

Fourth polio case reported

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan on Saturday reported the fourth poliovirus case of the current year, sources within the Ministry of National Health said. A 2-year-old boy from Bharkhan union council in Sindh's Shikarpur district became the latest victim. The health department official said the virus was detected in stool samples collected from a child, adding that he had developed symptoms of paralysis on May 21.



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Israel pounds Gaza after Biden outlines ceasefire plan

RAFAH (AFP, Reuters): Israeli forces hammered Rafah in southern Gaza with tanks and artillery Saturday, hours after US President Joe Biden said Israel was offering a new roadmap toward a full ceasefire.

Shortly after Biden's announcement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted his country would still pursue the war until it had reached all its aims, including the destruction of Hamas. Netanyahu on Saturday insisted on Hamas's destruction as part of an Israeli plan presented by US President Joe Biden to end the Gaza war.

"Israel's conditions for ending the war have not changed: the destruction of Hamas's military and governing capabilities, the freeing of all hostages and ensuring that Gaza no longer poses a threat to Israel," the Israeli leader said in a statement. "Under the proposal, Israel will continue to insist these conditions are met before a permanent ceasefire is put in place."

"The notion that Israel will agree to a permanent ceasefire before these conditions are fulfilled is a non-starter," Netanyahu added. Israel's opposition leader on Saturday urged Netanyahu to heed US President Joe Biden's call for a Gaza truce under which Hamas would free hostages, and offered to support the government should far-right coalition partners bolt.

"The government of Israel cannot ignore President Biden's consequential speech. There is a deal on the table and it should made," Yair Lapid said in an X post. "I remind Netanyahu that he has a safety net from us for a hostage-release deal if (Itamar) Ben-Gvir and (Bezalel) Smotrich leave the government." The Palestinian militant group, meanwhile, said it "considers positively" the plan laid out by Biden.

In his first major address outlining a possible end to the conflict, the US president said Israel's three-stage offer would begin with a six-week phase that would see Israeli forces

withdraw from all populated areas of Gaza. It would also see the "release of a number of hostages, including women, the elderly, the wounded, in exchange for (the) release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners." Israel and the Palestinians would then negotiate during those six weeks for a lasting ceasefire — but the truce would continue while the talks remained underway, Biden said.

The US leader urged Hamas to accept the Israeli offer. "It's time for this war to end, for the day after to begin," he said, in comments echoed by British Foreign Secretary David Cameron. Hamas in a statement on Friday evening said it "considers positively" Biden's speech regarding "a permanent ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, reconstruction and the exchange of prisoners." US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called his counterparts from Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye on Friday to press the deal.

UN chief Antonio Guterres "strongly hopes" the latest development "will lead to an agreement by the parties for lasting peace," his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said the Israeli offer "provides a glimpse of hope and a possible path out of the war's deadlock," while EU chief Ursula von der Leyen welcomed a "balanced and realistic" approach to end the bloodshed. But Netanyahu took issue with Biden's presentation of what was on the table, insisting the transition from one stage to the next in the proposed roadmap was "conditional" and crafted to allow Israel to maintain its war aims.

"The prime minister authorized the negotiating team to present an outline for achieving (the return of hostages), while insisting that the war will not end until all of its goals are achieved," Netanyahu's office said. Those aims included "the return of all our hostages and the elimination of Hamas's military and governmental capabilities," it added. "The exact outline proposed by Israel, including the conditional transition from stage

to stage, allows Israel to maintain these principles."

Israel has repeatedly vowed to destroy Hamas since the Palestinian militant group attacked southern Israel on October 7. Israel sent tanks and troops into Rafah in early May, ignoring concerns over the safety of displaced Palestinian civilians sheltering in the city on the Egyptian border. Before the Rafah offensive began, the United Nations said up to 1.4 million people were sheltering in the city.

Since then, one million have fled the area, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, has said. The Israeli seizure of the Rafah crossing has further slowed sporadic deliveries of aid for Gaza's 2.4 million people and effectively shuttered the territory's main exit point. Israel said last week that aid deliveries had been stepped up.

But Blinken acknowledged on Friday that the humanitarian situation was "dire" despite US efforts to bring in more assistance. The World Food Programme said daily life had become "apocalyptic" in parts of southern Gaza since Israel began its assault on Rafah in early May. The Gaza war was sparked by Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack on southern Israel, which resulted in the deaths of 1,189 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures. Militants also took 252 hostages, 121 of whom remain in Gaza, including 37 the army says are dead.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 36,284 people in Gaza, mostly civilians, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. In northern Gaza, witnesses said that after carrying out a three-week operation in the town of Jabalia and its neighboring refugee camp, troops had ordered residents of nearby Beit Hanun to evacuate ahead of an imminent assault. The Israeli army said troops "completed their mission in eastern Jabalia and began preparation for continued operations in the Gaza Strip."



CHANDIGARH: Voters queue up at a polling station in last phase of Indian general elections.

PM greets first Christian female brigadier in AMC

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday extended his congratulations to Helen Mary Roberts on her promotion to the rank of Brigadier in the Army Medical Corps.

Brigadier Roberts, a member of the Pakistani Christian community, has made history by becoming the first woman from a minority background to achieve this prestigious rank, the prime minister said in a statement. He said the entire nation including himself extend felicitation to her.

The prime minister praised Brigadier Roberts for her hard work and dedication, saying that she had proven that Pakistani women could excel in any field and were second to none. He said the entire nation was proud of Brigadier Roberts and the thousands of hardworking women like her from minority communities who were serving the country with distinction.

The prime minister added that Brigadier Roberts' commitment to service, humanity, and her dedication to her work would serve as a beacon of inspiration for the young women of the next generation.

Taliban still better than Imran: Azma

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari on Saturday castigated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, alleging that even Taliban are better than the latter.

Addressing a press conference here, the provincial minister alleged that PTI's 'simple formula' of revolution was to seek support and NRO from 'powerful quarters'. She questioned the hype over Hamoodur Rahman Commission (HRC) report, saying that a commission should be constituted to probe PTI founder Imran Khan's 'anti-Pakistan' agenda. "Imran Khan's agenda is to break Pakistan into parts," Azma Bokhari alleged.

She further said that even the Taliban are better than PTI founder as the former acknowledge and take responsibility for their views but the latter doesn't. The statement came after Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cybercrime Cell wrote a letter to the authorities seeking access to incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan to inquire about a 'controversial' post from his X handle.

The text of the letter stated that anti-state propaganda was disseminated through the official social media account of the PTI founder, targeting institutions, particularly the Pakistan Army. The video posted on May 26 aimed to distort facts, prompt rebellion among officers and soldiers, and create unrest within various state institutions.

Modi appears set to triumph as voting ends

NEW DELHI (Reuters): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance is projected to win a majority in the general election that concluded on Saturday, an exit poll summary by the NDTV news channel said. The summary of two exit polls projected the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) could win more than 350 seats in the 543-member lower house of parliament, where 272 is needed for a simple majority.

The NDA won 353 in the 2019 election. The opposition INDIA alliance led by the Congress party was projected to win more than 120 seats. Exit polls have a patchy record in India as they have often got election outcomes wrong, with analysts saying it is a challenge to get them right in the large and diverse country. Nearly one billion people were eligible to vote in the seven-phase election that began on April 19 and was held in scorching summer heat in many parts.

The Election Commission will count votes polled in electronic voting machines on June 4 and results are expected the same day. A victory for Modi, 73, will make him only the second prime minister after independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru to win three consecutive terms. At least 20 election workers have died from heatstroke, authorities said on Saturday, as Indians went to the polls in the final

round of a six-week-long general vote marred by abnormally hot weather.

The seventh round of voting in 57 constituencies across seven states and one union territory completed polling for all 543 seats in the lower house of parliament. More than 968 million people were eligible to vote, with the first six phases of the mammoth election held on April 19, April 26, May 7, May 13, May 20, and May 25. Voter turnout was affected by record-high temperatures, as parts of India continued to reel under a prolonged spell of extreme heat, which this week also took the lives of election workers.

At least 14 people, including 10 polling personnel, have died due to heatstroke in the eastern state of Bihar, according to local media reports. Mahendra Kumar, magistrate in the state's Bhojpur district, confirmed to Arab News that five poll officials died due to heatstroke in his region on Thursday alone. In Mirzapur city in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, scorching heat killed at least 10 people on duty at polling stations on Friday.

"Seven home guards and three polling personnel have died due to heatstroke," said Priyanka Niranjani, district magistrate in Mirzapur. "These people had reached the polling booth where they were supposed to perform their duty. Their health condition deteriorated there,

and they were brought to the hospital for medical attention, and they died there." The election sees Prime Minister Narendra Modi chasing a rare third straight five-year term, while his key contender, opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, seeks his Congress party's return to power.

Both took to social media to appeal to voters to cast their ballots. "You should participate enthusiastically in the festival of democracy. I hope that our youngsters and women will come out in large numbers to vote. Let's come together to make democracy more vibrant," Modi said. Gandhi expressed optimism that his party-led alliance would form the next government.

"A new dawn will be ushered in on June 4," he wrote on X. Votes will be counted on June 4. The party or coalition that wins at least 272 of the 543 contested seats will form the government. However, experts say the election results are far from easy to predict. "This is a different election compared with 2014 and 2019. It is a very difficult election to call what is going to happen," Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, a New Delhi-based political analyst and writer, told Arab News. "In this election anything is possible — there may be a wave in favor of Modi, there may be a wave against Modi ... Voters this time have been silent, and nobody has really spoken."

FIA summons top PTI leaders over Imran's post

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A day after several Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders made contradictory remarks on the controversy surrounding a video about the 1971 fall of Dhaka posted from party founder's X account, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Saturday issued notices to three more PTI leaders.

As per the notices, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan, Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan and Information Secretary Raoof Hasan have been summoned before the probe agency at 11am on Wednesday. The controversial post on X, formerly Twitter, was attributed to the deposed premier, which read: "Every Pakistani should study the Hamood ur Rahman Commission Report and get to know who was the true traitor, General Yahya Khan or Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

On Thursday, the FIA's Cyber Crime Reporting Center notified the PTI founder, who remains incarcerated at Adiala jail, of initiating an action against him over his controversial tweet and reached the prison later that night to question him. However, the former

premier had refused to meet the probe agency's anti-cybercrime team and become part of the probe related to his controversial social media post. The FIA had raised objection on the alleged "misuse" of Imran's verified X account through which "highly obnoxious and inciting content against state institutions" had been shared.

The notice, stated that the said post was "likely to cause fear or alarm in the public and may induce/provoke anyone to commit an offence against the state or state institution to public tranquility". The PTI trio was directed to appear in person before FIA Sub-Inspector Muhammad Monib Zafar to record their statements in their defence at the FIA Cyber Crime Reporting Centre on Wednesday "in the interest of justice".

"In case of non-appearance, proceedings u/s 174 PPC. will be initiated against you," the notification said, referring to Pakistan Penal Code Section 174 (non-attendance in obedience to an order from public servant). It may be noted that the PTI members including the three top leaders, Ali Muhammad Khan and National Assembly member Zain Qureshi seemed

confused over its endorsement or a clear rejection of the controversial post from the founder's X handle.

Commenting on the questionable X post, the party's lawmaker Ali Muhammad Khan claimed on Friday that Imran Khan was unaware of the post and decided to "personally approve" social media content in future. The PTI lawmaker dissociated the imprisoned former premier from the controversial video posted on the latter's verified X account which drew severe criticism from all quarters, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Meanwhile, Barrister Gohar said that the video was shared on Imran's X account in the current political scenario. On the other hand, Hasan first demanded the conducting of a probe and then retracted his statement by saying that he did not watch the video.

After facing a strong wave of criticism, the party's core committee said in a statement a day earlier that they rejected the FIA probe into Imran's social media post. It added that the registration of a new case against the PTI founder based on a social media post would be unwarranted.

Govt rises electricity tariffs by Rs 3.25 per unit

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Saturday increased electricity tariffs by Rs 3.25 per unit resulting in an additional burden of Rs 46 billion on consumers.

According to the sources in Nepra, the price of electricity was raised by Rs 3.25 per unit. It is said that this increase is part of a quarterly adjustment and will apply to June, July, and August. Sources further reveal that Nepra forwarded the decision to increase electricity prices to the federal government for final approval.

This increase will result in an additional burden of Rs 46 billion on consumers. It is worth noting that NEPRA had reserved its decision on May 30 regarding the request to increase the price of electricity. The Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) had requested this increase based on the April fuel adjustment.

People to get relief in budget, says Musadik

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik said that every ministry has been assigned with targets to control inflation.

Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Saturday, he said that the prime minister has directed all the ministries to ensure that the poor get job opportunities and have maximum relief in inflation. "The government is committed to provide every possible relief to the common man as per instructions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif," he said. He said that the country is heading towards development despite all the domestic and international challenges. According to petroleum minister, the efforts are underway to provide maximum relief to the people in upcoming budget.

Ready to talk with PTI if they apologise: Kundi

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi Saturday expressed willingness to talk with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) if party apologises for past mistakes.

"We are ready to talk if PTI apologises for past mistakes. The party should play its role in the Parliament, nothing will be gained by making noise," said the governor addressing a press conference in Lahore on Saturday. The KP governor's statement comes after PTI continues its tirade against the ruling government in Islamabad and the spat between KP government and Centre pertaining to dues owed to the province.

However, after a "meaningful" dialogue with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, the two sides resolved the issues between them, agreeing to work

together for public relief. The governor, on the other hand, maintained that he does not want tension between the provincial government and the Governor House in KP. "The Governor House of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will not be part of any conspiracy."

He also invited KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur to his office to sit together for development and peace in the province. "I will play the role of a bridge between the Centre and province," said the governor, adding that he has also spoken about KP's problems with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Commenting on the issues faced by KP and the provincial government's complaints towards Islamabad, Governor Kundi said he asked CM Gandapur to go to the federal government and convey the problems, as that will help find a solution. "I

told KP chief minister to talk to the federal government with arguments. If this behavior continues in the future, they will solve the problem," he said.

Kundi said he was hopeful that the federal government will resolve KP's issues. "KP CM earlier used such language that did not solve the problem." The KP governor said he was ready to talk to all the parties in the province for its development, peace and prosperity. "Political people should sit with political parties and solve the problems."

Sharing his opinion on the consequences of the May 9 riots, Governor Kundi said that all the accused of the violent-ridden event should be brought to justice. "The accused of May 9 should be punished. The mastermind of May 9 tragedy should be brought to justice first," he said during the presser on Saturday.

Live streaming of cases can be used for point scoring: SC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Justifying its rejection of the KP government's plea for live streaming the NAB amendments case hearing, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has stated that broadcasting of the court proceedings of cases involving politicians can be used for political "point-scoring".

The top court on Saturday issued a detailed verdict on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government petition seeking live streaming of the hearing of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) amendment case.

Referring to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, the apex court stated that when the head of a political party wants to be heard, who is not an advocate of this court, there is a real probability that these hearings may be used for political purposes and

point-scoring and in respect of matters which do not concern these appeals. The application for the live streaming was rejected by the apex court in a 4-1 verdict on May 30 with Justice Athar Minallah disagreeing with the majority judgement.

The case was heard by a five-member SC larger bench headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Minallah and Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi.

"This was a paramount consideration when we had dismissed the application. And, our apprehension proved correct later in the day. When Mr. Niazi [PTI founder Imran Khan] addressed this Court on (30 May 2024) he also mentioned other cases, the general elections held on 8 February 2023, a commis-

sion of inquiry and his incarceration; all these matters have nothing to do with the subject matter of these appeals. This cannot be permitted as it would thwart the proper administration of justice," read the order.

It further added that commenting on matters not under consideration may affect public perception, and the rights of those who are not before us, including their fundamental right to fair trial and due process may also be affected.

The application, in addition to being not maintainable, has no merit, the order said adding that the KP advocate general has also not stated "why the sudden interest, or desire, for live-streaming, when his Government did not join the hearings of CP No. 21/2022, let alone make a similar request when this Court was hearing the petition".

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Record power outage hits people of Pawaka, Abdara

Defaulters, Kunda culture and bill paying people are equal in the sight of PESCO authorities

Ikram Ullah Khalil

PESHAWAR: The long hour electricity suspension makes the lives of residents of Pawaka and Abdara villages miserable as they were facing these problems from the past some years but unfortunately the elected representatives and authorities did not pay heed to the basic problems of the locality. Pawaka and Abdara villages of Peshawar are the oldest villages and adjacent to the University town area, which is one of the posh areas of provincial capital, but still the residents were neglected by the elected lawmakers and they were left on the mercy of Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO).

The spread of Dengue fever is on the rise and the biggest reason of it is the prolonged hour power suspension in the area. The residents told The Frontier Post that despite paying huge electricity bills to PESCO, still the people are waiting for the provision of electricity in the area. The people of Pawaka village added that the power outage makes their lives miserable as they are unable to continue their routine life without the restoration of the electricity.

The residents of the locality recorded their protests time to time and met with various officials of PESCO, but the problem still exists and increasing day by day. A resident of Pawaka, Ilyas Khan claimed that they are facing the unscheduled and prolonged electricity suspension from the past few years and especially after the PTI-led government comes into power the area was badly targeted and facing unscheduled and prolonged load shedding and the duration of the power load shedding is more than 18 to 20 hours in the locality.

Mr. Mukhtiar Khan, a resident of Pawaka village told The Frontier Post that it is very hard for the people of the area to take rest in this hot weather without the provision of electricity and especially the women and the children were most affected in this situation. He added that power load shedding and continues tripping of the electricity destroyed their electrical items like refrigerators, fans and

Air coolers.

Moreover, the food items get destroyed in the refrigerators due to prolong duration of load shedding. Shortly he as much aggrieved by telling this to The Frontier Post. The residents also blamed the elected representatives of the constituency MNA Sher Ali Arbab and Arbab Zarak for neglecting the area.

They told that the elected Members don't bother to contact the people of the area after taking votes from them in the recent general elections and left the area on the mercy of PESCO authorities, because they are rich and they have all the facilities like Solar plants, generators etc. On the other hand, a poor person cannot buy food items for his family how can he install solar system at his house.

The villagers were compelled to stay in fields under the trees along with their families, especially children, because due to hot weather it is not possible to stay in their houses without electricity. The students also complained that they were not been able to continue their studies due to non-availability/supply of electricity. They informed this scribe that their studies have been affected and they have a lot of concern for their future.

It is pertinent to mention here that if there is no electricity, it means that there is no water in the area because the tube wells of the villages are operated through electricity and the water issues were also occurred in the area due to non-availability of electricity.

A senior citizen of the area also claimed that our families along with their children searching for drinking water and they take the water for drinking from the nearby areas for the last few months. The residents of the villages visited the office of PESCO and requested for supply of electricity and held protests but the PESCO officials failed to restore supply of electricity to Pawaka and Abdara villages. The lives of female were much tightened due to hot weather and non-availability of electricity.

The residents of Pawaka and Abdara villages appeal the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Mian Shehbaz Sharif, Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan,

Chief Justice Peshawar High Court, Minister for Power, Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Chairman of WAPDA / PESCO to ensure restoration of the electricity of the villages and if the load is over please connect our feeder with the feeder University Town Peshawar.

Imran Khan, member of civil society claimed that it is now a routine of PESCO to suspend power supply after every rain and the residents of the area will be waiting for the power supply even after the hours of rain. It is not possible for the residents of the area to continue their routine in the 18 to 20 hours load shedding in a day.

A daily wager told The Frontier Post that power load shedding had also affected his livelihood because he cannot afford solar system to protect his family from hot weather. The residents added that school going children cannot take proper rest which had badly impacted their physical and mental potentials.

The parents claimed that children are complaining regarding their health issues. The residents claimed that they had knocked the doors PESCO along with other competent authorities but their grievances could not be redressed until now.

It is worth mentioning here that the PESCO authorities claimed that these areas defaulters, but the residents told this scribe that this is the duty of the PESCO to take actions against the defaulters because a majority of the people is paying their regular electricity bills. But the PESCO gives punishment to all people or the area, which is totally injustice.

The PESCO need to take a strict action against the defaulters and Kunda culture through police or any other government agency and registered FIRs against the defaulters. Even collect their dues with fines from the defaulters. The residents threatened that if their demands regarding provision of electricity and ending of load shedding in the area were not fulfilled then they shall be compelled to arrange sit-in in front of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly to approach legislators for their basic right.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur chairing a meeting of Mineral Investment Facilitation Authority.

Governor takes notice of incident

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday took notice of the quarrel and vandalism incident among the students of Economics Department University of Peshawar.

The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa asked the administration of Peshawar University for submission of a comprehensive report of the incident by June 3.

A formal letter was sent from Governor Secretariat to Vice Chancellor Peshawar University in this regard.

Similarly, the Governor Kundi also took notice of the sad incident of the tragic death of Musa Khan, a young student of the University of Malakand.

Governor Kundi has asked University of Malakand administration for a comprehensive report of the incident by June 3.

FIA recovers fake medicine

PESHAWAR (INP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Peshawar Zone recovered a big consignment of fake medicines worth millions of rupees here on Saturday.

FIA conducted the first raid in Gulbahar Anam Sanam Chowk, the accused named Dawood, Sulaiman and Muhammad Ali were arrested. Fake medicines worth Rs 250,000 were to be smuggled to other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Afghanistan were seized.

In its second raid, at the house of the accused named Shoaib, the value of seized fake drugs of worth Rs. 40,35 million.

In the initial statement Shoaib confessed that Dr Fawad had given fake medicines on the partnership.

The FIA conducted a third raid on Dr Fawad's godown from where fake medicines worth Rs. 2.8 million were recovered. The accused Dr Fawad revealed that fake medicines were brought from Charsadda Razar and Shabqadar.

Likewise, during the fourth raid was conducted at a house in Charsadda Razar, drugs manufacturing and packing machinery was recovered and large quantities of tablets and injections of various companies were recovered.

The accused Marifat Shah was arrested and drugs worth Rs 5 million were recovered.

Pesco provides electricity to 4.3m consumers

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pesco is providing electricity to its 4.3 million consumers through 1,315 feeders in the province.

