

Two lawyers shot dead
F.P. Report

ATTOCK: An Elite Force jawan shot dead two senior lawyers in Attock District Court on Saturday. The police have arrested the murderer who was identified as Intezar Shah. The slain lawyers were identified as Malik Israr Ahmad, Member Punjab Bar Council, and Advocate Zulfiqar Mirze. According to preliminary probe, ASI Intezar Shah killed the lawyers over "personal grudge".



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PM unveils reforms agenda of economic revival

Shehbaz says 'current IMF deal will be last in Pakistan's history'

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday highlighting his government's achievements during the first 100 days, spelled out his five-year agenda of economics stability and public welfare marking the tough decisions of abolishing corrupt or loss-making ministries and departments, widening tax net and doing away with red tapism to achieve Quaid's Pakistan.

The prime minister, in his maiden address to the nation, said that the government's prudent economic policies had resulted in reduced inflation from 38 percent to 12 percent, interest rate from 22 percent to 20 percent and repeated reduction in oil prices with the latest one on Friday - Rs10.5 per litre reduction in petrol and Rs 2.5 per litre in diesel prices.

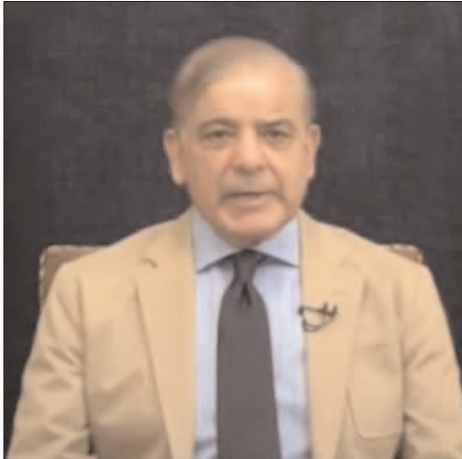
"We have defined the future course of action and we will pursue it with utmost honesty and strictness. We will spend every saved penny on public welfare... We will eliminate red tapism... This journey is not only difficult and long but also demands sacrifice from the government authorities as well as the elite," he said in his televised address.

He said the country's economic situation in April 2022, when the PDM government took the charge, was in worst condition and the country was on the brink of default. PM Shehbaz Sharif pointed out that the PDM government under the leadership of the allied party heads including Muhammad Nawaz Sharif took tough decision and saved the country from falling into default at the cost of their political gains. "As a result of our performance of 16 months in the previous tenure and 100 days in current tenure, today, Pakistan is slowly coming out of the crisis and moving towards stability and development," he added.

He said the journey of the economic stability and prosperity was not so easy while the people were looking toward the government for immediate relief. Due to the government's pro-people policies, he said the inflation hit people will get further relief in near future, he said.

"Similarly, the 22 percent interest rate has now come down to 20 percent that would help reducing the interest burden on the country's debts and further promote the domestic investment in the country." He advised the nation to get united and play role for the country's development and prosperity adding that it should also show a sense of sacrifice and adopt austerity measures in their lifestyles.

PM Shehbaz Sharif cited the Pakistan Public Works Department (PWD) as an example of a government department plagued by corruption, which had a devastating impact on the country's economy. He revealed that a staggering 50% of



funds worth over a hundred billions of rupees allocated to development projects are lost to corruption within this department. "I have decided that those ministries and departments which had become a hub of corruption must have to be eliminated," he said adding that in this regard a ministerial committee had also been formed.

He expressed his commitment to take solid decisions in one and a half month-time. "You will see a big change in this regard in less than two months," he added. Recently, he said he visited China where the agreements amounting to billions of dollars were signed. Similarly he said, the UAE government had also committed to invest at least \$10 billion in various Pakistan's sectors.

The prime minister told that the government had also chalked out a comprehensive strategy to materialize the committed foreign investment in Pakistan's various sectors including mines and minerals, agriculture, information technology and others under Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). "But before that, we have to create such an environment that we should ensure the domestic investment. We have the best financial experts, businessmen, traders and industrialists who could boost the domestic investment and play role in the country's development and prosperity," he said.

He informed that the government was in progress to fully digitize the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) system. The digitization of the FBR will help boosting the tax collection and reducing the departmental corruption," he added. He said the incapable and corrupt elements in FBR had been side lined while the efficient and honest officers were being encouraged to increase the FBR's efficiency and boost revenue collection which had already shown a significant increase of record 30 percent this

year as compared to the last year.

The prime minister hoped that "if we succeed in implementing the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme and achieve the targets set in the recent budget for upcoming fiscal year 2024-25, this will be the country's last IMF programme and will leave our neighbours far behind in this race of development and economic growth." He said yesterday, the government had also approved a massive reduction of electricity tariff for the industrial sector across the country which was expected to provide relief of over Rs 200 billion to the industry. "It will help bring down the manufacturing cost of the goods making them competitive in the global market."

He said the business community had expressed satisfaction over the budget announced by the federal government for the year 2024-25. He also vowed to minimize the gap between rich and poor, saying that without it the country cannot developed. In May 2024, he said the overseas Pakistanis had dispatched over \$3 billions of remittances which reflected their trust on the incumbent government.

The prime minister said the government had established a Pakistan Endowment Fund under which the deserving children and students especially from remote areas of the country would be given free education. He told that the government had embarked upon its five-year national development plan under which tough decisions would be implemented to bring the country out of economic crisis and put it on the path of prosperity.

The government, he said will no more construct industries, nor it will do any business. "We will promote the private sector, facilitate them, and support them so that the private sector could play its due role in the country's development." He emphasized that the journey of development was not an easy task as there were several elements creating hurdles. However, he believed that this time no such elements would succeed in creating hurdles in the country's journey of development.

He resolved that he would not take any pressure and would take every tough decision that would be in the larger interest of the country. He also sought the nation's support and guidance in implementing the tough decision taken by the government.

Meanwhile, speaking on the Israel's aggression in Gaza, the prime minister strongly condemned the Israel's brutality in Gaza where over 40,000 innocent Palestinians including thousands of children had been martyred. Additionally, he also urged for an immediate end to the atrocities perpetrated by the occupying forces in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir against the innocent Kashmiri people.

Muslims pray on Mount Arafat in Hajj climax



MAKKAH: More than 1.5 million Muslims braved extreme heat to reach Mount Arafat on Saturday for the high point of the annual Hajj pilgrimage, praying for hours, especially for Palestinians in conflict-ridden Gaza. Clad in white, worshippers began arriving at dawn for the most gruelling day of the annual rites, ascending the rocky, 70-metre hill where Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) gave his last sermon.

"This is the most important day," said 46-year-old Egyptian Mohammed Asser, who came prepared with a list of prayers. "I pray also for the Palestinians. May God help them." This year's Hajj is unfolding in the shadow of the fighting in Gaza between Israel and Hamas, which was triggered by the latter's unprecedented attack on southern Israel on October 7.

The assault resulted in the deaths of 1,194 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures. Israel's retaliatory military offensive and bombardment in the Gaza Strip has killed at least 37,266 people, also mostly civilians, according to the territory's health ministry. Saudi Arabia's minister in charge of religious pilgrimages, Tawfiq al-Rabiah, warned last week that "no political activity" would be tolerated during Hajj.

But that did not stop at least one pilgrim from chanting in support of the Palestinians who have endured more than eight months of incessant bombardment. "Pray for our brothers in Palestine, in Gaza ... may God give victory to the Muslims," he shouted. In a message to Hajj pilgrims on Saturday, Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said: "The iron-clad resistance of Palestine and the patient, oppressed people of Gaza ... must be fully supported in every way."

Some 2,000 Palestinians are performing the Hajj at the special invitation of Saudi King Salman, official media said. Hajj, one of the world's biggest religious gatherings, is increasingly affected by climate change, according to a Saudi study published last month that said regional temperatures were rising 0.4 degree Celsius each decade. The rituals, which take at least five days to complete and are mostly outdoors, are "not easy because it is very hot", said Abraham Hawa, 26, from Ghana.

"We have sun ... but it is not as hot. But I will pray to Allah at Arafat, because I need his support," she added. The temper-

ature was expected to hit 43°C on Saturday, creating challenges for pilgrims who arrived at Mount Arafat after spending the night in a giant tented city in Mina, a valley outside Makkah. Saudi authorities have urged pilgrims to drink plenty of water and protect themselves from the sun. Since men are prohibited from wearing hats, many carry umbrellas.

Mustafa, an Algerian pilgrim who gave only his first name, clung to his umbrella which was handed out by Hajj organisers, saying, "It's what saves you here". Another man, an Egyptian who preferred to remain anonymous, said he was drinking "a lot of juice and water" and had twice stopped to rest on the roadside. More than 10,000 heat-related illnesses were recorded last year, 10 per cent of them heat stroke, a Saudi official told AFP this week.

Ahmad Karim Abdelsalam, a 33-year-old pilgrim from India, admitted that he found the prospect of passing hours on Mount Arafat "a little scary". But with the help of an umbrella and water sprays, "God willing, everything will go well", he said. Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and all Muslims with the means must perform it at least once. Yet visas, doled out to individual countries on a quota system, can be difficult to obtain.

"It's a chance that only comes once in a lifetime, I couldn't not come," said Abdulrahman Siyam, a 55-year-old Iraqi pilgrim who was performing the rituals on a prosthetic leg. After Mount Arafat, the pilgrims will head to Muzdalifah, where they will collect pebbles to carry out the symbolic "stoning of the devil" ritual in Mina on Sunday. The Hajj is an important source of legitimacy for the Al Saud dynasty, whose monarch has the title "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques", in Makkah and Madina.

It is also a major financial windfall for the conservative country, which is trying to develop religious tourism as part of a drive to reduce its dependence on crude oil. The kingdom received more than 1.8 million pilgrims last year for Hajj, around 90pc of whom came from abroad. It also welcomed 13.5m Muslims who came to perform Umrah and aims to reach 30m pilgrims in total by 2030. Premier Shehbaz Sharif also congratulated the entire country and Muslims everywhere on the annual Hajj pilgrimage and Eidul Azha. "We all pray to Allah that he accepts our prayers and sacrifices," he said while addressing the nation. — Arab News

PTI's Shoaib Shaheen, 80 others booked

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad police have registered cases against PTI leader Shoaib Shaheen and 80 others over a violent protest outside the National Press Club.

As per details, the cases were registered against the PTI leaders Amir Mughal, Ali Bukhari and others under the terrorism act and charges of attempted murder, robbery and vandalism. According to the police, the protesters clashed with the police, snatched weapons, and damaged public property. The police have arrested 10 protesters so far.

The protesters, led by Shoaib Shaheen, Amer Moghal, and Ali Bukhari, had gathered outside the National Press Club to protest against the government. Last week, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders were booked for allegedly delivering anti-state speeches and inciting people against the state. 28 leaders of the PTI including Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh, MNAs Shehryar Afridi, and Shandana Gulzar were booked on the charges of sedition, inciting the public, and spreading chaos.

The case was registered at the Bostan police station on the complaint of Levies officer Abdul Ghani. PTI Balochistan chapter leaders Sherief Tokhi, Abdul Bari Kakar, Jahangir Rind, Mir Ashfaq, Nawabzada Sharif, Moazzam Butt, Mahwish Janjua, Abdul Bari, Khurshid Ahmed, Rahim Kakar, Ateeq Kakar, and others have also been named in the FIR.

Courts orders challan submission of cases registered in Lahore against Shah Mahmood: Lahore's anti-terrorism court (ATC) has ordered challan submission of cases registered in Lahore against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

SHC CJ says no attempt made to pressure him

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Commenting on alleged "interference and pressure" on the judiciary, Sindh High Court (SHC) Chief Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi on Saturday "categorically" stated that nobody pressurised him about any case.

"Some attempts were made, but, by the grace of God, no one coerced me," said the SHC chief justice while talking to the media in Karachi. He said this in response to a question posed by a journalist to him. The chief justice's comments came after six Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges in the recent past wrote a letter to the Supreme Court on March 25, accusing spy agencies of meddling in judicial affairs.

The IHC judges had demanded Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa to

convene the judicial convention to consider the matter of alleged interference of intelligence operatives in the judicial functions or "intimidation" of judges in a manner that undermined the independence of the judiciary. However, Justice Abbasi clarified that a couple of times such efforts were made which were right away dispelled and later they turned out to be a misunderstanding. He said no attempt had been made to pressurise the Sindh's judiciary in any case.

He said the judiciary's independence was reflected through its judgments. He believed that a judge could not be dishonest or corrupt, he said. The SHC CJ said the transfer of the election tribunal's judge was a normal procedure. The system of judges' transfer was extremely complex, he said. The SHC CJ state-

ment comes a day after Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Malik Shehzad Ahmed Khan said he believed that interference of the establishment in the matters of the judiciary will end soon.

"Interference in the judiciary will have to be fought with faith that it will come to an end," said the LHC chief justice while addressing the opening ceremony of the judicial complex e-courts in Rawalpindi. Justice Khan said there was an issue of establishment's interference in the judiciary's matters, adding that they receive letters claiming involvement in the judicial affairs. "The establishment's interference in judiciary will end and my experience [tells me] that it will come to an end," said the judge, assuring that these difficulties will end if there is fear of God.

Rains likely on second day of Eid

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Meteorological Department on Saturday predicted rains on the second day of Eidul Azha. According to the Met Office, moist currents from the Arabian Gulf are likely to enter the upper and central regions of the country. On June 18, rains are likely to hit several parts of Gilgit, KP, Punjab, Islamabad, Balochistan and Sindh as the moist currents will be entering the western regions of the country.

Weather pundits say Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir are likely to experience heavy rains/thunder showers with gusty winds from June 18 to 22. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will have very hot and dry weather from June 16 to 18. The Meteorological Department said that between June 18 and 22, Chitral and Abbottabad are likely to experience intermittent rains at few places with wind and thunderstorm.

During June 16-18 period, the weather will remain very hot and dry in most parts of Balochistan. The weather experts said in their report that between June 18 and 22, there was a possibility of rain at some places in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Murree and Galiyat in addition to thundershowers and lightning.

From June 20 to 22, Bahawalpur, Multan and Khanewal are expected to experience thunderstorms and rain. The Meteorological Department said that there is a possibility of rain at few places in Quetta, Zhob, Dera Botke, and Bahir Khan. However, from June 17 to 20, the weather will remain very hot and dry in most parts of Sindh. During June 21-22, heavy rains with gusty winds are expected at few places in Sukkur and Jacobabad.

Non-filers' electricity, gas connections to be suspended

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan eyes boosting its tax revenues in budget 2024-25, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) chief has said that electricity and gas connections of the non-filers will be suspended along with SIMs.

In a latest development, the Senate's Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue on Saturday okayed the proposal to impose a foreign travel ban on non-filers. A series of decisions were made in Saturday's session of the Senate body held under the chair of Saleem Mandviwalla. FBR Chairman Zubair Tiwana informed the upper house body that those who failed to file tax returns would face actions under the Income Tax General Order (ITGO), however, exemptions would be given to nationals for

Hajj, Umrah, children, students and holders of National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP).

He detailed that non-filers will face suspension of their SIM cards, electricity and gas connections, as well as their businesses could be shut down. During the session, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Farooq H Naek stressed that the travel restrictions on non-filers should be executed in the same way which were enforced on those who came under the category of exit control list (ECL).

Tiwana further said that a higher withholding tax rate was approved for the non-filers. He added that the non-filer list included 500,000 people with over 2 million in annual income. He added that the listed individuals

had already disclosed their income statements with their tax return documents in the past. The FBR's top officer said that temporary filers will also have to pay additional tax during the purchases of vehicles, plots and residences.

Additionally, the Senate body also approved a proposal to reduce the salary slab and hike tax besides, approving the imposition of a 75% withholding tax on cellular and internet bills of non-filers. Earlier this week, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb emphasised the need for widening the tax net, saying that the country cannot run with a 9.5% tax-to-GDP ratio. "We have to bring everyone into the tax net. We are aiming to bring everyone on the active taxpayers' list," said the finance czar while talking to media.

WB okays \$150m for Punjab
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank has approved \$150 million in funding to enhance education facilities in Pakistan's Punjab province with aim to benefit five million children currently out of school. A spokesperson for the World Bank noted that the funds will specifically address the needs of the seven million children in Punjab who lack access to education.



LAHORE: Law Minister, Azam Nazeer Tarar addressing the Cheque distribution ceremony at Punjab Bar Council. —APP Photo

Governor directs for uninterrupted electricity to hospitals

KARACHI (APP): Governor Sindh Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori on Saturday directed K-Electric (KE) CEO Syed Munis Abdullah Alvi to provide uninterrupted supply of electricity to hospitals, control unannounced loadshedding and overbilling.

While directing the Karachi Municipal Commissioner Afzal Zaidi, the Governor said that sanitation system should be improved in Karachi, especially on the occasion of approaching Eid ul Azha to ensure timely disposal of animal waste.

He stated this during a meeting with them at Governor House, said the spokesman of the Governor House.

The Governor also met with the officials of Kharadar Hospital.

Commissioner imposes ban on going to beach

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner of Karachi, Syed Hassan Naqvi, has imposed a two-month ban on bathing in the sea in view of the large and dangerous sea waves and also imposed Section 144.

KMC wrote a letter to inform the commissioner that large and dangerous waves are forming near the beach in Karachi, which may endanger the lives of bathers in the sea.

Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi imposed Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code and imposed a ban on bathing in the sea for two months.

The ban will be applicable at Canap Beach, Mubarak Village, and Sonera Beach until August 13. A notification has also been issued in that regard. The relevant police SHOs have been empowered to register cases against the violators.

Drugs recovered from car

LAHORE (APP): In a significant anti-narcotics operation, the Motorway Police recovered drugs worth million of rupees from a suspicious car near Nankana Sahib on Motorway M3.

According to the Motorway police spokesperson, patrolling officers signaled a suspicious vehicle to stop but the driver abandoned the car and fled the scene upon spotting the police. Upon searching the abandoned vehicle, officers discovered 124 packets of hashish and 69 packets of opium.

The operation was conducted under the directives of Sector Commander Shahbaz Alam, and the confiscated drugs were subsequently handed over to the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) for further action.

Zonal Commander Masroor Alam Kolachi praised the officers for their swift and effective action in intercepting the narcotics. Additionally, Additional IG Ali Ahmed Sabir Kayani commended the patrolling officers for their outstanding performance and dedication to duty.

Punjab to launch air ambulance service on motorways

LAHORE (APP): In a landmark move set to transform emergency medical care, the Punjab government is initiating an air ambulance service on motorways in the province.

This development was hailed as a "golden chapter" in Punjab's history by Provincial Health Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique and Khawaja Imran Nazir during a meeting at the Project Management Unit (PMU) on Saturday.

Khawaja Salman Rafique described the air ambulance service as a flagship program of the Punjab government, emphasizing its groundbreaking nature for patient convenience. "For the first time in Punjab's history, we are launching an air ambulance service, ensuring swift medical assistance for critical cases on motorways. Training sessions are underway to equip rescue teams with the latest skills needed for this service," he stated.

Khawaja Imran Nazir highlighted the comprehensive planning involved. "We have briefed DHQ hospitals across the province on the upcoming air ambulance and motorway emergency services. Ensuring the supply of medicines and doctors to remote hospitals is a priority. We are committed to providing the highest quality treatment to our people," he affirmed.

The meeting was attended by key officials including Secretary Health Punjab Ali Jan Khan, Secretary Emergency Services Punjab Dr. Rizwan Naseer, Special Secretary Muhammad Iqbal from the Primary and Secondary Health Care Department, and Additional Secretaries Khizr Afzal and Muhammad Ayaz.

Secretary Health Ali Jan Khan and Dr. Rizwan Naseer provided detailed briefings on the initiative's progress and implementation. The air ambulance service is expected to significantly reduce response times for emergencies on motorways, enhancing overall healthcare delivery in the region.

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Sindh Govt tapping renewable resources to reduce power tariff: CM

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that his government was committed and striving hard to tap renewable resources on the fast track so that the overall basket tariff of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) may be reduced and made more affordable to the general public of the country.

"Apart from reduction in tariffs, renewable energy will also contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for creating a clean, reliable and sustainable environment."

This he said while presiding over a meeting held before the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Sindh Transmission and Dispatch

Company (STDC) of the Sindh Government and its private partners Gul Ahmed Group for laying 60 km long transmission line from Jhimpir to Landhi where the Gul Ahmed Group is installing a 100 MW wind power plant at Jhimpir here at the CM House here Saturday.

Sindh Minister for Energy Nasir Shah briefed the CM that Gul Ahmed Group approached STDC for the construction of a 132kV Transmission Line from their power plant at the Jhimpir wind corridor to the Gul Ahmed Group located in the Landhi area. He said that the Sindh government had already allocated 524 acres and 558 acres of land in the Jhimpir area wind corridor for the purpose. The STDC will be laying a 60 km long Transmission Line from the

Jhimpir power plant, Thatta to Landhi Area, Karachi to transmit 100 MW wind power. This project is based on Business to Business (B2B). The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2027, he told.

The minister said that both the above projects were environmentally friendly and would promote Green Energy in the province and cheaper sources of electricity. Nasir Shah added that these projects would boost economy through the creation of Jobs in Sindh.

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, along with provincial ministers Sharjeel Memon, Nasir Shah, Zulfiqar Shah, Dost Rahimoo and others witnessed the signing ceremony. Director General STCD Saleem Shaikh, Zain Bashir and Ziad Bashir of Gul Ahmed Group signed the MoU.

Over 12,000 cops deployed

KARACHI (APP): Approximately 12,781 police officers have been assigned to ensure security during Eid-ul-Azha prayers throughout the city.

According to a Karachi Police spokesman on Saturday, under the directives of Additional IGP Karachi Imran Yaqoob Minhas, the deployment includes 5,600 officers and personnel in the East Zone, 3,656 in the South Zone, and 3,525 in the West Zone.

Additionally, around 2,170 officers and personnel will oversee security at collection points for sacrificial animal hides. Security measures have been heightened at all major shopping centers, markets, and other crowded locations. The traffic police have also been instructed to maintain smooth traffic flow in the city during Eid-ul-Azha.

13 dead in 1358 road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least thirteen persons were killed and 1464 injured in 1358 Road Traffic Crashes (RTCs) in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. Out of these, 686 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 778 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by rescue medical teams thus reducing the burden of hospitals. Furthermore, the analysis showed that 808 drivers, 56 underage drivers, 153 pedestrians.

4,500 latest cameras to be installed in Punjab jails

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Home Department has decided to install latest cameras for complete monitoring of all 43 jails across Punjab.

This decision was taken in the Jail Reforms Committee meeting under the chairmanship of Home Secretary Punjab Noor Ul Amin Mengal. IG Prisons Mian Farooq Nazir, Additional Secretary Prisons Asim Raza

and senior officers also attended the meeting.

According to the spokesman, every inch of jails across Punjab will be brought under the coverage of cameras. With the installation of cameras, all offices, prisoner barracks, security wall, jammers area, kitchen, hospital, library and all entry exit points will come under surveillance.

In total, 4500 modern cameras will be installed in 43 jails of Punjab. In this way, all places will be monitored by cameras in the format of high security zone. He said that the newly installed cameras will be equipped with artificial intelligence. Control rooms will also be set up in all jails, IG Prisons office and home department for effective monitoring.



DISPOSE OF OFFAL AND TRASH PROPERLY THIS EID TO PREVENT BIRD ACTIVITY NEAR AIRPORTS AND MAINTAIN SAFE AIR TRAVEL ATTENTION PLEASE!

During Eidul Azha, it's important to maintain cleanliness around the airport to ensure the safety of flight operations. Leaving offal and trash outside can attract birds, increasing the risk of bird strikes and jeopardizing flight safety. Please dispose of animal remains properly in designated bins or bury them. Let's work together to keep our surroundings clean, protect our environment and make air travel even more safer.



Director General,
Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority
www.caapakistan.com.pk

PID-K-3547/23



Government of Pakistan
Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunications

DIGITAL PAKISTAN

SITUATION VACANT

Applications are invited from suitable candidates on prescribed online application form available at the URL www.njp.gov.pk for the following project posts on contract basis under the project "Cyber Security for Digital Pakistan, Phase-I", Islamabad:

Sr.#	Name of Post	PPS Scale	No. of Posts	Upper Age Limit
1	Sr. PMO	PPS-10	Merit-01	50 Years
2	Assistant Director (Mobile)	PPS-09	Merit-01	45 Years
3	Assistant Director (Computer Systems)	PPS-09	Merit-01	45 Years
4	Assistant Director (Software)	PPS-09	Merit-01	45 Years
5	Assistant Director (Hardware)	PPS-09	Merit-01	45 Years
6	Assistant Director (Data Recovery)	PPS-09	Merit-01	45 Years
7	Assistant Director (Network)	PPS-09	Merit-01	45 Years
8	Assistant Director (Advisories / Communication)	PPS-09	Merit-01	45 Years
9	Assistant Director (Training)	PPS-09	Merit-01	45 Years
10	Assistant Director (Audit & Compliance)	PPS-09	Merit-01	45 Years
11	Assistant Director (Threat Intelligence)	PPS-09	Merit-01	45 Years
12	IS Auditor	PPS-08	Merit-01	40 Years
13	System/Network Penetration Tester	PPS-07	Merit-01	35 Years
14	Data Center Technician IT	PPS-05	Merit-02	40 Years
15	Data Center Technician (POWER)	PPS-05	Merit-01	40 Years
16	Data Center Technician (HVAC)	PPS-05	Merit-01	40 Years

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Details including required Qualification, Job Description, Conditions to apply are available at the URL (www.njp.gov.pk). Interested candidates meeting the required criteria may apply online on the prescribed form within fifteen (15) days of publication of the advertisement. Incomplete applications will not be entertained.

