

Gandapur disallowed

RAWALPINDI (INP): Planned meetings between PTI leaders and party founder, currently imprisoned in Adiala Jail, hit a snag as jail authorities objected to the presence of Chief Minister KP Ali Amin Gandapur. Sources revealed that six PTI leaders, including Rauf Hassan, Shibli Faraz, Rai Hassan Nawaz, Sanaulah Mastikhel, Khalid Khurshid, and KP CM Ali Amin Gandapur, were scheduled to visit Imran Khan on Thursday.



ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari called on Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif.

Opp leader in NA termed budget documents as illegal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the opposition in National Assembly Omar Ayub termed the budget documents as illegal. As per the parliamentary traditions, the opposition leader opened the general debate on budget on Thursday with his fiery speech in National Assembly.

"We couldn't run our election campaigns due to the crackdown of police," said the opposition leader and added that the cases under the sections of terrorism are being registered against the PTI workers even today.

We are the real heroes of Form-45 as people gave us the mandate, he added. According to opposition leader, the economy of the country was destabilised in result of the no-trust motion that was moved to oust the government of Imran Khan.

Speaking on floor of the house, the opposition leader said that the government has dug a grave for itself through this budget. "This budget was prepared by economic hitmen who

wanted to shake the foundations of the country," said Omar Ayub. The opposition leader was the view that the PTI founder is still in illegal detention. Omar Ayub said that the budget is against the people of Pakistan.

"Muhammad Aurangzeb was made finance minister but he was then stabbed in the back as he was removed from the chairmanship of Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnecc)," he said.

According to an agreement among the parties' representatives in a meeting with Speaker Ayaz Sadiq on June 6, the assembly will continue the debate on the budget until June 24. The members will take part in the debate and vote on cut motions on June 26 and 27, and the budget is expected to be passed on June 28.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb presented the federal budget for fiscal year 2024-25 with the total outlay of Rs18,877 billion earlier this month. Speaking at a

Senate session, PTI lawmaker Ali Zafar said the budget for the next fiscal year cannot deliver amid political polarisation in the country.

"This budget cannot work until the stolen mandate is returned," he said, holding the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) responsible for the prevailing political crisis. "The budget has been imposed upon the people due to ECP, hence I challenge the legitimacy of this budget." The PTI senator also made a spooky prediction that the tax-heavy budget could bring "revolution" in the country.

Citing examples of unrest caused by heavy taxation, Senator Zafar said people torched the parliament in the UK against the imposition of heavy taxes by the king. "Likewise, revolutions in the US and France were also triggered by the taxes. If all proposed taxes in the budget are approved then the revolution in the country would come soon," he claimed.

Blasphemy act: Angry mob kill man

Shafi Ullah

SWAT: An enraged mob killed a man inside Madyan police station and set fire to the station and a police vehicle, accusing him of desecrating the Holy Quran on Thursday evening.

According to locals, some individuals announced in the market that a person had committed blasphemy, leading others to apprehend him and hand him over to the police.

However, after a little while mosque announcements were made in Madyan town mobilising people to the police station in anger. They asked the police to hand over them the accused and after the police refused the enraged mob forcibly entered the police station, extracted the accused, and killed him. They also set a fire to the station and police vehicle.

Police managed to escape and requested additional reinforcements to manage the violent mob. Madyan police confirmed the incident and said that one policeman was also injured in the incident. They said the deceased was not from Swat and was staying in a local hotel.

Chinese minister due in Islamabad

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC) Liu Jianchao arrived in Islamabad on a three-day visit, according to a statement issued by the Foreign Office on Thursday.

He was received at the Islamabad International Airport by Additional Foreign Secretary (Asia & Pacific) Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui. Minister Liu Jianchao will call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and hold extensive bilateral talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar.

remarked that differences also emerged between the president and Election Commission over the general election schedule. Sikander Bashir represented the Election Commission (ECP) and Salman Akram Raja was the counsel for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in the case.

The ECP lawyer informed the court that the case was pertaining to the interpretation of Article 219(C) of the Constitution. The chief justice asked Sikander Bashir to apprise the court of some facts of the case.

Following direction of the CJ, the ECP lawyer informed the court that on Feb 14 last, the commission dispatched letters to all high courts regarding formation of the tribunals. He said formation of the tribunals fell under the purview of the commission. He said

through these letters all the high courts were requested to furnish the names of judges.

On Feb 20, he said the Lahore High Court forwarded the names of two judges, and both were notified by the EC for the election tribunals. On April 26, two more judges were named as the election tribunals. During the hearing, the CJ stopped the ECP lawyer from using the word of "honourable" for high courts. The CJ remarked that "honourable" was a word for the judges.

Justice Isa inquired from the ECP lawyer whether parliament in England was addressed as "honourable." The CJ remarked that parliamentarians in Pakistan often lacked respect for each other, resorting to mudslinging. "We desire parliamentarians in Pakistan ensure respect for each other."

SC turns down ECP's petition on tribunals

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has dismissed the Election Commission's plea to reject the Lahore High Court's decision regarding the formation of election tribunals.

The apex court issued a notice to the Attorney General for Pakistan and sent the case to a three-member committee for formation of a larger bench. Two-member bench comprising Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa and Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan heard the case on Thursday.

During hearing of the petition filed by the Election Commission against the formation of election tribunals, Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa remarked, "Is it necessary to make everything controversial in Pakistan"? He also

Tarar regrets 'smear campaign' against Pak-China friendship

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Thursday took exception to a "smear campaign" launched by a specific political party against the Pakistan-China friendship on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

Addressing a news conference, the minister brushed aside the propaganda against Pakistan-China friendship particularly surrounding the upgradation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). "Undoubtedly, the lobbies against the Pakistan-China Dosti are active, and are completely perturbed by the CPEC's upgradation, but such botch attempts are destined to fail," he added.

The minister said the government fully understood that some powers which were stunted by the Pakistan-China friendship, were resorting to undue and unfounded criticism towards the CPEC, but nothing could

harm the enduring bond between the two nations. "The people normally celebrate Eid-ul-Azha by slaughtering sacrificial animals and sharing sweets with their loved ones but there was one political party that exerted all its energies for conspiring against Pak-China Dosti," he regretted.

The minister lashed out at the political party, which, he said, was bent upon running a "smear campaign" against Pakistan-China friendship instead of reflecting on the possibilities to resolve the issues to forge unity in accordance with the spirit of Eid which taught nothing but sacrifice and altruism. The whole nation should celebrate the enduring bond of a friendship between Pakistan and China that had stood the test of time and was growing with each passing day, he added.

Tarar said a high-level Chinese delegation led by Minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee (IDCPC) Liu Jianchao would arrive in Pakistan

today on a three-day visit till June 22. He said the IDCPC minister had not only been in close coordination with the political parties of various countries but also had a critical role in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) related projects.

The IDCPC minister, he said, would co-preside the Joint Consultative Mechanism on CPEC with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar to review progress on CPEC and explore new areas for its upgradation. Minister Liu Jianchao would also hold meetings with the civil and military leadership of the country, he added.

According to the information minister, the arrival of a high-level delegation from China was not only a good omen but also a leap forward towards the cooperation and collaboration forged by the recent visit of the prime minister to China. The bureaucracy, media, academia, civil society and business community should continue to play their due role in the Pakistan-

The Frontier Post

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) delegation led by its Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Thursday met Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, and discussed political affairs and the budget 2024-25.

The PPP delegation included Senate Chairman Yusuf Raza Gillani, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Syed Khurshid Shah, Syed Naveed Qamar and Sherry Rehman. The meeting was held in a positive atmosphere, with both sides agreeing on the need for collaboration to address the challenges faced by the country.

The prime minister highlighted that the macroeconomic indicators with regard to the country's economy were showing encouraging growth while historic boom in the stock market was the endorsement of the government's budget by the business community. He said all political parties should work together for the country's development, prosperity and public welfare.

He said that in the budget 2024-25, steps were taken to provide maximum relief to the people. It was agreed in the meeting that further consultation would continue through parliamentary committees. The meeting was also attended by National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, Advisor to PM on Political Affairs Rana Sanaulah, Minister of State for Finance Ali Pervaiz Malik and former federal minister Khawaja Saad Rafique.

Education emergency shows government's seriousness in education sector: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif expressing the government's resolve to promote education in the country said that imposing education emergency in Pakistan showed how the government was serious in promoting this

sector.

He said the government was taking steps to increase the capacity of the country's youth through the use of modern technology. He was talking to a high level delegation of Google for Education led by its Managing Director Kevin Kells. The delegation comprised of Google for Education representatives from eight countries.

The prime minister told the delegation that the government was providing laptops to the brilliant students from remote areas of the country. For this scheme, he said the required amount had already been allocated in the budget 2024-25. He pointed out that the scope of Danish Schools was being expanded to the less developed areas of Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The prime minister welcoming the Google's decision to establish manufacturing plants of chromebooks in Pakistan, appreciated the signing of letter of intent between Google for Education and Ministry of the Federal Education to promote education in Pakistan.

He invited Google for Education to expand its scope of cooperation with government of Pakistan. Being briefed on Google for Education's initiatives to promote education and training in Pakistan, the prime minister was told that Google was working on "Digital Journey" for education, and 'Digital Safety', especially digital safety program for children.

Google for Education and the National Rural Support Program are working together to promote digital skills and protection in rural areas while under 'Balochistan First and Gilgit-Baltistan First' programs, training has been provided to thousands of youth regarding digital skills and security, the meeting was informed.

The prime minister was further informed that the number of out-of-school children would be reduced with the help of artificial intelligence whereas Google for Education would provide

Six picnickers kidnapped

QUETTA (PPI): Six picnickers from Punjab, including a customs clearing agent, were kidnapped at gunpoint by unidentified armed men from Shaban, a tourist resort of Koh-e-Zarghoon, on Thursday. Unknown gunmen appeared at a picnic point at Shaban, a suburb area of Quetta. After checking CNICs, 14 picnickers were taken away, however, eight other were later released at some distance while six picnickers were kidnapped.

artificial intelligence training in key national languages of Pakistan. Google for Education also offered to make Danish School under construction in Islamabad a Google Center of Excellence.

The prime minister was told that Google for Education organized training programs for teachers in collaboration with the Punjab government and last year, Google for Education gave 45 thousand certificates in Pakistan. The meeting was also attended by Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Minister of State for Information Technology Shaza Fatima Khawaja and relevant high officials.

Shehbaz visits revamped NEOC; says NDMA to become a safety wall for Pakistan: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, lauding the revamped National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) equipped with multiple satellite feeds and artificial intelligence tools, expressed the hope that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) would prove to be a safety wall for Pakistan against the impacts of the climate change.

"Due to climate change, Pakistan is in the red zone and among the top ten vulnerable countries. We should not lose our morale rather work hard. After this achievement, I have no doubt that the NDMA, in coordination with provincial PDMA's, will become a safety wall for Pakistan," the prime minister said during his visit to the NEOC here along with the federal ministers and secretaries. This was the maiden visit of the prime minister since the revamped NEOC was inaugurated in October last year.

He highly appreciated NDMA Chairman Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik for realising his dream of focusing on the capacity building and human resource development of the Authority instead of an earlier planned project of building an office tower.

Referring to his previous meetings following the floods of 2022, the prime minister said he had suggested the

(Continued on Back Page)

35 Pakistani pilgrims died during Hajj

RIYADH (AFP): At least 35 Pakistanis have lost their lives while performing Hajj this year due to extreme weather conditions, the Ministry of Religious Affairs confirmed on Thursday. The death toll from this year's Hajj has exceeded 1,000, an AFP tally said on Thursday, more than half of them unregistered worshippers who performed the pilgrimage in extreme heat.

Fatalities have been reported by Egypt, Pakistan, India, Jordan, Indonesia, Iran, Senegal, Tunisia, and Iraq. Director General of Pakistan's Hajj Mission Abdul Wahab Soomro said that as of 4pm on June 18, a total of 35 Pakistani deaths had been reported — 20 in Makkah, six in Madina, four in Mina, three in Arafat, and two in Muzdalifah.

"Due to a temperature of 50°C, this was a tough Hajj," the official said. Soomro also dismissed social media claims of leaving the pilgrims "helpless". "We trust the Saudi government's information and we confirm it ourselves as well, whenever there's a death. We are informed."

Meanwhile, the ministry added that under the Saudi government's rules, they seek permission from the heirs of the family for burial. "After bathing [the body], funeral prayers are offered here and burial takes place in Saudi Arabia." In case the family wants the body back, it said, arrangements are made to send it to Pakistan.

Media reports suggest that friends and family of missing Hajj pilgrims are searching hospitals and pleading online for news, fearing the worst. The Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and all Muslims with the means must complete it at least once. Its timing is determined by the Islamic lunar calendar, shifting forward each year in the Gregorian calendar.

For the past several years the mainly outdoor rituals have fallen during the sweltering Saudi summer. Indonesia, which had around 240,000 pilgrims, raised its death toll to 183,

according to the ministry of religious affairs, compared with 313 deaths recorded last year. Deaths have also been confirmed by Malaysia, India, Jordan, Iran, Senegal, Tunisia, Sudan and Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region. In many cases, authorities have not specified the cause.

Meanwhile, friends and family members have been searching for pilgrims who are still missing. On Wednesday, they scoured hospitals and pleaded online for news, fearing the worst during the scorching temperatures. Two diplomats told AFP on Thursday that Saudi authorities had begun the burial process for dead pilgrims, which involves cleaning up the bodies, putting them in white burial cloth and taking them to be interred in individual graves.

"The burial is done by the Saudi authorities. They have their own system so we just follow that," said one diplomat, who pointed out that his country was working to notify loved ones of the dead as best it could. The other diplomat said that given the number of fatalities, it would be impossible to notify many families ahead of time, especially in Egypt which accounts for so many of the dead.

Saudi Arabia has not provided information on fatalities, though it reported more than 2,700 cases of "heat exhaustion" on Sunday alone. Last year, various countries reported more than 300 deaths during the Hajj, mostly Indonesians. The timing of the Hajj moves back about 11 days each year in the Gregorian calendar, meaning that next year it will take place earlier in June, potentially in cooler conditions.

A 2019 study by the journal Geophysical Research Letters said because of climate change, heat stress for Hajj pilgrims will exceed the "extreme danger threshold" from 2047 to 2052 and 2079 to 2086, "with increasing frequency and intensity as the century progresses".

Balochistan to announce budget today

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan will unveil the provincial budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 on June 21. Over Rs800 billion budget will be presented by Provincial Finance Minister Mir Shoaib.

Sources privy to the development said over Rs100 billion will be allocated for education, while Rs61 billion will be kept for health. The salaries of the employees will be raised as per formula of the federal government govt, the sources said. The session of Balochistan Assembly will begin at 4pm tomorrow. In preparation for this significant event, a meeting of the provincial cabinet to discuss the budget details will also convene on the same day. The budget session of the Balochistan Assembly is slated to span from June 21 to 29, according to the Finance Department.

Alongside the main budget presentation, the supplementary budget for the current fiscal year will also be tabled and subsequently approved by Balochistan Assembly during this session. A debate on the proposed budget for the upcoming financial year will commence on June 24.

Pak-China friendship by a political party

China friendship which "is higher than Himalayas, deeper than ocean and sweeter than honey", the minister remarked.

"Today, even our critics are describing the prime minister's visit to China as the most successful in the history of Pakistan," Tarar said while lashing out those who were criticizing the CPEC and Pakistan-China friendship just for the sake of criticism. He said Senator Mushahid Hussain also lauded the prime minister's visit to China as the "most successful" and calling the joint communique of both the governments after the PM's visit as unprecedented.

"It is an honour for Pakistan that China organized two banquets on the same day in honour of the prime minister and his delegation," the minister said, adding Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted a dinner reception while PM Li Keqiang held a lunch reception for them. The minister said both the Chinese leaders including President Xi and Premier Li had categorically discussed upgradation of the

CPEC during the meetings.

"The Chinese side had made statements about the upgradation of CPEC which is meaningful and substantial in nature," he added. He urged all the political parties to welcome and celebrate the arrival of high-level delegation from China and did not resort to criticism on the Pakistan-China friendship and CPEC.

Tarar lauded the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan for playing an important role in mobilizing the high-level delegation from China to Pakistan. The minister highlighted achievements made by Pakistan at international level under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Pakistan garnered 182 votes to become a member of the United Nations Security Council that showed the trust reposed by the international community in it.

He said the national economy was on positive trajectory and all the indicators were positive that were being endorsed by international financial

organization, citing the report released by Fitch that termed the next year's financial budget "positive". The rating made by the Fitch recognized at international level which had ultimately boosted the confidence of business community and investors in the national economy, he said, adding the stock market had crossed 78,000 points today that was indication of a "feel good factor" in the business circle.

He said inflation had reduced drastically to 11 per cent from 38 per cent with a significant increase in foreign exchange reserves and IT exports, besides rupee gained strength against the dollar. To a query, he said political stunts could not control loadshedding rather extensive efforts and close coordination between the federation and the provinces were required in that regard. He said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister should resolve the issues on table with the Federal Government instead of visiting grid stations.



LAHORE: Director Hajj Punjab Muhammad Rizwan Sharif, Deputy Director Hajj Lahore Majeed Shah and others welcoming Hujjaj karaam.

Various areas in Punjab receives rain
F.P. Report

LAHORE: Different cities, towns and other areas of the Punjab province, including Lahore, received rain on Thursday, bringing pleasant weather to the people.

People in Lahore heaved a sigh of relief as several parts of the city, including Gulberg, Kalima Chowk, Barkat Market, Firdous Market, Kot Lakhpat and Green Town, received showers that brought down the day temperature.

Similarly, rain in other cities of Punjab namely Jhelum, Gujrat, Vehari, Gujranwala, Mandi Bahauddin, Warburton, Feroze Wattwan, Nowshera Virkan and Muridke brought smiles on people's faces. People's happiness in Vehari knew no bounds after it rained cats and dogs in the city and its outskirts. The rain applied brakes to a two-month-long heatwave.

Light rain, accompanied by cool breeze, led to a drop in temperatures in Gujranwala and Gujrat. Although rain and light breeze in Mandi Bahauddin rid the people of scorching heat, yet at the same time it resulted in the tripping of WAPDA feeders that left several areas of the city without power. Similar was the situation in Jhelum where several WAPDA feeders tripped as soon as the rain started. On the other hand, the weather department predicted rain, accompanied by strong winds, at a few places in Islamabad in the evening or at night.

Similarly, the department forecast rain and strong winds at a few places in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Malakand, Mohmand, Bajaur, Khyber, Peshawar, Mardan, Kurrum, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, Waziristan and Dera Ismael Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) during the next 24 hours.

In Punjab, the Met Office said, thundershowers were likely at a few places in Murree, Galyat, Rawalpindi, Attock, Jhelum, Chakwal, Mianwali, Khushab, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Jhang, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Kasur, Lahore, Okara, Mandi Bahauddin, Sialkot and Narowal, while heavy rain at a few places in Layyah, Bhakkar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Taunsa and Multan either in the evening or at night.

Likewise, the weather department said, heavy rain was also expected at a few places in Muzaffargarh, Sahiwal, Khanewal, Bahawalnagar and Bahawalpur during the next 24 hours. Most areas of Balochistan would remain dry during the aforementioned period, the department said, adding however rain, accompanied by strong winds, was expected in Quetta, Ziarat, Zhob, Sheerani, Kohlu, Musakhel, Loralai, Sibbi, Naseerabad, Jafarabad, Dera Bugti and Barkhan.

10 drowned during Eid
F.P. Report

ATTOCK: The Eidul Azha holidays turned tragic, with 10 people drowning in various incidents over three days, according to rescue officials. Officials said the accidents occurred at different locations along the Indus River and in a local dam where visitors had gathered to celebrate Eid and drowned while bathing. The rescue officials further said that among the victims were a pair of brothers and sisters, though their father was saved. The bodies of five individuals have been recovered during ongoing rescue operations. Efforts continue to locate the remaining five victims in the deep waters of Attock Khurd, Mallahi Tola, and Bagh Nilab.

SUIT NOTICE

In the court of Jehangir Khan Judge Banking Court-II Federal Judicial Complex, Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar
Case No: 163/1 Date of hearing: 1-7-2024 suit for the recovery of Rs.2010023/- NBP Saddar Bazar Branch Peshawar Vs. Shabir Ahmad
Notice Versus:- 1- Shabir Ahmad S/o Bashir Ahmad R/o House No. 2288 Iqbal Colony near Shinwari Parai Dalazak road Peshawar. Where is the plaintiff bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs.2010023/- Against you under section 10(2) of the Financial Institutions (Recovery of Finances) Ordinance 2001, you are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/ publication of the notice in the newspaper filling which an expert decree shall be passed in favour of the plaintiff Bank with costs.

Banking Court-II Peshawar

Murad launches Sindh Smart Surveillance System project
F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah today inaugurated the Sindh Smart Surveillance System (S4) project aimed at providing a comprehensive and integrated municipal security solution for all major entry and exit points connecting other cities in the Sindh province.

The inauguration ceremony of S4 was held at the Chief Police Office (CPO). Provincial ministers, Saeed Ghani and Zulfiqar Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, provincial secretaries, senior officers of Pakistan Rangers, and members of civil society also attended the ceremony.

The system will enable effective monitoring of entry and exit points, ensuring reliable security through the integration of advanced technologies such as Facial and Number Plate Recognition at 40 toll plazas, including 18 in Karachi. The project also aims to enhance security responses and seamlessly integrate with the existing Command & Control Centre at CPO Karachi.

CM Shah mentioned that the S4 Project aimed to facilitate the arrest of over 80,000 absconding criminals and reduce vehicular crime. "The system is designed to have the capabilities for crime prevention and deterrence." He also stated that the system would assist the police in identifying suspects and criminals, locating stolen vehicles, and conducting surveillance and investigations. This will enhance public safety, and improve traffic management, and overall efficiency. Additionally, it will help the police in analysing crime patterns.

Mr Shah said he approved Rs1.567 billion in 2022-23 to procure the ANPR Camera System by direct contract with M/s NRTC. "I am ready to provide funds to the police on the condition of providing him the best results," he said. The CM said his government was duty-bound to establish a crime-free society in the province.

Just after the inauguration, the CM visited the Command & Control Centre where he was given a detailed briefing by the Inspector General of Police. The CM was informed about the implementation of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and Face Recognition (FR) based smart surveillance on all listed Toll plazas in Sindh with central monitoring at CCC CPO Karachi. This includes all necessary equipment and tools.

The main components of the scope are as follows: Capturing and Recognition of Authorized Number Plates through 9MP ANPR cameras (Night Vision) installed close to toll plazas; capturing and Recognition of Driver faces and co-drivers through 8MP FR cameras (Night vision) installed at all listed toll payment booths, ideally with driver door window glass lowered and the driver looking into the camera installed at the toll payment booth and to the passengers; and installation of a

complete solar power solution at each Toll Plaza with eight to 10 hours of battery backup.

Its components also include installation and configuration of Gensets power at all listed Toll plazas. Gensets for all Toll Plaza sites would be provided by Sindh Police with fuel; renovation and Establishment of Command & Control Room in CPO on the first floor for central monitoring with all facilities as per international standards; deployment of the latest AI and analytical tools for actionable intelligence with licenses; latest and compatible CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch system) for quick response through mobile patrol units deployed on both sides and close to all listed Toll plazas; ensure uninterrupted and smooth connectivity/communication at each Toll Plaza and its integration and communication with CCC, CAD, and Central Data Centre for five years from the date of acceptance; and ensure required bandwidth at each site as per BOQ to ensure smooth and uninterrupted operations of the project till timely results – a maximum of 25 to 35 seconds are received at CAD system and smooth live streaming at CDC and CCC. Under smooth weather situations.

