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F.P. Report

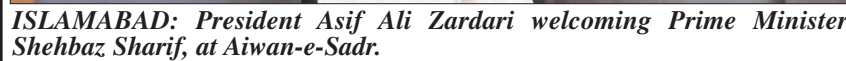
"If we had not been in the IMF programme, we would not have been

Aurangzeb stressed the need to increase the tax-to-GDP ratio and implement complex energy and

The finance minister highlighted that the currency had witnessed stability due to, he mentioned, the policies of the caretaker government. The finance minister said the large scale manufacturing sector faced significant setbacks due to inflation, increased energy costs, and other issues.

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“DHP-I is an essential project in Pakistan’s efforts to reverse its dependence on fossil fuels and reach 60 percent renewable energy by 2031,” said Rikard Liden, Task Team Leader for the Project. “The second additional financing will facilitate the expansion of electricity supply and potentially save Pakistan an estimated \$1.8 billion annually by replacing imported fuels, and offset around 5 million tons of carbon dioxide. The annual economic return of DHP-I is estimated to be around 28 percent.”



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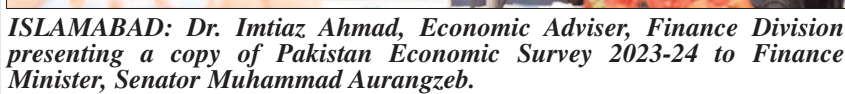
The cabinet which met under the chair of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, asked the law ministry to carry out the required review of the Act, which also aimed at digitizing the services sector in accordance with international

Moreover, a Pakistan Digital Authority would be established to achieve the objectives of Digital Pakistan. Being a corporate entity, the Authority would have financial and administrative autonomy. Apprising the members of his recent visit to China and his meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, the prime minister mentioned

He said that a high-powered Chinese delegation would visit Pakistan to further expand the bilateral cooperation. He told the meeting that B2B meetings were held between the businessmen and investors of Pakistan and China at the Pakistan-China Business Forum in Shenzhen. Prime Minister Shehbaz said the government would send around 1,000 youngsters to China for professional training in innovations and technology in the agriculture sector.

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Speaking during the meeting, President Asif Ali Zardari highlighted that almost 65% of the country's population was residing in rural areas and providing adequate wheat price to farmers would help boost the rural economy. He underlined that maintaining strategic food reserves was essential to ensure food security and meet the future food requirements of the country. He said that soft loans should be extended to the private sector to construct silos and modern wheat storage facilities to meet the food needs of the growing population. The President stressed the need for the availability of credible data regarding crops to make timely policy interventions as well as accurately predict the future food needs of the country. He also suggested that the agriculture sector should be deregulated.



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The prime minister chaired a meeting regarding load-shedding, the anti-power theft campaign and reforms in the power sector. The meeting was attended by Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister for Energy Awaiz Leghari, Minister for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik, PM's Coordinator Rana Ahsan Afzal and senior officials of the relevant ministries, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister advised that purchase of new transformers should be in line with the international standards, besides seeking benefits from the latest adopted present-day system at the global level for bringing

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The prime minister also strictly directed to end over-billing in the country. During the meeting, the prime minister was apprised that till May 30, 134 cases had been registered and a total of 90 employees were arrested. A briefing over the re-organization of National Transmission and Dispatch Company and the progress achieved so far in that regard was given.

Under the reforms in




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PLEASE PAY YOUR QUARTERLY ADVANCE INCOME TAX




Under Section 147 of Income Tax Ordinance 2001, payment of Quarterly Advance Tax is mandatory for the categories below.

Calculation Formula	
<p style="text-align: center;">For Companies and AOPs =$(A \times B / C) - D$</p> <p>Whereas: A= Taxpayer's Turnover of the Quarter B= Tax Assessed to Taxpayer for the Latest Tax Year C= Latest Tax Year's Turnover D= Tax Paid in 'the Quarter' for Which Tax Credit is Allowed under Section-168.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">For Individuals (Income exceeding PKR. 1 Million) =$(A/4) - B$</p> <p>Whereas: A= Latest Tax Year's Assessed Tax B= The Tax Paid in the Quarter for Which a Tax Credit is Allowed under Section-168 (Except under Section-149)</p>


- ▶ Tax liability under Section 113 shall also be taken into account while working out payment of Advance Tax.
- ▶ In the absence of last assessed income or declared turnover, tax payable shall be estimated on the basis of quarterly turnover.
- ▶ Adjustment for tax already paid may be made.

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KARACHI: A view of the cattle market in city before Eidul Azha. —APP Photo

CM reviews health related initiatives

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed the authorities concerned to complete the construction and revamping of Basic Health Units (BHUs) & Rural Health Centres (RHCs) along with major hospitals across Punjab by March and June 2025 respectively.

Chairing a three-hour long meeting to review progress on CM Punjab Special Health Initiatives in the province, here on Tuesday, the CM took a historic decision to grant special allowance to doctors working in health centers and hospitals in remote areas of the province.

The CM was briefed by the authorities concerned that at the cost of Rs 46 billion, the construction of Phase-I of Nawaz Sharif Cancer Care Hospital has started. The hospital will have cancer care clinics, state-of-the-art facilities, world-class doctors and their residences, solar sheds and parking, besides inns and restaurants for the ease and accommodation of patients' relatives. She directed to increase the number of beds from 100 to 150 in the first phase. However, it was briefed that in the second phase, more than 280 beds can be expanded in Nawaz Sharif Cancer Care Hospital.

The CM was apprised that the supply of medicines is being ensured in all health centers and hospitals across Punjab. She evaluated a pro-

posal to establish a specialised hospital in Punjab for the transplant of bone marrow, besides consisting a suggestion to start free insulin program in Punjab.

Maryam Nawaz directed to start the construction of Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cardiology Sargodha as soon as possible, and reviewed the issues related to the outsourcing of angiography services. She noted that monitoring is essential in every sector, a system of continuous monitoring of hospitals is being developed. She directed the Secretary Health to determine facilities available in hospitals vis-a-vis rush of patients.

The CM directed to ensure the completion of health projects on priority, besides optimal utilization of already-available infrastructure. She accorded in-principle approval of a special project to implant artificial limbs for the disabled persons, besides agreeing to establish cancer treatment unit at Qatar Hospital in Bhakkar.

Maryam Nawaz directed to make PIC-II Cardiology operational as soon as possible. She also agreed on the proposal to establish a big hospital in Rajanpur.

The CM had a detailed review of health projects of each division of Punjab, and asked the departments concerned to submit timeline of each project. She underscored that every new health project should set

a new example in quality and standard. No compromise on quality will be tolerated.

The CM was briefed that the facility of field hospital will be available in every tehsil of Punjab, and a special lift has started working for the convenience of patients in field hospitals. She also evaluated conversion of Simli TB Hospital to General Hospital, besides establishing medical colleges in every district on public private partnership basis.

She was briefed that 50 per cent students in these medical colleges will be admitted on government merit. She was also briefed that the installation of EMR system for keeping digital records in primary and rural health centers has been completed. She approved handing over of Government Data Darbar Eye Hospital to the Aqaf Department.

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Information & Culture Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique, MPA Sania Ashiq, Health Advisor Azhar Kayani and Dr. Adnan Khan attended the meeting. Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman, Chairman P&D, Secretaries C&W, Finance, Principal Secretary to CM and IDAP officials were also present.

Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Imran Nazir joined the meeting via video link.

NHA resolves issues related to Peshawar Northern Bypass

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ISLAMABAD: Over the past three years, National Highway Authority (NHA) has made remarkable strides in addressing and resolving complex issues related to the Peshawar Northern Bypass project.

These accomplishments represent significant progress in enhancing the region's infrastructure, reducing traffic congestion, and promoting economic growth. One of the major challenges resolved was the issue of land possession in Package-2 and 3A. NHA effectively coordinated with district government officials to address these issues, facilitating smoother project execution.

This coordination ensured that land in Mouza Charpariza, Karniza, Daag, Khappa, and Patwar Payan under Package-2 was fully awarded and handed over

to the contractor. Similarly, land in Mouza Badezai for Package-3A was awarded and handed over in August 2023, achieving complete land possession for the contractor. NHA also successfully addressed the stoppage of work on two bridges in Package-3A. Construction had been halted since 2021 due to local land disputes and court stay orders, but these issues have now been resolved, allowing the bridges' construction to be completed.

Additionally, the contract agreement for Package-3B was revived after the District Government assured land provision, overcoming legal and administrative hurdles. Further progress included the handing over of land in Package-3B. The District Government Peshawar transferred 2.4 km of land out of the awarded 3.6 km

on December 23, 2023, and work commenced shortly thereafter. Moreover, additional land in District Khyber was handed over on June 8 and 9, 2024, ensuring the project could proceed without further delays.

Another significant achievement was the removal of utilities. All PESCO pylons and HT/LT lines in Package-2 and Package-3A were removed, clearing the way for uninterrupted construction activities. This crucial step was necessary to maintain the project's momentum and ensure timely completion.

NHA also secured approval for the third revised PC-I from the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) on December 11, 2023. This revision, required due to enhancements in land and cost components, high-

lights NHA's commitment to adapting to evolving project needs.

The Peshawar Northern Bypass project offers numerous benefits. It provides an alternative route for through traffic from N-5 and M-1, benefiting localities such as Jamrud, Hayatabad, Landikotal, Torkham, and Afghanistan. Approximately 35% of city traffic, including nearly all heavy through traffic from N-5 and M-1, will be diverted, significantly reducing congestion on major roads like Khyber Road. This diversion will also lead to substantial reductions in vehicle operating costs, travel times, and pollution, promoting a healthier environment.

The achievements underscore the NHA's role in driving infrastructure progress and ensuring vital projects are completed efficiently and effectively.

Punjab narrowing gender gap in educational achievements

LAHORE (APP): Punjab is making headway narrowing the gender gap in educational achievements where the girls consistently outperformed boys in all subjects and grades, including maths.

This was revealed in the results of the National Achievement Test (NAT) 2023 conducted by the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) and released here in a ceremony at a local hotel on Tuesday. Punjab Minister for School Education Rana Sikandar Hayat, Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) Director General Dr. Shahid Soroya, Member Punjab Assembly Amina Hassan Sheikh, Dr. Nasir Mehmood from Punjab Examination Commission (PEC), educationist Dr. Azma Yousaf, Dr. Jessica from Lahore University for Management Sciences (LUMS), Dr. Abbas Rasheed and Dr. Afaf from University of Education also were present on the occasion. According to the result report, over 7,000 students from nearly 380 public schools in Punjab participated in the NAT 2023, providing a revealing snapshot of student learning across the province.

The findings also offer a springboard for further improvement and highlight areas where targeted interventions can yield significant impact. The data also pinpoints areas demand-

ing focused attention. Maths scores across both grades fell below than those achieved in Urdu and English. Grade 4 students encountered the most difficulty in statistics and probability, a trend mirrored by grade 8 students in the same content domain. Science proficiency also showed room for improvement, with the highest average score being 66 percent for grade 8 students in rural schools, the report added.

A trend emerged when examining performance by gender in Punjab, the girls consistently outperformed boys in all subjects where nationally the average scores for both genders were similar. Another noteworthy observation is the disparity in maths scores between rural and urban schools in grade 8. Here, students in rural areas displayed a slight advantage over their urban counterparts. The report also suggested further analysis to understand the reasons behind this trend.

In his address, Punjab Minister for School Education Rana Sikandar Hayat said that under the leadership of the Punjab Chief Minister, the government is making efforts to bring back out-of-school children as it is committed to prioritising education. He added, "The National Achievement Test results are encouraging, we recognize the need to do more. Pakistan

has declared an education emergency to address challenges, including the significant issue of out-of-school children. The collaborative efforts between the Punjab Examination Commission and Pakistan Institute of Education, with technical assistance from Cambridge Partnership for Education, underscore the importance of data-driven decision making in education reform," he observed.

He said that he had called upon the Pakistan Institute of Education for their expertise in tackling the issue of out-of-school children, which impacts a significant number of Punjab's youth. A first-ever census of public and private schools, as well as madrassahs, utilizing NADRA data, will assist in identifying their barriers and implementing targeted solutions, including accelerated learning programs. He added the data analysis will guide further improvements, pushing us closer to our goal of at least 80 percent student proficiency in future assessments.

The minister stated that education is an investment in the future and expressed a commitment to working collaboratively with the Pakistan Institute of Education and all education departments to empower Punjab's children, particularly with the strong support from the public, especially women.

Pakistan Railways announces reduction in train fares

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Railways on Tuesday slashed train fares by 25 per cent to facilitate passengers during Eidul Adha 2024 festivities.

As per details, Pakistan Railways has announced a reduction in fares for three days of Eidul Adha 2024, which will be applicable on all passenger trains except for Eid special trains.

"We are delighted to announce this significant fare reduction as part of our commitment to serving the people of Pakistan," Pakistan Railways spokesperson stated. The discount will be available exclusively for current bookings. Back in May 2024, Pakistan Railways had announced reduction in train fares across various classes.

The economy class fares of some trains had been reduced up to 54% while the air-conditioned class fares reduced by 40%. Eidul Adha, also known as the Feast of Sacrifice, is one of two Eid festivals celebrated by the Muslim faithful to commemorate Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son to God. Traditionally marked by the slaughter of animals, whose meat is shared with family members and the poor.

Punjab govt not giving funds to MPAs: Uzma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari on Tuesday clarified that the Punjab government was not allocating funds to any Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA). In a press statement issued here, she said the government had saved 530 billion rupees for the people of Punjab by discontinuing unnecessary schemes.

She made these remarks in response to Miftah Ismail's statement alleging the distribution of funds to MPAs. Azma Bokhari emphasised that there was no practice of utilising government funds for political interests in Punjab and assured that such practices would not be allowed in the future. She expressed disappointment over Miftah Ismail's statement, considering it irresponsible and unexpected from someone of his stature.

Home Dept sets up control room for Eid

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Home Department has established a control room in the Civil Secretariat to monitor the security situation during Eid-ul-Azha. The control room will remain operational 24/7 under the supervision of senior officers.

The control room will ensure the establishment of law and order and implementation of government orders. According to a spokesman for the Punjab Home Department, important orders have been issued before Eid-ul-Azha and no banned organization will be allowed to collect sacrificial animal hides.

Only organizations registered with the Charity Commission will be allowed to collect the sacrificial animal hides while Section 144 will be enforced on burning of head and trotters in public places. Bathing and boating in rivers, canals and dams will not be allowed, and according to the government policy, Section 144 will also be enforced on throwing animal waste and garbage into manholes or canals.

Guard kills his employer in Lahore

KARACHI (PPI): A security guard shot dead the owner of the shop where he was working in a brisk market of Lahore on Tuesday.

Owner Ghulam Rasool breathed his last on the spot after shot by his security guard in Ghalib Market. A police party led by SP Gulberg Raza has arrested the guard who accused his owner of "doing witchcraft on him".

The police also recovered the murder weapon from the accused. The SP Gulberg said the police is investigating the incident and collecting evidence from the crime scene.

Govt to restore natural waterways: CM Murad

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah Tuesday said that in the wake of the 2022 floods and the impact of climate change, Sindh government was working to restore natural waterways so that flood water could be disposed of in its natural gravity.

This, he said while talking to Ambassador of the Netherlands Mrs Henny de Vries who called on him here at the CM House.

The CM emphasized the need to strengthen our canal system, irrigation network, and drainage system in response to the floods of 2010, 2011, and 2022, in order to mitigate heavy damage from flash floods or riverine floods.

Ambassador de Vries said that the heavy rains that caused floods in Pakistan,

particularly in Sindh were the result of climate change, therefore the onward development needed to make climate resilient. At this, the CM said that his government was working to restore natural waterways so that flood water could be disposed of in its natural gravity.

The chief minister and the Dutch ambassador discussed investment opportunities in Sindh. Mrs Henny de Vries said that the Dutch Agriculture Bank was interested in advancing loans for agriculture development and added that flood-resilient crops were needed for the ongoing climate change era.

The CM thanked the ambassador and said that his government's investment department would contact the Dutch Embassy and discuss the modalities

for agricultural support.

The CM offered Dutch firms to come over and invest in wastewater treatment plants in Karachi. The treated water would be used for industrial purposes and investment in the treatment of water would give good returns. The Dutch Ambassador urged the CM to share the list of the projects for Dutch investors. She also offered technical and financial support for livestock and fisheries development in Sindh.

The CM directed the provincial Investment department to start meetings with the Netherlands ambassador and her team so that investment could be brought in. The CM presented ajrak made by Special Children as a gift which she lauded a lot.

IGP reviews security for Chinese nationals

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh, Ghulam Nabi Memon, announced on Tuesday that the Special Protection Unit (SPU) will ensure comprehensive and foolproof security for Chinese citizens residing and working in the province.

During a review meeting focused on the security arrangements for Chinese nationals, IGP Sindh emphasized that the responsibility for security clearance at the provincial level, as well as in residential areas of Chinese nationals, rests with the district police.

Ghulam Nabi directed the relevant units and depart-

ments to immediately allocate additional personnel to the SPU. He also ordered a thorough security audit of the residences, workplaces, and project locations associated with Chinese residents, experts, and staff.

The IGP announced the formation of a four-member committee to oversee the security of Chinese nationals' residences and movements. This committee will include the Deputy Inspectors General of Police (DIGPs) from Headquarters, Establishment, SPU, and Special Branch. The committee will regularly review and update security

measures in accordance with established rules and regulations.

In the meeting, DIGP SPU provided an in-depth briefing on the current security measures and strategies implemented for the protection of Chinese nationals at the provincial level.

The meeting, held at the Central Police Office in Karachi, was attended by several high-ranking officials, including the Additional IGP Karachi and DIGPs from the Counter-Terrorism Department, Special Branch, SPU, Headquarters, Traffic, South Zone, Training, and other senior police officers.

Sub-Cabinet committee reviews law & order

LAHORE (APP): The seventh session of the Sub-Cabinet Committee on Law and Order was held in the Department of Interior under the chairmanship of Provincial Health Minister and Chairman of the Committee Khawaja Salman Rafique here, on Tuesday.

Provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain and Provincial Minister of Transport Bilal Akbar Khan participated as committee members. Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique conducted a detailed review of the law and order situation across the province, security arrangements for Eid-ul-

Adha, and the release of prisoners on parole, during the meeting, whereas the concerned officers also gave a briefing.

Khawaja Salman Rafique, while expressing his views, said that extraordinary security arrangements would be ensured for Eid-ul-Adha.

During the meeting, Deputy Commissioners were approved to appoint Price Control Magistrates in various districts. Additionally, the release of two prisoners on parole was approved. The committee also approved action against banned organizations collecting sacrificial animals' hides under the

Anti-Terrorism Act on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha. To protect human lives, circular and temporary mechanical swings will be banned in streets and areas during Eid. Action will continue against drug dealers, kite-making factories, and electricity thieves across the province.

Home Secretary Noorul Amin Mengal, Secretary Information and Broadcasting Ahmed Aziz Tarar, Special Secretary Home, Additional IG Chaudhry Sultan, Additional IG Wasim Sial, DG Shahid Iqbal, and Commissioners and RPOs participated in the meeting via video link.

Farmers to be provided tractors on subsidy

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani on Tuesday chaired a review meeting regarding the green tractor scheme by the chief minister of Punjab, at Agriculture House.

The minister said a green tractor scheme was being launched for farmers on the directives of the chief minister Punjab. Under the scheme, small, medium and large tractors would be provided to the farmers on subsidy, he added.

He said green tractor scheme would be a one year scheme. All the system till the delivery of tractors to the farmers would be mechanised, he added and clarified that if the mechanised system was not done properly, then all this scheme would be useless. The color of the tractor will be "green" and the Chief Minister Punjab

Tractor Scheme will be written on it, he added.

The minister said that he would personally monitor this scheme. He endorsed that the vision of chief minister Punjab was to launch the scheme on a large scale. In connection with the purchase of tractor, the farmer should be given the option to buy the good quality tractor of the company he wanted.

He made it clear to the representatives of the tractor industry that the SOPs of the Agriculture Department must be taken into account while preparing the green tractor.

Secretary Agriculture Punjab Ifthikhar Ali Sahoo said that farmers not only, but also the tractor industry would be benefited from this scheme. He maintained that delivery of tractors, receipt of applications and balloting would be conducted

in a transparent manner. There would be no compromise on the quality of Green Tractor Scheme, he added.

Special Secretary Shehanshah Faisal Azeem, Consultant Agriculture Department, Punjab Dr Muhammad Anjum Ali, Director General Agriculture Field Engineer Sohail Ahmed, Director General Agriculture Extension Punjab Chaudhry Abdul Hameed and Director General Agricultural Information Punjab Naveed Asmat Kahloon participated while Chief Financial Officer from Ghazi Tractors Javed Iqbal, Head Corporate & Sales Ghazi Tractors Muhammad Mohsin and Chief Executive Officer Raheel Asghar and Director Marketing Azhar Noor from Millat Tractors participated.

AGPR issues funds availability

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant development to alleviate the hardships of low paid employees of the Federal government, Office of Auditor General of Pakistan Revenue (AGPR) has issued Fund Availability Certificates for all pending motorcycle advance appli-

cations in Islamabad.

This would allow for low paid employees to have their own transport and reduce their traveling time to and from office, said a press release issued here on Tuesday.

The fund availability certificates have been sent

on registered emails of the officials concerned. The list of successful applicants was available on AGPR's official website (www.agpr.gov.pk). The applicants should submit their bills as soon as possible so that they can be processed before June 30.



Chanzeb condoles death of journalist's mother

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PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb has expressed deep sense of sorrow and grief over the death of senior journalist Bakhtzada Yousafzai's mother.

Zahid Chanzeb also expressed grief and sorrow over the death of Chitral's folk artist Mirwali alias Kora Master and PTV and Radio Pakistan's prominent announcer Taskin Zafar. He paid tribute to the services of the above mentioned artists and admitted that both of the artists were infact national assets whose services will be remembered by their fans for a long time.

Tourism Advisor prayed for the forgiveness of the above mentioned deceased and expressed his heartfelt sympathies with the members of their bereaved families.