2. Only shortlisted candidates will be called for test/ interview. No TA/DA will be admissible. The Ministry believes in gender equality and reserves the right not to fill the posts or withhold appointment against the advertised posts.

3. Candidates already in Government Service are required to produce NOC at the time of interview.

4. The appointments shall be made purely on contract basis extendable further till the completion of project after evaluation of their performance.

Project Director
Cyber Security for Digital Pakistan
National Telecommunication & Information Technology Security Board
1st Floor, Cabinet Division, Islamabad,
(Tele: 051-9101796, 051-9103543)

PID(I)7769/2023

3 women, injured in cylinder blast

PESHAWAR (APP): Three women and a minor injured in an Cylinder explosion in the house of a person named Abdul Wali in Shaheen Town, situated on main Jamaluddin Road University Town on Saturday, an official of the Rescue 1122 said here.

Ambulances and fire vehicles of Rescue 1122 reached the spot and started rescue operations. All the injured were shifted to hospital by the Rescue 1122 officials before providing them medical aid to burn victims.

A fire broke out after a cylinder explosion, after which the rescuers completely controlled the fire in 20 minutes, Rescue 1122 officials said.

ANP express concern over illegal logging

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial President Awami National Party (ANP), Mian Iftikhar Hussain has expressed concerned over unrestrained logging in Malakand Division and accused that provincial government and relevant departments are backing this illegal cutting of forests.

In a statement issued from Bacha Khan Markaz here Saturday, he condemned the logging and demanded immediate steps to stop this illegal act. He said that illegal cutting of forests has been given a legal cover through Woodlot Rules 2017.

He said that Woodlot Rules 2017 contravenes the existing international rules of environment protection and added that provincial government should review these environment damaging rules and introduce needed reforms.

Mian said that Pakistan is facing various environment related threats and situation would grow worst if actions were not taken to control the situation. He also demanded probe into incidents of fire eruption in Swat, Buner, Malakand and Koh-e-Suliman.

He said that perpetrators involved in setting alight forests should be brought to court of law. He said that it is astonishing that government has started Billion Tree Tsunami Plus Project rather investigating corruption in Billion Tree Tsunami Project.

PDMA issued warning in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): PDMA Saturday issued a pre-rain and thunderstorms warning in upper districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from next Tuesday to Saturday.

Weak westerly winds are likely to enter the western regions of the country on Tuesday evening as PDMA has issued an alert to all district administrations in view of the weather situation.

The PDMA has issued instructions to the district administration to pre-emptively deal with any untoward incident due to dusty winds, windstorm, and thunderstorm.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister KP on Tourism, Culture, Archaeology & Museums Zahid Chanzeb giving away a certificate to a university student.

Health Deptt changed BoGs of MTI hospitals

PESHAWAR (APP): The Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Saturday changed the Board of Governors and members of MTI Hospitals of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said a notification issued by the Secretary Health here.

New office-bearers nominated in place of the Chairman and Members of the Board of Governors, said the notification. Chairman Board of Governors of Lady Reading Hospital, Dr. Muhammad Zaibair and Member of the Board of

Governors of Khyber Teaching Hospital, Dr. Umar Ayub has been removed from their positions, said the notification.

Member Board of Governors of Hayatabad Medical Complex, Ghulam Qadir Khan has been dismissed from his post along with Member of the Board of Governors of Mardan Medical Complex, Attaullah Toro while Asad Akbar Khan, Member Board of Governors of Peshawar Institute of Cardiology, resigned from his position.

Budgetary steps inadequate termed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chairman, Amun Taraqqi Party Muhammad Faiq Shah expressed dissatisfaction over budgetary measures to address economic, social and other issues.

There is no connection of ordinary people with such a budget, because incentives are only for elites and will open more doors of corruption through it, Shah said, according to a statement issued here on Saturday. This isn't a public-friendly budget wherein wishes of IMF and elite requirements are entertained, the ATP chief said.

He continued to say that the salaried class has further squeezed by increasing taxes on them.

Shah said allocation for the education budget is equal to the budget of a university of Singapore.

How can enroll approximately 30million out of school children?

How can we remove the darkness of ignorance, illiteracy and backwardness?

Similarly, he said no measures proposed in the health budget to increase employment opportunities.

Likewise, he said no policy has been unveiled for the farmer and agriculture sector.

A book of budget documents was published and imposed fresh taxes in order to give interest, Mr Shah said.

The party leader said there were no measures in the budget for 150 million youth, energy needs, construction of new dams and industry.

Also, he added no plan/strategy was proposed in the budget for ease of investment.

Faiq claimed that there will boost confidence between institutions, politicians and rulers, if the budget and investment policy are designed as per ATP' economic plan.

A government servant's salary increased by Rs5000 and slapped ten other taxes, the party chief said.

Faiq said the hike in tax on solar system, petroleum levy, and electricity and gas tariffs will bring a new storm of price-hike.

The ATP chief said the government and parliament house are divided in two different ways.

He added the political system has suffered owing to this division of ordinary people and elites, and fascism of rulers.

Shah said his party is ready to give a complete plan for prosperity and progress and urged the rulers and institutions to pay attention to it.

Swimming, boating in rivers, canals banned

PESHAWAR (APP): The District Administration Peshawar has ban on swimming, bathing and boating in rivers and canals in order to take safety measures for preventing any untoward incident.

The district administration of Peshawar has imposed a ban under section 144 on swimming, bathing and boating in Warsak Lift and Gravity Canal and all major waterways including Azakhel Dam. The ban has been imposed under Section 144 in public interest.

Accidents occur during swimming, bathing and boating of small children and local people in dams, canals and rivers.

As a result of accidents, a lot of resources are wasted due to rescue activities. In order to avoid these accidents, swimming, bathing and boating have been banned in Warsak lift and Gravity Canal aqueducts and Azakhel Dam.

WSSP finalizes Eid cleanliness operation

PESHAWAR (INP): The Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) on Saturday finalized its Eid-ul-Azha cleanliness operation plan and employees' holidays have been canceled.

A total of 2,559 personnel will participate in the sanitation operation, utilizing 679 small and large vehicles to collect waste through out the city.

To facilitate waste collection, 23 collection points have been established where waste will be transported to dumping sites.

A dedicated dumping site has been prepared for the disposal of collected waste, which will be covered with soil after spraying to manage odors.

Both the city and dumping sites will undergo thorough spraying operations. Monitoring teams have been established in all five zones to oversee the operation.

CM's Advisor awards prizes to students

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture, Archaeology and Museums Zahid Chanzeb on Saturday gave away certificates to university students in an elegant ceremony who completed semester projects on tourism, travel, hotel hospitality, and other sectors of tourism industry involving the latest technology interventions.

This project is part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) and various universities aimed at bridging the gap between the tourism industry and academia, with the basic aim to encouraging creativity and research activities in this crucial sector.

Zahid Chanzeb greatly appreciated the unwavering dedication and hard work of the students.

As a gesture of encouragement, he also awarded them cash prizes from his own pocket to bolster their research capabilities, enthusiasm, and morale.

He reiterated his firm support for such joint collaborative endeavors, emphasizing the need for more such vital projects and promoting partnerships to advance tourism and cultural initiatives in the province.

Acknowledging the pivotal role of technology in transforming travel, tourism and hospitality, Zahid Chanzeb said that KPCTA has rightly engaged itself in collaborations with various academic institutions to bridge the gap between industry and academia that, he said, is also a need of the hour.

Advisor Tourism reiterated the firm commitment of the PTI-led provincial government to promote tourism as an industry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in its true essence.

He asked KPCTA to continue developing and advancing the tourism and cultural sectors on war footings.

He expressed confidence that collaboration with Pakistan's top academic institutions can enhance tourism standards, increase cultural awareness, and introduce modernization across this innovative industry to attract maximum domestic and foreign tourism into this province that is soon becoming a cradle of peace and tranquility being the basic need for the purpose, he added.

He said promoting tourism and cultural activities would ultimately result into strengthening economy of the province and increasing employment opportunities amongst our jobless people as, he said, this is also a respectable cash earning industry for the educated youth.

"The innovative and strategic partnership between tourism department and universities not only links academia with the tourism industry but also facilitates the use of advanced scientific trends and techniques to promote and preserve the rich cultural and recreational heritage of the province," he maintained.

He recalled that the research works cherished by these students often appeared on different social media platforms and published in research journals, periodicals, which, he asserted, could prove more beneficial than the solitary endeavors of the tourism department with its limited resources for promoting culture and tourism in the province.

He also emphasized the need to involve and engage maximum educational institutions in these joint research programs and upgrade such vital courses to higher studies and degrees levels.

KMU's F&PC recommends surplus budget of Rs3828.471m

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU)'s Finance and Planning Committee (F&PC) has recommend a surplus budget amounting to 3828.471 million rupees during its 31st F&PC meeting held here Saturday.

The meeting was presided over by Vice Chancellor Meritorious Professor Dr. Zia ul Haq and attended by key members including Registrar KMU Inam Ullah Khan Wazir, Additional Secretary Higher Education Javed Iqbal Khan, Treasurer KMU Waseem Riaz, Principal KIMS Professor Dr. Musrrat Jabeen, Director P&D Amjad Hussain, Director ORIC Dr. Zohaib Khan, Deputy Treasurer Usman Khan, Assistant Director Muhammad Asif Khan, Dr. Nowshad Asim faculty member IHPER, while Dr. Samina Durrani Director Finance HEC Islamabad and Dr. Haider Darien attended the meeting on zoom app.

During the meeting, the minutes of the previous Finance and Planning meeting were approved and a comprehensive discussion on the current financial year and other expenses took place.

The commitment to financial prudence and strategic planning was reiterated.

The Vice Chancellor expressed his satisfaction with the university's financial stability, stating, "There is no economic crisis in the university."

The committee's discussions and deliberations led to the recommendation of this substantial budget, which will receive formal approval in the upcoming Syndicate meeting.

Dr. Samina Durrani, Director of Finance at the



Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Islamabad and KP government, commended the KMU for its financial management. They specifically highlighted the university's ability to maintain a surplus budget, which indicates that KMU's revenue exceeds its expenditures. This surplus is a strong indicator of the university's effective financial strategies and fiscal discipline.

Dr. Durrani and the KP officials noted that the diverse revenue streams and prudent expenditure practices at KMU could serve as a benchmark for other universities.

These finance-related initiatives likely include efficient budget planning, innovative funding approaches, and cost-saving measures, which together contribute to the financial health of the institution.

The praise reflects recognition of KMU's role in setting a high standard for financial administration in the higher education sector, potentially inspiring other universities to adopt similar practices to achieve financial stability and growth.

The recommended budget will be formally approved in the next syndicate meeting, solidifying the university's financial strategy and ensuring continued growth and stability.

KP Food Safety, Halal Food Authority operation continued

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The operation of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority continued against adulteration mafia and the food safety team raided a spice factory in Charsadda Road Peshawar after receiving a tip-off, spokesperson Food Authority said here Saturday.

The team during the raid, seized 1296 kg of bran, 128 liters of harmful dyes, 90 liters of oil from the factory, spokesperson said.

Bran, harmful non-food grade color and salt mixed with it was being used in the preparation of spices, spokesperson said.

After sealing the factory, 1075 kg of substandard spices were also taken into government custody, spokesperson said.

The operation was conducted under the supervision of Assistant Director Abbas, spokesperson said, adding the Citizens are requested not to buy open and uncertified spices from the market, the spokesperson said.

He said on directives of the Director General Wasif Saeed, timely action would be taken against those involved in such practice. "Do the duty of a responsible citizen and inform the Food Authority authorities against such elements," he quoted the Director General Wasif Saeed as saying.

Adulteration mafia does not deserve any concession and keeps a close watch on those who play with the health of citizens and strict disciplinary action should be taken against them, the Director General Food said.

Inadequate shelters, water at cattle markets displeases buyers in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The inadequate shelters, tents and water facilities in most of cattle markets have irked buyers of sacrificial animals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

As people thronged to cattle markets in Peshawar, Charsadda and Nowshera districts after a day was left in Eidul Azha which would be celebrated with religious enthusiasm on Monday have complained about poor facilities of shelter, tents, washrooms and drinking water at cattle markets of KP.

"I have come to Ring Road cattle market Peshawar for search of a suitable animal but return due to scorching heat due to unavailability of shelter, water and washroom facilities" said Qaiser Khan, a buyer and resident of Wapda Town Nowshera.

He claimed that Tehsil Municipal Administrations and private contractors were earning thousands of rupees from buyers of sacrificial animals but no facilities at the cattle market has been given to them which was highly deplorable.

He said that his son was fell unconscious due to heatstroke but no doctor was available at the said cattle

center for medical aid.

Sajid Ali, another buyer while cleaning his perspiration with a white handkerchief at Pabbi cattle market was seen engaged in hectic arguments with cattle traders one after another hoping to buy a small sacrificial animal at reasonable price on Sunday.

Engaged with arguments with local and inter-provincial cattle traders at the said livestock market flooded with sacrificial animals was seen using his argument skills besides making determined efforts to convince the cattle dealers after they declined his Rs70,000 offer for a Chirali sheep.

"This morning, I came from village Mohib Banda with a hope to buy a goat or a sheep at a reasonable price but its prices were sky high this year compared to last year, and was now thinking of participating in 'collective qurbani' with my neighbors on this Eid."

He said that unavailability of water and poor sanitation services have added to the difficulties of buyers.

Sajid said that standard juices are being sold at the premises of these cattle markets that may cause harm to their health.

He said that he spent almost an entire day to buy a suitable sacrificial animal on reasonable prices at Peshawar and Nowshera cattle markets but in vain.

"Now, I will wait for the last day prior of Eidul Azha with the hope that prices of the animals especially small ones would become down and he could be able to purchase his choice animal to fulfill religious obligations," he said.

Besides skyrocketing prices, he said poor sanitation and waste management besides unavailability of shelter shades and cold water have exposed hundreds of thousands of buyers and dealers to heatstroke in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Sajid Khan and other buyers demanded the KP Govt to regulate prices of sacrificial animals and ensure presence of price magistrates and livestock officials in cattle market besides shelter and wash room facilities.

Like Sajid, many government officials and pensioners were being seen at cattle markets set up at Lala Kala, Ring Road, Hazar Khwani, Hayatabad and Charsadda Road in Peshawar, Amangarh,

Akora Khattak, Risalpur and Pabbi Nowshera district where trading of sacrificial animals reached to its peak. A market survey conducted by APP revealed that employees of public sector departments and private organizations besides general public and cattle dealers have thronged to the markets to select suitable animal.

"Since last Friday, I have sold 50 goats out of available 70 and 40 oxens out of 50 with me. The buyers, mostly the government employees, come to cattle markets in the evening to take buy animals due to scorching heat and high prices in day time," said Ibrahim Shah, an inter provincial cattle trader of Nowshera district while talking to APP.

Brought 50 trucks having each five buffaloes and oxen from Sahiwal Punjab to Nowshera and Peshawar, he said that only 75 animals were sold so far signifying high inflation and skyrocketing prices of animals this year," he said, adding increase of transportation and fodder charges have increased prices of sacrificial animals manifolds.

He said the dealers suf-

fer great economic losses in case of death of an animal due to heatstroke or lumpy skin disease and demanded shelters and cold water besides fodder in cattle markets of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In the wake of scorching heat, he said that small and large enterprises specialising in the sale of sacrificial animals and related services, have entered the digital market space as customers opt to minimise the risk of heatstroke by purchasing sacrificial animals online. He said that online businesses have adversely affected sale and purchase of animals in cattle markets in KP.

Apart from domestic traders of KP and Punjab, inter-provincial businessmen of Sindh and Blochistan have also brought their stock to Peshawar from where sacrificial animals were being transported to the seven merged tribal districts for high profits.

Sohail Sardar, an inter provincial cattle dealer said that he had transported 25 trucks of cattle from Jacobabad and my brother send five more trucks to Peshawar due to high profit margin here.

"I refused an offer of Rs

300,000 for my ox 'Mahan' last Friday," he said and added that any offer less than Rs. 500,000 would not be accepted.

As Eidul Azha was on Monday, the main and small cattle markets in Peshawar including Lala Kalay, Ring Road, Hayatabad and Bakhshu bridge are flooded with sacrificial animals mostly transported from Sahiwal, Lala Musa, Lahore, Attock, Jehlum Bhakkar districts of Punjab, Jacobabad and Ghotki of Sindh province.

The prices of large sacrificial animals including oxen, buffaloes, camels and cows were relatively reasonable compared to small animals such as goats and sheep in local markets. The prices of small animals including goat and sheep are very high because of recent torrential rains and flooding in April this year in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Dr Aftab Ahmad, Director Livestock and Dairy Development KP told APP that hundreds of thousands of cattle are being sacrificed in KP on Eidul Azha. He said KP has no viable choice but to import cattle from Punjab to ensure

availability of sacrificial animals at reasonable rates to the people, adding that around 70 percent cattle are being brought from Punjab for Eidul Azha.

According to estimates shared by Pakistani tanners, over six million animals, including goats, sheep, cows and camels, worth about Rs531 billion had been sacrificed during the three-day Eid Al-Adha festival last year.

The approximately 6.1 million slaughtered animals include 2.6 million cows, 3 million goats, 350,000 sheep, 150,000 buffaloes and 87,000 camels in Pakistan on Eid Al-Adha, as per preliminary data compiled by the Pakistan Tanners Association (PTA) on the basis of hides received by tanneries last year.

Dr Aftab Ahmad said that several checkpoints were established with the assistance of the provincial government at various places on highways connecting KP with merged areas to control the menace of cattle smuggling.

Zahid Shinwari, former President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) claimed that transportation of sacrificial ani-

mals to Afghanistan are major reason behind the hike of sacrificial animals prices in KP that needed to be regulated.

He underscored the need for a tripartite-export agreement between Pakistan, India and Afghanistan to help meet people's requirements of beef, milk and sacrificial animals.

Dr Aftab said that fumigation spray at cattle markets are being conducted to counter animal diseases in the province and teams including DVM doctors were deployed at different cattle markets for monitoring of animals and for spraying of insecticides.

He urged the cattle owners to ensure cleanliness and use mosquito repellent besides cold shelters as a safety measure for protection of animals from disease and heat.

In case of illness of any animal, he urged people to isolate it and inform Livestock officials forthwith for its treatment. Dr Aftab said the DVM doctors were assigned tasks to visit cattle markets and ensure that animals with symptoms of lumpy skin disease may be isolated and treated on the spot.



In brief

Five killed in Dadu mishap

DADU (INP): Five people including four women were killed due to a collision between a truck and a loader rickshaw in Khairpur Nathan Shah. A terrible traffic accident occurred in Khairpur Nathan Shah of Dadu in which five people including women lost their lives while a truck loader hit a rickshaw while six people including women and children were injured. According to the police officials, the loader rickshaw riders who were involved in the accident belong to Pir Bakhsh Khoso village of Shikarpur. Officials added that the bodies of the dead and the injured were shifted to the hospital. The truck driver fled the scene after the accident.

Police seize drugs worth billions

F.P. Report

JAMRUD: The police in Khyber recovered drugs worth billions of rupees from the secret compartments of a suspicious truck while conducting an anti-narcotics operation. According to District Police Officer (DPO) of Khyber district Salim Abbas Kalachi, the police cordoned off a tip-off in Shaks area of Khyber. They recovered 67kg of heroin from the secret compartments of the suspicious truck. Police stated that the drugs were being transported from Quetta to Khyber. At the same time, as a result of the operation, three suspects were arrested and transferred to Jamrud police station for investigation. According to the DPO, the value of the seized drugs in the global market is about Rs3.61 billion.

No entry fee for Zamong Park

F.P. Report

MARDAN: On the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha, the entry of citizens will be free in Zamong Park, announced Mayor Mardan Himayat Ullah Mayar. However, the car owners will have to pay the parking fee. Mayor Mardan your initiative is commendable. Citizens fed up with the burden of electricity bills and taxes would at least get a breather without the TMA tax for a moment because Zamong Park is outside the city and it is difficult to reach there without a car. Mayor Mardan there are two days left in Eid, if free access orders are issued not only to Zamong Park but also to sports complex swings for the convenience of the citizens, then the citizens especially the parents will be grateful. Thus, if the parking tax of hospitals is also deferred on the occasion of Eid, it will be a favor to the residents of Mardan.

Girl electrocuted near Chaman

CHAMAN (PPI): A girl was killed when she received electric shock in Killi Rozi-ud-Din area of Chaman on Saturday. According to rescue sources, the girl, reported to be the sister of Journalist Muhammad Qaseem Achakzai, died after she was electrocuted at her home in Killi Haji Roziuddin area of Chaman. Her body was brought to a Chaman hospital and later handed over to the heirs after fulfilling necessary medico-legal formalities. The incident has created a mourning atmosphere in the victim's home.

Two killed

SUKKUR (INP): A man shot sister-in-law and niece dead over domestic dispute in the suburb of Sukkur, police said on Saturday. The accused opened fire on his 27-year-old sister-in-law Noor Khatoon and eight-year-old niece Zahida Khatoon after argument.

People hold rally for release of PTI founder, others

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Like other parts of the country, a huge protest rally was held in Kohat against the illegal arrest and for release of Pakistan Tehrik e Insaf founder chief Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi and other hundreds of leaders and workers led by former Federal Minister and senior PTI Leader Shehryar Afridi MNA and Khyber



Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Finance and Law Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate and participated by the MPAs Shafi Jan and Daud Shah Afridi, Tehsil Chairmen of Lachi and Gumbat Ihsan Khan and Sajid Iqbal, former District Nazim Naseem Afridi and large members of party workers and general public on Friday evening which on culmination converted into a big protest gathering.

A peaceful protest rally held in Kohat for the release of Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi and other unjust prisoners, carrying the flags of Pakistan and PTI and placards inscribed

with slogans for release of PTI Chief Imran Khan and others were slanting slogans against injustices made with PTI Chief, Leaders and workers during the last 2 years.

The PTI Leaders in their addresses thanked the brave people of Kohat who despite all the difficulties and hardships stands with Imran Khan in all odd times and raised their voice for Khan Sahib and all other innocent

prisoners in a peaceful protest. They demanded that Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi and all other innocents should immediately be released and not negate the mandate of the people who voted PTI for progress and prosperity of the country and get rid of the looters and theft. They said, Pakistan and its all institutions are ours declaring that the country cannot move forward without Imran Khan as Imran Khan is need and only and last hope for Pakistan, they concluded.

Meanwhile, on the call of PTI in Mardan, a protest was taken out in front of the press club for the release of

former Prime Minister Imran Khan, led by the Provincial Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru Provincial Assembly members Tariq Aryani and Abdul Salam Afridi, Walid Mir Kashmiri, Lakhkar Khan and others addressed.

The workers were holding placards in their hands and they were shouting slogans for the release of Imran Khan. The speakers while addressing the rally said that the founder of PTI does not have any facilities in jail even though he is a former prime minister and has been deprived of legal facilities. The speakers said that today the people of the whole country are protesting against the arrest of Imran Khan, he has been kept in jail illegally, there is a form 47 government in the country, there is a constitutional and legal crisis in the country, the only solution is the release of Imran Khan, all the parties are demanding.

They want Imran Khan to be released. He said that PTI believes in peaceful protest. Later, while talking to journalists, Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru said that the purpose of protest across the country is if we cannot give justice to the people and our voice is not heard for the release of our chairman Imran Khan, then we will not hesitate to resign and leave the government and will make all kinds of sacrifices for the release of our leader.

Tribemen block Quetta airport road

QUETTA (PPI): Tribemen blocked airport road near BA Mall area of the provincial capital for all kinds of traffic against the deportation of the family members of Abdul Rahim Hannawal, brother of former Minister for Livestock and Dairy Development and central leader of JUI-F, Moulana Allah Dad Khairwa to Afghanistan.

The enraged tribesmen burned tyres outside BA Mall near Askari Park area of Quetta, demanding the authorities to repatriate the family members of Abdul Rahim Hanna Wal.

Talking to media, Provincial President, Muthahida Qabail Federation, Balochistan, Ajab Khan Kakar, said that the previous night, a security forces team raided the house of Hanna Wal in Hanna Urak area of Quetta and took all the family members, including women and children, with them, adding when tribesmen blocked Hanna cross road, they were informed that the said family had been deported to Afghanistan on the ground that the said family had been declared

by the government as an Afghan refugee family.

He said how the said family could be Afghan refugees when one of the family members namely Moulana Allah Dad had previously served as Minister for Livestock and Dairy Development and another female of the same family had been elected as Member of Balochistan Provincial Assembly.

Condemning the forcible deportation of the family to Afghanistan, he called on the authorities to return back the family to Pakistan and conduct inquiry into the issue.

Quetta Bar calls for withdrawing names of lawyers from Levies FIR: President, Quetta Bar Association, Qari Rehmatullah Advocate, on Saturday called on the authorities to withdraw the names of lawyers from the FIR lodged by the authorities of Levies Station Killa Abdullah and investigate the issue regarding maltreatment faced by senior Advocate Jaffar Raza Khan at the hands of Quetta police.