The Chief Minister announced that 127,482 police employees and jawans are now covered by a comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme, with a total outlay of Rs4.9 billion. Under the scheme, each family will have a basic hospitalisation limit of Rs1 million and a room limit of Rs10,000. Additionally, a major medical extension pool of Rs1 billion has been established to be used in case the initial IPD limit is exhausted.

The insurance plan covers pre-hospitalization charges (30 days before admission), post-hospitalization charges (30 days after discharge), normal and C-Section delivery charges, and includes spouses, sons/daughters, and parents as dependents.

This Behbood-e-Jawan Health Insurance plan offers equal coverage to employees of all grades and includes all treatments, medications, and investigations during hospitalization, as well as coverage for emergency room treatment. Special investigations are covered across Pakistan without any restriction on the number of family members.

The Inspector General of Police, Ghulam Nabi Memon, stated that each employee would receive a health insurance card, and only 5 per cent of admin charges would be applied to the utilized amount. Any unutilized amount will be reimbursed after deduction of applicable tax, he added. Earlier, Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar thanked the chief minister for providing funds for the installation of the S4 system. He hoped that the Thana Culture would be changed for which he was working hard.

PFUJ shocked over Karamat's passing away
F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) was deeply saddened to announce the passing of Karamat Ali, a renowned labour and development activist, and a champion of peace and democracy.

In a statement, PFUJ President Afzal Butt and Secretary General Arshad Ansari said Karamat Ali dedicated his life to fighting for the rights of workers, promoting peace, and strengthening regional and global solidarity. They said as a founding member of the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research, Pakistan Peace Coalition, Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, and South Asia Labour Forum, Karamat Ali had left behind "a legacy of tireless struggle and unwavering commitment to social justice".

His contributions to the labour and peace movements in Pakistan have been invaluable, and his efforts to connect these movements with regional and global counterparts have inspired countless individuals and organizations, they said. The PFUJ leadership paid tribute to Karamat Ali's remarkable life and work, and extended its deepest condolences to his family, friends, and comrades. "His passing is a great loss, but his legacy will continue to inspire and motivate us to strive for a more just and peaceful world," the leaders added.

Meanwhile, Nasir Mansoor, General Secretary of the National Trade Union Federation, Pakistan (NTUF), Comrade Zehra Khan, General Secretary of the Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF), Lal Bux Lalan, General Secretary of the Sindh Agriculture General Workers Union, Aqib Hussain, Convener of Alternate, Comrade Gul Rehman, President of Shahri Awami Mahaz, Riaz Abbasi, Secretary of the SITE Labor Forum, and Muhammad Bachal Samitio, Chairperson of the All Pakistan Pharmaceutical Chemical and Unions Federation, on Thursday said in their joint condolence statement over the death of Comrade Karamat Ali, Convener of the National Labor Council and well-known left-leaning labor leader, that with his death, the labor movement of Pakistan had lost a great leader and thinker of the working class.

The labor representatives further said that the late leader's struggle for the rights of the downtrodden and oppressed in society for six decades would continue to be a beacon of light showing the way to the working class.

PRINT OR PERISH

The 10% GST Threatens Free Press

1. The newspaper industry is facing an existential crisis due to the 10% GST proposed on newsprint in the recent budget.
2. In an environment full of fake news and disinformation, newspapers are a vital source for credible and authentic news. They play an important role in promoting democratic values and shaping informed public opinions. The imposition of this GST will push many newspapers, particularly small and regional newspapers, towards closure.
3. Newspapers organisations are already subsidising the cost of their publications for their readers as they are not passing on the cost burden to the readers. Taxing the newspapers will further weaken the economies of the print media and impact the citizens' right to know.
4. This tax threatens the survival of an already struggling newspaper industry. While reducing the quality and quantity of news coverage, the tax will increase production costs, endanger jobs, restrict the ability for the industry to pay competitive and timely salaries and will make it impossible for print media organisations to implement the government mandated Wage Board for newspaper employees.

We urge the government to reconsider and withdraw this tax to ensure the survival and continued contribution of newspapers to an enlightened society.



Archealogy Dept to prepare videos on historical sites

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Archeology and Museums Department is working on a plan to prepare videos on historical sites of Peshawar to showcase it abroad to attract foreign tourists and earn maximum revenue for the government kitty.

While keeping in view of 2500 years old documented history of Peshawar blessed with numerous historical and archaeological sites, the department is working on a proposal to prepare small videos on Peshawar Museum, Balahisar Fort, Gor Kathri, Qissa Khwani, Chowk Yadgar, Mohabat Khan, Sethi House and others, highlighting its historical significance through digital media platforms.

Known as the oldest living city in South Asia, Peshawar carries a unique distinction of being a custodian of eight to ten ancient civilizations including Gandhara, making it a centre of attraction for foreign and domestic tourists due to its unique archaeological sites and glorious history.

Famous for ancient Balahisar Fort and Qissa Khwani Bazaar, Peshawar was officially declared by the Archealogy Department as the ‘Oldest Living City’ in South Asia with its history goes back to 539BC.

Assistant Director Archaeology and Museums, Bakhtzada Khan told APP that the department was working on a proposal to showcase these historical sites abroad through Facebook, Twitter's and other social media tools to attract archealogy and Gandhara art lovers.

He said the Gor Kathri's scientific excavation has disclosed that Peshawar was the oldest living city in South Asia inhabited by the humans with diversified culture, language and architecture.

Gor Kathri excavation, architectural designs, food and languages have revealed that eight to 10 ancient civilizations existed in Peshawar and its unlocking abroad through social media would help attract foreign tourists in droves to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said the excavation at Gor Kathri, which continued for several years and published in British Journal ‘Current World Archaeology’ titled ‘The deepest and biggest excavation in the world’ has revealed 20 layers that provide a complete profile of the Peshawar city ranging from British down to pre-Indo-Greek era.

The excavation has discovered that Peshawar was a province of Persian Alchamenian Empire in four to six century BC and later came under the influence of Mauryans, Greeks, Scythians, Kushans, Sasanians, White Huns, Ghaznavis, Slave Dynasty, Ghoris, Suri Afghans, Mughals, Durrani, Sikhs and the British before the creation of Pakistan.

Conquered by Greeks and ruled by Buddhists, Peshawar had witnessed rebuilding by Brahmins, invaded by Ghaznavis, captured by Mughals, over run by Sikhs and annexed by British in succession.

Despite witnessing the onslaught of worriers, kings and invaders that marched from Afghanistan, Central Asian Republics to the Subcontinent through historic Khyber Pass, he said that Peshawar's remained intact and a centre of attractions for tourists and traders since its establishment.

“Qissa Khwani Bazaar remained centre of attractions for international traders and merchants, who often stayed here to enjoy its famous Chappli Kabab and others delicious cuisine with traditional Qehwa and exchanged stories about each others’ culture, food, art and music before departing to Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Subcontinent for trade.”

During stay at Qissa Khwani, he said the international traders had got a unique opportunity to explore almost all the historical sites and buildings of Peshawar like Sethi House, Balahisar Fort, Ghanta Ghar, Chowk-e-Yadgar, Mohabat Khan Mosque and Peshawar Museum.

Terming Peshawar Museum is one the world's largest museums of Gandhara art, he said that conservation of its British era's building has been completed and opened for the general public.

The museum currently houses 40,000 rare antiquities and artifacts besides complete life story of Lord Bhudda, attracting foreign tourists, Bhuddists and monks from across the world, he said.

He said conservation work of the historical building of Mohabat Khan Mosque has been completed and efforts are underway to renovate it in original shape, adding that majority work on its ceiling and minarets besides adjoining portions were also completed.

Around 3,000 historical sites were existed in Peshawar, Charssadda, Swabi, Nowshera and Mardan districts including 1,840 ancient buildings in Peshawar.

Besides Gor Kathri, he said Dalazak Tomb, Kotla Mohsin Khan, Sakhi Mahuddin tombs and Chacha Younas monument were declared protected sites at Peshawar while Sakhi Shah Mardan Villa, Bejo tomb, Qissa Khwani, Lady Reading Hospital and others as non protected.

Sethi House Peshawar, a historical building of the British era carrying a unique architectural value and eye-catching wood craftsmanship, was purchased by the KP Government and was converted into a full-fledged museum.

Inspired by Muslims and vernacular architecture of Bokhara Uzbekistan, he said Sethi family associated with international trade had constructed the masterpiece in 1886 after migrating from Punjab to Peshawar in early 19th century at Mohallah Sethian where about seven Havelis were built in almost the same style, signifying their aestheticism.

“I have heard a lot about the wood craftsmanship of Sethi House and found it correct today after visiting the architectural wonder of Peshawar,” said Engr Faras Khan, a Civil Engineer while talking to APP.

He said the impressive building with eye-catching wood designs, red and greens’ window glasses and ventilators structure of Sethi House have impressed me the most.

Bakhtzada said the conservation of Mohabat Khan Mosque, development of key archaeological sites of Swat, Takht Bhai and preservation of Kalash culture in Chitral, curbing illegal excavations and smuggling of antiquities and preservation of colonial era archaeological sites have made Khyber Pakhtunkhwa a home of archeological wonders, adding 800 new archaeological sites were discovered in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said documentations of archeological sites in merged tribal districts’ and preservation of stupas would make Khyber Pakhtunkhwa a home to archeology.

KhUJ stages a protest demonstration against killing of Khalil Jibran

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Union of Journalists Thursday staged a protest against killing of Senior Journalist Khalil Jibran by some unknown persons in Khyber district and demanded from the government to arrest the culprits immediately.

A large number of journalists protested outside the Press Club by holding banners and chanted slogans against the killing of Khalil Jibran. The protesters also condemned and demanded immediate arrest of the persons involved in his killing.

The protesters were led by President Peshawar Press Club Arshad Aziz, President KhUJ Nisar Hussain. Members of the KhUJ and Peshawar Press Club participated.

The voice of truth and truth will be silenced by killing the journalist Khalil Gibran, who exposed the problems of the people by doing public service, Khyber Union of Journalists office-bearers said in their speeches.

Violence against journalists and then killing them is a very sad act, Khyber Union of Journalists said while condemning the killing of Senior Journalist Khalil Jibran.

The killers of Khalil Gibran should be arrested and brought to justice, Khyber Union of Journalists said in their protest in front of the Peshawar Press Club wherein members of the Khyber Union of Journalists and Peshawar Press Club took part.

The provincial government has failed to protect journalists as this is not the first incident, journalists have been targeted before, the office-bearers of the Khyber Union of Journalists said. Even though the late Khalil Jibran received death threats, the police and the administration did not take action, Khyber Union of Journalists said.

“If the killers of Khalil Jibran are not arrested within a week, there will be a protest outside the Chief Minister and the Governor House, Khyber Union of Journalists,” said in their speeches.

The provincial government should give a martyr's package to Khalil Jibran's family, the office-bearers of the Khyber Union of Journalists demanded.



Faiq says political disharmony harmful for country

PESHAWAR: Chairman, Amun Taraqqi Party Muhammad Faiq Shah said his party motto is provision of justice and public authority for which it is striving hard and country-wide campaigning vigorously.

Shah said political disharmony is harmful for the country.

He stressed the need for unification among all factions of political parties and stakeholders under a single platform and to work together to resolve all matters with mutual consensus and cooperation.

The party chief said they have given a viable solution to all issues, which can be resolved by formation of a joint platform wherein all institutions and stakeholders can be united and make uniform policies and decisions and implement them without any irritants.

Shah was addressing a gathering of the party central leaders, social media activists and workers here on Thursday.

We don't have a lust for power but only a quest to empower people.

He made it clear issues cannot be addressed until provision of justice and authority.

Shah said traditional and dynastic politics has inflicted colossal loss to the country.

He added politicians have always cheated people with empty slogans and kept deprived all the time from facilities and due rights.

FIA conducts major operation

PESHAWAR (APP): The FIA Cyber Crime Circle Peshawar have conducted a major operation and a person involved in online financial fraud was arrested here on Thursday, a FIA spokesman said here.

Afzal was arrested from Sheikhpura in a raid, FIA spokesman said.

The accused collected millions of rupees from the complainant through cheating and fraud and the accused used to contact innocent citizens on Facebook as well, FIA spokesman disclosed.

The accused had created fake Facebook accounts in the names of different citizens and the accused used to collect huge sums of money by pretending to be a relative, referring to various emergency situations, FIA spokesman said.

The accused had also opened a fake branchless bank account and used it to transfer the funds obtained through fraud in fake accounts, the FIA spokesman added.

The accused is a habitual criminal and has robbed many people, FIA spokesman said.

The accused was arrested and investigation is being started, FIA spokesman added.

Khizar demands legal action against Chief Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League (N) leader Arbab Khizar Hayat has demanded the immediate registration of an FIR and arrest of all those involved, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, for attacks on grid stations and forcibly opening feeders. He made it clear that no one is above the law.

In his statement, Arbab Khizar Hayat said that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wants to incite a conflict between the province and the federal government, and his actions, such as attacks on grid stations and forcibly opening feeders, are tantamount to challenging the state.

He stated that the days of the KP government are numbered and that governance cannot be maintained through bullying.

Arbab Khizar Hayat warned that the Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's actions are leading the province towards Governor's Rule. He further added that if there are any more attacks on grid stations or feeders are forcibly opened, even the Chief Minister's House will not be safe.

This statement by Arbab Khizar Hayat comes at a time when there are ongoing protests in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa over electricity distribution issues.

AKF sacrifices 3969 cattle worth Rs.95.4mn

PESHAWAR (APP): Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) sacrificed 3969 big and 163 small cattle worth Rs.95.6 million under its Qurbani Project 2024 and distributed their meat among the deserving people.

According a press release issued here on Thursday, the meat of the sacrificed cattle was distributed among orphans, widows, students of seminaries, deserving Afghan refugees, under-treatment drug addicts, deserving prisoners, under-treatment patients and their attendants in various hospitals, children with Thalassemia disease, street children, transgender community and other deserving and destitute families.

Sharing details of the Qurbani Project 2024, president Al-Khidmat Foundation KP chapter, Khalid Waqas Chamkani said that this year about 132700 people collectively benefited from the project. The Foundation arranged collective cattle sacrifice arrangements in all 36 districts and the process continued till the third day of the Eidul Azha.

The volunteers of the Foundation had also arranged camps for the collection of the hides of sacrificial cattle at gross-root level in all districts of the province while the people donated a record number of the hides of the sacrificial cattle to it.

The funds generated through collection of hides is utilized for provision of relief to the needy people in the province. He especially expressed gratitude to domestic and foreign donors of hides and affluent personalities, which speaks of their trust in the operation of the welfare entity.

Ban on Vapes, nicotine products lauded

PESHAWAR (APP): Blue Veins and the Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control commend the District Government Peshawar for imposing a 60-day ban on the use, sale, distribution, storage, promotion, and sponsorship of e-cigarettes, vapes, and nicotine products in District Peshawar.

The ban, issued through an administrative order by Deputy Commissioner Peshawar under Section 144 CrPC, aims at extending into a permanent ban through comprehensive legislation. Among the key points of the order include complete ban on the sale of e-cigarettes, vapes, and nicotine pouches near hospitals and educational institutions.

These products cannot be sold to individuals under 21 years of age.

Advertising and Promotion Ban: Advertising these products in public places and on vehicles is strictly prohibited.

Legal Action: Violators of these regulations will face legal consequences.

This ban is a significant step under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government's live Well initiative, showcasing its commitment to public health and tobacco control.

Civil society highly appreciates the "Live Well" initiative, anticipating it to be a game changer for drugs, tobacco control and public health. This comprehensive approach by the KP Government is crucial in protecting communities, reducing tobacco use, and ensuring a healthier future for all.

"We deeply appreciate the leadership role of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur, Health Minister Qasim Ali Shah, Director General Health Dr. Saleem, Director of Public Health Irshad Roghani, Coordinator to Minister Health Dr. Muhammad Ali Haider, " said Qamar Naseem, Program Manager of Blue Veins. "Their dedication to improving public health and tobacco control is exemplary. Prior to this, the KP Health Department notified a comprehensive Provincial Tobacco Control Plan to implement its roadmap, demonstrating a proactive approach to safeguarding our communities."

The KP Tobacco Control Cell has also been instrumental in improving compliance with the existing legal framework, ensuring that these measures are effectively enforced and the tireless efforts of Mr Ajmal Shah, Coordinator KPTCC, are appreciated.

Qamar Naseem further stated, "We urge the KP Government to consider a comprehensive legislative approach to permanently ban vapes and e-cigarettes. This will solidify the progress made and ensure a healthier future for our youth and communities."

HMC hospital treats over 5,200 patients

PESHAWAR (APP): The Hayatabad Medical Complex provided medical treatment to 5,219 patients during the three-day Eid-ul-Azha holidays, according to the hospital's spokesperson.

Among the treated patients, 548 were for food poisoning and overeating, 80 for traffic accidents, six for gunshot wounds, and 91 trauma cases. Additionally, 289 patients received ECG facilities, and 264 underwent operations across various departments.

The hospital administration ensured the presence of doctors, paramedics, nurses, and support staff, providing medicines without delay. Regular updates were received from the on-duty team to manage the increased patient load effectively.

Thousands of patients treated Lady Reading Hospital

Thousands of patients were treated at Lady Reading Hospital during the Eid holidays, Spokesman Muhammad Asim told media men here on Thursday.

He said that more than 1000 patients complained of back diseases in three days. Giving details, he said that more than 300 injured people were brought to LRH due to stabbing by animals. And around 200 injured in road traffic accidents were also treated while more than 100 patients were given free dialysis during the Eid holidays.

He said, about 50 C-sections while more than 100 babies were born and arrival of thousands of patients in gynecology and children's emergencies were also looked after. He said 100 other small and big operations were also conducted.



PESHAWAR: Youngster diving in a canal for bath to get relief from hot weather. — APP photo

PMLN lawyers appreciated PM efforts on Int’l front

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) Lawyers Forum Khyber Pakhtunkhwa spokesperson Saleem Shah Hoti appreciated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's outreach to political leaders on eve of Eid ul Adha, terming it a positive step towards consultation and stability in the country.

PMLN Lawyer forum praised the move as a good omen for national unity and stability, which is essential to address the current economic and political instability.

He attributed the country's challenges to the previous PTI government's wrong policies but expressed hope that the Muslim League leadership's efforts would help overcome these challenges.

International organizations have reported a 17% decrease in inflation and restored confidence of friendly countries in Pakistan, indicating a positive trend towards economic improvement.

The spokesperson emphasized that government efforts alone are not enough to address the current situation and urged national unity and support for the government to eradicate negative politics and anti-national activities.

He expressed hope that the political leadership will work together to address the challenges facing the country, including inflation, insecurity, and unemployment, and provide a favorable environment for business.

Overall, the Pakistan Muslim League (N) Lawyers Forum in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has expressed optimism about the potential for improved stability and economic growth in Pakistan, and has urged national unity and support for the government's efforts to address the country's challenges.



PESHAWAR: Workers preserving the hides of sacrificial animals at their warehouse at Ring Road.



In brief

First post Hajj flight landed F.P. Report

SIALKOT: The first flight carrying 150 pilgrims returned home at Sialkot International Airport. The Hajj flight operation has started at Sialkot International Airport after the completion of Hajj. In this regard, the first flight took the pilgrims to Sialkot, Pakistan. The flight landed at Sialkot International Airport at 6:45 PM Pakistan time. 150 pilgrims returned home after performing Hajj. The pilgrims were received at the airport by Sial Administration and other officers. All the pilgrims thanked the Sialkot International Airport for providing special facilities for the pilgrims. The spokesperson of Sialkot International Airport said that passengers are the asset of the organization and the organization is working tirelessly for providing them international level facilities, and special arrangements have been made for the pilgrims.

Journalists hold protest in Wana F.P. Report

WANA: Local journalists in Wana staged a protest demonstration outside the press club today, demanding justice for the slain journalist Khalil Jebran. Carrying placards and wearing black arm-bands, the journalists called for the immediate arrest of Jebran's killers and complete justice for his family. District Press Club Wana President Mujeeb-ur-Rehman addressed the protest, stating that the state has failed to protect journalists in tribal areas. He noted that over 18 journalists have been killed in targeted attacks in the region, yet no suspects have been arrested. Mujeeb-ur-Rehman vowed to continue the protest until Jebran's killers are brought to justice and called for a judicial inquiry into the murder to facilitate the government's investigation. He urged the entire journalist community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to join the protest until Jebran's killers are apprehended.

Deaf and dumb girl raped

PAKPATTAN (PPI): Police in Pakpattan on Thursday arrested a scoundrel who had subjected a deaf and dumb girl to rape, reported media on Thursday. The girl was shifted to a hospital after her condition deteriorated. After DPO Tariq Walayat took notice of the incident that took place at Chak Bhela in the jurisdiction of Saddar police station, police registered a case on the complaint of the girl's father and arrested Usman. Briefing newsmen, the DPO said that the youth had fled after committing the heinous act, and he was traced with the help of the latest technology. The official also visited the hospital to inquire after the victim and assured her father that justice would be done in the case.

Man found dead near Dasht

QUETTA (PPI): The body of a forty-five-year-old man was found lying in a well in Terra Meel area of Dasht in Balochistan province on Thursday. According to rescue sources, the deceased, Nur-ud-Din Machi, 45, son of Dani Bakhsh Machi, a resident of Jacobabad, was found lying in a water well in Terra Meel area of Dasht in Balochistan province. The body was shifted to Sandeman Provincial Hospital, Quetta. Further investigation was being conducted by the concerned authorities.



QUETTA: A deserted view of busy road after end of Eid holidays.

Govt cracks down on load shedding Minister orders Pesco to end power outages

Anees Takar

MARDAN: In a bid to address the persistent issue of electricity load-shedding and frequent tripping of feeders, a high-level meeting was convened at the Deputy Commissioner's Office in Mardan. The meeting was attended by Provincial Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Fayyaz Khan Sherpao, SE Pesco, Executive Engineers, and other relevant officials.

Minister Toru sternly instructed Pesco authorities to put an end to unannounced load-shedding, emphasizing that it will no longer be tolerated. He suggested utilizing government machinery to resolve the issue of frequent tripping of feeders and urged the development of a comprehensive plan to combat electricity theft and replace damaged wires.

The meeting decided that all Assistant Commissioners will monitor grid stations in their respective jurisdictions to ensure effective oversight. Pesco officials were reminded that, as per the Chief Minister's orders, load shedding exceeding 12 hours on any feeder will not be acceptable.

Deputy Commissioner Mardan, Muhammad Fayyaz Khan Sherpao, appealed to the public to cooperate with Pesco staff and settle their bills

promptly to facilitate a permanent solution to the load-shedding problem. He also urged the public to avoid unnecessary electricity usage due to the country's power shortage and high costs, and to support Pesco authorities in their efforts against the Kunda mafia.

The meeting's outcome demonstrates the government's commitment to addressing the long-standing issue of load-shedding and ensuring a stable power supply to the people of Mardan. By cracking down on unannounced power outages and electricity theft, the government aims to provide relief to the public and promote a culture of accountability in the power sector.

WSSCM disposed off 2405 tons of animal remains in Eid: The Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) completed three days Eidul Azha operations. During the operations 2405 tons of sacrificial animals waste safely disposed.

On the 1st day of Eidul Azha the waste disposal operation was started from College chowk and continued till 3rd day of Eid. Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao inaugurated Eid ul Azha Operations.

According to the WSSCM, The Management and Sanitation Staff were on duty during Eidul Azha operations, 600 numbers workers performed duties

in the Eid operations and 70 various type and capacity vehicles were deployed for collection and disposal of animal's offal. 48 Complaints were received during Eid days which were immediately resolved.

The water supply staff of the company also ensured uninterrupted supply of clean drinking water to the citizens while team also carried out disinfection sprays in different areas of the city. Deputy Commissioner reviewed the ongoing cleanliness operation of wsscm in Mardan city.

