sex Offenders Register (SOR), said a press release.

The Special Committee reviewed data from Police, Prosecution, Courts and Home departments all across Pakistan and key actions were identified for improving investigations and prosecutions of sex offences.

The chairperson of the Anti-Rape special committee emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts in combating sexual violence, stating, "Ensuring justice for survivors of sexual violence is our top priority."

The Special Committee is working closely with Federal and Provincial Agencies in order to improve compliance with Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021 to

ensure that both resources and processes are in place to support vulnerable victims."

The meeting was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Law and Justice, Provincial Home Departments, Provincial Law Enforcement Agencies, Civil Society Organisations, NADRA and the National Police Bureau.

Their collective participation highlights the integrated approach necessary to tackle the pervasive issue of sexual violence effectively.

Key actions were identified for ensuring rigorous investigations and swift trials under the Act, reinforcing the government's resolve to uphold the rights and dignity of survivors.

Primary focus will be placed on improving investigations by maximizing the number of cases referred to designated Anti-Rape Crisis Cell (ARCC) and Special Sexual Offenses Investigation Units (SSOUIs) and improving the timelines for deciding cases to ensure swift justice is delivered to survivors of sex offences.

The periodic review process will also be utilized to track convictions of sex offenders from across Pakistan being added to the Sex Offenders Register, which is a valuable tool for

safeguarding communities by assisting in investigation and prosecution of sex offences and deterring potential offenders.

Jawwad Raza Sultan, the focal person and member Special Committee and Section Officer of the Anti Rape Cell at the Ministry of Law and Justice, presented data to the Special Committee on the compliance with the Anti Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021.

The information was gathered from Anti Rape Crisis Cells, Prosecutor Generals, Special Sexual Offenses Investigation Units (SSOUIs), and Special Courts throughout Pakistan.

He also informed the committee about the weaknesses in the system/processes and suggested ways to address them effectively.

Furthermore, he briefed the Special Committee on key priority actions needed to ensure proper and comprehensive performance management of the nationwide compliance with the mandate of Act, as enunciated by Section 15 of the Anti Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act, 2021. The Special Committee unanimously agreed with its conclusions and the way forward suggested.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Education, Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, delivers a speech during the launch event of the Foundational Learning Policy 2024 held in the federal capital. —APP Photo

Ex-Commander returned

KABUL (BNA): The Liaison Commission for Contact with Afghan Personalities has announced the return of the former Police Academy Commander in previous Administration to the country. According to a post on the commission's official X page, Sayed Shir Agha Rohani, the former commander of the Police Academy, has returned to Afghanistan. Rohani returned to Afghanistan from the Netherlands through the Commission for Contact with Afghan Personalities.

50 scholarships rovided

KABUL (Khaama Press): Taliban's Ministry of Higher Education announced that Uzbekistan has offered 50 scholarships to Afghan students. Ministry of Higher Education reported a meeting between Lutfullah Khairkhwah, the ministry's academic deputy, and Yadgar Khoja Shadmanov, Uzbekistan's ambassador to Kabul. The ministry's statement mentioned that the meeting discussed resolving issues faced by Afghan students in Uzbekistan and enhancing bilateral cooperation.

Hanafi hold meeting on fiber optic and social services issues

KABUL (BNA): ARG has announced the convening of a high-level committee meeting aimed at tackling obstacles in the implementation of the fiber optic services project and addressing various network and social service-related challenges.

According to a press release, the meeting was chaired by Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, and

attended by committee members.

During the meeting, the coordination mechanism for the effective implementation of infrastructure projects across the country evaluated and discussed.

In the Meeting, discussions centered on the expansion of fiber optic services, public access to internet services and better regulation of drinking water supply nationwide, particularly in Kabul.

Additionally, the importance of creating necessary coordination among relevant departments.

The goal of this coordination is to prevent the destruction of roads and public facilities during the implementation of infrastructure projects.

The committee made several necessary decisions to ensure effective execution and maintenance of these vital services across the country.

Minister vows support for Afghan students



KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Education, Mawlawi Habibullah Agha, held a meeting with representatives of Afghan students residing in Kazan, Russia.

According to a press release from the Ministry today, in this meeting, the students discussed their current challenges, includ-

ing financial issues, visa problems, the lack of an official representative, and other concerns.