Addressing a press conference at Quetta Press Club, he said that nominating Naseebullah Advocate, Hameedullah Advocate, Waris Mehmood Advocate and Aamir Naseeb Advocate in the FIR No. 11/24 lodged at Levies Station Killa Abdullah was a condemnable act and in no way acceptable to Quetta Bar Association.

He called on the Commissioner Quetta Division and Deputy Commissioner Killa Abdullah to withdraw the names of lawyers from FIR after conducting fair and transparent investigation into the issue. He remarked, "We would like to make it clear that no fabricated FIR against legal fraternity was acceptable to Quetta Bar Association."

He said that in another incident, senior lawyer of the province Jaffar Raza was not only maltreated by Quetta police but was also kept in the police station. He called on the authorities to take notice of the incident and place the services of responsible police officers and officials under suspension.



MULTAN: Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Riaz Hussain Pirzada giving a letter to father of Shaheed Asadullah.

KP Minister visits livestock markets

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Local Government, Elections and Rural Development Minister Arshad Ayub Khan on the first day of his two-day visit to Hazara Division on Saturday visited various livestock markets in Mansehra, Abbottabad and Havelian tehsils and besides other facilities in the markets reviewed drinking water supply and sanitation arrangements in the markets.

On this occasion, he gave instructions to the higher authorities of the local government that the sacrifices should be covered in every way on the occasion of Eid. No littering will be tolerated in cities and villages. Provincial Minister Local Government Arshad Ayub Khan also visited the offices of TMA Mansehra and TMA Abbottabad and canceled the Eid holidays of all TMOs of Hazara Division. While doing so, he directed them to ensure their attendance on the occasion of Eid and directed them to submit a report in this regard. Provincial Local Government Minister directed the Regional Municipal Officer Hazara to visit the offices of all TMOs of Hazara Division every month and submit their performance report to him.

He also directed to install tracking system in vehicles used by TMOs in Hazara Division. He said that zero tolerance policy will be adopted on corruption and any kind of corruption will not be tolerated. Regional Municipal Officer Sajjad Haider, Secretary Local Council Board, TMOs Mansehra, Abbottabad and Havelian, Mayor Abbottabad Shuja Nabi besides PTI leader Kamal Saleem Swati also accompanied the provincial minister.

Training workshop on 'empowering voices' held

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: A 5-day capacity building training workshop on "Empowering voices for human rights and freedom laws" concluded on Saturday at Changa Gali district Abbottabad.

The training workshop was arranged by a non-government organization Individualland which was participated by different male and female journalists through out Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Trainers Saifullah Khoso, Senior Journalist Fazlur Rehman said that media has the power to mold public opinion through impactful reporting. They said that media can play vital role for the welfare of people and development of a country. Various topics including



Understanding fundamental rights and freedom of speech, dynamics of shrinking space and its implications for fundamental freedom and human rights. Overview of Pakistan's government systems like federal government, parliamentary government, and local government, how lack of information leads to misreporting. Overview of PECA (Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act) and PTA policies and its implications. Overview of PEMRA and

Press Council of Pakistan Ordinance Regulation, digital threats to democracy, Artificial Intelligence as a tool for journalism, risks, and opportunities, Mobile journalism and storytelling, climate reporting through podcasting, and Use of RTI for accessing information were the topics deeply discussed in the training.

Different journalistic exercises were also part of the training. At the end of the training workshop certificates were distributed among the participants.

Mother, daughter killed

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Mother and her daughter died when a speedy driven Truck (Dumper) crushed motorcycle on Gujranwala Road.

According to details, Ifukhar Ahmad resident of village Nohianwala was coming to city Hafizabad along with her wife Shabana and daughter Khadija (11-year-old) on motorcycle. When they reached near Doaba on Gujranwala Road, their motorcycle collided with another motorcycle. As a result of which, they fell on the road and meantime, a speedy driven dumper crushed them. They received fatal injuries and shifted to Trauma Centre Hafizabad, where Shabana and her daughter lost their breath.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad and DPO Faisal Gulzar visited cattle market and general bus stand to

review security and other arrangement made for providing different facilities to people, on Friday.

While visiting cattle market, DC and DPO checked standard of cleanliness, security arrangements washroom and provision of other basic facilities for people. They also inspected camps of livestock, health and rescue 1122 and Municipal Committee and witnessed anti-Congo Virus Spray and availability of medical and other facilities. DC Directed the Municipal Officers to improve lighting, tenting and potable water in the market.

Earlier, DC and DPO inspected general bus stand and checked waiting area for passengers, clean drinking water and cleanliness. They also checked fare table and directed the Secretary District Road Transport Authority Hafizabad to ensure implementation on fare list issued by the DRTA.

DC warned the transporters to received fixed fare from passenger otherwise punitive action would be taken against violators of fare table. ADCC/Administrator MC Hafizabad and Secretary DRTA Hamadullah, AC Munawar Hussain, Chief Officer MC Ansar Sahi and other officers were also accompanied.

Anti-Dengue Day: Anti-Dengue Day was observed in Hafizabad to create awareness among people for adopting preventive measures to contain spread of dengue.

In this connection, Health Department arranged a seminar and walk. Officers and officials of health, population, education and other departments including Chief Executive Officer Health Umer Sharif Rathor, DHO Dr. Faiq Ali Tarar and DDHO Dr. Zaheer Ahmad participated the seminar and walk.

TAPI gas pipeline project and geopolitical complexities

Ghazala Anbreen

TAPI gas pipeline project was signed in 1991. Geographically it is a Trans country natural gas pipeline which crosses 4 countries, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The estimated cost involved was \$10 billion. The construction of 1127 miles (1814 kilometer) long pipeline with 56 inch diameter having the ability to pass 3.2 billion cubic feet per day from Turkmenistan's Galkynys gas field with deposits amount of 27.4 trillion cubic meters started in 2018.

The route of gas transportation was supposed to be from Turkmenistan's Galkynys gas field to Herat, Qandhar, Chaman, Zhob, DG Khan, Multan and finally to Fazilka in India at Indo Pak border. 70 percent share will be from international donor, Asian Development Bank while 200 million dollars share is of Pakistan. 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas it will supply to the three countries every year. Pakistan and India have an even share of 42 percent of total volume and Afghanistan will be given 16 percent.

Initially this project had to be completed by 2019. It was envisaged that approximately 214 kilometers section will run through Turkmenistan, 774 km through Afghanistan and 826 km will be from Pakistan to Fazilka.

1.34 billion cubic feet gas it was supposed to give to Pakistan daily and therefore, for Pakistan TAPI was a solution for persistent energy shortfalls.

This project was funded by Asian Development Bank which had to restart work in December 2022. However, due to precarious security situation, the work could not continue.

A glance at its timeline will show that in 2008 negotiations regarding this project started. In December 2015 a stone laying down ceremony was held in Turkmenistan. The beginning of construction was marked by a ceremony which was held on Feb 2018. In May 2018, an unidentified gun man killed down the 5 mine clearance workers. It was assumed that in October 2019 construction had to be started in Pakistan and in 2020 it would be completed, but it could not start as the internal disturbances in Afghanistan had increased.

Also the US withdrew its forces from Afghanistan and it was taken over by Taliban. However, the Taliban had announced on January, 2022 that they wanted to resume this project. Afghanistan requested inter-governmental loan from Turkmenistan and Turkmenistan agreed for this. It was decided that Afghanistan will repay the loan through the revenue earned by transit fee. In September 2022 construction work restarted.

This project will enable

Afghanistan to increase employment opportunities and add to the economic development there. It will give an added advantage to Afghanistan to improve its ties with India and China and prove its credibility as a trustworthy partner. Afghanistan as a transit fee will get \$500 million per year from this project along with a share of 500 million cubic meters of gas for the first ten years and afterwards this share will increase to 1.5 billion cubic meter per year. TAPI may encourage trade between Kabul and Delhi along with enabling Afghanistan an independent source of revenue.

TAPI gas project will play a pivotal role in providing Turkmenistan's gas to South Asia. It is not only a gas transit initiative connecting energy rich Central Asia with energy starved south Asia, it is a trailblazing project for regional economic collaboration and integration as was enunciated by the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during a ground breaking ceremony joined by regional leaders in Dec 14, 2015. He also emphasized that such projects make energy deficient countries join hands with energy rich countries for pursuing common goal of prosperity in the region and also serve the purpose of regional connectivity. TAPI gas pipeline project will address the energy crisis which is at present being faced by countries like Pakistan, India and Afghanistan.

Till now Turkmenistan used

to export gas to Iran, Russia and China. Russia and Iran have decreased their imports considerably because they want to increase their own output and move towards self-reliance. In China manufacturing slow down caused a decrease in demand and this led Turkmenistan to establish close ties with South Asia. The benefits for Turkmenistan include the fact that it will reduce its dependence on China which is its biggest customer and may stride further towards a journey to self-reliance as it has already made progress in exploring prospects for a Trans Caspian Pipeline for supply of gas to Europe, it doubled its gas exports to Russia in 2021 and also signed a trilateral gas swap deal for 2 billion cubic meters per year with Iran and Azerbaijan and is further thinking of exploring other opportunities.

Pakistan has been facing a gas shortage since many years. The textile industry of Pakistan is a major industry and this has been facing a huge energy crisis due to scarcity of gas. That is why many Textile manufacturers shifted their units to Bangladesh. Between 2008 and 2012, 40 percent of Pakistan's textile sector migrated to Bangladesh. The dearth of gas is also linked with an increase in financial deficit. The overall circular debt in energy sector in 2024 is 5.4 percent of Pakistan's GDP. This Gas pipeline can finish one third of gas shortage in Pakistan. As a

result of this project transit revenues for Pakistan may encourage Pakistan to renegotiate with Beijing on China Pakistan Economic Corridor. It is important to mention at this point that Foreign Investment (Promotion and Protection) Act (2022) has been implemented in Pakistan. Hence no interference from provinces would be there relating to such projects.

This Act is for those bigger projects involving the funding of 500 billion dollar or above: "Provided that no investment shall be notified as a qualified investment unless the amount to be invested (whether in the form of equity or debt) is not less than US\$ 500 million (or its equivalent in Pak Rupees)" For Pakistan the use of gas for generating electricity will also lead to climate friendly measures and will add to an increase in trade volume for Pakistan with other countries and also facilitate grounds for diversifying its energy market.

It is thirty year agreement. This implies that once completed, for the next 30 years it will continue its operation. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India natural gas pipeline project has suffered a delay of more than 15 years since its inception. Here it should be kept in mind that the estimates of cost were old and now cost may be on the escalated side.

India is the world's 3rd largest energy consumer and ful-

fills its 8 percent demand from solid biomass, coal, and oil. For India it will add to its energy mix and improve its economic development. India, too needs to set its targets as per Paris climate summit and Glasgow Summit India and is supposed to go for the aggressive carbon emission reduction. This will be possible if this gas pipeline is operational and achieve the desired set targets. It will enable India mitigate coal usage and help him to meet the goal of COP 26.

Challenges that may impede its development can include security situation at Indo Pak border in Fazilka and secondly US may also sanction TAPI partners as Taliban are in control in Afghanistan. It will be helpful for energy starved countries and would pave way for bringing regional peace and stability and boost economic activities by meeting the energy requirements and bringing prosperity.

It will serve as a win win solution. 1.5 billion people will be benefited through this pipeline so it is in mutual interest of all the countries. There is a social and environmental importance as natural gas offers a safe substitute to coal and diesel fired power generation. Knowledge of modern hi-tech equipment and new technologies for the people in the region because of this project would become possible and the industrialization and investment will take a boost.



Ghana braces for three weeks of power cuts

GHANA (BBC): Power cuts are expected to last at least another three weeks in parts of Ghana because of a shortage of supplies from Nigeria. A statement from the state power firm said a temporary shutdown for maintenance works at an unnamed Nigerian gas supplier was to blame.

Ghanaians have endured years of regular power shortages and they even have their own nickname - "dumsor" - which means "on and off" in the Akan language. Power demand has steadily increased over the past two decades, partly due to rapid urbanisation and population growth. To end the shortfall, Ghana's government will have to stump up around \$400m (£315m) to buy gas and liquid fuel for power plants.

A growing debt may be behind the power shortages that started early this year. The state power company - the Electricity Company of Ghana - owes about \$1.2bn to private energy producers, which also include Nigerian suppliers. Last July, private suppliers

threatened to shut down operations over the arrears.

People in Togo and Benin are also suffering gas shortages, according to information in a statement from the West African Gas Pipeline Company (WAPCo). "The current situation is entirely out of WAPCo's control," the company added. Public anger has been growing in recent days. In response, the Electricity Company of Ghana said in a joint statement with the Ghana Grid Company:

"We wish to assure the public that we are collaborating with other stakeholders... to ensure minimal impact of the reduction in gas supply on consumers." To spread the available supplies as efficiently as possible in Ghana, they say they will carry out load-shedding. The two companies had previously disagreed over who was responsible for providing a schedule of this kind. The companies pledged to manage the disruptions effectively to ensure essential services were not interrupted

throughout the period of reduced gas supply.

It comes barely two months after President Nana Akufo-Addo curbed electricity exports to Togo, Burkina Faso and Benin following supply challenges. The companies pledged to manage the disruptions effectively to ensure essential services were not interrupted throughout the period of reduced gas supply.

In recent years, power shortages have worsened as the country grapples with its worst economic crisis in a decade. Ghana, one of the world's biggest producers of both gold and cocoa, has in the last few years become heavily reliant on gas as a major source of energy for electricity generation. The country gets much of its electricity from hydro and thermal sources, but these are often poorly maintained.

Chinese #MeToo journalist jailed

BEIJING (AP): Supporters say a Chinese journalist who promoted women's rights as part of the country's nascent #MeToo movement has been sentenced to five years in prison on charges of incitement to subvert state authority, almost three years after she and an activist were detained.

The verdict provided to The Associated Press stated that Huang Xueqin would also face a fine of 100,000 yuan (\$14,000), underscoring the ruling Communist Party's intolerance of any activism outside its control in a system whose upper echelons are dominated by men. China's #MeToo movement flourished briefly before being snuffed out by the government. China often silences activists by holding them incommunicado for a long time and then sentencing them to prison.

Huang's release date was listed as Sept. 18, 2026, accounting for her earlier detention. Co-defendant Wang Jianbing was sentenced to three years and six months on the same charge. Wang is more known for his labor rights activity but also helped

women report sexual harassment. Huang and Wang's cases appear to have become intertwined as part of the most recent wave of a general crackdown on rights advocates, a trend that predates the #MeToo movement and includes previous incidents such as the 2015 detentions of women distributing pamphlets against sexual harassment on public transport.

Working as a freelance journalist, Huang helped spark China's first #MeToo case in 2018 when she publicized allegations of sexual harassment made by a graduate student against her Ph.D. supervisor at one of China's most prestigious universities. Friends say that Huang and Wang disappeared on Sept. 19, 2021, a day before Huang was scheduled to fly to the United Kingdom to start a master's degree program on gender violence and conflict at the University of Sussex. They went on trial in September 2023.

The International Women's Media Foundation earlier gave Huang its Wallis Annenberg Justice for Women Journalists Award.

Supporters of Huang and Wang created a GitHub webpage to post case updates and share their thoughts. China is routinely listed by monitoring groups as among the top imprisoning nations of journalists.

Amnesty International's China Director Sarah Brooks issued a statement condemning Huang's conviction as an attack on women's advocacy in the People's Republic of China, which has long promoted the concept that "women hold up half the sky," but whose institutions remain dominated by men. "These convictions will prolong their deeply unjust detention and have a further chilling effect on human rights and social advocacy in a country where activists face increasing state crackdowns," Brooks said in an emailed statement.

"In reality, they have committed no actual crime. Instead, the Chinese government has fabricated excuses to deem their work a threat, and to target them for educating themselves and others about social justice issues such as women's dignity and workers' rights," Brooks said.

Seabed in South China Sea: Manila seeks UN confirmation

MANILA (AP): The Philippines has asked a United Nations body to formally recognize the extent of its undersea continental seabed in the South China Sea, where it would have the exclusive right to exploit resources, the Department of Foreign Affairs said Saturday, in a move that rejects China's vast territorial claims to the region.

The Philippine government submitted information to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on the extent of its undersea shelf in the South China Sea, off western Palawan province, after more than a decade and a half of scientific research, the department said. China did not immediately comment but it will likely contest the Philippine move.

The undersea region where the Philippines seeks to formally establish its sovereign rights under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, or UNCLOS, covers the Spratlys, a chain of islands, islets, reefs and atolls that has been fiercely contested over the years by China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. Indonesia has also confronted Chinese coast guard and fishing fleets in the gas-rich Natuna sea in the fringes of the South China Sea.

"Incidents in the waters tend to overshadow the importance of what lies beneath," Philippine Foreign Assistant Secretary Marshall Louis Alferez

said. "The seabed and the subsoil extending from our archipelago up to the maximum extent allowed by UNCLOS hold significant potential resources that will benefit our nation and our people for generations to come." "Today, we secure our future by making a manifestation of our exclusive right to explore and exploit natural resources in our extended continental shelf entitlement," Alferez said.

Under the 1982 UN convention, a coastal state could have exclusive rights to exploit resources in its continental shelf, a vast stretch of seabed that can extend up to 350 nautical miles (648 kilometers), including the right to authorize and regulate any kind of drilling. The Philippines' undersea continental shelf could potentially overlap with those of other coastal states in the South China Sea, including that of Vietnam. Philippine officials expressed readiness to hold talks to resolve such issues based on UNCLOS.

Philippine permanent representative to the UN Antonio Lagdameo said the move "can reinvigorate efforts of states to demonstrate their readiness to pursue UNCLOS processes in the determination of maritime entitlements and promote a rules-based international order." Hostilities and tensions in the disputed waters have alarmingly escalated particularly between China and the Philippines over

two disputed shoals since last year. Chinese coast guard ships and suspected militia vessels have used powerful water cannons and dangerous blocking maneuvers against Philippine coast guard patrol ships and navy boats that have injured Filipino navy personnel, damaged their supply boats and strained diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Sweden summons Iraqi diplomat

COPENHAGEN (AP): Sweden's Foreign Ministry said officials summoned the Iraqi chargé d'affaires to protest against death sentences handed down to Swedes in Iraq.

Swedish media reported in recent days that two Swedes have been sentenced to death in Iraq after being convicted of killing a member of criminal gang there. Sweden's news agency TT cited the foreign ministry in Stockholm's confirmation that at least one person with a Swedish passport has received a death sentence.

"We condemn the use of the death penalty. We oppose it always, everywhere and regardless of the circumstances," Sweden's Foreign Minister Tobias Billström said in a statement.

UNSC demands end to Sudan's city siege

NEW YORK (BBC): The UN Security Council has demanded that Sudanese paramilitary forces call off their eight-week siege of el-Fasher, a city in the Darfur region where fighting has sparked fears of a possible genocide.

Sudan's army has been fighting the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) for more than a year, in a civil war that has killed thousands and forced millions from their homes. El-Fasher is the last major urban centre in Darfur that remains in the hands of Sudan's army.

The security council has called for "an immediate halt to the fighting" and withdrawal of all troops from the city. The 15-member council adopted a British-drafted resolution, with 14 votes in favour, while Russia abstained. It expressed "grave concern" at the spreading violence and credible reports that the RSF are carrying out "ethnically motivated violence" in el-Fasher.

In a statement, the council called on the rival forces to "to seek an immediate cessation of hostilities, leading to a sustainable resolution to the conflict, through dialogue". The resolution called on all parties to allow civilians who wish to leave el-Fasher to do so and remove obstacles to humanitarian access.

Britain's UN envoy Barbara Woodward told the council that "an attack on the city would be catastrophic for the 1.5 million people sheltering in the city". "This council has sent a strong signal to the parties to the conflict today. This brutal and unjust conflict needs to end," she added. Human Rights Watch's Louis Charbonneau said the resolution "puts the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces on notice that the world is watching".

The security council also urged member states to "refrain from external interference," and demand compliance with the arms embargo on the country. El-Fasher's last functioning hospital has been forced to close down after an attack on the facility. More than 130,000 residents have fled the city due to fighting between April and May, the UN said.

UN experts warn that the Darfur region is facing a growing risk of genocide as the world's attention is focused on conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. Rights groups in Darfur have accused the RSF of using rape as a weapon of war, and is targeting darker-skinned Masalit people and other non-Arab groups in a campaign of ethnic cleansing. But the RSF says it is not involved in what it describes as a "tribal conflict" in Darfur. Several rounds of peace talks have failed to end the war, which began when the two generals leading the army and RSF respectively fell out.

UN urge Greece to shed light on migrant shipwreck

ATHENS (AP): The United Nations' refugee and migration agencies criticized Greece's failure over the past year to shed light on one of the worst migrant shipwrecks in the Mediterranean Sea that left hundreds dead.

UNHCR and IOM stressed the "critical" importance of a "comprehensive and conclusive" investigation in a joint statement on the first anniversary of the June 14, 2023, tragedy off southern Greece. "Investigations have been initiated in Greece but so far no outcome establishing the facts on the incident has been communicated," they said.

About 1,000 people took part in a central Athens protest march organized by left-wing groups to mark the anniversary of the shipwreck. Protesters, who included some of the survivors, carried a banner with photographs of the dead. Several hundred people joined in a similar protest in the northern city of Thessaloniki. Migrant charities and rights groups have widely criticized the Greek coast guard's handling of the shipwreck in international waters 75 kilometers (45 miles) off the town of Pylos.

Thousands to march across France against far right

PARIS (Reuters): Demonstrations were expected in Paris and cities across France on Saturday to protest against the far-right National Rally (RN) ahead of upcoming elections to the French parliament.

Following RN's surge in last Sunday's European elections, police said 350,000 people were expected to march and 21,000 officers had been mobilised after labour unions, student groups and rights groups called for rallies to oppose the anti-immigration, eurosceptic party. At least 150 marches were expected in cities including Marseille, Toulouse, Lyon and Lille.

In Paris where up to 100,000 people were expected to turn out a march will set off at 1200 GMT from Place de La Republique, in the east, going through the Bastille square to Nation. Speaking from Place de Republique, hard-left CGT union leader Sophie Binet told reporters: "We are marching because we are extremely worried that (RN's head) Jordan Bardella could become the next Prime Minister ... We want to prevent this disaster."

President Emmanuel Macron called a snap legislative election, to be held in two rounds on June 30 and July 7, after his centrist alliance was



trounced by the RN in last Sunday's European Parliament ballot. A first series of opinion polls have projected that the RN could win the election and be in a position to form the next government.

A poll conducted for Le Point magazine published forecast RN would lead in the first round of the parliamentary election with 29.5% of votes, narrowly ahead of a coalition of left-wing parties called the Popular Front on 28.5%. Macron's centrist camp was on 18%.

At least two polls have put the left not far behind the RN and ahead of Macron's group. In Tours, western France, where hundreds of protesters were taking part in a March, a banner read: "For liberties, for rights, for a social and democratic republic, against far-right ideas and against racism". Several banners read: "young people hate the FN (the RN's former name), while a pensioner carried a banner that read: 'Old people also hate the RN'".

A landmark moment in South Africa for a humbled ANC

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): South Africa once again has a national unity government, 30 years after a similar deal helped stabilise the transition to the full democracy from a nation divided by the racist system of apartheid. This time the ruling African National Congress (ANC) was forced to negotiate an agreement after losing its controlling majority in elections.

It marks a landmark moment for the country, with the confirmation that the ANC's new partners include the white-led Democratic Alliance - a pairing once considered unimaginable by many in South Africa. The main opposition DA party grew out of a union of groups which included what was left of the apartheid-era ruling National Party, and is an advocate of free-market economics at odds with the ANC's left-wing traditions.

It is still possible that ANC break-away parties that have not joined the unity government could try to influence events from the outside but the agreement gave shape to South Africa's political future as its new parliament gathered for the first time since last month's historic elections. "Today, the 14th of June 2024 will go down in the annals of history as the start of a new chapter for our beloved country," said DA leader John Steenhuisen in a statement delivered in Cape Town, where parliament was meeting.

More detail, including the breakdown of cabinet posts, is expected to emerge in the coming days. But this is not a national unity alliance like the one negotiated by Nelson Mandela in 1994. At that time the ANC reached across the divide from a position of strength. Now it is doing so from a position of political necessity.

The composition is similar. Thirty years ago the ANC joined forces with the National Party that ruled during apartheid, and the Zulu nationalist Inkhata Freedom Party (IFP). The IFP has already confirmed it is on board again, alongside the smaller Patriotic Alliance, meaning Cyril Ramaphosa will enjoy another term as president.

But "this is not a government of national unity", says TK Poee from the Wits University School of Governance in Johannesburg. "It's just a bit of camouflaging so that people

don't have to own that it's a grand coalition." That is because it does not include the parties which came third and fourth in the election - the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party of former President Jacob Zuma and the radical Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) which is popular with urban black youth.

Few doubt that negotiations since the 29 May elections have been difficult. Many in South Africa are now asking themselves one simple question - will it work? Fikile Mbalula, the ANC's secretary general, has stressed "gravitating to the centre" was the best response to a message from voters, who wanted parties to work together to bring stability to South Africa.

But the political disagreements between the new coalition's two main parties are sometimes stark. Perhaps the biggest and most contentious issues are DA opposition to the ANC's national healthcare policy, and its black economic empowerment programme. The DA charges the affirmative action measures are inefficient, do not reward meritocracy and enrich ANC cronies.