He said that district administration is committed to provide clean and green environment to the citizens. Deputy Commissioner stated that 1485 tons of waste was collected and disposed on Eid 1st day, 580 tons on 2nd day and 340 tons of waste safely disposed on third day and the operations successfully concluded.

Fayaz Sherpao paid tribute to all the staff of the company for their excellent cleanliness, and said that wsscm workers worked day and night to provide clean environment to the citizens of Mardan. He lauded the efforts of wsscm team and thanked the citizens for their cooperation. Moreover, an awareness campaign was also launched before the Eid where meetings were held with elected local government representatives, ulemas and traders.

Short fiction Pushto film on civic issues screened

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A short fiction Pushto film 'Dreams of Spring' produced by three young journalists Jamil Iqbal, Malik Musa Kamal and Fayyaz ud Din, on climate changes, scarcity of drinking water and girls' education in the Khyber district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was screened at the Nisar Shaheed Resource Center Timergara here on Thursday in order to get a feedback from the audience.

The filmmakers are graduated in journalism and mass communication and belong to the Lower Dir district. The film, according to Jamil Iqbal, has been included in

national and international competitions. Dozens of intellectuals, youths, social activists and area elders participated in the film screening. The participants watched the 12 minutes' long fiction film and termed it an appreciable step. The intellectuals including Jehan Bahadar advocate, Akbar Khan, Ibrash Pasha and others critically discussed the film and suggested some improvements in it.

The other participants also took a critical look at the film and gave their feedback regarding the film's shortcomings. The participants called upon the young filmmakers to use the medium of film and media documentaries

for highlighting the pressing issues like environmental pollution, water scarcity, girls' education in the Lower Dir district to draw the attention of the ruling elite.

Fayyaz ud Din, one of the filmmakers, informed the participants that they had already highlighted some of the Dir issues like deforestation, timber smuggling, lowering of underground water tab and incomplete Koto Hydro power project in the shape of documentaries and circulated on international media. He said that his team was willing to work on the issues discussed by the participants in the near future.

Laptop house fire death toll rises to four

FAISALABAD (PPI): The death toll from an incident of fire at a house in Sharifpura locality of Faisalabad rose to four as two more people, who had been admitted to the city's Allied Hospital's burns unit, died on Thursday.

Those who died were three-year-old Ibrahim and 32-year-old Nargis. Still, five people are under treatment at the unit for their injuries. In all, nine persons had been completely burnt in the incident.

On Wednesday, two children succumbed to their injuries and many

others were hospitalized with serious burn wounds when an overheated laptop exploded and led to a massive fire in a house in Faisalabad. Nine people of a family, including children, received serious burn injuries after the laptop exploded.

They were rushed to Allied Hospital's burn unit where six-year-old Dua Fatima and nine-year-old Talha breathed their last during treatment. The condition of the remaining people was said to be serious as 35 to 72 per cent of their bodies were burnt.

The blaze started in one room but soon it engulfed the whole structure. After receiving information, Rescue 1122 personnel rushed to the site and brought the fire under control.

According to doctors, Dua Fatima's body was burnt 42 percent and Talha's 38 percent. Among the other injured, eight-year-old Iryan and Imran's bodies were burnt 45 percent, three-year-old Ibrahim's 70 percent, Nargis's 72 percent, Rashida Bibi and Farhat's 60 percent and Makki Raza's 58 percent.

Kundi inspects facilities in Hospital F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday visited District Teaching Hospital D I Khan and inquired about the provision of facilities to patients.

He also visited various sections of the hospital and listened to the problems of patients. He also held a meeting with hospital administration and assured them his cooperation in provision of equipment.

Governor said that improvement of health sector and ensuring best available medical facilities is among priority of government. He also assured to play his role to achieve these objectives for maximum facilitation of patients.

2978 patients treated in Swabi hospitals F.P. Report

SWABI: During the Eid-ul-Adha holidays, the three MTI hospitals of Swabi, including Bacha Khan Medical Complex, THQ Topi, and THQ Chota Lahor, treated 2,978 patients who were brought to the emergency departments during Eid holidays. Data revealed that 966 medical, 653 pediatric, 250 surgical, and 82 gynecological patients were provided facility in A&ER. Additionally, 82 babies were born during this period.

Spokesperson BKMC-MTI said, that 370 minor operations were conducted in the MTI hospitals, including procedures for patients injured in shootings and various accidents. The spokesperson also noted that diagnostic tests and X-ray services continued throughout the three days of Eid. According to the report, a total of 3,728 tests of various types were conducted, including 387 X-rays, 34 CT scans, and 214 ECGs.

The report highlighted that 39 cases of dog bites were recorded during the Eid holidays. Most of the patients admitted during Eid were treated under the Sehat Sahulat Program. Emergency services were provided to the public 24 hours a day without any interruption during the Eid holidays. The administration had implemented a comprehensive plan before Eid to ensure the presence of doctors, paramedics, and nurses.

WSSC dispose 1816 tons offal during Eid F.P. Report

KOHAT: Water and Sanitation Company Kohat collected and disposed 1816 tons offal and animal waste during Eid-ul-Adha.

Following a plan, staff of WSSC collected offal and animal waste from six urban areas and Kohat Development Authority and disposed it on already decided dumping sites.

A total of 100 vehicles including mini dumpers, garbage compactors, tractors, shovels and excavators were used by 445 staff members to collect and dump the waste.

Journalists demand security in Landi Kotal



F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: The tribesmen demanded in Landi Kotal to restore peace in the area, provide security to the journalist community and adopt necessary actions to trace the killers of the Martyred media person, Khalil Jibran and grant them exemplary punishment.

In a protest rally, organized Landi Kotal press club, district Khyber at Bacha Khan Square on Thursday speakers including Tehsil Chairman Shah Khalid, Awami National Party (ANP) local leader Fazal Rehman Afridi, district head of Pakistan People Party (PPP) Shah Rehman, Jamat-e-Islam Tehsil Ameer Murad Hussain Afridi, local leader of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), representative of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Fazal Rehman (JUI-F) Maulana Rematullah President press club Ahmad Nabi, Malik Masel Khan Shinwari, Khyber Bar Association representative Zuhab Shinwari and others categorically condemned the murder of the local journalist, Khalil Jibran and said it is ineffective attempt to restrict media but will not be succeeded in their intentions.

Highlighting the importance of lasting calm, they added that restoration of peace in the area is inevitable for political and economical activities. Media is the eyes and ears of the layman and they will retaliate every single action of controlling it, they opined. They went on that the security

of life and property is binding on the State that must be ensured.

They demanded the concerned authorities to probe into the cold murder of the media person, trace the killers and treat them under law.

The participants carried out banner and placards inscribed with slogans in favor of their demands.

Earlier, advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif flanked by Director General Information Muhammad Imran visited Sultan Khel, village of Martyred journalist; Khalil Jibran condoled his death with his relative and families members and offered prayers for the departed soul.

Speaking to the media persons on his visit to Landi Kotal press club, district Khyber Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will utilize all resources to trace the perpetrators to bring the culprits to justice. He asked journalists to identify those involved in the murder of Khalil Jibran so that law enforcement agencies take stern action against them.

He pledged that the government will extend every possible financial support to the orphans of the slain journalist. It is to be stated here that last evening Khalil Jibran, reporter of Khyber News was Martyred by unknown armed persons in Mazreena area of Sultan Khel village of Landi Kotal.

Meeting directs strict action against power theft

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Duration of load-shedding in Kohat should not exceed 12 hours, DC Kohat. In line with the

direction of Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an important meeting on electricity loadshedding was held with Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, in the chair on Thursday. The meeting was attended by the ADC General, ADC Finance, Assistant Commissioners and PESCO authorities.

The meeting discussed in detail the issues of unan-

nounced loadshedding, kunda mafia and electricity theft and several important decisions were taken in this respect.

PESCO authorities were directed to take strict legal action against the kunda mafia and electricity theft and remove rotten wires at the earliest to control the line losses. Deputy Commissioner said, as per direction of the provincial government, the duration of load shedding on all feeders should not be more than 12 hours.

In case of fault, it should be removed as soon

as possible to ensure power supply to the people, he added.

The PESCO authorities assured to provide complete relief to the people of the district. Deputy Commissioner Kohat directed all the Assistant Commissioners to monitor the Grade Stations in their premises. He also asked the public to cooperate with the PESCO authorities against Kunda mafia and ensure timely payment of electricity bills for resolving the problem of electricity load-shedding on permanent basis.

Thieves steal mobile phone tower in Larkana

F.P. Report

LARKANA: In an unbelievable heist in Larkana's suburban area, thieves have managed to steal an entire mobile tower belonging to a private mobile company, police said Thursday.

According to a report, the strange theft occurred in the Bhoonbhtur village of Naudero, Larkana, where thieves dismantled the mobile tower by cutting it from top to bottom with cutters. The thieves also took the iron main gate and other installations with them.

The private mobile phone company had deputed two security guards to look after its installations in the village. A case of theft has been registered at the Naudero Police Station on the complaint of the mobile company's General Manager Sajid Iqbal against the two watchmen assigned to guard the tower.

The General Manager stated in his complaint that the company had received complaints from customers about mobile signals not working. When the company staff inspected the tower site to address the technical issues, they discovered that the entire tower, along with other installations, had been stolen, he said.

Young girl committed suicide: An 18-year-old young girl named Saima Teewni daughter of Merel Teewno, allegedly fired with a pistol at herself from the house and took her own self life. The wagfan police carried the body of the girl to the government hospital of Waggan town, from where after postmortem the body was handed over to the relatives after necessary procedures, the Waggan police have started the investigation of the incident. Of the young girl suicide.

Meanwhile, robbers attacked Gandhir police

check post in Kashmir area of ??Larkana police range, Larkana police range, Kashmir area, Gandhir police check post, constable Ghulam Mustafa, constable Raja were shot during the fight. And constable Saddam Hussain was injured. The injured 3 police men were admitted to a local hospital for treatment, while DIG Police Range Larkana Nasir Aftab Pathan contacted SSP Kashmir as soon as the incident was reported and a heavy police force headed by SSP Kashmir was dispatched to the scene. The personnel chased the robbers, while more personnel and APCs were flown from the range, while the DIG Police Range Larkana ordered the arrest of the accused involved in injuring the injured policemen in the encounter with the robbers as soon as possible and bring them to book. Orders have been issued.

Enmity between two groups takes two lives

JACOBABAD (INP): An old enmity between two groups of Pahore Jutt Tribe settled in Jacobabad killed two men of a group on Thursday.

Armed persons of a group attacked the rival people when they were going to the local court for the hearing. The assassins attacked the rival group at the Old College Road in Jacobabad and killed two people on the spot and the other one injured badly.

The accused escaped from the crime scene without any resistance or quick response from the

law enforcers after the attack. Jacobabad police said the incident occurred in the limits of the City Police Station. The dead bodies and the wounded person were shifted to the hospital.

The police said the deceased have been identified as Munir Pahore and Hayat Pahore who belong to Mehran Pahore, a village on the outskirts of Thal. The police said the incident occurred on a long-standing dispute between two groups of the Pahore community. The police said the area had been cordoned off to

arrest the accused.

Historically, Pahore gotra originated from Raja Poru of Kekaya Kingdom. Pahores refers to a clan of Rajputs who descended from King Porus or the ancient tribe called Puru.

The alternative spellings of the name are Pahor and Pahir. Pahore clan is found in northern districts of Sindh. They are found in Karachi, Hyderabad, Nawabshah, Dadu, Khairpur Sindh, Larkana, Jowagal, Sukkur and Shikarpur, Chachran, Mauza and Pahore.



NEW DELHI: A relative of a man, who died after drinking illegally brewed liquor, cries over a casket containing his body in Kallakurichi district of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

Sweden court acquits ex-Syrian general of alleged war crimes

STOCKHOLM: A court in Sweden has acquitted a former Syrian general of playing a role in alleged war crimes committed more than 10 years ago in his home country. In a statement announcing its verdict on Thursday, the Stockholm District Court said that while the Syrian military had used “indiscriminate attacks” at that time, the prosecution had not proved that former Brigadier General Mohammed Hamo’s division was involved in those attacks, or that he had a role in providing arms for the assaults.

The 65-year-old, who lives in Sweden and was one of the highest-ranking Syrian military officials to have been tried in Europe, stood accused of “aiding and abetting” war crimes in the first half of 2012. In June 2012, he was transferred to northern Syria, and the following month he decided to leave the army and fled to Turkey. There, he joined a group that was fighting against the Syrian regime.

He travelled to Sweden in 2015, where he sought asylum, which was granted. But the Swedish Migration Agency informed the government that Hamo was previously “a senior officer within the framework of an army that was systematically consid-

ered to have committed violations of human rights”. Hamo was living in central Sweden when he was arrested on December 7, 2021. A court at the time released him two days later, saying there was not enough evidence to keep him in jail. He has since been free.

The prosecution had argued that in his role as brigadier general and head of the 11th Division’s armament unit, Hamo allegedly helped coordinate the supply of arms and ammunition to units involved in attacks near the towns of Homs and Hama. “The main issues in the case are whether the 11th Division of the Syrian Army participated in indiscriminate attacks in certain areas and whether the defendant participated in arming the division in those attacks,” judge Katarina Fabian wrote.

“According to the District Court, there is no evidence to clarify these issues. The evidence presented by the prosecution has therefore not been deemed sufficient to convict the defendant of a criminal offence,” Fabian said. The war between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s regime and armed opposition groups, including the ISIL (ISIS) group, erupted after the government repressed peaceful pro-democracy protests in

2011. The war has killed more than half a million people and ravaged Syria’s economy and infrastructure. Half of the country’s pre-war population of 23 million have fled the country, igniting a wave of migration in the Middle East and Europe. However, few Syrian officials have been brought to trial.

The prosecution argued that the Syrian army’s “widespread air and ground attacks” caused damage “at a scale that was disproportionate in view of the concrete and immediate general military advantages that could be expected to be achieved”. Hamo denied criminal responsibility and his lawyer, Mari Kilman, told the court the officer could not be held liable for the actions “as he had acted in a military context and had to follow orders”.

“What is noteworthy about this case is that this is the first trial concerning the Syrian military’s warfare. That is, how the warfare was carried out,” said Aida Samani, senior legal adviser at rights group Civil Rights Defenders, which has been monitoring the trial. No European court has previously dealt with this issue and the impact on civilian lives and infrastructure, she added. — Aljazeera

China Coast Guard accused of behaving ‘like pirates’ in China Sea

BEIJING: The Philippines has accused the China Coast Guard of acting “like pirates”, saying personnel armed with knives and spears boarded their resupply vessels at Second Thomas Shoal in the latest confrontation in the disputed South China Sea.

Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces General Romeo Brawner said the incident took place on June 17 as Filipino soldiers attempted to resupply sailors stationed on the Sierra Madre, which Manila grounded on the reef in 1999. “The Chinese Coast Guard personnel had bladed weapons and our personnel fought with bare hands,” he wrote in a statement on Facebook. “We were outnumbered and their weapons were unexpected but our personnel fought with everything that they had.”

The Philippines said one of their sailors was badly injured, and the boats were damaged. Brawner said the coastguard had acted like pirates. “Only pirates do this,” he said. “Only pirates board, steal, and destroy ships, equipment, and belongings.” The situation at Second Thomas Shoal, which lies within the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone (EEZ) about 195km (121 miles) from the western Philippine island of Palawan, has become increasingly fraught in recent months with China attempting to disrupt the Philippines’ regular missions to the Sierra Madre. Beijing denied its personnel acted inappropriately.

“The law enforcement action taken by China Coast Guard on the scene was professional and restrained,” Spokesman Lin Jian said at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ regular news conference, saying they were trying to stop a resupply mission that was “illegal”. Lin accused the Philippines of sending construction material and “even weapons and ammunition” to the rusting ship.

“China urges the Philippines to stop its infringement and provocation at once,” Lin said. China claims almost the entire South China Sea under its so-called nine-dash line and has continued to build artificial islands and military outposts on outcrops and reefs despite an international tribunal ruling its claim to have “no legal basis” in 2016. Beijing has backed up its claims with ships from its coastguard, maritime militia and fishing fleets, and on Saturday, it began enforcing a 2021 law that China says allows its coastguard to use lethal force against foreign ships in waters that it claims, and to detain alleged foreign “trespassers” without trial.

The Global Times, a Chinese state-run tabloid, published photos that it said showed the China Coast Guard’s “interception, boarding, inspection and expelling of Philippine vessels” at Second Thomas Shoal in a manoeuvre that appeared to involve four boats. One picture, taken from the air, showed three Chinese vessels – two of them black-hulled infla-

bles – chasing down a Philippine boat, which appeared to be sandwiched between a coastguard ship and one of the inflatables.

The Philippines military, meanwhile, shared its own video of the incident. It appeared to show two Chinese vessels approaching a smaller Philippine ship from either side. A third Chinese boat was visible close behind with Chinese coastguard personnel in orange life jackets then boarding the encircled vessel. One appeared to be carrying an axe. The Philippines’ Foreign Ministry condemned China’s “illegal and aggressive” behaviour in the latest incident, noting in a statement efforts were being made “to rebuild a conducive environment for dialogue and consultation with China on the South China Sea”.

It said no progress would be made if “China’s words do not match their actions on the waters” and urged Beijing to “act sincerely and responsibly”. The ministry urged China to respect international law and the 2016 ruling, in particular, which Manila filed after Beijing seized Scarborough Shoal following a months-long standoff. Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), each country has an EEZ extending 200 nautical miles (around 370km) from their coast over which it has sovereign rights. Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam also claim parts of the South China Sea.

Supporters of Myanmar’s jailed leader Kyi mark her birthday

BANGKOK (AP): Supporters of Myanmar’s imprisoned ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi carried out peaceful flower-themed protests marking her 79th birthday, some taking to the streets in defiance of the military government’s repression.

Suu Kyi, a Nobel peace prize winner who led a decades-long struggle against military rule, was detained on Feb. 1, 2021, when the army seized power from her elected government. She is serving a 27-year prison term on what are widely regarded as charges that were contrived to keep her from political activity. She is one of more than 20,600 people currently detainee d for opposing military rule, according to the independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which documents arrests.

Pro-democracy street protests in Suu Kyi’s honor were held openly in parts of the country not under the control of the army, including in Sagaing and Magway regions in central

Myanmar, and Tanintharyi in the south, as well as in Kachin state in the north. Images on social media showed protesters carrying Suu Kyi’s picture and banners reading “Happy Birthday, Steel Rose” and “The steel roses will retaliate against the junta’s oppression without yielding,” referencing one of their hero’s nicknames and adopting the sobriquet for themselves.

Pro-democracy guerrillas in remote areas not under army control also celebrated her birthday. Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army’s 2021 takeover, which led to nationwide peaceful protests that escalated into armed resistance and what now amounts to a civil war.

However, nonviolent protests continue to be popular, both online and on the ground. They are often coordinated around themes, such as a flower strike. One common practice is to post online self-portraits along with symbols of the strike or of Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy

party, but with faces obscured to prevent identification by the authorities.

In the southern region of Tanintharyi, hundreds of demonstrators in Dawei district displayed Suu Kyi’s famous slogan “The only real prison is fear, and the only real freedom is freedom from fear.” Min Lwin Oo, a leader of the Democracy Movement Strike Committee (Dawei), told The Associated Press that the quote was supposed to inspire people to have courage and no fear in carrying out revolution against military dictatorship.

Young people held more discreet protests in the big cities of Yangon and Mandalay, where it’s not unusual for security forces to use force to break up demonstrations and make arrests. Eleven Media, a news outlet that maintains good relations with the military government, reported that 22 people in Mandalay were arrested for alleged involvement in the flower strike.

Step-son of Malawi’s ex-leader acquitted

MALAWI (BBC): The step-son of Malawi’s ex-President Peter Mutharika has been acquitted of all charges in a case in which he was accused of human trafficking and aggravated manslaughter.

Tadikira Mafubza and seven other men were arrested in November 2022 after police said they were linked with the deaths of 29 suspected Ethiopian immigrants whose bodies were found in an unmarked mass grave. Ex-President Mutharika said at the time he was shocked by the police action, saying his step-son was arrested without there being any evidence linking him to any crime. After an ordeal lasting more than 19 months, Mr Mafubza and his co-accused were cleared following a full trial.

“We are pleased with the outcome,” Mr Mafubza’s lawyer said. “To be honest, we saw it coming as the evidence [against our client] was disjointed.” However, Dzikondianthu Malunda, an official for the Directorate of Public Prosecution, said the ruling had “come as a surprise”.

Mr Mafubza himself declined to comment on his acquittal as he left the courtroom, only stopping to pose for photographers’ pictures. In October 2022, police found a grave filled with dozens of bodies in a forest in the northern district of Mzimba after young boys reportedly detected a foul smell. The corpses were of boys and men believed to be Ethiopian migrants being trafficked to South Africa.

Malawi is a major trafficking route for migrants from Ethiopia and Somalia. After police launched a search for Mr Mafubza, he handed himself over at their headquarters in the capital, Lilongwe. The former governing Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) had described his arrest as a political witch-hunt against Mr Mutharika’s family and his supporters.

Climate activists held

LONDON: Two climate protesters were arrested for spraying orange paint on the ancient Stonehenge monument, a prehistoric UNESCO World Heritage Site in southern England, police have said.

The act by Just Stop Oil was quickly condemned by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak as a “disgraceful act of vandalism”. Labour leader Keir Starmer, his main opponent in the election next month, called the group “pathetic” and said the damage was “outrageous”. The incident came just a day before thousands are expected to gather at the 4,500-year-old stone circle to celebrate the summer solstice – the longest day of the year in the northern hemisphere.

English Heritage, which manages the site, said it was “extremely upsetting” and said curators were investigating the damage. Just Stop Oil said on the social media platform X that the paint was made of cornstarch and would dissolve in the rain. The Wiltshire Police said the pair of protesters were arrested on suspicion of damaging the monument. “Officers attended the scene and arrested two people on suspicion of damaging the ancient monument,” police said. “Our inquiries are ongoing and we are working closely with English Heritage.”

Footage posted on social media showed activists, wearing “Just Stop Oil” branded T-shirts, spraying a cluster of the megalithic standing stones with the orange substance from a small canister. The group said Niamh Lynch, a 21-year-old student, and Rajan Naidu, 73, had used “orange cornflour” for the stunt.

Stonehenge was built on the flat lands of Salisbury Plain in stages starting 5,000 years ago, with the unique stone circle erected in the late Neolithic period about 2,500 BC. Some of the stones, the so-called blue-stones, are known to have come from southwest Wales, nearly 240km (150 miles) away, but the origins of others remain a mystery. Just Stop Oil is one of many groups around Europe that have gained attention – and received criticism – for disrupting sporting events, splashing paint and food on famous works of art and interrupting traffic to draw attention to the global climate crisis. — Aljazeera

Illegally brewed liquor kills 34 in India

NEW DELHI (AP): At least 34 people have died and dozens hospitalized after drinking illegally brewed liquor in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, local media reported on Thursday.

The state’s chief minister M K Stalin said the 34 died after consuming liquor that was tainted with methanol, according to the Press Trust of India news agency. The incident occurred in the state’s Kallakurichi district, where more than 100 people are being treated in various hospitals, top district official M S Prasanth said. He added that the number of those who are in critical condition keeps changing, suggesting that the death

toll could rise.

Ambulances, doctors and specialists from nearby areas were deployed to the district. Government officials earlier said several people who were vomiting and had stomach pain were admitted to hospitals, triggering a police investigation. Later that day, Stalin, the chief minister, said in a post on social media platform X that those involved in the crime have been arrested, and action has also been taken against officials who failed to prevent it. “Such crimes that ruin the society will be suppressed with an iron fist,” he added.