The Acting Minister of Education, Mawlawi Habibullah Agha, addressed the students as the future builders of Afghanistan, urging them to remain committed to their religion, society, and country, and to

diligently pursue their studies wherever they are.

In the end, Education Minister Habibullah Agha, emphasized that, in coordination with the Ministry of Higher Education and the Afghan Embassy in Moscow, they will address the students' issues and provide them with the necessary facilities.

24 mothers, 167 infants die in Afghanistan each day

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan faces a staggering daily toll of 24 maternal deaths and 167 infant deaths due to preventable causes, according to a new report released Sunday by the World Health Organization.

The report underscores the continuing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, highlighting the multifaceted challenges that citizens endure daily.

"Afghan citizens face an unstable health system and the daily specter of food scarcity and malnutrition," the WHO states. This crisis is further exacerbated by the burden of both communicable and noncommunicable diseases, frequent disease outbreaks, severe drought, and natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes,

the report stated.

The situation for Afghan women has particularly deteriorated, with limited access to education and livelihoods, WHO said.

The WHO report emphasizes that the need for humanitarian assistance has surged dramatically, adding that children and women bear the brunt of the health emergency.

"Preventable maternal mortality claims the lives of 24 mothers every day, and a staggering 167 infants die each day of preventable causes," the WHO report highlights.

In addition, Afghanistan's high level of food insecurity affects 15.8 million people, WHO stated.

Polio also remains a concern, although there have been significant gains in its eradication since 2021, the

report noted.

The ongoing geopolitical situation has also affected the health sector, leading to reduced international support. "The health sector is struggling to meet the surging demand for services," the WHO report states. Severe underfunding led to the closure of 428 static and mobile health facilities between January and December 2023, impacting over 3 million individuals, including more than 600,000 children under five and over 240,000 pregnant and lactating women.

However, the Ministry of Public Health's spokesman Sharafat Zaman says the report cites incorrect data. He said 300 mother have lost their lives while giving birth in the past six months.

Domestic products exhibition held to promote Afghan goods



HERAT (TOLONews): The "Aalst, Afghani" (It's great, it's Afghan) domestic products exhibition, with the participation of traders from eight provinces of the country, was held in Herat.

Officials said that domestic products are being displayed in 120 booths, separated into sections for men and women,

for three days.

"We have craftsmen from Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, Jalalabad, Farah, Herat, Kabul, and Badghis. This exhibition is open to the public," said Farid Ahmad Naderi, the organizer of this exhibition.

Of the total 120 booths, 60 are dedicated to women entrepreneurs. Some of these women consider the

lack of market for their products as one of their main challenges.

"The only goal is to showcase domestic products so that our people become aware that we have products made within the country," said Hafiza Mahmoodi, the head of the women's section of the exhibition.

"Previously, the markets

EU announces 150m aid for Afghanistan

KABUL (Monitoring Desk): In view of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, the EU has activated its emergency aid reserve to avoid a risk of famine in the country. This will bring the total EU response to nearly 150 million in humanitarian aid for this crisis in 2024.

This funding will support partners working inside Afghanistan (nearly 126 million) and responding to the need of Afghan refugees in Pakistan (over 11 million) and for humanitarian organizations in Iran (nearly 11 million), as well as strengthening disaster preparedness.

In Afghanistan, EU funding will continue to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable populations, notably in hard-to-reach communities. Aid will focus on food assistance, shelter, healthcare and access to water and sanitation. Up to 14.5 million are earmarked for Education in Emergencies, as 8 million children and adolescents need educational assistance, including 1.4 million girls that are excluded from accessing secondary school.

In Pakistan, over 7 million will go to respond to the humanitarian needs of displaced Afghans and their host communities. For instance, providing access to legal assistance, healthcare and nutrition, as well as education. Another 4 million will be dedicated to disaster preparedness in the country.

In Iran, the vast majority of funding, up to 10.25 million, will go to address the needs of displaced Afghan populations and host communities.

EU humanitarian aid is solely channelled through humanitarian partners working on the ground.

The announcement comes as senior representatives of the international community gathered in Brussels today to discuss Afghanistan's food and health crisis.

Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič, said: "The people of Afghanistan are currently facing one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. Over 50% of the population need humanitarian aid, and over 85% of the population are in poverty. It is crucial that the world does not look away from this ongoing emergency. Together with the international humanitarian community, the EU continues to support the people of Afghanistan in their moment of need – most recently following the devastating floods this April. And at this challenging and uncertain time we reaffirm our commitment to supporting people in need across the country, to humanitarian principles and to addressing operational challenges faced by aid workers on the ground."