Derek Hanekom, who was an ANC member of South Africa's original national unity government, believes the differences are sometimes overemphasised. "If they say that they really don't like the legislation," he told the BBC, "that doesn't mean they don't recognise the need for some kind of affirmative action, for some kind of redress - they do." "The parties are ready to make compromises and be flexible and at the end of the try to achieve consensus in decision-making." However difficult compromise may prove, the announcement of a coalition will bring a sense of relief to many investors and those in the private sector, who might hope for a period of stability. They had been concerned by the radical left-wing policies of the ANC's more natural allies, the EFF and MK.

Both of them advocate the nationalisation of land and property - with the aim of redistributing wealth to correct the racialised inequalities that remain embedded despite the ANC's initial success at lifting millions of black people out of poverty. The EFF rejected the idea of a national unity

government that included the DA, and the MK rejects the constitution, so it did not meet the criteria for joining. Not to mention the personal animosity between Mr Zuma and the man who ousted him as president, Mr Ramaphosa.

EFF leader Julius Malema said the party planned to remain on the opposition benches, and would request key roles in oversight committees. It's possible either or both parties might make efforts to disrupt proceedings in the weeks and months ahead. MK has made claims of election fraud despite failing to produce evidence, trying to block parliamentary sitting through a legal effort thrown out by the Constitutional Court.

For ANC supporters, another question is whether the party of liberation is forced to soften its ideology to align with its new partners. Addressing journalists, Mr Mbalula repeatedly stressed that a coalition didn't mean the ANC had changed. "No party is going to die," he said, "the ANC is not going anywhere." But some believe sharing power poses a threat for the party - and could embolden its opponents outside the deal.

"If this grand coalition doesn't work and dissatisfaction grows, it will only feed into the EFF and MK," said Dr Poee from Wits University. "But maybe the key question is whether we see a new ANC." Mr Hanekom agrees that South Africa's seventh parliament could be crucial for his party. "It all depends on what happens in the next few years," he says. "This could be the party that people have been waiting for, the kind of leadership that people have been waiting for. Despite his optimism, for the ANC veteran the stakes are high. "This is a second chance," he says, "and we dare not fail. Otherwise it will be the end of the ANC. And for the sake our country, it dare not fail." "This could either be a reset or a slow path towards South Africa becoming a sad story," Dr Poee told the BBC. "Their performance will show what it is. If it's a good performance, it's a good reset. If it doesn't really do anything - it's just us stumbling towards being a firmly established, struggling developing country."

Green Party to become the second-largest force in Congress

MEXICO CITY (AP): It's been a long strange trip for Mexico's Ecologist Green Party, which rode on its alliance with the ruling Morena party to become the second-largest voting block in Congress.

This Green Party has been better known for picking presidential winners like it did this time with incoming President Claudia Sheinbaum and making strategic alliances regardless of political ideology than for taking on environmental causes. But it has always been a strange political group in Mexico. Founded by the millionaire owner of a discount pharmacies chain, the Green party has at various times called for re-instating the death penalty, mandatory English classes for school kids and life prison sentences for kidnappers.

What it is good at is handing out free campaign swag — backpacks, T-shirts and water bottles with its logo "PVEM", for Partido Verde Ecologista de Mexico — and getting influencers and celebrities to post videos supporting it, allegedly in exchange for payments. The party has allied itself with whoever it thinks will win. It was an ally of the old ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, of the conservative National Action Party, and now cleaves to the ruling Morena party of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

That has worked for them, because Mexico's arcane election laws allow coalition parties to distribute votes, congressional seats and state governorships among themselves. That means the Greens, which have almost never func-

tioned as a real opposition, will likely displace the National Action party as the main opposition party in Congress in September. Though the Green Party won far fewer actual votes in the June 2 elections than National Action, it will have more seats in Congress because of 'proportional representation' rules designed to favor smaller parties.

But those alliances mean the Greens have supported López Obrador's policies of reviving Mexico's state-owned oil industry and its production of heavy crude oil and highly-polluting, poorly refined fuel oil. The government has subsidized airports, highways and gasoline prices, while building the Maya Train tourist line through jungles and over fragile caverns on the Yucatan Peninsula. "The Green Party is anything but green," said Adrián Fernández Breaumantz, the director of the activist group Climate Initiative. "They have voted against the environment, against public health and against fighting climate change."

The party promotes its efforts that have increased penalties for polluters, banned animal acts at circuses and added the right to a healthy environment to the Constitution. But in 2009, the Green Party also proposed returning the death penalty for kidnappers who kill their victims. The proposal was not adopted. Mexico formally abolished the death penalty in 2005 but has not held an execution since 1961.

That lead the European Greens coalition to say publicly in 2009 that they did not consider the Mexican party a member of the green political family. "It's not

consistent with the (environmental) causes," but wins votes from young people or the well-intentioned, but poorly informed, Fernández Bramauntz said.

In the late 1980s, the party's founders, members of the González Torres family, saw an attractive marketing ploy in the "green" label that could probably sell politically. "The environmentalist label was hijacked here in Mexico," said Paula Sofía Vázquez, the co-author of the book "The Green Mafia," who called it "a business model based on politics," because under Mexican electoral law, the government funds most electoral campaigns.

And from their business experience, they also realized the importance of marketing. The party has relied mainly on younger, physically attractive candidates, social media influencers and celebrities, and catchy one-line slogans based on whatever issue was at the top of voters' minds. Green party leader Karen Castrejón said the group had supported some controversial proposals because they were "fundamental for our country." Castrejón attributed the party's success to "political engineering" and "solid proposals."

"Regrettably, we have always been stigmatized as a party," Castrejón said. "they say we always go with whoever is in power." Things got so bad that in 2015, about 150,000 people signed petitions asking electoral authorities to pull the party's registration. The effort failed. María Marván, a legal expert at Mexico's National Autonomous University, served on the country's electoral board at the time.

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

G7 doing what it has been doing for so long

AS Europe shifts to the right, creating even greater uncertainties, the record low ratings of at least four G7 leaders in the run-up to elections in their countries show the ongoing G7 Summit in Italy is anything but well-timed, which will prevent them from hammering out any agreement of global significance.

And yet the G7 leaders have agreed to the United States' move to give Ukraine a loan of about \$50 billion which would be repaid by interest and profits from the nearly \$300 billion in frozen Russian assets in the West, especially in the European Union. Initially, the EU had been hesitant to use Russia's frozen assets to fund Ukraine for fear of violating international law, weakening investor confidence in the euro and triggering a capital flight from the European market and, more importantly, provoking a strong retaliation from Russia. But ultimately it succumbed to US pressure.

Within the EU, the debate on how and whether to use Russia's frozen assets to provide funds for Ukraine had been deadlocked for more than a year. Last month, however, the EU approved the use of the net proceeds from the frozen Russian assets to fund Ukraine's defense industry and reconstruction projects. By doing so, the G7 leaders have made their diabolic intentions of intensifying the Russia-Ukraine conflict clear.

The move sets a very bad precedent of the band of rich countries stealing the assets of sovereign states — the US is still holding about \$6 billion worth of Afghanistan central bank's assets. That the Western powers are not providing Ukraine with aid from their own coffers, as promised, should prompt Kyiv to question their sincerity.

Incidentally, the new US-Ukraine security treaty the two heads of state inked on Thursday makes two things clear — that Ukraine cannot join NATO and no US national's blood will be shed for Ukraine — casting a shadow over the "Summit on Peace in Ukraine" being held in Switzerland on the weekend. Anyway, the talking shop in Switzerland was not expected to find a solution to the Ukraine crisis, primarily because Russia was not invited to the talks.

Similar to the "peace talks" in Switzerland, the G7 Summit seems intent on putting all the blame on Russia for the Ukraine crisis. When it comes to Beijing, the G7 leaders are harping on the same string — the Taiwan question, the South China Sea issues, the "China threat" theory. The G7 leaders' desperate efforts to distract public attention from burning domestic issues are no longer working, as reflected in the declining ratings of the four G7 leaders. The G7 has long forgotten that its original mission is to coordinate macroeconomic policies and help the world overcome economic crises, for it has been doing just the opposite by triggering the Russia-Ukraine conflict and blindly supporting Israel's brutal assault on the Palestinian people.

Contempt vote against Merrick

AGGRESSIVE legislative oversight of the executive branch is a part of the nation's system of checks and balances, and Congress has a right to pursue it, even when the motivation is arguably partisan. As journalists, we're certainly curious to hear the conversations that prompted Justice Department special counsel Robert K. Hur to describe 81-year-old President Biden as seeming like "a sympathetic, well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory."

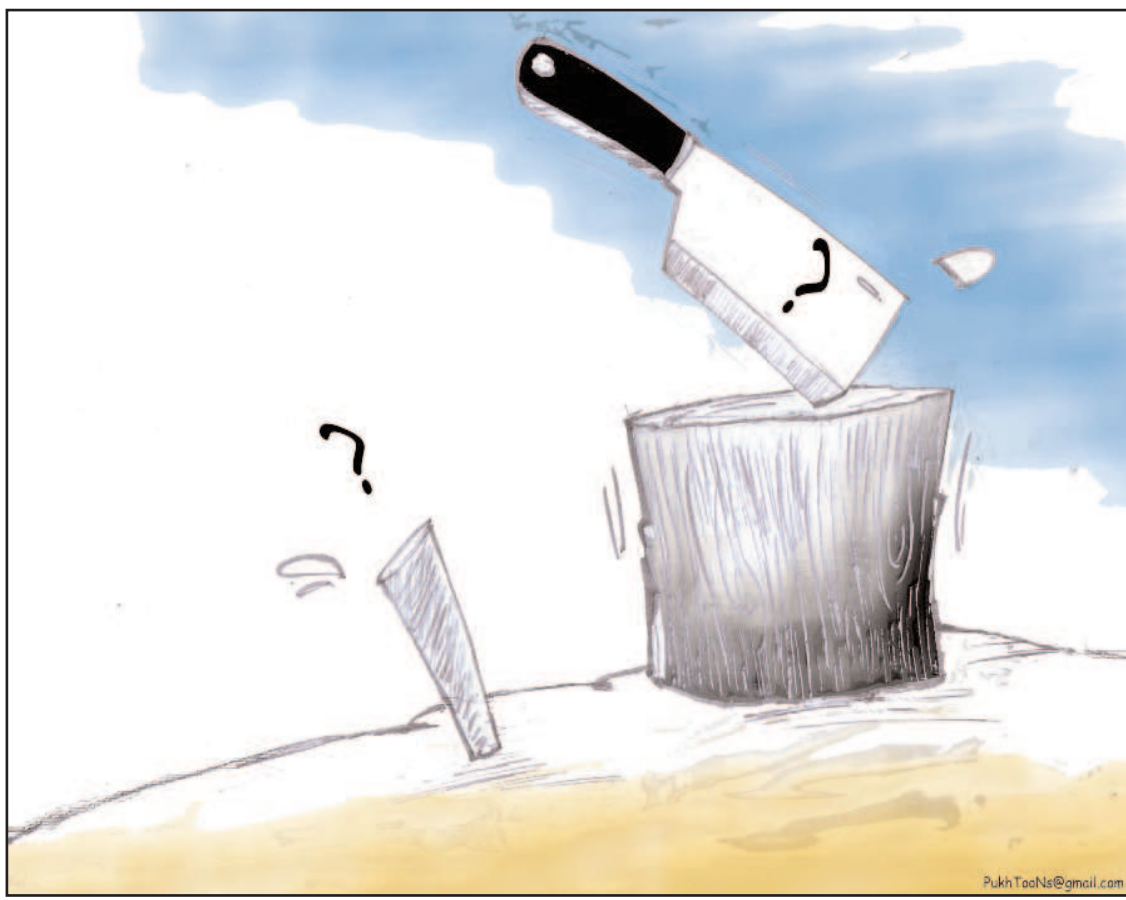
But House Republicans went well past the line when they voted this week to hold Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt of Congress for refusing to turn over audio recordings of the president's sit-down interview with Mr. Hur. Mr. Garland sought in good faith to accommodate congressional demands. He released a 258-page interview transcript and an unredacted version of Mr. Hur's 345-page report, though he was not required to release either. Mr. Garland allowed Mr. Hur to testify on Capitol Hill for more than five hours about why he didn't think he could convince a jury beyond a reasonable doubt that Mr. Biden willfully violated the laws on handling classified material.

The attorney general has plausible reasons to resist going further. The Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel says releasing recordings of interviews with people not charged with crimes would chill future high-profile criminal investigations, especially "where the voluntary cooperation of White House officials is exceedingly important." At Mr. Garland's request, Mr. Biden invoked executive privilege to block release of the tapes — providing legal cover against any criminal referral. President George W. Bush similarly claimed executive privilege in 2008 when Democratic lawmakers sought notes from special counsel Patrick Fitzgerald's interviews with Vice President Dick Cheney about the leak of a CIA officer's identity. Mr. Biden deserves credit for cooperating with Mr. Hur's probe. He gave a two-day interview last October just after Hamas attacked Israel. By contrast, then-President Donald Trump refused to sit down with then-special counsel Robert S. Mueller III, instead only answering written questions about activities before he took office. It's also commendable that Mr. Biden didn't invoke executive privilege to block the release of Mr. Hur's report or the transcript.

The irony is that Mr. Garland, who still has a judicial temperament despite no longer sitting on the bench, is arguably the least partisan member of the Cabinet. He appointed Mr. Hur, a Republican, to investigate Mr. Biden. He also gave special counsel powers to David C. Weiss to pursue criminal cases against Hunter Biden. Federal prosecutors won three felony convictions against the president's son just a day before the House held Mr. Garland in contempt for supposedly protecting the president. Mr. Garland describes the contempt vote as "the most recent in a long line of attacks" on the independence of his department. He fears that the demonization of law enforcement by Mr. Trump and his allies puts investigators and prosecutors at risk. On Thursday, for example, federal officials charged a Texas man with threatening to kidnap and kill an FBI agent involved in the Hunter Biden case. In this heated campaign season, elected officials in all branches of government need to look for ways to lower the temperature.

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Hajj proves religion can inspire peace

Shaykh M A Kholwadia

PILGRIMAGE – the devotional practice of journeying towards a site deemed sacred and collectively engaging in acts of worship and faith there – has been a fundamental part of the human experience since time immemorial. It is a widespread and important practice in many religions. Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jews, Christians and Muslims all have pilgrimage as part of their religious worship. The right and need to assemble for common goals are indeed innately and intrinsically human. Even the American Constitution deems the right to assemble a necessary legal and fundamental right in its First Amendment.

Pilgrimages, which bring thousands – and sometimes millions – of human beings together in a single site, are usually completely peaceful. Unlike the participants of similarly large secular gatherings like sporting events and music festivals, devoted pilgrims rarely resort to violence or harm their environment. No doubt there are some fanatics who assemble people for supposed religious goals and entice them towards violent campaigns, but their actions are not representative of pilgrimages, or the core values of any religion.

Our world today is plagued by war, violence, murder, rape, burglary, racism, domestic violence, child abuse, drug dependency, sex trafficking, hunger, homelessness, fraud in every industry, corruption in institutions and government, mental health crises, and an escalating climate emergency. The value of human life and labour is forgotten as most services and industries turned to automation and came to be dominated by machines a la, A Brave New World. Meanwhile, most secular forms of assembly and organisation have proved themselves to be recipes not for unity and peace, but for hate, harm and chaos.

In this context, we should perhaps turn to religious pilgrimages to find a way to rekindle peaceful human interaction and pave a new, peaceful path forward for humanity. As noted by Patrick Deneen in

his 2018 book, *Why Liberalism Failed*, the mission of modernity and liberal society, namely, to create a peaceful world predicated on individual liberation and freedom, has proven to be a massive failure.

As such, a fresh look at conventions that are as old as Adam might just save the day for us. Perhaps moder-

worship none but Allah, associate none with Him, nor take one another as lords instead of Allah..." (Surah Ali Imran (3): 64)

Ibrahim was also the prophet who laid down the foundations for the rituals of the Hajj known as "Manasik". The descendants of Abraham observed the Manasik correctly for a

The Quran states that the area around the Ka'ba – known as the Haram – is a sanctuary and a place of safety and security. Harm cannot exist there. More than two million Muslims abide by this code every year. There are exceptionally few fights, robberies, or cases of abuse or harassment during the Hajj.

nity could and should be replaced with, literal, antiquity! The right for human beings to assemble for worship and the right to protect places of worship is emphatically voiced in the Quran:

"Had Allah not repelled [the aggression of] some people by means of others, destruction would have come upon monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's Name is often mentioned. Allah will certainly help those who help Him. Allah is truly

All-Powerful, Almighty." (Surah al-Hajj (22): 40) For Muslims, this is the month of the Hajj, the universal pilgrimage. The Hajj – which means to make a firm intention – is the pilgrimage to the House of Allah in Mecca. This house which we call the Ka'ba was rebuilt by Abraham, who is considered the founding father of three important religions: namely Islam, Judaism and Christianity. Adherents of these three faiths all claim they are representatives of the Abrahamic Faith. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in uniting members of the Abrahamic Faith. This seems to be a noble initiative and indeed one that the Quran calls for:

Say, [O Prophet,] "O People of the Book! Jews and Christians. Let us come to word that is common amongst us: that we will

long while, but eventually began to corrupt the rules and changed many rituals. By the time Prophet Muhammad was born, the Hajj had lost its original beauty of worship and was barely recognisable.

Prophet Muhammad restored the Manasik to their original pristine Abrahamic convention when he performed his Hajj – which is the Hajj all Muslims perform today.

Uniting people of the Abrahamic faith would require the faithful to adhere to the Civilizational Values (known as the Millah) Abraham promoted and practised. Most of the values of the Millah are represented in the Muslim Hajj. While Muslims don their hajj garb, they are not allowed to argue, bicker and fight. In that state, they are not allowed to swat a fly, stamp a mosquito, scratch themselves such that blood comes out or hunt animals. They are not allowed to inflict harm on themselves or others; otherwise, they must pay a heavy penalty.

The Quran states that the area around the Ka'ba – known as the Haram – is a sanctuary and a place of safety and security. Harm cannot exist there. More than two million Muslims abide by this code every year. There are exceptionally few fights, robberies, or cases of abuse or harass-

ment during the Hajj. There is an air of unity that is unmatched in any human assembly.

Let's remember what Malcolm X wrote in his 1964 Letter from Mecca:

"Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practiced by people of all colors and races here in this ancient Holy Land, the home of Abraham, Muhammad and all the other Prophets of the Holy Scriptures. For the past week, I have been utterly speechless and spellbound by the graciousness I see displayed all around me by people of all colors.

There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue-eyed blondes to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white.

During the past eleven days here in the Muslim world, I have eaten from the same plate, drunk from the same glass, and slept on the same rug – while praying to the same God – with fellow Muslims, whose eyes were the bluest of blue, whose hair was the blondest of blond, and whose skin was the whitest of white. And in the words and in the deeds of the white Muslims, I felt the same sincerity that I felt among the black African Muslims of Nigeria, Sudan and Ghana."

Unity through the worship of One God, unity of all peoples, at all times, and the absence of inflicting harm is the essence of the Muslim assembly at the Hajj. This is the code of the Abrahamic Faith which is incorporated in the message of Prophet Mohammad. Those who frown upon religion and Islam might want to take a second look at this universal providence! Influencers of the world who wish to rid the world of its ills and man-made problems will do well to follow a code that is steeped in formula that are revealed from the Divine Who is the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate.

Aljazeera

G7 Summit and need for a fairer world

Fahrettin Altun

THE current international system that was put in place in the aftermath of the Second World War is struggling to address the many challenges and issues the world is facing today. Driven by the interests and desires of a specific set of states, it is fuelling conflict and hindering peace, stability and prosperity across the globe.

After the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the world has entered a new tumultuous era in which the international community came face to face with a new set of challenges to peace and stability. Modern era necessitates collaboration at both regional and global levels, with a greater involvement of global actors in problem-solving. However, the

Ukraine-Russia war, Israel's attacks on Palestine, and numerous other conflicts highlight the ineffectiveness of international actors in addressing regional issues and their lack of resolve to find solutions. The global influence of international organisations is in decline. This is because these organisations have failed to recognise the nature of the multipolar modern world that began to emerge at the turn of the century. It is important to acknowledge that the international system cannot be shaped solely by a few superpowers and their political and ideological concerns. It is impossible to imagine a world system in which the interests and benefits of certain powers are prioritised at the expense of exploiting other countries and peoples.

International organisations and the countries that dominate them must recognise this reality and adapt their strategies accordingly. The global system that was put in place after the Second World War is on the verge of collapse, yet it seems impossible to create a system that aligns with the modern era.

It is crucial for leading international organisations, initiatives to promptly assume responsibility for constructing a system that aligns with the requirements of the current era. Being an international organisation, the G7 is a group of countries that share common values and principles and strive to promote freedom, democracy, and human rights on a global scale. Given the recent international crises and conflicts, it is necessary to reconsider and discuss the G7's performance in meeting its responsibilities and how its decisions have been received on international platforms.

The G7 does not have the authority to make binding decisions, however, in the current landscape, when even the functions and operations of international organisations – which are supposedly capable of making binding decisions – are being scrutinised, the G7 cannot avoid these questions. The theme of this year's summit, which will be attended by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye, as a special guest, has been set as "rules-based international system." The discussions at the three-day summit, will focus on the defence of the rules-based international system among other pressing issues of our time,

from the Russia-Ukraine war and the conflict in the Middle East, to food security and migration.

The theme of the summit is highly appropriate because these days certain states are blatantly violating the rules, norms and standards the current international order has supposedly been built upon and is guarding.

Despite this theme, it is crucial to underscore the unfortunate reality that certain states in today's world blatantly violate the norms that the international system has adopted and built upon. Israel has slaughtered tens of thousands of innocent people in Gaza in a matter of months, eventually bombing even Rafah, the location it had previously designated as the only "safe zone".

Israel's actions in Gaza and other cities amount to a blatant war crime. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has consistently highlighted the need to put an end to Israel's reckless attacks for months now. As There is a growing global acceptance of the notion that Israel is shielded by the international system rather than being prevented. There is no denying that international actors, especially the G7, have failed to oppose Israel's actions, which disregard all laws, principles, and values. The international system failed to produce a binding call for a ceasefire for many months as Israel slaughtered thousands of women and children. It took repeated mass protests and a powerful uprising of young people at university campuses for the leaders of the G7 to make such a call. The global outcry and revolts against Israel's strikes serve as a stark reminder that those who support Israel will be remembered with deep shame.

These leaders have announced their full support for the ceasefire plan put forward by US President Joe Biden on May 31. However, it is unclear whether this appeal, and the support it has received from the G7, will be able to deter Israel from continuing its war on Palestine. The G7 and other international actors are expected, and required, to do more.

It is essential to restructure this system and devise methods to establish a new framework that prioritises the rights of the oppressed over the interests of the powerful. The dysfunction and silence of the international actors in the crises and conflicts that have been taking place in recent years highlight the significance and relevance of our President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's statements, "The World is Bigger than Five" and "A Fairer World is Possible." He strongly values and supports Türkiye's endeavours for global peace. The leading role Türkiye played in the efforts to secure a ceasefire in the Russia-Ukraine war and to resolve the grain crisis that stemmed from that conflict speaks to this determination. Türkiye remains committed to promoting regional and global peace, stability, and crisis resolution in the face of growing challenges of our times, from irregular migration and climate change to international terrorism, and disrupted supply chains.

PM's diplomatic endeavor: Bolstering Pakistan-China ties

M. Fazal Elahi

AMIDST a period characterized by shifting geopolitical dynamics among major powers and economic adjustments, the significance of diplomatic engagements between nations cannot be overemphasized.

Pakistan recently witnessed a notable development in its foreign relations, as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif embarked on a profoundly important visit to China. This crucial visit was geared towards reaffirming and fortifying the enduring partnership between the two longstanding allies – China and Pakistan, while also exploring new avenues for mutual cooperation and benefit.

Manifestly, Shehbaz Sharif's diplomatic agenda lay the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy – the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). As a groundbreaking effort designed to enhance regional connectivity and foster eco-

nomics development, CPEC symbolizes the depth of the Pakistan-China strategic partnership. The visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to China underscored Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the success and expansion of CPEC, recognizing it as a catalyst for socio-economic growth and development not only in Pakistan but across the entire region.

During his brief yet remarkably productive visit to China, Premier Shehbaz Sharif participated in a series of high-level meetings and discussions with his Chinese counterparts. These engagements focused on bolstering bilateral cooperation across several sectors, spanning from trade and investment to energy and infrastructure. The agenda of these meetings covered a broad spectrum of areas where Pakistan and China could mutually benefit from collaboration. Through strategic dialogues and negotiations, both nations earnestly aimed to strengthen their

economic ties and explore new and potential avenues for partnership in the post-pandemic era.

One of the key highlights of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China was the signing of several bilateral agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between Pakistan and China. These agreements, covering a range of sectors, underscored the commitment of the two friendly nations to boost their economic cooperation and foster inclusive development. From infrastructure projects to technology transfer initiatives, the agreements signed during the visit are set to unlock new opportunities for growth and prosperity in Pakistan.

Additionally, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to the People's Republic of China offered an invaluable chance to enhance people-to-people connections and cultural exchanges

between the two nations. Acknowledging the significance of cultural diplomacy in nurturing mutual understanding and friendship, endeavors were undertaken to encourage heightened cultural awareness and appreciation among Pakistanis and Chinese. Through the organization of cultural events, exhibitions, and academic exchanges, Prime Minister aimed to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the peoples of Pakistan and China.