Deaths from illegally brewed alcohol are common in India, where the

poor cannot afford licensed brands from government-run shops. The illicit liquor, which is often spiked with chemicals such as pesticides to increase potency, has also become a hugely profitable industry as bootleggers pay no taxes and sell enormous quantities of their product to the poor at a cheap rate. In 2022, more than 30 people died in eastern India’s Bihar state after allegedly drinking tainted liquor sold without authorization. Earlier that same year, at least 28 died from drinking altered liquor in Gujarat state. And in 2020, at least 120 people died after drinking tainted liquor in India’s northern Punjab state.

Heat wave claims lives of 125 in Mexico

VERACRUZ, Mexico (AP): When the nursing home in southern Mexico began to bake in the country’s ongoing heatwave, staff cycled their elderly residents through the few cooling options they had.

First, some would sit in front of fans buzzing in the sweltering heat of Veracruz. Then they’d be moved in front of the building’s few treasured air conditioning units. Then it was back to the record-breaking temperatures roiling the Veracruz state. Anything to get through the climate change-fueled heat wave, which has left much of Mexico grappling with the mounting human toll of the heat.

“We have never before experienced a heat wave this intense, this powerful, this pervasive and this persistent,” said Maria Teresa Mendoza, director of the Cogra nursing home, operating for decades in the port of Veracruz. “This heat wave has killed many people here in Veracruz.” At least 125 people in the Latin American nation have died due to the heat this year, according to data from the country’s health ministry. More than 2,300 more have suffered heat stroke, dehydration and

sunburns.

The heat deaths and larger ripple effects in Mexico have underscored the disproportionate effects climate change and rising global temperatures are having on some of the world’s most vulnerable. Victims in Veracruz have made up nearly a third of the deaths as temperatures have reached 100 degrees in the humid Mexican gulf state. Caregivers like Mendoza have been left scrambling to ease the suffering of her patients.

On Sunday, Mendoza stood in front of a group of elderly women in rocking chairs, many with their heads nodding downward due to the heat, which was hardly pierced by a set of fans rotating in front of them. “We’re going to drink a bit of water. Sounds good?” she said. “Those are my girls.”

The heat has had cascading effects across Mexico. Howler monkeys and tropical birds have dropped dead from trees in southern Mexico. Residents scramble to fill up jugs of water, concerned about the heat compounding ongoing drought. Migrants walk north with little to ease the beating sun. Emergency services in Veracruz have

been responding to a greater number of heat-related emergencies in areas like warehouses and even open air spaces.

David Zebadua Escalente, coordinator of state relief for the Mexican Red Cross in Veracruz, said medics respond to as many as five heat strokes a day. As a result, teams began rigging ambulances with ice and other equipment in an effort to save lives. “We had to take certain measures in the ambulances, like putting ice packs inside, cold liquids, cold compresses so we could treat people who have had heat stroke,” he said.

He said medics often attend to people working long hours in the sun, with few breaks and little water, which makes people more vulnerable to heat stroke. Meanwhile, construction workers like Jorge Misael Rodríguez keep on working. Drenched in sweat, Misael Rodríguez carries heavy equipment, bricks and planks on the site. “You feel feverish, feel pain, and get tons of headaches. Once you’re at home, the pain starts. In your shoulders, back and arms,” Rodríguez said, gulping down water during a break. “It hits you hard.”

Sudan’s RSF captures key army stronghold

KHARTOUM: Sudan’s paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have taken control of el-Fula, the capital of West Kordofan state, sources told Al Jazeera. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) fought the RSF for several hours before withdrawing from the city, with the paramilitary group seizing government and military headquarters, the sources said on Thursday.

Reporting from Khartoum, Al Jazeera’s Hiba Morgan said the capture of el-Fula was “significant”, being one of only two army bases in strategically located West Kordofan, with a power station. Centrally positioned, el-Fula affords access to regional and national borders. “So there are concerns the RSF would be able to have, not just more control of territory around the country, but also the power station there,” she said.

The army, meanwhile, had retreated to Babanusa, its one remaining base in the region. “If the RSF takes control of Babanusa as well, then that gives them more control of territory in the entire country,

which they say is their goal,” said Morgan. The assault on el-Fula, she said, was “not surprising”, given that the paramilitary group had repeatedly said they were targeting positions of the Sudanese army, not just in the Darfur region, but also elsewhere around the country.

The takeover of the army stronghold, which has led to more civilians fleeing their homes, came as medical charity Doctors Without Borders, known by its French initials MSF, slammed the humanitarian response to one of the world’s “worst crises” in decades as “deeply inadequate”. “There are extreme levels of suffering across the country, and the needs are growing by the day,” Christos Christou, international president of MSF, said on Thursday in a post on social media platform X.

With repeated outbreaks of fighting between the SAF and the RSF around Babanusa in recent weeks, it was uncertain whether aid agencies would be able to reach the displaced, said Al Jazeera’s Morgan. “Aid agencies have been saying that they’ve been having

difficulties reaching West Kordofan region along with other parts of the country,” she said.

“It’s likely that with the fighting in el-Fula and with civilians being displaced, the needs of those needing humanitarian assistance will rise.” War has raged for more than a year between the regular military under army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the RSF, led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo. The conflict, which began in April 2023, has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and displaced more than 10 million people, making it the world’s worst internal displacement crisis, according to the United Nations.

Both sides have been accused of war crimes, including deliberately targeting civilians, indiscriminate shelling of residential areas and blocking humanitarian aid, despite warnings that millions are on the brink of starvation. Rights groups and the United States have also accused the paramilitaries of ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. — Aljazeera

Kenya police use tear gas as hundreds protest over tax hikes

NAIROBI: Police in Kenya have fired tear gas and used water cannon to disperse protesters gathering near parliament in the capital to demonstrate against planned tax hikes that many fear will worsen the cost-of-living crisis. Tense scenes played out in Nairobi on Thursday as hundreds took to the streets in opposition to a finance bill, which proposes introducing new taxes and levies that would increase the price of basic goods.

The tax increases were projected to raise 346.7 billion shillings (\$2.7bn), equivalent to 1.9 percent of gross domestic product

(GDP), and reduce the budget deficit from 5.7 percent to 3.3 percent of GDP.

The cash-strapped government of President William Ruto agreed to make concessions, watering down the bill after hundreds of mostly young protesters clashed with police.

But the government will still go ahead with some tax increases and has defended the proposed hikes as necessary for filling its coffers and cutting reliance on external borrowing. Protesters have decided to stage demonstrations across the country, including in the Indian Ocean city of Mombasa and the lake-

side city of Kisumu, both opposition bastions.

In Nairobi, lawmakers were debating the bill on Thursday in its second reading before parliament. The final version must pass before June 30. Meanwhile, authorities blocked several roads near parliament and made a heavy police deployment. Reporting from Nairobi’s city centre, Al Jazeera’s Malcolm Webb said demonstrators outnumbered the police in the streets. “Police are firing a lot of tear gas here this morning ... and there is a thick smell of tear gas in the air where we are,” he said. — Aljazeera

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Selling damaging US chip move no easy task

THE US side makes no bones about the core mission of Under Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Security Alan Estevez's planned visits to the Netherlands and Japan early next month. The intention is to press the two US allies to further tighten and expand their implementation of the United States' ban on high-end chip and equipment exports to China.

The requirements are concrete: adding another 11 Chinese companies to the current list consisting of five prohibited enterprises; extending the exports ban to high-bandwidth memory chips needed for the development of artificial intelligence; and scrapping all servicing contracts related to high-end chips between their companies, in particular ASML and Tokyo Electron, and their Chinese partners.

The reason why the Republic of Korea does not appear in the US export control policy chief's itinerary is because its major HBM chipmakers, including SK Hynix, Samsung Electronics and Micron Technology, mainly rely on equipment from ASML and Tokyo Electron. So as long as the latter two companies submit to US pressure, the ROK companies will also be subject to it.

Holding aloft its banner of values, the US implemented its China-targeted chip exports ban in 2022, and pressed the Netherlands, Japan and the ROK to join it last year. But all of the three allies have been quietly resisting the US' pressure. Although they ostensibly stopped their companies exporting high-end chips and equipment to China, their companies still seek to do whatever they can to protect their own interests. That includes providing contracted after-sales services to Chinese partners for the equipment the latter bought before the US ban was introduced.

Meanwhile, the three countries are taking advantage of bilateral and multilateral occasions to negotiate with China to explore ways to sustain their chip companies' China business, as the US side does not, and cannot, provide them with any alternative market that can replace China for their enterprises. It is no secret that some major US chipmaking companies have been doing exactly the same. All of the three countries want more time to evaluate the impact of the current export bans on high-end chip-making equipment. Not to mention the fact that they are all waiting to see the outcome of the US presidential election in November. So Estevez might find his lobbying a challenging task if he only waves the flag of value diplomacy and cannot tell his hosts how the US can help ASML and Tokyo Electron make up the losses that will result from meeting the new requirements of the US. Notably, Estevez's planned trip to the Netherlands will follow the swearing-in of the new Dutch Cabinet that shows an even stronger will to protect the national interests of the Netherlands. That the outgoing Foreign Trade Minister Liesje Schreinemacher paid a farewell visit to the US last week to lobby for the interests of ASML is also a telling sign that to maintain the Chinese market is a consensus of the country's political circle.

Not only the Dutch people, but all US allies are wary that the restrictive, coercive, bullying and protectionist moves the US takes targeting China in economy, trade, technology and industry are all to defend the US' hegemony rather than serving other parties' interests. Estevez's hosts should bear in mind that Washington has already imposed the restrictions on US companies including Applied Materials and Lam Research, and it will not want any foreign companies, even those of its allies, to benefit from its rules-bending moves. That both the Dutch and Japanese government have declined to comment on Estevez's visits should prepare the US visitor for difficult discussions in both stops, if he cannot resolve their concerns.

Meloni: The new face

ITALIAN Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni seemed to have scored brownie points in the visual-dominated media focus on the G7 summit that Italy had hosted last week. This is not the first time that a woman politician in Europe was holding the reins of power. Former German Chancellor Angel Merkel did it without much ado for 16 years. It is slightly different with Meloni. She brings in Italian vivacity and more than a wee bit of feminine style and charm to the job. Meloni drew much attention when she greeted the G7 leaders with folded hands, the Indian style 'namaste', though warm shake-hands and that rare awkward hug with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak added spice to the spectacle.

And of course, there was that death stare at French President Emmanuel Macron, with who she clashed on the mention of abortion rights in the summit communique, accusing him of playing to his domestic gallery. Then there was the touching scene when Meloni gently brought back US President Joe Biden as he seemed to walk away a bit from the other leaders at a paragliders event which was also a photo opportunity for the group of leaders. And she was eloquent and warm when she expressed appreciation of Pope Francis attending the summit and addressing it. These were all visuals that gave Meloni plenty of opportunity to project the image of a firm and caring political leader. And she seemed to have grabbed the opportunity with both her hands. Observers have also noted the fact that Meloni is also a strong leader after the European Parliament elections where her Brothers of Italy had scored a convincing victory, which is not surprising the elections gave thumbs up to right-wing and more crucially to far-right parties, and Meloni leads a right-wing party. The parties of the Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz had faced a bruising defeat in the elections from their far-right parties in their countries, the National Rally of Marine Le Pen in France and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany.

The two leaders from North America, Biden and Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau face elections at home, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida with low popularity ratings faces a leadership election within his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Britain's Rishi Sunak has called for parliamentary election on July 4, which pollsters predict will be a hug defeat for Sunak's Conservatives. That leaves Meloni standing strong and alone among the leaders of the advanced economies and political democracies. She can call the shots as it were in continental politics. It is expected that she will support European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen with her conservative European People's Party (EPP) retaining an upper hand in the European Parliament. Her position on the troubling international questions have become mellowed ever since she became prime minister in late 2022. From being an anti-immigration politician, she now speaks of giving economic aid to African countries so that people do not have to feel their homelands, she has said that the two-state solution is the only way out to the Israel-Palestine problem, and she said that Israel has walked into the trap set by Hamas in its attack on Israeli civilians on October 7 last and that Israel is getting isolated in the world.

She was firm that access to abortion need not be mentioned in the G7 communique because it was already stated in the G7 communique of Hiroshima last year. She is one of the European leaders who is politically stable both at home and in the European Parliament, and she is keen to get something for Italy in the European powerstakes.

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Saudi Arabia's semiconductor revolution

Zaid M. Belbagi

At a time of rapid technological innovation and data-driven economies, semiconductors have emerged as the so-called new oil. These tiny chips that will court an estimated global investment of \$1 trillion by 2030 are the cornerstone of modern societies. From computing to consumer electronics to solar panels, various everyday devices are dependent on semiconductors.

Given its technological salience and economic potential, the semiconductor industry has attracted global interest and investment.

Though semiconductors are crucial components of defense systems and are exposed to global supply chain disruptions that cause domestic shortages, they have also attracted regulatory attention due to their significance to national security.

The global rise of semiconductors has aligned with the ongoing transformation in Saudi Arabia, whereby the Kingdom is more interested than ever in creating digital economics and investing in the latest technologies.

Building on its stated plan, announced in March, to provide a \$40 billion push for artificial intelligence in the country, Saudi Arabia this month announced the creation of a National Semiconductor Hub during the Future of Semiconductors Forum in Riyadh.

The government aims to use various financial incentives to attract 50 semiconductor companies to set up bases in Saudi Arabia and develop simple, fabless chips. The chips will initially be manufactured internationally, with the Kingdom planning to then use its strategic location, abundant natural resources, research infrastructure and local talent to build a semiconductor ecosystem worth more than \$13 billion.

This comes amid increasing Saudi interest in investing in emerging technologies locally and internationally. In doing so, the Kingdom has partnered with leading international semiconductor companies like Nvidia,

Qualcomm and Intel to combine their industry expertise with its financial and natural resources. However, while these American companies provide the most sophisticated semiconductor technology at present, growing geopolitical tensions between the US and China have complicated any third-party usage of this technology.

Citing national security

The government aims to use various financial incentives to attract 50 semiconductor companies to set up bases in Saudi Arabia and develop simple, fabless chips. The chips will initially be manufactured internationally, with the Kingdom planning to then use its strategic location, abundant natural resources, research infrastructure and local talent to build a semiconductor ecosystem worth more than \$13 billion. This comes amid increasing Saudi interest in investing in emerging technologies locally and internationally. In doing so, the Kingdom has partnered with leading international semiconductor companies like Nvidia, Qualcomm and Intel to combine their industry expertise with its financial and natural resources.

concerns, the US has banned the export of advanced AI and semiconductor technology to China, which in turn complicates the procurement of American technology by any country that also does business with China. Notably, the US last year banned the sale of Nvidia's advanced A100 and H100 chips to Middle Eastern countries amid concerns of technology leakage to China.

In this context, Saudi Arabia's commitment to developing a domestic semiconductor industry is also an exercise in shap-

ing an increasingly independent and influential foreign policy. The Kingdom's efforts toward balancing the US-China technological competition is seen in two contrasting recent statements. In early May, the Saudi AI investment fund Alat stated that it was willing to divest from Chinese companies should the US ask it to. By the end of the month, reports emerged

with both technological giants, Saudi Arabia has decided to look inwards to develop its own capabilities and local talent in the semiconductor sector. An initial investment of \$266 million in the National Semiconductor Hub, amid ambitious multibillion dollar plans to invest in AI and technological advancement, is a sign of the ongoing technological revolution in Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom is not only seeking to attenuate great power rivalry in the field but also use this opportunity to upskill and employ its youth, strengthen international partnerships and reduce dependency for a technology that is key to Saudi progress toward a diversified post-oil economy. Greater localization in chip manufacturing also allows Saudi Arabia to mitigate the challenges posed by natural calamities, conflicts and intellectual property rights to the globally dispersed semiconductor supply chain.

The hub's vision to attract 25 international experts and train 5,000 semiconductor engineers by 2030 indicates the Kingdom's sustainable approach toward developing this industry.

The National Semiconductor Hub's recent statement that it does not intend to "replace Nvidia or challenge Intel" is notable, as it highlights the Kingdom's pragmatic assessment of its capabilities and targets, which will make this technological revolution viable. Naveed Sherwani, who will head the new hub, highlighted Saudi Arabia's focus on uncomplicated chips that are not politically sensitive.

The Kingdom's development of low-cost and fabless chips will also be beneficial for its partners in the Global South. Saudi Arabia can offer these emerging economies a crucial technology at affordable prices to provide an initial impetus to their digitalization.

These efforts are putting Saudi Arabia at the forefront of the technological revolution, not only in the region but globally as well.

Australia must recognise Palestine to promote peace

Fatima Payman

OVER the last eight months, we have witnessed the mass killing and displacement of Palestinians and the devastation and destruction of Gaza carried out by Israel under the guise of "self-defence". As the Israeli government continues to disregard its obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and cease genocidal acts, it is imperative for influential nations to take a definitive stance.

Australia, with its global standing and democratic values, is in a strong position to facilitate peace. An important step in this direction is recognising a Palestinian state. It is also a moral and ethical imperative.

On May 29, a motion was presented to the lower house of the Australian parliament by the Greens to vote on whether Australia should follow Spain, Norway, Ireland, Slovenia, and the overwhelming majority of the world's nations in recognising Palestinian statehood, but it failed to pass as 80 MPs voted against it.

My party, the Australian Labor Party, has consistently argued that such motions are political machinations on the part of the Greens in order to score "cheap points" and sway the public.

Even if that were the case, this "politicizing" does not detract from the underlying fact that a genocide is ongoing, and the Australian public knows it. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have been slaughtered, among them 15,000 children.

Australians have seen for themselves the image of seven-year-old Sidra Hassouna hanging from a wall with her legs blown off and the footage of a man holding the corpse of 18-months-old Ahmad beheaded by an Israeli bombing. They have heard the sound of six-year-old Hind Rajab's last words, desperately pleading for help as Israeli tanks closed in on her.

Social media is rife with images and videos of children with multiple limbs amputated. Entire families have been wiped off the registry. According to the Geneva-based Euro Med Human Rights Monitor, more than 70,000 tonnes of bombs have been dropped on Gaza between Oct 2023 and April 2024.

Australians have read the endless human rights reports from the likes of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and even Israel's own B'Tselem describing the governance in Israel as akin to "apartheid" and Gaza as an "open-air prison".

They have heard Israeli ministers calling for the ethnic cleansing and occupation of Gaza. They have seen the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rule that there is a plausible case of genocide in Gaza. They have watched the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) request arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes.

France has affirmed its support for the ICC. Sweden has done the same.

Germany has announced it would arrest Netanyahu if the ICC warrant is issued. US Senator Elizabeth Warren has stated that there is ample evidence for international courts to find Israel guilty of genocide.

Renowned American Professor John Mearsheimer who came to Australia's Centre for Independent Studies, has emphatically asserted that Israel is choosing between apartheid and ethnic cleansing in its treatment of Palestinians.

UN experts have stated that Israel has committed at least three acts of genocide over the past eight months. UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese has stated that "Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza is an escalatory stage of a long-standing settler colonial process of erasure".

This is why a recognition of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders is imperative. Australia's recognition would be a symbolic and bold rejection of Israel's current bid to erase the Palestinian people. Recognition of a Palestinian state would not frustrate a peace process; rather, it would rescue that very peace process and keep it alive.

This is the reason why Ireland, Spain, Norway and Slovenia moved to recognise a Palestinian state. It was not to reject or antagonise Israel. It was to rescue the process Israel is frantically trying to destroy.

Australia must reinforce the fundamental moral principle at the heart of the conflict: the right to self-determination. The Palestinian people, like any other, have an inherent right to govern themselves, to live freely on their own land, and to build their future. This right is enshrined in international law, including in the United Nations Charter.

By recognising a Palestinian state, Australia would be affirming its commitment to this universal principle and frustrate Israel's bid to crush such aspirations of the Palestinians.

Israel is seeking to erase the agency of the Palestinian people. Australia must stand up to restore and reinforce it. Our country must not become one that smothers voices calling for justice, or one that censors the oppressed seeking freedom.

Australian hearts have an affinity for justice. This is the reason why our students across the country are standing up as their predecessors did when they denounced the wars in Vietnam, and Iraq, and Afghanistan. The students were right on each of these generation-defining conflicts. Will it be that history repeats itself again by which we ignore them again?

In opposition, our prime minister and the Labor Party were fierce champions of Palestine and passionate voices for justice. I ask that we summon that spirit of old and do the same in power. Let historians write of us that we were on the right side of history, that we boldly reinforced international law, and that we were a shining beacon and voice for freedom.

It is time to recognise Palestine.

Disease and starvation a growing threat in Gaza

Chris Doyle

Gaza have no access to clean water or sanitation. "We drove through rivers of sewage," Skau said. Diseases are spreading, including skin diseases, hepatitis, gastroenteritis and respiratory illnesses. With the summer heat hitting Gaza, a major cholera outbreak is probable.

Israel has had a huge hand in this. Four out of the six wastewater treatment plants in Gaza — vital in handling the buildup of sewage and the spread of disease — have reportedly been damaged or destroyed. The other two have also shut down because of a lack of fuel or other supplies.

Deaths by disease, exacerbated by malnutrition and unsanitary conditions, will rocket, not least because Israel has smashed Gaza's health service. The World Health Organization has recorded 464 attacks on healthcare in Gaza since October. Not a single hospi-

tal is functioning in Rafah. Palestinians have been compelled to drink filthy or saline water. During a June 7 assessment at Deir Al-Balah, the average water availability per person per day was less than two liters at one displacement site and as low as 0.7 liters at another. This is below the internationally recognized minimum requirement for survival of three liters per day. Even when water is available, it is not always clean and safe.

Satellite data analysis determined that half of Gaza's water and sanitation sites had been destroyed as of April. The situation has deteriorated further since then.

This cannot be allowed to continue. Israel is still playing games with aid into Gaza. Less aid entered in May than in April. Last Wednesday, an aid truck filled with medical and food aid for 10,000 Palestinian children was turned around for "no reason," according to

UNICEF.

The immediate solutions remain clear, if distant. A ceasefire is required, along with full humanitarian access and the ability to distribute aid across Gaza. Many will need critical treatment outside of the Strip. A failure to act will see far more people dying from malnutrition and disease than the bombing. It will also serve to harden the abundance of evidence that what Israeli is engaging in is nothing short of genocide, precisely enacting the threats of so many of its leaders, including the president, prime minister and defense minister.

Death by disease and starvation is not a process that can be switched off at the flick of a switch. Thousands of Palestinians may have already reached the point of no return. Others are on the brink. A ceasefire may halt the bombs, but these drivers of mortality have their own inexorable momentum.

New railway will turn Central Asia into a major Eurasian hub

WANG XIAOYING

A trilateral intergovernmental agreement on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project was signed at a ceremony in Beijing on June 6. President Xi Jinping, President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Japarov and President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev hailed the event as a sign of unity and shared progress.

In his address, President Xi underscored the railway project as an epitome of strategic cooperation

sibility study was updated following the completion of field surveys by Chinese engineers in December last year. All three countries have diligently prepared for the construction, which is expected to commence later this year.

The new railway, a beacon of hope and optimism, will start in China's Kashgar and traverse Torugart, Kosh-Dobo, and Kazarman in Kyrgyzstan, culmi-

In a testament to the project's significance, Japarov emphasized that this project is crucial for Kyrgyzstan's global connectivity, allowing his landlocked country to connect with the rest of the world.

The project was first proposed in the 1990s, and the three sides signed a memorandum of understanding on constructing the railway in 1997. Some experts believe political and geopolitical problems

valued at more than \$380 billion. This impressive accomplishment highlights the success of that railway link. Currently, China-Europe freight trains connect 223 cities in 25 European countries and over 100 cities in 11 Asian countries, creating a service network spanning almost the entire Eurasian continent.