Climate and water issues: Ministry, OCHA commit to enhanced cooperation



KABUL (BNA): A coordination meeting was held between the Ministry of Energy and Water and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock.

The participants discussed coordinating humanitarian aid and joint efforts in water resource manage-

Akhundzada, Deputy Minister of Energy and Water, officials from OCHA, and representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock.

The meeting was attended by Mujib Rahman Omar

ment, especially concerning climate change adaptation.

During the meeting, Deputy Minister Akhundzada stated that temporary and short-term programs are insufficient to address the challenges posed by climate change. He stressed the need for fundamental and comprehensive work to

tackle issues such as droughts, sudden floods, and other threats facing the people of Afghanistan.

The meeting concluded with participants assuring each other of their commitment to accelerating joint cooperation and emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts.

Justice Ministry launches nationwide investigation to reclaim seized lands

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Justice announced that all residential areas in the country are under investigation by the commission tasked with the prevention of land grabbing and stabilizing taken land.

Barkatullah Rasooli, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice, said that so far this commission has investigated the lands of several residential areas and different regions of Kabul.

The spokesman said: "The commission for the

prevention of land grabbing and stabilizing taken land is also investigating residential areas in Kabul and the provinces, and if the governmental lands are seized, they will be reclaimed."

The spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice announced that nearly 60,000 acres of land in the city and districts of Kabul have been reclaimed from usurpers.

A number of experts and residents of Kabul emphasized the need to return all

personal and government lands seized by usurpers.

"The lands belong to the nation and the public treasury, and there is a need for a serious commission to decisively implement the reclamation of illegally seized lands and return them to the public treasury," said Ghulam Mohammaduddin Mohammadi, a political affairs expert.

"If the land is government-owned, it should be returned to the government, and if it is private, it should be handed over to its

owner," said Amanullah, a resident of Kabul.

"Over the past twenty years, lands have been seized. The government must reclaim these lands, utilize them, and punish the usurpers according to Sharia," said Ajmal, another resident of Kabul.

According to information from the Ministry of Justice, the commission has reclaimed more than 2.5 million acres of seized land across the country and handed them over to the relevant departments.

DAB, UNAMA to address micro loans, economic development

KABUL (BNA): The Acting Governor of Da Afghanistan Bank, Hidayatullah Badri, in a meeting with Roza Otunbayeva, the Head of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) emphasized that access to micro loans reduces poverty levels and aids in job creation.

During the meeting, Hedayatullah Badri stated that Da Afghanistan Bank is committed to expanding financial services to all parts of the country, ensuring that citizens have easy access to affordable and high-quality financial services.

Badri mentioned that to strengthen this sector, regulations have been established considering the cur-



rent conditions of the country, allowing people to easily obtain micro loans.

He reiterated that enabling access to microloans is a crucial

strategy for reducing poverty and fostering job creation.

It is noteworthy that during the meeting, Roza Otunbayeva also highlight-

ed the importance of public access to financial services and assured United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)'s cooperation in this regard.

Annual Gul-e-Gulab poetry reading held in Uruzgan

URUZGAN (TOLONews): The Uruzgan Department of Information and Culture announced the annual 'Gul-e-Gulab' poetry recital event in this province.

According to officials from this department, in addition to Uruzgan poets, poetry and literature enthusiasts from neighboring provinces also participated in this event.

Messages such as freedom of the homeland, education, progress, and encouraging the youth through poetry were shared with the participants of this program.

Agha Wali Quraishi, head of Uruzgan's Information and Culture department, said: "We will organize such gatherings at the national level and strive to invite our compatriots from all corners of the country to Uruzgan and host them."

"Our homeland is full of gems. If we learn knowledge, our homeland will also become like Japan," said Lal Mohammad Masoumi, a poet.

Local officials in Uruzgan consider the organization of such literary programs beneficial for strengthening unity and patriotism, and they emphasize its expansion.

They called on poets to reflect the country's progress in the language of poetry.

Enayatullah Shuja, the governor of Uruzgan, said: "Treat your people well, leave the nation alone. There is no place left in this nation for suffering."