Training on climate sensitive budgeting held

PESHAWAR (APP): A training session was organized for government officers under the title 'Climate Sensitive Budgeting and Finance Transparency' in collaboration with Transparency International Pakistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission here on Tuesday.

The officers of weather, environment and finance related institutions as well as students and civil society representatives participated.

In the session, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission Deputy Director Communication Syed Saadat Jahan highlighted the role of Access to Information Act in climate change and its budgeting, and informed the Public Information Officers of their responsibilities under RTI and the procedure for providing information.

He said that this law is crucial for transparency, accountability, and effective decision-making in climate finance.

Under the Access to Information Act, a common citizen can obtain information from any government agency. Therefore, institutions have to ensure transparency in terms of climate change related measures and the budget allocated for it.

Syed Saadat Jahan further said that the institution should keep all records of its budget and expenses safe, and upload its details on relevant websites, so that people can get this information at home.

In response to a question, Syed Saadat Jahan said that if any organization or public information officer does not provide information within the prescribed period on the request of the citizens, then the commission can fine them up to 25 thousand rupees.

NEC agrees to release Rs70b for merged districts

PESHAWAR (APP): Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Finance, Muzammil Aslam on Tuesday informed that the National Economic Council (NEC) has agreed to release a grant of Rs 70 billion for the uplift of Merged Districts.

In a statement issued from his office, the Advisor Finance while congratulating the people of Merged Districts on approval of uplift grant said he along with Chief Minister KP Ali Amin Gandapur attended the meeting of National Economic Council and demanded funds for the transmission lines so that low-cost electricity could be provided to the people.

He said the province was all set to generate cheaper electricity of 180 megawatt at the rate of Rs 7 per unit adding that the KP government wanted to provide this low-cost electricity to the Rashakai and Daraban Economic Zones.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi along with VC SBBWU Professor Dr. Safia Ahmed in a group photo with participants of the one-day international conference.

Kundi emphasizes promotion of global-level regional relations

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PESHAWAR: Regional Connectivity Center Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar (SBBWUP) and the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future (PRCCSF), in collaboration with the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, hosted a one-day international conference on "Enhancing Regional Connectivity for the Betterment of Shared Future of Mankind."

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi was the chief guest on the occasion.

Expressing his views, the governor highlighted the significance of promoting global-level regional relations, emphasizing the joint efforts of the PRCCSF, the Chinese Embassy, and the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University's Regional Connectivity Center.

Addressing the conference, the governor stated that promoting regional

connections is essential for eliminating the current unsafe political, social, and economic environment, leading to better conditions in the future.

We must fully implement regional relations and unity while looking towards the future.

He said that the Pakistan Peoples Party and the Communist Party of China have always had close ties. The initiation of CPEC happened during the tenure of the PPP.

Efforts were made by anti-state elements to weaken Pakistan-China relations, attacks were carried out on Chinese engineers, but despite the conspiracies of enemy countries, CPEC will be completed.

He mentioned that CPEC will not only strengthen relations between the two countries but will also be a catalyst for regional development. He emphasized efforts to bring more scholarships from China for our students.

He said that better relations with neighbors and

mutual trade are the path to progress.

Lieutenant Colonel (R) Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director of PRCCSF, Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Safia Ahmed, Director of the Regional Connectivity Center Dr. Zarmena Baloch, and others also addressed the conference. The governor also planted a tree in the university's lawn.

The conference brought together prominent scholars, policymakers, and representatives from various sectors to discuss the importance of regional connectivity in building a better future for all.

Vice Chancellor SBBWU Professor Dr Safia Ahmad (TI) also appreciated the role of Regional Connectivity in the prosperity of the region and for the better future of Mankind. MS Basir Ali Director Project Management Unit KP, Mr Iqbal Sarwar Director KPBOIT and Vice Chancellor Gomal University Prof Dr Shageeb Ul Hassan were among the

guests.

Meanwhile, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi made a surprise visit to the Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium in Peshawar and inspected the decoration and arrangement of the stadium, the playing ground, and the swimming pool.

Provincial leaders of the Pakistan Peoples Party, including Malik Tahmas Khan, Razaullah Khan, and Misbahuddin, were also accompanying the governor. On this occasion, while talking to the media at the Arbab Niaz Stadium, Governor Kundi said that for both national and international cricket competitions, the Arbab Niaz Stadium holds a historical significance.

However, unfortunately, due to the absence of matches in the province for the last fifteen years, this historical stadium has been left deserted. The provincial government should take steps to promote sports competitions in the province, the governor said.

PHC cancels court summer holidays in July

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PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court has decided to cancel summer vacations in July to focus on clearing the backlog of old cases and ensuring timely justice for litigants.

According to Additional Registrar Administration, Mamrez Khan Khalil, the court takes a two-month summer break from 1st July to 1st September, but this year, the administrative committee, in consultation with senior lawyers, has decided to cancel the vacations.

Chief Justice PHC has also approved the decision, which aims to prioritize civil cases and establish special benches to hear them. A roster will be issued to ensure that lawyers can appear in court without any issues.

The court is also working to computerize its system, with most of the work already completed, allowing litigants to access their case status online. The Chief Justice's vision is to complete the remaining work promptly to ensure timely justice for litigants.

PCSIR holds seminar

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PESHAWAR: Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR) Laboratories Complex Peshawar organized a day-long seminar titled "Dimension Stones Summit: Uniting for a Knowledge-Based Economy" to explore the potential of the marble industry in the context of a knowledge-based economy. The event was honored by the presence of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for food Zahir Shah Toru as the Chief Guest, and Fawad Ishaq, President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce & Industry, as the Guest of Honor.

In his address, Zahir Shah Toru highlighted the importance of collaboration among scientists, engineers, and industrialists to innovate and fully exploit the province's vast marble resources. The minister emphasized that by applying advanced techniques, KP could significantly benefit financially from its marble sector. The Chief Guest also praised the efforts of PCSIR Laboratories Complex Peshawar in promoting the marble industry and called for a collaborative approach to drive economic growth in the province.

During the occasion, Jehangir Shah, Director General of PCSIR Laboratories Complex Peshawar, detailed the achievements of the PCSIR Dimension Stones Centre, which is equipped with state-of-the-art marble cutting and polishing machinery. He noted that the Centre, in collaboration with NAVTTC, HOPE-87, KP TEVTA, KP Industries and Technical Education, Sarhad Rural Support Programme, and other organizations, has been providing human resource development training. The DG further added that these programs aim to equip trainees with advanced techniques in marble and mosaic work, enabling them to add value and create products suitable for export, thereby generating significant financial returns.

Speakers at the seminar included Asghar Khan Utmankheil, Chairman APMIA, Mr. Yaqoob Nawaz, DG Mines and Minerals KP, a representative of KPEZDMC, and Professor Dr. Yaseen Iqbal Yousafzai. They all stressed the need for upskilling and reskilling within the marble sector to enhance its global competitiveness.

The seminar brought together experts from the marble industry, academia, and government to discuss strategies for promoting the marble sector in KP. During the brainstorming session, participants explored opportunities for innovation, value addition, and export enhancement.

The event concluded with a commitment to foster partnerships among stakeholders to develop a robust marble industry in KP, aligned with the vision of a knowledge-based economy.

FAPUASA argues federal govt to prioritize higher education

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (FAPUASA) calls upon the federal government to prioritize an increase in the recurrent budget for universities in the upcoming federal budget announcement. FAPUASA President Dr. Amjad Abbas Magsi and General Secretary Dr. Muhammad Uzair emphasized that the recurrent budget has been stagnant since 2018 and urgently needs to be increased from the current 65 billion rupees to 500 billion rupees.

The leadership of FAPUASA highlights that the stagnation of the recurrent budget over the past several years has severely hampered the functioning and development of universities across Pakistan. Dr. Amjad Abbas Magsi stated, "The recurrent budget is essential for the day-to-day operations of universities, including salaries, utilities, and essential academic resources. An increase in this budget is imperative to ensure that universities can maintain their standards and continue to provide quality education."

Otherwise, the universities will have to increase the fee structures of the students. The manifold increase in fees will deprive a large number of students from getting higher education. The stagnant recurrent grant has created severe issues of accessibility and affordability of higher education to a large segment of society."

Dr. Muhammad Uzair added, "The government's focus on increasing the developmental budget, while ignoring the pressing needs of the recurrent budget, is simply a game that overlooks the fundamental requirements of our educational institutions. The developmental budget is important, but without a significant increase in the recurrent budget, universities cannot sustain their basic functions, let alone progress."

FAPUASA firmly believes that an adequate recurrent budget is crucial for the stability and growth of higher education in Pakistan. The leadership warns that without a substantial increase in the recurrent budget, the quality of education and research will continue to decline, affecting the future of thousands of students and the overall progress of the nation.

The association urges the federal government to reconsider its budgetary allocations and make a substantial increase in the recurrent budget to ensure the smooth operation and advancement of universities. FAPUASA stands ready to engage in constructive dialogue with the government to address this critical issue and work towards a sustainable solution for the higher education sector.

Fakhar lauds performance of female players

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jihan has lauded the outstanding performance of female players in various sports during the recent Under-23 Inter-Regional Games.



He expressed his commitment to continue such events in the future, including Inter-Provincial Games and Under-16 Talent Hunt.

He made these remarks as a special guest at a ceremony held at a local hotel in Peshawar to honor the female players from Peshawar Region who participated in the recent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Under-23 Inter-Regional Games.

The ceremony was attended by Secretary Sports Mutiullah, Additional DG Sports Rashida Ghaznavi, Director Operation Azizullah Khan, Regional Sports Officer Peshawar, and District Sports Officers from the region, as well as the female players and girls who participated in the event.

The Advisor to the Chief Minister distributed awards among the players and praised their excellent performance in the recent games.

He said that the same event was a base line for the future achievements for the female players and hoped that the players will continue their such rich performance in future as well with zeal and enthusiasm.

Workshop on unlocking potential of carbon markets held

Umair Muhammadzai

PESHAWAR: A consultative workshop on "Unlocking the Potential of Carbon Markets in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Opportunities, Challenges, and the Regulatory Need Assessment" was held to explore the vast potential of carbon markets in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Planning and Development Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa organized the event, with the Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Jakob Linulf, as the guest of honor.

Mrs. Sarah Rehman, Chief International Development Section, emphasized the urgent need for climate action in Pakistan, citing recent floods, health issues, food insecurity, and impacts on tourism. She highlighted the department's commitment to addressing climate change through dedicated efforts, including a climate cell and collaboration with stakeholders for carbon markets.

The workshop aimed to discuss opportunities and challenges in unlocking the potential of carbon markets in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, identify regulatory needs and gaps in the current framework, explore success stories and potential of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to tap into Voluntary Carbon Markets (VCMs) in Pakistan, Address current challenges, bottlenecks, and knowledge gaps around carbon trading.

Participants gained valuable insights into the potential of carbon markets in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the importance of addressing regulatory needs and challenges.

The Ambassador praised the initiative, stressing the importance of collaboration in addressing the critical challenge of climate change. The workshop fostered a collaborative environment, bringing together stakeholders to discuss and explore opportunities in carbon markets.

The City School holds exciting Summer Camp

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The City School Warsak Campus organized an engaging summer camp, which saw enthusiastic participation from the students in various activities.

The students enjoyed learning and participating in Taekwondo, music, pottery, swimming, baking, glass painting, embroidery, and various art projects. Headmistress Zainab Ali Akbar distributed certificates and awards among the participating students, appreciating their performance and encouraging them.

She remarked that such activities make life easier for students by fostering their creative skills and learning experiences.

Parents of the students praised The City School Warsak Campus for organizing such activities and commended the school administration for their efforts.



7th international conference on Earth Sciences Pakistan concludes

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 7th International Conference on Earth Sciences Pakistan (ESP 2024) concluded triumphantly, leaving a significant mark on the scientific community. Hosted by the National Centre of Excellence in Geology (NCEG) at the University of Peshawar's Bara Gali Summer Campus from June 2 to 4, 2024, the event was a platform for global collaboration and innovation in Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Under the guidance of Dr. Liaqat Ali, Director of NCEG, and with the support of esteemed Chief patron Prof. Dr. Muhammad Jahanzeb Khan, Vice Chancellor of the University of Peshawar, and Patrons Prof Dr

Muhammad Qasim Jan and Prof. Dr Muhammad Tahir Shah, the conference brought together over 250 participants from diverse backgrounds. Renowned scientists and experts from Egypt, Netherlands, Oman, United Kingdom and China shared their insights alongside academics, postgraduate students, and industry leaders.

The conference covered an extensive array of themes, ranging from economic mineral resources to environmental concerns and emerging technologies. Discussions delved into Pakistan's rich mineral reserves, energy potential, geological studies, engineering challenges, and climate change adaptation strategies. Notably, a special workshop on "Policy Framework for Climate-

Induced Hazards and Risks for Critical Infrastructure" highlighted the importance of international collaboration in addressing pressing environmental issues.

An essential aspect of ESP 2024 was its focus on fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. The exhibition by various organizations provided attendees with a glimpse of cutting-edge innovations in the field, while networking opportunities allowed for meaningful interactions between industry leaders and researchers.

The conference's closing ceremony, graced by Prof. Dr. Mark van der Meijde from the University of Twente, emphasized the significance of global cooperation and the transition towards sustainable energy solutions. A memo-

randum of understanding (MoU) signed between NCEG and ITC paved the way for future academic and research collaborations.

Acknowledging the contributions of sponsors, organizers, speakers, and participants, Dr. Waqas Ahmad, Chief Organizer, expressed gratitude for their role in making ESP 2024 a resounding success. Shields and certificates were distributed to commemorate their involvement and dedication.

The support of sponsors including the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF), and Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), among others, was instrumental in ensuring the conference's success.



In brief

Crackdowns against outlaws F.P. Report

PABBI: District Police Officer (DPO) of Nowshera Azhar Khan claimed that the police are working to make Pabbi Tehsil a hub of peace. He said that police officers have been assigned to combat crimes including drug trafficking, street crime, and land grabbing. DPO expressed these views during a meeting with the president of the Pabbi Press Club, Muhammad Ilyas and added that the basic purpose of deploying police officers on merit is to provide selfless service to the public. He said that the police are working day and night to provide security to the people. DPO said that the police have launched a coordinated operation against anti-social elements, criminals, drug dealers, street criminals, land mafia, and loan sharks in Pabbi Tehsil. The protection of life and property of the people is the top priority of the police.

Plea against encroachment F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: A petition has been filed in the Court of Civil Judge against encroachment and poor traffic system in the main Bazaar of Landi Kotal. In the Court of civil Judge Sajjad Ahmad, lawyers Zohaib Khan and Sajjad Hussain have filed a petition stating that due to encroachment traffic jam has become a routine act; however, the authorities concerned have turned blind eyes towards it. It has been written that no proper cleaning process has been placed therefore heaps of garbage can be witnessed in the streets of the Bazaar that not only pollute the environment but also emit bad smell, posing a health hazard. In the petition, Traffic Police, Local Administration and Tehsil Municipal Authority and others argued for keeping in view its jurisdiction to perform their duties for provision public services delivery within stipulated timeframe. It has also asked to ensure smooth flow of traffic by removing all encroachment on the roads in addition to adopt necessary initiatives to clean garbage of the Bazaar. Under the Article 133, case has been registered in the Court of Civil Judge and the Court summoned various officials including Deputy Superintendent Police, Traffic, Khyber, Traffic In-charge, Landi Kotal, Assistant Commissioner, Landi Kotal, Tehsil Municipal Officer, Chairman Local Government, President Anjuman-e-Tajeran, Landi Kotal and Station House Officer, Landi Kotal to appear before it on 13 June, 2024.

Sujawal facing water scarcity F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: For the past two years, the coastal population of Sujawal district has been plagued by acute water scarcity, primarily due to the irrigation department's slackness and the contractor's failure to complete the lining of the Sher Khana water channel. As a result, 20 Dehs in Taluka Jati, Sujawal, have been facing a drought-like situation, with water supply from the main channel suspended for the past two years. Local residents attribute the delay to the contractor's indifferent attitude and subpar work by laborers engaged in the World Bank-funded project. The concrete lining of the main water channel, Sherkhana Mori, which supplies water to over 100 villages in the coastal areas of Sujawal, has been delayed due to the contractor's lack of effort and defective work.

KP govt to work on Dir Motorway and Panjkora Division

Haileem Asad

LOWER DIR: The Special Assistant to the Chief Minister (SACM) on Population Welfare and Development, MPA Malik Liaquat Ali Khan, assured a delegation of elders from Lower Dir that he would advocate for the establishment of Dir University, Panjkora Division and Dir Motorway with the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, urging the release of necessary funds.

He made this commitment while meeting with a group of elders from his native District, Lower Dir, at his office in Peshawar the other day. The visit was organized by the Dir Think Tank (DTT) and the Dir Overseas Pakistanis' Association (DOPA), two organizations dedicated to the region's development.

The 40-member delegation, led by Daim Shah Khan Akhunkhail, included notable figures such as for-

mer Provincial Minister Mahmood Zeb Khan, Professor Dr. Nadeem Sheikh, former district Bar President Jehan Bahadar advocate, DOPA general secretary Tajdar Yousafzai, former Tehsil Bar President Azad Bakht advocate, PML-N leader Malik Numan Khan, JI leader Hazrat Bilal, religious scholar Maulana Ubaidullah Anwar, Professor Dr. Fayyaz Ali Shah, journalist Syed Amjad Ali Shah, Abbas Khan Akhunkhail, and others.

The delegation briefed Malik Liaquat on the pressing issues faced by the people of Dir, Chitral, and Bajaur. They emphasized that a majority of local residents supported the establishment of Dir University, Panjkora Division, and the construction of Dir Motorway.

Liaquat Ali Khan listened to the group's proposals and committed to presenting the

issues of Panjkora Division, Dir University and Dir Motorway to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur. He noted that a resolution for the establishment of Panjkora Division had already been passed by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, and lawmakers from the area would discuss its implementation with the Chief Minister. Regarding the University of Dir, the lawmaker promised that the project would be included in the Annual Development Program (ADP) plan. However, he mentioned that the government currently lacks the necessary funds for it. Additionally, he stated that the government is revisiting the feasibility of the Dir Motorway due to increased land costs. The lawmaker expressed his gratitude to the delegation of elders from District Dir Lower and assured them that the government would not disappoint them.

DRC hold meeting on performance

F.P. Report

BUNER: Chairman Dispute Resolution Council (DRC) Wali Rehman chaired a meeting regarding performance. The report stated that as many as 58 disputes have been registered so far, in which 41 disputes have been settled by mutual consent of the parties due to the tireless efforts and dedication of the DRC members. While 11 disputes were sent for legal action and 2 disputes were filed due to lack of progress on the part of the parties and 4 disputes are still pending which would be resolved soon.

DRC Chairman Wali Rehman and Gadezai DRC elder Mukhtiar Khan said

that out of the disputes resolved so far, disputes worth rupees millions, houses, shops properties worth billions rupees have been resolved amicably by persuading the parties, but no one from either chairman nor member DRC has not even drunk a cup of tea from the parties. They added the members have spent own precious time and pocket money for the pleasure of Allah, considering it a good work and a great reward.

On this occasion DRC members Sardar Ali Khan Mukhtiar Khan Zia Hussain Qaribur Rahman Razi Mulk Khan Diyar Khan of Batai Noor Khan of Bhail Kalay Abdul Rasheed Ustad Zareen Khan Dada

Maulana Ehsanur Rahman Zubair Khan Journalist Abdur Rahman Abid Shah Khalid Khan Akbar Ali Khan hailed performance so far and appreciated chairman Wali Rehman and elder Gadezai Mukhtiar Khan for the selfless efforts and expressed their firm commitment and determination to carry forward this good cause with the same zeal to end hostilities resolving conflicts in the region and to render services for a prosperous society.

DSP Circle Pir Baba Muhammad Naseer praised everyone member of DRC circle Pie Baba for their good work and assured that the police will fully cooperate for wellbeing of the society.

BHUs to be equip to facilitate public at doorsteps

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad paid surprise visit to Rural Health Centre Kaleki and Basic Health Unit Kot Sarwar. She checked attendance register of staff, availability of medicines, cleanliness and provision of other treatment facilities to patients in the centre.

She directed the doctors and other staff to improve hygienic condition of RHC particularly to keep neat and clean bed sheets. District Manager Punjab Health Facilities Management Company (PHFMC), Muhammad Iqbal was also accompanying by DC. Later, DC visit Basic Health Unit Kot Sarwar and Directed the District Manager PHFMC to improve cleanliness condition of the centre and to ensure provision of medicines and other treatment facilities to patients without any hurdle. She also directed to get repair boundary wall of the BHU.

Meanwhile, DC gave away meddles and commendation certificates to

female player badminton who participated in South Asian Games, Pakistan Inter Board and Chief Minister's Talent Hunt Badminton competitions.

Chief Executive Officer Education Muhammad Anwar Javed, District Sports Officer Nabila Cheema, Badminton Coach Ghulam Sarwar Shaheen, Headmistress government girls higher secondary school Vanike Taran Naghmana Hayat and position holder female players were also present on this occasion.

While lauding abilities and excitement of female students and congratulating, DC said that participation of female students from Hafizabad in International, National and Inter Board competitions and to grab positions was a big success and honour for Hafizabad. She said that teachers, coaches and parents of female students of government schools were deserving compliment who encouraged students to take part in sports activities side by side their routine educa-

tional activities. DC distributed certificates among Sama Naveed, Hanna Irshad, Anum Shahzadi, Sania Ikram, Mafia Rani and other players.

Community policing directed: District Police Officer Faisal Gulzar has said that no one will be allowed to violate the law. All possible action will be taken for law and order throughout the district and anyone who breaks the law will be dealt with iron hands.

Police is always alert to deal with any situation. Therefore, one should not be under the impression that he is very influential. All are equal in the eyes of the law. They will not allow the peace and order of the district to be disturbed in any way and will use all their abilities to protect the people and uphold the law. He said that out of the accused involved in organizing the illegal gathering of Burj Dara, the police have so far arrested 6 accused while raids are being conducted to arrest the rest of the accused.