In addition to bilateral engagements, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit also afforded Pakistan the opportunity to express its sincere gratitude to China for its unwavering support and solidarity, especially during challenging times. Amid the relentless battle against the deadly COVID-19 pandemic worldwide, China stood as a steadfast ally, extending crucial medical assistance to

Pakistan and sharing its expertise in combating the profoundly lethal virus. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif conveyed Pakistan's heartfelt appreciation to China for its generous assistance, reaffirming Pakistan's steadfast commitment to standing by China in times of need.

As PM concluded his visit to China, the undeniable and enduring spirit of friendship and cooperation between the two decades-old allies, Pakistan and China, was indisputable. His visit conspicuously stood as a testament to the longstanding ties and shared aspirations that unite the two nations. Looking forward, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed optimism about the future of Pakistan-China relations. In the pursuit of common goals, he underscored the necessity for continuing collaboration and partnership between the two countries.

Since the establishment of

diplomatic relations between the two nations in May 1951, Pakistan and China have enjoyed exceptionally close and friendly ties. Over the years, this relationship has evolved into an 'All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.' In the history of Pakistan-China relations, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to China will be remembered as a significant milestone, reaffirming the strategic depth and resilience of a partnership that continues to explore new avenues of cooperation and collaboration. As both countries are continuously engaged in navigating the complexities of the contemporary world, the visit signifies the beginning of a fresh chapter in the enduring friendship between Pakistan and China, bolstered by trust, solidarity, and shared aspirations for a brighter future.

The writer is a columnist and analyst based in Islamabad-Pakistan. Email: geniousfazal@hotmail.com

Will Russia’s ‘window to Europe’ be closed for good?

Dr. Diana Galeeva

AMID wonderful sunshine, the “Russian Davos” — the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, which hosted guests from 130 countries — opened last Wednesday. While walking from the Winter Palace toward the monument to Peter I, the so-called Bronze Horseman, in the Senate Square — a monument to a ruler who opened a “window to Europe” — I thought about the irony that, despite having been influenced by a kaleidoscope of Western architectural styles and having become the “Venice of the North,” St. Petersburg now hosts a platform for new ideas on developing the “foundations of a multipolar world,” in which the discussions were on how to open windows to everywhere except Europe.

This was reflected in the main thematic blocks of the forum, including sovereignty in all spheres, deglobalization and the transformation of the global economy, international cooperation, and social priorities in domestic policy and health. This year’s four-day St. Petersburg International Economic Forum was unique for several reasons, reflecting Russia’s current foreign policy, in which the economy clearly plays a key role due to the ongoing sanctions. The window to Europe is closed (at least for now).

First of all, by observing the program, the utilization of smart power — a combination of hard and soft power strategies — can be seen in Russia’s strategic policy. Among more than 200 events, there were sections on economic hard power that were dedicated to the key drivers of economic growth and sustainable development of the country’s internal resources, such as high-quality sub-soil use and the development of tourism and the creative industries. The business reputation index and

data from the National Rating of the Investment Climate in the regions of Russia were also presented.

Furthermore, Russia aims to bring the processes of soft power closer to those of economic hard power by discussing and working on subjects such as “Combining cultures and traditions in contemporary cross-cultural projects.” “The image of the hero: How modern cinema and media respond to the demands of the state and society,” and “Development of infrastructure of cultural facilities as a driver of development of the state’s cultural economy.” Therefore, the first lesson on Russia’s strategic direction is its aim to integrate soft power into hard power in its policies toward so-called friendly states.

Secondly, a great deal of attention was paid to discussing the BRICS economies. Events included: “BRICS goals in the context of the new world order,” “Transition finance: Opening up opportunities for the energy transition in BRICS,” “Development of BRICS cooperation in the diamond industry,” “The role of the BRICS countries in ensuring global food security,” and “Great cultures: New opportunities for the development of creative interaction among the BRICS countries.”

The rationale is clear, as the BRICS countries play a key role in ensuring global food security. They account for more than a third of the world’s food production and produce more than 40 percent of all fertilizers, thanks to which more than 4 billion people are provided with food.

This special focus is not a coincidence, as Russia chairs BRICS this year and hosts both the upcoming forum in October and the affiliated BRICS Games multisport event this month. Therefore, Russia’s multilateral diplomacy must be stressed as, in

addition to BRICS, it seeks strategic economic development through the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Greater Eurasian Partnership in the fields of financial technologies and culture, global food security, intercultural projects and ecology.

Russia has also sought to further boost relations through a “pointed approach” of developing ties with strategic regions and countries, including in the Middle East and North Africa. During last week’s forum, discussions on bilateral relations took place with the UAE, China, Oman and Africa.

An interesting dynamic was that of the active participation of the delegates from Oman. In 2023, the volume of mutual trade between Oman and Russia increased by 60 percent. An agreement was signed last week to prevent double taxation, opening up new opportunities for expanding the trade and investment exchanges between the two countries. The discussions explored which areas of economic and investment cooperation between Russia and Oman are promising, considering the possibility of Russian input into the realization of Oman Vision 2040. The Omani delegates seemed to use soft power techniques in return, bringing to the forum a translated book of Omani proverbs to show its cultural heritage and focusing on similarities between the two countries.

In addition to discussions on further boosting ties in trade, the energy sector, the localization of products, bilateral investments and geological exploration within the context of Oman’s Renaissance 2.0, Muscat also aims to win hearts and minds in Russia with the “Omani Empire: Asia and Africa” exhibition in the State Hermitage Museum in St.

Petersburg, one of the world’s largest and most prestigious museums.

Such discussions on aspects of the global economy lead to broader debates on the current multipolar world and the economic interests manifested there. For example, in discussions on “Philosophy and geopolitics of a multipolar world” and “Architecture of the world order: A view from Russia,” Russia’s views on the concept of the “world majority” were presented and stressed.

However, as one of the high-level speakers noted, a theoretical alternative world order would need to be accepted by all sides, including the so-called collective West. Another speaker emphasized the length of time required for such processes and also that, for one side, the process will end badly. Either Russia and its strategic partners will successfully develop alternative payment and economic systems, logistics and transportation corridors or the existing instruments based on Western interests will continue to be attractive for the “world majority” countries.

This would also be reflected in the balance of power in a multipolar world structure. How the world will look with a multipolar structure remains in the distant future — and how far Russia will reach with its “Russian Davos” remains a mystery.

To continue the metaphor, whether Russia and its inner circle of allies in this confrontation with the collective West will reopen the window to Europe in order to be integrated into Western-based economic instruments or completely shut it remains unclear. What is crystal clear is that the forum’s guests enjoyed the atmosphere of the host city, showing that St. Petersburg, where the annual White Nights Festival has now begun, has a magnetism for investors and businesses alike.

Media must call out Israel’s ban on foreign journalists

Daoud Kuttab

FOR eight long months of its bloody and brutal war in Gaza, Israel has not allowed any international journalists to cover the fighting from the war theater. Hundreds of foreign journalists are accredited in Israel, yet not a single one has been allowed free access. International journalists were told by the foreign minister of Egypt that Israel had threatened that it would cut off humanitarian aid to Palestinians if any of them were allowed in from the Egyptian side.

Meanwhile, Palestinians working for international media outlets from inside Gaza were not immune from the indiscriminate Israeli war machine. According to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists and the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders, the number of Palestinian journalists killed in Gaza has passed 100. Buildings owned by major international media outlets have also been bombed by Israel. In May, Israel closed down Al Jazeera’s local office on the false claim that its reporting constituted a threat to national security.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, “journalists and their equipment enjoy immunity ... as long as they do not take a direct part in the hostilities. News media, even when used for propaganda purposes, enjoy immunity from attack, except when they are used for military purposes.”

Why is the so-called only democracy in the Middle East banning access for journalists? It is not about the safety of foreign journalists. Israel has allowed medical and humanitarian workers into Gaza. Saying that it is for their own protection does not fly when war journalists around the world are familiar with the risks they take and can make their own decisions about when and where to go and how to stay safe. If doctors and food kitchen workers are allowed in (they have also not been spared either), then the simple justification of the ban being for journalists’ own protection does not make sense.

A better understanding of the reasons for the ban on journalists has to do

with the constant aim of Israel and its supporters to control and spin the narrative. Sure, war has its secrets, but the biggest problem in this war has been the repeated accusations of Israel committing war crimes, as it has targeted civilians, hospitals, churches, schools and universities.

Israel claims, without proof, that many of those locations were Hamas “headquarters.” The evidence that the Israeli army presents to the world is worthless in terms of credibility and has been debunked many times by courageous investigative journalists.

But let us imagine if journalists like CNN’s Anderson Cooper, The New York Times’ Nicholas Kristof or the BBC’s Lyse Doucet were at the Shifa Hospital when Israel rolled out the fabricated video claiming that Hamas fighters (they called them terrorists) were using the basement of the building as their headquarters. If any well-known foreign journalist was around, he or she would have easily debunked the claim by simply saying, “I am at the hospital, I have checked it out and the claims are bogus.”

But Israel is not willing to let anyone expose its lies, which are necessary to continue its military efforts aimed at forcing the Palestinian resistance fighters to surrender. How many innocent Palestinian lives would have been saved had Israel allowed foreign journalists into the war theater?

Regardless — and as obvious as Israel’s goal in controlling the narrative is — the complicity of Western media anchors, editors, broadcasters and corporate chiefs should not be overlooked. A simple note or superimposed text should be included every time a report about or from Gaza is broadcast or printed. The note should say: “Israel denied our reporters access to Gaza.” If this message was repeated every single time a story about Gaza was published or broadcast, the so-called only democracy in the Middle East would be forced to give in.

But Western broadcasters and editors are clearly part of the problem, not

part of the solution. If truth is the first victim of war, then the media platforms of America, Europe, Australia and elsewhere are part of the reason for this victimhood of the truth. No wonder there is a chasm today between the young, digitally wired peoples around the world, and especially in the Global North, including university students, and the older generations.

One can get information relatively unfiltered on social media thanks to posts by courageous Palestinian bloggers and journalists. Meanwhile, those depending on legacy media get highly spun narratives with a strong dose of Israeli input, no journalists on the ground and non-Palestinian experts explaining to their generally older audiences how careful Israel is in carrying out this war of revenge that has devastated an entire community in Gaza.

The problem of bias long preceded Oct. 7. When an Israeli sniper shot dead American-Palestinian Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh in May 2022, Israel was able to shun calls for a full investigation and the American government and media, while offering some coverage of the case, let it go after a while. In contrast, Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, who is being held in a Russian jail, is regularly mentioned in media conferences, public events and state dinners. And when Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian was arrested in Iran, Americans kept the pressure on until he was released. Where is the pressure for an investigation into the murder of Abu Akleh? And where are the demands for an explanation of the arrest without trial or charge of 50 West Bank Palestinian journalists and the deaths of more than 100 in Gaza?

To redeem this terrible injustice to the worldwide journalism profession, the corporate media must rise to the occasion and insist on the public’s right to hear first-hand from their own reporters, who should be allowed into Gaza and shielded from the indiscriminate Israeli attacks. Short of that, every report must include the simple but powerful qualifier that the Israeli authorities are preventing international reporters from entering Gaza.

Unpacking Blinken’s lies on Gaza ceasefire negotiations

Mohamad Elmasry

DURING a Wednesday press conference in Doha, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was less than honest about a United States-proposed Gaza ceasefire deal. During the course of his opening remarks and the question and answer session, Blinken made several statements that are either transparently untrue or deeply misleading.

First, Blinken insisted that the three-phased ceasefire deal announced by US President Joe Biden on May 31 was an “Israeli proposal” and that Israel fully backs it. When asked during the question and answer session whether the US was attempting to put pressure on Israel to accept the proposal, Blinken said there was no need to do so because Israel had already accepted it. But Blinken was being untruthful. Biden proposed the deal because he is desperate to get out from under his disastrous Gaza policy before the start of the Democratic National Convention, which is scheduled for August. Biden’s proclamation that it was an “Israeli proposal” simply isn’t true.

In the two weeks since Biden made his announcement, Israeli officials have not come forward and announced their acceptance of the deal. In fact, they’ve done the opposite. Over the past two weeks, Israeli officials have made clear that they oppose the Biden draft proposal. Moreover, Netanyahu and other officials have made clear that Israel intends to continue its war on Gaza, an aim which contradicts the basic terms of Biden’s proposal. On Monday at the United Nations, Israeli representative Reut Shapir Ben-Naftali could not have been clearer about Israel’s position. She said that Israel’s war aims “have not changed” and that the war “will continue ...

until Hamas military and governing capabilities are dismantled”.

She also said that Israel would not “engage in meaningless and endless negotiations” about a permanent ceasefire. Israel’s public positions caused a former top Israeli diplomat, Alon Liel, to proclaim that Israel has “definitely not” accepted the “proposal submitted by the Americans”. Indeed, Israel continues to say it is pursuing the “total victory” it has sought since the start of the war. Although Israel claims “total victory” involves the elimination of Hamas, a more realistic interpretation is that Israel seeks the complete destruction of Gaza and the forced transfer of Palestinians there to Egypt and/or Jordan. In any case, what is clear is that Israel has no intention of honouring phase two of Biden’s agreement, which calls for a permanent end to fighting. Here, the devil is in the details.

The wording in Biden’s proposal gives Israel a way out after phase one. The Biden proposal stipulates that phase two can only be reached upon Israel’s agreement at the end of phase one.

During the press conference, Blinken indicated that the Biden proposal was “virtually identical” to the deal Hamas proposed on May 6. Blinken went on to blame Hamas for being insincere and “continuing to try to change the terms,” including terms that “Hamas had previously accepted”. But all of this is also untrue. First, Hamas’s May 6 proposal was quite different from the Biden proposal. It did not give Israel wiggle room to easily exit the agreement after phase one. Also, and importantly, the Hamas proposal called for an end to Israel’s illegal, suffocating

blockade on Gaza. Blinken said that Hamas had proposed “numerous changes” to Biden’s proposal.

All Hamas did, however, was attempt to move things closer towards its May 6 proposal, which would lead to an actual end to the war. One significant change that Hamas did introduce — an Israeli troop withdrawal — was necessitated by Israel’s taking over of the Philadelphia Corridor on May 30. This is an important fact that Blinken conveniently decided to omit. Third, Blinken said the “whole world” supports the proposal and that Hamas is the only entity to avoid getting behind it. This is highly misleading.

Over the past several months, the US and Israel have rejected and obstructed several serious ceasefire proposals, all of which have been backed by Hamas and the global community. After engaging in this obstruction, the US made its very imperfect proposal on May 31. Countries in the United Nations Security Council voted for it not because it was a great proposal, nor because they thought it was better than previous proposals which they had also voted for.

Several countries made their reservations known on Monday. Russia, China, Malta and Algeria, among other global actors, have expressed their reservations. Blinken’s statement that the “entire world” stands behind the Biden proposal is deeply misleading. Fourth, Blinken blamed Hamas for holding up the ceasefire for 12 days. During his Wednesday remarks, Blinken mentioned the “12 days” — which is the time elapsed between Biden’s announcement and Hamas’s response — a total of five times. Each mention was an attempt

by Blinken to blame Hamas for the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza. For example, Blinken said, “the reality is as this negotiation is going on, during the 12 days that it took Hamas to respond, the world wasn’t standing still. Gaza wasn’t standing still. People were suffering every single day.”

But Blinken is again being untruthful. Biden announced the deal on May 31, but, as Sami Al-Arian and other analysts have noted, didn’t present a written, detailed draft to Hamas until much later. The exact date is unclear, but based on news reports, it appears that as of June 5, Hamas still hadn’t received anything in writing from Biden. It appears they may have finally received a written draft by June 6.

The group responded on June 11. That would mean a five-day gap, not the 12 that Blinken misleadingly claimed. Given the apparently significant discrepancies between what Biden announced on May 31 and what he submitted to Hamas in writing, it is not unusual that Hamas needed five days to respond. In any case, attempting to blame Hamas for Palestinian suffering constitutes another US attempt to shield Israel from blame over its mass killings in Gaza. That Blinken would lie is not surprising. Indeed, in the context of Israel, the Palestinians, and Gaza, the Biden administration has a history of untruths. But the sheer amount of lies that Blinken was able to pack into a short press conference is nonetheless astonishing. Recent diplomatic manoeuvring isn’t likely to end the war on Gaza, but it will serve Biden’s domestic aims. At the end of all this posturing, Biden will be able to tell US voters that he tried his best to end the war but that Hamas didn’t allow him to.

Far right first to shine in Europe’s summer of elections

Luke Coffey

TENS of millions of Europeans went to the polls last week to vote in the European Parliament elections. In all, 720 seats divided between the 27 EU members were up for grabs. Although the European Parliament is the only directly elected EU institution, it also happens to be the one with the least amount of power when compared to the European Commission and the European Council. Even so, European Parliament elections matter because they often set the political tone for the bloc.

Last week’s elections were no different. While the mainstream center-right political grouping in the European Parliament, the European People’s Party, continues to hold the most seats, there was a significant increase in seats for far-right political parties, mostly at the expense of left-wing parties. The outcome of these elections sent political shock waves across some countries in the EU. Meanwhile, the UK, while no longer in the EU, is also experiencing a period of political turmoil.

Perhaps the biggest shock wave resulting from the European elections was the one that hit France. The far-right National Rally party led by Marine Le Pen won the largest number of seats. This rattled French President Emmanuel Macron, who has led a center-left minority government for the last two years. When Macron subsequently called snap elections, which will take place on June 30 and July 7, many were

shocked. The thinking behind Macron’s decision is not clear. He wants to force the French public to make a binary choice between the far right and more mainstream political parties, and he believes an immediate election is the best way to do this. It is one thing to vote for a far-right party in European elections, but voters tend to moderate their preferences in national elections.

Macron is hoping that National Rally’s recent success was a result of protest voting by the French public and not a fundamental realignment of French politics. It is likely that the president believes that a swift defeat of National Rally so soon after its victorious European election results would prevent Le Pen from becoming a serious contender in the 2027 presidential election.

However, this strategy could backfire. The National Rally now has incredible momentum across France at a time when Macron’s popularity remains at an all-time low. Furthermore, the leader of France’s mainstream center-right party, The Republicans, announced that he would join forces with the National Rally if it meant taking power away from Macron. He has since been removed by party officials.

If Macron’s plan does backfire, it could have major implications for France’s role in Europe and NATO, especially as it pertains to important issues like Ukraine. The second place to watch this summer is

Germany. Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s Social Democratic Party came third in the country’s European elections, behind the mainstream center-right Christian Democratic Union and the far-right Alternative for Germany. This was the worst showing for the Social Democrats in a national election in decades.

Unlike Macron, Scholz has said that an early election is not on the table. Ultimately, however, the final decision on this matter may not be his to make. As with France, the European elections were seen as a vote of no-confidence for national governments across Europe, and Germany was no exception. With a coalition government that faced problems even before the vote, the political pressure may build from all sides of German politics to force Scholz into calling an early election.

In the coming weeks, the ruling coalition will try working together to formulate a common budget. This will no doubt place considerable political strain on the coalition and could make snap elections more likely. Germany is Europe’s largest economy and is the primary motor behind EU politics. When Germany goes to the polls, it matters for the whole continent. There is one more important election that will take place this summer in Europe, but not in the EU: the UK. Even though British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called an early election well before the European elections took place, many of the

same factors that impact politics on the continent also impact the UK.

After 14 years in power, it is likely that the Conservative Party will be on its way out when voters go to the polls next month. How big the Labour Party’s majority will be is really the main question at this point. One important factor to watch will be the emergence of the populist Reform UK party in British politics and what role it will play in the election outcome. Due to the country’s electoral system, it will be very difficult for any Reform candidate to win a seat in the House of Commons. However, Conservative Party voters who are disillusioned with the recent direction of the party could be tempted to vote for it as a form of protest. This will likely lead to an even larger Labour Party majority than would have otherwise been the case.

Whether inside or outside the EU, the politics across Europe will remain contentious this summer. With Europe’s three biggest economies either holding elections or possibly doing so, the next few months could set the future direction of the continent for years to come. The uncertainty of the US presidential election this November complicates matters even further. Europe is facing ongoing economic challenges and energy security issues. At the same time, the largest war on the continent since the 1940s is taking place in Ukraine. As Europeans head to the polls this summer, the stakes will be high. Not just for Europe, but the rest of the world too.

Turkish-Syrian reconciliation may be too big a task for Iraq

Sinem Cengiz

ONCE again, Turkish-Syrian reconciliation is on the agenda, this time with Iraq stepping forward to offer mediation. Iraq’s emergence in this role may come as a surprise to some, given its complicated history of turmoil, internal strife, and foreign intervention. But despite these challenges, Iraq is actively seeking to adopt a nuanced approach to regional conflicts, drawing upon its experience and positioning to enable dialogue between conflicting parties.

It has already proved itself in the Saudi-Iranian reconciliation, which was eventually brokered by China but after mediation efforts by Baghdad, which hosted a series of talks between the two regional powers. Additionally, an Iranian official recently confirmed that talks between Iran and Egypt were taking place in Baghdad.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani has expressed his government’s commitment to brokering reconciliation between Ankara and Damascus, recalling his country’s role in the normalization deal between Tehran and Riyadh. “We are trying to create such a foundation for reconciliation and dialogue between Syria and Türkiye. God willing, we will see some steps in this regard soon,” Sudani said, and he was in contact with Syrian President Bashar Assad and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Highlighting the shared security threats from Syria faced by Iraq and Türkiye, Sudani referred to regions not controlled by the Assad regime as a threat. Türkiye shares that perception. Ankara is frustrated by plans by the YPG, which it views as the Syrian branch of the outlawed PKK, to hold elections in northern Syria from Deir Ezzor and Raqqa to Manbij and

Afrin. This is an attempt to trigger tensions in the area that are likely to affect Iraq as well.

The main goal of talks between high-level Turkish, Syrian and Russian officials in 2022 was to eradicate the Kurdish-led autonomous administration in northern Syria. The talks failed after Damascus pressed for the withdrawal of Turkish forces from Syria, which is not an option for Ankara unless the Kurdish threat is eliminated. Its conditions have not changed. Türkiye’s readiness for military withdrawal from Syria is under specific and already known frameworks that include a constitutional amendment, fair elections in Syria, an honorable and safe return of Syrian refugees, and cooperation in the issue of “combating terrorism” linked to the PKK and YPG.

Besides the withdrawal of the Turkish presence in northern Syria, Damascus also consistently requires each meeting to involve Iran, Türkiye, the Assad regime and Russia, aiming for a political solution in Syria based on UN Security Council Resolution 2254 from 2015, which called for a ceasefire and political settlement in Syria, established a roadmap for the country’s political transition, and required free and fair elections within 18 months. Damascus restated this condition to reveal a role for Iraq in achieving reconciliation. However, for both Iran and Russia, Turkish-Syrian reconciliation is not a priority now. For instance, Russia attributed the latest collapse of the normalization steps to the war in Gaza. Since then, the conditions in Gaza have not changed; rather the situation has deteriorated, with increased casualties and destruction. In light of the failure in Russian and Iranian attempts at Turkish-Syrian talks, Iraq has

stepped in. Iraq has an advantage over other regional countries when it comes to Turkish-Syrian reconciliation. Its historical ties with both Türkiye and Syria give it a unique position as a mediator. It is a neighbor to both, and is not isolated from the devastating effects of the Syrian crisis.

Sudani’s mediation offer may have three motivations: First, as a response to Ankara’s recent overtures following Erdogan’s visit to Iraq. Second, Sudani’s desire to illustrate Baghdad’s regional stature and a new foreign policy that seeks to build regional relationships and bridge gaps between conflicting parties. Third, as part of a broader strategy to address security challenges along its borders, related to counterterrorism and refugee management, and fostering a conducive environment for economic cooperation.

Despite Iraq’s proven competence in mediating regional conflicts, achieving significant results in Turkish-Syrian reconciliation and finding common ground between Ankara and Damascus will be challenging. There are divergent interests between Türkiye and Syria, entrenched hostilities, and the involvement of other regional and international actors. Iraq’s mediation attempt may also face skepticism from the US, Russia, Iran, and the Gulf states, which have their own interests and agendas in the region.

The outcome remains uncertain. If a global power is required to play the role taken by China in the Saudi-Iranian deal, Russia would be the only option. Iraq’s mediation attempt is promising, but the road to reconciliation remains fraught with complexities, and the task may be beyond Baghdad’s capacity to resolve independently.

Arab News



FBR to impose 18% sales tax on packaged food items from July

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Amjad Zubair Towana, has announced that an 18% sales tax will be levied on processed and packaged flour, pulses, rice, sugar, and spices starting from the next financial year. This decision was disclosed during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee chaired by Saleem Mandvi Wali. The session, which included notable participants such as Industry Representative Sheikh Waqar Ahmed, also considered a proposal to impose

the same tax on locally produced baby milk. Sheikh Waqar emphasized the need for a gradual increase in the sales tax to avoid a sharp rise in baby milk prices. Chairman FBR highlighted that milk companies have repeatedly raised their prices over the past two years, burdening consumers without contributing to the government's revenue. He noted that these companies have not entered the tax net despite substantial price hikes. Additionally, the complete abolition of zero rating from the next financial year

was confirmed. Zubair pointed out that imported milk is currently sold at twice the price of local milk and reiterated that the new 18% sales tax would be applicable to processed and packaged flour, pulses, rice, sugar, and spices. He challenged companies to reduce their prices by 18% if they wish to be exempted from the tax. This move aims to increase government revenue and bring more businesses into the tax net, ensuring a fair contribution from all sectors.