The Gul-e-Gulab poetry recital program was held in the sports stadium of Trinkot city, and in addition to poetry recitals, dramatic pieces were also performed by artists until midnight.

Officials report significant rise in Congo fever cases

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Public Health reported a 38% increase in Congo fever in the last two months compared to the first month of the solar year.

Sharafat Zaman Amarkhil, the spokesman for the Ministry of Public Health, said that in the first five months of this year, over 200 people across the country have been infected with this disease, and six people have died due to it.

Amarkhil said: "In the past five months, we have had approximately 203 positive cases of Congo fever across the country. Last year, we had nearly 1240 positive cases, with around 100 deaths. The death toll in the past five months is six."

"When they find a wound or something, they should immediately stop in the area, meaning they should not contact other animals because it is not known if the animal carries the virus," said Hamed Raihan, a doctor.

Shamsuddin, a 38-year-old

butcher who has been working in one of the districts of Takhar for the past twenty years, said that he has been infected with Congo fever for the past ten days and has come to Kabul for treatment from Takhar.

"A few days ago, my neck started itching. I asked the kids to check my neck to see what was wrong. They saw a bug and removed it. I didn't take it seriously, but after two days, I got a fever," said Shamsuddin, a patient.

Some doctors at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Kabul said that the number of Congo fever cases has increased in the current month. They added that out of fifteen people who visited this hospital for Congo fever testing in the past week, the test results of eight were positive.

"This month, the cases of Congo fever have increased, and among the patients admitted to the Congo ward, we have around eight positive cases," said Faridullah Omari, another doctor.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Austria, Muhammad Kamran Akhtar, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

President directs to pay compensation to victims

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has directed the authorities concerned to ensure making payment of compensation of Rs4.7 million each to 1500 affectees of the Diamer Bhasha Dam.

The directives were issued by the president on Monday in separate meetings with Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam and Energy Minister Dr Musaddik Malik here. Asif Ali Zardari while highlighting the necessity of establishment of a medical college and hospital in GB, instructed the relevant departments to take meas-

ures on priority for the purpose.

Besides, he also directed for extending the scope of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) to the people of GB to provide them healthcare facilities. A few days ago, the GB governor and the Members of GB Council had apprised the president of the issues faced by the GB people. The president had also assured them for the measures to help resolve the problems.

Meanwhile, President Asif Ali Zardari has directed for immediate steps to establish a medical college and hospital in Gilgit Baltistan (GB). He was talking to the Minister for

Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Amir Muqam and Minister for Energy Musaddik Malik, who called on him here in Islamabad on Monday.

The President also directed to pay compensation of 47 lakh rupees per person to 1500 affectees of Diamer Bhasha Dam. He said 'Sehat Sahulat Program' be made part of Benazir Income Support Program for provision of healthcare facilities to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. The President had a meeting with Governor Gilgit Baltistan and members of GB Council few days go in which he assured them of resolution of problems faced by GB.

Govt ordered to pay Rs3m to missing person's father

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) directed the federal to pay three million rupees in compensation to the father of the missing person named Haroon Muhammad ahead of the next hearing.

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Justice Mian Gul Hasan Aurangzeb heard the petition related to the recovery of Haroon Muhammad, missing since July 2009. The court ordered that the federal government should pay Rs3 million in compensation to the father of the missing citizen.

Lawyer Iman Mazari said that the petitioner's family is receiving threats for fighting the case. The court issued a directive to the IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through the Interior Secretary to provide security to the petitioner. He also ordered to registration of a case against the security personnel. Further hearing of the case will be held after two weeks.

Poet Farhad sent to jail

MUZAFFARABAD (PPI): An anti-terrorism court in Azad Kashmir capital Muzaffarabad on Monday sent poet and journalist Ahmed Farhad Shah to jail on 14-day judicial remand.

Farhad Shah, who had been forcibly abducted from his residence in Islamabad on May 15, mysteriously resurfaced in the custody of Gujjar Kohala police in Azad Kashmir on May 29, facing a case regarding inciting protests.

The AJK police on Monday produced Farhad Shah in court after completion of his remand and also submitted an incomplete challan of the case. The court ordered to transfer Farhad Shah to Rarrah Jail until June 24. The ATC judge also directed the police to again produce the poet in the court on June 24. Later, Farhad Shah was taken to Rarrah Jail amid heavy police security.