QUETTA: People buying a sheep from a vendor for Eidul Azha.

Malaria outbreaks in Barikot F.P. Report

BARIKOT: The number of malaria and diarrhea patients has increased in the Amluk Darra area of Barikot district Swat, on Tuesday. In-charge Civil Hospital Barikot Dr. Fakhir Alam took immediate steps and sent letters to the supervisors of the sub-division. Assistant Commissioner, local government officials, and journalists, urging them to take prompt measures against these diseases in the area.

Dr. Fakhir Alam informed newspaper representatives that the number of patients from the Amluk Darra area in the hospital's OPD was higher than usual, prompting them to take immediate action and alert relevant institutions.

He announced that a medical camp would be set up in the area after Eid-ul-Azha, where treatment would be provided, and health department officials, TMA Breekot officials, and others would also spray insecticides in drains and other areas to prevent the spread of diseases. He added that the hospital has chlorine tablets to purify water and would also provide vaccines against these diseases.

Two robbers killed in encounter

OKARA (INP): Two robbers were killed while their two accomplices managed to escape after exchange of fire with police here on Tuesday. Arms, bike and cell phones recovered from possession of the killed robbers.

According to details, four robbers riding two motorcycles started firing at patrolling police party in Abadi Farid Nagar in Okara. In retaliatory firing of police, two robbers were killed while two others managed to flee from the scene.

The police recovered a motorcycle, arms and mobile phones from possession of the killed robbers. Heavy contingent of police reached the scene and cordoning off the area conducted search operation for fled robbers.

DPO for foolproof security arrangements for Eid

F.P. Report

KOHAT: District Police Officer Muhammad Umar Khan on Tuesday directed comprehensive security arrangements to ensure law and order during Eidul Azha.

He emphasized enhancing surveillance to curb motorcycle one-wheeling, aerial firing, swimming in deep waters, and illegal boating. He stressed the need for special security measures at cattle markets, bazaars, places of worship, and all key locations vulnerable to potential terrorist attacks.

The DPO also instructed to strengthen monitoring and patrolling on major highways to ensure the safety of travelers and cattle traders and prevent incidents of robberies. He further directed effective

measures to check public and recreational places and transport hubs, discourage the display of weapons, and prevent carrying firearms. Additional personnel would be deployed under a special traffic plan to maintain smooth traffic flow at all times.

The DPO also emphasized the need for strict implementation of the comprehensive security plan and related SOPs for Eid prayer gatherings. Reiterating the commitment to make Kohat crime-free, he stated that police stations would be made safe havens for law-abiding citizens and reform centers for miscreants. He warned that strict action would be taken against anti-social elements, especially those involved in drug trafficking and gambling. The DPO

appealed to the public to cooperate with the police in maintaining law and order during Eid-ul-Adha and to report any suspicious or illegal activities to their nearest police station promptly.

Five-member gang of transformer thieves arrested: Kohat police a five-member gang that was involved in stealing electricity transformers and power cables.

The arrested thieves were identified as Asayed Khan, Abdullah, Habibullah, Prabi Khan and Umar Khalid. Police said that gang members who belong to Jarma and Muslimabad area have confessed to their crimes. Stolen cables and tools that were used in the theft were recovered from possession of the arrested gang.

Wheelchairs distributed among people with disabilities

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: 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, Kohat.

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 Mr. 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, Ms. 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, BHQ'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.

Civil society demanded actions against mafias for peace

F.P. Report

LARKANA: The leaders of Larkana Social Ittehad' (LSI) met with DC Larkana at his office to solve social problems. On this occasion, the leader of the Larkana Social Ittehad, Hafiz Bashir Ahmed Sheikh, along with other leaders, were informed about receiving complaints from the citizens against the increasing unrest in the city and against the corrupt mafia.

On which the DC Larkana while addressing the leaders of the social alliance said that the development of the city and providing relief to the citizens is the responsibility of the district administration. The instructions have been issued for those who do not comply, raiding teams have been appointed who will take legal action against the non-compliant shopkeepers.

On this occasion, the leaders of Larkana Social Union, Sheikh Hafiz Bashir Ahmed Hussaini Sarwan, Larkana Social Union, Liaquat Ali Umrani, President of

Larkana Social Union, Zwar Ghulamullah Kori, Information Secretary Asif Ali Shahani Agwan. Hafiz Aslam Ali Khandaro Hussaini District President Pakistan Sunni Tehreek and other leaders were present on the occasion.

Arts Council to host Sindhi folklore: Sindhi Literary Sangat Branch Jurrio Chandio, with the help of Arts Council of Pakistan "Literature Section" of Larkana, in the open-air theater of the Arts Council, is a poet who writes poetry in public language, a conscientious teacher, a social worker and a music lover. "Dayo Majeed" will live together this time.

There was also a musical and musical event, in which the poets recited their masterpieces, were applauded and the people who were sitting with their heads bowed were swayed. Dayo Majeed is the flower of the garden of poetry, from which the fragrance of public poetry comes, his poetry has artistic and intellectual qualities and the aim of the Sindhi Literary Sangat is that young poets

and writers participate in the Sangat's critical meetings to improve their writing.

A famous poet of Sindh, Ahmed Ali "Sabir" chandio, a prose writer, speaking as a special guest, said that poets and writers define paths for nations, and politicians are responsible for putting them into practice when they sit on the thrones of power. If we look at the history, we can see the traces of the history of countries in poetry. Dayo Majeed is also a poet. The poetry of this poet who writes in vernacular language and dialect has spread throughout Sindh, in which musicians have played a major role.

Dayo Majeed has the ability to write songs. The subjects are the subjects of the earth and the stories described in his poetry are also wonderful. Dayo Majeed, the great poet of Rahan, said that whatever I have written, I have tried to write it with love, love and truth. I still learned that my favorite hobby is listening to music and studying. Sindhi Literary Sangat Branch is associated with Jadhoo Chandhi, I

am trying to learn from Sangat's craft meetings. Renowned poet Sami Sajid Junji, speaking as a special guest, said that "Dayo Majeed is a poet as well as a philanthropist.

He is always helping the poor, the needy and the needy with his poetry. Public colors are otile." Arts Council of Pakistan Larkana's finance secretary and supervisor of the literature department, Abdul Nabi Sario, while speaking, said that this organization belongs to the city and its residents, scholars, writers and poets. We are only facilitators and we consider it our duty to facilitate all of them for the programs and we will continue this service. He added that Dayo Majeed is a good teacher as well as a good poet. Will take it further. The well-known and famous literary worker of children's literature *Ustad Gul Dayo said.

"The poets and teachers of the nations are true to their land and duty, those nations will surely enjoy their destiny. Dayo Majeed is also a dutiful teacher. He is a

great man, a person who loves music to the point of madness. It is the good fortune of Dayo Majeed that his poetry has been sung by almost 50 people Gul Sangi, Anwar Qambrani, Sagar Shah and many other poets have been sung by many singers and their popularity is not hidden from anyone, but their name could not be captured in the literary world due to their association with the Sindhi literary association of Dayo Majeed I am sure that his name will be counted in the literary world."

The secretary of the host branch, Ijaz Seetai, thanked all the guests and explained the performance of his branch. Before that, the counselor of the branch and the poet Sagar Kubobai introduced Dayo Majeed and said, "I have been associated with Dayo Majeed for twenty years. He is a cheerful, tolerant and kind person. He is a bridge between all our friends." The actor is a friend. We all appreciate his friendship. This program was hosted by the famous poet and broadcaster and the sincere man

Khawar Qubaii. In recognition of his services, he also presented the shield of the best literary worker to Ustad Gul Dayo daOn this occasion, there was also a mushaira, in which the above-mentioned guests including Aziz Nawaz, Ahmed Adisi, Siddique Soomro, Isa! Chandio, Zahid Ali Junejo, Amjad Hisbani, Azhar Majeed, Irshad Akash and many other poets presented their unique creations and received applause.

At the end, there was a music concert in which Nawaz Mirathi, Farman Ali Chandio, Zahid Ali Zahid, Raja Simon and Ghulam Murtaza Dayo were the main singers. Writers and literature friends participated, among them: "Asi" Ahmad Ali Abbasi, Barkat Ali Gad, Asif Junejo, Syed Rustam Ali Shah, Liaquat Simon, Fahad Korai, Faqir Ali Gohar Mangrio, Naveed Sagar Leghari, Intiaz Khavoor, Hassan Mujtabi! Amjad Gul Soomro, Shaukat Sheikh, Nimatullah Dayo, Abdul Masoor Dayo, Rashid Ali Dayo, Iqbal Ahmed Sheikh and others were included.



Taiwan takes pragmatic approach to keep formal allies

TAIPEI: Hundreds of foreign delegates were in Taipei last month to watch William Lai Ching-te sworn in as Taiwan's fifth elected president. Beijing, which claims the democratic island as its own, has branded Lai a "separatist" and "troublemaker" but that did not stop as many as 508 foreign delegates from attending the ceremony where they had front-row seats to the colourful parade and flypast.

But while there were some from countries like Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, only a few were actual heads of state or high-ranking officials. They came from Taiwan's 12 remaining formal diplomatic allies and included the king of Eswatini, the prime minister of Tuvalu and the president of Paraguay. The flags of their countries were on display all around the site of the inauguration alongside Taiwan's flag, and there was a special round of applause for each leader during the ceremony.

The day before the inauguration, soon-to-be President Lai and Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim had also taken the foreign leaders fishing for prawns. "The Taiwanese government values its diplomatic allies," assistant professor Fang-Yu Chen from the Department of Political Science at Soochow University in Taipei told Al Jazeera.

Since 2016, when the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) took the presidency under Tsai Ing-wen, Beijing has turned up the heat on the island, which at that time had 22 formal allies. Its officials rejected all overtures for talks and stepped up efforts to woo the island's then-22 diplomatic allies. Lai's victory in January brought more of the same, with the Pacific island of Nauru switching sides just days later and Beijing criticising countries such as the Philippines that congratulated Lai on his win. Amid continued pressure from China, Taiwan has sought to hold onto its formal allies by high-lighting their common values and shared principles of freedom, democracy and respect for human rights, but according to Brian Hioe, a political commentator and founder of Taiwan-focused magazine New Bloom, the reality is more complicated. "It is about geopolitics," Hioe told Al Jazeera.

That geopolitics was on full display last April when Tsai stopped over in the US on her way to, and from, Central America where she visited diplomatic allies Belize and Guatemala. During her US transit, she met several US officials, including then-Speaker of the House of Representatives Kevin McCarthy. A few months later, Lai, who was then vice president, also made stopovers in the US to meet American officials during a trip to Paraguay in South America.

Italy's mafia a threat to democracy

ROME (AP): Last month, an Italian administrative court confirmed the dissolution of the city administration of the Puglia city of Neviano, after an investigation determined that local officials were being unduly influenced by the mafia. The decision barely made news in Italy, where city hall administrations, town councils and local public health agencies are regularly dissolved because of mafia infiltration or collusion, and independent commissioners appointed to take over.

While the popular image of the Italian mob was made famous by Don Corleone and the gangland shootouts of "The Godfather," the reality of organized crime in Italy today is far more nuanced and eats away at the heart of its democracy: local governance. From the awarding of big public works contracts to small-town decisions about who manages landfills, parking lots and beach concessions, local governments are particularly vulnerable to mafia influence and corruption, according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, an interagency organization.

Green parties suffer EU poll drubbing

BERLIN (AFP): Green parties suffered major losses in the EU elections, particularly in France and Germany, hit by growing discontent at the bloc's environmental push and by voters' shifting priorities. They had notched up their best ever results at the last European Parliament polls five years ago, which were accompanied by mass rallies over climate change.

But the parties appeared to be the biggest losers of this year's election, with projections showing they will be left with just 53 seats in the parliament -- down from a record 72 in 2019. The German Greens -- part of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's beleaguered ruling coalition -- saw their support slide to just 12 percent compared with 20.5 percent in 2019, according to preliminary results. France's main Green party, EELV,

Puglia, which will host this week's Group of Seven summit, ranks fourth among Italian regions in the number of local administrations that have been dissolved because of mafia infiltration, with 26 decrees issued since 1991, out of a national total of 326, according to Avviso Pubblico, an Italian association that tracks the decrees. That fourth-place ranking also corresponds to the fourth-place status of its local mafia, the Sacra Corona Unita, on the hierarchy of Italy's mafia clans. The SCU is the youngest and smallest of the organized crime groups in the country, after the 'ndrangheta in Calabria, the Camorra in Campania and Cosa Nostra in Sicily. And it is the only one whose origins are really known: it was founded in prison in the early 1980s by Pino Rogoli as an autonomous Puglia-based alternative to other mobs.

While initially focusing on the trafficking of cigarettes and other contraband with Balkan countries, the SCU's clan-based organization morphed into drug trafficking and extortion. In the 2000s, it began a new phase "of getting rooted in the territory, the so-called cover-

up and camouflage phase," said Marilù Mastrogiovanni, an investigative journalist and journalism professor at the University of Bari. That phase, which is bearing fruits for clans today, involved avoiding calamitous acts of violence "so that everyone, from ordinary citizens to law enforcement, would forget about it," she said.

Now, the focus is on laundering drug profits through legitimate front companies, many catering to Puglia's booming tourism industry, while infiltrating the local public administration to steer public contracts its way, said Carla Durante, head of the Lecce office of Italy's Anti-Mafia Investigative Directorate. Europol, the European police force, says 60% of the organized crime groups it tracks in Europe engage in some sort of corruption, from petty bribery of public officials to multi-million euro corruption schemes. "Corruption erodes the rule of law, weakens institutions of states and hinders economic development," Europol said in its latest report, "Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment."

lowing a bout of record inflation, and security, with wars raging in Ukraine and the Middle East. There have also been signs of growing frustration among voters at the cost of green transition measures, such as switching to electric vehicles and overhauling heating systems. "Climate protection has slipped down people's list of priorities, even among young people," said German news outlet Spiegel, seeking to explain the losses suffered by the country's Greens. "War, and a longing for peace, are much more important, as are social issues, crime and immigration." After their gains in the 2019 EU polls, Green parties had helped to push through a mammoth package of "Green Deal" laws as warnings about the dire impact of climate change multiplied.

Far right made big gains in EU elections

BRUSSELS (AP): For decades, the European Union -- which has its roots in the defeat of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy -- confined the nationalist far right to the political fringes. With a strong showing in elections, far-right forces could now influence or block joint EU-wide policies on migration, security and climate change.

What's next? Senior EU party officials and number-crunchers met to work out what kind of groups and alliances might be formed in the parliament for the next five years. Party presidents will hold their first formal talks on Tuesday. EU presidents and prime ministers will hold a summit June 17 to take stock of the results. They will also discuss whether to return Ursula von der Leyen to the helm of the EU's powerful executive branch, the European Commission. The new parliament's first session starts in mid-July in Strasbourg, France. Pro-EU conservative parties are expected to have the biggest group. Populist or far-right forces have more seats than ever, but their views diverge on many issues.

One thing is clear: The results will slow decision-making and the passing of legislation on issues from climate change to farm subsidies. The two world wars and the Holocaust started in Europe, and EU was created to prevent such horrors. Longtime enemies agreed to open trade and borders and even share their currency, sacrificing some sovereignty to ensure stability after centuries of conflict. The EU's single market has helped keep Europe competitive in a globalized economy. Its collective economic weight means that its sanctions bite -- one reason Russia's Vladimir Putin benefits from divisions within the bloc.

Ukraine may keep some F-16 planes abroad

KYIV (AP): Ukraine may keep some of the F-16 fighter jets it's set to receive from its Western allies at foreign bases to protect them from Russian strikes, a senior Ukrainian military officer said.

Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway have committed to providing Ukraine with over 60 US-made F-16 fighter jets to help it fend off Russian attacks. Ukrainian pilots are currently undergoing training to fly the warplanes ahead of the deliveries expected to start later this year. Serhii Holubtsov, head of aviation within Ukraine's air force, said that "a certain number of aircraft will be stored at secure air bases outside of Ukraine so that they are not targeted here."

Holubtsov told the US government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that those F-16s could be used to replace damaged aircraft as they undergo repairs as well as for training Ukrainian pilots abroad. "This way, we can always have a certain number of aircraft in the operational fleet that corresponds to the number of pilots we have," he said. "If there are more pilots, there will be more aircraft in Ukraine."

Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned that Moscow could consider launching strikes at facilities in NATO countries if they host the warplanes used in Ukraine. "If they are stationed at air bases outside the Ukrainian borders and used in combat, we will have to see how and where to strike the assets used in combat against us," Putin said last year. "It poses a serious danger of NATO being further drawn into the conflict."

In March, the Russian leader again warned Ukraine's Western allies against providing air bases from where the F-16s could launch sorties against the Kremlin's forces. Those bases would become a "legitimate target," he said. "F-16s are capable of carrying nuclear weapons, and we will also need to take that into account while organizing our combat operations," Putin stated.



GAZA: Palestinian women mourn near the bodies of relatives killed in an Israeli airstrike, outside the morgue in Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir el-Balah.

Top Canadian judge steps down from Hong Kong's top court

LONDON (AP): A former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada is stepping down from Hong Kong's top court, city officials said, following a raft of other overseas judges' resignations from the court amid concerns about Hong Kong's judicial independence.

Beverly McLachlin would end her term serving as a non-permanent overseas judge at Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal, Hong Kong's judiciary confirmed, without giving more details. Canadian media outlets reported McLachlin noted in her statement that she has reached 80 years of age and will retire from that position when her term ends in July. She said she intended to spend more time with her family and she continues to have confidence in the members of the court and their independence, the reports said.

Also, a British judge who resigned from the same court last week said she stepped down because the rule of law in the city is in "grave danger" and judges operate in an "impossible political environment created by China." Jonathan Sumption, who had served as a non-permanent overseas judge on Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal, described a growing "paranoia of the authorities" and judges being intimidated by a "darkening political mood" in the Asian financial hub in an article published by the Financial Times.

"Hong Kong, once a vibrant and politically diverse community, is slowly becoming a totalitarian state. The rule of law is profoundly compromised in any area about which the government feels strongly," he wrote.

"The least sign of dissent is treated as a call for revolution." He wrote that he remained on the court in the hope that the presence of overseas judges would help sustain the rule of law, but "I fear that this is no longer realistic." McLachlin and Sumption were the latest of several overseas judges who have quit Hong Kong's highest court in recent years.

Hong Kong, a former British colony, is a common law jurisdiction, unlike mainland China. After the city returned to Chinese rule in 1997, non-permanent overseas judges have consistently served on its top court. Fifteen such judges served in 2019. About seven remain following McLachlin's departure next month. The city government expressed its strong disagreement with Sumption's comments in a lengthy statement Tuesday. It insisted the city's courts are not under any political pressure from Chinese authorities or the local government when handling cases, and said the rule of law in the financial hub has not declined. "Anyone who suggested otherwise, no matter what the reasons or motives may be, would be utterly wrong, totally baseless, and must be righteously refuted," it said.

Hong Kong's leader, John Lee, doubled down in his weekly news briefing, saying the professional duty of judges is to interpret and apply law in accordance with legal principles and evidence, regardless of their political views about a certain law. Lee said Sumption in 2021 wrote about people's confusion between democracy and the rule of law and his latest statement appears

to be contradictory to his previous stance. Lee also said some British officials and politicians have attempted to "weaponize" the U.K. judicial influence to target China and Hong Kong and the city should not allow that.

"It is sad and disappointing that our judges are abandoned by a few overseas counterparts and have been so unfairly treated," he said. In 2022 another British judge, Robert Reed, stepped down while saying the administration "has departed from values of political freedom, and freedom of expression." Another judge, Lawrence Collins, resigned last week, telling The Associated Press that his departure was "because of the political situation in Hong Kong. But he said he continues "to have the fullest confidence in the court and the total independence of its members." Rights groups and critics say Chinese authorities' enactment of a 2020 national security law has eroded Hong Kong's judicial independence and all but wiped out public dissent. Many pro-democracy activists have been arrested under the law.

In May, a Hong Kong court found 14 pro-democracy activists guilty of conspiring to commit subversion in the city's biggest national security case to date. They were among 47 activists accused of attempting to paralyze Hong Kong's government and topple the city's leader by securing the legislative majority necessary to indiscriminately veto budgets. The Beijing and Hong Kong governments have insisted that the law has helped bring back stability following huge anti-government protests in 2019.

SK troops fired warning shots after NK soldiers crossed border

SEOUL (AP): South Korean soldiers fired warning shots after North Korean troops briefly violated the tense border earlier this week, South Korea's military said Tuesday, as the rivals are embroiled in Cold War-style campaigns like balloon launches and propaganda broadcasts.

Bloodshed and violent confrontations have occasionally occurred at the Koreans' heavily fortified border, called the Demilitarized Zone. While incident happened amid simmering tensions between the two Koreas, observers say it won't likely develop into another source of animosity as South Korea believes the North Koreans didn't deliberately commit the border intrusion and North Korea also didn't return fire.

Some North Korean soldiers who were engaged in unspecified work on the northern side of the border crossed the military demar-

cation line that bisects the two countries, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. Those North Korean soldiers carrying construction tools -- some of them armed -- immediately returned to their territory after South Korea's military fired warning shots and issued warning broadcasts, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. It said North Korea had not conducted any other suspicious activities.

South Korea's military has assessed that the North Korean soldiers didn't appear to have intentionally crossed the border because the site is a wooded area and MDL signs there weren't clearly visible, Joint Chiefs of Staff spokesperson Lee Sung Joon told reporters. Lee gave no further details. But South Korean media reports said that about 20-30 North Korean soldiers had entered South Korean territory about 50 meters (165 feet) after they likely

lost their way. The reports said most of the North Korean soldiers were carrying pickaxes and other construction tools.

The 248-kilometer (155-mile) -long, 4-kilometer (2.5-mile) -wide DMZ is the world's most heavily armed border. An estimated 2 million mines are peppered inside and near the border, which is also guarded by barbed wire fences, tank traps and combat troops on both sides. It's a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty. South Korea resumed anti-Pyongyang propaganda broadcasts from its border loudspeakers in response to the North's recent launches of balloons carrying manure and rubbish across the border. South Korea said North Korea has installed its own border loudspeakers in response but hasn't turned them on yet.