SECP launches scheme

ISLAMABAD (INP): The SECP has announced a regularization scheme in a bid to address the issue of defaulting companies failing to file returns for extended periods. Effective from June 15, 2024, to September 15, 2024, the scheme allows defaulting companies to rectify their status by filing overdue annual returns, documents, and accounts. However, to avail of this opportunity, companies are required to pay the requisite filing fee. The initiative aims to streamline corporate compliance and encourage timely submission of financial records, ensuring transparency and accountability within the business sector.



DUBAI: CEO SLIC Shoaib Javed Hussain and CEO DI Ahmed Khizer Khan with senior executives from both organizations after signing MOU.

Gold rates decrease by Rs200

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs. 200 and was sold at Rs.241,300 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs.241,500 on previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.171 to Rs.206,876 from Rs.207,047 whereas the prices of 10g 22 karat gold went down to Rs.189,636 from Rs.1689,793 the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver and 10 grams silver remained unchanged at Rs 2750 and Rs2357.68.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$9 to \$2,332 from \$2,323 the Association reported.

Spices prices surge ahead of Eid

MULTAN (INP): Prices of spices have surged heavily ahead of Eid al-Adha, causing concerns among consumers. For instance, the price of black pepper has risen sharply from Rs1600 to Rs2500 per kg.

This increase comes amidst a broader trend of inflation affecting essential commodities even before Eid. Moreover, 'chana daal' has seen a hike of Rs40 per kg, while popular items like gorma masala and tikka masala are now priced at Rs800 per kg.

These developments have exacerbated the financial burdens on the public, prompting calls for government intervention to stabilize prices.

SLIC and DI announce alliance

F.P. Report

DUBAI: The State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC), the leading life and health insurer in Pakistan, has entered into a strategic partnership with Daman Investments (DI) Dubai, a preeminent regional investment firm known for its comprehensive suite of non-banking financial services tailored to institutional clients, corporations, SMEs, and high-net-worth individuals. This new partnership will facilitate the collaborative development of tailored client solutions that align with and support the growth

strategies of both DI and SLIC.

During the event, Shoaib Javed Hussain, CEO of SLIC, stated, "State Life has always been at the forefront in transforming the insurance sector. It is a pleasure to announce the strategic partnership between State Life and Daman Investments which, brings together two leading organizations with a shared vision of enduring financial protection and inclusion of people across all strata of society, with the goal of increasing economic activities.

Ahmed Khizer Khan, CEO of DI stated, "Daman Investments has built a

lasting legacy of delivering world-class investment and growth opportunities to our clients. This partnership with State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan underscores our unwavering commitment to excellence and our strategy of fostering growth through strategic alliances. We are confident that, together, we will provide unparalleled value and innovative solutions to meet the diverse financial needs of our customers. We eagerly anticipate a successful and fruitful collaboration and are excited about the opportunities this partnership will bring."

S&P 500 ends lower

NEW YORK (Reuters): US stocks dipped, gold surged and European stocks suffered their biggest weekly loss of the year on Friday amid cooling economic data, a hawkish Federal Reserve and unfolding political crises in Europe. The dollar gained ground against a basket of world currencies, while the euro saw its largest Friday-to-Friday drop against the dollar in two months.

"(Regarding) the political turmoil over in Europe, we're finally starting to see some signs of contagion," said Michael Green, chief strategist at Simplify Asset Management in Philadelphia. "You're seeing risk metrics getting amped up and people are moving into risk-off assets," Green added. "And you're not just seeing it in the stock market." The S&P 500 and the Dow ended the ses-

sion moderately lower while the tech-heavy Nasdaq eked out a nominal gain to reach its fifth consecutive all-time closing high. The S&P 500 and the Nasdaq advanced on the week, with the latter nabbing its largest weekly percentage gain since late April. The Dow looks to be headed to end the week lower than last Friday's close.

The Fed capped its two-day monetary policy meeting with no change to its key interest rate, as expected. But in its Summary of Economic Projections, the central bank reduced the number of its projected rate cuts this year from three to one, striking a more hawkish than expected tone. The sting was soothed by a series of economic indicators that showed inflation is cooling more quickly than analysts projected, which could convince the data-

dependent Fed to reconsider the timing and number of cuts this year.

"(The Fed is) saying, 'We plan on cutting one time,' right? That was relatively disappointing to investors," Green said. "At the same time, they acknowledged that the inflation progress is encouraging, and the economy is weakening. Investors are dealing with that exact same issue."

Cleveland Fed President Loretta Mester called the recent cooling inflation data "welcome," in the wake of the week's CPI and PPI reports, which came in below analyst expectations, while Chicago Fed President Austan Goolsbee called the data a relief, but added that more progress is needed.

COURT NOTICE

In The Court of Miss Faryal Ayaz Judge Family Court Kohat, Suit no 82/FC Date of hearing 21-06-2024, Titled:- Mst Shazia Bibi Vs Qayyum Khan, Notice against:- (1)Qayyam Khan S/o Raees Khan R/o Kamar Dandad District Kohat (3)Qabas Gul S/o Abdul Saleh R/o Dar Band District Hangu(4)Gul Bat S/o Akbar Khan R/o Malgeen(5)Gul Mar Jan S/o Khalid Khan R/o District Hangu (Defendants no.1,3,4,5) presently R/o(now in Abroad) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a family suit of Dower against you defendants in which date of hearing 21-06-2024 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendants intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 21-06-2024 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 11-06-2024 (Court of J.F.C.Kohat)

COURT NOTICE

In The Court of Fazal Gul ADJ-IV Kohat. Appeal no.CA-50/13 Date of hearing. 24-06-2024, Titled:- Dur e Nayab Vs Asfand yar Ali, Notice against:- (8)Noori Jamshaid Sons of Ikhtlaq Hussain R/o Hassan Abad Shapur District Kohat presently r/o (now in Abroad London UK) (Respondent) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a Appeal against you Respondent in which date of hearing 24-06-2024 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Respondent is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 24-06-2024 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law.order Issued on.03-06-2024(Court of ADJ-IV Kohat)

Six-month E-skills IT training programme concluded



F.P. Report

KASUR: A dynamic six-month E-skills IT training programme on 'SEO - Ecommerce with Social Media Marketing' concluded

recently, benefiting 39 students, including 20 girls and 19 boys. The programme, conducted in partnership with Akhuwat, has already enabled 10 participants to start earning through small-

scale online initiatives, demonstrating its success.

The concluding ceremony was held at Akhuwat College, Kasur, where laptops were distributed to the graduates, equipping them with essential tools for professional growth and financial independence. The event was graced by Mr. Imran Abbasy, MD & CEO of PPL, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib, Founder of Akhuwat, and officials from both organizations.

In his address, Mr. Imran Abbasy congratulated the graduates and expressed hope that the programme would open numerous earning opportunities, facilitating their seamless transition into the workforce. He also distributed certificates and laptops to graduates from

PPL's operational areas in Dera Bugti, Sanghar, and Chakwal districts, as well as Tehsil Gujjar Khan.

With a contribution of Rs. 10 million, PPL's support of the IT training programme underscores its strong commitment to CSR and youth empowerment. PPL continues to lead in CSR initiatives, fostering sustainable community development and empowering individuals towards financial independence, benefiting marginalized communities nationwide with an annual input exceeding Rs 3 billion.

Founded in 2001, Akhuwat provides support through interest-free micro-finance, free education, healthcare, and other socioeconomic measures.

Pakistan's e-commerce expected to cross \$100b by 2030: FCCI SVP

FAISALABAD (APP): Pakistan has been ranked 46th in terms of e-commerce as its business volume has crossed \$ 5.2 billion which is expected to cross \$ 100 bn by 2030.

Addressing a training session organized in collaboration with Trade Development Authority of Pakistan on e-commerce-101, Dr Sajjad Arshad, Senior Vice President (SVP) Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), said that it could play a key role in arresting unemployment in

the country.

It is more suitable for young educated girls who could achieve economic empowerment by efficiently utilizing e-commerce in addition to earning sustenance for their families and contributing their role in the economic stability of Pakistan, he added.

He mentioned his visit to Ethiopia and said that its Prime Minister has revolutionized its economy by weeding out the traditional system of bureaucracy. Pakistan should also focus

on nation building to put the country on the road to progress and prosperity, he added.

He thanked TDAP for selecting the FCCI for organizing the important session on e-commerce and assured to provide free space for similar events in future. He said that training sessions on e-commerce should be arranged on a monthly basis to provide skills to the maximum number of youths to enter into the arena of e-commerce. Persons linked with

e-commerce could have connectivity across the globe with the minimum input cost as there was no need of traditional shops, human resource and direct person to person contacts, he added.

He also termed e-commerce a noble cause as it could provide jobs to the educated youth and the persons involved in this endeavor must earn blessings of Allah Almighty. The FCCI would also acknowledge their contributions, he added.

Govt urged to revisit numerous budgetary measures

KARACHI (PPI): The Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI), while identifying several anomalies in the Federal Budget 2024, highlighted that the Budget appears to have been prepared in the standard template of IMF, disappointing both the business community and working classes of Pakistan. Obviously, the limited fiscal space and debt obligations left little room for the Finance Ministry and FBR to come up with significant relief for trade and industry in particular and public in general.

It is of deep concern for trade and industry based in Karachi that a major part of the budget proposals for FY2024-25 compiled painstakingly by the Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry were not included in the Finance Bill 2024 presented by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb in the parliament.

The proposed shift from 1 percent turnover-based Final Tax Regime (FTR) to the standard taxation at 29 percent of taxable profit, would prove to be disastrous for the exports, hence, this proposal to remove exports from FTR must be dropped from the Finance Bill 2024 to prevent further deterioration of trade deficit and resulting pressure on foreign exchange reserves.

KCCI also mentioned that the Finance Bill 2024's proposal to eliminate zero-rating on local supplies under the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) will have significant adverse effects. Removal of zero-rating on local supplies to registered exporters will compel the exporters to claim refunds of Sales Tax from FBR which is a lengthy process which is

contrary to the spirit of EFS.

"Historically, the FTR provided transparent mechanism for taxing export proceeds by levying 1% Fixed WHT. Its removal may result in exporters being subjected to super tax, which was previously not applicable under the FTR", KCCI added that this particular measure has been proposed not with an intention to enhance revenue but to open up the possibility of harassment and corruption. Had there been the intention to enhance revenue, Fixed rate of 1% WHT could be enhanced to 1.25% or 1.5% rather than creating complications in compliance.

KCCI expressed the apprehension that the definition of fraud has been changed, enabling the officials to seek records of up to 15 years to prove innocence in case of any allegation of fraud which would not be possible to comply as under the previous definition, taxpayers have been maintaining records for a maximum period of 6 years so they will not be in a position to produce records older than six years. Hence, KCCI demanded that the new definition of fraud, which was yet another discretionary power, should be withdrawn and the officers should only be allowed to seek explanation or take any action strictly as per previous definition.

KCCI further stated that the tax rate for salaried individuals remains capped at 35 percent, whereas non-salaried individuals, non-corporate sector, SMEs and AOPs will see an increase from 35 percent to 45 percent. "This introduces a horizontal inequity, as it places a disproportionate tax burden on non-salaried individuals compared to

their salaried counterparts", KCCI added while underscoring the need for careful removal of such discrepancies before approval the Finance Act. The decision to raise tax rate up to 45 percent would encourage substantial number of individuals and AOPs to exit from tax net. Current threshold of Rs.600,000 has largely affected non-salaried class such as small shopkeepers, traders and SMEs forcing them to become non-filers. KCCI is of the view that threshold of taxable income should be raised from Rs.600,000 to income exceeding Rs.1.0 million, in view of high inflation and increase in cost of living.

KCCI further stated that extraordinary powers have been conferred to FBR officials through investigative audit which would open up a floodgate of corruption. The newly added concept of "Investigative Audit" under Section 25 of the Sales Tax Act, 1990, aims to address tax fraud but increases regulatory burdens and the risk of misinterpretation, leading to frequent audits based on vague suspicions. The FBR can now conduct investigative audits if it suspects tax fraud, even with the assistant commissioner's approval. This raises concerns about potential misuse and coercion by tax authorities, fostering an environment of uncertainty and fear that will defeat the efforts to broaden tax base and discourage new investment in such anti-business environment.

KCCI further stated that the budgetary measures lack government's plans for bringing down the exorbitantly high government expenditures which were being financed through borrowings from domestic

banks, creating an unbearable burden of interest payments of trillions of rupees against the domestic debt, particularly in a situation when the key interest rate stood at 22.5 percent.

KCCI pointed out that no concrete relief measures have been provided to businesses, such as super tax reductions, minimum turnover tax adjustments, or further tax reductions. These factors contribute to the overall cost of doing business and have a dampening effect on investment. This is especially concerning given the decline in investment to GDP ratio to 13.4 percent as per latest Economic Survey.

KCCI noted that the shortfall in last year's tax collections by Rs2,152.5 billion casts doubt on the ambitious projection of achieving a 40 percent increase in the tax revenue for FY25. KCCI was of the view that without essential tax reforms, rationalization and reforms of energy sector and doing away with exemptions to PATA/FATA and AJK, stated objectives of the Budget proposals 2024-25 and revenue targets appear to be a far-fetched idea.

KCCI further stated that Debt servicing was projected to consume 94.2 percent of the federal net revenue for the upcoming year, implying that virtually all other government expenditures, including defense, pensions, and civil administration, will likely be financed through increased borrowing, predominantly from external sources. Current volume of domestic debt has reached an alarming level of 85 percent from commercial bank which has made it impossible for SMEs to avail business financing from banks.



In brief

PU team wins 1st PCB tournament

LAHORE (APP): Punjab University Women Cricket Team on Saturday won the title of the 1st PCB University Cricket Tournament held at COMSAT University here. Teams from four regions participated in the competitions, in which the PU's Women Cricket Team remained undefeated. PU Director Sports Muhammad Zubair Butt congratulated the women players on this wonderful achievement.

Baseball C'ship from June 30

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 25th National Men's Baseball Championship would kick off from June 30 in Rawalpindi. All provincial teams and affiliated units including Balochistan, K.P. Sindh, Punjab, Islamabad, Army, Wapda, Police and HEC will participate. According to Secretary General Pakistan Federation Baseball Syed Fakhar Ali Shah, all provincial teams and affiliated units including Balochistan, K.P. Punjab, Sindh, Islamabad, Pakistan Army, Wapda, Police and HEC would participate in the championship. He said the names of Organizing Secretary, Coordinator, Chairman Technical Committee, Media Coordinator and other members of organizing committee would be announced later. "The championship is expected to showcase the best of baseball talent from across the country," he said. Shah said the organizing committee was working hard to ensure a successful and memorable event. "Pakistan Federation Baseball has sent a letter to all the participating units announcing the organization of the 25th National Men's Baseball Championship, in response to which all the teams and units have started their preparations and training for the event," he said.

Millwall goalkeeper Sarkic dies aged 26

LONDON (AFP): Montenegro and Millwall goalkeeper Matija Sarkic has died at the age of 26, his club and national football association announced on Saturday. The Montenegro Football Association said he "died suddenly early this morning", calling him a "beloved member of the 'Brave Falcons', an eternally smiling guy." Grimshy-born Sarkic played nine times for Montenegro. He made his debut against Belarus in 2019 and started in goal in a friendly against Belgium on June 5. His twin brother Oliver is a midfielder with Montenegrin champions Decic Tuzi. He started his club career in the youth academy at Anderlecht before moving to Aston Villa in 2015. He had loan spells at Wigan, Stratford and Havant & Waterlooville in England, and Livingston in Scotland, before joining Wolves in 2020. After further loan spells at Shrewsbury, Birmingham and Stoke, he moved to Millwall. "Millwall Football Club is completely devastated to announce that Matija Sarkic has passed away at the age of 26," his English Championship club said in a statement. "Sarkic, The Lions' number one goalkeeper, made 33 appearances for the club since joining from Wolverhampton Wanderers in August 2023." "Everyone at the club sends their love and condolences to Matija's family and friends at this immensely sad time." The Montenegro football federation echoed the sentiment.

South Africa survive Nepal scare as NZ thrash Uganda

KINGSTOWN (Agencies): South Africa needed a dramatic late turnaround to beat Nepal by one run in a nail-biting T20 World Cup encounter.

Needing two to win from the last ball, or one to force a super over, Nepal's Gulsan Jha was run out trying to run a single to the wicketkeeper.

In a remarkable finale, Jha missed a short ball from Ott Niel Baartman and started running, the throw from keeper Quinton de Kock deflected off the batter's back to Heinrich Klaasen and the fielder threw down the stumps.

After restricting South Africa to 115-7 in Kingstown, Nepal were well on their way to a victory that would have kept their Super 8s hopes alive.

However, Tabraiz Shamsi (4-19) struck twice in a game-changing 18th over and Baartman defended seven runs in the last as the Proteas maintained their 100% record in the tournament to eliminate a heartbroken Nepal.

Meanwhile, New Zealand earned their first win of the competition with a nine-wicket demolition of Uganda in Trinidad.

Tim Southee took 3-4 as the already-eliminated Black Caps skittled Uganda for 40 before knocking off the runs in 5.2 overs.

Shamsi denies Nepal

famous win

The spinners came to the fore on a slow, turning track in St Vincent and for much of the game it seemed that the Nepal bowlers would be the match-winners. They kept a powerful South Africa batting unit under control throughout with wrist-spinner Kushal Bhurtel (4-19) the standout and Dipendra Singh Airee taking 3-21 with his off-breaks.

Reeza Hendricks top-scored with 43 but with the Nepal bowlers on top, it took a cameo from Tristan Stubbs (27* off 18 balls) to give the Proteas an ultimately vital late boost.

"You have to give Nepal a lot of credit, throughout the game they put us under a lot of pressure and it shows the quality they have," said South Africa captain Aiden Markram.

Nepal began their chase well, got through the power-play unscathed and even when Shamsi claimed two wickets in the eighth over, they calmly pressed on. A 50-run stand between Aasif Sheikh and Anil Sah was broken by Markram in the 14th over but with just 30 more needed, Nepal remained on track for victory.

But when Shamsi had Singh Airee caught behind down the leg side before bowling Aasif for 42 to leave Nepal 100-5, the nerves set in. Nepal still whittled it down to eight to

win from the last over, seven for the super over, and that became two from two balls.

Baartman came through for South Africa, though, and they clung on for the narrowest of victories.

"Definitely relieved," said Shamsi. "The team is standing up to the pressure and that's great to see."

Nepal captain Rohit Paudel added: "I'm very proud of the unit, the way we bowled and batted."

"We were very close but a little far."

New Zealand off the mark with quick win

New Zealand's exit from the tournament had been confirmed late on Thursday but Kane Williamson's side responded with an emphatic win over Uganda.

The Black Caps were on top from the first over as Trent Boult took two wickets in two balls and Uganda soon slumped to 15-5 at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy. Kenneth Waiswa made 11 and was the only Uganda batter to reach double figures, while no Kiwi bowler conceded more than nine.

After wickets in successive balls from Southee in the 18th over, Mitchell Santner wrapped up the innings in the 19th. Devon Conway then made an unbeaten 22 from 15 balls as New Zealand completed the win in barely a quarter of their allotted overs.

Former cricketers react after Pakistan's T20 WC exit

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former champions Pakistan were knocked out of the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 after the all-important fixture between co-host USA and Ireland was washed out in Florida yesterday.

The USA, playing their first-ever T20 World Cup, qualified for the Super 8 stage of the tournament as they shared points with Ireland due to washout.

Besides Pakistan, Ireland have also been eliminated from the Super 8s stage.

The USA finished the group stage with five points in four matches. Whereas, Pakistan could attain a maximum of four points if they manage to beat Ireland in their last group fixture, scheduled on June 16.

Pakistan's early exit from the 20-team tournament shook the world, prompting reactions on social media from cricketers and analysts from across the globe.

The former England captain took to his official X (formerly Twitter) account and shared his opinion on the USA's qualification as well as Pakistan's ouster.

"USA through to the Super 8s ... Cricket is going to catch on in the

States... !! Pakistan are out ... at the moment they are a long way off being a good white-ball side," Vaughan posted.

Meanwhile, the former Pakistan off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq expressed his disappointment over the Green Shirts' performance.

"It's very saddening, heartbreaking, and embarrassing to watch Pakistan Team exit from the super 8 of the T20 World Cup tournament. I really believe that we need to put Pakistan first before we take any actions and decisions and we should all reflect on each mistake we made, as individuals and collectively," Mushtaq posted.

On the other hand, former Indian batsman Wasim Jaffer expressed his opinion that Pakistan's exit from the tournament was due to their own shortcomings, not because of rain in Florida.

"Contrary to popular belief, Pakistan didn't get knocked out because USA v IRE got rained off. They got knocked out because Pakistan lost to the USA," Jaffer posted.

Former Pakistan wicket-keeper batter Kamran Akmal stated the fact that the Green Shirts played below par average, resulting in their elimination.

"It is really very disappointing and sad that Pakistan team could not reach to the Super Eight, but it is also a bitter fact that Pakistan team played below the average cricket. Now it's time to rectify the problems," Akmal posted.

Pakistan had a disastrous start to their T20 World Cup 2024 campaign as they suffered a shocking defeat at the hands of the USA in the Super Over.

The Green Shirts then succumbed to a frustrating six-run defeat against arch-rivals India in a blockbuster clash, that took place at a jam-packed Nassau County International Cricket Stadium on June 9.

The former champions then finally got on the winning track when they registered a hard-fought seven-wicket victory over Canada, who lost all three matches they have played thus far.

Pakistan Squad for T20 World Cup 2024: Babar Azam (c), Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Usman Khan.

Messi and Martinez score twice in Argentina win



MARYLAND (Agencies): Lionel Messi and Lautaro Martinez both scored twice as Argentina beat Guatemala 4-1 in their final Copa America warm-up game in Maryland.

Argentina were given an early scare when an own goal after four minutes by Manchester United's Lisandro Martinez put Guatemala ahead - their first ever goal against the reigning World Cup and Copa America champions.

But Messi equalised eight minutes later when keeper Nicholas Hagen cleared the ball straight into

his path and the Argentina captain scored into an empty net. Lautaro Martinez, who finished as Serie A's top scorer last season, put Argentina ahead with a 39th-minute penalty and the Inter Milan star scored his second from a Messi pass after the break.

"We are aiming for the title, we are fighting for everything," he told TyC Sports. "We said it when the Copa America ended in 2021 and when the World Cup ended, we will try to prepare ourselves to start the Copa America in the best possible way and

hopefully it will be all joy."

Messi claimed his second in the 77th minute after a superb pass from substitute Angel di Maria. The tournament runs in the United States from 20 June to 14 July, with coach Lionel Scaloni's side starting their campaign against Canada on Thursday before group games against Chile and Peru. "We're going to keep trying to do our best, we still want to keep winning titles," added Messi. "It will be harder and harder, the games are getting tougher, winning [the Copa] again is hard, but we will try again."



LAUDERHILL: India coach Rahul Dravid has a chat with his players.

Trent Boult calls T20 World Cup 2024 'his last'

NEW YORK (Agencies): Veteran pacer Trent Boult has confirmed that the T20 World Cup 2024 will be his final appearance for New Zealand in the marquee tournament.

Since his debut in 2011, the left-handed pacer has been a key member of the BlackCaps' golden generation, participating in multiple finals across all three formats for New Zealand.

One of the best exports of new-ball swing from his country, Trent Boult has picked up 81 wickets in 60 matches in the T20I format at an economy of 7.76. He was NZ's leading wicket-taker in the 2014 and 2021 editions of T20 World Cups.

"Speaking on behalf of myself, this will be my last T20 World Cup," stated Boult, following his two for seven in a dead rubber T20 World Cup 2024 fixture against Uganda.

Whether Boult will continue to play for New Zealand in any capacity remains uncertain as he had opted out of a central contract in 2022, choosing to play T20 franchise cricket around the world instead.

Despite the huge win against Uganda and a game left in hand, New Zealand have already been eliminated from the race to Super Eight of T20 World Cup 2024 with Afghanistan and West Indies clinching the two spots from Group C.

The Blackcaps began their campaign with a 84-run loss against Afghanistan. They then lost to co-host the West Indies by 13 runs. This is the first time New Zealand have failed to reach the semi-finals of a white-ball ICC World Cup since 2014.

"I think T20 cricket anything can happen. We're devastated to not qualify. We've been outplayed earlier in the tournament and, we haven't qualified for good reason so it's unfortunate but that's how T20 cricket goes," Boult said.

Britain's Raducanu into first semi-final since 2022

LONDON (AFP): Former US Open champion Emma Raducanu has reached her first semi-final since 2022 after Fran Jones withdrew from their quarter-final in Nottingham on Saturday.

Raducanu, the first qualifier to win a Grand Slam singles title when she triumphed in New York in 2021, was set to face Jones in the last eight of the grass-court Nottingham Open. But her fellow Briton withdrew because of a shoulder injury.

Raducanu, 21, will now face defending champion Katie Boulter in another all-British clash later on Saturday in the last four of this warm-up event for Wimbledon.

Jones was all set to play Raducanu, the first British woman to win a Grand Slam singles titles since 1977, on Friday before rain forced play to be abandoned for the day. Jones then declared herself unfit on Saturday.