During the last 12 hours, power has been fully restored to 548 feeders of category 1 and 2, said a press release issued here on Saturday.

Proper load management has been done on remaining feeders due to ratio of losses and system overloading. During the last 12 hours, 64 Pesco feeders have been affected by fault at different times.

Pesco operation teams have restored power to 28 feeders by repairing the fault immediately.

Work on remaining 36 feeder are in progress and power will be restored in next few hours.

Developing tourism in Chitral: Several new schemes approved, says Chanzeb

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In the new budget of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, several new schemes have been approved for the development of tourism in Chitral and sufficient funds have been allocated.

In addition to celebrating the traditional Kalash festivals and the Shandur Polo Festival in a more organized manner, new projects have been added so that tourists can enjoy visiting Chitral twelve months of the year.

New schemes include government-level organization of Jashan Tirch Mir and schemes to provide easy loans to residents of Chitral to construct additional rooms with all amenities in their homes to accommodate foreign tourists.

The experience of visiting foreign tourists in rented houses has proved to be quite successful in Gilgit-Baltistan, which not only increases the number of tourists, but also increases the income of the local people.

This was disclosed by the Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb in a meeting with various delegations from Chitral who thanked the provincial government for allocating new schemes and additional funds for the tourism sector in Chitral.

He assured that the tourists of Chitral will go back to their countries with pleasant memories of the hospitality and a good image of the place. Zahid Chanzeb said that a new scheme called Families Based Accommodation for the Foreign Tourists is included in the 18 new schemes for which about Rs. 40.4 million have been allocated in the new budget while their total cost is estimated at 4 billion rupees.

He said that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and himself are fully confident that the amount of money spent on such schemes will generate many times more income, while the economic condition of the local people will also improve in addition to the increase in the arrival of foreign tourists besides opportunities for decent employment will increase and our educated youth will not have to travel to other cities for jobs or be shy in foreign countries.

He said that the experience of staying foreign guests in extra rooms of houses is also successfully continued in Gilgit, which helps foreign tourists and guests to understand the lifestyle and customs of the local people and the reason for increasing their interest and curiosity.

The arrival of foreign tourists also increases continuously. The Tourism Advisor further revealed

that in the future Tirch Mir will be celebrated in Chitral every year under the patronage of the government and at the foot of the 25,300 feet highest mountain of Chitral with full planning of traditional dance, photo exhibition, archery and in addition to horse riding, hiking, trekking and mountaineering competitions will be held.

He said due to this, the number of foreign tourists and the increase in the economy and income of the province will also highlight the soft image of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa worldwide. Earlier, in a meeting with a delegation from Chitral, which included MPA Fateh Mulk, Ali Nasir and Senior Vice President of PTI Malakand Division, Razit Ballah, the Tourism Advisor assured that the provincial government would further promote tourism in Chitral Lower.

The Tourism Adviser also assured the delegation that all possible steps will be taken to promote tourism in Chitral so that the menace of unemployment can be completely eradicated from there. Zahid Chanzeb also assured to build a park at Darosh Gol Kham in Darosh on the demand of the delegation and issued orders on the occasion. He accepted the delegation's invitation to visit Chitral and promised to visit Chitral on the occasion of Shandur Festival.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali meeting with a delegation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Youth Assembly.

Major crackdown by KP Food Authority in City — six hotels sealed for poor hygiene

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority launched a major crackdown on well-known hotels in Peshawar, leading to extensive operations and significant penalties.

Six major hotels were sealed, and heavy fines were imposed due to extremely poor hygiene conditions and violations of health standards. According to the Food Authority spokesperson, the inspections were carried out under the supervision of Director General Food Authority Wasif Saeed and the district administration.

The Food Safety teams inspected 18 renowned and branded hotels in Peshawar. During these inspections, the teams discovered numerous health violations, including



ing poor hygiene, lack of medical certificates for staff, use of substandard cooking oil, and expired meat and other food items.

As a result, six hotels were sealed, and substantial fines were levied. Furthermore, while detailed by the spokesperson, food samples from various hotels were collected and sent to the Food Safety Laboratory for further analysis.

The spokesperson stated

that these actions were prompted by public complaints, aiming to ensure compliance with health standards and the provision of safe and quality food.

DG Food Authority Wasif Saeed emphasized that the objective of the crackdown and raids is to ensure safe and healthy food and to protect public health. Secretary for Food Department Zarif Ulmani praised the Food Safety teams' performance and urged the public to report such violations to the Food Authority promptly.

He assured that those compromising public health would face strict action. Minister for food, Zahir Shah Toru directed the Food Authority officials to regularly monitor food-related businesses and enforce rules and regulations without any leniency.

World No Tobacco Day celebrated

PESHAWAR (APP): Blue Veins, a local NGO working in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, celebrated World No Tobacco Day here on Saturday. The event highlighted the dangers of tobacco use and the urgent need to protect young people from tobacco industry interference.

This year's theme, "Protecting Children From Tobacco Industry Interference," underscored the importance of safeguarding youth from harmful products and called on the tobacco industry to cease targeting them. World No Tobacco Day, created by the WHO in 1987, aims to prevent tobacco-related deaths and diseases.

According to WHO, tobacco kills over 8 million people annually, including 1.3 million non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke. Tobacco use is linked to numerous serious health conditions, from lung cancer to reproductive issues, significantly impacting cardiovascular health.

The event was well-attended, drawing participation from civil society organizations, academia, the Police department, the trader association, the Health Department, the Right to Information and Right to Services Commission, students, doctors, public health experts, religious leaders and others.

Qamar Naseem, Program Manager of Blue Veins, said, "Protecting our children from the predatory tactics of the tobacco industry is important. We must stand united to ensure a healthier future for our youth."

Zainab Naqvi, Assistant Commissioner and focal person on tobacco control, added, "The health of our young population is paramount. We are committed to implementing stringent measures to prevent the tobacco industry from exploiting our children."

Ajmal Shah, Project Coordinator of the Tobacco Control Cell, remarked, "Collaboration across sectors is key to effective tobacco control. We will continue to work together to reduce tobacco consumption and its devastating health impacts."

Govt asked to compensate people of merged districts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Saturday asked the government to compensate the people of the merged districts who suffered losses during the war on terror.

He was talking to a delegation of tribal elders from South Waziristan at Watan Kor here.

The members of the delegation informed the QWP leader about the problems being faced by the people of Waziristan. The delegation said the government had conducted a survey to assess the damage to the houses so that compensation could be paid to the

affected people. They said after the survey, the government had issued tokens to the people who were supposed to receive the compensation.

However, the elders said the government had not yet issued the promised money to the people. They also demanded increase in the compensation amount and to include the left out houses in the survey. The delegation also extended invitation to the QWP leader to a consultative meeting in Islamabad.

Assuring the delegation of his support, Aftab Sherpao said the tribal people offered matchless sacrifices for the restoration of peace, therefore, the government should properly

compensate them for the losses.

He also endorsed the demand to increase the compensation amount and to include the houses in the survey which were earlier missed.

The QWP leader demanded the government to fulfill the lawful demands of the tribal people or else discontent would grow among them. He said the QWP had always supported the genuine demands of the tribal people and would spare no effort to help them get their due rights.

He said the restoration of peace was made possible due to the unprecedented sacrifices rendered by the tribal people.

Meeting decides strategy to end load shedding

PESHAWAR (APP): Additional Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abid Majeed here Saturday chaired a meeting that was convened to devise a result oriented strategy to end load shedding in the province.

The meeting was also attended by Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Mehsud, deputy commissioners, Wapda officials and elected representatives of local government, provincial and national assembly belonging to Charsadda, Nowshera and Peshawar.

The meeting constituted

committees comprising assistant commissioners, wapda officials and elected representatives to end power pilferage, remove illegal connections and to recover outstanding amount from consumers. It was decided that outstanding amount of only 24 months would be recovered in installments against the arrears that are pending for the last twenty years.

On the occasion, meeting was informed that 700 feeders among a total of 1300 feeders situated in Charsadda, Nowshera and

Peshawar are facing load shedding due to excessive power theft and illegal activities of 'Kunda Mafia'.

It was told that consumers of these areas also owe a significant amount to Wapda and load shedding has been continued in these areas to reduce line losses while remaining 500 feeders are free from any kind of load shedding. Meeting also urged elected representatives to play their role in ending power theft and support efforts of government to end load shedding.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister KP on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb meeting with a delegation from Chitral in his office.



In brief

DHQ Wana near to collapse F.P. Report

WANA: A critical healthcare crisis looms in Wana, South Waziristan, as the District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) faces a severe funds crunch, crippling its ability to provide essential medical services to thousands of patients. Despite remarkable progress in restoring healthcare services, the Health Department's eight-month delay in releasing funds has pushed the hospital to the brink of collapse. DHQ, managed by MERF since March 2022, has transformed from a ghost hospital to a functional secondary care center, benefiting patients from South Waziristan and across the Afghan border. The agreement between the KP health department and MERF requires quarterly fund releases to support hospital operations, including staff salaries and patient services. However, the health department has failed to release funds since October 2023, severely impacting the hospital's ability to pay staff salaries and maintain services. MERF has continued to run the hospital using its own resources, but the lack of funds has left staff unpaid for the past month. Doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff will protest from June 1, 2024, by wearing black armbands, demanding the KP government release the funds. Dr. Hammad Mahmood, hospital's MS, emphasized, "Our hospital's ranking has improved significantly, according to the health department. Department's independent monitoring unit, thanks to MERF's efforts. The government must release funds to ensure continuous improvement and support our dedicated staff."

Ji hold rally against Israel F.P. Report

HAFAZABAD: Jamaat Islami Hafizabad took out protesting rally to express solidarity with oppressed people of Palestine and to condemn brutality of Israel. The rally was started from Al-Fatah Masjid and concluded at Fawara Chowk. Ameer Jamat-i-Islami Hafizabad Shoukat Ali Phullarwan, Amanullah Chatha, and Dr. Muhammad Yaseen Ansari led the rally. The participants of the rally were raising slogans against crudity and brutality of Israel on people of philistine. Addressing the rally, speakers said that the whole Pakistani Nation is standing with people of Philistine. They urged the government of Pakistan to recognize independent state of philistine for expressing its solidarity with Muslim Ummah and raise strong voice against Israel to stop killing of innocent Muslims of Philistine. Timely completion of bridges on Hafizabad-Gujranwala road directed: Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Sundas Irshad visited under construction bridges and other work on Hafizabad-Gujranwala road, reviewed pace of work on this project and directed officers of highway department to expedite construction work on Kot Sarwar Motorway Interchange-Gujranwala Road. She also directed the officers to eliminate all encroachments and shifted electricity polls on the way of road immediately so that this project could be completed earliest for providing better communicational facilities to commuters. Deputy Director Development Hafizabad Tasawar gave briefing about construction of fly-over in city Hafizabad, construction of bridges on Kot Sarwar Motorway Interchange to Gujranwala Road which is being completed with the estimated cost of Rs. 10 billion.

Sukkur Industrial enclave inaugurated at IBA University

F.P. Report

SUKKUR: Former federal minister and Member National Assembly Syed Khurshid Ahmad Shah laid foundation stone of Sukkur Industrial Enclave at IBA University while stated that it was a great pleasure to lay the foundation of Sukkur Industrial Enclave here, on Saturday.



This project will be a game changer for the entire region. He said that the country that has technical people will never die of hunger, we have to produce technical people in the country, our country is rich in natural resources and it is our failure not to get benefit from it. There is a dire need to work in the fields of environment, health and education in the country. The education system of Pakistan is old, now it should be changed. He said that there should be institutes like IBA, Art and Design in the country so that children do not go anywhere for a job after completing their degree. He said that our country will not need to go to the IMF if our youth go abroad for technical job purposes. The federal minister said that Sukkur is very important for investment, but unfortunately there are no Motorway roads in Sindh and Balochistan yet.

The former federal min-

ister said that the third cheapest electricity in the world is obtained from coal, coal is available here for at least 2 centuries and the politicians must think of it. Addressing the ceremony, the board member of Sindh Economic Zone Management Company Qasim Naveed Qamar said that the former federal minister MNA Syed Khurshid

on the issue of law and order situation, where it will be looked at as far as possible.

On this occasion, Hassan Bilgrami CEO of Bio Masdar Private Limited said that after a practical review of the different zones of Pakistan, it was decided that Khairpur is the best place for the economic zone, the location of the city is very important where jobs are generated by the establishment of industries. Speaking at the ceremony, former president of Sukkur Chamber of Commerce Aamir Ghori said that today is a memorable day for the history of Sukkur.

The former federal minister MNA Syed Khurshid Ahmad Shah has made a lot of efforts in its establishment. Sindh government deserves congratulations for laying the foundation stone of Sukkur Industrial Enclave. It is the joint responsibility of all the stakeholders to make this project successful and it is everyone's wish that Sukkur be given a dry port and the security system should also be improved.

Before this, former Federal Minister MNA Syed Khurshid Ahmad Shah also laid the foundation stone of Sukkur Industrial Enclave spread over 400 acres of land under public-private partnership at SITE near Arror University. On this occasion, Sindh Economic Zones Management Company CTO Farid Ahmad Sheikh, Commissioner Sukkur Division Fayyaz Hussain Abbasi, DC Sukkur Dr. MB Raja Dharejo, AC Rohri, Project Manager Naeem Sheikh, Marketing Head Hamad Shams, VC of Sukkur IBA University and other relevant officers were also presented.



HYDERABAD: People busy in filling their pots with drinking water from water filtration plant at Phulile area.

Culprits including PO arrested during operation

F.P. Report

KARAK: Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) along with local law enforcement agencies conducted search and strike operation against anti-social and criminal elements in the suburbs of Khurram police station, arrested the law-breaking accused and suspects, including proclaimed offenders.

According to the details, at the present time, a heavy police force conducted a search and strike operation in the most sensitive area of Banda Daud Shah of Karak district, in the suburbs and hilly areas of Khurram police station. In order to maintain peace and prevent crimes, the police raided the possible hideouts of anti-social elements and the hideouts of criminals during the search operation in the areas of Gulbanda, Dargah Shaheedan, Darwish Khel etc.

Two alleged culprits and four suspects including a proclaimed offender were arrested and the police also recovered a 12-bore repeater, a 7 mm rifle, a pistol and ammunition of different bore during the operation. According to the special orders of the District Police Officer Kirk Khan

Khel, the scope of search and strike operations has been increased throughout the district to maintain law and order and prevent crimes.

In this continuation of search and strike operations led by DSP Banda Dawood Shah Zaman Khan, SHO of Khurram Police Station, SHO Banda Police Station, In-Charge Chowki Bahadur Khel, RRF Squad and Commandos including Anti Terrorism Wing CTD and a heavy police force took part.

Meanwhile, DPO issued clear order to the entire Kirk police, as long as we are wearing the police uniform, we have the responsibility to protect the people and the nation and the country. We have to come out of the police stations and outposts and fight the criminal elements and snap their necks.

According to the details, District Karak (Public Relations Department) DPO Khan Khel's clear order to Puri Karak police, as long as we are wearing police uniform, we have the responsibility to protect the people and the nation and the country. We have to come out of the police stations and outposts and fight the criminal elements and snap their necks. According to the details, District Police

Officer Kirk Khan Khel, after his appointment, informed the Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan and the Deputy Inspector General of Police Kohat Division's policy and strategy to the Kirk Police, making it clear that the enemies of the country and criminals.

They have to suppress the elements by narrowing the ground on them and making the selfless service of the people their motto.

Now once again DPO Khan Khel has again given a clear order to the officers and personnel of District Kirk Police that as long as we are wearing the uniform, it is our responsibility to protect the people and the nation and the country. It is our responsibility to assure, we have to come out of the police stations and outposts and fight against the criminal elements and the enemies of the country and nations and snap their necks. He has told the police officers that only routine duty will not work, every police officer and official will have to take additional responsibility and the time demands that every police officer should play a role beyond his fixed and assigned duties.



SARGODHA: A doctor examining patients during free medical camp organized by NCHD in collaboration with different organization at Dindaar Colony.

Civil society demands shifting of factories Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Residents of Kohat Development Authority (KDA) housing society demands early shifting of factories from residential areas. An important meeting of the general body of KDA Phase-II of Civil Society, Kohat Township was held under the chairmanship of Dr. Saadullah Jan at Masjid Hazrat Usman Ghani which besides its elders, lawyers, doctors, serving and retired officers was also attended by other residents in large number.

The main agenda of the meeting was to get opinions and support regarding the problems being faced by the residents of Kohat Township, especially to protect the inhabitants of Phase-II from air pollution of the factories including Asphalt Factory and Crush Machines installed adjacent to the Township and to take various measures for the same.

At the end of the meeting, a resolution was unanimously passed in which the civil society Kohat township strongly demanded of the district administration including Commissioner Kohat Division, Deputy Commissioner Kohat, Assistant Commissioner Kohat, Tehsil Municipal Officer Kohat and District Environment Officer Kohat to immediately close and shift all the factories and crushing machines including the asphalt factory adjacent to KDA on Peshawar-Kohat Road from Gulshanabad Chowk to DHQ Hospital to a suitable place within the next 2 months and in future, construction of factories spreading pollution should not be allowed in the vicinity of residential areas.

Later, the civil society of Kohat township and its residents also took out a protest rally from Masjid Usman Ghani Chowk to Exchange Chowk to achieve their legitimate demands. At the end of the rally, the participants once again repeated their above-mentioned demands and sought its early redressal announcing in case of failure, the scope of their protest will be expanded to the entire district.

Husband convicted

F.P. Report

BUNER: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Javera Sartaj Khan convicted murderer for lifetime imprisonment for killing his wife as well as imposed Rs0.5 million on fine on the culprit which to be paid to deceased's heir.

According to prosecution, Izhar Ali resident of Daggar area of Buner killed his wife of village Bagra. The court announced fine rupees 500000 (five lac), the convicted have to pay to the legal heirs of the deceased.

AD&SJ further announced three years imprisonment to the convicted for having unlicensed pistol that was used in the crime. The murder case was registered on the complaint of deceased brother on 18/6/2022 at Daggar police station.

Mardan people living on mercy of stray dogs

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The urban population of Mardan was attacked by stray dogs, children and old people were bitten daily even fatal attacks were made on veiled women. However, the shortage of rabies vaccine made up for it.

Citizens demand immediate action from the Deputy Commissioner Mardan. According to the details Bari Cham urban areas of Mardan thousands of stray dogs in Gali Bagh, Par Hoti, Kas Kuroona, Sikandari Kuroona, Mardan Khas, Hoti, Baghdada, Bicket Gunj, Muslimabad and other densely populated areas have become a risk to the human population. Many women have been bitten including children and elderly people who are forced to take expensive vaccines from the open market due to the non-availability of vaccines in hospitals and some of them die due to not getting a single vaccine.

Hundreds of stray dogs wandering in the streets have become an alarm bell for the children and girls of schools and madrasas but despite the increasing number of stray dogs, TMO Mardan has not lost sight of this. Public social circles have strongly demanded the Deputy Commissioner Mardan to issue orders to ensure the availability of vaccines in hospitals, including the eradication of stray dogs.

Robbery in Govt college reported: Unknown thieves boldly stole three

580 watt solar panels worth lakhs of rupees six dry batteries and two ceiling fans from other rooms of the college in the dark of night on May 2 from Government Degree College Takhtbhai BS Block.

According to the details, on May 2, unknown thieves boldly entered the BS Block of Government Degree College Takhtbhai 3 glasses of 580 watts solar panel installed in the darkness of night worth two lakh rupees and 6 pieces of lithium dry batteries 100 ampere 48 volt worth 15 lakh rupees. Remember, the weight of these six batteries is 540 kg. Similarly, two ceiling fans from one room of the college the value of which is said to be 8 thousand rupees.

According to sources, two watchmen are on duty in the college, one of them is on leave and the college administration is taking the duty of the watchman from class IV employees.

Saro Shah police station had registered the diary on the written request of the college Principal Naik Muhammad but despite the passage of 27 days, the police failed to get access to the accused. Tehsil Council Takhtbhai Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Saeed visited the Degree College Takhtbhai and met the principal of the college Naik Muhammad and demanded to file an FIR against the accused involved in the theft as soon as possible and arrest them.

Meanwhile, Com-

missioner Shaukat Ali Yousafzai said that Mardan is a fertile and populous region. His tenure in Mardan was short but memorable. The positive role of media in Mardan is commendable.

He was addressing a farewell function in his honor on behalf of Mardan Press Club. Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, DPO Zahoor Afridi were also present on this occasion. On reaching the Mardan Press Club, President Bashir Adil welcomed the Commissioner Mardan along with the members of the club. Bashir Adil while appreciating the services of Commissioner said that Shaukat Ali Yousafzai is a bold and honest officer and he always prioritized the solution of public problems and did not come under any pressure.

He said that Shaukat Ali Yousafzai's role in maintaining the viability of the state in extremely adverse conditions in Swat will always be remembered. In his address, Commissioner Praised Mardan and the people of Mardan and said that he is leaving Mardan with beautiful memories and his connection with the people of Mardan and especially the media will always remain. On this occasion, a commemorative shield was also presented to Commissioner Shaukat Ali Yousafzai on behalf of the club president and the cabinet in recognition of his services.

Global peace journalists program concluded

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The department of journalism and Mass Communication, University of Malakand (UoM) arranged a virtual session of Global Peace Journalists Program that concluded at the varsity. The initiative was a joint venture of the UoM and a South Korean organization, the Heavenly Culture, World Peace and Restoration of Light (HWPL).

The UoM vice chancellor Rashid Ahmad attended the third and fourth online sessions which were held on the same day at the Digital Hujra in collaboration with the UoM Youth

Development Center.

The VC thanked the Korean instructors and appreciated the department of Journalism and Mass Communication, saying the varsity administration would continue to support such events at the varsity which, he added, is located in a conflict zone where journalists should be equipped with all skills to do balanced news stories to promote peace in the area. "Peace should not be taken for granted," argued one of the Korean instructors, elaborating journalists must report any issue at once which endangers peace. However, he said, working for peace was not an easy

task for journalists, considering first the journalist must work on their heart.