North Korea has said its balloon campaign was in response to South Korean activists' launches of their own balloons to drop propaganda leaflets critical of leader Kim Jong Un's authoritarian rule, USB sticks with K-pop songs and South Korean drama shows, and other items in North Korea. North Korea is extremely sensitive to any outside criticism of its political system as most of its 26 million people have no official access to foreign news. Kim's sister and senior official, Kim Yo Jong, warned of "a new response" if South Korea continued its loudspeaker broadcasts and refused to stop civilian leafletting campaigns. The tit-for-tat over speakers and balloons -- both Cold War-style psychological warfare -- have deepened tensions between the Koreas as talks over the North's nuclear ambitions have remained stalled for years.

Czech PM blames failed arson attempt on Russia

PRAGUE (BBC): The Czech prime minister, Petr Fiala, has said a failed arson attack that took place in Prague last week was "very likely" organised and financed by Russia. Speaking after a meeting of the Czech National Security Council, Mr Fiala said the failed attack was evidently part of a "hybrid" campaign of sabotage being run by Moscow against European countries.

Police said a foreign citizen was arrested in connection with the incident and was being held in custody on terrorism charges. He was described as "a Spanish-speaking man originally from South America" and had apparently been in the country for five days. The prime minister said the attempt to set fire to buses at a depot in Prague was

likely connected to a spate of arson attacks in Europe that he said appeared to be orchestrated by Moscow.

These, he said, included May's arson attack in Warsaw, and a similar attack in a branch of Ikea in Lithuania, which authorities believe were carried out by Russian intelligence agents or their proxies. "The connection [to Russia] is not only possible, but highly probable," Mr Fiala told reporters. "The attack was probably organised and financed from Russia." The BBC has approached the Russian foreign ministry for comment on Mr Fiala's allegations. Police beefed up patrols across the Czech capital last Friday after claims of a heightened risk to security. They released CCTV footage apparently showing a dark-haired man

paying for items in a shop or petrol station. They said the man was possibly dangerous and should not be approached, but gave no further information. Police president Martin Vondrasek said the man had been apprehended the following day. "On Friday we asked the public for assistance. The suspect was arrested. A criminal prosecution was launched, a court ordered he be remanded in custody," Mr Vondrasek told journalists at a news briefing. The man -- described as a 26-year-old of South American origin -- is accused of trying to set fire to buses at a public transport depot in Prague's Klicov district in the early hours of Thursday morning.

Local media initially reported that he had spit petrol over several buses at the depot, but failed to set

them on fire. However, a spokeswoman for Prague's public transport authority was quoted by news outlet Novinky.cz as saying the man had set several buses alight, and the fires were subsequently extinguished by depot workers. The fires caused an estimated 200,000 Czech crowns (£6,864; \$8,738) of damage, she said. He now faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted under terrorism legislation -- 30 if given an exemplary sentence.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Czech government has become one of Ukraine's most ardent supporters, providing military assistance including artillery, tanks and ammunition. However the mutual antipathy predates the February 2022 invasion.

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Washington seeks another bloody hellscape

It seems that the United States cannot resist continuing to up the ante in its meddling in the Taiwan question and that it will keep sending wrong signals to the "pro-independence" forces on the Chinese island.

If the Chinese mainland "invades" Taiwan, the United States will "turn the Taiwan Strait into an unmanned hellscape using a number of classified capabilities", Admiral Samuel Paparo, the new head of US "Indo-Pacific" Command, was quoted as saying by The Washington Post in an opinion piece published on Monday. Having washed their hands of the domestic problems in the US, which require more than a sound bite and badge of blame pinned on those of the other political stripe to fix, the members of the political establishment in Washington have obviously been drumming their fingers in idleness for too long — which has been an invitation for the devil to give them something to do.

Despite having already created "unmanned hellscape" in Ukraine and Gaza, that has clearly not been enough for someone with the work ethic of Lucifer who is unwilling to let the Washington do-gooders rest on their blood-soaked laurels. According to Paparo, the US' plan is to use a large, lethal drone force to buy the US time "for the rest of everything" in its "Hellscape strategy". Such rhetoric is obviously meant to boast of the US' military capabilities in the region while shoring up the confidence of Taiwan's new regional radical separatist leader Lai Ching-te that he enjoys the US' support. Last month, Lai filled his inauguration speech with "Taiwan independence" fallacies and hostile rhetoric toward the mainland, shamelessly claiming that Taiwan is a de facto "sovereign" nation parallel with the mainland.

Much of Lai's audacity in voicing such hokum in violation of the legal status of the island comes from such overt expressions of support the island's separatists have been offered by the US and its allies, which have emboldened the island's "pro-independence" forces to walk ever more boldly and recklessly along the dangerous road of splitting the island from the motherland in recent years. But Lai and his "pro-independence" Democratic Progressive Party cohorts should know even in the worst-case scenario of a cross-Strait "hellscape" the US will not be able to materialize their pipe dream. In such a scenario, they will simply bring untold suffering on the Taiwan people as a whole, who will pay a dear price for the island being sold to Washington as part of a devil's bargain. The US should fully recognize the sensitivity of the Taiwan question and the dangerous ambition of the "Taiwan independence" separatists, which poses the biggest risk to cross-Strait peace and stability as well as a major challenge to China-US relations.

High-ranking figures in the US military have been voicing such fire-and-brimstone warnings like Paparo's with increasing frequency now that the Joe Biden administration has unlocked the gates to hell in Europe and the Middle East. Not only is the US trying to impress upon the outside world that the US military is well-prepared for a conflict over Taiwan but it is straining at the leash to get into the fray again, having nursed the wounds suffered in the ill-conceived war on terror.

No matter what the US says or does it will not deter the People's Liberation Army from doing its duty should the need arise. The PLA has already demonstrated its capability to effectively seal off the island. The US should fully abide by the one-China principle, honor its commitment of not supporting "Taiwan independence" and stop sending any wrong signal to pro-independence forces in Taiwan in any form. The intensified PLA patrols and exercises around Taiwan are not only meant to deter the separatists in Taiwan but also meant to send an unmistakable message to any outside forces that they should not underestimate Beijing's resolve to safeguard the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Macron's gamble in the face of far-right

French President Emmanuel Macron dissolved the National Assembly on Sunday, and called for a snap poll on June 30 (first round) and July 7 (second round). This was in response to the overwhelming performance of Marine Le Pen's far right National Rally (RN) in the European Parliament elections over the weekend.

In a sombre televised message to the country, Macron said, "Far right parties are progressing everywhere in the continent. It is a situation to which I cannot resign myself." He explained: "This is an essential time for clarification. I have heard your message, your concerns, and I will not leave them unanswered...France needs a clear majority to act in serenity and harmony." Le Pen responded to Macron's announcement saying, "We are ready to take over power if the French give us their trust in the upcoming national elections. We are ready to put the country back on the feet." The reaction to Macron's shock decision has been critical. It is seen as a gamble which might even backfire. If the National Rally manages to win the national election, Macron, who is serving his second and last presidential term, will have to work with Jordan Bardella, the young leader of the far right party. Raphael Glucksmann, a writer, commentator and European lawmaker, called Macron's decision "an extremely dangerous game with democracy and institutions."

Valerie Pécresse, a former presidential candidate of the centre-right Les Républicains, said, "Dissolving without giving anyone time to organise and without any campaign is playing Russian roulette with the country's destiny." Jacques Reland of France's Global Policy Institute describing Macron's decision as a "gamble", provides a perspective. He says, "The European election was used as a way for the French to vent...to say they are not satisfied on issues like immigration, cuts in unemployment benefits. But they recognise one thing about him (Macron) that on the international level, he puts across a good image of France and Europe."

The French political scene, says Reland, is a "rampant political mess." The traditional left-right division between the socialists and the conservatives has broken down. The French political left is broken into small factions of the communists, the Greens and the socialists. And the conservative centre has weakened, giving way to Macron's new Renaissance party. It is in this situation that the far right National Rally, which has been waiting in the wings for decades and fine-tuning its extreme views from the days of Jean-Marie Le Pen to that of his daughter, Marine Le Pen, has been steadily gaining ground. Macron, who was dissatisfied with the country's centrist parties and hence formed his own party, is no socialist. He is a pro-market leader, who wants to push France from its traditional niche of agriculture and industry to the new technology-driven economy of computers and communications. And he also has little sympathy for the welfare state. And he is keen that France should remain the leader of EU. And his futuristic vision has an edge over the back-to-good-old nationalist ways of the far right, whatever may be the momentary gains.

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When it comes to the Palestinians, what does Israel want?

Osama Al-Sharif

IT is difficult to imagine Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad accepting a hostage exchange deal that does not meet their immutable demand, which is a lasting ceasefire linked to a total Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. This, for them, is nonnegotiable, but for Benjamin Netanyahu and his hard-line coalition partners, an end to the war in this way can only mean defeat.

Sunday's announcement by former defense minister and member of the war Cabinet Benny Gantz that he is resigning because Netanyahu has failed the Israeli public, including the families of the captives, and has never been able or willing to spell out a day-after plan for Gaza has compounded pressure on the government to call for early elections.

Assuming that the war will end soon or drag on for another few weeks or months, Israel will be looking for a way to declare victory. But even then, the question will be this: victory over whom and at what price? The political cost of the war, both domestically and abroad, is phenomenal. And then what comes next? The war will leave the entire population of Gaza, about 2 million people, homeless and battling a chronic humanitarian crisis for decades. Running this enclave will become an insurmountable challenge for any administration.

The deliberate destruction of Gaza in the most barbaric of ways can only mean that Israel was not going after Hamas but the Palestinians. Gaza has no more hospitals, universities, schools, residential areas, parks, stadiums or anything that denotes civilian life, including a society, culture and even cemeteries. This is a plan to drive people into extinction.

The war has dispatched Israel, the Palestinians, the region and the whole world back to the pre-1948 era, as if the last 75 years have

meant nothing. The Palestinians remain stateless and under occupation and Israel is yet to decide what it wants to be in this region.

The war on Gaza will not deliver answers. But it will bring these fundamental questions to the forefront. We all know where the Palestinian people stand: they want to end the occupation — by any means possible — and claim their right to self-determination. They have tried to do this through both national struggle and peace negotiations. Both have failed to deliver.

And while it is easy to blame the victims for missing opportunities, a few have dared point the finger at Israel itself for derailing agreements and violating international law. An appeasement policy led by the US brought us to the Oct. 7 watershed moment.

But the real question is, what does Israel want to do with the Palestinians? It has killed more than 37,000 of them in Gaza — so far — and destroyed most of the enclave. By the time the war ends, Gaza will have become unlivable, according to experts. Will Israel withdraw? Or will it occupy the Strip indefinitely? What about the Palestinians there? What future awaits them?

Suppose one believes that the Gaza war, with all the atrocities and horrors, will summon a new vigor to find a lasting peace in historical Palestine. In that case, one should look back at the evolution of the Israeli body politic in the last two decades. Netanyahu's long era in Israeli politics has empowered the far right — a toxic mix of ethnonationalist neo-fascists who openly talk about annexing the West Bank, colonizing Gaza and burying the Palestinians once and for all.

Netanyahu had hoped to use those who used to be on the fringe of Israeli politics

to secure a majority in the Knesset. But now he has become their hostage. Similar to his, their agenda now occupies the center of the Israeli stage.

Netanyahu and his far-right partners do not want to give the Palestinians anything. They openly state that Oslo is over, the Palestinian Authority will be defunded and the UN Relief and Works Agency will be banned, as the momentum to annex most of the West Bank is at its height. The two-state solution is anathema to the far right. In the final phase, as Vladimir Jabotinsky and later Meir Kahane preached, the transfer of Palestinians will ensure complete Jewish control of the land.

We do not hear a rebuttal from the far right's political rivals. Gantz, Yair Lapid, Avigdor Lieberman and Yoav Gallant, all potential successors of Netanyahu and his cronies, are all openly against the two-state solution. They are against giving up any territory in the West Bank, not to mention the Syrian Golan Heights. East Jerusalem is a red line for all. So, what are the Biden administration and its Western allies talking about when they declare they are behind a two-state solution?

The Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas have radicalized Israeli society even further. The Israeli left is no more. The so-called doves have been marginalized by a new generation of Israeli politicians. Netanyahu has claimed that there is no Palestinian peace partner. Still, in reality, it is the Palestinians who today cannot find an Israeli politician who presents himself as a partner for peace.

When the Gaza war is finally over, Israelis will face this question: what to do with the Palestinians? One has to understand that there is a Zionist master plan and that, after decades

of intermittent wars and uprisings, that plan remains on target. Netanyahu and his extremist partners are clear about the objective; for them, this is an existential struggle: one ethnostate in all of historical Palestine — and maybe beyond.

Since the late 1980s, the concept of the land-for-peace deal, evolving into the two-state solution, had been a bipartisan US roadmap aimed at resolving what the Arab-Israeli conflict was then. But Donald Trump's election changed all that. The core of the Republican Party is now aligned with Israel's far-right agenda.

Republican lawmakers are openly distancing themselves from the two-state solution for ideological, religious or selfish political reasons. The Democratic Party is divided and the Gaza war has splintered its ranks.

If anything good has come out of the war on Gaza, it is this: the Palestine cause is now universal. Israel has become a pariah state facing accusations of genocide. Its top government leaders may soon be indicted for war crimes. Global public opinion has shifted against it. A grassroots movement in Western colleges and universities is here to stay. Israel's Western allies must choose between upholding international law and siding with a rogue state.

The Zionist agenda is under attack, but locally it is still on course. The systemic colonization of the West Bank is picking up speed. The situation in the West Bank is about to explode at any moment. The specter of a regional war is hovering over the Middle East.

Where Israel goes from here concerning the Palestinians is likely to be answered by the outcome of future Israeli elections. Israelis will have to choose, and their choice will determine where the rest of the world and the region go from there.

Celebrating the 80th anniversary of Nazism's 'departure' but it's coming back

Eyad Abu Shakra

LAST week, a significant number of world leaders, mostly European, and with them US President Joe Biden, came together on the northern coast of France to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the historic Normandy landings. As the history books have taught us, these landings marked the beginning of the end of the Second World War in Europe, which was considered to be a knockout blow to Nazism and fascism in the West.

That, of course, was what had been aspired to and deserves to be celebrated annually. However, the irony is that, this year, the celebrations coincided with the European Parliament elections and came as a climate of Nazism, fascism and forms of ethnic, religious and isolationist fanaticism have been taking back the reins of the political initiative in many European countries.

This bitter and unsettling fact cannot be addressed with good intentions and desperate diplomatic efforts. These are no longer sufficient for containing its repercussions and the messages it sends to the entire world.

In a nutshell, Nazism and fascism, which the Allied forces had expelled, have returned through the ballot box.

Statements that had been considered racist, which could be prosecuted for defamation, have now become "honorable." They are expressed boastfully by the fanatical racists who openly call for the expulsion of "foreigners" and threaten Muslims and Africans with deportation to their countries of origin. The extremist discourse goes as far as drowning refugee boats that threaten Europe's "cultural purity" and countries' "national identity."

The isolated incidents that emerged on the European political map in recent decades have now become the dominant trend among the forces that are competing with traditional ruling parties that are out of touch and in decline, as well as figures who have lost credibility because of their compromises, deals and scandals.

It is also noteworthy that the decline and downfall of traditional parties is no longer limited to moderate left-wing parties like the socialists in France, Italy and elsewhere. Conservative and moderate right-wing parties are also in peril. The dismal end of the Soviet experiment — with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Berlin Wall — demoralized leftist forces and broke their spirit across Europe and in large parts of the developing world. However, US unipolarity, which led some, like Francis Fukuyama, to speak of the "end of history" in favor of Western capitalism, quickly engendered its own contradictions and opposition.

Instead of creating an era of coexistence, cooperation, trust and investment in a future that benefits all the peoples of the world, the victory of the West, represented by NATO, over its Eastern rival, the Warsaw Pact, led to the exact opposite. The dream of peace and security on European soil

swiftly ended when Western powers decided to keep expanding eastward, as they sought to achieve a crushing final victory over a powerful opponent that had changed its ideology but had not forgotten either its inherited resentments or the lessons of its national history.

The Soviet Union did indeed fall — its collapse had been predictable because of a whole host of domestic and international factors — but "Russian" Russia, with its alternative identity, strong memory and old fears of being surrounded and besieged, remains. Its unwavering resistance to attacks from the West is undeniable.

The Ukrainian crisis in Europe has reopened the wounds of the past with unprecedented severity. Before that, we witnessed the disintegration of several Slavic entities: Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia were divided (alongside, of course, the Soviet Union). This gave rise to the dilemma of defining identities and the problems of economic migration from the east of the continent to the west, while Europe's major players were working toward achieving the dream of unity, which today seems more threatened than ever.

Alongside the economic migration within Europe, which contributed to reversing Britain's hesitant acceptance of a single European identity, broader and more dangerous migration arose from developing countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. This was the natural result of the collapse of the previous old world order that had been established and sustained by the Cold War.

It is worth noting that the East-West conflict (socialism versus capitalism) directly facilitated African and Asian countries' path to independence. However, unipolar interests — before China entered the fray — combined with population growth, poor financial and economic management and tribal and religious conflicts, some of which turned into open civil wars, fueled asylum and migration.

The alternative in Russia and several countries in the Eastern bloc was populist or conservative Christian. In the West, the effective alternative to confront the wave of asylum and migration was religious and populist (and, in extreme cases, racist).

Consequently, just as moderate leftist parties found it difficult to push back against the notion (reinforced by the end of the Cold War) that "the socialist model had failed," moderate right-wing and traditional conservative parties have also struggled to find solutions to the economic, demographic and security developments like terrorism, and to overcome the populist, isolationist and extremist right-wing rhetoric. Yesterday's conundrum is particularly consequential for Europe. However, more than ever before, it is clear that the assumption that we learn from our mistakes is misguided.

In the Arab world, unfortunately, experience has also shown that we have a short memory and a tendency to refuse to learn from the costly mistakes of the past.

escalating risks, many things have gone well. Global poverty has massively declined. Hunger and malnourishment declined for decades before starting to increase again in recent years. Global life expectancy has more than doubled since 1900. Medical advances have reduced the spread of infectious diseases, brought down maternal and infant mortality and helped people live better for longer. Modern technologies have connected people and improved lives in many ways. The last few decades have seen advances in political freedoms, women's rights, religious and racial minorities' rights and more, even if some of them now seem to be under threat.

Today's leaders should take seriously the warnings issued by experts who are careful and precise. Predictions of catastrophe do not have to come true if leaders take wise decisions based on high-quality information and analysis. History includes examples of times when people avoided disaster, but it also includes cases in which disasters occurred — a sobering reminder for today.

Managing an age of intensified risks

Kerry Boyd Anderson

Texas National Security Review, Philip Zelikow, a historian with extensive experience in the US government, provided the type of informed warning that world leaders should take seriously. "We are in an exceptionally volatile, dynamic, and unstable period of world history," he wrote. "During the next two or three years, the situation will probably settle more durably in one direction or another: wider war or uneasy peace. There is a serious possibility of worldwide warfare."

There are many valid reasons to support the idea that we are living through a particularly risky time. The global order is transitioning from the unipolar, US-dominated period that followed the end of the Cold War to something different, which is likely to diffuse power to multiple global and regional countries or alliances.

Russia and China are actively pushing to change the global order that was established after the Second World War and particularly to undermine US leadership.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a sovereign state, was a major attack on postwar global principles. At the same time, a substantial part of the US political base, led by Donald Trump, is questioning some of the basic assumptions that have underpinned US foreign policy and leadership for the last several decades.

The weakening global order contributes to several key conflicts, which in turn further erode the global order. The extreme nature of the war in Gaza violates many modern humanitarian principles and intensifies the risks of a broader regional war. The Middle East sits at the crossroads of cultural, economic, religious and strategic interests, and war in the region tends to affect multiple other parts of the world. The war in Ukraine carries potentially severe risks that could extend well beyond Eastern Europe.

Parts of Africa — especially the Sahel — are experiencing increased political instability and violence, including

looming famine in Sudan.

Other trends act as catalysts that intensify all of these political and security risks. Climate change supercharges old risks and creates new ones. Global demographics are deeply unbalanced, as most wealthier countries have aging populations while some poorer countries — primarily in Africa — have growing, young populations. Technological advances — including modern communication technologies, artificial intelligence, armed drones and much more — shape risks in ways that are difficult to fully understand and predict.

So, it does appear that the world is going through a tough time and faces very significant risks. However, this is not the first time that humans have experienced global volatility. As Zelikow noted in his article, for example, the US has faced a "set of powerful adversaries in a rapidly changing and militarized period of history" before — during the run-up

to the Second World War and again during the early Cold War period. While the US could not prevent the Second World War, it used the post-war opportunity to help rebuild a more peaceful world for much of the planet's population. The US and the Soviet Union avoided the greatly feared nuclear war, despite some frighteningly close calls.

Disaster is not inevitable. Diplomacy can sometimes prevent conflict. Governments can sometimes choose to pull back from the brink of broader war. For example, international pressure and other factors ended the 1999 Kargil conflict before it could escalate to a worse war between India and Pakistan. Despite years of tensions over Taiwan, China and the US have so far avoided war. International efforts helped to contain the 2003 SARS outbreak, which could have been far worse. International cooperation still has the potential to address climate change.

We should also remember that, while the world faces

The EU’s 1 billion-euro gift will hurt Lebanon and its people

Elia J Ayoub

LAST month, the European Union (EU) unveiled a 1 billion-euro (\$1.07bn) aid package for the Lebanese state. During a visit to Beirut, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen declared that the EU seeks “to contribute to Lebanon’s socioeconomic stability”.

The funds will go towards strengthening basic services, enacting financial reforms, supporting Lebanese security forces and managing migration, she said.

Anyone who has been paying attention to the abuses committed by, or with the direct knowledge of, the EU’s border agency Frontex against desperate refugees and migrants seeking to enter the union would have cause for concern. Sea-Watch, a search and rescue organisation operating in the Mediterranean Sea, described the deal as “another cash-for-border-violence deal” wherein Europe is “exchanging money for border violence and death”.