Between 2016 and 2023, the annual number of China-Europe freight train trips increased from 1,702 to over 17,000. The value of goods transported by this service rose from \$8 billion in 2016 to \$56.7 billion in 2023. This rapid growth reflects the growing market demand for this efficient and dependable mode of transportation, especially when compared to air and sea routes.

The traffic's rapid growth continued this year. From January to April, 6,184 China-Europe freight trains operated, delivering 675,000 TEUs of cargo. It represents a 10 percent increase in the number of trains and an 11 percent increase in cargo compared to the same period of last year. The set-scheduled service has further improved transit time, with a journey from Xi'an to Duisburg, Germany, now taking only 12 days.

The rapidly growing rail traffic volume shows that developing an additional rail transport route between China and Europe, this time through Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, and the South Caucasus, will be economically feasible. The construction of this railway line will create the shortest land route between the two economic centers of the Eurasian continent along the Middle Corridor. At the same time, it will establish direct rail connections between China and Central Asia, the South Caucasus, Iran, Turkiye, and Europe, transforming Central Asia from a landlocked to a land-connected area.

The new railway lines will intersect in Central Asia with planned and under-construction railway lines in the North-South direction from Russia and Central Asia through Afghanistan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, and Iran to the deep-water ports of the Indian Ocean. President of Uzbekistan Mirziyoyev specifically highlighted this potential during the signing ceremony on June 6 by saying that the railway will become the shortest land channel between China and the Central Asian countries and open the big markets of the South Asian and Middle Eastern countries.

If this plan comes to fruition, the intersection of the East-West and North-South railway routes in Central Asia could transform the region into a major transport hub for the entire Eurasian continent. If this happens, the Great Silk Road revival could become a reality.

— China Daily

Meet in the middle

GU WEI

IN the context of the prolonged Ukraine crisis and an unstable Middle East, Eurasia is facing rising concerns over supply chain stability and transit security, which is of great significance for the world economy.

Located at the intersection of Europe and Asia, Central Asia has gained increasing attention from the world's major powers. The great powers have been actively participating in Central Asian affairs, and the five Central Asian countries are also diversifying their foreign relations, seeking to strengthen their independence and autonomy by engaging with external forces.

The new situation in Central Asia is not only a manifestation of the competition among great powers, but also offers new opportunities for their cooperation.

Sitting at the two ends of the Eurasian continent, China and the European Union share certain interests and goals in Central Asia, which creates room for their cooperation in the region.

Since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, despite the escalating of major power's competition and severe regional challenges, China and the EU have maintained high-level exchanges and strategic communication.

Visits to China by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, as well as the recent reciprocal state visits between the leaders of France and China, indicate there is a consensus on deepening China-EU relations. China and the EU may step up their cooperation in Central Asia, which is situated between the two, and promote their bilateral relations through regional cooperation.

Stability in Central Asia and the region's development are the shared needs of the EU and China. Amid frequent crises in the Eurasian region in recent years, including the Ukraine crisis, Central Asia requires a stable and peaceful environment to promote development. The EU and China, as major neighbors of the region, can contribute to the stability and development of Central Asia.

Central Asia is an integral part in the EU's eastward expansion of its connectivity strategy, the EU's economic cooperation with Asian countries, as well as China's Belt and Road Initiative. Both the EU and China favor stability in Central Asia and are willing to support the development of Central Asian countries, fostering independence and autonomy in the region.

There is a solid founda-

tion for China and the EU to enhance their cooperation in Central Asia.

Central Asia maintains healthy ties with both China and the EU. The EU and China are both important supports for Central Asia's economic growth. The EU is the largest aid donor to Central Asia while China is the main trading partner for the five Central Asian countries and the largest investor for some of them.

Among the major powers, China and the EU were the earliest to upgrade their mechanisms with Central Asia. Since 2022, leaders of China and Central Asian countries have held video meetings, met at their first summit, and launched the secretariat of the China-Central Asia mechanism. The EU has held two meetings with Central Asian leaders and is about to hold its first formal summit.

The establishment of these cooperation mechanisms reflect the high importance China and the EU place on Central Asia.

Moreover, China and the EU have experience and the foundation for conducting third-party market cooperation. In 2015, China and France proposed the concept of "third-party market cooperation" during their c o o p e r a t i o n .

Subsequently, China and several developed European countries reached a consensus to leverage China's production capacity and developed countries' advanced technologies for cooperation in developing countries. By setting differentiated roles and providing various resources, cooperation projects will be more efficient in promoting the growth of the developing countries. China and the EU's successful experience in developing third-party market cooperation in Southeast Asia can be applied to Central Asia.

Considering the current situation in Central Asia and the interests and needs of all parties, China and the EU should focus on the following areas when cooperating in Central Asia. First, sanctions and counter-sanctions between Russia and the West, along with the ongoing Ukraine crisis, have severely obstructed logistics and personnel exchanges via Russia.

The EU is proactive in promoting connectivity in Central Asia. The EU has held connectivity meetings and sustainable transport investor forums with Central Asia. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development released its final report on sustainable transport connections between Europe and Central Asia in 2023. The European Investment

Bank has signed memorandums of understanding with some Central Asian countries and institutions for cofinancing transport projects.

In September 2023, the China-Central Asia transport ministers' meeting mechanism was established. Freight trains linking China to Europe and Central Asia remain in normal service, and the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway is progressing.

Leveraging their respective strengths in multimodal transport, China and the EU should work together to establish a stable transport corridor across Eurasia, creating a logistics network to facilitate the green transition.

Second, the EU's "decoupling" from Russian energy has shifted its attention to Central Asian countries, which are rich in resources. Kazakhstan has become the EU's third-largest oil supplier after Norway and the United States. Turkmenistan has signed its first deal to supply natural gas to Hungary, which is also its first-ever commercial agreement to export natural gas to Europe.

Although China and the EU are competing to some extent for the availability of resources in Central Asia, there is still room for cooperation. Oil and gas supply requires infrastructure, an area where China has an advantage. China can engage in third-party market cooperation with the EU in Central Asia, complementing each other's strengths and helping Central Asian countries accelerate infrastructure building so as to increase their total trade volume and improve their resource utilization.

Third, extreme weather, water shortages, desertification and other issues related to natural disasters, climate change, and environmental protection have long troubled Central Asia and are focal points for both the EU and China.

The EU and Central Asian countries have held multiple high-level meetings on environment and water resources, striving to achieve integrated water resource management at the state, regional, and international levels. On May 30, the China-Central Asia emergency management cooperation mechanism was established. As China and the EU are both advancing their cooperation with Central Asia in these areas, it is suggested to establish a communication mechanism and a new cooperation model among the three parties to build a database, coordinate emergency management mechanisms, and create a regular communication platform for jointly addressing climate change and protecting the environment in the region.

How the world views US presidential candidates

Kerry Boyd Anderson

AS the US presidential election looms on the horizon, recent polling shows that global publics clearly prefer President Joe Biden to Donald Trump, while Americans are more divided between the two.

Last week, the Pew Research Center published the results of surveys in 34 countries and found that "a median of 43 percent have confidence in Biden to do the right thing regarding world affairs, while just 28 percent have confidence in Trump." In all but five countries in the survey, more people express confidence in Biden than in Trump. In some cases, the gap was enormous, including Sweden, Germany, Poland and the Netherlands, where Biden scored higher than Trump by more than 40 percentage points.

The Pew results range across continents and different types of countries. Biden is clearly more popular than Trump in much of Europe. And citizens of crucial US allies in the Pacific — Japan, South Korea and Australia — have far more confidence in Biden than in Trump. The pro-Biden gap in other countries in Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe is narrower, but Biden still does well. In India, Biden has only two percentage points over Trump and they are tied in Bangladesh.

Of the 34 countries in the survey, respondents in only three express greater confidence in Trump than in Biden. In Turkiye, neither Trump nor Biden scored well, with only 8 percent expressing confidence in Biden and 10 percent in Trump. In Tunisia, 7 percent have confidence in Biden and 17 percent in Trump.

In Hungary, Trump beats Biden by 13 percentage points, with 37 percent expressing confidence in the former president.

While many people around the world prefer Biden to Trump, the Pew survey also shows a decline in people's confidence in Biden in multiple countries compared to 2023.

Out of 21 countries for which Pew has data from last year and this year, confidence in Biden has dropped in 14 of them. This includes a diverse group, from South Africa to Israel to Japan to

Canada.

Biden also faces criticism on some key global issues, according to the Pew survey. Opinions are nearly evenly split on how he is handling climate change and global economic problems. More people disapprove than approve of his approach to China and the Russian-Ukrainian War. Fifty-seven percent of respondents

percent with a favorable view. However, a May Gallup poll found that Americans were equally divided in terms of favorability, with 46 percent expressing a favorable view of Trump and another 46 percent of Biden.

While global publics naturally care more about US foreign policy, the American public typically

The Pew results range across continents and different types of countries. Biden is clearly more popular than Trump in much of Europe. And citizens of crucial US allies in the Pacific — Japan, South Korea and Australia — have far more confidence in Biden than in Trump. The pro-Biden gap in other countries in Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe is narrower, but Biden still does well. In India, Biden has only two percentage points over Trump and they are tied in Bangladesh. Of the 34 countries in the survey, respondents in only three express greater confidence in Trump than in Biden. In Turkiye, neither Trump nor Biden scored well, with only 8 percent expressing confidence in Biden and 10 percent in Trump. In Tunisia, 7 percent have confidence in Biden and 17 percent in Trump.

disapprove of Biden's approach to the war in Gaza.

Despite some decline, Biden can feel positive about how much of the world's public views him, but he is struggling more with the public that will determine whether he wins a second presidential term — Americans.

In the latest FiftyThirtyEight polling average, Trump is ahead of Biden by 1.1 percentage points among voters. The polling average also shows that 56.5 percent of respondents disapprove of Biden's performance as president, while only 38 percent approve. In comparison, 53.8 percent have an unfavorable view of Trump compared to 41.5

ly cares more about domestic policy. A Pew poll from April found that 83 percent of Americans said Biden should focus more on domestic issues than on foreign policy.

However, when considering Americans' views on foreign policy, the results are mixed and often reflect partisan perspectives. Overall, there is a sense of frustration. A February poll from Gallup found a major decline in whether Americans thought that world leaders respect Biden — from nearly 60 percent at the start of his presidency to 37 percent in February.

A March Gallup poll found that 40 percent of US adults

approved of Biden's job as president but rated his performance on foreign policy (33 percent approval) and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (27 percent approval) lower.

Biden entered the White House with a reputation as an experienced foreign policy leader and initially received high marks from the American public. However, the chaotic nature of the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 began to damage Americans' views of Biden's foreign policy. At the start of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, many Americans backed Biden's support for Kyiv, but growing partisan polarization in attitudes toward the war — combined with military stalemate and increasing difficulties for Ukraine — have undermined American consensus on the issue.

Then Biden faced new challenges as the war in Gaza unexpectedly gained traction among the US public, with many Democrats opposing Biden's strong support for Israel while Republicans criticize him for not doing even more to back Tel Aviv. Indeed, polling suggests that Biden's approach to the war in Gaza is dragging down views of his foreign policy among Americans and abroad.

While much of the world has greater confidence in Biden as a global leader than in Trump, Americans' views are more mixed. One significant reason for the difference in global versus American perspectives is the increasingly partisan nature of US politics, as Americans often view a president and his policies through the lens of Democratic or Republican identity. Another factor is that the American public puts greater emphasis on domestic policy. A less tangible but still important driver is a generalized sense of frustration among Americans, which appears to be hurting the incumbent president and potentially benefiting his rival.

Polling of foreign publics provides very interesting insights into how the world views the US and its leadership. But, in the end, American voters will determine whether Biden or Trump will shape US foreign policy in the future.

Macron's leap into the unknown

Mustapha Tossa

IT is hard to say who will be in a position to govern France on July 8, the day after the second round of early legislative elections decided by President Emmanuel Macron with his surprise dissolution of parliament last week. It is also hard to say what the foreign policy of France, the only nuclear power in the EU and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, will be with regard to its European, Mediterranean, African and Arab environment, should the extreme right seize power.

President Macron's decision to dissolve parliament and the accelerated agenda it imposes continue to provoke party cracks internally and questioning reverberations externally. Three major shocks were observed following this dissolution.

Firstly, Eric Ciotti's Republicans party publicly tore itself apart over the need to establish an electoral alliance with Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella's National Rally. Meanwhile, Eric Zemmour's Reconquest party broke up when its head of list Marion Marechal and its European deputies took up the cause of the National Rally, provoking, in Zemmour's words, a great betrayal.

The third shock was felt by the left-wing galaxy. Despite its divisions and the multiplicity of egos that lead it, it managed to unite in record time and form a popular front that will take the

place, in the French imagination, of the Republican front that repeatedly prevented Jean-Marie Le Pen and his daughter Marine from reaching the presidential office — once against Jacques Chirac and twice against Macron. The ability of the left to overcome its contradictions and antagonisms in theory reveals the sense of urgency that is gripping it in the face of the high probability of the arrival of the far right in France in these early legislative elections.

A leap into the unknown is the expression most often used to describe Macron's move. For no one is able to predict the outcome of the evening of Sunday, July 7, and the political architecture that will emerge from the ballot box. Some have no hesitation in attributing a Machiavellian approach to Macron — that of attracting the far right to power and then showing the French its inability to govern in order to close the door to the presidential election once and for all. This option is too risky and fraught with consequences and has been loudly denied by Macron himself.

This leap into the unknown creates a major concern for France's future foreign policy in the event that the Quai d'Orsay is occupied by a far-right figure. What would be France's policy toward current crises and wars? The extreme right's admiration for Vladimir Putin's Russia could lead France to back-

track on its support for Ukraine. The extreme right's sudden and surprising sympathy for Benjamin Netanyahu's government will certainly influence France's stance on Israel's war in Gaza. The scales will tip heavily in favor of Netanyahu and any French move to recognize the Palestinian state will be postponed indefinitely.

With the Arab countries of North Africa and the Gulf, relations will go through a phase where everything will have to be reinvented. The far right sees these Arab countries either as exporters of illegal immigration — the nightmare on which the far right has built its fortune — or as exporters of radical Islamist ideology. Unless we can imagine this new power reneging on all its promises under the pressure of political realism, this relationship with the Arab world will be fraught with grit and acid reflux, requiring a real rewriting of alliances.

By taking the decision to plunge France into an electoral sequence in such a short space of time — and on the eve of the Olympic Games being held in Paris — Macron is taking the risk of handing the keys to power either to the far right, with the anxious uncertainties we all know, or to the Popular Front, whose main driving force is the radical left. It has promised major overhauls to both erase the Macron era and attempt to immunize France against the specter of the far right.



PSX closes at historic high level of 78,801 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 2,094.76 points, a positive change of 2.73 percent, closing at historic level of 78,801.53 points against 76,706.77 points the previous trading day.

A total of 452,637,253 shares valuing Rs.20.675 billion were traded during the day as compared to 395,897,996 shares valuing Rs. 21.366 billion the last day.

Some 447 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 256 of them recorded gains and 133 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 58 remained unchanged.

In PSX, the three top trading companies were Silk Bank Ltd with 53,586,473 shares at

Rs.1.09 per share, the K-Electric Ltd with 23,109,865 shares with Rs.4.72 per share and Habib Bank with 20,943,162 shares at Rs.121.92 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.86.62 per share price, closing at Rs.7,706.92, whereas the runner-up was Ismail Industries Limited with a Rs.63.93 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,443.93.

Bhanero Textile Mills Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.75.99 per share closing at Rs.994.59, followed by Faisal Spinning Mills Limited with Rs.17.00 decline to close at Rs.280.00.

Rupee sheds 10 paise against Dollar
Pakistan Rupee on

Thursday witnessed a devaluation of 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.60 against the previous day's closing at Rs 278.50.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market, however, were Rs 277.7 and Rs 280.6 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 55 paise to close at Rs 298.77 against the last day's closing of Rs 298.22, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen lost 1 paise and closed at Rs 1.75, whereas a decrease of 48 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 354.07 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 354.55.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 2 and 3 paise to close at Rs 75.84 and Rs 74.26.

Gold rates remain unchanged at local market, up by \$3 in int'l trade

The per tola price of 24 karat gold remained unchanged at Rs. 241,300 on Thursday, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat and 10 gram 22 karat also remained stagnant at Rs.206,876 and Rs.189,636 respectively.

The price of per tola and 10 grams silver witnessed no change and was traded at Rs 2750 and Rs2357.68 respectively.

However, the price of gold in the international market increased by \$3 to \$2,335 from \$2,332 the Association reported.



KARACHI: DIG Naeem Shaikh on behalf of Sindh Police and Executive Director of SLIC Dr. Aftab Iman signing a Memorandum of Understanding.

26 gas connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 26 connections; Rs 3.55 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the team disconnected 15 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 2.19 million against gas theft cases. The team lodged 1 FIR against gas pilfer.

In Multan the team disconnected 09 connections on illegal use of gas and also lodged 2 FIRs against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Shiekhpura disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 0.77 million against gas theft cases.

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

The regional team of Gujranwala imposed fine of Rs 0.59 million against gas theft cases.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships, Marathopolis, MSC Positano, Atlantic Crown and Simaisma carrying container, Palm oil and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal, Liquid Terminal and Elengy Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Maersk Chicago, Khairpur and Chemtrans Ionian with Container, Gasoline and Mogas also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

Seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Nordic Copenhagen and IMO left the port on today morning while two more container ships, Marathopolis and MSC Positano are expected to sail on same day.

Cargo volume of 188,296 tonnes, comprising 140,778 tonnes imports cargo and 47,518 tonnes export cargo carried in 5,276 Containers (2,566 TEUs Imports and 2,710 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Five ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Khairpur, OM Shanghai and Maersk Chicago & another ship 'Navios Constellation' carrying Gasoline, Chemicals and Container are expected to take berths at respectively FOICO, EVTL and QICT on Thursday, while another containers ship 'Atlantic Ibis' is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Friday.

Exports during July-May (2023-2024) totaled Rs. 7,962,082 million as against Rs. 6,183,949 million during the corresponding period of last year, according to PBS provisional figures.

Exports from Pakistan during May, 2024 increased by 25.99 percent to Rs. 790,199 million compared to exports of Rs.627,199 million in May 2023.

On month-on-month basis, the exports from the country increased by 20.83 percent in May 2024 when compared to exports of Rs.653,957 million

SLIC to provide health insurance to Sindh police officers

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh Police enters a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC) to provide health insurance coverage to over 127,000 police personnel and their dependents.

The MOU signing ceremony took place at the Police Headquarters, Karachi where Chief Minister Sindh, Murad Ali Shah, Home Minister, Zia UL Hassan Janjari, IGP Sindh, Ghulam Nabi Memon and CEO of SLIC, Shoaib Javed Hussain were present. The MOU was signed by DIG Establishment, Naeem Sheikh and Executive Director of SLIC, Dr. Aftab Iman.

IG Sindh spoke at the

event highlighting the importance of protecting the Sindh Police force through health insurance provided by State Life.

CEO of SLIC emphasized the importance of this initiative, stating, "Our mission is to extend the benefits of protection and well-being to every section of society. Providing financial and health protection to the brave officers of Sindh Police, who tirelessly ensure our safety, is a matter of immense pride for us. Their health and well-being are paramount, and through this collaboration, we are dedicated to serving our brave police force with best-in-class health solutions as they protect us by serving on the front lines."

Under this initiative, each family will receive

health insurance coverage worth Rs1 million per annum, covering inpatient hospitalization and OPD services. Additionally, families can avail cashless inpatient health services at over one thousand empanelled private and public hospitals across Pakistan. To facilitate a smooth transition and utilization of these benefits, State Life will conduct awareness sessions for Sindh Police employees, ensuring they are well-informed about the procedures involved.

This partnership not only highlights SLIC's commitment to supporting the brave members of the Sindh Police but also reinforces the value of health insurance in protecting their well-being and that of their families.

SIFC provides enabling environment for investment

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Special Investment Facilitation Council has provided an enabling environment for the investment and business development in the country by working with utmost diligence and dedication over the last one year.

The most important of the measures is the provision of facility for investors in the IT sector to repatriate up to fifty percent of their profits, according to a Radio Pakistan's report.

According to data released by the State Bank of Pakistan, IT exports have grown by sixty two percent.

Similarly, the establishment of the Office of the Investment Ombudsman has provided a platform to investors to resolve their issues efficiently and invest with confidence. Appellate Tribunals have also been established in the privatization and telecom sectors so that investors can seek guidance on legal issues related to their investments.

Since June last year, the SIFC has made many amendments at the policy level due to which the efficiency of the government system has greatly improved.

Under the policy meas-

ures, the visa policy has been revised by removing unnecessary barriers, which has increased the confidence of foreign investors.

National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority has been set up to provide high quality seeds to the farmers. A comprehensive aquaculture policy has been formulated to enable the export of seafood to other countries.

This will ensure the processing of fish and other aquaculture products in accordance with international standards, which will benefit the industry.

ICCI all set to host APCPC on June 25-26

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) will organize "All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conclave" (APCPC) on June 25-26, 2024.

The APCPC will hopefully be attended by Presidents of over 70 Chambers of Commerce & Industry and federal ministers of government's economic team, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that it is at the credit of the ICCI that it took the initiative to organize first APCPC in 2020 to bring Presidents of all Chambers of Commerce and Industry at one platform to discuss the key issues of business community and put forward proposals to the government for resolving them and now it is once again all set to convene the second APCPC. He said the event aims to discuss important issues, share ideas and collaborate on initiatives that promote economic growth and development.

The Conclave will feature keynote speeches, panel discussions, and networking opportunities, providing a platform for business leaders to engage with each other and with policymakers.

He said that at the moment, the economy of the country is facing multiple challenges, which have slowed down the business activities, therefore, the

ICCI felt the need to bring the leadership of the entire business community at one place and give comprehensive as well as workable proposals to the government for the revival of business and economic activities.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that federal ministers concerned would also take the business community into confidence about the government's measures to promote ease of doing business in the country.

He expressed optimism that APCPC would prove instrumental in building more confidence between the government and the business community to put the economy of Pakistan on the path of sustainable economic growth.

Sarsabz Royals wins prestigious ANA B2B Award in USA

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Fatima Fertilizer's pioneering loyalty program, Sarsabz Royals, has garnered remarkable success at the prestigious Association of National Advertisers (ANA) B2 Awards. This year, Sarsabz Royals was honored with a silver accolade for Best Customer Experience at the ANA B2B Awards Gala in Naples, Florida, USA.

The silver B2B Award for Customer Experience

was awarded to Sarsabz Royals for its extremely successful five-year journey in the fertilizer industry, recognizing the partnership with Fatima Fertilizer's business associates. This pioneering initiative has set Fatima Fertilizer apart with first-of-its-kind point-based dealer loyalty program, aiming to create, cultivate, and foster stronger relationships with business associates.

This achievement strengthens Fatima Fertilizer's belief that when dedication,

creativity, and vision come together, they create a lasting impact that transcends traditional marketing boundaries. ANA is the advertising industry's renowned and largest trade association in USA, with over 600 companies and 25,000 brands internationally, annually celebrating the most impactful and innovative B2B marketing campaigns across diverse industries.

Speaking about this triumph at the ANA B2B Awards, Rabel Sadozai, Director Sales and Mark-

eting Fatima Fertilizer, said, "We are incredibly proud of our achievements at the ANA B2B Awards. This accolade is a testament to our innovative marketing approaches and commitment to excellence. Our aim is to continuously push the boundaries and set new standards in the trade marketing landscape, especially within the agricultural sector. We dedicate this award to our esteemed business associates, whose loyalty towards the brand has made this win possible."

PPL-funded E-skills Information Technology training concluded

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A dynamic six-month E-skills Information Technology (IT) training on 'SEO - E-commerce with Social Media Marketing' concluded recently, benefiting 39 students, including 20 girls and 19 boys. The programme funded by Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), conducted in partnership with Akhuwat, has already enabled 10 participants for income generation through small-scale online initiatives, which speaks for the training itself.