Gandapur disappointed

PESHAWAR (PPI): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has written a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif regarding the exclusion of 91 development projects of the province from the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

In the letter, Gandapur stated that the Planning Committee's decision was deeply disappointing, observing that the exclusion of 91 development projects from the PSDP would significantly impact the province.

The CM termed the exclusion of ongoing development projects a violation of the decisions made during meetings of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) as well as the National Economic Council (NEC). In the letter, Gandapur also mentioned the decision taken during the National Economic Council (NEC) meeting, where emphasis was placed on prioritising the completion of ongoing projects. He said that the exclusion of development projects by the federal government would exacerbate the province's deprivation.

Sharjeel says PPP not a part of defamation bill introduced in Punjab

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, Mass Transit, Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has said that today we are saddened by the tragic death of Sindh journalist Nasrullah Gadani. This incident is a part of the mindset that seeks to suppress press freedom, a mindset that is known worldwide. However, it is the responsibility of governments to combat this thinking.

He said that due to the efforts of the Ghotki Police and DIG Sukkur, three suspects have been arrested in the murder case of martyred journalist Nasrullah Gadani. The media will be kept informed. Today, we are providing a relief cheque to the family of the martyred journalist. Although money cannot replace a loved one, we express our full sympathy to the martyr's family. Following the instructions of the Chief Minister of Sindh, a relief cheque of 10 million rupees is being given to the heirs of the martyred journalist. This act is a commitment to a cause, as the Pakistan People's Party and the Sindh government support free and transparent journalism.

Speaking to the media at the Karachi Press Club, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that a campaign had been launched against the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to tarnish its image. However, even today, the PPP stands firmly with journalists. The Pakistan People's Party is the only party that demonstrates the most tolerance and patience and actively supports journalists and journalism. It is also the only party in the entire country that raises the loudest voice for press freedom.

He said that when journalist Nasrullah Gadani was shot, the police immediately arrived and shifted him to the hospital. Within five minutes, the Chief Minister of Sindh wrote a letter requesting his admission to Aga Khan Hospital. However, life and death are in Allah's hands.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam



Memon said that when the journalist community protested in the Sindh Assembly for the arrest of the killers of Shaheed Nasrullah Gadani, both the Interior Minister and I assured them that the killers would be apprehended. Alhamdulillah, the accused have been arrested, and action will be taken against all those responsible for the murder.

In response to a question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Pakistan People's Party is not a part of the defamation bill introduced in Punjab. He clarified that the governor of Punjab, who belongs to the Pakistan People's Party, did not sign this bill.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that in all incidents involving journalists in Sindh, the Sindh government under the Pakistan People's Party has arrested all the accused. He highlighted that the killers of Shaheed Aziz Memon were apprehended from the desert area by the Sindh government. Additionally, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari personally visited the house of Shaheed Jan Muhammad Mahar.

He mentioned that the Sindh Police has made significant progress in the case of Shaheed Jan Muhammad Mahar, indicating that news of the arrest of his killers may be forthcoming very soon. Senior

Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon highlighted the concerted efforts of Chief Minister Sindh, Interior Minister, and IG Sindh to enhance the law and order situation in Upper Sindh. He also announced the release of funds for the second phase of the Safe City project in Karachi.

He mentioned that the province-wide crackdown on drugs continues, with recent arrests of drug peddlers in Karachi and Hyderabad. One notable arrest is of a significant dealer known as the "grandmother of the drug world," involved in trafficking ice and crystals.

He emphasized the need for drug dealers to cease their activities, warning of dire consequences if they persist. He lamented the increasing prevalence of drugs in educational institutions nationwide and highlighted their misuse as a status symbol in some circles. Despite this, a robust crackdown against drugs is underway, echoing President Asif Ali Zardari's stance against drugs as a top priority. On this occasion, Senior Minister of Sindh and Provincial Minister for Information Sharjeel Inam Memon handed over a relief cheque of one crore rupees to the family of martyred journalist Nasrullah Gadani on behalf of the Sindh government to his brother Muhammad Bakhsh Gadani.

Blinken on peace mission as Israel keeps hitting Gaza

CAIRO (Reuters): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in the Middle East on Monday hoping to deliver the ceasefire that President Joe Biden proposed last month, in an all-out push by Washington to secure an end to the Gaza war.