"Without a peaceful heart and mind, journalists would not be able to do balanced news stories," said a Korean instructor while emphasizing the importance of forgiving, which, she added, will be easy if "we first understand the situation of people with whom we are working." The Koreans also gave the example of Nelson Mandela for his epic struggle for peace which, she said, became possible after the great South African leader announced amnesty while implementing the policy of national reconciliation.



FAISALABAD: FESCO workers removing fault from electricity transformer.



We have no Plan B if Ukraine falls, says Estonia

KYIV (BBC): Estonia considers itself a front-line state, a Nato member where its border guards stare across the Narva River at the Russian fortress of Ivangorod. This tiny Baltic state, once a part of the Soviet Union, is convinced that once the fighting stops in Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin will turn his attention to the Baltics, looking to bring countries like Estonia back under Moscow's control.

To help stave off that possibility, Estonia's government has poured money and weapons into Ukraine's war effort, donating more than 1% of its GDP to Kyiv. "If every Nato country did this," says Estonia's steely Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, "Ukraine would win."

But Ukraine isn't winning. Short of artillery, ammunition, air defences and most of all, troops, Ukraine is struggling to hold back the sheer weight of Russian firepower, glide bombs and massed infantry assaults that often border on the suicidal. What, I asked Prime Minister Kallas, is Estonia's Plan B if Ukraine loses this war and Russia's invasion ultimately succeeds? "We have no Plan B for a Russian victory," she replies, "because then we would stop focussing on Plan A" - helping Ukraine push back the Russian invasion.

"We should not give in to pessimism. Victory in Ukraine is not just about territory. If Ukraine joins Nato, even without some territory, then that's a victory because it will be placed under the Nato umbrella." Kaja Kallas is controversial. She is not the first national leader to be more popular outside their country than within. Born a Soviet citizen, her mother and grandmother were forcibly deported to Siberia.

Now 46 and prime minister since 2021, she is one of the most hawkish leaders in Nato when it comes to blunting the Kremlin's ambitions in Europe. That has spooked some in the White House that she risks dragging the West into direct conflict with Moscow. Many Estonians are also

less than happy at taxes being raised to pay for their contribution to Ukraine's defence. But Kaja Kallas wants the West to wake up to what she sees as an existential threat from a newly aggressive Russia. "Russia wants to sow fear in our societies," she tells us, sitting in the cabinet office in Estonia's equivalent of 10 Downing Street, overlooking the soaring spires and ancient castle walls of Tallinn's Old Town.

"We see different hybrid attacks in many parts of the EU." "Hybrid attacks", also known as "sub-threshold" or "grey zone" warfare, are hostile actions suspected of being carried out by an adversary such as Russia where no shots are necessarily fired, no-one is killed and blame is often hard to pin - yet the damage can be extensive.

An example, still unsolved, would be the mysterious underwater explosions that blew up the Nordstream gas pipelines beneath the Baltic Sea in 2022. Another example is the recent allegation of Russian electronic interference in flights passing close to its exclave of Kaliningrad on the Baltic coast. In its latest annual report, Estonia's internal security service Kapo quotes the example of last autumn when hundreds of schools in Estonia and other Baltic states were sent emails claiming bombs had been placed in school buildings.

"Such threats," says the report, "aim to create psychological and emotional tension by targeting the most vulnerable - threatening the safety of children". So just how vulnerable is Estonia to a future Russian invasion? "We have to prepare for war so that we don't have one," says one Nato officer, speaking on the sidelines of Nato's Exercise Steadfast Defender.

Down on Estonia's southern border with Latvia, ageing British Challenger 2 tanks and other 1980s-era armoured vehicles lurch over farmland, belching exhaust fumes into the clear spring air. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February

2022 was something of a wake-up call for the Western alliance. It made Nato chiefs realise that they needed to significantly beef up their military presence on Europe's eastern flank if they are to deter any future Russian invasion. Today the UK leads a 1,200-strong battle group based in Tapa, northern Estonia, and composed of tanks, infantry, artillery, drones and a company of France's elite mountain infantry.

"The key part of this strategy of denial," says Brigadier Giles Harris, who commands UK forces here, "is to make sure we have enough forces built up in time to create more of a deterrence". I point out that 1,200 troops does not sound like a lot when the one big lesson from the current conflict in Ukraine is that mass matters. Russia may have poor tactics and equipment but it can field such vastly superior numbers of men and ammunition that it is often able to overwhelm Ukraine's defences.

"Your observations that one battle group isn't enough would be a fair one a few years ago," he replies. "But our new plans see us reinforcing at brigade scale [3,000-5,000 troops] in advance of even a short, small-scale incursion [by Russia]." "We have a formation at high readiness in the UK... to get heavier forces here in time... and it's a complete step change from where we were before." The British forces based in Tapa, and their Estonian partners, are keeping a close eye on what's happening in Ukraine.

"It's a window into the tactical deployment of Russian troops," says Brig Harris. "We now see our training here in Estonia far more as a mission rehearsal specifically to fight the enemy we see playing out in the south [Ukraine]." So ultimately, I ask him, given the setbacks Ukraine is currently experiencing, largely due to a shortage of ammunition and manpower, is Britain's commander here confident that a Russian incursion into Estonia would be repelled successfully? "Absolutely," he replies, without hesitation. "More so now than ever before."

Zambian ex-first lady arrested on fraud charges

LUSAKA (BBC): Zambia's former First Lady Esther Lungu and her daughter Chiyeso Katete have been arrested over possession of properties suspected to be proceeds of crime. The two were arrested in the capital, Lusaka, alongside another close relative identified as Charles Phiri, authorities said.

Ms Lungu "failed to give a reasonable explanation" of how she acquired a \$1.5m (£1.2m) estate in the capital, the state anti-drug agency said. Former President Edgar Lungu said the family would challenge the charges in court. The former leader has been accusing the government of victimising him and members of his Patriotic Front (PF) party to block his return to politics ahead of 2026 elections.

He recently claimed to have been put under house arrest over his heightened political activities although the government denied it. Last September, his wife was arrested over corruption allegations, involving cases of theft of motor vehicles and title deeds, which she denied. Ms Lungu, 66, was arrested on suspicion of fraudulently acquiring a luxurious real estate in Lusaka, the Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC) said in a statement.

It said Ms Lungu owned "15 white double storey flats" situated in State Lodge area of Lusaka's Chongwe town, "reasonably suspected to be proceeds of crime". The exact date the property, owned jointly with other unknown people, was acquired was not clear but the DEC said it was bought between 2015 and 2023. The DEC said her daughter was faced with additional charges of acquiring another three flats estate in Lusaka, suspected to have been bought fraudulently.

"Further, she was arrested for possession of 1 high-cost house, four chicken runs, and associated external works in the property," the agency added. They were all released on bond, said Mr Lungu, adding that they were safe at home after being questioned by DEC officials for several hours. Another of Ms Lungu's daughters, Tasila, is facing separate but related charges, according to the DEC. She has been ordered, through her lawyers, to appear at the DEC on Monday.

The accused persons did not comment on the allegations but in a brief statement, the former president said the family would challenge them in court. It was not immediately clear if and when they will appear in court. Mr Lungu announced a comeback to politics last October, prompting the government to withdraw his retirement benefits. He had retired from politics after losing the presidency to Hakainde Hichilema in 2021.

After six years in office, Mr Lungu left the southern African country heavily in debt and with a precarious economy. Several former ministers, government officials and members of Mr Lungu's family have been on the radar of Zambia's investigative agencies in an anti-corruption campaign launched by President Hichilema. Mr Hichilema has vowed to recover all resources allegedly looted while Mr Lungu's was in power. Critics say the anti-corruption drive is politically motivated.

‘Too much heat’ hits Delhi courts, judges asked to let lawyers ditch robes



NEW DELHI (Reuters): Soaring temperatures in India's capital have proven to be too much for some courts and are putting to the test a law in place since 1961 that requires lawyers to wear heavy black robes and coats.

At least three High Courts have permitted lawyers to discard the robes and coats for the summer, although the Supreme Court is being urged to make it a general rule for all lawyers in the country. Judges at one New Delhi court postponed a case this week until later in the year, complaining about a lack of air conditioning and water supply.

While India's Supreme Court and most High Courts have air conditioning, many lower courts and consumer forums depend on fans and have poor ventilation. New Delhi recorded temperatures of around 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) for the first time this week, forcing authorities to restrict water supply, shut schools and set up heatstroke units at hospitals. They have also deployed paramedics to polling stations for the final day of India's massive general election on Saturday in case any voters fall ill as they queue in the heat. A 40-year-old labourer died of heat stroke.

The northwest of India has been experiencing high temperatures for several weeks. India's Meteorological Department has predicted two or three times the usual number of heat wave days in the region

this month, or days defined by abnormally hot weather. For Delhi, that means sweltering temperatures that are affecting people across the city, including its legal system. At a consumer court in the southwestern district of Dwarka, which Reuters visited, judges presided over cases against insurance companies in a courtroom fitted with two non-functioning air conditioners. Ceiling fans and open windows offered the only respite from the weather.

Three of the court's judges issued a written order this week stating they had declined to hear a case due to high temperatures in the court room. They adjourned the case for the cooler month of November. "There is neither air conditioner nor cooler in the court room ... There is too much heat. There is no water supply even to go to the washroom to ease ourselves ... In these circumstances, arguments cannot be heard," the order said.

In 2021, India's then chief justice said courts "still operate from dilapidated structures without proper facilities", which was "severely detrimental" for both litigants and lawyers. A Delhi-based lawyer, Shailendra Mani Tripathi, has taken the matter to the Supreme Court, asking justices to change the decades old dresscode. Black coats absorb more heat and endanger health, Tripathi says in his filing, which the justices have yet to hear. Forcing lawyers to wear them "is neither fair nor reasonable," he says.

Serbs will head to polls again after fraud reports

BELGRADE (AP): Voters in Serbia will go to the polls this weekend for a municipal vote in dozens of cities and towns, including a rerun ballot in the capital of Belgrade where ruling populists were accused of an election fraud in December.

The right-wing Serbian Progressive Party of President Aleksandar Vucic is seen as a favorite ahead of the Sunday balloting, aiming to further cement an already vast hold on power. The populist strongman is formally seeking to have his troubled nation join the European Union but has steadily drifted away from pro-EU democracy values while nurturing close ties with Russia and China.

Vucic's opponents remain weak. A pro-Western opposition alliance that was behind big anti-government street protests last year has splintered and turned against each other, lowering chances for an upset.

Some 65 million voters will choose local authorities in all key cities in Serbia: the capital of Belgrade, the northern regional center of Novi Sad and Nis in the south, as well as nearly 80 town halls or local councils throughout the country. The governing party has for over a decade firmly controlled all levels of power in Serbia, so if the opposition manages to wrestle away at least some of the local councils, not to mention big cities, it would be a significant success. Analysts, however, warn that disagreements among opposition groups have led to huge disappointment among their supporters and that voter apathy is widespread ahead of Sunday's ballot.

Governing right-wing Serbian Progressive Party is dominant. Firmly led by Vucic, the populists have presented themselves as the only political force capable of running the country and keeping it safe at a time of global turmoil.

Vucic and his party have refuted reports of widespread irregularities during the previous election that came from both international and local election observers. Populists have sought to portray an image of a strong national state defying powerful enemies in the West under Vucic's leadership — he has featured strongly in the campaign even though this is not permitted by the law. Pro-Western opposition groups have accused Vucic of crime links, rampant corruption and a crackdown on democracy. The opposition groups split over whether to take part in the ballot or press on with demands for free and fair elections.

Those taking part in the vote go under the slogan: "We choose to fight!" Adding to the confusion is the fact that some opposition parties that are not competing in Belgrade are running in other cities. Analysts say

this has left voters baffled. International election observers have said that the December election was held in "unjust conditions," in part because of the president's involvement and systemic advantages for the ruling party.

The report by an office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said the ballot was "marred by harsh rhetoric, bias in the media, pressure on public sector employees and misuse of public resources." Reports also emerged of voters from other parts of the country being bused into Belgrade to vote for the ruling party and being registered at bogus addresses.

Nothing, according to election observers from the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability, or CRTA. Under EU pressure, the government has formed a working group with watchdog organizations and opposition representatives. A law on voter registration has been amended but nothing really improved. CRTA's program director Rasa Nedeljkovic said, "We have evidence to show that things that we documented in previous electoral cycle, we are documenting now" again, he said, along with "new types of pressure, manipulation, especially with those (voters) working in public sector."

Italy's migrant jails are squalid and chaotic

ROME (AP): It was still dark and quiet outside when Ousmane Sylla had his last prayer in the courtyard of an Italian migrant jail. A few moments later, the silence of dawn was shattered. Chaos took over the detention and deportation center of Ponte Galeria on the outskirts of Rome. The 21-year-old Guinean had been found dead in an apparent suicide.

Fellow detainees who discovered his body screamed for help and frantically tried to resuscitate him. When paramedics finally arrived, Sylla was gone. Enraged by his death, migrants set mattresses on fire, broke down doors and threw stones at security forces inside the prison. The riots led to the arrest of 13 people. Sylla's death in February shined a spotlight on the conditions inside these de-facto jails for migrants, raising questions about Italy's migration policy as its government, led by far-right Premier Giorgia Meloni, vowed to build more such facilities across the country as well as abroad. The detention and deportation centers were established in 1999 and have been described as "black holes for human rights," by lawyers and activists. The Italian government says they are essential to deterring migrants like Sylla from crossing the Mediterranean on smuggler's boats.

Sylla's journey from the West African nation of Guinea to Italy began in 2022. One of 7 children, he dropped out of school during the COVID-19 pandemic. He learned masonry but his real passion was singing. Sylla posted videos of himself on TikTok rhyming and gesturing his hands like a rapper. "His dream was to become a big star, that everyone would say his name, and he would sing for everyone," his older sister, Mariama Sylla, said from the family's modest home in the outskirts of the capital, Conakry.

To get to Europe, Sylla crossed the Sahara through Mali, Algeria and Tunisia. He made his way to the Tunisian coast, where smugglers move thousands of migrants from

northern Africa to Europe on rickety boats. This Central Mediterranean route is known as one the deadliest migration crossings in the world: more than 2,500 people died or went missing last year alone. After nearly drowning in the Mediterranean, Sylla finally reached the Italian island of Lampedusa on July 29, 2023.

Sylla was trying to join his older brother, who lives in France. But when he reached the border town of Ventimiglia on August 9, 2023, he was rejected by French authorities. After lying about his age in the hopes it would increase his chance of getting residency, Sylla was sent south, to a center for underage migrants in the town of Cassino. But the place was violent and dysfunctional, his brother and witnesses told AP. During his time in Cassino, Sylla told them he was repeatedly beaten up by other migrants.

According to witnesses working at the center, the facility lacked basic services such as proper clothing, psychological support and translators. Food deliveries, pocket money and mobile data cards were scarce. On Oct. 13, Sylla received an order expelling him from the country. One day later, he was transferred to a detention and deportation center in Trapani, the first of two migrant jails where he would spend the last four months of his life, according to Dario Asta, a lawyer who assisted Sylla. Giuseppe Caradonna, another lawyer who tried to help Sylla, said that's when a psychologist first flagged his mental health issues. Caradonna informed local authorities on Nov. 14 that Sylla's mental and physical conditions made him unfit for detention and requested his transfer to a specialized facility. But the transfer request was denied and on Jan. 5 a judge ordered him held for three more months.

A fellow migrant detainee from Guinea-Bissau said that Sylla was taking daily medication provided by a doctor at the Trapani facility. In late January, when a riot broke out in the center, burning most of it, both

of them were transferred to the Ponte Galeria detention center near Rome. As Sylla boarded the bus that would transfer him, a doctor handed him his case file, urging him to show it to staff at the new center so he could get proper care. But there is no evidence that the file was ever seen by any professional at the Rome detention center and Sylla was never seen by the center's psychologist. The center, managed by an international detention and reception company called ORS, wouldn't comment on Sylla's treatment, but the contract confirmed they had a responsibility to provide psychological care to detainees.

Four days later, the young man took his own life. Italy currently has 10 such migrant jails across the country with a capacity to hold 700 foreigners under administrative detention at any one time. Two of them, including Trapani's, are closed for upgrades. In theory, the aim of the centers is deportation. But according to Interior Ministry data, only 52% of migrants in detention centers are successfully expelled. The rest are eventually released with a self-expulsion order, unable to work or regularize their situation. Many fall into the underground economy or become prey to criminal groups.

Rights groups and human rights lawyers have for years denounced and documented squalid conditions inside the migrant prisons, including the lack of adequate health services, over-prescription of psychiatric drugs to keep detainees sedated, and limited access for their lawyers and relatives. From 2019 to 2024, 13 people had died — five by suicide — inside Italy's detention centers, which also registered hundreds of suicide attempts and self-harm episodes. Sylla's relatives blame the Italian government for his death. "I am so, so angry at them!" Mariama told AP shortly after his burial in Conakry. "What they've done to my little brother, they abandoned him like he's not a human being. I'm furious."

closers of other candidates," said Angélica Chávez, a homemaker who was at the rally in Cotija. "Then there were gunshots, several rounds of gunfire very close. And then people started running and diving to the ground, crouching." Chávez was hurt in the stampede and had to take refuge in a local church. In Celaya, a city in Guanajuato, gunmen opened fire on a campaign event in April, killing a mayoral candidate and wounding three of her supporters. Saucedo, the analyst, sees the shootings as a sign that narco gangs are no longer willing to lose their handpicked candidates

lose. "Rather than allow the victory of a candidate who is not in line with their criminal interests, or allow a candidate linked to a rival drug gang to win, they use this tactic," Saucedo said. "What we're seeing in the final stretch is pretty desperate strategy on the part of some groups of drug traffickers." Saucedo said that such

attempts at narco-control of local politics had been seen previously in some particularly violent states, like Tamaulipas. "What was once limited ... is now spreading to include the whole country," he said.

The National Electoral Institute says it has had to cancel plans for 170 polling places, mostly in Chiapas and Michoacan and mostly because of security problems. In Chiapas, electoral authorities say there are places they can't even go to. While that's a tiny fraction of the country's 170,858 polling places, it's disturbing. And in the northern border city of Nuevo Laredo, a shadowy group that local media reports link to the dominant Northeast drug cartel has put up posters claiming one mayoral candidate is linked to the rival Gulf drug cartel.

Authorities have not confirmed the origin of the crude poster, which includes a photoshopped image of the candidate waving an assault rifle and wearing a bulletproof vest with the

Gulf cartel's insignia. In the state of Morelos, just south of Mexico City, residents awoke this week to find a banner strung over a road claiming a gubernatorial candidate was tied to rival drug gangs. The banner was signed by a local drug boss whose name is unknown, "the Commander of the Three Letters." Another apparently gang-related banner threatened that anyone trying to buy votes would be "punished severely." That banner was signed by "Those who have always killed the shots here."

Such events appear to indicate that past calculations by the cartels — take out the strongest candidate you don't like, and the remaining major-party candidate will win by default — have become more complicated. In one town in Michoacan, Maravatio, the gangs apparently tried to eliminate any doubts as to who will win this year; they killed off three candidates for town mayor who were apparently not to their liking.

Mexico's drug cartels appear to be playing a wider role in elections

COTIJA, Mexico (AP): Mexico's drug cartels and gangs appear to be playing a wider role than before in Sunday's elections," Saucedo said. "They have loyal voters who they have won over through the distribution of food packages, cash, medicine and infrastructure projects. They will use them to support narco-candidates." In some places, it appears the gangs are encouraging people to vote while discouraging voting in areas controlled by their rivals.

Electoral authorities reported that assailants burned a house where ballots were being stored ahead of Sunday in the violence-wracked town of Chicomuselo, in the southern state of Chiapas. While they did not say who was behind the attack, the town is completely dominated by two warring drug cartels, Jalisco and Sinaloa. On May 14, gunmen apparently linked to a cartel shot and killed 11 people in a single day in Chicomuselo. On May 17, five people were killed along with a mayoral

candidate when gunmen opened fire on a crowd in the town of La Concordia, Chiapas, about 45 miles (75 kilometers) east of Chicomuselo. Targeted assassinations of local candidates continued. Dramatic video images showed a mayoral candidate in the southern state of Guerrero being shot in the head at point-blank range with a pistol. A total of 31 candidates, almost all running for mayors, have been killed this year. But mass attacks on campaign rallies, once exceedingly rare in Mexico, are becoming common, and have killed many more supporters than candidates this year. The effect is intimidating.

The last official day of campaigning, unidentified gunmen opened fire a couple of blocks away from a mayoral candidate's final campaign rally in the western state of Michoacan, sending hundreds of people scrambling for safety. "It seemed like a normal evening, like the campaign

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Expanding Pakistan Single Window Company

In an era where streamlined trade and commerce can significantly bolster economic growth, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's recent directive to expand the scope of the Pakistan Single Window (PSW) Company marks a commendable move towards enhancing Pakistan's trade infrastructure. This strategic initiative not only aims to facilitate trade but also integrates municipal services, setting a precedent for efficient governance and public service delivery.

The PSW Company, modeled after China's successful Single Window system, has already made substantial strides. As highlighted by CEO Syed Aftab Haider, the company facilitates 65% of the country's trade, linking 11 government departments and 29 banks. This integration reflects a robust framework that simplifies and expedites trade processes, a critical factor in a globally competitive market. The recognition of PSW among the best in the region by the United Nations' 2022 Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation underscores its efficacy and potential.