Indeed, the EU’s financial support will encourage the criminalisation of people on the move and undoubtedly result in more suffering for refugees, especially Syrians, who are already facing abuse and misery in Lebanon. But this money will also undermine any efforts and any hopes of the Lebanese people to rid themselves of a corrupt and deeply dysfunctional political elite.

Endangering Syrian refugees in Lebanon

The announcement of the EU aid package for Lebanon comes on the tail of similar deals aimed at “tackling migration” with other countries in the region. In the past year, Egypt, Tunisia and Mauritania have all received large amounts of EU funds in exchange for cracking down on people trying to cross into Europe.

Libya, which has received financial support from Brussels for years, has seen some of the worst abuses. In March 2023, a United Nations fact-finding mission declared that there are “reasonable grounds to believe that migrants” in Libya, including those forced back through the EU-Libya deals, are “victims of crimes against humanity and [...] acts of murder, enslavement, sexual violence, rape and other inhumane acts”.

There is growing concern among human rights organisations and activists that Lebanon will be heading in the same direction of heightened abuse of refugees.

In Lebanon, the situation was already worsening before the deal, as the uptick in the number of boats leaving Lebanese shores shows. The UN has verified that at least 59 boats departed from Lebanon in the first four months of 2024, compared with three boats in the same period last year. The Cedar Centre for Legal Studies (CCLS) put the number of boats at about 100 in 2023.

Many of those attempting the dangerous journey are Syrian refugees, but there are also Lebanese citizens who are desperately trying to escape a col-

lapsed economy and almost non-existent social provision.

In the past, Lebanese authorities used to turn a blind eye to these departures, but in recent years, they have increasingly cooperated with push-backs under EU pressure. According to local human rights organisations, Lebanon and Cyprus have had a “non-public agreement” to coordinate efforts to return refugees and migrants to Lebanon after they reach Cyprus. But the Lebanese authorities have also engaged in violent border patrolling.

In April 2022, the Lebanese navy deliberately sank a boat carrying dozens of Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian nationals. According to witness testimony collected by Megaphone news, the CCLS and Febrayer

death at the hands of the Syrian regime. Human rights organisations have repeatedly made clear in reports that Syria is not a safe country to return refugees to. The Syrian regime has killed so many detainees that it has amounted to, in the UN’s own words, the “extermination” of the civilian population.

More recently, the UN Syria commission of inquiry described Syria as an “abyss” where a “plunging war economy and a devastating humanitarian crisis are inflicting new levels of hardship and suffering on [the] Syrian civilian population”. This is the same abyss that the EU wants refugees to “voluntarily” return to. Part of the 1 billion-euro package will go into “exploring how to work on a more structured approach

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Network’s Investigative Lab, a navy vessel rammed the boat and then moved away, while it sank and people drowned. Seven bodies were found, including a 40-day-old baby, while 33 people remain missing to this day. Forty-five survived.

Syrian refugees in Lebanon are particularly vulnerable to an intensified crackdown by the authorities.

For years, they have been facing daily acts of violence from state and para-state actors, with major parties – from the Lebanese Forces and the Free Patriotic Movement to Hezbollah – routinely dehumanising them in their rhetoric.

In addition, the Lebanese authorities have been forcibly deporting Syrian refugees, including opposition activists and army defectors who are at immediate risk of torture and

to voluntary returns to Syria”, per von der Leyen’s statement.

The EU has effectively signed off on the Lebanese state’s violent scapegoating of the most vulnerable group of people in Lebanon today: Syrian refugees.

Propping up a corrupt elite The EU’s generous package will also go towards solidifying the grip of Lebanon’s corrupt elite over the Lebanese state against the will of the Lebanese people.

It comes amid a years-long economic crisis triggered by decades of incompetence, corruption and mismanagement at the highest levels of government.

That political and economic elite brought the country to its knees by running what economists have called “a nationally regulated Ponzi scheme, where

new money is borrowed to pay existing creditors”.

In 2019, the Lebanese people took to the streets in the country’s largest non-sectarian uprising to demonstrate their rejection of the corrupt Lebanese elites. Hundreds of thousands of protesters occupied city squares across the country. Echoing the 2011 Arab Spring, those protesters chanted, “The people want the downfall of the regime.” The government of billionaire Saad Hariri responded by resigning.

The uprising failed to produce immediate political change and the economic crisis only deepened when the COVID-19 pandemic hit a few months later.

Then in August 2020, some 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate blew up in the port of Beirut, killing 218 people, injuring about 7,000 and devastating the capital city. Hassan Diab’s government set up to replace the Hariri one resigned shortly afterwards. Diab would remain caretaker prime minister until another billionaire and former prime minister, Najib Mikati, took over in September 2021.

The Lebanese journalist Lara Bitar described post-blast life in Lebanon as facing “attempted murder [by the state] on a daily basis”. The ruling oligarchs and warlords have effectively enacted daily structural violence as a way to maintain power.

This state of affairs can be traced back to the post-war period of the 1990s when the Lebanese people witnessed the rise of what scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore has called the “anti-state state”, namely the organised abandonment of state services by the very people who run the state.

In 2021, recognising the role of political and economic elites in the Lebanese crisis, the EU set up a regime of sanctions against Lebanese politicians accused of corruption; it was renewed again in 2023.

The EU, along with the UN and the World Bank, also launched the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) aimed at “a people-centred recovery that returns sustainable livelihoods to the affected population”.

But one has to wonder where the “people-centred recovery” is in the 1 billion-euro donation to the very same oligarchs and warlords who caused the multiple crises in the first place. Von der Leyen sealed the deal in May with a handshake with a smiling Mikati, a billionaire prime minister in a country where more than 80 percent of the population lives beneath the poverty line.

The deal will solidify the existing state capture by the country’s ruling elite and send a clear political message: the EU does not care about accountability for crimes in Lebanon as long as its elites, no matter how corrupt or violent, take part in Europe’s border regime.

It is no longer an exaggeration to describe the civilian population in Lebanon – citizens and residents – as hostages to an unaccountable, and violent, class of oligarchs and warlords. And the EU just gifted it 1 billion euros.

While our eyes were on Rafah’s “Block 2371” – the small area in south Gaza which the Israeli military designated as a “safe humanitarian zone” on May 22 but went on to bomb just four days later, massacring at least 45 civilians sheltering in tents – we were reminded of a 15-year-old confidential cable intercepted by WikiLeaks describing the plight of civilians in the final days of the Sri Lankan civil war.

Dispatched in May 2009 from the United States embassy in Colombo to the US Department of State in Washington, DC, the cable recounts how the bishop of Mannar had called to ask the embassy to intervene on behalf of seven Catholic priests caught in a so-called “No Fire Zone” which had been set up as a safe space by the Sri Lankan military.

The bishop estimated that there were still 60,000 to 75,000 civilians confined within that particular zone, located on a small sliver of coastal land about twice the size of Manhattan’s Central Park. Following the bishop’s phone call, the US ambassador spoke with Sri Lanka’s foreign minister, asking him to alert the military that most of the people remaining in the “No Fire Zone” were civilian. He was, it seems, afraid that due to intense artillery shelling the coastal strip had become a death trap.

Not unlike the Israeli military’s efforts to push Palestinian civilians from across the Gaza Strip into the so-called “safe humanitarian zone” in Rafah, at one point, the Sri Lankan military had urged the civilian population to gather in areas it designated as “No Fire Zones” by dropping leaflets from planes and making announcements on loudspeakers.

As an estimated 330,000 internally displaced people assembled in these zones, the United Nations erected makeshift camps and, together with several humanitarian organisations, began to provide food and medical assistance to the desperate population.

The Tamil Tigers, the armed group fighting the Sri Lankan military, however, also appeared to have retreated into these “No Fire Zones”. The fighters had prepared in advance a complex network of bunkers and fortifications in these areas and went on to mount their final stand against the military there.

While the Sri Lankan military claimed that it was engaged in “humanitarian operations” aimed at “liberating the civilians”, an analysis of satellite images

as well as numerous testimonies reveal that the military continuously pounded the enclosed “No Fire Zones” with mortar and artillery fire, transforming these designated safe spaces into killing fields.

Anywhere between 10,000 to 40,000 caged-in civilians perished in the so-called safe zones while thousands and thousands more were severely injured often laying for hours and days on the ground without receiving medical attention because virtually every hospital – whether permanent or makeshift – had been hit by artillery.

The parallels between Sri Lanka 2009 and Gaza 2024 are uncanny.

In both cases, the military displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians, instructing them to gather in “safe zones” where they would not be harmed.

In both cases, the militaries proceeded to bomb the designated “safe zones,” indiscriminately killing and injuring a large number of civilians.

In both cases, the militaries also bombed medical units responsible for saving the lives of the civilians.

In both cases, military spokespersons justified the strikes, admitting that they had bombed the safe zones, but claiming that the Tamil Tigers and Hamas were responsible for the civilian deaths since they had hidden among the civilian population, using them as shields.

In both cases, Western countries criticised the killing of innocents, but continued supplying the militaries with weapons. In Sri Lanka’s case, Israel was among the main suppliers of weapons.

In both cases, the UN claimed that the warring parties were carrying out war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In both cases, the governments mobilised a cadre of experts who used legal acrobatics to justify the massacres. Their interpretation of the rules of engagement and of the application of fundamental concepts of international humanitarian law including distinction, proportionality, necessity and the very notions of safe zones and warnings were put in the service of eliminatory violence. But there is also one important difference between the two cases.

The genocide in Gaza is not taking place in the dark. Whereas in Sri Lanka it took time to gather evidence of violations and carry out independent investigations, the global attention on Gaza – and the live-streamed images of beheaded babies and charcoaled bodies in “Block 2371” – can prevent the repetition of the Sri Lankan

horror.

Media outlets have already shown how the “safe area” south of Wadi Gaza has been pummeled by 2,000-pound bombs, killing thousands of Palestinians.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has collected evidence and is now seeking arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Galant for their alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has observed Israel’s deployment of relentless violence against civilians and ordered the government to “immediately halt” its offensive in Rafah, specifying that its actions have not been sufficient “to alleviate the immense risk [including the risk of not being protected by the Genocide Convention] to which the Palestinian population is exposed as a result of the military offensive in Rafah”.

Israel responded to the ruling of the highest court of the land by continuing its bombing of safe zones. The Block 2371 massacre came only 48 hours after the ICJ order. Less than a fortnight later, another Israeli air attack on a UN-run school in the Nuseirat camp, which had also been designated as a “safe zone”, killed at least 40 people, mainly women and children. On June 9, an Israeli operation to free four Israeli captives at the same camp claimed the lives of 274 Palestinians and injured hundreds of others.

All eyes are on Rafah, and the rest of the devastated Gaza Strip, yet Israel is undeterred, carrying out its crimes under the limelight, while the US, the United Kingdom, France and Germany continue to supply it with weapons.

The ICJ and ICC have had their say, as have South Africa, Spain, Ireland, Slovenia and Norway. The university encampments and the global solidarity movement are calling on their governments to apply an arms embargo and demand a ceasefire as they witness how Israel has transformed the safe zones it has created into killing fields.

Like in other situations of extreme colonial violence, Israel’s acceleration of its extermination practices in Gaza and its clumsy attempt to portray it as abiding by the law are symptoms of the twilight of its dispossession project. Former colonial powers like the UK, France and Germany should know that. The US should know that. All eyes are on Gaza. All eyes are on them, too.

Neve Gordon and Nicola Perugini

Russian assets might tip the balance in favor of Ukraine

THE topsy-turvy war in Ukraine is continuing with no conclusion in sight, either on the battlefield or by diplomacy. After more than two years, this war has become another example of an asymmetrical conflict, as much in terms of what the implications are for either side as it is of military capabilities.

For Ukraine, this is about defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity, which it cannot afford to lose. For Russia, in what is primarily Vladimir Putin’s war, the longer it continues without significant achievements, the more it becomes about the Russian president’s staying power.

Predictably and justifiably, Russia’s naked aggression against its neighbor drew a powerful reaction from large parts of the international community, which has supported the Ukrainian people and equally hindered Moscow’s further expansionist attempts to restore much of what used to comprise the Soviet Union. However, as time goes by, other pressing global and domestic issues are diverting the world’s attention and exerting pressure to accordingly direct resources away from supporting Ukraine.

No surprise, then, that the Western countries that have contributed almost all the financial and military aid in support of Kyiv in its war effort are looking for creative mecha-

nisms to continue to do so without detrimental economic and political impacts on their own societies. The most recent idea to emerge from the EU, which will be considered at this week’s G7 meeting, is to raise tens of billions of euros in debt for

Ukraine’s war effort.

As of the end of February, European donors and the EU have allocated a total of 89.9 billion in aid for military, humanitarian and financial support since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in

Yossi Mekelberg

At times of sluggish economic growth and the unavoidable, although distracting, fatigue among the public as well as in some decision-making circles, the long-term support for Ukraine is weakening.

sure on Europe to raise funds for Ukraine, is adamant that “moving from freezing the assets to confiscating the assets, disposing of them, is something that needs to be looked at very carefully.”

Predictably and justifiably, Russia’s naked aggression against its neighbor drew a powerful reaction from large parts of the international community, which has supported the Ukrainian people and equally hindered Moscow’s further expansionist attempts to restore much of what used to comprise the Soviet Union. However, as time goes by, other pressing global and domestic issues are diverting the world’s attention and exerting pressure to accordingly direct resources away from supporting Ukraine. No surprise, then, that the Western countries that have contributed almost all the financial and military aid in support of Kyiv in its war effort are looking for creative mechanisms to continue to do so without detrimental economic and political impacts on their own societies. The most recent idea to emerge from the EU, which will be considered at this week’s G7 meeting, is to raise tens of billions of euros in debt for Ukraine secured against future profits generated by the Russian state’s assets that have been frozen by Western countries. There are some 210 billion (\$225 billion) in Russian assets currently frozen in the EU, which could yield up to 3 billion a year that, according to this plan, would be used to support Ukraine’s war effort. As of the end of February, European donors and the EU have allocated a total of 89.9 billion in aid for military, humanitarian and financial support since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In addition, the US allocated the equivalent of 67 billion over the same period and, after prolonged wrangling in Congress, in April approved a further \$61 billion.

Ukraine secured against future profits generated by the Russian state’s assets that have been frozen by Western countries. There are some 210 billion (\$225 billion) in Russian assets currently frozen in the EU, which could yield up to 3 billion a year that, according to this plan, would be used to support

February 2022. In addition, the US allocated the equivalent of 67 billion over the same period and, after prolonged wrangling in Congress, in April approved a further \$61 billion. The contributions of the US and Europe account for more than 95 percent of all aid allocations to Ukraine.

Hence, in principle, using some of the profits from the aggressor’s assets should not be rejected a priori.

However, one person — and not the only one — to remain unimpressed by this scheme is European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde, who, despite the growing pres-

Lagarde argues that such a move would “start breaking the international legal order that you want to protect, that you would want Russia and all countries around the world to respect.”

Lagarde’s view must be taken seriously because one of the accusations customarily levelled against

that they expect others to follow.

Yet, there is a way to square this circle by limiting the suggested practice to either the length of the war or until Putin goes and a new government emerges in Russia; one that is ready to enter into constructive negotiations with Ukraine to end the

war while respecting its sovereignty. In the meantime, using the interest from these assets, while bearing in mind that they belong to the Russian people and will have to be returned to them, is a practical and not immoral solution to financing Ukraine’s defensive war.

Much of these assets can only be described as part of the post-Cold War hoarding of Russia’s “family silver,” including the country’s natural resources, industrial infrastructure and media outlets, by a small group of oligarchs conspiring with the political class. Admittedly this was with the more-or-less tacit support of other, mainly high-income, countries for their own benefit; although this has hardly benefited ordinary Russian people.

But for now, supporting Ukraine is the top priority. And, in any case, the many billions of dollars accumulating in interest will not be returned to Russia at least until the end of the war. Meanwhile, the need to sufficiently finance Ukraine’s war effort is becoming even more urgent as a result of a changing balance of power on the battlefield, which in some areas is turning against Ukraine. Russian forces have already crossed the international border north of Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-biggest city, and are making what was described as “tactically significant advances,” along with similar inroads into some parts of eastern Ukraine.

It must be emphasized



PSX stays bearish, losses 663 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 663.07 points, a negative change of 0.91 per cent, closing at 72,589.49 points against 73,252.56 points the previous day.

A total of 372,538,669 shares valuing Rs11.650 billion were traded during the day as compared to 350,721,616 shares valuing Rs10.180 billion the previous day.

As many as 431 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 107 of

them recorded gains and 263 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 61 companies remained unchanged.

The top three trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 45,897,256 shares at Rs 4.50 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 33,249,426 shares at Rs 1.29 per share and Pervez Ahmed Company with 29,026,271 shares at Rs 1.19 per share.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 50.98 per share price, closing at Rs 1,500.00 whereas the

runner-up was Sapphire Fibres Limited with a Rs 41.45 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,450.00.

Ismail Industries Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 121.78 per share closing at Rs 1,432.22, followed by Mari Petroleum Limited with a Rs 61.12 decline to close at Rs 2,535.39.

Gold rates increase by Rs1,900 to Rs241,300 per tola

The price of per tola of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.1,900 and was sold at Rs.241,300 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs

Rs.239,400 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increase by Rs 1,629 to Rs.206,876 from Rs.205,247 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.189,639 from Rs.188,143, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

Per tola and ten gram silver remained stagnant at Rs.2,750 and Rs.2,357.68 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$15 to \$2,307 from \$2,292, the Association reported.

Govt must withdraw tax exemptions for FATA/PATA in budget: PBF

PESHAWAR (INP): The Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) criticizing the unfair competitive advantage granted to industries in former FATA and PATA which is devastating industries across the country has said the tax incentives package introduced in 2019 has created a significant disparity of around 27% in taxes between units in former FATA and the rest of the country.

As a result, ghee and edible oil units in exempted areas are importing excessive quantities (180,000 tonnes in just five months) and selling their produce in mainland Pakistan, causing harm to local industries. Moreover, numerous steel units have been forced to shut down, including 16 in

Hattar industrial estate, and 8 in Islamabad.

The PBF urged the government to abolish these exemptions to ensure a level playing field for all industries in Pakistan in the budget.

Chairman PBF Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Ashfaq Paracha demanded the government to abolish the exemptions awarded to the industry in former FATA and the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) for five years.

He highlighted that the concessions granted to FATA included complete exemptions from income tax, sales tax (both at local and import stages), customs duty (at import stages on plant and machinery), turnover tax exemption

from annual tax returns, and exemption from withholding income tax on local supplies. "As a result, there is a difference of around 27% between the units in former FATA and the rest of the country," Paracha added.

Ashfaq Paracha informed that with a total population of around 6.25 million, the requirement of ghee and edible oil in former FATA and PATA should be around 52,000 tonnes during Jan-May 2024 based on per capita consumption of 20kgs annually. "But the ghee units in these exempted areas have already imported 180,000 tonnes of edible oil including palm oil in five months," he said, adding, "This clearly shows that the ghee and oil mills

of exempted areas have been selling their produce in mainland Pakistan even up to Punjab and parts of Sindh during the past five years."

Similar most of the steel units working in Hattar industrial estate, Gadoon industrial estate, and Hayatabad industrial estate have shut down, with 16 steel units closed in Hattar industrial estate, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and eight in Islamabad.

PBF KPK chairman Ashfaq Paracha, further emphasized that the current situation was not only hurting local industries but also deterring foreign investments, as evident from the shelving of CPEC-related steel projects at Rashakai Economic Zone.

Installing water filtration plants in markets of Capital top priority

ISLAMABAD (INP): The President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has said that installation of water filtration plants in different markets of the federal capital to facilitate the business community is top priority of the chamber.

Speaking after inaugurating water filtration plant in F-6 Super Market on Tuesday, he said that the water filtration plant of Super Market was dysfunctional for the last three years and when we initiated the task of installation of new water filtration plants in different markets of Islamabad, we also made it functional that's why today the traders as well as the residents of F-6 are deriving its benefit

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that very soon a huge water cooler will also be installed alongside the filtration plant.

He said that we were serving the community sincerely and devotedly which will continue even after the completion of my tenure as President ICCI. Those who were propagating that after September 30, I shall be nowhere must know that this noble cause will continue successively, he added.

The ICCI President further said that he was in contact with Chairman CDA to determine new routes of the public transport which will not only be beneficial for the public but will greatly help to connect all the markets of the city.

Speaking on the occasion, President TWA Super Market Shahzad Shabbir Abbasi pledged unwavering support to Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari for the cause of the community by saying that the respect and honour bestowed to traders community in the era of Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari was real-

ly praiseworthy.

President All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajran Ajmal Baloch said that provision of clean drinking water to masses is of significance importance and the financier will surely be rewarded by Allah Almighty.

President Blue Area TWA, Raja Hassan Akhtar while emphasizing trader's unity, reaffirmed community's support to ICCI by saying that initial work for the installation of a water filtration plant in Blue area has also been commenced.

Address the traders, Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari while describing the Super market as the pride of Pakistan said that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry will leave no stone unturned to further enhance its business friendly atmosphere by up gradation of all the necessary facilities

including the parking lot, security, cleanliness etc.

General Secretary TWA I-8 Markaz Zahid Qureshi expressed gratitude to Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari for the gift of CCTV cameras for the I-8 markaz which has greatly contributed in curbing the crimes by saying that the patronage being provided to the traders of Islamabad by ICCI was a unique and commendable.

General Secretary, Jinnah Super market, Abdur Rehman Siddiqui spoke at length about the ongoing welfare projects for the betterment of the community.

President Jinnah Super market Asad Aziz, Group leader Blue Area Yousuf Rajput, Raja Fayyaz Gul, Chaudhry Nasir Mahmood, Khalid Chaudhry, Imtiaz Abbasi, Malik Shabbir, Shaikh Abdul Waheed and other were also present on the occasion.

FWCCI to establish women export display center

LAHORE (APP): The Faisalabad Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FWCCI) will establish a Women Export Display Centre in collaboration with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of

Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) at Faisalabad to facilitate 'Access to Market' for women products. These products particularly handmade articles have very well in demand in traditional and non-traditional markets abroad.