The top US diplomat met Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Cairo and was due to meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his defense chief in Israel later in the day. Ahead of his trip, Israel and Hamas both doubled down on hard-line positions that have scuppered all previous attempts to end the fighting, while Israel has pressed on with assaults in central and southern Gaza, among the bloodiest of the war.

"We are committed to total victory," Netanyahu said in a statement released by his office, quoting remarks he made on Sunday to relatives of Israelis killed in Gaza. "What is the main dispute? It is over Hamas' demand ... that we commit to stopping the war without achieving our goals of eliminating Hamas.... I am not prepared to do so."

Hamas, for its part, said Washington must push its ally Israel to halt the fighting. "We call upon the US administration to put pressure on the occupation to stop the war on Gaza, and

the Hamas movement is ready to deal positively with any initiative that secures an end to the war," senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters ahead of Blinken's arrival. The war has now entered its ninth month, since Hamas-led fighters killed 1,200 people and took some 250 others hostage in a rampage through southern Israel. In response, Israel launched an assault on the Gaza Strip that has killed more than 37,000 Palestinians and reduced most of the enclave to wasteland. Palestinian officials said 40 more bodies arrived in hospitals over the past 24 hours. Thousands more dead are believed buried under rubble.

In Rafah, the city on the southern edge of Gaza where Israel launched an offensive last month in defiance of White House pleas, residents said on Monday tanks had been trying to thrust deeper toward the north in the early hours of the morning. They were on the edge of Shaboura, one of the most densely populated neighborhoods at the heart of the city.

Around half of the Gaza Strip's 2.3 million people had been sheltering in Rafah before last month's assault, and a million have had to flee again. Since last week, Israel has also launched a large-scale assault in the central Gaza

Strip, around the small city of Deir Al-Balah, the last population center yet to be stormed. On Monday, residents said the Israelis had pulled back from some areas there but were keeping up air strikes and shelling. Residents in Nuseirat north of Deir Al-Balah were still clearing debris after Israel freed four hostages in a massive raid there on Saturday. Palestinian officials say 274 people were killed, making it of the deadliest assaults of the war. Israeli forces said they were aware of under 100 Palestinians killed there in intense gunbattles, and did not know how many were combatants.

"We are exhausted and helpless, enough is enough," said Jehad, who fled under fire from Saturday's assault in Nuseirat with his family and was now in Deir Al-Balah, speaking by text message. The family had already been displaced from Gaza City to Nuseirat, to Khan Younis, to Rafah and back to Nuseirat before their latest flight. In video obtained by Reuters from Nuseirat, resident Anas Alyan, standing outside the ruins of his home, described how Israel commandos wearing shorts had appeared in the streets, firing wildly while F-16s and quadcopters fired from the air.

90 states headed to Ukraine peace summit

BERN: Ninety states from around the globe have signed up to attend a conference aimed at finding a route to sustainable peace in Ukraine, Switzerland has said, but Russia will not be represented. Swiss President Viola Amherd told reporters in Bern on Monday that the aim of the event on June 15-16 is to agree on a path towards ending the war that started nearly 28 months ago when Russian forces invaded Ukraine.

However, Russia will not be present at the conference, which Switzerland is hosting at Kyiv's request. Bern has previously said that Russia was not invited as it had signalled it was not interested in participating. Moscow has maintained that Switzerland is no longer a neutral country due to its mirroring of sanctions imposed by the European

Union. However, the Swiss government said in a statement that the gathering will aim to "jointly define a roadmap" on how to involve both Russia and Ukraine in a future peace process.

Amherd said that "a handful" of the confirmed participants are from organisations like the United Nations, with the rest representing countries, about half of which are sending a head of state or government. French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz are set to appear. US President Joe Biden will not but the White House will instead send Vice President Kamala Harris and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. Amherd denied that Switzerland was "disappointed" that fewer than 100 countries would attend after about 160 invitations

were sent.

The invitation list sought to drum up support among countries that have better relations with Moscow than leading Western powers. Key developing countries like Turkey and South Africa have not indicated whether they will attend. India, the Swiss said, will take part but it remains unclear at what level. The final list of participants is expected by Friday. Brazil and China said they would not take part unless both sides – including Russia – were at the table, according to Swiss officials.

Beijing last week rejected accusations from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that it was trying, in cooperation with Russia, to undermine the summit by putting pressure on other countries not to attend. — Aljazeera

PTI protests as ATC dismisses Omar Ayub's bail plea

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD/SARGODHA: A special anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Sargodha Monday dismissed PTI Secretary-General Omar Ayub's bail petition over non-appearance as police personnel stopped him from presenting himself before the judge, his lawyer said, prompting a strong protest from the party.