The government's decision to expand PSW's scope to include municipal services is a visionary step. This move will not only streamline bureaucratic processes but also enhance public access to essential services. By leveraging the digital infrastructure and efficiency of the PSW, citizens will experience faster, more transparent, and more reliable service delivery. This expansion is expected to reduce red tape, minimize corruption, and improve overall governance.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's emphasis on replicating the successful Chinese model is strategic. China's Single Window system has been a cornerstone of its trade facilitation, significantly reducing the time and cost associated with cross-border trade. By adopting and adapting this model, Pakistan can expect similar improvements, thus making its trade environment more attractive to both domestic and international investors. This initiative is a clear indication of the government's commitment to leveraging global best practices to drive national progress. In addition to trade facilitation, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's commitment to building a tobacco-free Pakistan is another significant stride towards public health and national well-being. On World No Tobacco Day, he reiterated the government's dedication to reducing tobacco production and consumption. The prime minister's call for a collective effort from civil society, professional associations, NGOs, and the media is crucial. Tobacco use not only affects individual health but also imposes a heavy burden on the nation's healthcare system.

With Pakistan ranked among the top 15 countries suffering from tobacco-related illnesses, the government's stringent measures, such as large pictorial health warnings, bans on loose cigarette sales, point-of-sale displays, and increased taxation, are steps in the right direction. The 150% increase in cigarette taxation is a bold move to discourage tobacco use. However, achieving a tobacco-free Pakistan will require sustained efforts and collaboration from all sectors of society. Furthermore, the prime minister's upcoming visit to China, focusing on enhancing business-to-business linkages, is poised to attract Chinese industries to Pakistan. This visit underscores the government's proactive approach in seeking foreign investment and industrial collaboration. By facilitating meetings between Pakistani and Chinese business communities, the government aims to foster economic ties and encourage Chinese industries to set up units in Pakistan. This could lead to job creation, technology transfer, and increased economic activity. The government's comprehensive approach to economic development, public health, and international collaboration reflects a progressive vision for Pakistan's future. The expansion of the PSW Company and the drive towards a tobacco-free Pakistan are emblematic of a leadership that prioritizes efficient governance, public well-being, and economic prosperity.

In conclusion, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's initiatives represent a forward-thinking approach to governance and national development. The expansion of the Pakistan Single Window Company will significantly enhance trade facilitation and public service delivery, while the commitment to reducing tobacco use highlights a strong focus on public health. Moreover, efforts to strengthen business ties with China demonstrate a strategic move to attract foreign investment and boost the economy. These measures collectively signal a brighter, more prosperous future for Pakistan, driven by innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to the well-being of its citizens. The government's actions are a testament to its dedication to creating a more efficient, healthy, and economically vibrant Pakistan.

US words with deeds

ALTHOUGH the more than one hour meeting between Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun and US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on Friday was the first face-to-face meeting between the two countries' defense chiefs since 2022, both chose to cut short the formalities and go straight to the core issues impacting Sino-US security relations — the Taiwan question and the South China Sea disputes.

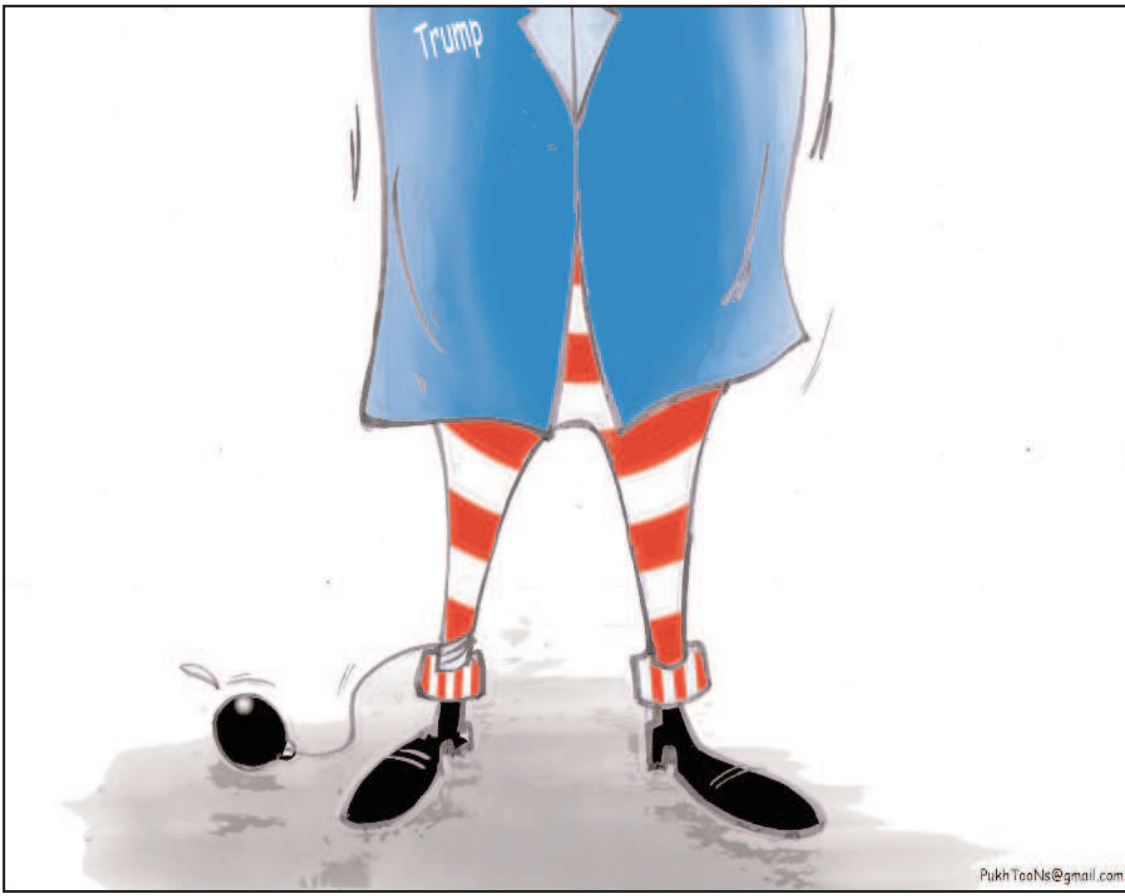
The US-backed, pro-independence Taiwan administrative head, Lai Ching-te, taking office on May 20, and the Philippines' increasingly provocative moves in the South China Sea must have prompted the two sides to hold the meeting. That the conversation the two defense chiefs had on the phone in April covered the same subjects points to the pressing need to manage the two potential flashpoints.

Although such exchanges are, as both sides claim, building on the summit of the two heads of state in San Francisco in November 2023, the dire situation across the Taiwan Strait and the increasingly provocative actions of the Philippines, along with the fraught bilateral economic relations, are the main issues that should be urgently addressed but cannot be because the US rarely, if ever, matches its words with deeds. The US is equally hypocritical on trade and technology issues.

At the ongoing Shangri-La Dialogue, which has brought together the defense and security chiefs of over 50 countries and regions, Austin, according to reports, is likely to urge allies to work closely with the US and be prepared to respond to emerging challenges and threats in the "Indo-Pacific" region and beyond. In contrast, Dong is expected to expound on China's global security vision, calling on countries to not be dragged into major powers' geopolitical games and, instead, safeguard peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific. In fact, China has always counterbalanced the US' destructive actions with constructive endeavors. It is clear the different kinds of future their forked paths can lead to.

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Is Trump toast? Only if Joe Biden seizes lifeline this guilty verdict has given him

Jonathan Freedland

IT took little more than nine hours of deliberation for a New York jury to ensure Donald Trump a new place in history. He was already the first US president, sitting or former, to be tried for a serious crime. Now he is the first ever to be convicted.

Sure, the guilty verdict did not come in any of the three much graver cases still outstanding against him. Like Al Capone – to whom Trump has, self-incriminatingly, long liked to compare himself – he got done on Thursday for the relatively small stuff. But the law got him in the end. It would be nice to think this really is the end. In a normal world, it wouldn't even be a question: Donald Trump would be done, all hope of a return to the White House shattered. "Of course," we'd say, "Americans would never elect a convicted felon as their president! They disqualified Joe Biden back in 1988 for nicking a rhetorical riff from Neil Kinnock, for heaven's sake – they're hardly going to send a criminal 34 times over to the White House."

But we left the normal world a long time ago. In Trumpworld, a guilty verdict, like the first presidential police mugshot, is a fundraising opportunity. Acolytes of the former president can point to the pattern that established itself early, by which successive legal blows only made Trump stronger, propelling him to the front of the pack during the Republican primaries as he cast himself as the victim of a liberal deep state. So you can see the logic behind Team Trump's bullish insistence that the pattern will hold. As the man himself said, he could "shoot somebody" on Fifth Avenue and still his supporters would not abandon him.

Even so, you could see something else last night written on the faces of Trump and his advisers. They knew that the 12 jurors in courtroom 1530 had just handed a lifeline to Joe Biden – at a moment when Biden could scarcely need it more. The incumbent president's poll numbers are grim on every measure that counts. He trails Trump in five of the

six must-win states. He's losing ground among the very groups – Black, Latino and young voters – that took him to victory in 2020. On the all-important issue of the economy Americans favour Trump over Biden by 46% to 32%.

Through it all, there has been one consolation. Polls have consistently found around one in five Republican voters who say they would reconsider their support for Trump, or ditch him altogether, if he were to be a convicted criminal. Well, that day has come.

The incumbent president's poll numbers are grim on every measure that counts. He trails Trump in five of the six must-win states. He's losing ground among the very groups – Black, Latino and young voters – that took him to victory in 2020. On the all-important issue of the economy Americans favour Trump over Biden by 46% to 32%.

And this is not just something people say to pollsters. Note the stubborn number of Republicans who have already snubbed Trump in actual – recent, if barely noticed – elections. I'm referring to the state-by-state primary contests, which have rolled on through the spring well after all Trump's opponents dropped out and he became his party's certain nominee. In Indiana, 22% of Republicans voted for Nikki Haley – in Pennsylvania it was 16.5% – even though Haley herself had long since abandoned her campaign (and last week endorsed Trump). These are Republicans, joined in some places by independents, who bothered to go out and vote in a dead-rubber election just to take a stand against Trump.

Now, of course, some of those voters will come back home in November. But it wouldn't take that many of them to decide the stink of Trump is too great, and that they can hold their nose no longer, to deprive the former president of victory. That won't happen by itself. A door opened for Joe Biden last night, but he has to walk through it. That

means appealing directly to those dissenting Republicans, urging them to break their party allegiance and lend him their votes. Incredibly – mad-deningly – Biden has so far made next to no effort to do that. Former presidential candidate Chris Christie, who dropped out of the race with an excoriating attack on Trump in January, revealed this week that neither Biden nor anyone in his team had so much as contacted him, neither to seek his endorsement nor even his advice. It looks

like the most appalling, and unmerited, complacency. The guilty verdict gives Biden a second chance. Of course, there are perils in using it. Press the point too hard and it will play into the false Trumpist narrative that the Manhattan trial is part of a partisan witch-hunt, in which Biden has abused the justice system to hound a political rival. Biden can't say anything that suggests he was the author of Trump's legal downfall. Neutral bromides about no one being above the law are the safest bet. But that should not stop surrogates for Biden referring to his opponent in every sentence not as "former president" but as "convicted felon Donald Trump". And when Trump claims his trial was rigged, Biden's lieutenants should hit back hard and say that Trump's own lawyers helped pick the 12 New Yorkers who delivered that verdict, thanks to the jury selection process. For all the crumbling trust in the country's public institutions – a process of corrosion actively promoted by Trump – most Americans still believe in the jury system.

While he's at it, the pres-

ident should make the use of surrogates a habit. One of the most glaring weaknesses of the Biden campaign has been the intensity of its focus on Biden. When you have a flawed candidate, the best remedy is to widen the lens and show that person surrounded by an impressive, capable team. As it happens, the Democrats have some campaign stars – Pete Buttigieg, Gina Raimondo, Gretchen Whitmer, Mitch Landrieu and others – but they're barely used. If Biden is worried they might overshadow him, or that their relative youth will make him look old, he needs to get over it. As the Republican sage Mike Murphy puts it: "He already looks old." Better to look old and surrounded by youth than old and alone.

The message needs work, too. He has to stop rattling off stats designed to show the US economy is doing great, and show instead that he gets that Americans are still feeling the pain of high inflation. In a nutshell: "We're turning the corner – now you need to decide whether you want a president who fights for you or a president who fights only for himself." I know, it seems odd to be discussing campaign tactics as if 2024 were a normal election. It's clearly anything but. The current frontrunner is a man who tried to overturn the election he lost in 2020 and, as the court found, cheated in the election he won in 2016. He is now more desperate to win than ever, because victory on 5 November is his only sure way of staying out of jail. And, as Christie also said this week, Trump fears jail the way he fears going broke: in his bones.

The danger to the American republic, to democracy and the rule of law, of such a man regaining power could not be more severe. But simply alerting voters to that peril does not seem to be enough. This contest also has to be won the old-fashioned way, with a smart campaign and a bread-and-butter message. So yes, those 12 citizens, good and true, have handed Joe Biden a lifeline. But now he must seize it.

The Guardian

Now all eyes are on Rafah and Washington

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

AN Israeli attack in southern Gaza last week ignited a fire in a camp for the displaced at Tel Al-Sultan in western Rafah that killed at least 45 Palestinians, many burned alive, and injured hundreds more, adding to at least 36,000 killed and more than 100,000 injured since the start of the conflict.

Many of the victims had fled to Rafah on the orders of Israeli forces who were bombarding other parts of Gaza. When Israel invaded Rafah three weeks ago and ordered the evacuation of its eastern districts, many refugees were forced to flee west, to destinations including Tel Al-Sultan. A week before the bombing, Israel had designated the neighborhood a "safe zone" and dropped leaflets urging Palestinians to move there. The attack hit a tent encampment known as the Kuwait Peace Camp, the location of which had to be known to Israel. Thus the responsibility for this war crime falls squarely on Israel.

The attack came in defiance of the International Court of Justice, which just two days earlier had ordered Israel to halt the Rafah offensive: Israel disregarded the order, confirming its rogue-state status. Despite the horror of last week's attack, the US has yet to call for a stop to Israel's Rafah operation. Earlier, President Joe Biden had said he would limit weapons supplies to Israel if it entered Rafah's "population centers," which clearly it has. But the US has taken no action, and has instead continued to support Israel materially and diplomatically. The administration's spokesmen have failed to call out Israel for crossing Biden's red line, and its UN diplomats are thwarting efforts for the UN Security Council to order a halt to Israel's Rafah operations.

This attack was the second mass killing Israel has committed in Rafah in this war. Its forces launched an assault on the city in February, killing over 83 people. Airstrikes destroyed several homes, killing most or all of their occupants, another textbook war crime.

To many Palestinian refugees in Gaza, most of whom are descendants of refugees in earlier waves going back to 1948, these massacres bring to mind the 1956 massacre by Israeli forces in a Rafah refugee camp, and repeated in other parts of Gaza, during Israel's brief occupation of the Strip. Hundreds of refugees were killed in cold blood. Those killings stopped only when Israel was forced to withdraw in early 1957, following a threat of action by US President Dwight Eisenhower.

Only when faced with such decisive moves by the US has Israel in the past curbed its appetite for Palestinian blood and land. So far in this war, the US has chosen not to do so, but has emboldened Israel by continuing military support, including weapons used in the Gaza war, and shielding it from Security Council censure.

The US administration has also failed to persuade Israel to provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinians in Gaza, as

required of an occupying power under international humanitarian law; to stop obstructing aid from other countries; and to open more crossings for the delivery of aid to Gaza. The US attempt to help by building a temporary pier off the coast of Gaza has fallen apart, as did the pier – which took months to build at great cost to US taxpayers, but was never able to provide the assistance it had promised. The whole effort was undertaken because the US did not want to pressure Israel to allow sufficient aid through the closed land crossings, including the Rafah border crossing, which already existed and would have been more than sufficient to allow sufficient aid in. The result has been an increasing number of Palestinians dying of starvation and malnutrition.

In addition to the colossal humanitarian toll of its Rafah incursions, Israel has now taken over the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza. This has had severe implications. For one, Israel has effectively cut off the main humanitarian access to Gaza and prevented the delivery of acutely needed aid. For another, Israel is trying to force its own vision for the future of Gaza, precluding the possibility of restoring control of the Strip by the Palestinian Authority, which the US and others have proposed, and reunifying Gaza with the West Bank as a prelude for an independent and viable Palestinian state.

Richard Peeperkorn, World Health Organization representative in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, said in February: "All eyes are on Rafah," warning against Israeli forces attacking the city. He feared "unimaginable disaster" if the Israeli army made a large-scale incursion into the city, which at the time it was threatening to invade.

Since last week's attack there has been widespread international condemnation. Officials and activists have been repeating Peeperkorn's phrase to express their concern and opposition to Israel's military operation in Rafah. His words superimposed on an image of tent camps for displaced Palestinians have been widely shared on social media, about 50 million times on Instagram alone.

The image is moving, despite its simplicity and the absence of pictures of dead bodies, blood, real people, names or distressing scenes. Its widespread use indicates how abhorrent most of the world, including most Americans, view the carnage in Rafah and all of Gaza. All eyes are on Rafah, but also on Washington: Israel's genocidal war in Gaza has continued mainly because the US has failed to take action to stop it. If Benjamin Netanyahu is left to his base instincts, he will drag his people, the entire region and possibly the US to the abyss with him. As the 19th-century British philosopher John Stuart Mill observed: "Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing." The "good men" of the US government have so far chosen to do nothing.

World is a shameful spectator to injustice

Dya-Eddine Said Bamakhrama

THE war on Gaza that Israel launched last October, killing nearly 40,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and destroying cities and infrastructure, reaffirms the pressing need for global and regional solidarity, and the highest state of alert to intensify efforts toward achieving lasting peace and security in this sensitive region.

There are immense human and material losses caused by the war, which continues to have painful negative impacts as the entire world stands powerless before it, and the adverse effects are clearly reflected on global peace and stability. The war has exposed the ugliness and brutality of the Israeli occupation, disproving Israel's claims to be an oasis of democracy in a disparate environment. This falsehood was highlighted by protests in many cities and universities worldwide, expressing outrage over the mass killing of unarmed civilians in Gaza.

It is shameful that the international community

remains a mere spectator to this injustice, brutal destruction, and barbaric killing that defies international laws. While we condemn the global silence, we must commend the positive steps taken by Spain, Norway, and Ireland to recognize the state of Palestine. The decision by these three European countries is a significant stride toward achieving global peace and security, as the Palestinian cause is one of the most significant causes worldwide. Its exacerbation over decades has been a major cause of many crises in the world and the region due to the occupation and displacement of the Palestinian people. We should also appreciate the efforts by the Arab-Islamic committee established during the Arab-Islamic summit in Riyadh last November, chaired by the Saudi minister of foreign affairs. Its efforts aim to achieve a ceasefire, the release of hostages, the delivery of aid and UN recogni-

tion of the state of Palestine based on 1967 borders.

The Israeli government opposes any peace plans that acknowledge Palestinian rights. This means no progress will be achieved unless Israeli political forces become convinced of the need to abandon the notion of hegemony and the imposition of force. The events in Gaza, notwithstanding the staggering number of casualties, have proved that military force will not provide the desired solution sought by the Israeli right wing.

Today, more than ever, it is imperative to join hands at various levels to find a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian cause based on the two-state solution. The use of violence and excessive force has proved that there can be no rest or stability without sustainable peace. It is crucial that the Palestinians take sincere and serious steps to consolidate their ranks and

strengthen their united movement toward this goal.

Resolving the Palestinian issue and achieving peace in the Middle East require strong political will and sustained efforts by all parties. This represents a significant challenge, but it is not impossible if sincere intentions and a commitment to justice and equality are present. Peace is the only way to achieve stability and prosperity in this sensitive region of the world.

In this regard, we can draw on the experiences of countries with a history of sponsoring peace, such as Saudi Arabia, which enjoys unparalleled acceptance in the Islamic world and has sponsored many peace talks to resolve crises in the Middle East. The Kingdom actively sought solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict, presenting two key initiatives in 1981 and in 2002. It also participated in the Madrid Conference in 1991 and

endorsed King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's peace initiative approved by the Arab summit conference in Beirut in 2002. It is fair and just to acknowl-

edge that from the era of King Abdulaziz to the reign of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia has stood by the Palestinian people since the onset of their plight. A notable example of this support is King Saud, who offered Ahmed Shagiri, the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Saudi seat at the UN, allowing him to defend his country's cause not only as a Palestinian representative but also from his position as a representative of Saudi Arabia.

My own country, Djibouti, is renowned for its pioneering role in peace and reconciliation efforts in the Horn of Africa, and for hosting refugees fleeing conflicts in neighboring countries. Since gaining its independence in 1977, Djibouti has defended

it, and continues to do so, in various international and regional forums. Everyone must understand that Israel will not enjoy peace unless it recognizes the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

The continuation of the Arab Peace Initiative is contingent upon Israel's beginning to fulfill its commitments within the framework of international references to achieve peace in the region. The starting point must be an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in Gaza and the exchange of prisoners and hostages, as a prelude to finding a just and comprehensive solution that ends the suffering of the oppressed Palestinian people by declaring their independent state recognized by the UN with East Jerusalem as its capital. I call on all countries that have not yet recognized the state of Palestine to do so. This will encourage peace, contribute to achieving stability and development, and put an end to the decades-long suffering of the Palestinian people.

Arab News

Why Ramzan Kadyrov remains strong despite unrest in Chechnya

Harold Chambers

OVER the past couple of weeks, events in Chechnya have shown the Kadyrov regime to be less than the beacon of order and stability it likes to portray itself as. Mass abductions coinciding with changes in top personnel have made the republic appear to be in tumult.

Such an interpretation, however, would be misleading, playing into the pitfalls of gauging the stability of authoritarian systems. If anything, these events underscore the current strength of the Kadyrov regime. On May 6, Chechen opposition blogger Tumso Abdurakhmanov shared a video in which a man in a suburb of Grozny burned a car that bore symbols associated with Adam Kadyrov, Ramzan's 16-year-old son who is notorious for emulating his father. The authorities almost immediately began hunting for the perpetrator of this act of protest.