"Unfortunately today

India and Canada game washed out in Florida

LAUDERHILL (Agencies): The T20 World Cup's Florida-based matches continued to be blighted by bad weather as India's game with Canada was abandoned without a ball being bowled.

All three matches scheduled for Lauderdale have now fallen to the elements, with the ground suffering the effects of heavy rainfall over the last week.

The abandonment has no effect on the outcome of Group A, with India already qualified for the Super 8s and eliminated Canada's tournament now at an end. India's next match will be in the second stage on Thursday against Afghanistan, while Lauderdale is due to stage its final match, Pakistan against Ireland, on Sunday.

Yasir clinches silver medal in Asian Throwing C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Talented Pakistani athlete Muhammad Yasir has secured a silver medal in the 2nd Asian Throwing Championship held in Korea.

Yasir threw an impressive 78.10 meters, finishing second behind Sri Lanka's top player, who achieved a throw of 85.45 meters, said a press release.

Another Sri Lankan ath-

lete took third place with a throw of 77.57 meters, while a Japanese athlete finished fourth with a throw of 77.25 meters.

The championship, which took place in Korea, brought together athletes from various Asian countries.

The Pakistan Athletics Federation (PAF) has expressed pride and congratulated Yasir and his

coach, Syed Fayaz Hussain Bukhari, for this outstanding achievement.

PAF President Brig (R) Wajahat Hussain and Secretary General Col (R) Shahjahan Mir praised the duo's dedication and hard work.

Yasir and Bukhari are scheduled to return home on June 18 and will be accorded a warm welcome at the airport.

Arshad Nadeem to compete in Diamond League events

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant development, Pakistani athlete Arshad Nadeem has been granted a long-term multiple entry visa for the Schengen region, courtesy of the efforts of the Pakistan Athletics Federation (PAF).

This will enable Nadeem to participate in the Diamond League events in Finland and France, paving the way for his journey to

the Olympics.

The PAF, in collaboration with Major General (R) Muhammad Akram Sahi, Vice President of the Asian Athletics Federation, played a crucial role in facilitating the visa issuance, said a press release.

Sahi had appealed to his counterparts in European Federations and World Athletics, seeking support for Arshad's training and

competition endeavours abroad.

With this visa, Nadeem will now have the opportunity to train abroad, compete in all European competitions, including the Olympics, and showcase his talent on the global stage.

This achievement is due to PAF's dedication to promoting athletics in Pakistan and supporting its athletes in achieving their goals.

IOC issues first list of Russians and Belarusians eligible for Olympics

LAUSANNE (AFP): A total of 14 Russian and 11 Belarusian athletes were included on Saturday by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on an initial list of "Individual Neutral Athletes" (AINs) eligible to compete in the Paris Games.

The athletes had to qualify for the Games and pass a double check, first by the international sports federations and then by the IOC, to prove they did not actively support the war in Ukraine or have any links with their countries' armies.

The athletes named on Saturday compete in four disciplines.

Sixteen are wrestlers. The IOC has also approved two weightlifters, three trampolines gymnasts and four road cyclists, including Aleksandr Vlasov, who was fourth in the 2021 Giro.

"Our cyclists passed the 'test'," Vyacheslav Ekimov, the President of the Russian Cycling Federation told Russia's state-run TASS news agency.

"The IOC allowed us to

the Olympics, although I did not expect a different development. As for Vlasov, despite all his past statements, I think he will participate in the Olympics. And with great pleasure," Ekimov said.

The President of the Russian Trampoline Federation, Nikolai Makarov told TASS he was not entirely happy. "The fact that the IOC has decided to admit Angela Bladtseva to the Olympics is very good news," he said.

"But I don't understand why another one of our contenders for the only ticket - Yana Lebedeva - is not on the list. I hope that her name will be on the next list."

Saturday's IOC statement also listed taekwondo, but that section included no names.

"It is absolutely true - none of our taekwondists will perform at the Olympic Games in Paris," Vadim Ivanov, Russia's taekwondo head coach told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

After initially banning the two countries' athletes from world sport follow-

ing Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the IOC adjusted their regulations to allow their participation, under a neutral banner, subject to strict conditions and excluding team events.

Last March, the IOC said it was expecting 36 Russians and 22 Belarusians at the Paris Games "according to the most probable scenario", and a "maximum" of 55 and 28 respectively.

That would be far fewer than the 330 Russians and 104 Belarusians that took part in the last Games in Tokyo in 2021.

The IOC will update its list as the final qualifying results come in.

There will be no track and field athletes. World Athletics has banned all Russians and Belarusians.

Other sports have reinstated them so late that their presence is uncertain.

Opening ceremony On Friday, Yuliya Efimova, who has three Olympic breaststroke medals, became the first Russian swimmer to be granted neutral status for the Games although she has not yet swum a quali-

fying time. She also said she did not yet have a visa to travel to France.

While Moscow has finally decided not to boycott the Paris Games, some athletes may opt to. Russia's gymnasts have said they will refuse to take part.

The neutral athletes will neither take part in the opening ceremony on the Seine nor appear in the official medal table.

In March, the IOC awarded them a dedicated flag, stamped with the letters "AIN" on an apple-green background, as well as a short composition without words, which will serve as their anthem if they win an Olympic title.

At the same time, the IOC set up the Individual Neutral Athlete Eligibility Review Panel (AINERP) to help decide which athletes to invite.

The expert panel "has been able to benefit from new information from various sources, in particular official lists of athletes affiliated to sports clubs of the armed and security forces, published on official websites in Russia and Belarus", said the IOC.



In brief

IRSA releases 305,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 305,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 281,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1444.83 feet and was 46.83 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 117,300 cusecs and 120,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1182.45 feet, which was 134.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 44,000 cusecs and 65,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 159,900, 153,500, 104,000 and 48,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 81,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 12,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Four killed in road mishap

ISLAMABAD (APP): A speeding truck hits a rickshaw killing four persons and nine were injured including children on Saturday. According to private news channel, the local police said that the road accident took place near Murad Khoso village of Khairpur Nathanshah at Indus Highway. "The victims of the traffic mishap were returning to home after visiting a shrine," police officials said. The dead bodies and injured were shifted to the nearby hospital whereas the suspect driver managed to flee the spot of the incident.

ANF recovers 182 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover over 182 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters' spokesman here on Saturday. He informed that 4 kg ice was recovered from the parcel sent to Kenya from a cargo office in Rawalpindi. 88.8 kg hashish and 700 grams opium were recovered from the possession of an accused arrested in Khushab. 22.8 kg hashish and 2 kg opium were recovered from the possession of an accused along with two women netted near M-1 Motorway Islamabad. 22.8 kg opium, 19.2 kg hashish and 500 grams ice were recovered from two suspects arrested in Johar Town Lahore. 21.6 kg hashish was recovered from a rickshaw in Quetta while an accused was also arrested during the operation. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

CDA helpline to empower citizens

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has established a helpline and WhatsApp contact for residents to report issues regarding cleanliness in the federal capital. According to the spokesperson, citizens can send their messages to the number 0335-5001213 through What's App Message or SMS. Citizens can send messages via WhatsApp or SMS to the number 0335 5001213. Citizens can call the sanitation helpline numbers 1334 or 9213908, and also contact 9203216, 9211555, or 9223171 to report issues or complaints related to urban sanitation.



RAWALPINDI: People arriving at Railway station depart their hometowns to spend Eid ul Azha holidays with their loved ones. —APP Photo

Over Rs 5bn approved fixed for development projects in NA-53

RAWALPINDI (APP): The government has approved Rs. 5 billion 5 crore and 28 lac for the construction and repair of roads in Rawalpindi's constituency NA-53 including the mega remodelling project of Kachehri which will get 2 billion rupees.

Rs.1.5 billion have been allocated for the Adiala Road Flyover which is the second much-needed project of Rawalpindi, whereas Rs. 20 crores will be spent for the completion of Mahota-Mohra Dam. Talking to APP here on Saturday, Member National Assembly (MNA) and Chairman Coordination Committee, Eng. Raja Qamar ul Islam shared details of development schemes for his constituency approved in the budget for the financial year 2024-25. He informed that Rs.5 crores for Rescue 1122 and Rs.1.34 crore for completion of Girls College Jhata Hatial will be sanctioned.

He stated that many mega projects of NA 53 have been approved in the budget. With a cost of 2 billion

rupees, the road from Khawaja Corporation to Gorakhpur is being constructed and broadened, along with the construction of a flyover at Khawaj Corporation at 1.5 billion rupees has also been approved to address severe rush, he said adding that the project would facilitate the residents and travellers of Chontra, Rawat, Dhamman, Kaliyal, Dhamial, Adiala and Gorakhpur areas.

Construction of the road from Chakri Adda to Haryanwala via Bilawal Adda for Rs. 35 crores will be released in this financial year, he informed. He said that a grant of Rs 6.2 million has been approved for the construction of Chakri-Dhadambar road which will be completed within the same financial year. Similarly, he said that 10.35 rupees will be spent on the Harka-Basali road, Rs. 5.5 crore will be spent on outstanding work on Kararr Road.

Another important road connecting Chakri road with Adiala areas

through Jarar camp-Kachi Jorian will be constructed at Rs. 21 crore. Although only one crore three million will be released for it this year, but in view of its importance, every effort will be made to complete it by releasing more funds in this financial year, he said. The Jorian-Chakri Road construction will be done separately for which Rs. 27 crore have been allocated. Apart from this, the Moorat Road from Main Chakri Road will also be completed with funds of Rs.5 crores.

Eng Qamar said that the Chakri-Jorian Road project was kept under MNA funds but from now onwards the project would be a part of the mega projects. He further informed that little funds of Rs. 2 crore only were available currently but more funds would be obtained for the Jorian-Chakri and Kuchi Jorian-Jarar Camp Roads. The complete release of Chuck Beley Bypass will be completed same year with the cost of Rs. 4.84 crore, he said.

RDA enforcement squad takes action against Century Town

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Enforcement Squad taking action in accordance with the law against illegal housing schemes conducted an operation against Century Town, an illegal housing society located in Mouza Bagga Sheikh Khan and demolished infrastructure.

According to an RDA spokesman, the Task Force formed on the directives of the Divisional Intelligence Committee had accelerated its operations against illegal housing schemes.

The operation was conducted against Century Town as despite the notice to stop illegal advertisements,

booking of the plots, and development work, the owners of the housing scheme continued to operate booking offices in violation of the regulations.

The operation team included officials from the RDA and cops from Police Station Rawat. Key team members included Shiza Butt, Assistant Director Planning RDA, along with RDA Scheme/Building Inspectors and other team members.

The spokesman informed that the operation was conducted on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Muhammad Abdul Aamer Khattak under the supervision of Director General

(DG) RDA Kinza Murtaza, Additional DG RDA, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, and City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi.

DG RDA Kinza Murtaza said that on the orders of the Commissioner, the crackdown against illegal housing societies would continue and strict action would be taken without any discrimination against the rules violators. She advised the citizens not to invest in illegal housing schemes. The citizens can visit the RDA website, www.rda.gop.pk or the RDA office to get information about legal and illegal housing societies.



RAWALPINDI: Worker busy cleaning garbage with the help of machine from 'Nullah Lai' before monsoon season. —APP Photo

Prices of sacrificial animals see sharp increase

RAWALPINDI (APP): With just one day left until Eid ul Azha, the prices of sacrificial animals have increased sharply as the purchasing process has gained momentum ahead of Eid.

The traders as well as buyers at cattle sale points have also expressed concern over the high cost of the animals as well as transportation charges.

Cattle traders usually come to Rawalpindi from other parts of the district like Chakwal, Fateh jang, Talagang, Attock, Taxila, Gujar Khan and other cities. People were visiting animal markets to buy or see suitable animals but most of the buyers looked disappointed upon observing the high prices of animals which they said were beyond what they could afford.

The prices of the sacrificial

animals have further increased this year as compared to last year owing to an increase in transportation charges and other associated expenses. Due to the high prices of the sacrificial animals, most people are giving preference to the collective Qurbani ritual instead of sacrificing animals individually on Eid ul Azha.

The residents of various localities have arranged for combined sacrifices with the cooperation of various religious and social organizations including local madrassas and mosques. A large number of people have also arranged for combined qurbani with their relatives and friends.

The prevailing economic crunch leading to limited incomes and livelihood amid steady increases in animal prices

in recent years has led to the trend of collective sacrifices, citizen Nadeem said.

Rawalpindi district administration had set up temporary cattle markets at 11 different places in the district in connection with Eid ul Azha. According to a district administration spokesman, five cattle markets were established in Rawalpindi city, two in Gujar Khan, two in Taxila and one each in Kallar Syedan and Kahuta.

The district administration had also issued a notification imposing a ban on the open sale of sacrificial animals. Assistant Commissioners, Chief Officer Municipal Corporations concerned had been directed to supervise the cattle markets.

According to the spokesman, no one is being allowed to set up a market for sacrificial animals

in city areas.

He said that special teams had been formed to take action against the violators, besides imposing fines and confiscating their animals. Like last year, he said that the sellers of sacrificial animals are not being allowed to enter the city in a bid to keep the city clean.

Earlier, the Rawalpindi Metropolitan Corporation, the Rawalpindi and Chaklala Cantonment Boards had banned the sale of sacrificial animals on stalls or streets ahead of Eid ul Azha. However, the authorities concerned have failed to enforce the ban on the sale of sacrificial animals on roads, streets and markets as several roads of Rawalpindi city and Cantonment areas have been turned into cattle markets.

Naqvi visits Frontier Constabulary's Fort in Shabqadar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the historic Fort of the Frontier Constabulary in Shabqadar and conducted a detailed inspection of the said fort which was built in 1813.

The minister showed keen interest in the ancient parts of the fort and the chained gates. Apart from this, the minister also saw the statue of former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the rest house which was built in 1837.

It is worth mentioning that Winston Churchill stayed in that rest house in

September 1897. During the reign of Ranjit Singh, the fort was built by Toota Ram, a skilled architect, and named Shankar Garh.

In 1839, the Mahmood tribe attacked Shankar Garh Fort and entered the fort by breaking the gates. Ranjit Singh's son, Sher Singh, conducted an inquiry about the broken gates which was headed by a French general. As a result of the inquiry, the gates were sentenced to be chained for 100 years in 1840. Even after 184 years, the gates remain chained.

Mohsin Naqvi praised

the historical significance of the fort and commended it. He highlighted that FC has rendered invaluable services towards maintaining peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that FC has written stories of bravery in the war against terrorism and the nation is proud of its brave soldiers.

Commandant FC Moazzam Jah Ansari briefed the interior minister about the historical background of the fort and chained gates. Later, Minister Mohsin Naqvi recorded his comments in the visitors' book.

3,000 armed policemen to be deployed for Eid ul Azha

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police on Saturday have finalized a comprehensive security plan for Eid-ul-Azha. Around 3,000 armed policemen will be deployed outside mosques, imambargahs and open places to ensure the safety of worshippers. To manage traffic during the celebrations, over 700 traffic police officers and traffic wardens will be on duty to maintain traffic flow.

Additionally, 21 special

pickets have been set up across the city to prevent one-wheeling, with more than 200 officers assigned to this task. More than 130 officers will be assigned at parks and other public places, while over 260 officers will be on duty at cemeteries to ensure the safety of visitors. The security plan includes personnel from the police force, elite force, ladies police, dolphin force, and the security squad.

The patrolling police

will carry out security duty on Chand Raat and during Eid days. SSP Operations, Flight Lieutenant (retd) Hafiz Kamran Asghar, stated that all necessary measures are being taken to ensure foolproof security.

City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani emphasized that the safety of citizens the top priority, and all available resources are being utilized for this purpose.

CTP finalises traffic plan for tourists visiting Murree

RAWALPINDI (APP): The City Traffic Police (CTP) on Saturday have finalized plan to maintain flow of traffic and to provide facilities to tourists in Murree during Eid-ul-Azha.

Over 700 officers and traffic wardens will be on duty to ensure the safety and facilitation of visitors, with around 300 officers specifically focused on maintaining smooth traffic.

To boost security, special pickets have been set

up at 16 locations around the hill station. Additionally, six facilitation centers have been established to assist and guide tourists, providing necessary facilities.

Senior officers will be on the field to oversee operations. Rawalpindi Police are fully committed to provide 24/7 security and assistance to tourists throughout the Eid celebrations.

SSP Operations, Flight Lieutenant (retd) Hafiz

Kamran Asghar highlighted the importance of coordination among the police, district administration, and meteorological department to ensure the best security and traffic arrangements over there.

City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi, Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani, assured that all possible measures are being taken to ensure tourists have a pleasant journey during Eid-ul-Azha.

WASA finalises plan for Eid-ul-Azha

RAWALPINDI (APP): Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi on the directives of Managing Director (MD), Muhammad Saleem Ashraf has finalised a plan for Eid-ul-Azha.

The authority has cancelled the leaves of operational staff and all personnel have been directed to perform their duties with dedication and in accordance with the plan. The Tubewell operators, valve man and repair teams have been directed to remain present on their duties during Eid holidays while the Directors and Deputy Directors would supervise the whole operation.

A comprehensive strategy has been finalised to provide uninterrupted water and sewage facilities to the citizens. Muhammad Saleem Ashraf while chairing a meeting held in connection with the preparations for Eid-ul-Azha directed the officers concerned to ensure an uninterrupted supply of clean drinking water to the citizens on Eid-ul-Azha.

Director Admin, Muhammad Umar Farooq, Director Water Supply

Muhammad Tauseef, Director Sewerage Saadoun Basra and other officers attended the meeting. According to the WASA spokesman, the MD issued special instructions to the sewage staff to visit important mosques and Eidgahs and ensure that the sewage lines are clear and no manholes are uncovered.

Water supply and sewerage officers have been appointed as focal persons for the Eid holidays who would monitor the WASA Complaints Cell and would also remain present on the spot in case of any kind of emergency, he said. Assistant Director Muhammad Afzal Baloch (0332-5123897) Sewerage and Assistant Director Asim Nazir (0334-5393442) Water Supply would be the resource persons.

According to WASA duty roster, Director Sewerage Saadoun Basra (0316-0444870), Assistant Director Muhammad Afzal (0332-5123897), Sub Engineer Haseeb (0341-5069552), Sub Engineer Adil Afzal (0311-5552255) would be the focal persons of WASA for matters related to sewage.

Sub-Engineer Fakhri Ijaz (0332-2344414) Liaquat Bagh, Sub-Engineer Raja Shoaib (0311-8543385) Mohammadi Chowk, Sub-Engineer Mohammad Tufail (0305-6909950) Shamsabad, Sub-Engineer Saad Faiz (0316-5114296) Commercial Market, Assistant Director Ahmed Hasan (0321-9477240) Dhama Syedan and Chak Jalal Deen, Sub Engineer Muhammad Umair Hashmat Ali College, Sub Engineer Naushad Aslam, Dhama Syedan, Sub Engineer Muhammad Ishaq, Chak Jalal Deen and Sub Engineer Adeel Azhar (0321-5812202) would be focal person of Gulzar Quaid-ul-Noor Colony and Kotha Kalan Water Supply Offices.

MD WASA urged the citizens not to throw entrails of the sacrificial animals in the drains and put them in the RWMC bins so that they could be removed easily. MD WASA also directed Director Admin

Muhammad Umar Farooq to make surprise visits to the field during the Eid holidays. Attendance of tube well operators and valve-men would be checked.

Ministry sign agreements

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations signed eight cooperation agreements worth over 4.3 million USD with various social and economic development organizations. These agreements were signed with institutions such as Women for Afghan Women, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), and other organizations. These organizations will utilize the funds for various projects in various provinces of Afghanistan.

MoIC concludes survey

KABUL (BNA): In a significant move towards boosting tourism, the Ministry of Information and Culture of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan successfully concluded a thorough survey program aimed at identifying and registering tourist areas in Panjshir. Mawlana Nasrullah Malekzada, Head of Information and Culture in Panjshir, stated that this program was launched by the Ministry of Information and Culture in collaboration with the local administration.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

Slaughterhouse provides service

KABUL (TOLONews): As Eid al-Adha approaches, the Balkh state slaughterhouse is prepared to process the residents' sacrificial animals at a minimal cost, ensuring strict adherence to health standards.

According to the slaughterhouse officials, all livestock will first be quarantined and subjected to necessary inspections before being slaughtered in accordance with halal practices. The cost for slaughtering a sheep is set at 350 afghanis, while for a cow, it is 1250 afghanis.

Attaulah Ismailkhil, the head of the Balkh state slaughterhouse, said: "Bring your sacrifices to the slaughterhouse on Eid day. Here, they will be slaughtered according to standard procedures, and the meat will be returned to you. The livestock will undergo several hours of

quarantine and veterinary checks before being slaughtered. We also urge organizations distributing sacrificial meat during Eid to utilize the slaughterhouse for their needs." The Municipality of Mazar-e-Sharif also urged the city's residents to bring their livestock to this slaughterhouse.

Mohammad Jawad Mayar, the head of the sectorial department at the Municipality of Mazar-e-Sharif, said: "First and foremost, they should try to take their livestock to the slaughterhouse. If the slaughterhouse does not have the facilities for slaughtering the livestock and they slaughter them at home, they should ensure cleanliness and avoid causing disorder in the city."

Some residents of Mazar-e-Sharif have also stated that to prevent environmental pollution, they

will bring their livestock to this slaughterhouse.

Shahrokh Farahmand, a resident of Mazar-e-Sharif, said: "This action significantly affects the mental well-being of children who roam around the city and has a positive impact on our city. When we live in a city, we must act in a civilized manner."

Mohammad Naseem, another resident of Mazar-e-Sharif, said: "The weather is hot, and various diseases can arise. I urge citizens to have their sacrifices slaughtered at the slaughterhouse and not to throw the offal on the streets, as it disrupts the city's order."

Officials at the Balkh state slaughterhouse reported burning over one thousand kilograms of spoiled meat that had been collected from the butcher shops of Mazar-e-Sharif in less than a month.

Afghanistan celebrates Eid on Monday

KABUL (Khaama Press): Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Taliban administration, announced that Sunday is the Day of Arafah, and Monday coincides with the first day of Eid al-Adha.

Mujahid, in a statement, said that the announcement of the days of Arafah and Eid al-Adha is based on "religious decree."

The Taliban officials has announced Monday as the first day of Eid al-Adha while the Hajj ceremony began on Friday in Mecca, and the Arafah ceremony is being held on Saturday, in Mecca with the presence of 1.5 million Muslims, including senior Taliban officials.

The eve of Eid days come amid a dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the World Food Programme (WFP) warned on Friday on the social media platform X that over 12 million people in Afghanistan do not know where their next meal will come from during Eid.

The WFP urged for immediate aid support to address this severe food insecurity.

The WFP's warning highlights the critical need for international aid and support as millions of Afghans face hunger and malnutrition.

The organization called on the global community to step up and provide the necessary resources to help alleviate the suffering and ensure that families in Afghanistan can celebrate Eid with some semblance of hope and dignity.

5,000 refugees deported

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation of the Taliban has reported the expulsion of over five thousand Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran.

The ministry announced today, June 15, in a press release that 4,881 people were expelled from Iran and 775 from Pakistan.

The Ministry of Refugees stated in a press release that the returnees entered the country on the Thursday and Friday.

According to the press release, these refugees entered the country through the Islam Qala, Torkham, and Spin Boldak borders after being expelled.

Afghan refugees are being expelled from Pakistan as the deportation of Afghan nationals from neighboring countries, especially Iran and Pakistan, has significantly increased in recent months.

This forced deportation is happening amid a dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, where many people are facing severe hardships due to ongoing conflict and economic instability.

Moreover, there are significant security risks for these returnees, including the threat of persecution against former Afghan security officials who are at high risk of retribution from militant groups.

Additionally, there has been an alarming increase in militant attacks within Pakistan, exacerbating the already tense situation between the two countries and contributing to the regional instability.

Baradar visits flood affected Ghor province — assures continued support



KABUL (BNA): In a visit to Ghor province, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund expressed his condolences to the citizens affected by the recent floods and held discussions with provincial officials.

The purpose of his visit was to assess the extent of the damage caused by the floods and offer support to the affected individuals.

During his address, Mullah Baradar Akhund highlighted the significant

personal and financial losses suffered by the people of Ghor and other affected provinces.

He acknowledged the displacement of families, the submergence of agricultural lands, and the destruction of crucial infrastructure such as bridges, culverts, and roads.

He emphasized that the Islamic Emirate had acted promptly to provide assistance to those affected by the floods.

Mullah Baradar Akhund conveyed the Islamic

Emirate's solidarity with the citizens in their time of grief and sorrow.

He announced that tens of tons of food, medicine, and clothing had already been sent to Ghor province, demonstrating their commitment to alleviating the suffering of the affected individuals.

Furthermore, he declared that tens of millions of Afghans in cash would be provided to support the citizens in their recovery efforts.

The Deputy Prime

Minister assured the residents of Ghor that the Islamic Emirate had instructed all government officials to gather aid and ensure its transparent distribution to deserving and vulnerable citizens.

The visit of the Deputy Prime Minister to Ghor province and his commitment to supporting the citizens affected by the floods underscore the Islamic Emirate's dedication to addressing the needs of the people and rebuilding the affected regions.

Criminal activity decreased at Kabul gates, says officials

KABUL (TOLONews): The security command of entrances to Kabul said that in the past three months they have arrested more than twenty individuals in connection with drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and vehicle theft.