FWCCI President and Chairperson of FPCCI Standing Committee on Think Tank, Mrs. Rubina Amjad stated this while

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

She said that Pakistan export volume can go further high if we are able to facilitate and fetch best price for women particularly hand made products in international markets.

She emphasized that women dong business or startups, must be facilitated and equipped with the international scenario of digital transformation that offers a pathway to overcome traditional barriers and achieve sustainable growth.

By adopting digital tools and strategies, women entrepreneurs should enhance their competitiveness and market base in more than 200 countries, she added. She said that 'Access to Market' is the most important step for attention of policy makers, and government and policy makers should take it in letter and spirit. By supporting women entrepreneurs on this front is her missionary zeal. "We have worked day and night in collaboration with FPCCI and in consonance with State Bank, SMEDA and others, to bring under one roof, the experts from E-Commerce digital platforms, IT com-

panies, Banking Industry, Cellular companies and Non-Banking organizations to promote digitalization, freelancing accounts, digital marketing zero interest loans and web based development."

She said, "At FWCCI, we have already established first ever 'Business Incubation Centre' which is now upgraded to 'Women Resource Centre' in collaboration with Industries Department, Government of Punjab. Our women entrepreneurs can take benefit of the enriched training programs and business development opportunities organized time to time. We are striving for establishment of exclusive women entrepreneurs block and women skill development centre at M-3 Allama Iqbal industrial estate, Faisalabad."

Qurrat ul Ain, Vice President FPCCI, appreciated role of FPCCI Chairperson Think Tank Committee/President FWCCI for organizing the most important Symposium on 'Digital transformation of Women Businesses in Pakistan' and congratulated her for this milestone.

She said that empowering women entrepreneurs both in Access to Finance and Access to market is the dire need and FPCCI and Think Tank Committee/FWCCI will work together

in this respect. She said that women products must receive facilitation for market access to domestic and international destinations. She said that women entrepreneurs must be supported for delegation visits as well as participation in international trade fairs on subsidized rates by the government.

She emphasized on the 'Industry-Academia Linkage' as prime importance and educated female graduates must opt for business as career as job providers instead of job seekers.

She quoted examples of various women entrepreneurs as successful business women today. She assured full cooperation from FPCCI for future ventures of Think Tank Committee and FWCCI.

Mrs. Quratulain Bilal, Deputy Chief Manager, Financial Inclusion Division, State Bank of Pakistan BSC Faisalabad informed of the various initiatives taken for promoting Digitalization and foreign exchange Regulations for IT Companies and Freelancers.

It was informed that for opening of Freelancer accounts, foreign proceeds are must while enormous facilities and incentives are available to the account holder in this context.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja chairing meeting on upcoming 'GSMA Digital Nation Summit'.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where six ships, Xpress Antila, Lotus-A, MSC Lisbon, Block Island, Asia Liberty and Al-Jasasiya carrying Container, Steel Coil, Palm oil and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal-1, Liquid Terminal and Elengy Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile two more ships, MSC Positano and DA Xin with Container and Wind Power also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on same day.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Xpress Antila, Lotus-A and Umm Bab left the port on today morning while another containers ship 'MSC Lisbon' is expected to sail on same day.

Cargo volume of 218,556 tonnes, comprising 162,483 tonnes imports cargo and 56,073 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,853 Containers (2,602 TEUs Imports and 2,251 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, Hafnia Excellence and MSC Positano & another ship 'Maersk Valencia' carrying Mogas and Container are expected to take berths at respectively FOTCO and QICI on today, while two more container ships, Cosco America and Maersk Cabo Verdeare due to arrive at Port Qasim on Wednesday.

Chinese Consulate's help hailed

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) President Kashif Anwar has expressed his gratitude for the support of the Chinese Consulate In Lahore, which has always patronized the LCCI in every way.

He said that LCCI had been honored with a friendship award by the Chinese Consul General, first for any Chamber in Pakistan, which is a symbol of the strong relationship of the two organizations.

He was speaking at the certificate distribution ceremony for participants in the Chinese language course here at the LCCI here on Tuesday.

Chinese Consul General Zhao Shiren was the chief guest of the ceremony while LCCI Senior Vice President Zafar Mehmood Chaudhry, and LCCI Executive Committee members Raja Hassan Akhtar and Fareeha Younis amd Ahmed Elahi were also present. Consul General of China Zhao Shiren and LCCI President Kashif Anwar also inaugurated the recently renovated Jinnah Auditorium at the LCCI.

Kashif Anwar emphasized the importance of maintaining good relations with neighboring countries. He highlighted China's consistent support of Pakistan during challenging times.

He also stressed the need to adopt new technology from China and source raw materials to boost Pakistan's exports.

Kashif Anwar said that the recent visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to China resulted in several MoUs being signed, which are expected to attract more Chinese investment to Pakistan.

SBP for adoption of DSCF solutions

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan, Tuesday, instructed banks to develop and implement digital solutions for supply chain finance within six months to leverage the technology for increasing the SMEs' access to finance and digitizing retail payments.

In view of the critical importance of Digital Supply Chain Finance (DSCF), the central bank's SME, Housing and Sustainable Finance Department, through a circular, instructed banks to

develop and build their capacity in the DSCF and take measures for promoting DSCF on priority.

The circular requires banks to establish effective Supply Chain Finance (SCF) function having suitably trained HR and systems to develop and offer digital SCF products to the SMEs, said a statement issued here.

The banks have been advised to either develop their own digital solutions for SCF or partner with any Fintech or service providers for providing digital SCF.

The State Bank of

Pakistan hoped that DSCF solutions would not only increase access of SMEs to finance but also improve operational efficiency, reduce costs, and strengthen risk management practices.

In order to ensure implementation on the directives within the given time frame of six months, the SBP further instructed banks to develop a strategy for building the bank's capacity in SCF and DSCF and share the same with the banking regulator within 3 months of issuance of the circular.

66 gas connections disconnected by SNGPL

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 66 connections; Rs 1.8 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the team disconnected 8 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed a fine of Rs 0.75 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 1 FIR against gas pilfer.

In Multan, the team disconnected 11 connections on illegal use of gas while another 03 on use of Compressor.

In Peshawar, the company disconnected 31 connections on account of direct use and illegal use of gas and an amount of Rs 0.07 million have been booked against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Shiekhupura disconnected 02 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 0.18 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 2 FIRs against gas pilfers.

In Faisalabad, the team disconnected 03 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed a fine of Rs 0.04 million against gas theft cases.

In Karak, the team dis-

connected 02 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 0.14 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 2 FIRs against gas theft cases.

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

The regional team of Sahiwal disconnected 03 connections on the illegal use of gas. In Gujrat, the team disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas.

The regional team of Gujranwala disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas and also imposed a fine of Rs 0.62 million against gas theft cases.

Policy rate cut to relieve businesses, industry

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former president Iftikhar Ali Malik said here Tuesday that reduction in the policy rate by State Bank of Pakistan would provide much-needed relief to businesses and industries by lowering borrowing costs.

He added that it would not only help in sustaining current operations but also encourage new investments, fostering economic growth and job creation.

He emphasized that it would enhance liquidity in the market, making credit more accessible to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which are the backbone of the economy. He described the move as a

significant step towards stabilizing the economic landscape of Pakistan, which is facing a myriad of financial challenges.

Ifitikhar Ali Malik pointed out that this decision could potentially boost consumer spending by reducing the interest burden on loans and it would also have a positive impact on aggregate demand, which has been subdued in recent times due to high inflation and economic uncertainty.

He suggested that the SBP's move could help in stabilizing the exchange rate by attracting foreign investment, given the more favorable interest rate environment.

He expressed optimism that the reduction would pave the way for a more robust and resilient economic recovery.

He urged the government and relevant stakeholders to support this initiative with complementary policies aimed at sustainable economic development.

While acknowledging the positive aspects of the rate cut, Malik also cautioned that it must be accompanied by structural reforms to ensure long-term economic stability.

He also called for addressing the underlying issues such as fiscal deficits, inflationary pressures, and improving the overall business environment.

Asian markets mixed ahead of key Fed announcement

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets were mixed Tuesday as traders shifted nervously while awaiting the Federal Reserve's policy decision and the release of US inflation data, while the euro struggled to recover from a sell-off fuelled by political uncertainty in Europe.

After an upbeat run last week fuelled by signs of an easing in the labour market and economy, Friday's forecast-busting non-farm jobs report provided a dose of reality that interest rates might be kept elevated for some time.

Speculation has been swirling about how many, if any, cuts the Fed may introduce this year, with several officials warning that they are reluctant to move too soon for fear of restoking inflation, which remains stubbornly above

target. Focus is now on the conclusion Wednesday of the latest policy meeting and the release of May's consumer price index, which dipped in April after three successive above-forecast readings.

While decision-makers are expected to keep borrowing costs on hold, the main interest is their so-called "dot plot" forecast for them over the coming months.

Traders started the year predicting as many as six cuts but they have whittled them down since then and now the most optimistic estimate is for three, with some even eyeing zero.

"The interest-rate guessing game goes on," said Chris Larkin at E*Trade from Morgan Stanley. "Even the friendliest inflation numbers probably won't push the Fed to act any sooner

than September."

All three main indexes on Wall Street pushed higher Monday, with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq chalking up records again. But Asian investors were less assured Tuesday, after a tepid performance the day before in holiday-thinned trade.

Hong Kong, Shanghai and Sydney all sank on their return from an extended weekend break, while Singapore, Manila and Jakarta were also down.

However, Tokyo, Seoul, Wellington and Taipei all edged up. The euro remained under pressure against its peers owing to growing political uncertainty after French President Emmanuel Macron called a snap parliamentary election in reaction to a strong showing by the country's far-right in EU elections.

Court Notice

In the Court of Qurat-ul-Ain Rashid, Civil Judge/Judge Family Court Swabi, Mst. Sonia Vs. Bahar Ali, Suit No. 66/FC, Institution date 20-03-2024, Hearing date 01-07-2024. Subject: Dissolution of marriage. Notice to Bahar Ali son Yousaf Khan R/o Largo Pul, Maneri, Tehsil and District, Swabi, presently abroad. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the Court on 01-07-2024 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.



In brief

Mirpurkhas hosts tennis coaching camp

KARACHI (APP): The Mirpurkhas Tennis Association, in collaboration with the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF), has launched a month-long Wheelchair Tennis Coaching Camp at Citizen Gymkhana. This initiative is part of the International Tennis Federation (ITF) Wheelchair Tennis Development Program. Building on the success of a four-month camp held from September to December 2023, this new camp aims to further develop wheelchair tennis in the region. Key supporters include Gulistan-e-Mazoreen Mirpurkhas and the management of Citizen Gymkhana. The camp was inaugurated by Muhammad Khalid Rehmani, Vice President of the Pakistan Tennis Federation and a member of the Asian Tennis Federation's Wheelchair Tennis Committee. During the opening ceremony, Rehmani announced plans for another camp in October 2024. He also invited the two top wheelchair tennis players from Mirpurkhas to participate in the National Wheelchair Tennis Event in Karachi later this year. Rehmani highlighted the support from the Pakistan Tennis Federation, which has provided essential equipment, including nets, rackets, and four wheelchairs, to facilitate the camp. Officials from the Sindh Tennis Association, including Sarwar Hussain, Humera Qazi, Perveen Akhter, Farha Riaz, Erum Bukhari, Ishrat Zehra, Raisa Ashfaq, Fahmida Zamir, and Iqbal Ahmed, were present at the inauguration, underscoring the strong community and organizational support for this initiative.

China squeeze into Worl Cup qualifying stage

HONG KONG (AFP): China squeezed into the third round of Asian qualifying for the 2026 World Cup despite a 1-0 defeat at South Korea on Tuesday, with Indonesia also progressing on a night of drama. Paris Saint-Germain's Lee Kang-in scored just after the hour in Seoul for South Korea, who were already into the next qualifying phase as group winners. The damaging loss left China's World Cup hopes hanging by a thread, but Thailand failed to take advantage as their dreams of progressing fell agonisingly short. They needed to beat basement side Singapore by three goals in Bangkok to leapfrog China into second place in Group C of the second qualifying phase, but the Thais could only win 3-1. China and Thailand finished with the same number of points and same goal difference, but the Chinese went through with a superior head-to-head record. Same of the Thai players were in tears at the end. In contrast to the crushing disappointment in Bangkok, Indonesia celebrated reaching the third qualifying round for the first time with a 2-0 home victory over the Philippines. Indonesia joined Iraq in advancing out of Group F, with Thom Haye and Rizky Ridho the goal-scoring heroes in front of a raucous crowd of 64,000 in Jakarta. Five-star Japan Elsewhere, coach Hajime Moriyasu warned Japan that the third qualifying round will be "a completely different level" after thrashing Syria 5-0 to go through with a 100 percent record. Moriyasu's side completed the second qualifying stage on maximum points with 24 goals scored and none conceded after an easy win in Hiroshima.

Rizwan, Babar keep Pakistan alive at T20 World Cup

NEW YORK (AFP): Mohammad Rizwan and captain Babar Azam starred as Pakistan stayed alive at the T20 World Cup with a seven-wicket win over Canada on Tuesday. Knowing defeat would condemn them to a shock first round exit, Rizwan and Babar put on a match-winning second-wicket partnership of 63 as Pakistan reached their target of 107 with 15 balls to spare. Opener Rizwan finished undefeated on 53 off 53 balls with two fours and a six for his 29th T20 international half-century while Babar made 33 off as many balls with one four and a six. The victory came after the 2009 champions and runners-up in 2022 had lost both their first two Group A fixtures. A stunning super-over humiliation at the hands of the United States was followed by a six-run loss to bitter rivals

India in a game where they failed to chase down a modest 120-run target. However, Tuesday's win at the same Nassau County International Stadium where they came up short against India may still not be enough to secure a place in the second round Super Eights. Pakistan have two points with one game left while India and the United States both have four points from two wins apiece and remain favourites to progress to the next stage. Despite the loss, Canada, with two points from three games, are still in the hunt for a Super Eights spot. Dillon Heyliger took two of the Pakistan wickets to fall, dismissing recalled opener Saim Ayub for six and claiming the prized wicket of Babar, both men caught behind. Earlier, Pakistan restricted Canada to 106-7 despite opener Aaron Johnson hitting his sixth international

fifty. Johnson demonstrated his attacking intent from the start, cracking successive boundaries off the first two balls he faced from Shaheen Shah Afridi. The Jamaican born 33-year-old opener made 52 off 44 balls with four boundaries and four sixes before he was eventually out in the 14th over with the score on 73-6, clean-bowled by Naseem Shah. Johnson was the only batsman in the top six to reach double figures as Pakistan's seamers took wickets on a regular basis. Mohammad Amir clean-bowled Navneet Dhaliwal (four) with a 141 km/h delivery which sliced through the defences of the opener. Shaheen recovered from conceding 10 runs off his first over to get rid of Pargat Singh (two) before Nicholas Kirton (one) was run out by a superb throw by Imad Wasim.

Shahid Khan participate in inaugural meeting of IACO

F.P. Report

MOSCOW: Pakistani Teen Shines at International Children's Organization Meeting in Moscow Malik Shahid Khan, a young student, social activist, and mental health advocate, recently made Pakistan proud by representing the nation at the inaugural meeting of the International Association of Children's Organizations. Held in Moscow, Russia, this significant gathering was organized by the Movement of the First and World Youth Festival. The event, which took place on June 1st and 2nd at VDNH Park, brought together young minds from over 60 nations to discuss crucial objectives aimed at empowering children and youth globally. The main objectives of the meeting encompassed a broad spectrum of initiatives dedicated to fostering the well-being and development of children and youth worldwide. These included facilitat-



ing the implementation of state policies favoring children and youth, promoting education, vocational guidance, and organizing leisure activities. Moreover, the meeting aimed at creating equal opportunities for comprehensive development and self-fulfillment, preparing the younger generation for active participation in society, and nurturing socially significant and creative endeavors. Beyond mere representation, Malik actively engaged in leading a group

project, demonstrating his dedication to making a meaningful impact on a global scale. For Pakistan, Malik's representation at such a prestigious international forum symbolizes a significant milestone in the nation's efforts to nurture young leaders and advocates who can contribute meaningfully to global discourse on critical issues affecting children and youth. His involvement not only reflects the potential and talent within Pakistan's youth but also highlights the importance of fostering a supportive environment that encourages active civic engagement and social responsibility from a young age. His experiences and achievements at the MIACO inspire hope and optimism, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to nurturing the next generation of leaders who will continue to champion the rights and well-being of children and youth on both national and global platforms.

Pak team departs for Russia to feature in BRICS Games

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 7-member Pakistan athletics team has departed for Russia to participate in the Brics Games being held in Kazan from June 12 to 17. According to Athletics Federation of Pakistan President, Brig (R) Wajahat Hussain, the team includes five athletes and two officials. The athletes are Shajar

Abbas (100m and 200m races), Gohar Shahbaz (100m race), Abdul Muheed (400m race), Sohail Amir (1500m and 5000m races), and Abdul Qadir Khan Marwat (Javelin throw). The team will be accompanied by Manager Imdadullah Memon and Coach Rana Sajjad Ahmed Khan. Hussain expressed hope

that the national team will perform outstandingly in the event. This is a great opportunity for Pakistan's athletes to showcase their talent and bring laurels to the country. The BRICS Games is a prestigious international sporting event that brings together athletes from all over the world.

Pakistan team reaches Tajikistan for FIFA WC qualifier

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan national football team has reached for Tajikistan to play the FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifiers round 2 against the hosts. Pakistan team had departed for Dushanbe, Tajikistan on a special Pakistan Air Force plane from Nur Khan Air Base. Pakistan is set to play

Tajikistan on Tuesday at 8pm Pakistan time. Pakistan squad - Goalkeepers: Yousuf Butt (D), Saqib Hanif and Hassan Ali. Defenders: Abdullah Iqbal (D), Mohammad Fazal (D), Haseeb Khan, Rao Omer Hayat, Mamoon Moosa, Mohammad Saddam, Waqar Ihtisham,

Moin Ahmed and Abdul Rehman. Midfielders: Rahis Nabi (D), Otis Khan (D), Ali Uzair, Umair Ali, Toqeer ul Hassan, Alamgir Ghazi and Ali Zafar. Forwards: Imran Kayani (D), McKeal Abdulah, Fareedulah, Adeel Younas and Shayak Dost.

Murray beaten in first round of Stuttgart Open

STUTTGART (Agencies): Andy Murray's first match of the grass-court season ended in defeat by American Marcos Giron at the Stuttgart Open. Appearing in the 99th singles match of his career, three-time Grand Slam champion Murray was beaten 6-3 6-4 in the first round. The 37-year-old is preparing for what looks set to be his final Wimbledon, having previously said he does not plan on "playing much beyond the summer". Against Giron the former world number one

twice saved break point in his first service game, before missing out on an early chance to break himself. World number 54 Giron soon took advantage, breaking to go up 4-2 before comfortably taking the opening set. Murray rallied at the start of the second set, holding to love in the first game before finding himself 40-15 up on his opponent's serve. But he failed to convert his break points, with Giron instantly getting a break of his own that he would never relinquish.

Giron, 30, will face another Briton, sixth seed Jack Draper, in the second round on Wednesday. Murray hopes to play at the Cinch Championships at Queen's next week as his preparations continue for Wimbledon. He will also team up with brother Jamie in the men's doubles at the All England Club in what will be their first Grand Slam appearance as a pair. Earlier this month, Jamie Murray told BBC Sport it was "now or never" for the brothers to play together. Wimbledon starts on 1 July.



NEW YORK: Mohammad Rizwan has a laugh as the ball slips from the bowler's hand and rolls to him.

Rania of Abbottabad wins KP Jr U17 Squash C'ship

PESHAWAR (APP): Rania Qazi of Abbottabad clinched the trophy after upsetting Manahil Aqeel in a marathon 3-2 battle in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa U17 Squash Championship played here at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex on Tuesday. President KP Squash Association and Secretary Local Govt Dawood Khan was the chief guest on this occasion. Chairman KP Squash Association and former World Champion Qamar Zaman, Director Blue Tone Academy Wazir Gul, former Nazim Nawa Khali Sajjad Khan, Chief Referee Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) Munawar Zaman, coaches Adil Faqeer, players and large number of spectators were also present and witnessed the thrilling finals of the U17 Girls, U9, U11, U13 categories. In the Girls U17 final Rania Qazi of Abbottabad marched into victory in the marathon five sets battle wherein Manahil Aqeel gave her rival very tough resistance. Rania Qazi, a promising upcoming player, lost the first two set after a tough a battle, the

score was 10-12 and 11-13 but she staged a strong come back and not only level the two sets lead of Manahil Aqeel after winning the third and fourth sets at 11-9 and 13-11 but also won the fifth set by 12-10. The final lasted for 52 minute and both Rania Qazi and Manahil Aqeel played well and a large number of spectators enjoyed the battle. In the other final matches in the U9 category Atif Ali Naz handed another upsetting defeat to Ryan Zaman in 3-1 battle, the score was 11-9, 8-11, 12-10 and 11-9. In the final of the U11 category Anas Rafe recorded victory against Abdullah Riaz by 3-1, the score was 9-11, 11-9, 11-7 and 11-7. Both Anas Rafe and Abdullah Riaz played well and gave each other a tough fight but overall Anas Rafe dominated the match and did not give much time to Abdullah Riaz to play with free hands. In the U13 Danish Sikander defeated Malik Muhammad by 3-2, the score was 12-10, 9-11, 11-8, 13-11 and 11-9. Both Malik Muhammad and Danish Sikander played well and gave

each other a tough fight. Danish has better command over his drops and nick shots and Malik Muhammad tried hard to pick the same but it was a difficult task as Danish despite losing the first two sets, came back strongly and won three consecutive sets to win the final. At the end of the final matches, the chief guest Secretary Local Govt Dawood Khan gave away trophies and cash prizes. Talking to media men, he said, the Squash association is mainly focusing on age group players that is why 25 to 26 tournaments including eight to nine events for female are part of the overall KP Squash Association calendar. He said the players are gradually coming up at the grassroots level and hopefully they would achieve name and fame not only for KP but also for the nation. He said our female players have been showing tremendous performance and now winning medals at international level. He also thanked DG Sports KP for extending all out support to the association.