Around ninety people were abducted from Starye Atagi and Shali in connection with the burning. Some victims have been released, although many remain in custody at an unknown location. One of the abducted, Abdullakh Magomadov, was killed through torture, with another death believed to be connected to the abductions. The authorities also targeted the relatives of suspects, a tactic intended to dissuade onlookers from behavior that could have violent repercussions for their loved ones and to incentivize families to intervene against rebellious behavior. This mass kidnapping alone makes May 2024 the worst month for abductions in Chechnya in over a year, according to data compiled by the opposition movement IADAT.

Several commentators have argued that this level of response illustrates the regime's weakness. But this enters the pitfall of how stability and strength are thought of in authoritarian regimes.

Strength is implicitly assumed to be rooted in a regime's popular legitimacy. Thus, crackdowns on public demonstrations are thought to indicate weakness. While this may be accurate in countries where the state is founded on popularity, this is by no means a guarantee in regimes like Kadyrov's and Putin's that are built entirely on violence.

The mass abduction of dozens connected to the fire starter is a straightforward continuation of Kadyrov's counterinsurgency strategy. It differs considerably from perhaps the most comparable incident, December 2022's raids in Urus-Martan. Then, a severe crackdown came in the wake of societal ridicule at a fight between members of the Kadyrovtsy. That the public viewed Kadyrov's personal militia as a joke directly undermined the regime's ability to exercise force, which they predominantly do by seeking to create an atmosphere of fear.

In contrast, the targeted symbolic attack on Adam Kadyrov undermined the regime in a more indirect way. If anything, rather than depicting a republic in chaos, the scope of the retribution speaks to Adam's newfound and growing influence. While he lacks a formal role in politics, his shadow looms large enough to inspire such terror.

The series of high-level resignations and re-appointments may make the Kadyrov regime look unstable, but they are evidence of its current authoritarian strength. These personnel moves were to clear a path for the rise of the new generation. The speaker of parliament remains unfilled, with veteran official Shaid Zhamaldae temporarily serving in this role. The re-shuffling is not yet complete. The two main movers are the former Chechen parliament speaker, now Prime Minister Magomed

Daudov and the man he succeeded, Muslim Khuchiev. This move kept Daudov in Chechnya, where he managed the regime's affairs for a decade. However, the regime apparently sought a different appointment, advocating through Grozny-aligned media for Daudov to be appointed head of Ingushetia. Kadyrov, who has long pursued greater influence over the neighboring republic, attributed the rumors to "Ingush provocateurs."

Kuchiev has now joined the office of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin as an advisor. This promotes yet another of Kadyrov's loyal, veteran agents into the federal ministries, along with Deputy Chief of the Russian Armed Forces' Main Military-Political Directorate Aпти Alaudinov and advisor to the emergency services minister Danil Martynov. Khuchiev and Daudov's re-assignments cleared the path for the new generation to continue their rise within Chechnya. The eldest Kadyrov son, Akhmat, became the physical culture and sport minister, with his old job as youth politics minister taken over by a son of Ramzan Kadyrov's oldest friend. Finally, Temirlan Khuchiev, son of the ex-Prime Minister, became the industry and energy minister.

Both the precise appointments and their timing came as a surprise. What exactly motivated this abrupt flurry of activity continues to remain a mystery, made even greater due to its coinciding with the ongoing purge of the Defense Ministry after President Putin assembled his new government. The general direction of the moves comes as no surprise. The generational transition in the republic has long been underway and is only going to continue. This integration and promotion of the old guard's children within the regime is the most compelling explanation for

the turnover, given the currently available information.

Conducting so many simultaneous personnel changes unprompted — as this seemingly was — can only come from a place of strength, even if the regime is in turmoil. I will concede that it does not hurt when most of your officials are engaged less meaningfully in their roles, relying instead on the work of lower ministerial employees. Regardless, mass reshuffles typically provoke an image of instability — look at the Russian Defense Ministry.

Mishustin's rapid integration of Khuchiev emphasizes the strength of Kadyrov's regime at the federal level. Not just anyone could have brought about such a fast transition for their regional prime minister, no matter how experienced they may be. That this move comes on the back of Alaudinov's promotion and the Kremlin's purge of the Defense Ministry only serves to further underscore Kadyrov's current strength.

As the generational transition continues, observers must brace themselves for more raids. Large-scale ministerial reshuffles will eventually happen less frequently but, for now, what happens in the Kremlin will accompany the changing bureaucratic guard in the Kadyrov regime. A similar occurrence should be expected around the end of this year after Ali Kadyrov, Ramzan's second son, comes of age in December.

The fact remains that, while many wish to see Chechnya become unstable for myriad reasons, the Kadyrov regime remains strong. Despite what it may seem, neither the mass abductions nor the personnel moves truly create instability. However, if more acts of resistance occur, they could inspire more people to escalate the amount of pressure piled on to the regime.

The Moscow Times

On this year's Global Day of Parents, I still long to be with my children

MY country, Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza from the Ministry of Justice. However, my repeated requests to visit my family in The Netherlands have so far been met with nothing but silence. Over the years, I received a few "acknowledgements of receipt" for my requests, but never an actual answer. I have missed numerous family milestones, including weddings of my children and the births of my grandchildren.

In 2023, I appealed directly to Rwanda's President Paul Kagame on humanitarian grounds and asked for permission to visit my severely ill husband who I have not met for more than a decade. Again, my plea went unanswered. Since then, I once again attempted to restore my civil rights, including my right to free movement, through Rwandan courts,

limited my access to social support networks — all practices that stand in stark contrast to Rwanda's supposed commitment to protecting families and advancing women's rights.

In 2014, I took my case to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR). After three years of deliberations, the court decided in my favour and acknowledged the infringement of my rights. The 2017 ruling by the African court confirmed that the Rwandan government had breached its international obligations. The court further ruled that the Rwandan government should compensate my family and I for the moral prejudice we suffered during this ordeal. The Rwandan government has refused to acknowledge the

infringement of my rights. The 2017 ruling by the African court confirmed that the Rwandan government had breached its international obligations. The court further ruled that the Rwandan government should compensate my family and I for the moral prejudice we suffered during this ordeal. The Rwandan government has refused to acknowledge the

infringement of my rights. The 2017 ruling by the African court confirmed that the Rwandan government had breached its international obligations. The court further ruled that the Rwandan government should compensate my family and I for the moral prejudice we suffered during this ordeal. The Rwandan government has refused to acknowledge the

Though I had no patrimonial relationship with any of them, every single one of these people is family to me, and I remain heartbroken to have been separated from them. The children, wives, parents and other family members of my supporters who have been killed, disappeared or put in jail for daring to demand a more democratic Rwanda are also living in endless sorrow. They, too, have been arbitrarily denied their right to a family life in the state which had promised to protect them. The presidential pardon that I was granted in 2018 stipulates that I may leave Rwanda with permission from the Ministry of Justice. However, my repeated requests to visit my family in The Netherlands have so far been met with nothing but silence. Over the years, I received a few “acknowledgements of receipt” for my requests, but never an actual answer. I have missed numerous family milestones, including weddings of my children and the births of my grandchildren. In 2023, I appealed directly to Rwanda's President Paul Kagame on humanitarian grounds and asked for permission to visit my severely ill husband who I have not met for more than a decade. Again, my plea went unanswered.

AfCHPR ruling to this day. Following the African court's ruling, and despite being eligible for release, I was kept imprisoned under stringent conditions for an additional year. I was eventually released under conditions, through a presidential pardon, in 2018. My suffering and that of my family, however, did not come to an end with my release from prison. After being freed, I was subjected to a relentless smear campaign on social media. Many high-ranking Rwandan officials — including ministers, government spokespersons, presidential advisers, ambassadors and members of parliament — publicly accused me of promoting a “genocidal ideology”, “inciting genocide” and waging war against Rwanda and its people. Although blatantly false, these allegations put a target on my back and made me fear for my safety, as well as the safety of those closest to me. These fears were not baseless, as during this period, many of my closest supporters, who had backed my call to establish a genuine democracy and rule of law in Rwanda, were forcefully disappeared, killed and arbitrarily arrested. Though I had no patrimonial relationship with any of them, every single one of these people is family to me, and I remain heartbroken to have been separated from them. The children, wives, parents and other family members of my supporters who have been killed, disappeared or put in jail for daring to demand a more democratic Rwanda are also living in endless sorrow. They, too, have been arbitrarily denied their right to a family life in the state which had promised to protect them.

The presidential pardon that I was granted in 2018 stipulates that I may leave Rwanda with permission

but my application was denied.

Today, as nations around the world celebrate the Global Day of Parents, I remain separated from my children. My story, and those of my supporters who have been targeted in various ways for calling for genuine democracy and rule of law in Rwanda, speaks to the harm parents, and their children, suffer when state mechanisms are wielded to silence, intimidate and punish government critics and human rights activists.

Today, I am not only being denied my right to a family life, but I also remain barred from participating in my country's elections. This means I am not allowed to participate in the July 2024 presidential election and make my case for genuine democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Rwanda, as a candidate.

The state's refusal to rehabilitate my political rights, as well as its repeated violations of my basic human rights, including my right to a family life, breach Rwanda's commitments under the East African Community Treaty, which mandates adherence to the fundamental principles of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

For this reason, I have filed a case before the East African Court of Justice. My aim was not only to secure interim measures allowing me to participate in the upcoming presidential elections, but also to challenge my unjust and heartbreaking separation from my family. This legal action is not just about my rights; it's about affirming the rights of all individuals who have been similarly victimised. And in the hope that I will be able to celebrate the next Global Day of Parents surrounded by my children.

Aljazeera

Thailand's China submarine deal for relations, not defense

Tommy Walker

THAILAND'S government appears set to complete a deal for a Chinese-built diesel-electric attack submarine — a one-off purchase first negotiated under its previous military government — but experts say at this point, motivation for the deal may more political than military. Under Thailand's previous government led by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Cha, the original deal to purchase three submarines was made in 2017. But only one of the submarine deals materialized and faced many snags along the way. It was projected to cost Thailand about 13.5 billion baht — or \$367 million — for China's construction of the S26T Yuan-class submarine and was put on hold amid the outbreak of COVID-19.

Hesitant to resume the deal, Thailand's Defense Ministry under a new civilian-led government in October 2023 said it would no longer acquire the submarine because of Beijing's inability to integrate a German-made diesel engine, a result of EU sanctions on China. Benjamin Zawacki, author of Thailand: Shifting Ground Between the U.S. and Rising China, said the events unfolded during a time of political uncertainty in Thailand.

"There were legitimate concerns about the engines. But the timing of that controversy coincided with a lot of controversy about the then-military government, whether or not it should be spending so much money in the midst of COVID-19 and the midst of post-

COVID-19 economic recovery," he told VOA. "It was trying to realize this submarine deal didn't place it in a very good light politically." With Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin's September 2023 rise to power, the submarine deal looked dead in the water — until Thai Defense Minister Sutin Klungsang's May 21 announcement that Thailand's Royal Navy had dropped demands for the German hardware, opting instead from Chinese-made CHD620 diesel engine, bringing the submarine deal back to life.

Chinese tourism is key to Thailand's tourist economy. China was Thailand's largest trading partner in 2023, when it exchanged an estimated \$135 billion in revenue. Following the 2014 military coup, the US, which had worked closely with Thailand in the past, quickly denounced the seizure of power, withdrawing millions in military aid to Bangkok. Since then, Bangkok and Beijing have tightened security ties. Thailand purchased more arms equipment in terms of value from China than the US between 2016 and 2022, according to a report published in the Lowy Institute. But Zawacki says questions remain about the necessity of a Thai attack submarine.

"Thailand doesn't need it, and China doesn't need Thailand to have it," he told VOA. "Speaking purely from a security standpoint, it doesn't make a great deal of sense for either China or Thailand,

especially given the political controversy it's caused." But, Zawacki added, the deal is "emblematic of the [Sino-Thai] military-to-military relationship" that has evolved since the 2014 coup. He also believes Beijing has persisted in finalizing the deal, which has since been modified to accommodate trade requirements on Thai military hardware procurement announced under Srettha's new government.

"It's been brought back I think primarily because it's important to the Chinese," Zawacki said. "I'm sure they were persistent. It's a deal they want to get done for their own reasons." Greg Raymond, a senior lecturer at the Strategic & Defence Studies Center at Australia National University, echoes that opinion, saying it seems like Chinese pressure pushed the deal over the line.

"I don't think [this is] what the current Srettha government was looking for," he said, adding that Srettha's administration in October 2023 briefly discussed the possibility of converting the deal into a procurement of Chinese-made naval frigates. "They were looking for that trade to frigates or some other alternative, [but] they wanted to stand their ground," he said of the new administration.

"They've been rolled," he added, alluding to China pushing through the deal. "I think that's pretty significant that whatever pressure or leverage the Chinese have applied has been successful."

VOA has contacted governments of Thailand and China seeking comment on the submarine deal.

Beijing's push for greater power in Southeast Asia, including the submarine deal with Thailand and docking its warships in Cambodia, won't go down well in Washington, Raymond added. "This ... is something which I'm not sure the Thais have thought through in terms of how that's going to be read by the US," he said. "I think it's an increasingly tenuous posture of hoping to somehow achieve a balance and equidistance between China and the US" Zawacki says Washington's main concern will be about where the Chinese-made submarine will dock. "Will it be at Sattipheap [Thailand Naval Base in Chonburi] which is where US assets are also docked? And would that pose a potential [for] espionage and information gathering? In terms of the proximity of having Chinese or Chinese-built vessel and US vessels in the same in the same port, that's been their primary concern." Unveiling the newly modified deal to acquire the submarine last week, Thai Defense Minister Sutin Klungsang asked opposition leaders to wait until further details of the transaction were locked in place before asking questions about it. According to the Bangkok Post, Sutin also said he could not share precisely when the finalized deal would be ready for review by Cabinet officials, adding that a trade component of the deal was still being negotiated.

VOA

Degradation of rangeland worldwide threatens the global food supply

Ranvir S. Nayar

A report by the UN in May warned that more than 1.5 billion people are at risk due to the rapid, largely unnoticed, degradation of rangeland, which is defined as land used for grazing or hunting.

It said a mix of factors, including faulty policies, climate change and rising populations, are negatively affecting the rangeland that covers more than 54 percent of the Earth's surface. It adds that more than 50 percent of rangeland has been degraded, the signs of which include diminished soil fertility, erosion, and rising salinity or alkalization of soil, resulting in inhibited plant growth. The poor health of rangeland worldwide is a very worrying development as it provides more than 17 percent of the global food supply and also about a third of the Earth's carbon storage.

The degradation has occurred primarily as a result of changes in land use, as rangeland is increasingly converted to farmland or developed to build factories, homes and offices as a result of increasing urbanization. Even on rangeland that is still used for pastoral purposes, excessive grazing by pastoralists causes damage, as do government policies that incentivize over-exploitation, a trend seen in Brazil until recently.

Despite the dramatic increase in the degradation, much of it has gone largely unnoticed, perhaps

because there is very little awareness of rangeland and its importance to the world, including the crucial role it plays in coping with climate change and global warming. The biggest threats posed by the degradation of rangeland are of course its effects on global food security and the livelihoods of almost a quarter of world's population; more than 2 billion people, mainly herders, ranchers and farmers, most of them poor and marginalized, depend on healthy rangeland to make a living, most commonly from rearing cattle.

The percentage of the population dependent on the rearing of livestock as the main source of income is highest in poorer nations. For instance, as much as 80 percent of people in many West African states depend on livestock production for a living. In Central Asia and Mongolia, the figure is 30 percent. Livestock production also accounts for a significant share of the global food supply, as it provides 18 percent of calories and 34 percent of protein consumption.

Yet, the amount of food provided through livestock production is increasingly disrupted by efforts to improve food security and productivity by converting rangeland to farmland in arid regions, which has resulted in degraded land and lower agricultural yields. This is true even in places such as the US,

where large tracts of grassland have been converted to grow crops. Rangeland has also suffered in other parts of the world, albeit for different reasons. In Central Asia, the advent of private management of rangeland and the introduction of industrial farming have resulted in herders having insufficient resources for their livestock.

In West Africa, the effects of climate change in one of the world's driest regions have pushed herders into poverty as their pastures have become degraded to the point that they are unfit to support livestock in requisite numbers. In the Sahel region and East Africa, conflicts, along with climate change, have affected livestock migration, which in turn has had an impact on the state of rangeland.

In some other parts of the world, most notably Europe and Asia, increasing urbanization has resulted in changes to land use from pastures to sites for homes, offices and even factories and mines. South America has one of the largest populations of livestock in the world. It is also one of the largest producers of meat. But on top of the effects of climate change, even this region is not fully spared the effects of changes in land use. This was most notable during the four-year period when Jair Bolsonaro was president of

Brazil and authorized large-scale farming and logging operations in the Amazon rainforest.

Outside of Brazil, climate change, deforestation linked to industrialized agriculture and extractive activities, and changes of land use have also led to the degradation of rangeland in the region. While the damage is extensive, and not easy to reverse or even curb, it is not yet too late to take remedial action. If we are to reverse the trend, however, it is important for all stakeholders to play their part. Responsible governance of rangeland requires the meaningful participation of all, so that communities can take collective actions that improve access to land and combine traditional knowledge with practical skills.

One of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals is for the world to achieve neutrality in land degradation, which means maintaining the amount and quality of healthy land needed to support global food security and ecosystems. This is only possible when every participant in the process is fully involved, across national borders. Traditional knowledge and heritage is also a key factor and so pastoralists who have been in the business for generations must share their hereditary knowledge with the wider community so that more people adopt the proven best practices traditionally used by generations of livestock producers.



Traders demand pragmatic steps for maintenance of law and order situation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Traders demanded of the government to take pragmatic steps for improving law and order situation.

They urged federal and provincial tax departments/authorities to respect dignity during actions and enforcement of rules and regulations and orders.

Business community asked to end issuance of illegal notices, harassment and unnecessary actions by concerned authorities.

Traders want permanent solutions to border-related issues. They demanded steps to make a fully functional dry-port. The government should pay attention to developing small and medium scale business and industry, along with the mining, marble sector, they stressed.

The traders asked the government to retain tax-exemption for erstwhile FATA/merged district and Provincial Administered Tribal Areas (PATA).

They made these demands during a joint meeting of

various trade bodies and associations of Peshawar held under chairmanship of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fuad Ishaq here at the chamber house on Saturday.

On the occasion, almost all the trade unions in Peshawar have placed their trust in the Businessman Forum (BF) leader former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour and pledged their support to BF for the upcoming election of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI).

The meeting was attended by Businessman Forum leader former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, former FPCCI president Ghazanfar Bilour, Anjuman e Tajran KP president and former president of the chamber Haji Muhammad Afzal, the SCCI senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, Peshawar Fruit Market President Haji Alif Khan, Haji Mushtaq Hussain, IAP president Ayub Zakori, Peshawar Jirga Chairman Habibullah Zahid, Saraf Bazar Andar Sher President

Sherfarzand, SIEA Kohat Road Peshawar President Wahid Arif Awan, executive members of the chamber Javed Akhtar, Fazal Mugeem, Pervaz Khan Khattak, Ismail Safi, former president Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Engr Maqsood Anwar Pervaz, Sherbaz Bilour, former SVPs of the SCCI Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Naeem Butt, former VP Shuja Muhammad, Aftab Iqbal, Ihsanullah, Muhammad Asghar, Haji Naseer, Gohar Islam, President Shoba Bazar Malik Miraj, President Khyber Bazar Khalid Mehmood, President Karimpur II Khurram Shahzad, Chairman Tajir Itehad University Road Haji Amir Nawaz, Abdul Rashid, traders, industrialists, importers and exporters were present.

Traders apprised meeting about issues relating to border closure, police, excise, custom, pesco, SNGPL, tax-authorities, KPRA, obstacles in export, trade and harassment, illegal actions by the federal and provincial relevant departments. They asked

SCCI to take up all issues with the government and authorities to resolve them.

Ilyas Bilour said BF is the only forum which has played a vital role in resolution of business community issues. He urged community vote and support for the forum in the upcoming SCCI elections.

Fuad Ishaq speaking on the occasion said SCCI has played a role in resolution of business community issues by proactively taking up with authorities at central and provincial level.

He said SCCI believes in self-less services to the business community and for the last 25 years, the businessman forum won elections with heavy margin and mandate and continued services to the traders. He urged the community to vote in favour of BF to continue this sequel of indiscriminate services.

Ghazanfar Bilour, Haji Muhammad Afzal and other traders' leaders also spoke on the occasion and shed light on traders' issues and SCCI role toward their amicable resolution.



ISLAMABAD: Counselor/Head of Economic and Development Section Kenta Kawamura and Economic Adviser from Embassy of Japan Ms. Sania Jehanzeb being presented a shield.

Kenta and Sania visits ICCI F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Kenta Kawamura, Counselor/Head of the Economic and Development Section, Ms. Sania Jehanzeb, Economic Adviser from Embassy of Japan on Saturday visited ICCI and discussed to enhance Sister-City program between both countries. Special thanks to Zafar Bakhtawari for his invaluable support.

The meeting was arranged by Shafique Swati Member and Sajid Iqbal Convener of the Committee. Sister-City program can play pivotal role to promote and share the trade, culture and many more including students exchange programs, between different cities of countries.

Delta Air sees healthy demand

DUBAI (Reuters): Delta Air Lines (DAL.N), opens new tab is running its largest ever transatlantic schedule this year as it sees healthy travel demand, especially on international routes, senior executives said on Saturday.

Delta, one of the largest US airlines, has forecast record high second-quarter revenue thanks to buoyant demand for spring and summer travel.

"Summer's progressing strongly and demand is quite healthy," CEO Ed Bastian told reporters.

"Demand is growing faster internationally than it is domestically, and Delta is very well positioned to take advantage of that with its partners," Bastian added. Delta says consumers are spending on experiences with travel a top priority after the pandemic.

Demand is particularly strong for premium travel, benefiting carriers like Delta. "We have seen continued strength through the spring to early summer... our international business is quite strong," Delta President Glen Hauenstein told reporters.

Rival American Airlines (AAL.O), opens new tab, however, said this week there was still excess seat capacity in the domestic market, resulting in discounting pressure.