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

In his address, Mr. Imran Abbasy congratulated the graduates and expressed hope that the programme would open numerous earning opportu-

nities, facilitating their seamless transition into the workforce. He also distributed certificates and laptops to graduates from PPL's operational areas in Dera Bugti, Sanghar, and Chakwal districts, as well as Tehsil Gujjar Khan.

"The sustainability of our business at grassroot level is linked with the impact we create through

social investment and our Corporate Social Responsibility programme," MD PPL added.

With a contribution of Rs. 10 million, PPL's support of the IT training programme is a testimony to PPL's consistent social welfare policy that ensures shared value and strong commitment to the empowerment of youth.

PPL continues to lead in Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives benefiting marginalized communities nationwide with an annual input exceeding Rs 3 billion.

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



KARACHI: Founder of Akhuwat Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib presenting a memento to MD & CEO PPL Imran Abbasy.

Most Asian markets advance after latest Wall St record

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Equities rose across most of Asia on Wednesday following yet another record day in New York fuelled by data that boosted US interest rate cut hopes, though expectations were tempered by cautious comments from Federal Reserve officials.

In Europe, London fell at the open even after data

showed UK inflation had eased to the Bank of England's two percent target.

The below-forecast May retail sales figures pointed to signs of fatigue among American consumers -- a crucial driver of growth -- suggesting the world's number one economy was slowing and giving the central bank room to ease monetary policy.

The reading helped to slightly offset a surprisingly large jump in US jobs creation that pointed to a still-resilient labour market despite a long-running campaign of rate hikes and stubbornly high inflation.

The S&P 500 and Nasdaq clocked up more records, driven again by a surge in demand for Big Tech, with chip giant Nvidia overtaking Microsoft to become the world's most valuable publicly traded company.

Nvidia, a titan in the artificial intelligence sector, hit a market capitalisation of \$3.349 trillion after cruising nearly 3,500 percent higher in the past five years. And one analyst predicted it could even hit \$5 trillion in the coming year.

The rally on Wall Street spilled over into Asia, with tech firms among the big winners. Hong Kong piled on more than two percent after a recent run of weakness, with analysts saying investors were hopeful for fresh market-friendly measures to be announced at a forum in China being

attended by securities regulator chief Wu Qing and central bank boss Pan Gongsheng.

"There's anticipation of positive policies and expectations of reforms for banks regarding shareholder returns. I suspect the policies could be more relevant for Hong Kong-listed shares," said Billy Leung, at Global X ETFs. Tokyo, Singapore, Seoul, Mumbai, Jakarta and Taipei also rose but Shanghai, Sydney, Manila, Bangkok and Wellington edged down.

London opened slightly lower. Investors were unfazed by news that inflation had hit two percent in May, in line with expectations. The pound was barely moved.

Paris and Frankfurt were also down. "The (retail sales) data clearly reflects a shift in US consumer behaviour, which is becoming more conservative, feeling the pinch from higher interest rates, curbing wage increases and a depletion of savings," said Rodrigo Catril of National Australia Bank.

Exports increase by 28.75%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports from the country in the rupee term witnessed an increase of 28.75 percent during the first eleven months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reported.

Exports during July-May (2023-2024) totaled Rs. 7,962,082 million as against Rs. 6,183,949 million during the corresponding period of last year, according to PBS provisional figures.

Exports from Pakistan during May, 2024 increased by 25.99 percent to Rs. 790,199 million compared to exports of Rs.627,199 million in May 2023.

On month-on-month basis, the exports from the country increased by 20.83 percent in May 2024 when compared to exports of Rs.653,957 million

in April 2024. The main commodities of exports during May 2024 included knitwear (Rs. 115,022 million), ready-made garments (Rs.97,564 million), bed wear (Rs. 77,184 million), rice others (Rs. 75,311 million), cotton Cloth (Rs. 48,117 million), towels (Rs.28,768 million), petroleum products, excluding top Naphta (Rs.25,393 million), rice Basmati (Rs.20,807 million), madeup articles, excluding towels & bedwear (Rs.18,558 million) and cotton yarn (Rs.17,883 million).

On the other hand, imports during July-May (FY2023-24) totaled Rs. 14,109,047 million as against Rs. 12,272,596 million during the corresponding period of last year, showing an increase of 14.96%

Imports into Pakistan during May,

2024 amounted to Rs. 1,376,815 million (provisional) as against Rs. 1,347,817 million in April, 2024 and Rs. 1,228,739 million during May, 2023 showing an increase of 2.15% over April, 2024 and an increase of 12.05% over May, 2023.

The main commodities of imports during May, 2024 were petroleum products (Rs. 188,213 million), petroleum crude (Rs.139,096 million), electric machinery & apparatus (Rs.102,630 million), natural gas, liquified (Rs.90,251 million), palm oil (Rs. 64,276 million), iron & Steel (Rs.57,624 million), plastic materials (Rs.50,812 million), mobile phone (Rs. 44,198 million), medicinal products (Rs.32,719 million) and Iron and steel scrap (Rs.31,537 million).



In brief

Serbia threaten to quit

BERLING (BBC): Serbia have threatened to pull out of Euro 2024 over chanting between fans at the match between Croatia and Albania. Fans could be heard chanting during the 2-2 Group B draw about the killing of Serbians. The general secretary of the Football Association of Serbia, Jovan Surbatovic, has called for the strongest sanction to be taken. He told the Serbian state-owned broadcaster RTS: "What happened is scandalous and we will ask [European governing body] Uefa for sanctions, even if it means not continuing the competition." Serbia are in Group C and began the tournament with a 1-0 defeat by England on Sunday. Surbatovic said that he was "sure they will be punished" following Uefa's decision on Wednesday to cancel the credentials of Kosovar journalist, Arlind Sadiku. Sadiku made a nationalist double-handed eagle gesture towards Serbia fans during the game against England. The gesture mimics the eagle on Albania's national flag, which can inflame tensions between Serbian nationalists and ethnic Albanians, who make up the vast majority of Kosovo's population. "We will demand from Uefa to punish the federations of both selections," Surbatovic added. "We do not want to participate in that, but if Uefa does not punish them, we will think how we will proceed." In a statement the Serbian FA said it had sent a letter to Uefa general secretary Theodore Theodoridis highlighting the "shameful joint chanting". The BBC has contacted Uefa for further comment. Serbia were fined £12,250 after fans threw objects during the England match. Serbia and Albania were also fined as fans from both countries displayed banners of nationalist maps, external in their opening matches.

Marketa suffers injury scare

LONDON (BBC): Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova has suffered an injury scare less than a fortnight before her title defence is due to start. The Czech slipped and fell when leading 5-3 in the first set of her second-round match against Anna Kalinskaya at the Berlin Open. Vondrousova clutched her right hip and called for a medical time-out before retiring two games later, with the score at 5-5. Wimbledon takes place from 1-14 July, with Vondrousova set to start her title defence on the second day. The 24-year-old became the first unseeded player to win the Wimbledon women's singles title when she beat Ons Jabeur in the final. Russia's Kalinskaya will face either world number three Aryna Sabalenka or compatriot Daria Kasatkina in the quarter-finals. Elsewhere on Thursday, third seed Elena Rybakina reached the quarter-finals with a 6-4 7-5 victory over Veronika Kudermetova. Kazakhstan's Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion, will play former world number one Victoria Azarenka next. Eight of the world's top 10 are competing in Berlin, with only top-ranked Iga Swiatek and world number seven Jasmine Paolini absent.

Impressive England beat WI to start Super 8s



ST LUCIA (BBC): England produced their best performance of the T20 World Cup so far to begin the Super 8s stage with a composed eight-wicket win against West Indies. Having cannily restricted the previously unbeaten co-hosts to 180-4 on a good pitch, the defending champions completed the chase with 15 balls to spare. Phil Salt batted through for a fine 87 not out while Jonny Bairstow made an unbeaten 48 to add impetus after the loss of Jos Buttler and Moeen Ali. With 70 needed from seven overs, Bairstow struck a six and a four before hitting 15 of the 16 runs in the next over bowled by spinner Akeal Hosein. Salt then crashed an over from seamer Romario Shepherd for 30 runs as England won at a canter and, perhaps significantly, boosted their net run-rate. They play South Africa

in less than 48 hours, knowing a win would probably seal their progression to the semi-finals. After that they still have a meeting with the tournament's surprise package, the United States, with the top two sides in the group progressing. England's group stage was a mixed bag, with a washout, defeat by Australia and two rain-affected wins against Namibia and Oman, which meant they only edged through courtesy of their net run-rate. This performance, against one of the tournament favourites, was Buttler's side back to something approaching their very best. West Indies were unbeaten in eight T20s but their powerful batting lineup was kept in check and then the score knocked off with relative ease. The only wobble came when Buttler fell lbw to Roston Chase for 25, having put on a measured

opening stand of 67 with Salt, and Moeen picked out deep mid-wicket off Andre Russell, having been promoted to attack West Indies' spinners. But Bairstow took charge as Salt's scoring slowed, pulling Alzarri Joseph for six and then

ramping him over the keeper. That swung the momentum and Salt reignited with a brutal assault of Shepherd, including two big straight sixes. After all of the doubts, England suddenly looked like contenders again.

West Indies scored 92 runs in the powerplay against Afghanistan on the same ground on Monday but England kept them in check by conceding only 52 with just one six clearing the ropes. The hosts lost opener Brandon King, who had to

retire hurt with an injured side on 28, and afterwards Nicholas Pooran was far more circumspect than when making 98 two nights ago. England never looked like running through the batting order, instead helped by West Indies' ploy of milking England's spinners Adil Rashid and Moeen rather than the all-out attack many had expected. After opener Johnson Charles struggled to 38 from 34 balls, captain Powell attempted to add some impetus by hitting a six off Moeen and three straight off Liam Livingstone but he was caught off the all-rounder for 36 from 17. From there England closed out the innings well with Jofra Archer nicking off Pooran for 38 in a 16th over that cost only four and Rashid removing Andre Russell while conceding half that in his final over. Archer, Rashid, Livingstone and Moeen all

finished with a wicket apiece while Sam Curran, kept in the side at the expense of Chris Jordan and Will Jacks, bowled three tidy overs for 25. England captain Jos Buttler on Jonny Bairstow: "He's a class player and has been for a really long time. "You just keep backing class players. He hasn't had many opportunities but today was a really impressive innings: a mature, senior player's innings with a lot of power. "He scored at a great lick when the game was in the balance." West Indies captain Rovman Powell: "I think you've got to look at it from a batting perspective. We left 15 or 20 runs out there as a batting group, but we couldn't have done more with the ball too. "We're normally very good in the last five overs, but credit to England's bowling unit. We just need to sit, re-evaluate and take the positives."

PCB likely to make changes to selection committee

L A H O R E (ESPNCricinfo): The seven-member PCB selection committee is likely to undergo changes in the wake of Pakistan's dismal T20 World Cup campaign. While the PCB will undertake a review to assess what went wrong for Pakistan, it is understood streamlining the operations of the selection committee is a top priority for the board. ESPNcricinfo understands the number of people on the selection committee will be reduced, with the PCB also considering ditching its brief experiment of having a selection committee without an official head or chief. It was less than three months ago that the present selection committee was unveiled. Wahab Riaz, who had until then served as its chair, was stripped of that title, although he did

remain a member of the committee. Each of the seven members carried an equal vote, with PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi saying at the time that the committee would "make a majority decision based around debate and argument to reach a satisfactory conclusion". Wahab, though, is not expected to regain his position as the head of the committee, should the post be recreated. ESPNcricinfo understands there is frustration at the PCB, including from Wahab himself, about public perception that he runs the selection committee as its de facto head, and consequently shoulders the brunt of any criticism. Wahab's departure from the committee altogether remains a very strong possibility, with Naqvi keen to publicly demonstrate no one is immune from

adverse consequences. Meanwhile, it is believed a decision on Babar Azam's captaincy is not immediately expected. Despite a situation that has become increasingly emotionally charged since Pakistan were knocked out of the ongoing T20 World Cup, it is felt the need to take a call either way is not pressing, given Pakistan's next white-ball game isn't till November. The review will include feedback from several members of the management who were with the side on tour, most notably head coach Gary Kirsten. Kirsten's opinion holds sway at the PCB, having been appointed in April after an extensive search for a coach. Following Pakistan's exit from the tournament, multiple reports emerged of Kirsten expressing dismay at the lack of unity in the side. And while the

veracity of the specific content of Kirsten's remarks remains hazy, it is understood there was a frank and robust exchange of views, which could set the tone for the tour report he submits to the PCB. If no decision is publicly communicated by that time, indications of any further changes to the national set-up may lie in the revisions made to players' central contracts when they expire on June 30. Though the PCB and the players agreed to three-year contracts in a landmark decision last year, that only applies to the overarching terms of the contract. Individual players can be moved up and down in categories - or left out altogether - depending on their performances. At the moment, there are three players in the highest category: Babar, Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Shah Afridi.

Shaqiri scores stunning goal in Switzerland's 1-1 draw with Scotland at Euro 2024



COLOGNE, Germany (AP): "Shaqi" did it again. At the age of 32 and having left top-flight European soccer behind to play in MLS, Xherdan Shaqiri is back on the international stage and back scoring again. His stunning first-half strike secured a 1-1 draw for Switzerland against Scotland at Euro 2024 on Wednesday. It is the sixth-straight major international tournament in which Shaqiri has scored, dating to the World Cup in 2014. That's three World Cups in a row and now three European Championships for the Chicago Fire forward. According to UEFA he is the first player to achieve that feat. "He proved tonight that he lives and breathes for moments like these," Switzerland coach Murat Yakin said. Shaqiri rolled back the years with a first-time curling effort from about 20 meters out at Cologne Stadium. Scotland led from the 13th minute when Scott McTominay's shot took a wicked deflection off Fabian Schar to beat Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer. But Shaqiri pounced on Anthony Ralston's loose pass in the 26th to even the match with a left-footed shot into the top corner and past Scotland keeper Angus Gunn. "If that chance falls to any other player in the Swiss team, it's not a goal," Scotland manager Steve Clarke said. "You knew when it was rolling towards Shaqiri it was destined for the back of the net. He's a top, top player, so you don't give top, top players that kind of chance." Shaqiri's career has seen him play for some of Europe's most iconic teams, including Bayern Munich, Inter Milan and Liverpool. He joined the Fire two years ago, but in that time has continued to produce for his country on the biggest stage. "Shaqi always gives everything in training," Switzerland defender Manuel Akanji said. "I don't know how many other players are able to score that goal." The draw leaves Switzerland on four points, second in Group A behind Germany and likely to advance to the round of 16. Germany became the first nation to advance after a 2-0 win over Hungary earlier in the day. Scotland's hopes of making the knockout round depend on its final game against Hungary on Sunday and results elsewhere. No team has failed to advance from the group stage with four points. Both teams had chances to win the game. The Swiss should have taken the lead just before the hour mark when Dan Ndoye turned Kieran Tierney on the edge of the box. With just goalkeeper Angus Gunn to beat, Ndoye fired wide of goal. Grant Hanley then headed against the post from a Scotland free kick and Switzerland's Zeki Amdouni headed wide at the far post late on. Scotland has never advanced beyond the group stage of a World Cup or Euros on 11 previous attempts. But repeated disappointment doesn't seem to dampen optimism among its fans, who filled Cologne's square before the game. Swiss supporters were out in numbers, too, creating a raucous atmosphere in the stadium. It was certainly a more enjoyable evening for Scotland's fans than the opening game of the Euros — a 5-1 loss to Germany.

Cooper appointed Leicester manager

LONDON (BBC): Leicester City have appointed former Nottingham Forest boss Steve Cooper as their new manager on a three-year deal. Cooper, 44, has been out of work since leaving Forest in December 2023. The Foxes have been searching for a new manager since Enzo Maresca departed for Chelsea at the start of June. Maresca joined Leicester at the start of last season, guiding the club to first place in the Championship and an immediate return to the Premier League after their relegation in 2022-23. "I am really excited and proud to be appointed Leicester City's first-team manager," said Cooper. "This is a fantastic club with a rich history and passionate supporters. I am excited to work with such a talented squad and I'm looking forward to the challenge of achieving our shared ambitions in the Premier League."

Leicester were disappointed that Maresca opted to leave the club following their Championship title win. The Foxes considered a number of replacements, including West Brom manager Carlos Corberan. Cooper provides the Foxes with Premier League experience, having kept Forest in the top flight by finishing 16th following their promotion in 2022. He was a popular figure with Forest supporters but he was sacked midway through last season, with the club 17th in the table. The former Forest boss guided England's Under-17s to victory at the 2017 World Cup and also spent two years at Swansea, taking them to the Championship play-off final in 2021 where they lost to Brentford. Cooper's first competitive fixture in charge will be on 19 August, when Leicester host Tottenham in the Premier League. "We are delighted to

welcome Steve to Leicester City. His vision for the team, including his ability to develop players and implement a dynamic style of play, is very much aligned with our aspirations for the club," said Leicester chairman Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha. "As a leader, he has the ability to build on the strong relationship that has been forged between our fans and our team, strengthening a bond that will be vital to us re-establishing the club in the Premier League." It has been a fluid situation for Leicester in their search to replace Maresca. Graham Potter held talks and Corberan was admired, but on Wednesday, Cooper became the obvious choice. It promises to be a challenge, with a potential points deduction looming and another second charge for breaching profit and sustainability rules possible if the club is not compliant by 30 June. It means a potential sale of players

before the end of the month. Cooper knows how to do more than just firefight following his time at Forest, but he will need to bring his extinguisher with him to the King Power Stadium. The former Swansea City boss fostered unity at the City Ground and it is something which will be needed again in what could be a battle against relegation, especially if Leicester start the season on minus points. Despite winning the Championship and returning to the Premier League at the first attempt, there was never a complete buy-in to Maresca's style from the Foxes fans, but Cooper will hope to create that togetherness going back into the top flight. That could negate any minor animosity towards an ex-Nottingham Forest manager moving across the East Midlands. Survival is the main priority next season and Cooper will need solidarity.

Fleeing Kabul, chasing gold - the story of a refugee Olympian

LONDON (BBC): Wearing traditional white robes, a patterned tunic and a black face mask, Farzad Mansouri proudly carried the Afghanistan flag into Tokyo's Olympic Stadium. As he strode out in front of empty stands and a global television audience of millions, he had no idea that a few weeks later he would be scrambling to flee the country he was representing in taekwondo. The teenager couldn't foresee the desperate scenes at Kabul airport as he, and tens of thousands of compatriots, tried to board evacuation flights to get away from the Taliban. He did not know he would be mourning the death of a team-mate in a suicide bomb attack. Nor could he have imagined he would be spending months living with five members of his family in one room in a refugee camp in Abu Dhabi before heading to the UK alone. "When I left my country

and my house, the only clothing I had was my Olympic kit," he told BBC Sport. "My only goal was the Olympic Games. I said I will carry on anything I can so I can go to Paris." And after makeshift training in the refugee camp, not seeing his parents for more than two years and missing many competitions because of visa issues, Mansouri has succeeded. Now 22, he will compete under a different flag in Paris. When the athletes sail down the River Seine in July's opening ceremony, Mansouri will be beneath a banner bearing the Olympic rings this time. He has been selected for the International Olympic Committee's Refugee Olympic Team, motivated by the home he has left behind and cheered on by the new one that has welcomed him. Mansouri was in Tokyo, having lost in the last 16 in

the +80kg category at the Olympics, when a brother, who lives in London, called him. His sibling's message was stark: "Don't go back to Afghanistan. I know everything will go bad." A coalition of foreign forces, led by the USA and including the UK, had been withdrawing from Afghanistan after making a deal with the Taliban, two decades after removing the headline Islamist group from power. While Mansouri was competing in Tokyo, the Taliban made rapid territorial gains as US troops pulled out and reduced support for the Afghan army. Despite what he was hearing, Mansouri told his brother he was going home: "I'm carrying my flag. I will live in Afghanistan until I'm safe." "I have to go to Afghanistan because if I go to London, they would say, 'oh, he was maybe carrying the flag just for show'. But

it's not like that. "I went to back to Afghanistan and after two weeks the situation got very bad." The Taliban took over Kabul on 15 August 2021, with the capital descending into chaos. Fearing the return of their fundamentalist rule, Afghans and foreigners rushed to find room on flights out of the country. Mansouri, who was 19 at the time, said he quickly realised he needed to join them. "Embassies closed, everything closed," he says. "I was thinking, how can I carry on my sport life? How can I go to another competition?" "So I discussed with my dad and my mum and I told them, 'If you want to help me, you have to go outside the country'." With a father who worked with the Afghan army and a brother who worked with Americans, there was a pressing reason

beyond sport for the family to want to leave - the risk of reprisals. Mansouri packed two small bags, stuffing in whatever sporting kit he could. His mother, still recovering from a back operation, father, brother, sister and niece all decided to make the journey. "The situation was very crazy," Mansouri says. "Everyone was trying to get inside the airport and some of them didn't have documents, nothing. We were outside the airport one or two days. "Children were crying and, as maybe you saw in the news or on TV, the situation was very bad." Television footage showed frantic scenes as people ran on to the tarmac trying to get on to planes and gunshots were fired into the air. Some people were reported to have died after falling from the underside of a plane they were clinging to, while others were

killed in a crush outside the airport. Mansouri and his family eventually got on a US evacuation flight, not knowing when they might next see the rest of their relatives. The day after they landed in the United Arab Emirates, a suicide bomb attack on Kabul airport killed 170 civilians and 13 US soldiers. Among those who lost their lives was Mansouri's taekwondo team-mate Mohammed Jan Sultani. Sultani, 25, had left his wife and two young children further back as he tried to get nearer to the gate and secure their passage out of the country. Unwittingly, he was moving closer to the blast that would kill him. "I lost my friend, I was really close with him," says Mansouri. "I was really sad. He was also trying to leave the country. I was thinking, what's going on?" The US and its coalition partners evacuated more

than 123,000 civilians in August 2021, with the UK airlifting around 15,000 Afghans and British nationals. However, an inquiry by MPs in 2022 found the UK's withdrawal from Afghanistan had been a "disaster" and that "mismanagement" of the evacuation "likely cost lives". Mansouri's flight delivered him to a huge compound in Abu Dhabi housing thousands of Afghan refugees. There were still Covid restrictions, meaning he and his family were confined to the room they all shared. Somehow he needed to find a way to be able to train to stand a chance of continuing in elite sport one day. Having explained his situation to camp staff, he was allowed to leave the room - but not the compound - and he started running and skipping and doing some conditioning.



In brief

303,400 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 303,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 369,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1,454.75 feet and was 56.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 175,000 cusecs and 110,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1,180.65 feet, which was 132.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 46,400 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur barrages was recorded as 157,800, 161,200, 111,400 and 46,400 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River, a total of 92,600 cusecs water was released at Nowshera and 25,300 cusecs from the Chenab River at Marala.

World Refugee Day observed

ISLAMABAD (INP): World Refugee Day was observed on Thursday to honour the courage, strength and determination of refugees who are forced to flee their homeland under threat of persecution, conflict and violence. This year's theme of the day is 'Solidarity with Refugees.' Pakistan continues to be one of the world's largest refugee hosting countries, providing safety to millions of people forced to flee their countries. These include mainly Afghan refugees holding Proof of Registration, besides a small number of refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries such as Myanmar, Yemen, Somalia and Syria.

Loadshedding notified

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday issued a power suspension programme for Friday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 06:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Islamabad Circle, CDA Flats, G-8/2, Iqbal Town, UC Road, Charah, Melody, New Marvi, Park Enclave, F-10 Markaz, G-10/3, Industrial-I & II, Carriage Factory, Golar-II, Railway Road, Shahpur, Company Bagh, Kohala, Pearl Canton, Patriata, Angori Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Medina Colony, Amerhamza Colony Feeders, GSO Circle, Bhini, Baral/ MES-I, Gadari, CMH/ MES-II feeders and surroundings.