Sindh, KPK victorious in Blind Cricket T-20 Super League matches

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sindh and KPK earned victories in the 7th edition of the PBCC Blind Cricket T-20 Super League 2024 matches at APS School Cricket Ground, Abbottabad on Tuesday. In the first match, Sindh beat Balochistan by 64 runs. In the morning Balochistan won the toss and put Sindh into bat. Sindh set a formidable target, scoring 221 runs for the loss of 6 wickets in their allotted 20 overs. The stand-out performance came from Sanwal Shahzada (B3), who played a spectacular unbeaten innings of 83 runs off just 46 balls, hitting 6 fours and 3 sixes. Muhammad Ijaz (B3) also contributed significantly with a quickfire 25 runs off 19 balls. Balochistan's bowling attack faced a tough challenge, with Kamran Akhtar (B3) being the pick of the

bowlers, taking 3 wickets for 40 runs in his 4 overs. Despite their efforts, Sindh batsmen maintained a steady run rate, bolstered by 39 extras from Balochistan's bowlers. In response, Balochistan Blind managed to score only 157 runs for 9 wickets in their 20 overs. Haroon Khan (B2) was the top scorer for Balochistan, contributing 36 runs off 24 balls. Mohsin Khan and Muhammad Ayyaz make 25* and 22 runs respectively. However, the disciplined bowling from Sindh, particularly from Muhammad Salman (B1), who took 4 wickets for 31 runs, and Idrees Saleem's 2 wickets, restricted Balochistan from reaching the target. In another match, KPK defeated Punjab by 51 runs. KPK Blind set a formidable target of 281 runs for the loss of just 2 wickets

in their allotted 20 overs against Punjab. KPK batting was spearheaded by Badar Munir (B2), who remained not out with a phenomenal 154 runs off just 63 balls, including 24 fours and 4 sixes, maintaining a strike rate of 244.44. He was well-supported by Muhammad Rashid (B3), who scored 78 not out off 40 balls, hitting 14 fours. Punjab Blind's bowlers faced a tough challenge against the formidable batting line-up of KPK. Babar Ali (B2) was only bowler, managed to take 1 wicket. In reply, Punjab put up a strong fight but fell short by 51 runs. Mati Ullah (B3) was the standout performer, smashing 62 runs off 27 balls, including 11 fours and 1 six. Akmal Hayat Nasir (B3) made 51 runs off 42 balls with 7 fours and 1 six. Punjab Blind's batting lineup faced early setbacks, losing two quick wickets. Zafar Iqbal (B1) was dismissed for 2 runs, and Moeen Aslam (B2) was bowled out on the very first ball by Badar Munir (B2). Mati Ullah's explosive innings brought some hope, but consistent wickets prevented Punjab Blind from maintaining the required run rate. Israr Ul Hassan (B2) contributed 15 runs off 6 balls, and Abdul Wahab (B1) added 10 runs off 8 balls. SanaUllah (B3) remained not out with 45 runs off 32 balls, while Anees Javed (B2) was unbeaten with 6 runs off 8 balls. KP bowlers showcased a disciplined performance. Badar Munir (B2) and Muhammad Asif (B1) both took 2 wickets each, conceding 32 runs in their 4 overs each. Talha Iqbal (B3) and Fakhar Abbas (B1) took 1 wicket a piece.

FIFA President hopes football WC 2026 to be the greatest ever

LAHORE (APP): FIFA President Gianni Infantino has said that the FIFA World Cup 2026 will be the most inclusive and greatest tournament ever in the history of the sport to be hosted by Canada, Mexico and USA in June 2026. In a press release, showing the FIFA chief standing beside the glittering trophy, issued on Tuesday, Gianni Infantino was quoted as saying that the upcoming mega event will feature 48 countries and be hosted by 16 cities across three countries. The FIFA World Cup 26 is due to kick off at the iconic Estadio Azteca Mexico City on June 11, 2026 while the final will be played in New Jersey (New York) on July 19.



The Estadio Azteca Mexico City – one of three venues in Mexico along with Estadio Monterrey and Estadio Guadalarajara – will make history at the tournament, having also hosted the opening matches of the FIFA World Cup 1970 and 1986. "It will be the first stadium to host three inaugural (FIFA) World Cup football matches," said the FIFA President, adding that "We've never seen this before, and to experience it at an iconic stadium like the Azteca is something very, very special. We all know the epic football matches that have been played there in the past while absolute champions like Pelé and Diego Maradona played and won at the Azteca." "In two years from now, the world will stand still and watch what is happening in North America. The trophy

is already here, ready – we take care of it – and we are all getting ready, gearing up for the competition, preparing everything." He said a number of qualifying matches are being played as the milestone was reached. Eighteen games were scheduled to take place in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) qualifiers, bringing the second round of qualifying to a conclusion and determining which 18 teams would proceed to the third stage. Matches in North, Central America and Caribbean (Concacaf), and in the Confederation of African Football (CAF) are also scheduled on the day. The ball started rolling in South America in September 2023. The FIFA President said preparations were well on course across the three host nations. "At the host cities,

of course, FIFA is working with the authorities, with the stadium owners and operators, with the local communities," he said of the two Canadian, three Mexican, and 11 US venues. "(There is) fantastic collaboration everywhere. They are looking forward to millions and millions of fans from all over the world. The stadiums are absolutely beautiful." Talking about the major milestones in the upcoming FIFA World Cup 26 milestones, Gianni Infantino said these include qualifying draws in both Asia and Oceania, adding that 18 team will vie for eight direct slots during the AFC qualifying in September this year while 11 nations will compete for one direct slot in the Oceania Football Confederation from September as well.



In brief

IRSA releases 295,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 295,100 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 197,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1452.71 feet and was 54.71 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 72,100 cusecs and 140,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1186.05 feet, which was 136.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 40,700 cusecs and 70,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 178,000, 150,800, 118,700, and 69,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 51,800 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 5,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

ANF recovers 57 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting three operations across the country managed to recover 57 kg drugs and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He said that 6.2 kg ice was recovered from a parcel sent to Australia from the DHL office in Sialkot. 3 kg intoxicated tablets were recovered from a passenger going to Saudi Arabia at Lahore Airport. 48 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested on GT Road Peshawar. Cases have been registered against the accused and further investigations are under process.

Police arrest purse snatcher

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a swift response to a recent purse snatching incident, Rawalpindi police have successfully captured the culprit and recovered a big amount of stolen cash. The suspect identified as Umair Hassan was apprehended after snatching woman's purse during a shopping excursion. The stolen purse contained an amount of Rs 2,67,000. According to a police spokesman, Umair Hassan was involved in the stealing activity. The incident occurred when the accused targeted a woman during her shopping. City Police have registered a case and initiating a thorough investigation into the matter. SP Rawal, Faisal Saleem, emphasized that the accused would face the law for his crime. He further reiterated that such prompt and effective actions by law enforcement send a clear message that criminal activities will not be tolerated in Rawalpindi.

Low quality milk destroyed

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a bid to ensure food safety and crackdown on the adulteration mafia, the Punjab Food Authority (PFA), under the directive of the Director General, has intensified its operations in different areas. The food safety team conducted raid and started inspection of 34 milk-carrying vehicles at Toll Plaza and Thalian Interchange. The PFA team tested some 2 lakh 35 thousand liter of milk which was found low quality and contaminated. Later, the PFA team destroyed the sub standard milk to protect the citizen of using unhygienic food products. Additionally, a total of 1 lakh 35 thousand rupee fine was imposed on 6 milk-carrying vehicles found violating food safety standards.



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ms. Jane Marriot calling on Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani at Parliament House. —APP Photo

Eliminating child labour key to ensure Children's bright future

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Tuesday said that eliminating child labour is a key to ensure the bright future of children.

"Children are the future of this country and no one can be allowed to deprive them of their potential, dignity and rights. Parliament of Pakistan is committed to eradicate child labour," the speaker said in a message on 'World Day Against Child Labour'.

The Speaker said that child labour is a serious social challenge and it is hurting the physical, mental and emotional growth of millions of children globally, who are unfortu-

nately involved in the child labour.

He further, emphasized the need for enhanced investment in education, social protection programs, and child protective services said a news release. He also stressed the importance of raising awareness about the issue and engaging civil society, parents, children, and the larger public to eliminate child labour along with all its forms once and for all.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq commended the efforts of all stakeholders working tirelessly to combat child labour and to promote children's rights. He urged all stakeholders to continue

their efforts and work in consensus to eradicate child labour.

On this occasion, Deputy Speaker National Assembly Syed Mir Ghulam Mustafa Shah said that child labour is a serious social issue that needs to be addressed urgently. He emphasized that children should be have an access to quality education and a safe environment, rather than being forced into forced labour.

He also stressed that the government, civil society, and individuals must join hands to eliminate child labour and ensure that every child has access to their fundamental rights.

Governor honors Dubai-based Pakistani journalist Mudassar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan presented the Best Journalist Award to Syed Mudassar Khushnood, a prominent Pakistani journalist based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), at a prestigious ceremony organized by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Gulf and the Middle East in Dubai.

On this occasion, PPP Gulf and Middle East President Mian Munir Hans praised Syed Mudassar Khushnood, emphasizing that he is recognized as the number one journalist in the United Arab Emirates, particularly in Dubai.

His extraordinary services have brought immense pride to Pakistani journalists in the UAE. The award,

presented personally by the Governor of Punjab, recognizes Syed Mudassar Khushnood's role as an important bridge between the UAE and Pakistan.

Syed Mudassar Khushnood has been honored with numerous awards in the past, cementing his reputation as the best journalist in the UAE, including the region. Syed Mudassar Khushnood is the first Pakistani journalist in the UAE to receive a 10-year golden visa and the highest immigration award from the UAE government.

His services in promoting the positive image of Pakistan and serving the Pakistani community in the Emirates have been widely recognized. Speaking at the event, PPP Middle East and

Gulf President Mian Munir Hans reiterated that Syed Mudassar Khushnood is ranked first among the top ten journalists in the UAE. He called Khushnood an ambassador for the country while highlighting his significant impact on journalism.

Talking to the media on this occasion, Governor Punjab Sardar Salim Haider Khan said that his party believes in freedom of the press and he has no role in the recent passing of the Punjab Defamation Bill 2024. The event highlights Syed

Mudassar Khushnood's outstanding achievements and dedication to journalism, further cementing his position as the number one journalist in the UAE.

PSM to be revived by Sindh govt

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Tuesday apprised the Upper House that Sindh government was going to take over the Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) for reviving the state-owned enterprise after consensus with the federal government.

The minister was responding to the query of Senator Mohsin Aziz of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) pertaining to losses of PSM at present and the number of individuals employed. Minister for Investment with Chief Minister Sindh for working out a plan to revive the PSM. He said that Sindh government was demanding 200 acres of more land other than the 550 acres of covered area of the existing plant of PSM.

Moreover, he said the federal government had also approved 700 acres of the total 19,000 acres land of the PSM to use it for industrial purposes and Sindh Cabinet had also approved it's rules for using the land. The Minister said that PSM had around 5,000 employees whereas the Mill was closed that remained dysfunctional during the previous governments.

The federal government had acquired 1,500 acres of land for sports processing zone, whereas China was interested to relocate it's export industry to Pakistan, he added.

Senator Taj Haider, Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) informed the House that the PSM had the capacity of 1.1 million tonnes of production capacity whereas another steel mill of similar capacity and technology was set up in Isfahan, Iran that had 30 million tonnes of production capacity.

Pak-Australia agreed to collaborate on water security

ISLAMABAD (APP): PM's Coordinator on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Romina Khurshid Alam met with Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins here on Tuesday and discussed range of bilateral issues of mutual interest including COP-29, water security, forest fires, climate resilience community, GLOFIII and Climate Change Authority.

Both sides agreed to closely collaborate on water security and agriculture. The Australian side

would provide technical assistance to Pakistan for water security management, a news release said.

The PM's Coordinator underscored, water security is Pakistan's most critical development challenge and sustainable management of water is indispensable for sustainable development.

Keeping the significance of water in view, she is working on GLOFIII project in Pakistan which will at one hand reduce the risks of floods in northern areas while on the other hand provide huge reservoirs of water to be used by water

scarce districts, she added.

H.E Neil Hawkins while reiterating his resolve of close collaboration with Pakistan, stated that the Australian Government's main focus in Pakistan was to work on climate change and gender. Australian High Commissioner also presented a coffee table book 'Australian Journey-Our Country' to the PM's aide. The both sides agreed on consistent engagements to further deepen their ties in climate initiatives.

The meeting was marked with traditional warmth, understanding and trust.

BISP disburses Rs 117 billion under Benazir Taleemi Wazaif

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has over-all disbursed Rs 117 billion and enrolled 14.8 million children under the Conditional Cash Transfer intervention of Benazir Taleemi Wazaif, since its inception.

According to the Economic Survey 2023-24 unveiled by the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, the internationally acclaimed BISP had disbursed a total of Rs 36.9 billion under the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif initiative during July-March

FY2024 with enrollment of 2.2 million children.

The stipend rate of students has been raised during FY 2024 up to Rs. 2000 for boy child per quarter and Rs. 2500 for girl child at primary level.

While the stipend rate has been increased up to Rs 3,000 for boy child and Rs 3500 for girl child at secondary level. For higher secondary level, the stipend has been increased up to Rs 4,000 for boy child and Rs 4500 for girl child.

A one-time bonus of Rs 3,000 is also given to the girls upon their graduation

from primary education.

The government is dedicated to achieving universal primary education that aligns with the SDGs.

To address the issue of children from BISP beneficiary households not attending school, the government introduced a Co-Responsibility Cash Transfer in October 2012, providing additional cash per quarter for primary education. Since July 1, 2021, the program has been expanded to include secondary and higher secondary education, gradually rolling out nationwide.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Leslie Scanlon, High Commissioner of Canada to Pakistan, calls on the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Mr. Ahad Khan Cheema.

Punjab bans burning of animal offal at public places

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to ensure public safety and maintain cleanliness during Eid-ul-Azha celebrations, the Punjab government has imposed Section 144 across the province, prohibiting the burning of animal heads and trotters at public places.

A spokesperson from the provincial Home Department told PTV that the directive also extends to the disposal of sacrificial animal offal, with strict

prohibitions against dumping them in manholes, drainage systems, or canals.

He said the measures aim to prevent environmental hazards and promote hygienic practices during the festive period. Furthermore, the spokesperson stated that the government has forbidden banned organizations from collecting sacrificial animal hides, as part of efforts to regulate the distribution and utilization of animal by-products.

To a query, he said the Punjab Home Department has established a dedicated control room tasked with monitoring compliance across the province.

He noted that through vigilant oversight and coordination, authorities aim to ensure adherence to the prescribed guidelines and maintain public order throughout the Eid-ul-Azha festivities.

Munir: Effective crisis management requires transparent communication

ISLAMABAD (APP): Timely, transparent communication is crucial in mitigating crises, enabling strategists to quickly resolve emergencies," said Arshad Munir, Executive Director General of the Information Service Academy.

Speaking at a one-day training session on 'Communication Crisis' held on Tuesday by the Information Service Academy in collaboration with MarCom (a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, UK), he said that this training would generally benefit their professional development and enhance the capacity of M/o I&B's officers to handle crisis situations effectively, ensuring that accurate information is disseminated to the public in a timely and efficient manner.

The seminar referred to the technologies, systems, and protocols that enable an organization to communicate effectively during a major threat to its reputation. The objective of the seminar was to equip our

officers with the skills and knowledge required to manage communication effectively during crises.

Muhammad Shahzad, Director General of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, emphasized the importance of Public Relations Officers (PROs) using strategic empathy and compassion in communication to humanize the organization and ensure accurate news.

He cautioned against relying on guesswork or assumptions during crises, stressing the need for accurate information verification. Crisis communication specialists must make swift decisions. He emphasized the importance of responding promptly and effectively in unstable situations while ensuring information confidentiality.

Serious measures should be implemented against employees who share information and data with external parties, as such actions are deemed highly unprofessional, unethical, and detrimental to the organization's reputation.

He further emphasized that the Public Relations Officer (PRO) should recognize the crisis's impact on affected individuals and tailor communications accordingly. Sardar Zaheer, MarCom (a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing), highlighted the significance of crisis communication policies, emphasizing the necessity for structured frameworks to navigate crises effectively and deliver accurate, timely information to the media.

Sajid Gondal, Director of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, stressed the importance of promoting effective workplace communication during emergency situations. He emphasized that employees should have convenient access to their superiors' offices to discuss critical issues and collaborate on finding mutually acceptable solutions.

Additionally, information should seamlessly flow across all departments in the desired format.



RAWALPINDI: A young vendor arranging and displaying car sun shades to attract the customers along Murree Road. —APP Photo

Minister calls for foreign help

KABUL (Ariana News): Habibullah Agha, the Acting Minister of Education, highlighted the educational situation in Afghanistan during his statement at the Second Global Conference of Education Ministers in Kazan, Russia, this week and called for international assistance to help boost the sector in the country. He said Afghanistan needed international assistance and cooperation over building of schools, printing textbooks, and paying teachers' salaries.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Zil-Hajj 05 1445 — Wednesday, June 12, 2024

Denmark announces aid

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UN Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan has announced that Denmark has contributed \$7.29 million to provide assistance in various sectors, including women's empowerment. The agency stated on its social media platform from X that this is Denmark's third round of aid to Afghanistan. The UN Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan emphasized that this assistance will strengthen coordinated efforts to provide services to the Afghan people.

CASA-1000 project survey started

KABUL (TOLONews): Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) announced the commencement of the survey for the CASA-1000 power transmission route in Kunduz and Baghlan provinces.

Hekmatullah Maiwandi, the spokesperson for DABS, stated that the CEO of the company has traveled to Baghlan and Kunduz to assess and facilitate the execution of this project and has also held discussions with local provincial officials.

The CASA-1000 project aims to transmit approximately 1,000 megawatts of electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan through Afghanistan. The project's work in the involved countries is reportedly almost complete; however, in Afghanistan, it was halted

ed due to political changes in August 2021.

"They have started the preliminary survey, after which a meeting will be held with Breshna Sherkat, and then a date will be set to start the work," Hekmatullah Maiwandi said.

The CASA-1000 project is valued at \$1.2 billion, with the Afghanistan section costing \$260 million. So far, \$100 million of it has not been paid by the World Bank.

Amanullah Ghalib, former head of Breshna company, considers the implementation of this project politically and regionally beneficial for Afghanistan and says that Afghanistan could earn around 45 to 50 million dollars annually as transit fees.

Amanullah Ghalib added, "Afghanistan can

politically prove that we are no longer isolated and can be a partner, and start other projects like TAP and the Internet."

Some economic experts believe that the implementation of this project will have a positive impact on job creation and improving Afghanistan's economic trust in the region.

Taj Mohammad Talash, an economic expert, said: "This project can reduce unemployment, improve the economic trust of regional countries, create industrial zones, and move us towards self-sufficiency in the energy sector."

Previously, the Central Bank of Afghanistan had announced that infrastructure projects worth \$40 million would be implemented along the CASA-1000 line in Afghanistan.

WFP calls for \$650m aid for Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Food Programme (WFP) says it needs \$650 million to address the needs in Afghanistan.

The agency stated on its social media platform that despite improvements in food security in Afghanistan compared to the past two years, one-fourth of the country's population still requires assistance for survival.

The World Food Programme has emphasized that it requires \$650 million for the next six months to continue providing aid to Afghanistan.

The World Food Programme's request for assistance for Afghanistan comes as the country has recently experienced devastating floods caused by recent rains, resulting in hundreds of deaths and significant financial losses.

Moreover, adverse natural events have completely devastated the livelihoods of many families, primarily reliant on agriculture.

However, the forced return of over half a million Afghans from Pakistan and the regular expulsion of large groups of Afghan refugees from Iran have recently increased the level of need in Afghanistan.

This comes amid a dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, exacerbated by the recent deadly floods in the country.

Additionally, the urgent need for aid extends to the returnees, as the influx of refugees returning from neighboring countries, such as Pakistan, and the expulsion of Afghan refugees from Iran, has intensified the demand for assistance in Afghanistan.

Factionalism ended in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): Mohammad Ali Jan Ahmad, the Deputy Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs, said in a meeting in Kabul that the islands of power in Afghanistan are no more and those who intend to destroy Afghanistan will not achieve their goals.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the electronic attendance system for students of ten educational centers, he also said that bullying and tribalism in the country have ended and all Afghans live together in an Islamic system.

In this meeting, Mohammad Ali Jan Ahmad added: "Today, there is no more factionalism, bullying, and selfishness in Afghanistan. Those who worked for themselves in Afghanistan did not last long."

Meanwhile, Abdul Mateen Rahimzai, the head of the technology department of the Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs, said in this meeting that all the borders of the country are secure and no one is allowed to engage in destructive activities against the Islamic Emirate.

Rahimzai said: "The IEA will not allow anyone to cross our borders and bring opposition and misfortune to the country."

Officials of this ministry have denied reports of human rights violations in Afghanistan and pledged that everyone's rights are protected.

Sar-e Pol province implements 71 projects worth over 675 million Afs

KABUL (BNA): Officials from the Department of Economy in Sar-e Pol province have reported the implementation of 71 major and minor projects during last year, with a value of over 675 million Afghanis.

Mawlawi Ghulam Haidar Haidari, head of the province's Department of Economy, told BNA that in the solar year 1402, 71 projects were implemented in the province at a cost of over 675 million, Afghanis.

He added that these projects were conducted in the sectors of health, education, agriculture, and other sectors.

He further stated that these achievements not only demonstrate the commitment and continuous efforts of local officials but also provide new hope and motivation for the people of Sar-e Pol.

The head of the Department of Economy of Sar-e Pol mentioned that these projects created job opportunities for more than 5,000 people.

It should be noted that last year, dozens of similar projects costing hundreds of millions of Afghanis were also implemented in other provinces, receiving warm appreciation from the public.