Planning Minister visits CDHT

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Minister Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal visited Chengdu city in Sichuan, China and had a comprehensive tour of the Chengdu High Tech Development Zone (CDHT).

According to press release issued by Planning Commission here Saturday, the minister also met with Chengdu based entrepreneurs, and businessmen, interested in becoming part of Phase-II of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and members of the Pakistani diaspora.

During Minister's tour of CDHT, he was briefed by Chengdu Municipal leaders, and zonal officials, on the High Tech Development Zone's history, development profile, special policies to attract both domes-

tic and foreign investment, and pillar industries.

The CDHT, established in 1988, is one of the first national high-tech zones in China. In 2023, the CDHT realized a zonal GDP of over US\$ 43 billion. Covering an area of 237 sqkm, the zone includes a financial district, biotechnology city, and a science and technology park, employing more than 750,000 people, and registering over 4300 enterprises.

The minister thanked the local officials for their briefing and invited them to participate in Pakistan's development, especially vis-à-vis CPEC Phase-II, and to develop technology parks in Pakistan, sharing their valuable experiences and expertise.

The minister also invited relevant experts to visit

Pakistan, and engage with authorities and businesses, so that meaningful cooperation could take place. This was greeted positively by both the Municipal leaders and zonal officials.

During interaction with Chengdu entrepreneurs and businessmen, on invitation by the Minister, the businessmen shared their suggestions on how the Pakistani government could further facilitate them in expanding their operations in Pakistan, bring more investment into the country, hire more Pakistanis, and increase foreign exchange earnings.

In the Minister's exchange with the Pakistani diaspora, those present shared their achievements and desire to return to Pakistan, and contribute positively, the statement added.

Govt urged to announce new industrial zone

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Capital Area of Pakistan Business Forum (PBF), Atif Ikram Sheikh has urged the federal government to officially announce a new industrial zone in Islamabad to promote industrial sector and attract investment.

Addressing the members of Islamabad Industrial Association on Saturday, Atif Ikram who is also President FPCCI, said Islamabad has seen fast expansion during the last 15 years, and the existing industrial area has no more space to set up new industrial units. As per Master Plan of Islamabad, the industrial area of sectors I-9 and I-10 have come almost in the middle of the city with no adequate space available for establishment of additional industrial units," he pointed out.

Ikram said that industrial estate played a pivotal role in bringing prosperity to a larger extent with poverty reduction through creating plenty of job opportunities.

Urging the government to give due consideration to this important issue, the PBF Chairman said that a massive ratio of taxes on

part of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) had multiplied the problems of local industrialists in the capital city.

He said the new industrial zone will not only promote industrial base but also bring multiple benefits to the economy as it would create new job opportunities, enhance tax revenue and boost exports.

Atif Ikram mentioned that a few years back, with joint efforts of CDA and ICCI, Sector I-17 was earmarked for the purpose of industrial estate, and land acquisition process had also started, but later, the CDA changed the Master Plan for Islamabad and redesignated Sector I-17 from industrial use to institutional purposes.

The government has identified a piece of private land near Rawat Industrial Estate to establish a new industrial zone in the vicinity of the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT); however, there are some other options under consideration.

A large number of potential investors are willing to set up industries in

Islamabad, he added.

He further said that industrialisation was a key element of Pakistan's bright economic future, a gateway to northern areas, and also the main artery towards China, which could prove a potential economic hub in coming years to boost trade and industrial activities in the region.

He also demanded the government to revisit on the policy rate to support new industrialization 22 percent central bank's interest in Pakistan was highest in the whole Asia compared to interest rate in Japan is 0.1 percent, Taiwan 1.88 percent, Thailand 2.25, Malaysia 3 percent, China was 3.4 percent, Vietnam 4.5 percent, and Indonesia and Hongkong 5.75 percent, Bangladesh and India 6.5 percent. Currently high interest rate has made our industry uncompetitive in the national market due to which our exports are also suffering.

The best way to revive the economy is to focus on export-led growth of the economy for which single digit interest rate is the key requirement; he added.

Business delegation from Pakistan concludes its visit to Ethiopia

SIALKOT (APP): As a business and trade delegation from Pakistan concluded its visit to Ethiopia.

President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Abdul Ghafoor Malik expressed heartfelt gratitude on behalf of the delegation.

SCCI President Abdul Ghasfoor Malik highlighted the delightful experience of staying in Addis Ababa, noting the city's beauty, cultural heritage, the resilience and warmth of its people.

Malik commended the

Ethiopian government's vision and dedication to economic growth and development. He particularly acknowledged Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan Jemal Beker Abdula for his tireless efforts and meticulous planning in executing the delegation's visit.

Malik praised his commitment to strengthening ties between business communities of both nations. The SCCI president emphasized Ethiopia's appeal as an investment destination, citing its strategic initiatives to liberalize the economy, improve infrastructure, and create an investor-friendly environment. He reiterated the Sialkot chamber's commitment to facilitating collaborations between Sialkot-based exporters and Ethiopian

businessmen, seeing immense potential for mutually beneficial partnerships.

On the occasion, Abdul Ghafoor Malik presented souvenirs to Jemal Beker Abdula in honor of his contributions to promoting bilateral trade and managing the delegation with perfection.

Earlier, Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ethiopian Investment Commission to facilitate consortium-based investments in sectors such as sports goods, sports wear, leather products, surgical instruments, gloves, and workwear.

The MoU was signed by President SCCI Abdul Ghafoor Malik and

Ethiopian Investment Commissioner Hanna Arayaselassie.

This significant agreement lays the groundwork for enhanced bilateral trading cooperation between the business communities of Pakistan and Ethiopia through joint ventures.

Malik expressed his optimism about this development, stating, "This MoU marks a pivotal step towards fostering stronger economic ties and exploring new investment opportunities between our two countries. We look forward to collaborative ventures that will bring mutual growth and prosperity."

This strategic move is expected to boost trade and investment, opening new avenues for both nations to benefit from shared expertise and resources.



MULTAN: Labourers carrying seasonal fruit baskets on their heads at fruit market.

Rule of law

Khawaja Wajih-u-Din

Justice is the virtue of Allah. In Surah Al-Nisa in Ayat 135 he says: "O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: For Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do".

Islam places a high value on the establishment of justice. The Qur'an states that administering justice in a fair, impartial, and fearless manner is one of the primary objectives of the Islamic state. Islam views justice as a sacred trust that must be upheld with the utmost integrity, equity, and impartiality. Human being as vicegerent of Allah administers justice as Qazi. The Qazi is tasked with decision of disputes and fuqaha have described many attributes which are required of a person performing functions as Qazi.

He is required to show exemplary impartiality, fairness and sense of justice while adjudicating the cases. Judiciary operates within rule of law to protect human rights. For bringing better judicial service and accountability the importance of monitoring and evaluation cannot be over emphasized. It is the main path to change and innovation. I, as Registrar of the Peshawar High Court made consistent efforts to bring transparency, therefore, with the continuous support and hard work of other judicial officers working in the High Court developed improved monitoring and evaluation standards. The data pertaining to financial, planning and development, asset management, human resources etc received by the High Court was required to be analyzed on contemporary lines through various methodologies, therefore, a strong and agile Data Analysis Wing was established in the Secretariat of District Judiciary in the year 2018. It was tasked to collect information about case institution, disposal and

pendency for analysis purpose. The prime area of study of the wing was judicial performance measurement. It provided a strong monitoring and analytical dashboards using data generated by Case Flow Management Information System (CFMIS). The Wing provided information on periodic basis which led the way to timely policy level decisions with an impact on service delivery.

Performance years were proclaimed in the year 2018 and 2019. The judicial officers were encouraged to achieve the goals set by the High Court, however various reasons such as outbreak of pandemic effected the functionality of the court proceedings and affected the targets.

This concern required that data should be read with a pinch of salt. To ensure equal assessment of the judicial officers "Equal Playing Ground Model" was devised based on intelligible formulae in order to address the issue of disparity of inflow (institution) and pendency. In order to obtain more objective, accurate and reliable results

the available data was used for creating an effective monitoring and evaluation system i.e., District Judiciary Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, 2020-2025.

The purpose was to introduce better mechanisms for actions and accountability. Key performance indicators i.e quality, quantity, time, cost of litigation and public perception were settled and an all-encompassing and comprehensive policy was developed. The policy provided a comprehensive scheme for disposal of cases with focus on distribution of cases on the basis of bifurcation of zones and human resource management of district judiciary. The policy highlighted the stagnant categories of cases and provided a way forward for clearance of backlog and disposal of freshly instituted cases.

As a follow up strategy and as a continuation of objective to provide inexpensive and expeditious justice, the third performance year was declared in September 2020. Guidelines for case equalization, case marking and reasonable fixation of

per day disposal standards were issued. Mechanisms were devised for monthly monitoring and by District and Sessions Judge and quarterly monitoring by the High Court. The inspection standards in the form of proformas indicating the fields to be checked and assessment made were circulated to the judicial officers and were made available on the official website of Peshawar High Court. The aim was to encourage judicial officers to carry on their self-assessment, work efficiently, to strengthen their capacity by identifying the areas which need special attention and ultimately to enhance efficiency for better service delivery. As a strategy to redress the grievance of the general public, prime objective of rule of law complaint redressal mechanism was also improved. A software was developed for the purpose and the backup was maintained through scanning of the record.

The effectiveness and efficiency of justice system is not only dependent on the role of judicial officers, it also requires competence, skill, efficiency and honesty

of the staff attached to the courts and the paralegals working in the judicial system. To bring them into the sphere of accountability and monitoring the staff of the district judiciary was required to submit their Assets Declaration. Guidelines were issued to streamline the affairs of the stamp vendors and petition writers.

On the automation and digitization category development of stock an inventory management system was put in place. Creation of virtual benches in Peshawar High Court, Peshawar and two virtual benches at Kohat and Mardan were established. Establishment of 29 virtual points in Kpk resulted in connectivity of all the courts. Branch registries were created in the districts by extension of PHC CFMIS to the districts through VPN. The other innovative initiatives were establishment of the E kiosk, provision of online copies and EDSR etc.

Members of the District Judiciary always complained about the unit policy which was in vogue. It was replaced by performance quantification scheme

to the satisfaction of the district judiciary. Peshawar High court ministerial establishment rules and amendment in various existing laws were made.policies of hajj and Umrah, reimbursement of medical claims etc were laid down. The concept of internal audit and financial management of the District Judiciary was introduced for the first time. A record number of meetings of the departmental development working party resulted in approval of 346 proposals.

For the first time share in the ADP from.4% was increased.8% then the previous year by the government of KPK.It was all due to continuous planning and development of future oriented policies. An important consideration wants to minimize the throw forward liability. Construction for benches and judicial complexes was the one of the main tasks undertaken on priority. Judicial complex Haripur and Bannu bench were some of the projects completed. The research cell which was established published first ever quarterly case law

update and is continuing till date.

A proper diary management system was established leaving no room for human discretion in fixation of cases. The concept of red causes list was introduced. Digitization of the record rooms in the province was initiated in the year 2018. It was a very huge exercise and included digitization of record room and classification of the record as per rules. Significant progress in this respect was made. After FATA'S integration establishment of courts there was the biggest challenge. The courts in the erstwhile FATA are now functioning with the grace of Almighty.

Strengthening of Rule of Law depends on open and accessible justice system with accountability and transparency. As a Registrar of the Peshawar High Court, I have always strived that efforts should be put into action and efficiency and professionalism should be brought into the justice system by minimizing human discretion. (The writer is Ex-Registrar Peshawar High Court)



In brief

Pak team reach Bahrain

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Volleyball team landed in Bahrain on Saturday to feature in the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) Challenge Cup 2024. According to Chairman Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF) Chaudhry Muhammad Yaqoob, after back to back winning performances in the Central Asian Volleyball League and series against Australia, Pakistan team was now set to participate in the mega event of AVC Challenge cup which starting June 2 (Sunday). “We retained the winning squad of Central Asian Volleyball League after consultation of head coach Ruben Wolochin from Argentina,” said Yaqoob, adding that the national squad played excellent volleyball and we were expecting top notch performance in AVC Challenge Cup. The team was ready to showcase their skills and sportsmanship in the upcoming event, representing the country with pride and determination as twelve teams were competing in AVC Challenge Cup where Pakistan, Kazakhstan and Thailand would fight in pool B matches, said PVF chairman. Yaqoob said we had good experience at two recent events for the preparations of AVC Challenge Cup. I am very much hopeful that Pakistan team will return home with good results, he said. Pakistan would play its first group match against Kazakhstan on June 2 (Sunday) and Thailand on June 3 (Monday). The quarterfinal round would be held on June 6 while the semifinal and final of the challenge cup will be played on June 8 and June 9, respectively.

Punjab White wins

PESHAWAR (APP): Unbeaten among top 10 teams across the country, Punjab White clinched the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt National Men Handball League-2024 played here under the aegis of University of Peshawar on Saturday. Spokesperson of the Prime Minister of Pakistan and Pakistan Muslim League (N) former MPA Ikhtiar Wali Khan graced the occasion as chief guest who witnessed the thrilling final played between Punjab White and Punjab Green. Surprisingly both Punjab White and Green moved to the final where in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa White got third position. Punjab White remained unbeaten in the 10 teams battles, two teams each from Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad. Prime Minister's Youth Talent Hunt National Men Handball League Punjab White grabbed the title by defeating Punjab Green 32-20 in the thrilling final match while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa won the third position in the League organized by Directorate of Sports University of Peshawar with the support of Higher Education Commission, Islamabad. The final of the National League was played in a hotly contested encounter. Speaking on this occasion, Ikhtiar Wali Khan said that former Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif is a visionary leader who started the talent Hunt Program in 2013 for which he allocated Rs. 6 billion. This is the effort to attract more and more youth towards healthy activities and that is the reason why the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt program has been started, Ikhtiar Wali Khan said.

US cricket awaits its authentic Donald Duck moment

NEW YORK (BBC): There's a wonderful anecdote from the time the great Don Bradman was out for a duck in New York.

Having dismissed the legendary Australia batter - who finished with a Test average of 99.94 - without scoring, the jubilant bowler sprinted off to the boundary in celebration.

That breach of cricketing etiquette, in an era of fusty formality, was sufficient to slightly irk Bradman as he walked from his crease.

But when the bowler then proceeded to stuff his cap with US dollar bills collected from the crowd, Bradman was aghest.

Just under a century later, as the United States prepares to co-host the T20 World Cup, such brazen profiteering from cricket might be perceived in a different light.

The US has been a project of the International Cricket Council (ICC) for more than two and a half decades. Tangible progress has been slow.

With a major global ICC tournament on its shores (well, 16 of the 55 games,

at least) and cricket returning to the Olympic Games at Los Angeles in 2028, there is a sense cricket here has arrived at a critical juncture.

And there are still some challenging hurdles to clear if the sport is to succeed.

A beacon of hope amid the chaos

Firstly, USA Cricket, the sport's governing body in the country, is an organisation beset by governance problems. There have been more resignations than a chess tournament in recent years.

Unusually for a member hosting an ICC event, it has had next to no role in organising and marketing it.

The ICC set up T20 International Inc in the country, operating under its auspices, to oversee the tournament instead.

For anyone with even a passing interest in US cricket, it's a familiar tale. The body that USA Cricket replaced - USA Cricket Association - was expelled by the ICC in 2017.

However, a beacon of hope on the organisational

front has come from Major League Cricket (MLC), which is providing the infrastructure and profile the game so desperately needs in the US.

The T20 franchise tournament has significant backers, including Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella.

And the tournament has the finances to pull in the star names, too.

Washington Freedom alone has Steve Smith, Travis Head, Glenn Maxwell, Rachin Ravindra, Marco Jansen and Lockie Ferguson on their books for the 2024 season, which starts six days after the T20 World Cup wraps up.

Awarded List A status this week, MLC plans to expand from 19 games in 2023 to 34 by 2025.

Build it and people will come

Dedicated cricket grounds are already constructed in Dallas - hosting the opening game between the USA and Canada this weekend - and Florida.

The other stadium used for this tournament, in New York, has grabbed the

headlines. A 34,000-capacity temporary structure in Eisenhower Park with drop-in pitches has been put up in a matter of months, amid much fanfare, at a cost of £24m (\$30m).

The site of the New York stadium, set to host India v Pakistan, will be restored to a municipally accessible park after the tournament ends with responsibilities turned over to Nassau County authorities.

"It's a two-hour drive from downtown Manhattan, not served particularly well by public transport but worst of all leaves no real meaningful legacy," an MLC franchise owner told BBC Sport.

"India's games aside, the attendances for matches starting so early might be a real struggle."

The ICC insists it will leave behind a "world-class international playing facility with drainage and irrigation".

Informal proposals to use the ground after the World Cup finishes for a portion of this season's MLC matches to sustain interest in the game were

seemingly unworkable.

The MLC is also pressing ahead with plans for grounds in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington DC and New York.

They are supremely confident if they build them, people will come.

The million-dollar question

ICC's estimates of 50m-60m cricket fans in the US might feel hugely optimistic.

One in five Americans questioned in a recent YouGov poll did express an interest in the T20 World Cup and 52% of those surveyed believe the US team will win the tournament.

And a 2-1 series win over Bangladesh for the US in the lead-up has raised hopes of the associate member giving a few full members a bloody nose.

But, the million-dollar question is how (and if) cricket can jostle its way into the psyche of the American mainstream.

It's never going to come close to overtaking the traditional sports of baseball, basketball and NFL. It took

football a while to get its act together.

Cricket is being played by American universities, but does not have 'Varsity' status with the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

The tens of millions of dollars in university and federal funding, and profile, akin to college American football and basketball, remain firmly out of reach.

The pathway below MLC is Minor League Cricket and further down the pyramid it becomes a mishmash of leagues and private academies, but talent will climb.

There should be opportunities to play international cricket in the future for those who break through. Of the USA's squad for the T20 World Cup, 13 are over 30 and the other two are 29. Four members of the 15-man party - Nosthush Kenjige, Jessy Singh, Steven Taylor and Aaron Jones - were born in the US, for those who consider such things relevant.

For now, the South Asian diaspora - there are approximately 6.5 million

people from India or with Indian heritage in the US alone - have the passion, players and finances to carry the sport along.

There is also a sizable West Indian population, along with Anglophiles such as England World Cup winner Liam Plunkett, who emigrated a few years ago.

Throughout the next few weeks, though, expect the inevitable vox pops with Americans baffled by cricket to emerge on social media.

The 1994 football World Cup brought a similar reaction, though it would doubtless be different now.

Finally, back to Bradman. His dismissal in New York spawned a dubious yarn.

The story goes that Walt Disney took inspiration from the newspaper headlines that followed Bradman's nought for the name of Mickey Mouse's cartoon friend Donald Duck.

When there really is an authentic animated Disney cricket story or character - Jiminy aside - we'll know the sport will truly have made it in America.

KP Inter-Regional U23 KP Games

Peshawar wins overall trophy by securing 29 gold in

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Region clinched over trophy by leading medal table with 29 gold medals, followed by Hazara with a total of 48 medals including 17 gold and 16 silver and 15 bronze medals, Mardan was third with a total of 42 medals including 9 gold, 13 silver and 20 bronze medals.

Kohat won 30 medals including 8 gold, 8 silver and 14 bronze medals. Malakand won 25 medals including 6 gold, 6 silver, 13 bronze. Dera Ismail Khan won 21 medals including five gold, nine silver and seven bronze, Charsadda, Bannu got 22 medals including four gold, seven silver and 11 bronze medals. PSB Academy won a gold medal. Peshawar won gold in athletics, badminton, hockey, karate, squash, throw ball, table tennis, silver in athletics, karate, and volleyball, bronze medals in athletics and karate, Mardan in athletics, and gold in cricket, athletics, karate and silver medal in Taekwondo and bronze medals in Athletics, Karate and Taekwondo. Games were played in Peshawar, Charsadda,

the Games. Peshawar claimed 29 gold, 19 silver, 15 bronze and a total of 63 medals, followed by Hazara with a total of 48 medals including 17 gold, 16 silver and 15 bronze medals, Mardan was third with a total of 42 medals including 9 gold, 13 silver and 20 bronze medals. Kohat won 30 medals including 8 gold, 8 silver and 14 bronze medals. Malakand won 25 medals including 6 gold, 6 silver, 13 bronze. Dera Ismail Khan won 21 medals including five gold, nine silver and seven bronze, Charsadda, Bannu got 22 medals including four gold, seven silver and 11 bronze medals. PSB Academy won a gold medal. Peshawar won gold in athletics, badminton, hockey, karate, squash, throw ball, table tennis, silver in athletics, karate, and volleyball, bronze medals in athletics and karate, Mardan in athletics, and gold in cricket, athletics, karate and silver medal in Taekwondo and bronze medals in Athletics, Karate and Taekwondo. Games were played in Peshawar, Charsadda,



Wapda, PAF in Memorial Basketball Tournament final

ISLAMABAD (APP): Wapda would face Pakistan Air Force (PAF) in the final of All Pakistan Muhammad Majid and Abdul Nasir Memorial Basketball Tournament at Siddique Memon Sports Complex Karachi.

Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) Secretary General Khalid Bashir was the chief guest in the semifinal while PBBF associate secretary

Yaqoob Qadry and others also witnessed the matches.

Wapda continued their good show in the tournament and beat Islamabad in the first semifinal by 80-51. Wapda ace player Kaleemullah again led the winning side by scoring 17 points along with Muhammad Israr scored 12 points, while Ali Kazmi and Jibran Asif scored 14 and 12 points for

Islamabad respectively.

In the second semifinal, Pakistan Air Force trounced Punjab Rangers by 86-57 points to set the final clash against Wapda. PAF also maintained their dominance in the championship and comfortably won the crucial match. Umair Jan and Mehtab Akram were the top players for PAF with 18, 18 points respectively. Governor Sindh

Kamran Khan Tessori will be the chief guest in the closing ceremony of the memorial tournament who will distribute prizes among the players.

Late Muhammad Majid and late Abdul Nasir represented Pakistan in national events for a long time and the purpose to organise the memorial tournament was for their recognition of great love and services to basketball.