PML N leader urge parties

ISLAMABAD (APP): PML (N) leader Ch Jaffar Iqbal Thursday urged political parties in the Parliament to join hands for a common goal of bringing political and economic stability in the country and warned that nobody will be allowed to harm national interest at any costs. He said that there is need for certain legislation and reforms in state institutions to strengthen rule of law in the country, adding, our primary objective should be to attract foreign direct investment. He further elaborated that Pakistan has capacity to absorb all the foreign investments in different sectors to boost the economy and gradually the country will emerge as an economic power in the world.

Tackling climate risks:

Romina lauds UNDP's support

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Resident Representative for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Pakistan, Van Nguyen called on Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam here on Thursday whereas the Coordinator lauded the Programme's financial and technical support to the country for tackling climate crisis.

During the meeting held here at the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, both sides discussed at length the matters related to the climate risk mitigation, climate finance for adaptation and mitigation measures, agriculture insurance, urban flood resilience, a news release said.

The senior UNDP-Pakistan official Van Nguyen also briefed the PM's aide about the Global Shield against Climate Risks initiative, saying the new global funding mechanism aimed to close protection gaps in climate-vulnerable countries like Pakistan, using pre-arranged finance.

Sharing details, she apprised the PM's aide Romina Khurshid Advisor further said that the Vulnerable Twenty Group (V20) together with the Group of Seven (G7) and other supporting countries launched the Global Shield against Climate Risks initiative to provide and facilitate more and better pre-arranged protection against climate and disaster related risks for vulnerable people in the highly climate risk-prone countries.

"Basically, the Global Shield against Climate Risks initiative is more and better pre-arranged and trigger-based financial resource, which is immediately-available fund in response to disasters, in the

most efficient, effective and fastest way for the economy, businesses, and communities in the most climate-vulnerable countries," UNDP-Pakistan's Van Nguyen elaborated during the meeting with Romina Khurshid Alam.

"More importantly, providing countries with comprehensive support in further understanding the climate risks and impacts and the innovative solutions and support to plug the protection gap and effectively address losses and damages caused and exacerbated by climate change is an overarching purpose of the initiative," the UNDP-Pakistan's senior official informed the PM's aide.

"Another key objective of the initiative is provision of grant-based financial and technical assistance to climate-vulnerable countries like Pakistan so as to develop and implement solutions for financial protection of the vulnerable communities linked with climate change and adaptation efforts," she added.

Meanwhile, the UNDP-Pakistan official also assured the PM's aide Romina Khurshid Alam of her organisation's all-out support to access the financial and technical support provided by the initiative to build the country's climate resilience.

Romina Khurshid thanked and lauded the UNDP – Pakistan for their generous offer for helping Pakistan through the climate change and environmental coordination ministry to build up resilience of the climate-vulnerable sectors, particularly agriculture, urban flood resilience and early warning for disaster risk reduction.

"I would leave no stone unturned to avail any opportunity that help us protection lives and livelihoods of the people and

socio-economic sectors particularly agriculture, water, energy, health, education through climate adaptation and mitigation measures," Romina Khurshid Alam told the UNDP – Pakistan's senior official Van Nguyen.

"Greater financial protection and faster and more reliable disaster preparedness and response provided under the initiative can contribute to effectively responding to the vulnerabilities as well as climate change-related loss and damage in Pakistan," the PM's aide said.

During the meeting, the PM's coordinator also noted that over the last decade, the adverse fallout of climate change had exacerbated alarmingly to an extent that these now pose grave risk to the human survival and ecosystems' sustainability.

"Storms, droughts and floods are continuing to become more frequent and more intense not only in Pakistan but also other countries. These extreme weather events along with slow-onset impacts from climate change pose a growing risk for the sustainable development of all countries, but particularly for the most vulnerable countries and communities," the PM's aide highlighted.

"But, despite climate action and investments in adaptation to climate change, residual risks leading to climate-related losses and damages still persist, resulting in more devastating impacts," PM's aide Romina Khurshid Alam pointed out.

"When a climate-related disaster strikes, better systems need to be in place, providing immediate finance in the most efficient, effective and fast way for the most vulnerable," She emphasized.

Chairman praises officials for 'good performance'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chairman of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) Saqib Rafiq Thursday praised officials for their good performance and said that RWMC had implemented a comprehensive strategy to effectively collect and dispose of more than 9,000 tons of animal waste during the three days of Eid-ul-Azha while resolving public complaints.

He said that almost 43 transfer stations were being set up at the Union Council level with various zones, adding that trade bodies of the city and citizens had

also appreciated the department's performance.

He said that for the first time, the relevant authority distributed biodegradable bags among citizens so that the waste material could be safely collected and disposed of.

Around 5000 sanitation staff took part in the 3-day clean-up operation, he mentioned.

For the facilitation of citizens, a helpline and a wi-fi-based monitoring system were set up, he said, adding that round-the-clock administration and other staff were present to assist

with public complaints.

He said the Waste Management Authority and provincial and district administrations worked day and night on the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to dispose of millions of tons of garbage.

RWMC also launched an exhaustive campaign during Eid-ul-Azha, where we have involved Ulema and local government representatives to create awareness among citizens to fulfill their social responsibility of cleanliness on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

ANF seizes 236 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover 236 kg of drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He informed that 3.6 kg ice was recovered from a passenger going to Bahrain at Islamabad Airport.

Several capsules containing 900 grams heroin were recovered from the

stomach of a passenger going to Bahrain at Sialkot Airport.

In another operation at Islamabad Airport, 254 grams heroin and 200 grams hashish were recovered from a Doha-bound passenger. 300 grams hashish was recovered from a parcel sent to Karachi from a cargo office at Lahore Airport.

146 kg hashish and 69 kg opium were recovered from a vehicle intercepted

near Motorway Toll Plaza Nankana Sahib. 15 kg hashish and 800 grams ice were recovered from a parcel sent to Multan from a courier office in Quetta. 5 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of two accused arrested near Wahari in Multan.

Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Anti-Narcotics Act while further investigations are under process.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Resident Representative of United Nations Development Programme in Pakistan Van Nguyen meeting with Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam.

Zamzam distribution announced

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has announced the arrangements for distributing Zamzam water among pilgrims who are availing the government scheme.

The ministry has made all airlines responsible through an agreement to facilitate pilgrims at designated points to collect Zamzam water.

All four airlines including Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Saudi Airlines, SereneAir, and AirSial will carry pilgrims back to Pakistan.

The pilgrims have been urged to collect holy water from their airports concerned and book it with their luggage.

The ministry specified that pilgrims traveling with PIA, except those from Quetta and Sukkar, will collect Zamzam water from Jeddah and Madina airports.

Pilgrims from Quetta and Sukkar traveling with PIA will collect Zamzam from their airports in Pakistan.

Pilgrims traveling with Saudi Airlines, SereneAir, and AirSial will collect Zamzam water from their airports in Pakistan.

Wildlife Safari Park to be setup

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to establish Wildlife Safari Park in the federal capital.

It was decided in a meeting chaired by Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

The park will be developed on a jungle theme and will include tree houses, facilities for close observation of animals and a rehabilitation center for animals. For this purpose, a technical team has been formed to evaluate the technical and financial aspects of establishing the Wildlife Safari Park.

Muhammad Ali said that the experiences of safari parks established at both national and international levels would be utilized.

The meeting also decided to launch Pakistan Street, which will feature outlets offering cuisines from around the world.

ICT admin disposes of over 0.2m offals, 1750 tonnes waste

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration efficiently managed cleanup efforts, disposing of about 0.2 million offals and over 1,750 tons of waste during Eid ul Azha.

Last year, about 94,000 offals were disposed of in the Federal Capital on Eid. This year, the administration worked tirelessly to ensure that offals and waste were collected from every household, said the spokesman for the ICT administration.

Sharing the details, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, said that more than 150 citizen complaints were received via the 1334 helpline, prompting immediate response teams to address the issues.

He said that on the first day of Eid, over 99,000 offals and over 1,750 tons of waste were disposed of, while more than 100 citizen complaints were received via the 1334 helpline, prompting immediate response teams to address the issues.

Similarly, on the second day of Eid, the district administration resumed the cleanup operations and disposed of over 99,000 offals while receiving more than 50 citizen complaints via the 1334 helpline.

The DC congratulated all Assistant Commissioners and the district administration teams for their dedication to restoring the city's cleanliness.

He emphasized the importance of citizen cooperation in maintaining the city's cleanliness and beauty.

He said that special attention was given to rural areas this year, with biodegradable bags distributed to citizens for waste collection. This model proved successful in urban areas, with residents placing the filled bags outside their homes for collection.

Moreover, a control room was also set up in Safe City, receiving 150 complaints in the first two days, all of which were promptly addressed.

The DC expressed deep gratitude to the staff of the CDA and Union Councils, who worked tirelessly in the extreme heat.

Meanwhile, mass sacrifices were conducted at 42 locations in Islamabad, with all areas cleaned and sprinkled with rose water to maintain a pleasant environment.

BB's visionary leadership still inspires new generation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party MNA Nawabzada Jamal Khan Raisani on Thursday said that the vision and the dynamic leadership former prime minister Benazir Bhutto still inspired the young generation of the country.

The young PPP Member of the National Assembly, in a statement on the 70th birth anniversary of former party chairperson, said her struggle and sacrifices for democracy was a golden chapter in the country's history.

Due to the party leaders like Benazir Bhutto, the PPP always remained steadfast against the anti-democracy elements, he added.

Raisani said it was Benazir Bhutto Shaheed who had become a symbol of Pakistan's identity internationally because of her prolonged fight against the dictators.

She set a precedent by working for the country's solidarity, integrity and stability, he added.

Raisani said that she was the first woman prime minister of an Islamic country and was revered as the "Daughter of Islam".

He said she was a beacon of hope for the party leaders and workers as she had the only dream of how to elevate the sufferings of the marginalized segments of the society.

Being a caring and compassionate person, she had a heart full of empathy for the underprivileged and labourers, he added.

Khawaja Pervez remembered on his death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prominent composer and film lyricist Khawaja Pervaiz was remembered on his 13th death anniversary as the nation, through various media platforms, paid rich tributes for his unforgettable services to the film industry.

He was born at Amritsar in 1932. His real name was Ghulam Mohayudin.

Parvaiz was indeed the saving grace of an industry that fell too hard and too fast after its patrons left

forever.

Songs penned by Parvaiz were brought to life by notable singers including Madam Noor Jahan, Ahmed Rushdi, Mehdi Hassan, Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Nayyara Noor, Runa Laila, Masood Rana, Naheed Akhtar, and Mala, among others, a private news channels reported.

The late icon has over 8,000 songs to his credit, among which are popular tracks including Sonay Di

Taveetri, Sun Ve Balori, Pyar Bhary Dou Sharmeelay Nain, Tumhi Ho Mehboob Meray, and Mahi Away Ga Mei Phullan Naal Dharti Sajawan GI.

He also composed the verses for some of the songs featured in Nusrat's debut album, such as Sanu Ik Pal and Kissay Da Yaar.

The impact of these songs on the industry is such that even the younger generation is aware of these hits.

Experts underscore leading role of carbon markets in KP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Carbon markets will play a leading role in driving Pakistan's climate action, however, addressing regulatory challenges, building capacity, and stakeholder consensus would be the key.

This was one of the key messages from the consultative workshop on "Unlocking the potential of carbon markets in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Opportunities and regulatory need assessment" that was conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Planning and Development Department under a joint project of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Embassy of Denmark in Pakistan, a news release said.

Imtiaz Hussain Shah, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Department mentioned that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is actively seeking opportunities within carbon markets

to support our development objectives while mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. "Our commitment to sustainable development remains steadfast, recognizing the pivotal role in achieving this vision," he said.

He further highlighted that through concerted efforts, we are dedicated to creating an enabling environment for carbon market development, ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come. By harnessing the potential of carbon markets, we aim to drive economic growth, reduce poverty, and build a more resilient Khyber Pakhtunkhwa".

Jakob Linulf, Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan mentioned that climate change is the mother of all crises. It is worsening the world, and if we don't take action, the coming generations will face severe

crises.

He stressed the significant role that is to be played by the federal and provincial government departments. While highlighting the role of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, he appreciated the government efforts around climate action and mentioned that it further needs to create awareness on how to make the best use of its natural resources. Pakistan needs to transform its economy, and carbon trading could be a source of project financing.

Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director at SDPI while highlighting the significance of carbon markets in Pakistan mentioned that the country needs "foreign exchange", and carbon markets is one of the low hanging fruits through which it can implement and bring the foreign currency into Pakistan.

He further mentioned

that with introduction of global initiatives, such as "European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)", Pakistan is going to face an increasing pressure of reducing the carbon footprint of its exports.

Especially given that over 44% of Pakistan's exports are going to Europe, the country has limited time to make necessary adjustments before CBAM will be applied. Carbon markets in Pakistan would not only help in achieving the NDCs that we have set for ourselves, but that would also generalize the financing for low carbon technologies in Pakistan.

Mrs. Sarah Rehman, Chief International Development Section at P&DD mentioned that in Pakistan, the reality of climate change is not just a topic of discussion; it's a stark real-

ity evident in recent floods, health concerns, food insecurity, and impacts on tourism.

She said to address these pressing issues, we have established a dedicated Climate Cell within the Planning and Development Department. This specialized unit collaborates closely with stakeholders to confront the challenges posed by climate change. Moreover, we're diligently evaluating every project in our database through the lens of climate change. This comprehensive approach ensures that each initiative contributes to a sustainable future for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Engr. Ubaid ur Rehman Zia, Head of Energy Unit at SDPI highlighted various challenges that currently exist for an efficient carbon markets in Pakistan. The key challenges include i) limited capacity of both

public and private sector entities, ii) limited data availability for a carbon registry, knowledge gaps around global standards, and iii) the market complexities.

As the way forward, Ubaid highlighted that climate action needs to be incorporated in every decision-making process of the government and its entities. In this regard, creation of Pakistan climate change authority is a step in the right direction.

He further mentioned various aspects of SDPI and Embassy of Denmark's joint project on carbon markets under which they are conducting capacity building workshops across Pakistan along with addressing the knowledge gaps.

Dr. Khalid Waleed, Research Fellow at SDPI during his presentation on carbon markets mentioned that Pakistan's economy is

already vulnerable to climate change, it needs to couple its economic growth with environmental sustainability.

For corporates, industries, and other project developers, this would require providing an alternate engine of economic growth that ensures environmental sustainability while further enabling them to climb up the corporate ladder. This is where carbon markets would play an essential role.

He also conducted a discussion around the global trend in carbon markets.

Zainab Naem, Associate Research Fellow at SDPI mentioned that carbon pricing has not been explicitly mentioned in the existing policy documents in Pakistan. To ensure inclusive pricing policy, there is a need to focus on a hybrid mechanism that can benefit all stakeholders.

Body of Afghan girl found

WORMS, Germany (Khaama Press): German police officials have recently reported that the body of a 15-year-old girl from Afghanistan has been found in the country. According to German media reports citing the police, the body of this teenage girl was discovered in the city of Worms. Meanwhile, the police announced that the Afghan girl died as a result of drowning, but her parents are being held in investigative custody on suspicion of murder.

Fiber optic to be expanded

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology announced the connection of 26 provinces of the country to fiber optic services. Enayatullah Alokozay, the spokesperson of the ministry, said that currently, seven regions of the country are connected to fiber optic services through neighboring countries, and some other countries are also interested in investing in this sector.

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

UN Security Council to review situation

KABUL (Ariana News): The United Nations has announced that the Security Council will hold a meeting today (Friday) to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. Roza Otunbayeva, the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), will provide an update at the session on the current state of affairs in the country. This review comes shortly after Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur, released a report highlighting what he called the pervasive and severe violence against women in Afghanistan. Bennett's report states that the "systematic oppression of women and girls by the Taliban (Islamic Emirate)" could amount to "crimes against humanity."

Bennett also urged the UN not to treat the Islamic Emirate as a recognized government in Afghanistan. The Islamic Emirate said Wednesday Bennett's report on the violation of women's rights in Afghanistan was groundless and that it was an attempt to negatively influence people ahead of this month's Doha meeting.

In response to these claims, the IEA's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement that cer-

25 Afghans dead due to cholera

KABUL (Ariana News): The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that from January 1 to May 26, Afghanistan recorded 46,758 cases of cholera, marking a 54 percent increase in the monthly number of cases. During this period, 25 people died from the disease. The WHO report indicates a cholera incidence rate of 143 cases per 100,000 people in Afghanistan. The report also highlights that the Eastern Mediterranean region has seen the highest number of cholera cases. The disease has also been observed in Africa, the Americas, Southeast Asia, and Europe. According to the WHO, stocks of oral cholera vaccines are depleted. Sixteen countries have requested 92 million doses of the vaccine from January to June this year, nearly double the amount produced during the same period last year. The WHO's list of countries with the highest cholera incidence shows that Afghanistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have reported the most cases. The organization attributes the spread of cholera to factors such as population growth, natural disasters, and climate change. The WHO emphasizes the need for coordinated international responses to combat the disease effectively.

Park visitors surge in Kabul during Eidul Azha

KABUL (TOLONews): The number of visitors to recreational parks has increased on the third day of Eidul Azha. Residents of the capital, who have been visiting the parks to celebrate Eidul Azha, told a TOLONews reporter that they enjoy going to parks and recreational areas of the country during Eid days. Sulaiman, who came to Shahr-e Naw Park in Kabul on the third day of Eid, told a TOLONews reporter: "The Eid days passed well and happily. We celebrated."

Atta-ul-Haq, another resident of Kabul who came to Shahr-e Naw Park to celebrate Eid, said: "The first two days passed happily, today is the third day and I came to this park and visited my friends and relatives' houses also."

At the same time, several street vendors have spoken about the boost in their business during Eid days, adding that their sales mar-



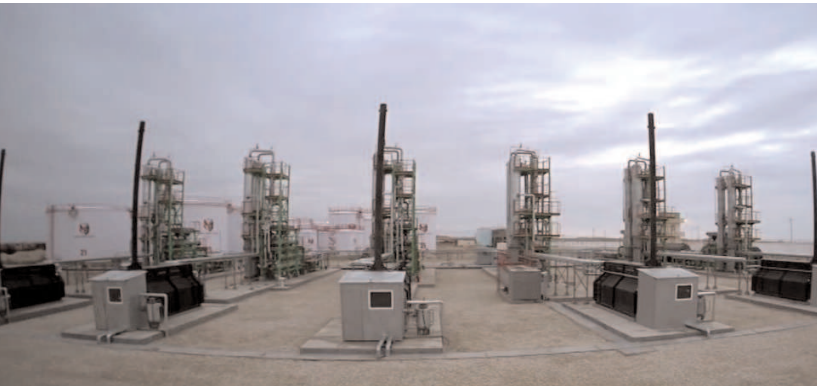
ket is more vibrant during Eid compared to other days. Ali Asghar, a street vendor, said: " Since people visit recreational parks and areas in Eid days, our sales boom."

Residents of the capital

said that visiting each other during Eid is an ancient tradition of the Afghan people. Abbas, a resident of the capital, said: " We celebrated the three days of Eid because this is an ancient

tradition of ours and all Muslims in the world." Eid is one of the Islamic festivals celebrated twice a year, namely Eid al-Fitr and Eidul Azha, by Muslims worldwide, including in Afghanistan.

Oil sector a source of investors' interest



KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan's Ministry of Mines and Petroleum reports that the country's lucrative oil sector is generating growing interest from a number of countries in the region including Iran, Turkey, Russia and Uzbekistan. According to officials, companies in these countries have shown serious interest in investing in the extraction and refinement processes. The ministry has however called on Afghan investors to also take advantage of opportunities in the sector. Afghanistan's Crude Oil Refinery Union has meanwhile urged the Islamic Emirate to support local investors in the extraction process but also by establishing refineries that meet international standards. Afghanistan's Crude Oil Refinery Union has meanwhile urged the Islamic Emirate to support local investors. Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) officials meanwhile called on the ministry to also focus on increasing the operational capacity of established oil extraction companies and in building refineries instead of focusing on attracting foreign investors. Muhammad Younus Mohmand, Vice-Chairman of the ACCI, said: "Our wish is that the refineries that people invest in, in Afghanistan, should be supported."

According to union officials, over \$300 million has already been invested in the sector in the country, providing jobs to thousands of workers. Working towards self-sufficiency Despite having over 200,000 square kilometers of oil and gas reserves, Afghanistan currently purchases nearly 90% of its oil and gas needs from Central Asian countries and Iran. But growing interest from companies in the region could mark a significant shift in Afghanistan's energy sector, potentially reducing its reliance on imports and boosting regional economic ties. Earlier this month, the ministry of mines and petroleum reported that it had successfully sold \$80 million in crude oil. For Afghanistan this was a major leap in the direction of growth, especially after China's Xinjiang Central Asia Petroleum and Gas Company's (CAPEIC) investment in Afghanistan last year of \$49 million has helped boost the country's daily crude oil output to more than 8,000 bpd. Spanning Afghanistan and Tajikistan, the Amu Darya basin, where oil is extracted, is estimated to contain 962 million barrels of crude oil and 52,025 billion cubic feet of natural gas. So far, CAPEIC's investment of \$49 million in Afghanistan has helped boost the country's daily crude oil output to more than 1,100 metric tons (8,000 barrels per day), a volume that could increase significantly.

Residents want water issue addressed

P U L - I - K H U M R I (Pajhwok): Flood-affected people in the Dushi district of northern Baghlan province did not have access to clean drinking water and had been facing serious issues in this regard. Recent flash floods inflicted heavy human and material losses on Baghlan residents, including the residents of the Dahn-i-Larghab locality of the Dushi district. Arbab Abdul Sammad, a resident, told Pajhwok Afghan News their drinking water wells were filled with flash flood water. "Now we don't have clean drinking water, we drink river water and we could become sick," he said. He said resident travel at least two kilometres to bring one a container of water. Mohammad Alam, another resident talked about similar issue and said four children of his neighbor got sick due to the contaminated water drinking. Some other residents expressed similar issues and asked the government and aid providing organisations to address their drinking water issue. Mullah Alam Majidi, the provincial government spokesperson, said that water tankers supplied water to some areas even now. He said four wells approved for the Dahni Larkhab area of Dushi district which would be dug soon. It is pertinent to mention that 169 people had been killed and 265 others injured due to flash floods in Baghlan province of Afghanistan recently.

Afghanistan's carpet exports reach \$7.5 million in five months

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce said that Afghanistan exported carpets worth \$7.5 million dollars in the past five months. According to Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, most of these carpets have been exported to neighboring countries and Europe. The spokesman told TOLONews: "During the first five months of 2024, more than two million kilograms of carpets worth \$7.5 million dollars were exported to countries including Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Italy, Turkey, the United States, India, Germany, the United Arab Emirates, China, and other

countries." Meanwhile, the Afghanistan Carpet Union said that if the challenges faced by traders in the visa issuance process are addressed and air corridors are activated, the volume of carpet exports will increase further. The union reported a 7% increase in carpet sales abroad compared to last year. Noor Ahmad Noori, the head of the Afghanistan Carpet Union, told TOLONews: "Due to the efforts of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the leadership of the Afghanistan Carpet Union, the sales of Afghan carpets in Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Central Asian countries have increased. This means that compared to last year, domestic sales have also

increased by 7% this year due to the efforts of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the Carpet Union." Meanwhile, a number of carpet sellers in the capital said that due to certain challenges, they are forced to sell some of their carpets to Pakistani traders at a lower price, who then export Afghanistan's products to European countries and the US under the name of Pakistan. According to carpet sellers, Afghan women, especially women from the northern part of the country, weave the finest carpets in the world. "We have problems in sales; we export most of our carpets to Pakistan, and Pakistani traders export these carpets to European

countries under the name of Pakistan," Ghulam Ali Shirzad, a carpet seller, told TOLONews. "These carpets are made from pure sheep wool and are hand-woven, meaning no chemical materials are used in these carpets. These carpets are not produced by machines and are woven by Afghan women by hand," said Makhdoom Quli, a carpet seller. The Afghanistan Carpet Union has always emphasized the need to participate in national and international carpet industry exhibitions, stating that if the problems in the visa issuance process for traders are addressed and air corridors are activated, the country's carpet exports to various countries will increase.