Afghan Hajj Minister attends int'l conference



KABUL (BNA): Sheikh al-Hadith Dr. Noor Mohammad Saqib, Acting Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, participated in the 48th international conference held in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, upon the official invitation of the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah.

The press office of the Ministry announced today that this conference, titled "Nadwat al-Hajj al-Kubra," was inaugurated with a speech by Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan al-Rabiah, the Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah. The conference was attended by key figures including the Minister of Hajj of the Islamic Emirate

of Afghanistan, Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim al-Issa, President of the Muslim World League, Sheikh Abdulrahman al-Sudaia, President of the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, along with ministers, scholars, scientists, and officials from various Islamic countries. The conference agenda

included discussions and consultations on the Hajj rituals alongside Saudi Arabia, efforts by Islamic countries, and other important topics. The aim was to ensure that the outcomes of the conference would create a suitable environment and provide more facilities for the pilgrims during the Hajj rituals.

Nimroz currency exchange suspends toman transactions

NIMROZ (TOLONews): Nimroz money exchangers will no longer process Iranian toman transfers in an effort to reduce transactions with foreign currencies.

Officials of the Money Exchangers Union of this province announced that from now on, money transferred in Iranian toman will be converted to afghani and delivered to customers.

Gul Ahmad, the head of the Nimroz Money Exchangers Union, said: "Transfers we receive in toman will be converted to afghani and given to the customers, except for those involved in the purchase and sale of oil."

Nematullah Hakimi, another money exchanger, said: "Since afghani is our national currency, its value should increase. Now, toman are very rare in Zaranj city, except among those engaged in the oil trade who still use toman."

Another money exchanger, Gulbuddin, said: "This move is beneficial for both us and our customers, as Afghani have a lower volume, which is advantageous for us."

Local officials in Nimroz report an 80% reduction in transactions using Iranian toman in the province.

Naqib Ahmad Khalid,

head of the Nimroz Urban Order Committee, said: "We have informed the money exchangers that individuals who transfer toman will receive afghani instead in Nimroz. Most people in the city prefer to use afghani, as toman have caused significant losses to the population."

Mohammad Hassan Mokhtar, an economic expert, said: "The goal of converting foreign currencies to afghani is to reduce the volume of foreign money in the market and instead have afghani in circulation. The more our national currency is used in the market and

financial exchanges, the more its value increases, thereby enhancing the purchasing power of the people."

The Nimroz Urban Committee was established several months ago with the aim of reducing and preventing transactions with foreign currencies, especially the Iranian toman.

Currently, only 20% of Nimroz residents do transactions with Iranian toman. The officials of the Urban Order Committee said it hopes that in the near future, the use of the Iranian toman in Nimroz will drop to zero.

Afghanistan rejects WHO report on maternal, infant mortality rates

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Public Health has rejected the recent World Health Organization (WHO) numbers on maternal and infant mortality in Afghanistan, stating that in the first five months of the current year, only about 300 mothers and 4,000 infants have died across the country.

Sharafat Zaman Amarkhil, spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Health, said that 350 health centers have been established in the past two years to provide healthcare services to all citizens, especially mothers and infants.

Amarkhil told TOLONews: "The figures available to the Ministry of Health of the Islamic Emirate differ significantly from these numbers. Based on our data, we reject the WHO report and the shared information, considering them far from reality. According to the data shared with the Ministry of Health, nearly 300 mothers

have died in the past five or six months."

Meanwhile, the WHO in a report said that 24 mothers and 167 infants die daily from preventable causes in Afghanistan.

The WHO report added: "The most severe repercussions of this protracted health emergency are borne by Afghan women and children, who find themselves on the margins of society. They are increasingly vulnerable to adverse health outcomes, particularly concerning reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health. Tragically, preventable maternal mortality claims the lives of 24 mothers every day, and a staggering 167 infants die each day of preventable causes."

"It is well known that we do not have good diagnostic or treatment equipment, and we also lack sufficient health centers. Look at Malalai Hospital, which is our largest hospital, and see how limited its facilities are, or Rabia Balkhi Hospital," Najm Sama Shefajo, head of the Association of Obstetric Gynecology, told TOLONews.

The WHO report also



mentioned that Afghanistan has made significant progress in fighting polio since 2021; however, challenges such as economic recession, drought, floods, food shortages, and the return of refugees remain.

"The role of WHO is commendable because it can provide financial support and help deliver healthcare services to remote areas, ensuring vaccines reach all parts of Afghanistan and remote locations," said Hashmatullah Azimi, a doctor.

The report also stated that the need for humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan has surged dramatically, increasing from 18.4 million people in

need prior to August 2021 to the current estimate that 23.7 million people will be in dire need in 2024. A substantial segment of this population – some 9.5 million people residing in more than 20,000 villages – still have limited or no access to the most basic health services.

The WHO stated that WHO Afghanistan requires an additional US\$ 352 million to supplement the overall budget of US\$ 423 million for the 2024-2025 biennium.

Amid all the health challenges, maternal and infant health has always been a significant concern for the country's health system and international aid organizations.

Afghanistan seeks international support



Environmental Protection Agency announced today that Hafez Azizurrahman, the head of the National Environmental Protection Agency, met with Ilham Mohammadov, the ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and Trial Ismailov, an advisor at the Azerbaijani embassy.

In this meeting, Hafez Azizurrahman emphasized the global importance of environmental issues. He pointed out that the Environmental Protection Agency, which is currently a member of 16 international environmental conventions, is fully committed to all its obligations. However, the international community has not been cooperating with Afghanistan on environmental issues.

Hafez mentioned that Afghanistan is affected by the adverse effects of climate change, which is one of the main reasons for the dangerous floods in the country.

He urged the Azerbaijani ambassador to strive for participation in this year's COP 29 conference to ensure that Afghan voices are heard at this global event.

In response, the Azerbaijani ambassador highlighted the longstanding and friendly relations between Afghanistan and Azerbaijan, expressing a commitment to further strengthen these ties.

Pul-e-Khishti: New tourist hotspot in Badakhshan

PUL-E-KHISHTI (TOLONews): Pul-e-Khishti, a historic monument in Badakhshan province, has recently become a popular destination, attracting many visitors from various provinces across the country.

Visitors to Faizabad city expressed their delight at the improved security and the opportunity to explore this remarkable site.

Khal-Nazar, a resident of Kunduz, said: "We came to Badakhshan, took a tour. The weather in Badakhshan is very nice, it's green, and it's the best place for recreation."

Sayed Manawi, a resident of Balkh, said: "Security is very well maintained. The roads are also very good. We had a great trip, stayed here for a

couple of nights, and then went to Dasht-e Shiva."

Parts of this historical monument have been damaged due to the government's neglect in recent years and are at risk of collapse.

Residents of Badakhshan say that this historical monument is deteriorating and they urged the interim government officials to restore and renovate it.

Matullah, a resident of Badakhshan, said: "People come here to visit and tour. It's a very nice place with a great history. If the government restores it, it will benefit both the government and the people, and also enhance the beauty of Badakhshan."

Romal, another resident of Badakhshan, said: "As far as I think, it needs

restoration and should be repaired."

The Department of Information and Culture of Badakhshan pledged that the restoration work on this monument will begin soon.

Zabihullah Amiri, head of the Department of Information and Culture of Badakhshan, said: "Inshaullah, with the onset of cold weather and the reduction of water levels, the restoration and repair work on this historical monument will begin."

According to numbers from this department, around 37 historical monuments and ancient sites have been registered in this province, and among them, five monuments were restored and renovated during the previous government.

Bamyan's new market:

Female entrepreneurs showcase crafts



KABUL (BNA): Local officials in Bamyan have announced the opening of a commercial market for female entrepreneurs for the first time in the Isa Khan Family Park, located in the center of province.

The head of the Vice and Virtue Directorate in the province, Mawlawi Mahmoodul Hassan Mansoori,

told BNA that this market features handmade crafts, Afghan clothing, embroidery, Afghan stitching, miniature artworks, local carpets, and other related items by female entrepreneurs for sale.

Meanwhile, the head of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) office in Bamyan, Moha-

mmad Ashraf Niazi, stated that the market includes 18 shops, a hotel, and a large green area, all designed to promote the industry of female entrepreneurs.

This comes after a similar market for selling handicrafts by female entrepreneurs was previously opened in the Gholghola area of Bamyan center.

PPP not going to be a part of cabinet: Shazia

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The meeting of the parliamentary committee of Pakistan Peoples Party was held in the meeting room of the National Assembly under the leadership of the chairman of the party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari also participated in this meeting.

After the meeting, Member of National Assembly and Secretary Information of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Shazia Marri briefed the journalists. In this meeting, the members of the National Assembly of the party informed the party leadership about their views and reservations.

Responding to the questions of the journalists, Shazia Marri said that the members informed about the problems of their respective constituencies. The attitude adopted by the federal government towards our members is causing problems to our members because the members are accountable to the people. Not giving relief to the agricultural class, difficulties in purchasing wheat etc. were discussed. We have to be accountable to

our people when the farmer does not get relief in fertiliser, does not get relief on tractor and no one listens to the problems of electricity, then all these concerns are valid.

No input from our party was taken in preparing the budget. Even in the federal PSDP, our opinion was not taken. We had tried to prevent this time from coming so senior members of our party approached the government but it did not yield any result and we did not expect that our voice would not be heard.

The National Economic Council was established after a long time, the meeting of which was held yesterday and the Sindh Chief Minister presented his case there, Balochistan presented its case. The reservations of PPP are for the people of the entire country.

We are a political party, we have an ideology and a manifesto and we wanted to give our input in light of that. So does this government want the PPP to protest? Does the government want us to express our displeasure on the floor of the National Assembly? Now it has to be seen by the government as it is in a responsible position. We did not expect this behavior

from Shahbaz Sharif. If this attitude continues, we will go to our people. Our commitment is with solar energy and agriculture, with farmers, so tell us what we should do?

On the question whether PPP is parting ways, Shazia Marri said that you should ask this question to the government. We are having another meeting on Wednesday before the budget at 2.30 pm so we are giving the government another chance.

We also have to look at our constituencies, the people and the implementation of our manifesto. She said that PPP is not going to be a part of the cabinet and PPP is supporting the government from outside for economic and political stability in the country. After the concerns of members, Chairman PPP will have to take a decision.

The members of South Punjab also told the Chairman about the injustices done to them. The Chairman wants to address the concerns of the members. Time is with the government and now it is the responsibility of the government to address these concerns if it wants to retain the support of this large political party.

SC orders closure of Monal restaurant, others

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Tuesday ordered the closure of Monal and all other restaurants in the Margalla Hills National Park in Islamabad.

The Supreme Court bench led by CJP Justice Qazi Faez Isa said while rejecting the Capital Development Authority's (CDA) report, ordered the administration to close all restaurants including Monal in Margalla Hills National Park within 90 days. SC in its verdict said National Park cannot be used for commercial activities. The apex court also said to consider affected restaurants in land leasing outside the National Park.

Earlier during the hearing of Monal Restaurant case, Chief Justice (CJ) Justice Qazi Faez Isa said that the apex court had sought a report on several other restaurants as well. He said there was also a mention of the Sports Club Pak-China Center and Arts Council National Monument in the report. "This shows the CDA officials' honesty," he said.

"Does the SC building also lie in the Margalla National Park; does the CDA office also lie in the same park?" he questioned, and said, "If that is the case, then it would be better if the Authority ordered the demolition of its own building." Justice Isa remarked the whole world knew how many restaurants were built alongside the Monal Restaurant. "It is only the CDA, which is clueless."

Burney's bail plea rejected

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The City Court Karachi (East) has rejected the bail application of social activist Sarim Burney, who is charged with illegally sending children abroad and forging documents.

In a reserved verdict delivered by the judicial magistrate (east), the court emphasized the need for further evidence collection, aligning with the argument presented by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) prosecutor. The prosecutor contended that granting bail to Burney could potentially jeopardize the integrity of the evidence.

"The suspect, if granted bail, might tamper with the evidence," the FIA prosecutor asserted during the proceedings. The court had earlier reserved its decision following the completion of arguments from both Burney's defense and the FIA's legal team in the case of sending children abroad illegally and forging documents. The defense argued for bail on the grounds of insufficient evidence, while the FIA insisted on the necessity of keeping Burney in custody to ensure a thorough investigation.

Sarim Burney, a prominent social worker, faces serious charges related to the illegal trafficking of children and document forgery. The allegations have raised significant concern and scrutiny within the community. On June 8, the judicial magistrate (East) of Karachi's city court rejected the investigating officer's request to extend the remand of social activist Sarim Burney and instead ordered that he be sent to jail on judicial remand.

During the hearing of the high-profile human trafficking, fraud, and cheating case against Burney, the court sent the activist to jail on judicial remand and said his bail application will be heard on June 10. Burney's lawyer argued that the family of the girl concerned, Haya, has been contacted, who claimed to have said they gave away the girl themselves.

The FIA produced Burney in court and requested for his further physical remand. On June 5, Burney was detained upon his arrival at Karachi Airport from the United States, sources confirmed. The detention came amidst serious accusations of human trafficking levelled against him by the US government. According to sources, Burney was apprehended by the Anti-Human Trafficking Police upon his arrival in Pakistan on the complaint of the US government.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman PPP, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari chairing party's parliamentary committee meeting.

Govt made several achievements: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Tuesday that the present government after coming to power had taken initiatives which resulted in many achievements on foreign policy front.

Delivering his speech on the occasion of launching ceremony of the report on national security and foreign policy, he said that foreign policy was top priority of the present dispensation. "We are a responsible nuclear country and our importance in the world cannot be denied," he said, adding Pakistan believed in peace not war.

The minister said Pakistan was recently elected a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council with 182 votes which was a demonstration of its successful foreign policy. "We have trade relations with Iran, and the late Iranian President's visit to Pakistan was also successful", he maintained. He said earlier a high-level Saudi delegation also visited Pakistan tapping investment potential.

Tarar said that 68 per cent of Pakistan's population comprised youth and focus on technical training was topmost priority of the government. He said recently Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif made a historic visit to China with renewed determination. The minister remarked that Pakistan was a huge market in the field of information technology, adding that the China Pakistan Economic Corridor was being upgraded.

He said that Huawei which had set up two Safe City projects in Pakistan, had offered to provide free of cost training to 200,000 Pakistani Information technology professionals per year. The minister said that the government's priority was also economic security, adding "Thanks to government initiatives, the economy is on the path of recovery. Foreign exchange reserves are improving and the rupee is stabilizing. The rate of inflation has decreased significantly in the country."

He said that the Special Investment Facilitation Council had played an important role in that regard. Tarar said that the slogan of the present government was aid

not trade. "In the past we heard about cricket and agriculture diplomacy", he said, adding that the foreign policy initiatives of the present government had ended the isolation of Pakistan.

The minister said after the conflict between Iran and Israel, the Iranian President came to Pakistan. He said in the geopolitical situation, Iran was also Pakistan's partner, adding Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif participated in the funeral prayer of the Iranian President. The minister said a high-level Saudi delegation also visited Pakistan and signed several agreements for investment in Pakistan.

The purpose of the Prime Minister's visit to China was the launch of the second phase of CPEC, he said, adding training of 200,000 youth in the IT sector by Huawei was a big achievement. The two countries were moving towards an upgraded version of CPEC, he added. About the Bisham incident, he said that a thorough investigation of the incident had been carried out. The minister said after the incident, Chinese engineers and workers were assured of security.

"Our priority is to ensure security as well as economic security," he said and added that during past two months, the government had taken priority measures regarding security and foreign policy. The minister said that Pakistan wanted good relations with its all neighbours and regional allies. He said that Pakistan contributed less than 2 per cent of carbon emissions but it had to suffer from impacts of climate change badly. The minister said that during floods in Pakistan, the United Nations Secretary General visited Pakistan.

He said Pakistan was suffering from the impacts of climate change and it was the responsibility of those countries which were contributing to carbon emissions resulting in climate change to assist Pakistan in countering its impacts. The minister said that it was the government's job to run businesses. He said that 120 businessmen accompanied the PM during China visit. Tarar said that Pakistan could provide opportunities to Chinese investors with cheaper cost of production.

PHC orders Secretary Defense, KP CS to appear

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ijaz Anwar ordered Secretary Defense, Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Additional Chief Secretary Tribal and Home Affairs to appear before the court on 14th June in regards to the enforced disappearance of four brothers of the Alkozai family from Hayatabad, on Tuesday.

PHC Justice Ijaz Anwar expressed dismay and annoyed lack of progress in the investigation despite previous orders to recover the missing brothers while Deputy Attorney General Ubaid Ullah Anwar appeared on behalf of federal government.

The Muhammad Nader Shah advocate presented details of the case, stating that Muhammad Nasser, Usman Khan, Abdul Waris, and Muhammad Zahir were taken into custody by police on 28th February 2024, and have been untraceable for over three months.

The lawyer argued that the disappearance of the businessmen is a result of the negligence and complicity of the Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) and Senior Superintendent of Police Peshawar, who have failed to comply with the court's orders to produce the missing brothers.

Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had submitted before PHC that the enforced disappeared four brothers will be recovered within 14 days during his appearance on previous hearing but a mouth said to no veil, the lawyer argued.

The court has adjourned the hearing till 14th June, directing the secretaries of defense, home affairs, and chief secretary

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to appear before the court and provide a detailed explanation for the enforced disappearance of four brothers of the Alkozai family.

PHC orders submission of cases record registered against Asad Qaiser: PHC's divisional comprising of Justice SM Atique Shah and Justice Waqar Ahmed ordered National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Anti-Corruption Department, and other authorities to provide details of cases registered against member national assembly and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Qaiser. The court has also restrained the authorities from harassing the petitioner, on Tuesday.

The counsel Arshad Ahmed advocate informed the court that the petitioner is a member National Assembly and former Speaker of the Provincial Assembly, and that multiple cases have been registered against him after 9th May incidents. He alleged that PTI workers are being targeted and harassed, and that the petitioner is facing difficulties due to the non-provision of details of the cases registered against him. The court has directed NAB, FIA, Anti-Corruption Department, and other authorities to provide details of the cases registered against the petitioner and has restrained them from harassing him.

Similarly, PHC issued notices to the authorities including FIA and concerned District Police Officers to respond to pleas of members Provincial Assembly including Rangeez Khan, Fazal Elahi, Aqib Ullah, Asif Khan, and Senator Dost Muhammad Khan for enlisting them in the stop list.

IHC opposes ECP's grounds for changing election tribunal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Showing his annoyance over the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to change the election tribunal hearing the appeals filed by rival candidates of PML-N MNAs from Islamabad, Chief Justice (CJ) of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) Justice Aamer Farooq on Tuesday questioned the grounds on which the ECP had based its decision.

During the hearing of petitions filed against the Election Act Amendment Ordinance, counsel for the

election commission told the CJ that the tribunal had failed to follow the required procedure. "Do you want to introduce a new jurisprudence?" Justice Farooq asked, adding, "Even if we admit that there are flaws in the tribunal's order, still there is no justification for setting up a new one." By doing so, the chief justice went on to say, the ECP was setting up a new precedent.

He remarked that prima facie the commission's decision was flawed. "Either prove there was an element of bias or get ready to face contempt of court proceedings," the CJ said, and added, "Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri is an IHC judge. If there was any complaint about 'bias', it could have been conveyed to the judge. The ECP could have challenged the order rather than transferring the cases to another tribunal."

Advocate Shoaib Shaheen said there were reports on the media that Shakoor Paracha, a retired judge, had been made the head of a new tribunal. The chief justice said the election commission had made Justice Jahangiri the tribunal head on his recommendation.

LHC halts enforcement of Punjab Defamation Act

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday ordered the non-enforcement of the controversial defamation bill, which was signed into law by the acting Punjab governor Malik Ahmad Khan a few days ago.

During the hearing of the petition filed by Jaafar Ahmad Yar and Riaz Ahmad Raja, seeking annulment of the law or Punjab Defamation Act, 2024, Justice Muhammad Amjad Rafiq of the LHC linked the operation of the Defamation Law to the verdict of the court in this case. The LHC judge also issued notices to the respondents, including the Punjab government, and sought their replies. Punjab Additional Advocate General (AAG) raised objections to the admissibility of the plea for the hearing. "The petition is not fit to be admitted for the hearing," he said.

The court also issued notices to the attorney general and advocate general, seeking their legal assistance. Justice Rafiq asked whether the law was against the right of free speech.

The petitioner's lawyer replied that there was a clause in the law, which slapped Rs3 million in fine on the alleged offender without proof even before the start of the trial. The legislation about defamation became law on Saturday after acting Punjab Governor Malik Ahmad Khan — a PML-N member — gave his assent to the bill in the absence of PPP Governor Sardar Saleem Haider, who had gone on leave after assuring bodies of journalists and other stakeholders 'consultations' on the law.

The law, which became the subject of criticism the moment it was passed, however, soon landed in the Lahore High Court (LHC) after a joint petition was filed by two journalists challenging its legality. On Monday, the Punjab Defamation Act 2024 has become law as the provincial government has issued the gazette notification for it. The Punjab Assembly Secretariat officially declared the Defamation Act 2024 as law.

After issuance of the gazette notification, the new defamation law has been enforced across the province of Punjab with immediate effect. The defamation law suggests special tribunals to hear defamation cases, with swift judgments anticipated, and fines of up to Rs3 million for disseminating false information. The tribunal has six months to make a decision. Cases involving accusations against people in positions of constitutional authority shall be heard by the Lahore High Court (LHC).

On May 20, 2024, the Punjab Assembly passed the Defamation Bill 2024, rejecting all the amendments proposed by the opposition and ignoring the reservations and protests of the journalist community. The opposition in the Punjab Assembly termed the bill a black law and tore copies of the bill in protest. Journalists also staged a walkout from the press gallery and held a protest on the steps of the assembly against the passing of the bill. The law aims to curb the spread of fake news across print, electronic, and social media platforms. It addresses the issue of misinformation on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. It targets not only news that invades private life but also content that disrupts public space.



AMMAN: Deputy Prime Minister Senator Ishaq Dar meeting with UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres on the sidelines of high level conference on 'Urgent humanitarian response for Gaza' in Jordan.