Everton 'assessing options' as 777 miss takeover deadline

LONDON (BBC): Everton say they will "assess all options for future ownership" after the deadline for the sale of the club to 777 Partners expired.

The US-based consortium agreed to buy majority owner Farhad Moshiri's 94% stake in the club in September 2023.

777 Partners was given until 05:00 BST on Saturday to complete the share purchase agreement of Everton but the deadline passed without resolution.

The club say they will "continue to operate as usual" as they look at their ownership options.

How did Everton get here?

Moshiri, who took a controlling stake of the club in 2016, has faced a backlash from supporters in recent years after presiding over a period of poor performances on and off the pitch.

Everton posted losses of just under £400m for the four years between 2019

and 2023, which resulted in the club being docked a total of eight points for two separate breaches of the Premier League's Profit and Sustainability Rules (PSR). After an agreement was struck last September, the Miami-based investment firm had hoped to complete a takeover of the club by the end of 2023.

However, the deal was met with persistent delays as 777 failed to meet the Premier League's required conditions of ownership.

The investment firm was granted an extension in February, and the Premier League wrote to the club and Moshiri in May to say 777 must provide proof of funds and turn their £200m loan to Everton into equity.

The Premier League also wanted proof that the firm could pay off a £158m loan owed to MSP Sports Capital.

But hopes of 777 meeting those conditions appeared slim in early May as the firm appointed

finance restructuring experts to help it cut costs.

With pressure building on the Premier League to reject the takeover, its chief executive Richard Masters said it was not for the league to decide who the club was sold to.

"The Premier League's role in this, as regulator, is to perform the [owners' and directors'] test," said Masters.

"It is not to decide who the current owner wants to sell his club to. That is his decision. At the moment, he wants to continue to have discussions with 777 about it."

'Unsuitable owners' Despite fan protests against Moshiri's ownership, a sale to 777 received widespread criticism and faced intensifying calls for the deal to be called off as the takeover dragged on.

The Everton Advisory Board wrote to Moshiri in early May asking him to dismiss 777's takeover bid and to explore alternative

options.

"Each party must recognise the role it is playing in sullying the reputation of one of the most storied clubs in English football history and appreciate that all the rumour and speculation is causing extremely high levels of anxiety and concern to the club's greatest assets: their fans," a statement read.

The Advisory Board labelled 777 "unsuitable owners", who would cause "reputational damage" to the club.

In a scheduled meeting with supporters later in May, Moshiri said he had received "unsolicited" approaches from other parties interested in the club as talks dragged with 777.

Crystal Palace co-owner John Textor is one known interested party.

The American businessman, who owns the largest stake in Palace, has announced plans to sell his 45% share in the Eagles and is monitoring the situa-

tion at Everton.

Toffees officials insist the club remains financially stable and claim there will be no "fire-sale" of players this summer in order to comply with PSR rules.

That's despite director of football, Kevin Thelwell, and manager, Sean Dyche, both saying there could be sales this summer.

The club's build of a new 52,000-seater stadium is expected to be completed in time for the 2025-26 season.

Costs for the project have increased from £500m to £760m since building began in 2021.

The Toffees finished 15th in the Premier League last season, securing their survival with three games remaining.

'No quick fix' Giulia Bould BBC Radio Merseyside reporter

@GiuliaBould The news that the 777 Partners takeover is off the

table won't come as a surprise to most Everton fans but many are asking: what's next?

The Miami-based investment group had been given numerous chances to complete the deal but given the amount of headlines surrounding the consortium and its finances in recent weeks it always looked unlikely to go through.

The Toffees still have a working relationship with 777 right now because they have provided loans of £200m.

But now the takeover is off it means Everton can progress talks with other interested parties, and a number have made unsolicited approaches that couldn't be advanced until this stage.

It's been another season of stress and drama for the fanbase with two PSR charges, points deductions and headlines around the takeover - so many will have further worries today.

Thelwell and Dyche have already begun working together to boost the squad in the transfer window, and talks are continuing with Seamus Coleman, Ashley Young and Idrissa Gana Gueye over new deals.

Both have said they don't necessarily have to sell members of their squad unless some big offers come in and the player wants to leave. That will be a relief to supporters who have seen favourites like Richarlison sold off in recent years in order for the club to meet PSR rules.

Regarding the ownership though, this will not be a quick fix. Other parties will be in conversation with Mr Moshiri and there will be another Premier League owners' and directors' test should they want to proceed. Given the 777 situation has run since September, a new deal to take control of Everton will surely play out over months, not weeks.



In brief

World parent's day celebrated

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan joins the global community in celebrating World Parents' Day on June 1st. This day acknowledges the invaluable contributions of both mothers and fathers in raising their children. The day honors the sacrifices parents make for their children's well-being, from nurturing their character to providing educational opportunities. Parents play distinct yet complementary roles in this journey, bringing their unique strengths and perspectives to child-rearing. Previously, various dates were used internationally to celebrate parenthood. However, the United Nations designated June 1st as World Parents' Day. This unified approach emphasizes the universal commitment and challenges faced by parents worldwide. The day serves as a platform to discuss the importance of healthy parent-child relationships for a child's development. It also highlights the need for support systems that strengthen families and empower parents in their crucial role.

285,000 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Saturday released 285,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 294,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1468.56 feet and was 70.56 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 118,600 cusecs and 120,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1188.75 feet, which was 138.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 56,200 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 159,200, 179,300, 145,900 and 65,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 77,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 15,400 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Dacoits loot guests at funeral

RAWALPINDI (INP): What can be described as quite an unusual incident, dacoits in Rawalpindi did not even spare those who had come to attend a funeral and robbed them of valuables worth millions of rupees, reported on Saturday. Four dacoits looted motorcycles, cellphones and cash from nine persons, including a woman, near Shahpur graveyard. Police have registered a case and launched hunt for the suspects.

Sports festival inaugurated

RAWALPINDI (APP): A sports festival was started here late on Friday on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Engineer Aamir Khattak. The festival was organized in collaboration with Municipal Corporation and District Sports Department. The sports festival kicked off on Friday would continue till June 12 at the Shahnaz Sheikh Hockey Stadium, Rawalpindi. Hockey, Football, Taekwondo, Badminton, MMA (International Event), a demonstration of pentathlon, kung fu, gymnastics and other games would be organized under the festival.

Govt to set up ECE centers in existing primary school

100 classrooms to enhance facilities

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Government of Pakistan is establishing Early Childhood Education (ECE) centres in existing primary school 100 classrooms in Islamabad to enhance early childhood education facilities and ensure quality education for young children.

This project aims to provide a foundation for lifelong learning by focusing on the critical early years, facilitating foundational learning and skills, said a press release here on Saturday.

It aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-4 and SDG-5), ensuring children are well-prepared for formal schooling. Initially, fifty urban and fifty rural areas are selected for the construction and renovation of 100 classrooms into ECE centres with appropriate furniture and materials and providing trained Montessori teachers and support staff.

As a result the project significantly improves educational infrastructure.

The initiative promotes holistic development, including physical, intel-

lectual, emotional, social, and moral growth, which helps reduce dropout rates, improve attendance, and enhance retention. The project targets enrolling 6,000 students annually, thereby improving the early childhood education enrollment ratio and ensuring gender equality by providing equal educational opportunities for boys and girls.

Economically, the project creates 300 jobs, including teaching and non-teaching positions and contributes to developing a skilled and educated workforce.

To address ECE needs, the project will establish a total of 100 ECE classrooms with the structure of kindergartens with five ECE rooms, one activity room, and a play area in 10 urban centres, and convert 50 existing classrooms into ECE centres in rural schools.

The provision includes specialised Montessori teachers (PPS-05), Montessori Teacher/Aide (PPS-04), and support staff (Ayas, PPS-01), hired through Education Service Providers (ESP) or FDE.

Learning during the early years plays a critical and formative role in acquiring concepts, developing skills and attitudes, and nurturing hidden potential, laying the foundations for lifelong learning. This period is marked by rapid physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and moral development.

Quality early childhood care and education significantly positively impact children's future learning, careers, and adult lives as responsible citizens. Investment in Early Childhood Education (ECE) benefits individuals, the education system, and society as a whole.

ECE is crucial for developing cognitive abilities, communication skills, creativity, problem-solving, and social skills, setting the stage for enhanced learning outcomes in subsequent grades. Children who receive ECE before enrolling in primary school exhibit lower dropout rates, improved attendance, better retention, and completion, and smoother transitions to higher educational levels.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik addressing a press conference.

Dar urges healthcare professionals to serve needy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday urged the healthcare professionals to stay committed to their noble profession and knowledge by undertaking the responsibility towards the needy and deserving with compassion and empathy.

Addressing a convocation ceremony of HBS Medical and Dental College, the deputy prime minister said that in the healthcare sector, the professionals should accord high priority to the needs of the deserving and needy and should not forget the high values taught by Islam which emphasized upon making of efforts for the betterment of others.

Dar said that together, they could transform Pakistan into a developed and prosperous country among the comity of nations as the country had the immense capacity and the nation was resilient to overcome all challenges.

He cited that when they formed the government,

the country was on the verge of default, but they took drastic steps to ensure economic turnaround. The deputy prime minister further stressed upon making of sincere efforts to become a member of G20.

"Things are turning around and Pakistan is not more in isolation among the comity of nations as claimed by certain critics," he added.

He also regretted that in the past, whenever the PML-N government strived to put the country on path of progress and prosperity, some hidden hands tried to disrupt that journey.

The foreign minister expressed the confidence that the incumbent government under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and former prime minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif would take the country to a new level of economic prosperity as envisaged by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Muhammad Iqbal.

The deputy prime min-

ister said that a committee had been working to address issues of medical sector, adding it would assess healthcare demand and supply in the country, ensure quality education and propose policy measures to the prime minister. He also lauded the contributions of the private sector in imparting medical education.

He also underlined the need of making further efforts for shaping the younger minds for future challenges and said that coordination was crucial in shaping the new generation with skills.

The future of the healthcare system in Pakistan was bright, he added. The deputy prime minister also wished success for the new medical graduates and reminded them that they were entering into a new phase of life full of challenges and opportunities.

They had chosen a noble duty and profession as under Islamic teachings 'saving a life tantamount to saving the whole humanity', he advised.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar delivering speech as chief guest at the 1st convocation of HBS Medical and Dental College.

Parliament to safeguard rights of journalists: NA Speaker

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that the parliament is determined to spearhead the legislation for protecting reporters and journalists, especially the ones attached to print media.

In a felicitation message to the newly elected members of the Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE), he congratulated Arshad Ahmed Arif and Ijaz-ul-Haq on their successful election as President and Secretary General of CPNE, respectively.

He expressed confidence that the newly elected members will carry out every possible effort in making CPNE a proactive organisation, dedicated to protecting and ensuring the provision of basic rights to reporters and journalists.

While acknowledging the role of print media, he said that "Parliament and media are dovetailed to further the cause of democracy".

Meanwhile, Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has extended warm felicitation to the newly elected members of the Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE).

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He expressed confidence that the newly elected members will carry out every possible effort in making CPNE a proactive organization, dedicated to protect and ensure the provision of basic rights to reporters and journalists.

While acknowledging the role of Print Media, he said that "Parliament and Media are dovetailed to further the cause of democracy". He also expressed his resolve that the Parliament of Pakistan is determined to spearhead the legislation for protecting reporters and journalists, especially the ones attached with Print Media.

Severe weather persists

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The heatwave conditions continuing across the country on Saturday with above 40 Celsius temperatures in several cities.

The plains of Sindh and Punjab are boiling in searing temperatures with maximum 45 Celsius temperature recorded in Lahore, Gujranwala, Bahawalpur and Jacobabad.

Meanwhile, mercury soared to 44 Celsius in Multan, Faisalabad, Sahiwal, Sargodha and Qambar Shahdadt districts. Maximum temperature 43 Celsius was recorded in Peshawar and 40 Celsius in federal capital city of Islamabad.

In Karachi, maximum temperature recorded 34 degree Celsius. The heatwave conditions in coastal areas of Sindh including Karachi likely to improve by June 02, the Met Office earlier predicted.

Salik urges staff to do duties with devotion

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Saturday urged the Hajj welfare staff (Moavineen-e-Hujjaj) to perform their responsibilities with devotion as serving the pilgrims is a sacred duty.

He said this on the occasion of orientation sessions held by the Hajj mission for supporting staff in Makkah to make them aware of assisting pilgrims during the Hajj days.

Emphasising the need for effective communication, the minister suggested that guides fluent in

various Pakistani languages should be deployed to assist pilgrims visiting the Haram Sharif for Umrah or prayers.

"This move would enhance the experience of pilgrims and help them navigate the area with comfort, given Pakistan's multicultural nature with language diversity," he added.

He urged the supporting staff to ensure that the pilgrims should be provided with the best possible facilities and services during their stay for Hajj, showing compassion and empathy towards them in addition to their duties.

The minister noted that properly marked and

men-supported bus pick-up points could facilitate the transportation of pilgrims to and from their residences.

He urged guides to be proactive in guiding pilgrims to the right ways towards their destinations, ensuring they were readily available to assist those who may feel distracted or lost on their way to their residences.

It is important to note that over four hundred members of Hajj welfare staff currently performing duties in transport, accommodation, and food departments, have already received orientation sessions to prepare them for their roles during the Hajj days.

IESCO supplying smooth, uninterrupted power supply

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) is supplying smooth and uninterrupted power supply on 1344 feeders despite severe heatwave.

However, severe heat wave caused increase in complaints of transformers tripping and individual

complaints, told IESCO spokesperson here Saturday.

He said the complaint staff were fully alert to promptly clear any faults. Additional, meters, transformers, cables and necessary equipments have already provided to filed offices to address con-

sumers complaints. Meanwhile, the IESCO has already canceled all approved development and scheduled maintenance programmes due to severe heatwave. The consumers could lodge their complaints at helpline 118 or send their SMS number 8118.



RAWALPINDI: A Gypsy father carefully cuts his son's hair at their roadside temporary home. — APP photo

Citizens applaud China's role in Pakistan's satellite missions

ISLAMABAD (INP): The people from countrywide have expressed their gratitude for China's support in launching Pakistani satellites into space.

According to Gwadar Pro, after the successful deployment of back to back two space satellites ICUBE-Q and PAKSAT MM-1, they expressed their appreciation for China's role in Pakistan's space missions.

Expressing their thoughts on social media, a number of Pakistanis view China's support in their space missions as a significant collaboration that enhances their capabilities and strengthens bilateral ties.

They regarded China's assistance as crucial in initiating and advancing Pakistan's satellite capabilities, fostering a robust partnership in space exploration.

On X (formerly Twitter), a user expressed gratitude and credited the Chinese side. The user

quoted a saying from late Chinese leader, Deng Xiaoping.

Another user posted on social media that launching of this satellite would address several issues we currently face in Pakistan, particularly internet outages.

The successful satellite launch received applause not only from overseas Pakistanis but also from those residing in China.

The internet was flooded with congratulatory messages celebrating Pakistan's flourishing space missions.

The report says, the launch of PAKSAT MM-1, Pakistan's second communication satellite will bring a multitude of benefits to the country. It will significantly improve internet connectivity across Pakistan, especially in remote areas.

The satellite will support tele-education and telemedicine services, allowing people in remote areas to access quality

education and healthcare services that were previously unavailable to them.

It will also support e-governance and e-commerce, which will help streamline government services and boost economic activities in the country.

The satellite will play a pivotal role in the socio-economic uplift of the country by strengthening its communication infrastructure.

It will help meet the growing demands of the Telecom sector and address the increasing demand for high-speed internet and seamless connectivity.

Therefore, the launch of MM-1 is seen as a testament among the locals to the strong collaboration and partnership between Pakistan and China in the field of space technology. They believe this partnership will continue to benefit both countries in the future.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor on his way at Islamabad Highway selling birds' nests during a hot and humid day in federal capital.

Team visit Minaret of Jam

KABUL (BNA): A delegation from the Ministry of Information and Culture has recently visited the historic Minaret of Jam in Ghor to assess its condition and preservation needs. Engineer Mohammad Haseeb Naseemi, Director of Preservation and Restoration of Historical Monuments at Ministry of Information and Culture, together with Mawlawi Abdul Hai Zaeem, Director of Information and Culture of Ghor and their technical team, visited the Minaret of Jam.

Supply plan to be started

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Energy of Kyrgyzstan plans to start electricity exports through Afghanistan to Pakistan under the CASA-1000 project next year. The \$1.2bn CASA-1000 regional power project is designed to interconnect the power grids of the four participating countries, allowing for hydro power-generated electricity to be exported from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

‘IEA holds firm grip on Afghanistan’



KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) holds a firm grip on Afghanistan which is crucial for Russia, Zamir Kabulov, Russia’s special presidential representative for Afghanistan and Director of the Foreign Ministry’s Second Asia Department, said. “We believe that this government is holding consistent control over the country. This is fundamentally important for us,” Kabulov said on the

Rossiya-24 television channel, TASS news agency reported. “As any disintegration of Afghanistan would have the most negative reverberations across the region.”. Kabulov considers that Russia can cooperate with Afghanistan in exporting oil products and ensuring that country’s food security. “Ensuring the basic essentials for the Afghan economy in the broad sense of this word. Of course, they are oil products, but

far beyond that,” he said when asked what form of Russia’s economic cooperation with Afghanistan may be possible. “Food security is also a [discussion] topic for the Afghan authorities in order to enhance cooperation, and to ensure the supplies of the most needed food-stuffs,” Kabulov added. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on May 27 that the initiative to remove the IEA from the list of terrorist organizations “reflects awareness of reality.” Kabulov told TASS earlier that Russia’s Foreign and Justice Ministries had briefed President Vladimir Putin that the IEA could be removed from the list of banned organizations. On May 28, Putin emphasized the need to build relations with the IEA as they were in power in Afghanistan and controlled the country.

20 dead after boat sinks in river

JALALABAD (Khaama Press): Local Taliban officials reported that a boat capsized in the sea in Nangarhar early Saturday morning, resulting in the deaths of 20 people. The governor’s office in Nangarhar stated that the bodies of 5 victims have been recovered so far. The boat was said to be carrying 25 people, including women and children. The media office of the Taliban governor in Nangarhar wrote in a statement that this “generator boat” sank around 7:30 AM on Saturday. According to the report, the deceased include women and children. It also added that the incident occurred in the “Basal” area of Mohmand Dara district. It is said that the boat had 25 passengers, and the Taliban stated that five passengers of the boat were rescued.

Officials have so far reported the discovery of five bodies and state that the search for the remaining bodies is ongoing. The statement added that emergency aid teams from the Taliban’s Ministry of Health and other officials have been dispatched to the scene of the accident to search for the victims’ bodies.

Aid distributed in victims

KABUL (BNA): Lieutenant General Mawlawi Amanuddin “Mansoor,” Commander of the 217 Omari Army Corps, announced that 10 million Afghanis in cash, along with various food and non-food items, have been distributed to flood victims across 20 districts in Badakhshan. He stated that the officials of the Islamic Emirate and the army personnel consider ensuring security and serving the people as part of their responsibilities and stand by the nation under any circumstances. Additionally, Engineer Zabihullah “Amiri,” the Head of Information and Culture of Badakhshan, mentioned that yesterday, a thousand bags of flour, 40 bags of rice, 180 blankets, 316 carpets, 150 steam pots, 300 kitchen items, and 16 tents were distributed to some of the affected individuals as governmental aid. Meanwhile, Mawlawi M. Akram “Akbari,” Head of Disaster Management in Badakhshan, reported that his department, in coordination with various authorities, has promptly addressed the needs of affected individuals. Governmental aid distributed includes 1,000 bags of flour, 500 five-liter cans of oil, 108 sets of clothes, 500 bags of rice, 114 cartons of meat, 600 packs of juice, and 300 tents.

It is worth mentioning that natural disasters over the past month have caused significant damage to the people and public infrastructure in Badakhshan, and the affected individuals require further assistance. The students have found the construction of these classrooms impactful for their education, stating that they used to study under the sun and in the open air. They are asking the authorities to provide educational materials, desks, and chairs as well for them. Subhanullah, one of the students, said: “We used to study in a tent. We don’t have books or any other educational materials.” Saleemullah, another student, said: “We used to study in a tent, and it would rain. Now that the building is constructed, it has no doors, no windows, no desks, and no books.” The district chief of Raghistan says that in the past nearly three years, more fundamental projects

Hanafi emphasizes service delivery as key responsibility

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, in a meeting with a group of scholars, Mujahideen, and influential figures from various provinces of the country, emphasized that providing services to the people in various fields is the main responsibilities and duties of the officials. In the meeting, scholars, Mujahideen, and elders expressed satisfaction with the local administration’s governance, activities, and performance in ensuring security, peace, and providing services. They also discussed the social, economic, and security issues in their provinces. They urged the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to prioritize establishing health clinics, constructing



roads, initiating development projects, and creating job opportunities for the youth in their provinces. In response to the concerns and suggestions, Deputy PM Hanafi, stated that the Islamic Emirate of

Afghanistan officials are open to all compatriots, welcoming their suggestions, opinions, and concerns. He also emphasized that delivering services across various sectors is a funda-

mental duty of the officials. He assured that both central and provincial authorities are dedicated to addressing the people’s needs and striving to meet their demands to the best of their ability.

Over 20,000 tourists visited Kapisa in less than three months

KAPISA (TOLONews): The Kapisa Directorate of Information and Culture announced that before the first three months of this year, more than 20,000 tourists have visited the recreational areas of Kapisa province of Afghanistan. According to the directorate, the Ministry of Information and Culture also initiated the construction of a standard hotel to provide facilities for tourists.