Abdullah Jalali, head of planning and policy of the Kabul gates security command, told TOLONews that compared to the past, criminal activity at the Kabul gates have decreased.

Jalali said: "In the drug sector, we have achievements, including the discovery of 3,532 K-tablets and 38 other types of drugs, and we have arrested ten people in this regard."

Residents entering Kabul from southern provinces are inspected by security forces to prevent suspicious individuals from entering the city.

"We are ready to serve to prevent the smuggling of drugs and weapons and to ensure that suspicious individuals do not enter Kabul and disrupt security during Eid days," said Abdullah, a security officer.

"The Islamic Emirate conducts inspections with complete precision and strict measures, and the security forces' treatment of us was appropriate, and we are happy," said Anwar Shah, a resident of Jalalabad city.

"For our security, these checkpoints are very good and very effective for the people," said Sabawon, a resident of Kabul.

At the same time, a number of military analysts believe that better control

of drug and arms smuggling requires repairing scanners and deploying professional personnel.

"To ensure the security of Kabul citizens, the existing scanners from the past can be more effective provided that they are managed by professional individuals," said Zalmai Afghan Yar, a military analyst.

The security command of entrances to Kabul also emphasized that compared to the past, criminal incidents have also decreased.

Tajikistan stands against IEA's inclusion in SCO activities: Russia

KABUL (Ariana News): Tajikistan has expressed opposition to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's (IEA) participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) activities, Russia's special envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, said.

The issue was discussed at the SCO Foreign Ministers' Council held in Kazakhstan's Astana on May 20-21.

A Tajik official, however, has said that Kabulov has incorrectly presented Tajikistan's position in this regard.

"We note Kabulov's incorrect presentation of Tajikistan's position on the issue of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group activities," Ahmad Saidmurodzoda, Tajikistan's National Coordinator for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), told Asia-Plus.



"Within the framework of the SCO, Tajikistan have consistently emphasized the need to discuss Afghanistan issues. As far as the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group activities are concerned, Tajikistan has never opposed the resumption of activities of

this group; on contrary, our side draws attention to the fact that Afghanistan received the status of observer at the SCO in 2012, while protocols on the establishment of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group were signed with the authorities of this country

in 2005 and 2018," Saidmurodzoda said.

He further noted that in this context, the Tajik side, including during the SCO foreign ministers' meeting, had proposed "at this stage to launch an expert discussion of Afghan issues in the SCO format."

Residents demand urgent road repairs

DARA-E-NOOR, Nangarhar (TOLONews): Several residents of the remote areas of Dara-e-Noor district in Nangarhar say they are facing significant problems due to the poor condition of the roads.

The deteriorated roads have made it difficult for them to transport their patients to medical centers on time, and they are urging officials to address this issue.

Ahmad Iqbal, a resident of Dara-e-Noor district in Nangarhar, said: "When we take a patient from here to Jalalabad, we face many problems; they die on the way. When they reach the

hospital, a regular patient would be hospitalized for two days, but this patient has to stay for four to five days."

Bazgul, another resident of Dara-e-Noor, said: "There are six, seven to eight villages on this unpaved road, such as Utran, from Utran to Majgandol, Choh, Lamtak, Sutan, Laghik, Sar Ghalik, Bamba Kot, Shimul, Kandok, and Shugyali, which are all above this unpaved road."

The green and scenic valleys attract every passerby, but the bad roads have made traveling to these beautiful areas difficult.

Some drivers say that due to the poor condition of these roads, they have to spend their earnings on repairing their vehicles. They are calling on officials in the caretaker government to construct these roads.

Daryab Khan, a driver, said: "Students who go to the city or other districts or other villages face many problems."

Manawar, another driver, said, "It's been twenty years that our road is unpaved. Vehicles get damaged, and patients face many problems."

However, local officials in Nangarhar report the

start of construction work on some roads in remote areas, including Dara-e-Noor district.

Mansoor Sapi, the Director of Construction at the Nangarhar Public Works Department, said: "Inshaullah, all the roads under the jurisdiction of the Public Works Department have been planned, and we will repair the roads and include new roads in the program."

According to the Nangarhar Public Works Department, in 2023, 28 kilometers of roads that were damaged by rain and floods in various districts of this province have been rebuilt.

Masoud vows to prevent migrants' entry if elected

KABUL (Ariana News): Masoud Pezeshkian, a presidential candidate in Iran, has vowed that he will shut the borders to Afghan immigrants if elected.

Pezeshkian added that those already residing in Iran should be regulated.

"It should not be denied that a large number of Afghan brothers play an effective role in Iran's economy or have sacrificed in the imposed war...but their presence in Iran should be regulated and disciplined," he said.

"The West must shoulder responsibility for what it has done in Afghanistan



and which has led to the migration of millions of Afghans," he said.

"There is no reason for the Iranian people to pay

for the wrong policies of others."

Iran's presidential election is slated to be held on June 28.

Smuggling of 80,000 farm animals to Iran prevented

NIMROZ (TOLONews): Nimroz local officials said they have prevented the smuggling of 80,000 farm animals to Iran in the past six months.

According to the officials, the number of smuggled livestock has increased as Eid al-Adha approaches, with more than one thousand animals being smuggled to Iran daily.

Mohammad Dawood Ishaq, commander of the Fifth Border Battalion, said: "We have prevented the smuggling of between 70,000 to 80,000 farm animals."

Habibullah Elham, head of Information and Culture of Nimroz, said: "The smuggling of animals, in any form, is prohibited from the country. Therefore, based on the recommendations and guidelines of the provincial leadership of Nimroz, thousands of livestock have been prevented from being smuggled out of the country."

Nimroz residents say that along with the increase in livestock smuggling to Iran, the price of meat has also risen in this province.

Akhtar Mohammad, a resident of Nimroz, said: "Livestock are being sold at higher prices in Iran, which causes significant losses to the nation."

Ghulam Sakhi, head of the Nimroz Butchers' Union, said: "Animals are being smuggled to Iran, which is why they are scarce. There are few animals in Nimroz."

According to officials, previously about 300 farm animals were being smuggled to Iran daily, but as Eid al-Adha approaches, this number has increased to up to one thousand per day.

AI urges Taliban to reopen girls' schools

KABUL (Khaama Press): After a thousand days of girls' schools being closed by the Taliban's orders, Amnesty International has called on the group to reopen these schools.

The organization said on Friday, June 14 on its social media platform X that Afghan girls have lost their right to education because of the Taliban's "discriminatory and unjust policies."

Amnesty International added that the Islamic Taliban's policies break international laws.

With the hashtag "Education is not a crime," this human rights body wrote that the Taliban must immediately reopen all secondary and high schools for girls.

A month after regaining control of Afghanistan, the Taliban reopened schools that were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but they shut the doors of girls' schools above sixth grade.

This comes amid a dire humanitarian crisis and severe human rights issues in the country. The current

regime's suppressive policies have severely impacted women's rights, including education and employment.

Women are also restricted from working with aid agencies and domestic organizations. Additionally, their free movement is heavily controlled, further limiting their opportunities.

Media restrictions have worsened the situation, making it difficult for the public to stay informed and for the international community to understand the full extent of the crisis.

Recent floods in Bamyan cuase significant financial damage

BAMYAN (Khaama Press): The media office of the acting governor in Bamyan province has announced that floods in several districts of this province have caused significant financial damage.

According to the press release from the office of the acting governor in Bamyan, these floods occurred yesterday, Friday, June 14, in the village of Golestan, the center of this province, and the village of "Qatarsam" in the Sayghan district.

The office stated that as

a result of the floods, 60 livestock have perished, approximately 205 acres of agricultural land have been destroyed, and six kilometers of agricultural water canals and 26 kilometers of roads have been damaged.

Reports indicate that 12 residential houses have also been destroyed due to these floods in the province.

Meanwhile, heavy rains and destructive floods in several provinces of the country have resulted in the death of hundreds of people and caused significant financial losses.

Recently, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced that the floods in Afghanistan, in addition to human casualties, have led to the displacement of thousands of families and the destruction of agricultural lands and public infrastructure, including roads, bridges, health facilities, and schools.

According to statistics from this organization, 347 people have died due to the floods, and more than 10,000 houses have been

destroyed.

The dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is exacerbated by a severe shortage of funding for international aid organizations. This shortage has hindered the delivery of essential assistance to the flood-affected regions, leaving many without adequate food, shelter, and medical care.

Additionally, the forced deportation of Afghan refugees from neighboring countries, including Iran and Pakistan, has intensified the humanitarian crisis.

E-Office to provide better public services: Shehbaz

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the main objective behind usage of E-Office system in the federal government's run ministries and departments would provide better services to the public, besides ensuring transparency in the government system.

The prime minister chaired an important review meeting on shifting of federal government's run ministries and departments on E-Office. The meeting was attended by Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister of State for Information and Technology Shaza Fatima Khawaja, PM's Coordinator Rana Ahsan Afzal and other relevant senior officials. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During the meeting, the prime minister observed that with this system, billions of rupees in the national exchequers could be saved and the lesser use of paper would also cast positive effects upon environment. He also directed for simplification and security of E-office system.

The prime minister directed for expediting work on the matters related to a cooperation agreement with Huawei, a Chinese company. The meeting was apprised of progress made on the E-Office system, its implementation and reforms. For the evaluation of success of this system, key performance indicators were being arranged. While overhauling of National Information Technology Board was also started, it was further added.

PM conveys Eid greetings, wishes to Sultan of Oman: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday held a telephone conversation with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of the Sultanate of Oman to extend warm

greetings and best wishes on the auspicious occasion of Eid ul Azha.

The prime minister expressed his heartiest felicitations to the Sultan, the government, and the people of Oman, and prayed for their well-being, prosperity, and happiness. Sultan Haitham bin Tariq reciprocated the greetings and best wishes and expressed his appreciation for the prime minister's thoughtful gesture.

On this blessed occasion, both leaders also prayed for peace and unity among the ranks of the Muslim Ummah, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. During the conversation, the two leaders reaffirmed the strong bond of friendship and brotherhood between Pakistan and Oman, rooted in shared values and mutual respect. They also discussed ways to further strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields. The two leaders also discussed the regional situation, particularly developments in Palestine and agreed to continue to work together to promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and beyond. The prime minister reiterated his cordial invitation to the Sultan to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at his earliest convenience.

The prime minister, on X account, said that it was a pleasure to speak with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman on the blessed occasion of Eid ul Azha. "While exchanging Eid greetings, we reaffirmed the strong ties of friendship and cooperation between our two nations as well as our common desire to promote peace, progress and prosperity within the Muslim Ummah and in the broader region," he added in the post.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday held a telephonic conversation with Amir of the State of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani on the auspicious occasion of Eidul Azha.

The prime minister extended warm greetings and best wishes to the amir, the government, and the brotherly people of Qatar on behalf of the government and people of Pakistan. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The two leaders exchanged views on the importance of Eidul Azha, which symbolizes sacrifice, compassion, and unity.

"At this joyous moment, both leaders also spoke about the plight of the brave and innocent people of Palestine and urged the international community to redouble peace efforts and ensure an immediate end to violence and bloodshed in the region," it was further added. The prime minister and the amir reaffirmed the strong bond of friendship and brotherhood between Pakistan and Qatar, rooted in shared values and mutual respect. They discussed ways to further strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields.

The prime minister expressed his appreciation for Qatar's support and cooperation with Pakistan, particularly in the areas of trade, investment, and labor. The two leaders agreed to continue to work together to promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and beyond. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked the amir for graciously accepting the invitation to undertake an official visit to Pakistan and said the dates of his visit would be worked out soon.

Separately, on X account, the prime minister said that he had a warm and cordial telephone call with Amir of Qatar Tamim Bin Hamad on the blessed occasion of Eidul Azha. "Exchanged greetings and best wishes, reaffirming the strong bond of friendship and brotherhood between Pakistan and Qatar. Also discussed the situation in Palestine and appreciated His Highness the Amir's efforts for peace in the region," he further added in the post.

Bajwa was behind PTI-led govt's ouster: Sh Rasheed

RAWALPINDI (INP): Awami Muslim League chief Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed said there is no doubt that former Army Chief General (retd) Qamar Bajwa was 'behind' the toppling of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government.

In a media interview he said that he knew that the Imran Khan-led PTI government was bound to be toppled. "The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan had informed (to vote against Imran Khan in the no-confidence motion) me," Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed added.

"I told Imran Khan that the MQM-P made it clear that the government is bound to be toppled as signaled by the real forces," he added. The host asked as if General Bajwa was involved in toppling the PTI government. "There is no doubt about it," the former interior minister replied.

"No one has entered in politics of Pakistan, including me, without (backing) of the Gate No. 4," he claimed. Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed said that he does not see dialogue between the PTI and the government.

"I am not seeing successful dialogue and neither hopeful for it," former federal minister said in his exclusive interview. "Initially they were not holding talks, now they will not accept the conditions set for dialogue," he said. "Two months after Eid are crucial, seeing decisive development by August," he further said.

"There might be some new to come on surface," he added. "This government is a show off". He said that Nawaz Sharif has been better than Shehbaz and 'less corrupt'. "Shehbaz has only been for signing. Nawaz Sharif has not been in good books and could not aspire for it".

DSP, son sent on physical remand

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The accused DSP and his son were sent on a three-day physical remand in the robbery case in Karachi's Gulshan Iqbal. As a report on Saturday, a judicial magistrate court in Karachi has granted the physical remand of DSP Zafar and his son, who are accused of involvement in a robbery case.

The court ordered the police to investigate the accused and produce a progress report at the next hearing.

According to the investigation officer, DSP's son was using his father's police mobile to commit crimes, and one of the accomplices is still at large and needs to be arrested. The court directed the investigation officer to submit a progress report at the next hearing and granted the police custody of the accused for further investigation.

Yesterday, the local police arrested the DSP and his son after the police vehicle allocated to the robbery at a shop in Karachi. The police arrested the DSP, his son who allegedly used the police vehicle to commit a robbery in Gulshan Iqbal area of Karachi. As per the statement of police officials, the citizen - Abbas - captured in the CCTV footage assisting the robbers was also arrested who later released after taking his statement.

The accused robbers also tampered with the number plate of the cob vehicle. "I was just an ordinary citizen of Gulshan-e-Iqbal, the policemen asked me to help them shifting the items in the police mobile," Abbas in his statement told police. It is pertinent to mention here that an under-training Deputy Superintendent Police (DSP) Umair Tariq Bajari, along with SSP South Imran Qureshi and two Shaheen Force officials was declared guilty in Karachi's Orangi Town heist.

DSP Umair Tariq Bajari was arrested by the Karachi Police West for his 'direct involvement' in the Orangi Town heist. DSP Bajari and his raiding team members was declared guilty after a high-level police probe.



NAWAB SHAH: President Asif Ali Zardari arriving at airport.

G7 leaders put on good show of unity

ROME: This year's G7 summit bore the hallmarks of a fragile club, yet one that still manages to put up a good fight when it comes to shielding Western interests. On Saturday, the leaders of what were once the wealthiest countries in the world concluded the three-day G7 summit in Borgo Egnazia, a luxury resort nestled in the hills of Italy's southern region of Puglia. But the group's authority in global politics was overshadowed by trouble back home for most of its members.

French President Emmanuel Macron's party took such a pounding at the European Union parliament elections last week that he called snap elections. In Germany, Chancellor Olaf Scholtz's Social Democratic Party also suffered in the EU elections to the point that critics have called on him to follow Macron's example. United Kingdom Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is already heading to the polls in early July for an election that most predict will see the end of his government, in a landslide victory for opposition party Labour, while the approval rating of Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has plunged to a dismal 38 percent. And in Japan, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's party has been mired in the throes of a political crisis since last year with some labelling the leader as Japan's most unpopular premier since 1947.

Above all, the spectre of November's United States presidential election has loomed large over this G7 summit, with the prospect of a comeback for Donald Trump, a former president who is openly sceptical of Washington's multilateral agreements.

Despite the domestic challenges faced by G7 leaders, however, the group still managed to pull together a strong message of unity when it came to addressing the threats they see as undermining Western stability. Most significant was the announcement on Thursday that it will draw on frozen Russian assets to make a \$50bn loan to Ukraine to support its efforts in the continuing war with Russia. "The G7 projected an image of weakness and of failing political authority," said Ettore Greco, vice director of Istituto Affari Internazionali. "But they performed very well on important dossiers such as Ukraine, Gaza and China, something that signals a clear convergence among them and sends a message of unity."

Target number one was Russia's President Vladimir Putin. As well as the

\$50bn loan to Ukraine, one day before the G7 summit began, the US announced a robust new round of sanctions against Russian entities and individuals. On the sidelines of the event, US President Joe Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed an historic 10-year security pact, while a similar deal was signed between Ukraine and Japan. The thorny issue of how to tackle growing global economic competition from China has also seen European allies moving closer to the US, which has traditionally taken a more confrontational line towards Beijing than they have. In an unprecedented move this week, the European Union hit China with tariffs up to almost 50 percent on Chinese electric vehicles, marking a big change in its trade policy. The US did the same in May.

Demonstrating their unity on this subject, the G7 leaders expressed their concerns about "China's persistent industrial targeting and comprehensive non-market policies and practices that are leading to global spillovers, market distortions and harmful overcapacity in a growing range of sectors, undermining our workers, industries, and economic resilience and security" in a final statement issued by all G7 governments at the end of the summit. One issue on which the G7 seems less united is that of abortion. Absent from this year's final communique is the word "abortion" – a likely win for Meloni's far-right party which opposes it. By contrast, the final statement of last year's summit in Japan specifically called for "access to safe and legal abortion". This year, the concluding statement mentions only "comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights for all".

And, while the club did manage to pull together over shared concerns, it was less obvious if it has succeeded in shedding its elitist image and becoming more inclusive of other countries – particularly those in the Global South – one of the key stated goals of this year's summit. Hosting the summit, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni invited a large number of guests including heads of state of India, Turkey, Brazil and the United Arab Emirates. Even Pope Francis made an appearance – a first for a pontiff. In part, these invitations reflect Meloni's political ambitions in Africa and the Mediterranean, but were also designed to broaden the outreach of the club, often accused of being too Western and exclusive. — Aljazeera

US ran secret anti-vax drive to undermine China's Covid efforts

WASHINGTON (Reuters): At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States military launched a secret campaign to counter what it perceived as China's growing influence in the Philippines, a nation hit especially hard by the deadly virus, an investigation by the Reuters news agency has found.

Through phony internet accounts meant to impersonate Filipinos, the military's propaganda efforts morphed into an anti-vaccination campaign, Reuters reported in a story released on Friday. Social media posts decried the quality of face masks, test kits and the first vaccine that would become available in the Philippines – China's Sinovac inoculation.

The clandestine operation has not been previously reported. It aimed to sow doubt about the safety and efficacy of vaccines and other life-saving aid that was being supplied by China, the Reuters investigation found. It identified at least 300 accounts on X, formerly Twitter, that matched descriptions shared by former US military officials familiar with the operation. Almost all

were created in the middle of 2020 and centred on the slogan #Chinaangvirus – Tagalog for "China is the virus."

"COVID came from China and the VACCINE also came from China, don't trust China!" one typical tweet from July 2020 read. The words were posted next to a photo of a syringe beside a Chinese flag and a soaring chart of infections. Another post read: "From China – PPE, Face Mask, Vaccine: FAKE. But the Coronavirus is real." After Reuters asked X about the accounts, the social media company removed the profiles, determining they were part of a coordinated bot campaign based on activity patterns and internal data.

The US military's anti-vax effort began in the spring of 2020 and expanded beyond Southeast Asia before it was terminated in mid-2021. The Pentagon tailored the campaign to local audiences across Central Asia and the Middle East using a combination of fake social media accounts on multiple platforms to spread fear of China's vaccines among Muslims at a time when the virus was

killing tens of thousands of people each day.

A key part of the strategy: amplify the disputed contention that, because vaccines sometimes contain pork gelatin, China's shots could be considered forbidden under Islamic law. The military programme started under former President Donald Trump and continued months into Joe Biden's presidency – even after alarmed social media executives warned the new administration that the Pentagon had been trafficking in COVID misinformation, Reuters said.

The Biden White House issued an edict in spring 2021 banning the anti-vax effort, which also disparaged vaccines produced by other rivals, and the Pentagon initiated an internal review. Spokespeople for Trump and Biden did not respond to requests for comment about the clandestine programme, Reuters reported. A senior Department of Defense official acknowledged the US military engaged in secret propaganda to disparage China's vaccine in the developing world, but the unnamed official declined to provide details.

Kate waves to crowds in first public appearance

LONDON (Reuters): Kate, Britain's Princess of Wales, waved to crowds and smiled broadly from the balcony of Buckingham Palace after watching a military parade on Saturday, making her first public appearance this year as she undergoes treatment for cancer.

The princess, 42, spent two weeks in hospital in January after she underwent major abdominal surgery. Two months later she announced in a video message that tests had revealed the presence of cancer and she was receiving preventative chemotherapy. She is still undergoing treatment, but her improved health meant she was able to appear in public for the first time since December.

The princess rode in a covered carriage with her three children to watch the "Trooping the Colour", an annual military parade to mark the official birthday of the British monarch, King Charles. Despite heavy rain showers, crowds lined the streets and waved and cheered as the carriage went past, outnumbering a small group of protesters holding placards calling for an end to the monarchy.

Charles rode in a separate carriage with Queen Camilla, followed by Prince William, Charles' heir and Kate's husband, who was on horseback along with other senior members of the royal family. Kate, wearing a pale outfit decorated with a white and navy ribbon by British fashion designer Jenny Packham and a broad-brimmed matching hat by Irish milliner Philip Treacy, watched the ceremony from a window overlooking the parade ground. She pointed out aspects of the event to her children Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis, while Charles saluted passing troops from a covered dais on the parade ground itself.

The king and queen, as well as William, Kate and other members of the royal family later returned to Buckingham Palace to watch a military flypast from the balcony. Kate smiled broadly and waved. In a rare personal written message on Friday, she said she was making good progress but was "not out of the woods". She said she was looking forward to attending Saturday's parade and hoped to join a few public engagements over the summer.

Kate's office, Kensington Palace, has declined to give any details about the type of cancer or about her treatment, other than to say the preventative chemotherapy had begun in February. Before the parade, onlookers said they were looking forward to seeing the princess.

Rs37,000 minimum wage isn't enough: Sindh CM

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Saturday said next fiscal year budget for the province had been made amid a difficult period and promised to extend full assistance to the federal government to achieve the 3.6 per cent growth rate.

As Sindh opted for a 30pc wage hike for the lower ranking government employees, the chief minister said he wasn't satisfied with minimum wage of 37,000 – an obvious reference to the record high and persistent inflation that has shrunk the purchasing power of ordinary people at an alarming rate.

Addressing a post-budget press conference in Karachi, Murad said the total budget size of Rs3.056 billion was 34pc more than the previous one, thus continuing with the tradition of increasing the amount each year. "We will go towards further growth in the next year," he added. The chief minister told reporters that the Sindh government was expecting an inflow of

Rs1.900bn from the Centre – an amount calculated according to the province's share under the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award.

About the future development strategy, Murad said they would focus on completing the ongoing schemes, as his cabinet had already decided not to launch new ones. He noted that the caretaker setup had halted work on new schemes, including those designed for the victims of historic floods that hit the country in 2022.

The chief minister claimed that Sindh's development budget was more than any other federating unit and that they could have easily added new schemes worth Rs500bn. "We are in government neither for the first time nor going for the last stint. We believe in long-term planning."

Murad said PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had talked about providing free electricity [for those consuming up to 300 units per month] and added that the budget con-

tained provision of solar panels as part of the plan to start supplying free power. On the occasion, he assured the audience that citizens in every district of Sindh would have access to clean drinking water, adding that the disabled people would have separate hospitals and parks.

On a question alleging that no work is done in Sindh without corruption and "commission", Shah said problems are everywhere. "The people [of this province] do not agree with you [as] they have elected us [in polls]," he said. Speaking on the issue of water security, the chief minister said that the federal government has allocated less budget for connecting Keenjhar Lake to the K-IV project. "The federal government has allocated Rs25 billion for the K-IV project [whereas] the Sindh government will spend Rs170 billion of its own," he said, adding that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has promised that the disbursement of the concerned amount will be approved by June 17.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah addressing post-budget press conference.

PNS Babur participates in PN-TN bilateral exercise

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy's M-ILGEM Class Ship BABUR participated in PN-TN Bilateral Exercise TURGUTREIS-IX at Naval Base AKSAZ, Türkiye. The exercise encompassed harbour and sea phases to rehearse various maritime operations and enhance interoperability.

During harbour phase of the exercise, briefings, tabletop discussions and exercise coordination meetings were held onboard PNS BABUR. During the sea phase, PNS BABUR and Turkish Fleet units,

including ADA Class Corvette TCG HEYBELI-ADA, Submarine TCG DOGANAY, and SH-70B helicopter, conducted joint maritime exercises and operations to enhance interoperability between both navies.



Earlier, upon arrival at Naval Base AKSAZ, Rear Admiral Yusuf Akyuz, Commander Turkish Navy Southern Task Group welcomed the ship.

During interaction with Commanding officer of PNS BABUR matters of mutual interest and bilateral cooperation were discussed. Regular conduct of

PN-TNF Bilateral Exercise TURGUTREIS demonstrates the strong bond and cooperation between the Pakistan Navy and the Turkish Naval Forces, promoting regional maritime security and stability.