Ayub had arrived on Monday at the court premises to appear before the court; however, he could not ensure his attendance due to the law enforcers, his lawyer told reporters, which led to his bail plea's dismissal in the May 9 and 10 riots case. Several politicians, including Ayub, Amjad Khan Niazi, and Malik Ehsan Ullah Tiwana, have been nominated in the case. With several leaders set to appear, authorities had deployed additional police personnel near the compound.

As he was being stopped, Ayub told reporters that the police personnel were not allowing him to appear before the court on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's "instructions". "They have taken the special court's judge hostage," alleged Ayub, who is the opposition leader in the National Assembly. "Under the guise of security, the police have stopped me from presenting myself before the judge. But I will not leave before marking my attendance," he had said but failed to do so.

For his part, the PTI leader and lawyer Babar Awan, who was also present there, said the government should "punish others to the extent that they can bear themselves", while also alleging that a few people were playing with the country's security. He said that his clients were not being allowed to appear before the court. "Chief Justice of Pakistan [Qazi Faez Isa] should take notice. Which door will we knock on for justice?"

In response, PTI MNA Asad Qaiser said on the floor of the National Assembly that the opposition leader was not allowed to appear before the court today, asking the treasury benches under which law he was stopped. "We condemn this and we're staging a walkout." In the Punjab Assembly, Hafiz Farhat Abbas said that Ayub and other PTI leaders were not allowed to appear before the court.

Hajj heatstroke, deaths fall with S Arabia safety measures

RIYADH: Heat-related deaths and strokes during the Hajj have fallen by 47.6 and 74.6 percent respectively over a 40-year period because of the interventions by the Saudi Arabia government, according to a study published in May this year. The study, titled "Escalating climate-related health risks for Hajj pilgrims to Mecca," was conducted under the auspices of the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Sunday.

The interventions of the government have been effective despite the rise in temperatures in Makkah of 0.4 degrees Celsius per decade, the study found. The study, published in the Journal of Travel Medicine, examined the relationship between the increase in ambient temperatures during the Hajj season and health conditions. The measures taken to mitigate heat-related health risks for pilgrims include the use of mist fans to cool the air in open spaces, the SPA quoted the report as saying.

The government also distributes water and umbrellas; and there are now air-conditioned transport options available, including the Mashaer train at the holy sites since 2010. The

Kingdom has run awareness campaigns along with access to free healthcare services during the Hajj, the report added.

The report found that the government has instituted long-term measures including integrating environmental engineering and building design strategies to improve natural ventilation and reduce temperatures at the holy sites. There has been an increase in shaded spaces, and efforts have been made to reduce overcrowding. Considering that the annual Hajj attracts millions of pilgrims from more than 180 countries, the KFSHRC study "holds enormous scientific value for planning and improving the response to the increasing temperature rise around the world." The KFSHRC is the top-ranked medical brand in the Middle East and North Africa for the second year in a row, and 20th globally, according to Brand Finance. It has also been ranked among the best 250 hospitals in the world by Newsweek magazine.

Millions of Muslims from across the world have arrived to perform Hajj in Makkah during the hottest season of the year in the Kingdom, leading to concerns regarding the challenges that may await

them in the days to come. Unpredictable weather can affect the health and safety of pilgrims, especially the elderly. A primary concern is the extreme heat. As global temperatures continue to rise, heat waves in the region have become more frequent and intense every year.

Last year, temperatures in Makkah ranged between 43-45 degrees Celsius during Hajj, affecting the health of pilgrims, particularly the elderly, who are vulnerable to heat-related problems such as heat stroke and dehydration. Ayman bin Saleem Ghulam, CEO of the Saudi National Center for Meteorology, recently told a press conference in Makkah that maximum temperatures at the holy sites were expected to reach between 45-48 degrees Celsius in the afternoons.

Many elderly pilgrims have underlying medical conditions that can be triggered by heat, making them even more susceptible to health complications. Dr. Fakhr Al-Ayoubi, president of the Cardio Clinical Pharmacy Group in Saudi Arabia, explained to Arab News how the rising temperatures impact the immune system and increase the risk of developing critical health conditions. — Arab News