Nasratullah Nasrat, head of culture and tourism at the Kapisa Directorate of Information and Culture, said: “We proposed to the ministry to have a standard hotel or at least a place for accommodation so that when tourists come, they can leave their luggage and move towards any district they wish to visit.” Some visitors say that Kapisa has many recreational spots and that the caretaker government offi-

cials should provide more facilities for the people. Muzaffar, a resident of Mazar-i-Sharif, said: “Indeed, the north has very beautiful places. We came, we saw, and we enjoyed the Regrawan and Sayed.” Abdullah Faramarz, a resident of Bamyan, said: “We came with friends; it was truly an excellent place. We enjoyed it.” Kapisa is a scenic province adjacent to Kabul and attracts a high number of

visitors from across the country in the spring season. Navidullah, a resident of Parwan, said: “In my view, the Regrawan (flowing sand) of Kapisa is very beautiful and attracts everyone’s attention. It is truly a sight to behold.” According to officials, Sayad National Park, Regrawan (the flowing sand), and the scenic areas in Tagab district are among the places most visited by tourists.

Raghistan residents build school and clinic with personal funds

B A D A K H S H A N (TOLONews): Residents of Raghistan district in Badakhshan have constructed a school with classrooms and a medical center with more than six million Afghanis from their personal funds. The construction of this school and medical center in the village of Dahan Shala, Raghistan district, has addressed the challenges faced by residents of several villages in this district. Nazrullah, one of the residents, said: “The children here used to study in the open air, under the sun and rain. With the cooperation of the teachers, we were compelled to collect money from the people to build a medical center and this school.”



Qutbuddin, another resident, said: “With the cooperation of the district chief, we collected some money from the people and built this school for our children.” The students have found the construction of these classrooms impactful for their education, stating that they used to study under the sun and in the open air. They are asking the authorities to provide edu-

cational materials, desks, and chairs as well for them. Subhanullah, one of the students, said: “We used to study in a tent. We don’t have books or any other educational materials.” Saleemullah, another student, said: “We used to study in a tent, and it would rain. Now that the building is constructed, it has no doors, no windows, no desks, and no books.” The district chief of Raghistan says that in the past nearly three years, more fundamental projects

have been carried out in this district using the personal funds of the people. Hayatullah Mohsin, the district chief of Raghistan, Badakhshan, said: “In the past three years, we have built nearly three to four schools and clinics with the cooperation of the people.” The Badakhshan Directorate of Education stated that still 40 percent of the schools in this province do not have buildings, and students study under tents or in the open air.

Abdul Ghani Abidi, the spokesperson for the Badakhshan Directorate of Education, said: “About 60 percent of the schools have buildings, but in most border districts of Badakhshan such as Khash, Darwaz, Shaki, and Nerkhi, most schools do not have buildings.” Badakhshan, in the northeast of the country, is a province where the residents of its border districts face numerous challenges, including poor roads and a lack of healthcare centers.

Minister assessed local media in Jawzjan



KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Hayatullah Muhajir Farahi, the Deputy Minister of Publications at the Ministry of Information and Culture, reviewed the activities of local media in Jawzjan province of Afghanistan. In a meeting with the officials of Jawzjan Department of Information and Culture and the heads and journalists of local media in this province, he stated that the Islamic Emirate supports media outlets that operate according to the principles of the

Islamic Emirate system and Islamic values. The heads and journalists of the private local media in Jawzjan shared information about their work and activities, and also discussed some of their issues, suggestions, and requests with the Deputy Minister of Publications. Additionally, officials of the Jawzjan Directorate of Information and Culture mentioned in their speeches that no local media outlet in this province has stopped operating since the establish-

ment of the Islamic Emirate in the country, and the local media are functioning in accordance with the principles of the Islamic Emirate system and Islamic values. The Deputy Minister of Publications, assured that the leadership of the ministry is committed to addressing the problems and meeting the demands of local media officials. Following the meeting, the Deputy Minister Farahi, along with Mawlawi Saifuddin Moatasim, Head of Information and Culture of Jawzjan, and Qari Saifullah Anas, Head of National Radio and Television in Jawzjan, toured the broadcasting and technical sections of the Jawzjan National Radio and Television Directorate. In the end, Mawlawi Farahi and the mentioned officials also visited the area of the martyrs of Dasht-e-Leili and offered prayers for the souls of the martyrs who died for Islam, freedom, and justice.

Shopkeepers, artisans praise IEA’s tax exemption policy

KABUL (TOLONews): Shopkeepers and artisans in the capital praised the tax exemption by the Islamic Emirate. Some of these shopkeepers say that due to low sales and high shop rents, they were unable to pay taxes. Officials in the Islamic Emirate announced that according to the leader’s decree, taxes will no longer be collected from small businesses and shopkeepers with annual sales of up to two million Afghanis. Nisar Ahmad, a shop-

keeper, said: “Previously, we could barely cover the rent by the end of the month; it was a struggle. We are very happy with this decision by the Islamic Emirate.” Noor Mohammad, another shopkeeper, said: “We used to pay 65,000 Afghanis annually with great difficulty, and now that we are exempt, we are very happy.” On the other hand, some shopkeepers, while acknowledging that taxes are the government’s right,

still call for further tax reductions from the interim government. Jawan Mard, a shopkeeper, said: “It is true that this is the government’s right and that it is spent on us again. If there is income and we can pay, it is a very good thing.” Some economic experts believe that the tax exemption by officials in the Islamic Emirate will increase the income of small business owners and encourage citizens to establish small businesses.

Russia calls for enhancing security of Tajik-Afghan border

KABUL (Ariana News): The situation in Afghanistan highlights the need to strengthen Tajikistan’s border with the country and take other measures to ensure regional stability, Russian Defense Minister Andrey Belousov said. “In the Central Asian region, the situation in Afghanistan remains the main source of instability. Numerous radical groups have gained a foothold there, stepping up attempts to promote their ideas in the neighboring countries. The risk of gangs and terrorism spilling outside the country is growing,” he pointed out, addressing a meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Council of Defense Ministers in the Kazakh city of Almaty, TASS news agency reported. According to Russian Defense Minister Andrey Belousov, all this requires “constant monitoring and prompt measures aimed at ensuring regional stability.” “Those particularly include efforts to strengthen the Tajik-Afghan border,” he noted. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has previously dismissed countries’ security concerns over Afghanistan, emphasizing that it will not allow Afghanistan’s soil to be used against any other country.

Education Ministry launches 10 school uplift projects



KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Education has initiated practical work on 10 new development projects in schools across Balkh province. According to the Ministry’s statement, 10 new school projects in Balkh province, valued at 47.5 million Afghanis, have commenced. The ceremony was attended by education leaders,

local officials, religious scholars, and tribal elders. These projects include the construction of boundary walls for schools, toilets, handwashing facilities, the drilling of wells, and the activation of solar power systems in schools in the districts of Nahr-e-Shahi, Dehdadi, Balkh, Charbolak, Chamtal, and Zari. The costs of these projects

are being covered by a partner organization collaborating with the Ministry of Education. Meanwhile, Alhaj Mawlawi Abdul Jalil Shaheedkhil, head of the Balkh Department of Education, highlighted the importance and urgency of these projects. The official commencement began with the laying of the foundation stone.

KP CM reviews revenue targets so far achieved

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting of Mineral Investment Authority held here the other day with Chief Minister

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair, has discussed and reviewed the revenue targets so far achieved through mineral resources, existing lease mechanism, the current ratio of mineral royalty and other important matters related to mineral development and investment in the province.

The meeting also deliberated upon various proposals aimed at aligning the existing legal framework with the contemporary needs and requirements, and made important decisions to this effect. Administrative Secretaries of Finance, Mineral Development, Environment and Law department, Director General Mineral, Vice Chairman of Board of Investment and Trade and other relevant officials

attended the meeting. The chief minister on this occasion, underlined the need to introduce mechanical mining mechanism based on latest technology, and said that due to old mining mechanism, we are not getting significant results from our precious mineral resources.

Besides, illegal mining also poses serious threats to the environment, he added. The chief minister also directed the authorities concerned to put the leasing method on modern lines and said that the current leasing procedure caused to mass scale destruction of valuable mineral resources, which is injustice to the province.

We can significantly increase the revenue stream of the province by utilising available mineral resources in an efficient and judicious manner. He maintained that if the existing lease and mining system is not changed, the government will impose complete ban on mining

by declaring the mineral resources provincial heritage.

He directed the quarters concerned to propose necessary amendments in the legal framework related to mining and take strict action against the elements found involved in illegal mining activities. The Machinerics being used in illegal mining should be seized on the spot and FIRs be logged against the owners, he directed.

He said that mineral resources of the province are assets of our upcoming generations as well, it is our responsibility to protect and ensure judicious use of these resources. We can not afford anymore negligence to this effect, he warned.

The chief minister also directed to introduce a modern mechanism for the effective monitoring of mineral auctions and other related affairs, further directing them to ensure complete audio and video recording of entire auction process.

PHC restrains govt from concluding land settlement

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Waqar Ahmad restrained the provincial government from finally concluding the land settlement process in the Districts of Upper and Lower Chitral.

The petition was filed by residents of Chitral and taken up on 30th May 2024 for regular hearing, Additional Advocate General (AAG) Muhammad Naveed submitted that since the case concerned the legality of the land settlement of two districts the Advocate General would himself argue the case and sought an adjournment on account that the Advocate General was in the

Supreme Court. Barrister Asad-ul-Mulk, Dr. Adnan Khan and Muhibullah Tarichvi appeared on behalf of the petitioners. Barrister Asad-ul-Mulk argued that the government had been seeking an adjournment in the case since 2019 on one pretext or the other, and in view of the governments delaying tactics written arguments should be called for so that if the government continues to use such tactics then the case may be decided on available record and in light of the written arguments.

PHC adjourned the case till 9th September 2024 but acceding to the request made on behalf of the petitioners in its written order directed that "Learned counsel for the parties are directed to file their

respective comprehensive and detailed written arguments covering all aspects of the case since 1975 when the impugned Regulation was issued along with all judgments of this and the august apex Court which have decided the controversies arising out of the impugned Regulation from time to time.

Adjourned to 11/09/2024. In the meantime, the interim relief already granted shall remain in field". PHC extended the interim relief already granted preventing the Government from notifying land settlement record according to which the government proposes to declare itself the owner of 97% of the total area in the districts of Upper and Lower Chitral.

South Africa election ends 3 decades of ANC dominance

CAPE TOWN: The African National Congress (ANC) party has lost its parliamentary majority in a historic election result that puts South Africa on a new political path for the first time since the end of the apartheid system of white minority rule 30 years ago.

With more than 99 percent of votes counted on Saturday, the once-dominant ANC had received nearly 40 percent in Wednesday's election, well short of the majority it had held since the famed all-race vote of 1994 that ended apartheid and brought it to power under Nelson Mandela. The main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), had 21.63 percent and uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), a new party led by former president and ANC leader Jacob Zuma, managed to grab 14.71 percent — pulling away votes from the ANC.

Opposition parties have hailed the result as a momentous breakthrough for a country struggling with deep poverty and

inequality, but the ANC remained the biggest party by some way. "The way to rescue South Africa is to break the ANC's majority and we have done that," said main opposition leader John Steenhuisen.

The final results are still to be formally declared by the independent Electoral Commission that ran the election, but the ANC cannot pass 50 percent. Reporting from the Results Operation Centre in Midrand, South Africa, Al Jazeera's Mike Hanna said the ANC will try to find a way to form a new government.

"It [ANC] has to find a partner in order to be able to govern. Otherwise it could try to form a minority government which could make it very difficult to pass any form of legislation or advance ANC policy," he said. Gwede Mantashe, the ANC chair and current mines and energy minister, told reporters in comments broadcast by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC): "We can talk to everybody and

anybody," dodging a question about who the party was discussing a possible coalition deal with.

Political parties' shares of the vote determine their seats in the country's National Assembly, which elects the nation's president. President Cyril Ramaphosa can in theory still keep his job, as the former liberation movement was on course to get about twice as many votes as the next party. But he will be weakened and could face calls to quit both from opposition parties and critics in the deeply divided ANC.

On Friday, however, a top ANC official backed him to stay on as party leader, and analysts say he has no obvious successor. A deal to keep the ANC in the presidency could involve opposition backing in exchange either for cabinet posts or for more control of parliament, perhaps even the speaker. The election commission has pencilled in a final results announcement for Sunday. — Aljazeera

SC sends anti-smuggling law to Parliament

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has sent the Anti-smuggling Act 1977 to the Parliament for review with recommendation of amendment in the law on Saturday. The apex court in its verdict said that the anti-smuggling law has scores of lacunae. "The anti-smuggling law only allows accused the right to appeal," the decision read.

"Denying the right to appeal to government means the Anti-smuggling Act benefiting accused," the court observed. The copies of the verdict, written by Justice Shahid Waheed and comprised of seven pages, have been dispatched to the Law and Justice Commission, Secretary Law and the Attorney General of Pakistan.

Referring a case, the court said that the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in a complaint in year 1998 said that a man Ubaid Khan made property with smuggling. "The ANF has only a role of reporting the special judge under the Anti-smuggling Act," decision read. "The matter restricted between the judge and the accused after the accused present their stance. The complainant's role come to an end in the law after reporting the judge," verdict read.

"The ANF will not be an affected party of the decision after its role ends with complaint. In the anti-smuggling act, the ANF or the state have not been given any right to appeal and only the affected party i.e. accused have right to appeal under the law," according to the decision. "The Peshawar High Court (PHC) dismissed the ANF's appeal against the court's decision in the case because 'it was not an affected party'," verdict read. "The anti-smuggling laws, across the world, give the state or government the right to appeal. It will be appropriate if the parliament revisits the law to give the right to appeal to the state," the apex court verdict suggests.

Court orders medical examination of poet

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: An anti-terrorism court in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Saturday ordered a medical examination of poet Ahmed Farhad by a team of doctors from the Abbas Institute of Medical Sciences.

The development came during the hearing of case involving Farhad whose counsel requested the court to have the Kashmiri poet medically examined. Farhad, as per his lawyer Iman Mazari was transferred to Muzaffarabad from DhirKot under multiple sections of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA).

With the government's lawyer requesting time to submit his response, the court adjourned the case till June 3. Farhad, known for his defiant prose, was allegedly abducted from his house on May 14 after which his wife Urooj Zainab moved the IHC seeking her husband's recovery along with requesting the court to identify, investigate, and prosecute those responsible for his disappearance. In response to IHC's directions to recover the missing poet, AGP Mansoor Usman Awan on May 29, revealed that Farhad was arrested and in AJK Police's custody.



LAHORE: KP Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi meeting with Punjab Governor, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan.

Amir Muqam assures provision of funds to AJK

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan and SAFRON Engr Amir Muqam has reiterated that Pakistan was committed to the cause of the Kashmiri people till they get the right to self-determination in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

Addressing a press conference here at a local hotel after a briefing by AJK top government officials about progress on federal Public Sector Development Programmes (PSDP) projects and AJK's Annual development program (ADP) besides meeting delegations, the minister said that the issue of Kashmir and its people was of prime importance to Pakistan which was consistently advocated at international level in the United Nations and different other international forums.

Engr Amir Muqam said that this support to the Kashmir cause is because Pakistan considers Kashmir its jugular vein and will continuously strive to provide support for the freedom of the Kashmiri people in all forms at all costs. The minister said that the present regime has taken various measures to support the smooth functioning of the government in AJK.

He said the federal government has transferred the funds, staff and assets relating to the Kashmir Council in Islamabad to AJK Government. He said that funds amounting to approximately Rs.7.5 billion have been transferred from

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to the Government of AJK.

"Due to efforts of an Inter-Ministerial Committee signing of a bilateral Agreement on Neelum Jhelum Hydro Power Project in the advanced stage will resolve issues of water use charges, environmental issues and other issues", he said adding that similarly, the prime minister of Pakistan has constituted high-level committee to resolve other issues of Neelum Jhelum Hydro Power Project which will benefit the people of Kashmir.

The minister said that earlier, the government of Pakistan constituted a high-level inter ministerial committee under the Minister for Defence to resolve outstanding issues related to the AJK which has been quite successful in resolving these issues. "Recently the government of Pakistan has provided funds amounting to Rs.23 Billion to help the government of AJK to deal with liabilities and subsidies issues e.g. electricity and wheat," he added.

He said that the government of Pakistan has also committed to supporting the AJK government and the people by increasing the budget for the next financial year (2024-25), adding that in addition to the above the GOP has assured that variable grant for the fiscal year 2024-25 would be allocated as per formula 3.64% of the federal divisible pool as per 2018 financial agreement.

He informed that the Planning Commission Government of Pakistan was also considering bi-annual

releases of PSDP funds for quick development work on development projects. He said that CDWP in Planning Commission has approved the remaining cost of the project of RathoaHaryam Bridge over Mangla Lake to complete this long-awaited project as early as possible. "To resolve the issue of 614 cusecs water for AJK from Mangla Reservoir, the matter is brought before the Council of Common Interests (CCI).," he added.

He also informed that the Jhelum – Mirpur – Muzaffarabad Highway has been approved by the federal government and the project would be included in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects besides the extension of Hazara Expressway from Mansehra to Muzaffarabad that will bring economic revolution in the region.

He said his government in the centre was performing well and the outcome was visible with the decline in inflation besides other positive indicators but while referring founder PTI, he said some anti-elements had been trying to detract the country from the prosperity path through false propaganda. He criticised saying that PTI engineered the 9th May incident, a black day in the history of Pakistan and now have been launching a dirty social media campaign against the armed forces of Pakistan which are the symbol of the integrity of Pakistan demanding that such elements must be brought before the justice. He said founder PTI was launching a malicious campaign through his X handle account and later denied.

Hezbollah launches series of retaliatory attacks on Israel

BEIRUT (AFP): Lebanese militant group Hezbollah said it launched a series of attacks on Israeli military positions Saturday after state media reported Israel had stepped up its own strikes the night before.

Since the start of the war in the Gaza Strip between Israel and Hamas on October 7, the Iran-backed Hezbollah has exchanged almost daily fire with the Israeli army in support of its Palestinian ally. On Saturday morning, the Lebanese Islamist group said it had carried out "an air assault using explosive drones against... the Yiftah

barracks, targeting the positions of enemy officers and soldiers."

It said the attack was in retaliation for a drone strike on a motorcycle in Majdal Selm earlier in the day. The Hezbollah-affiliated Islamic Health Committee said two people were wounded in the drone strike. The Israeli military said in a statement that "two Hezbollah terrorists operating in the region of Majdal Selm were struck by an aircraft."

Later on Saturday, the Lebanese Shiite movement said it had "shot down a Hermes 900 drone which was attacking our

people and villages." Hezbollah, which has increased its use of drones in recent weeks, has also claimed responsibility for several attacks against Israeli military positions "in response to Israeli aggression against southern localities and civilian homes."

"The enemy (Israel) intensified its attacks last night," Lebanon's National News Agency reported. They included "a series of drone strikes... which resulted in deaths, injuries and extensive damage" in multiple locations near the border, NNA said.

Minister calls for minority judges in higher judiciary

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights Senator Azam Nazir Tarar has expressed his aspiration for judges from minority communities to join Pakistan's higher judiciary.

Speaking at the Justice A.R. Cornelius Conference held at a local hotel on Saturday, he emphasized the importance of religious freedom and minority rights in Pakistan. The event was organized by the Bright Future Society and Implementation Minority Rights Forum Pakistan.

He highlighted that Pakistan's Constitution guarantees complete religious freedom, aligning with Islamic teachings on the rights of minorities. He lamented the decline in religious tolerance post-Afghan war but reiterated Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision of a united, tolerant society.

He mentioned ongoing efforts to establish a Minority Rights Commission and proposed reserving quotas for minority law officers and legal advisors. He praised retired Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani for his landmark decisions benefiting minorities, and lauded Justice Cornelius for his legacy of equal justice.

Supreme Court Justice Mansoor Ali Shah echoed Tarar's sentiments, noting the Constitution's protection of minority rights and advocating for the appointment of minority judges to the higher judiciary. Speakers at the conference, including senior judges and legal experts, paid tribute to Justice Cornelius and discussed the constitutional protections for minorities.

They highlighted Justice Cornelius' impactful career and the 2014 Supreme Court guidelines under Justice Jilani aimed at safeguarding minority rights. The conference concluded with the distribution of certificates to distinguished guests, attended by prominent figures including Supreme Court Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, among others.

کمرشل یا صنعتی میٹرنگستان پہنچانے برس قیداور 50 لاکھ جرمانہ	گھریلو صارف کے گیس چڑی میں موٹ ہوئے ماہ قیداور 16 لاکھ جرمانہ
گرفتاریاں 214 gas connections severed, Rs2.7m fine imposed	گیس پائپ لائن کو نقصان پہنچانے برس قیداور 1 کروڑ جرمانہ
قید کی سزا NGPL intensifies crackdown on gas pilferers	لاکھوں روپے کے جرمانے Massive action kicks off against gas theft in Punjab, KP

خبردار!
 گیس تحفہ کشنہرہل اینڈ ریکوری ایکٹ 2016ء کے تحت گیس کے غیر متوازی استعمال گیس تنبیہات کے تحت قید اور جرمانہ سزا میں رکھیں۔ ریفرنس سٹیشن سٹیشن سٹیشن سٹیشن

1199 پروڈی

PIA Hajj flight makes emergency landing

RIYADH: A Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) Hajj flight, PK 839, made an emergency landing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, late Friday night, media reported citing airline sources.

The plane, however, left for its destination in Jeddah after the inspection, on Saturday. The Hajj flight took off at 10pm Saturday from the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi for Jeddah. But it was diverted to Riyadh for an emergency landing.

Earlier, a passenger told media that an explosion was heard during the flight. As soon as the unexpected sound was reported, the plane was diverted to and landed in Riyadh. Following the emergency landing, passengers were offloaded from the Boeing 777 plane and shifted

to the lounge at the Riyadh airport.

A PIA spokesperson said the pilot received a high temperature warning in the cargo cabin during the flight after which the landing was made in the Saudi capital. However, after inspection, it was found out that the warning was false and the flight departed to Jeddah following a quick check.

Several air incidents have recently made headlines around the world with passengers worried for their safety. Just a week ago, one passenger died of a suspected heart attack and 30 were injured after a Singapore Airlines flight hit severe turbulence on May 21, flinging passengers and crew around the cabin and forcing the plane to land in Bangkok. — Agencies

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