Rice production in Kunduz sees 30 per cent increased

KUDUZ (TOLONews): The department of agriculture and irrigation of Kunduz said that in 1403 (solar year), rice harvests in the province have increased by 30%. A number of farmers in Kunduz are pleased with the increase, but they asked the authorities to distribute chemical fertilizers and pest control substances to them. "Thank God, there is water now, but if I talk about chemical fertilizers, the request of our farmers from the government is that the medicines and fertilizers we buy are of low quality and high price, which harms the farmers," Abdul Hamid, a farmer, told TOLONews. "In terms of chemical fertilizers and other areas, people should be helped so that the farmers can stand on their own feet. If the farmers suffer, they will become weaker," said Ghulam Rasul, another farmer. Meanwhile, the agriculture and irrigation department of Kunduz said that this solar year, more than 49,000 hectares of land in the province are used to grow rice, and it is estimated that this product will increase by 30% compared to last year. Salahuiddin Wahidi, the head of agricultural affairs of the Kunduz Directorate of Agriculture, said: "Our prediction is that this year, rice will be planted on 49,781 hectares of land in Kunduz province. Fortunately, compared to last year, when we had water problems, this year the cultivation level shows a 30% increase."

Kunduz is one of the agricultural provinces in the north of the country, which is famous for its agricultural products, especially Surkhe, Basamti, Munda, Shalungi, Irani, Sarda Bara, Garma Bara, and other rice varieties.

Computerized embroidery transforms Herat fashion

HERAT (TOLONews): Herat's computerized embroidery garment manufacturers say that recently, the market for computerized embroidery garments has flourished in the country. A computerized embroidery garment factory in Herat produces and prepares hundreds of embroidered garments for sale every day. The garments made here are transported to more than ten provinces. Ghulam Sarwar Wahidi, the head of one of the computerized embroidery garment factories, told TOLONews: "Thank God, the demand has increased. In Kabul, Kandahar, Ghazni, Nimroz, Farah, Ghor, and Herat, thank God, the demand has also increased. Now, the demand for these garments in the capital, Kabul, has increased." Computerized embroidery garments have almost replaced handmade ones. Due to their low price, these clothes are widely used by people. Iqbal Aarifi, the head of the computerized embroidery garment factory, explains: "Compared to handmade garments, they are much more suitable because they have higher quality and better stitching. We use original fabric, which is used in handmade garments."

Most citizens, who have economic problems, use computerized embroidery garments instead of handmade ones. Recently, the market for these clothes has flourished in Herat and other provinces. Herat resident Noor Ahmad said: "Now, the conditions have changed, and it is no longer the time for handmade garments, which are expensive. The quality of machine-made garments is high and is used like handmade ones."

Ramin Amiri, a seller of computer-



ized embroidery garments, also said: "This year, sales have increased significantly compared to previous years because the quality, craftsmanship, and fabric used in these garments are good."

Wearing computerized embroidery garments during Eid is common among citizens, especially in Kandahar and Herat provinces. Many young people are eager to wear such clothes.

Khost remote areas residents demand maternity health services

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): Some residents of remote areas in southeastern Khost province say they lack access to basic health services, including well-equipped maternity clinics. They say there are no health clinics in many remote areas and if any they have no maternity wards. The residents are asking the government to solve the problem. Among these remote areas one is Babrak Tana area in Alisher district near the Durand Line. Badshah, an inhabitant of this area, told Pajhwok Afghan News they had no access to maternity health services. He said their patients often died on the way before reaching hospital due to bad condition of roads and lack of female doctors. Saifullah Khan, a resident of Sabari district, told Pajhwok although a health center existed in their area, it was without any female workers. He said 1 patients reached the provincial capital with many difficulties and asked relevant agencies to appoint female doctors in remote areas. He added: "There is no one here at night to provide maternity services to women. If there is a mater-

nal illness, we immediately take them to the provincial hospital."

Meanwhile, some female civil activists expressed their concern in this regard, saying that despite the fact there are many graduated nurses and midwives in this province, the problem had not been addressed. Nadia Bawari, a civil activist, told Pajhwok that the government should provide necessary maternity services to women in rural areas. She said: "There are problems in our remote areas. The government should hire midwives and allocate specific places for them so that they can provide services to the people. We have many midwives here, but due to lack of facilities, they are unable to provide services."

Naqibullah Zaland, another activist, also told Pajhwok that most of the remote areas in Khost are deprived of maternity services. He suggested that the government should draw the attention of aid agencies to this area, so that the rate of mother and child mortality could be reduced. According to him, "In remote areas, sometimes children and mothers lose their lives during childbirth. The lack of maternity clinics in the area is one of

the main reasons behind the mortality. Investment should be made in this regard in order to address the problem. On the other hand, Public Health Department officials say maternity wards are functioning and providing services to the people in all districts of the province. Naqibullah Masoum, spokesman for the department, told Pajhwok they were trying to extend their services to all remote areas. Buildings for some health centers in rural areas have been constructed years ago, but they are yet to be made functional.

Engineer leads construction of life-saving bridge

PAKTIKA (TOLONews): An engineer, after returning from the United States, has undertaken the construction of a bridge in Yahya Khel district, Paktika province. This bridge, with a length of 25 meters and a width of 5 meters, is being built at a cost of \$80,000. "I had no idea, since I came here after 60 years, I didn't even know if there was a bridge or not, but when I came, I found some equipment. So far, \$45,000 has been spent, but it may exceed \$80,000," Aminullah Mahmoud, the builder of the bridge, told TOLONews.

The locals are happy about the construction of this bridge and said that during the floods several women lost their lives because they couldn't reach the hospital on time due to the absence of a bridge. They also called on other wealthy individuals to participate in such charitable works. "If this bridge is built, it will provide convenience for us and all the people of this area. Patients will reach hospitals on time, and other goods will also be brought in cheaper," said Rasheed, a resident of

Yahya Khel district, Paktika. "When the water came here, we used to wait for three hours for it to subside so we could cross it. Now that the bridge is being built, it is the best work for me and the people of the area," said Adam Gul, another resident of Yahya Khel district, Paktika. This bridge is being constructed in the Ghaibi Khel area of Yahya Khel district in Paktika province of Afghanistan, and will connect three districts with Sharan, the center of the province, and to seven other districts.



GWADAR: President Asif Ali Zardari welcomed by Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti and Commander 12 Corps Lt. Gen. Rahat Naseem Ahmed Khan, upon his arrival.

Shaheed Rani's birthday and a gift more valuable than life

Sharjeel Inam Memon

JUNE 21 marks the birthday of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. Born into a royal family of Sindh on June 21, 1953, the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto rejected a life of luxury and consciously chose a path filled with pain and suffering, ultimately accepting a martyr's death. There is no precedent for this in history. Why did she do this? This is a question for history, answerable only by those who stood with the truth and did not hesitate to sacrifice their greatest pleasure "life".

In her book "Reconciliation," Shaheed Benazir Bhutto wrote, "I suffered the persecution of my father's arrest, imprisonment, and murder, and I knew that such wounds of the soul never heal. I was ready to do anything to save my children from the persecution I suffered on my father's death, but this was the only thing I could not do."

From these lines, it is not difficult to infer that Shaheed Benazir Bhutto chose this path herself. After the great tragedy of the judicial killing of her father, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Shaheed Rani could have lived comfortably in any country outside Pakistan if she wanted. However, she realized the significance of Pakistan to its people. Despite understanding the dangers, she chose to stay and engage in politics for her land and its people.

Once, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto also told her that if she wanted, she could go to a European country and live her life in peace. However, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto replied that she would fulfill her father's mission, no matter how much suffering and hardship she had to endure. Shaheed Benazir did not care for her own life, but when she thought of her children and sought to save them from the suffering she experienced due to her father's arrest, imprisonment, and killing, she resolved that she could do anything to protect them from such pain. But, she could not abandon the people of Pakistan.

On the occasion of Shaheed

Benazir's birthday on June 21, 1978, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto wrote a long letter to her while he was a prisoner in Central Jail Rawalpindi. This letter was later published in book form under the title "My Dearest Daughter".

In this letter, Shaheed Bhutto addressed his beloved daughter, Ms. Benazir Bhutto, and said, "What gift can I give you from this prison cell, from which I can't even take my hand out? I give you the hand of the people as a gift. What event can I organize for you? I give you the gift of a famous name and the memorial of a significant event. You are the heir of the oldest civilization. Play your full role in making this ancient civilization highly advanced and powerful. By developed and powerful, I do not mean that society becomes extremely fearful. A fearful society is not a civilized society. A truly civilized society is the most developed and powerful one, which has recognized and nurtured the special sentiments of the nation."

In the same letter, Shaheed Bhutto also wrote, "I am giving you only one message. This message is the message of the coming day and the message of history. Just believe in the people. Work for their salvation and equality. The paradise of Allah is under the feet of your mother, and the paradise of politics is under the feet of the people."

Then history witnessed that Shaheed Bhutto bestowed upon his dearest daughter on her birthday the gift of the people's support. Shaheed Benazir Bhutto cherished this gift as more precious than her own life, and she continued to advance the struggle for people's rights during an era considered the most challenging period in human history for politicians and the populace alike. It was a time when neo-fascist forces waged war against the people, causing more bloodshed than the world wars.

In a time when democratic forces were crushed and dictatorships imposed in third world countries, and when non-state terrorist elements hin-

dered the development of democratic movements, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto emerged as a formidable figure. She not only confronted two military dictators but also took on terrorists. Amid this challenging era, she unified democratic forces and successfully restored democracy in her country. Moreover, she thwarted the anti-Pakistan agenda of neo-fascist forces.

She not only granted democratic rights to the people of Pakistan but also steered the country away from security threats it faced. On October 18, 2007, when Shaheed Bibi returned home after 8 years of exile, a multitude of people from all corners of Pakistan gathered in Karachi. On that same day, forces opposed to the people attempted to assassinate Shaheed Bibi through an act of terrorism, reinforcing her belief that these anti-people forces were determined to take her life.

On 19 October 2007, during a press conference at Bilawal House, when a journalist asked her if she intended to continue running election campaigns in Pakistan after the incident, Shaheed Bibi replied unequivocally that "They also want me not to campaign and go back abroad. Those people do not want genuine democracy restored in the country. However, if democracy is not restored, the dangers for Pakistan will increase. I am committed to staying with my people." In subsequent gatherings (Jalsas), she consistently reiterated, "We live and die with the people. We are a resilient nation, filled with ideas and emotions. We know how to live and how to face death."

Finally, the tragic day of December 27, 2007 arrived, when Shaheed Benazir Bhutto sacrificed her life among the people. She held onto the gift of public support given by her father, Shaheed Bhutto, until her last breath. Today, on her birthday, this gift serves as a reminder for all those who can follow Shaheed Bibi's path in love for their country and its people. Shaheed Bibi's birthday gift is to never abandon the people's hand.

Fazl calls grand tribal jirga on 27th

FP. Report

PESHAWAR: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has convened a Grand Tribal Jirga in Peshawar on June 27 to discuss the prevailing situation in the country's tribal areas.

Religious and political personalities from these areas will attend the huddle which Maulana Fazl will also address. The grand Jirga has been called in the wake of rising lawlessness in the tribal belt.

The JUI-F chief had yesterday strongly condemned the killing of Maulana Mirza Jan, the Khatib of Jamia Masjid Wana and District Amir of JUI-F South Waziristan, who had been shot and injured by unidentified assailants just two days before Eidul Adha while he was riding a motorcycle. Despite receiving medical treatment at CMH Peshawar, he succumbed to his injuries.

The incident came shortly after another local leader of JUI, Deen Saeed, was martyred by unknown persons in the Surrey Khawra area. On Tuesday, Khalil Jibrani, a senior journalist from Landi Kotal, had been gunned down which further pointed towards the gravity of the situation.

Maulana Fazl, while expressing deep sorrow, over Maulana Mirza Jan's martyrdom, condemned the rising insecurity and targeted killings in the country's tribal areas. "Maulana Mirza Jan's martyrdom is a stain on the government's performance," the JUI-F chief said, and urged the authorities to expose the perpetrators behind the attack and bring them to justice.

Poliovirus 'detected' in sewage samples

PESHAWAR, KARACHI (INP): The poliovirus has been detected in sewage samples from Karachi and Peshawar, sourced said on Thursday.

The sources further said, the poliovirus was detected in sewage samples of Karachi's Kemari and Peshawar. Sources added, the samples were collected on June 3rd and 4th, and the results show the presence of wild poliovirus type 1, and vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 and 3. So far this year, 185 samples from all four provinces have tested positive for polio, and 45 districts across the country have reported polio cases.

Pakistan has reported five poliovirus cases in 2024 so far, while an infected kid passed away battling the crippling disease. Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only two countries in the world where the poliovirus, which causes paralysis and can be a life-threatening disease, is endemic.

Sanghar camel incident: Six remanded

SANGHAR (PPI): A local court on Thursday extended physical remand of six accused of chopping off camel's leg in Sanghar.

The accused were presented in the court of Judicial Magistrate Habibullah Sial after their four-day-remand ended today. Upon the police's plea, the court extended the physical remand of the accused for two more days. According to the SSP Sanghar, two out of six suspects namely Abdul Shakoor Shar and Abid Shar have confessed to their crime in the probe. The camel was shifted to Karachi for treatment. A landlord in Sindh's Sanghar district allegedly chopped off a camel's leg as punishment for scavenging into his field for fodder.

According to police, the incident occurred in Mund Jamrao village in Sanghar district on Friday. Soomer Khan, owner of the camel, narrated the incident along with his camel at Sanghar press club. "I have no enmity with anyone. I don't know why this was done to my camel," he said. Sanghar SSP took notice of the incident after the video of camel with chopped leg went viral on social media. Police officials said the peasant had refused to identify the culprit and press charges against him, hence police lodged an FIR on behalf of the state against unknown persons under sections 429 and 34 PPC.

President calls for enhancing capacity of LEAs

F.P. Report

GWADAR: President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday called for enhancing the capacity of the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), posting competent officers in Balochistan, and improving the prosecution mechanism to effectively counter terrorist elements in Balochistan.

The president expressed these views while chairing a meeting on the security/law and order situation in Balochistan, in Gwadar, on Thursday. Minister for Interior, Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, MNA Malik Shah Gorgaji, Home Minister, Mir Ziaullah Langov, MPA Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, senior civil and military officials attended the meeting.

The president was briefed about the overall security situation of the province as well as the role of LEAs in successfully countering terrorist attacks in various districts of Balochistan. It was informed that the provincial government had adopted a targeted approach to improve the security and law-and-order situation in Balochistan.

It was further apprised that the initiatives taken by the LEAs had resulted in improving the security situation in the province. The president was informed that the provincial government was taking steps to provide fool-proof security to Chinese and foreign nationals. He appreciated the efforts of the provincial government as well as the sacrifices of the LEAs in combatting terrorism.

The president emphasized that the prosecution system needed to be improved so that the terrorist elements could not escape justice. He said that compensation for the families of martyrs of LEAs in Balochistan should be enhanced bringing it at par with the rest of the provinces. The president said that competent and brave

police officials needed to be posted in Balochistan that would help improve the law-and-order situation of the province. He also called for taking effective measures to ensure the safety and security of Zaireen.

Underlining the need to improve the socio-economic condition of Balochistan, the President called for focusing on the skill development of its people and producing more skilled professionals. He said that the capacity of training institutions should be enhanced to produce more trained human resources and equip them with foreign language skills that would also help them find jobs in foreign countries.

The president also called for promoting the fishing industry of Balochistan by providing financing and equipment to local fishermen, apart from promoting sustainable fishing practices and checking the production of illegal fishing nets. During the meeting, the president said that political dialogue was the way forward to bring prosperity, development and peace to Balochistan.

Chief Minister Balochistan thanked the president for visiting Gwadar, saying that it would give the people of Balochistan a sense of ownership as well as strengthen the resolve of the LEAs to eliminate terrorism. He informed that the provincial government was according top-priority to the capacity building of police and levies. He underlined the importance of equipping people residing in border areas of Balochistan with marketable skills to help them find employment in the country and abroad.

He highlighted that all stakeholders needed to make collective efforts to stamp out terrorism, besides evolving a national consensus for the development of Balochistan. The meeting also urged the need for completing the Kachhi Canal project to fulfil the food requirements of the province.

Hezbollah fires 'dozens' of rockets at Israel

BEIRUT: Hezbollah said it fired "dozens" of Katyusha rockets targeting a barracks in northern Israel on Thursday in retaliation for a deadly strike in southern Lebanon that killed a member of the militant group in the village of Deir Kifa.

It came after fears of a wider regional conflict grew on Wednesday when Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah warned that "no place" in Israel would be spared if authorities in the country declared all-out war against his group. He also threatened to target Cyprus if the island nation allowed Israel to use its air bases. Israel and Hezbollah have traded cross-border fire on an almost daily basis since the Oct. 7 attacks by Palestinian militant group Hamas that triggered the war in the Gaza Strip.

In the attack by Israeli forces on Thursday, a combat drone hit a car on the Deir Kifa-Srifa road, killing its driver, Abbas Ibrahim Hamadeh. The Israeli army designated him as a "Hezbollah operations commander in the Jouaiyya area." Elsewhere, Ammar Jomaa, the son of cleric Mohammed Jomaa, a Hezbollah official, died when a drone hit the car he was driving on the road to the town of Houmine El-

Fauouqa. And two people were seriously injured when an Israeli drone struck a pickup truck in the town of Hanouiyeh in the Tyre district.

Israeli forces attacked four Hezbollah sites. It came shortly after the departure of Amos Hochstein, the US president's envoy for Lebanon and Israel, who had visited Tel Aviv on Monday and Beirut on Tuesday in an attempt to calm the situation. On Thursday morning, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said the Jish settlement in the Upper Galilee, near the border with Lebanon, had been evacuated.

Nasrallah's comments on Wednesday raised concerns on both sides about a possible escalation of hostilities. Michael Malchiel, the Israeli minister of religious services, told Channel 14 news that his ministry, which is responsible for burials, "is preparing for significant scenarios in the north."

Avichay Adraee, a spokesperson for the Israeli army, said the war in the north is "defensive but has offensive aspects in southern Lebanon. The army leadership discussed plans for confrontation in Lebanon and approved them, and we are awaiting the decision of the

political leadership. Our current goal is to keep Hezbollah away from our borders, which we achieve through our strikes against its leaders and interests."

Eitan Davidi, head of the Margaliot settlement council, said no place in Israel is safe. "What worries us is the laxity and weakness of the Israeli government on the northern front," he told Israeli radio news. Nasrallah threatened during his speech to target all parts of Israel and said Hezbollah had obtained "new weapons that will be seen in action." He added: "We have prepared ourselves for the most challenging times. There is an unprecedented human power in the resistance, as we have far exceeded 100,000 members.

"There will be no place in Israel safe from our drones and missiles. The enemy knows very well that we have prepared ourselves for the most difficult days and the enemy knows what it will face. If war is imposed, the resistance will fight without constraints, rules or limits." He warned the Cypriot government that "opening its airports and bases to the enemy to target Lebanon means it has become part of the war." — Arab News

PM assures Bilawal

(Continued from Page 1)

NDMA chief to prioritise the capacity building of the organisation by equipping it with the latest technology, input from the provinces and recruitment of permanent human resources, besides establishing a digital hub.

"Today, the way that dream has been realised deserves applause. I don't think any province has achieved such capacity with the world-class systems. I am happy that instead of a highrise building, you invested in this digital hub," the prime minister remarked. He said the 2022 floods had inflicted a \$30 billion loss to the country which would take years to overcome as the Federal Government alone had spent Rs 100 billion for the rehabilitation of affected population, besides the funding from provinces as well as aid from the friendly countries.

He said consequent to the efforts by that time Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and other federal and provincial organisations, the country was able to rehabilitate millions of people. Prime Minister Shehbaz appreciated the merit-based induction of quality human resource and establishing a third-party validation mechanism at the NMMA, and assured of the government's support and funding for the staffers' training and procurement of

equipment.

"This is not normal. This is not usual. This is far above normal and usual," he said and asked the federal ministers and secretaries to follow the role model to make Pakistan a great nation. He asked the NDMA to ensure close coordination with the provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and advised the procurement of equipment through coordination to avoid duplication.

"This is not an expenditure. This is an investment to save our future investments," he remarked. He told the gathering that the Federal Government had allocated Rs 80 billion for the promotion of information technology, besides signing an agreement with Huawei for training of 300,000 Pakistani youngsters in IT (Information Technology) annually.

The prime minister highly applauded the genesis of NEOC with the cutting-edge technology and team NDMA for actualizing the first of its kind centre in Pakistan and region which was a testament to Pakistan's commitment for disaster readiness and mitigation. NDMA Chairman Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik briefed the prime minister about capabilities of the NEOC, enabled by multiple satellite feeds, softwares and artificial intelligence tools, to generate a National Common Operating Picture

(NCOP), strengthening digital risk assessment, early warning systems and preparedness strategies for Pakistan.

The briefing also highlighted the NEOC's capability to forecast weather patterns six to ten months in advance not only at national but regional level also. The chairman elaborated on the modus operandi of NDMA, and highlighted how the NEOC served as a hub for emergency response and coordination among PDMA, DDMAs, relevant ministries/departments and other pertinent stakeholders including domestic International humanitarian partners ensuring swift and effective response during all phases of disasters specifically pre-disaster stage.

During the briefing, the NDMA's newly developed mobile application aimed to empower individuals and communities with vital information to effectively prepare for and respond to potential disasters was also showcased. The prime minister was accompanied by the cabinet members including Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, Industries Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain, and Petroleum Minister Dr Musaddik Malik. Advisor to PM Rana Sanaulah, and PM's coordinators Romina Khurshid Alam and Dr Mukhtar Ahmed.

State departments causing serious threats, harassing courts: LHC CJ

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice (CJ) Malik Shahzad Ahmad on Thursday said that state departments are causing serious threats to and harassing the courts and their staff, along with creating hurdles in procedures.

The chief justice's remarks were made in the written order for a case on the alleged threats to a judge of a Sargodha anti-terrorism court (ATC) and his harassment by the intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Last week, CJ Ahmad had summoned Punjab Inspector General of Police (IGP) Usman Anwar and other officials on the complaint.

The LHC registrar office had received a special report on June 7 from District & Sessions Judge (DSJ) Muhammad Abbas, wherein he said that on May 25 — the first day of his new charge as Sargodha ATC judge — a message was conveyed to him that some authority of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) wanted to meet him in his chamber. Upon refusing to meet the said authority, DSJ Abbas alleged that ever since then, he had been encountering various incidents, such as firing outside his ATC and questioning from family members, among others.

CJ Ahmad had reserved his verdict in the matter on June 13. The verdict was announced in Thursday's hearing. The written order, said: "It is unfortunate to note that it is duty of the state to provide protection and pay respect to the courts but perusal of the special reports sent by the learned judge ATC Sargodha and assistant of the said court

shows that prima facie the state departments have been causing serious threats/harassment to the courts and its staff and creating hurdles in the court process.

"Furthermore, the state departments have denied the constitutional rights of citizens of this country of having the protection of law and to be treated in accordance with the law while restraining them to approach the above-mentioned court." The order termed the Punjab police chief's report in the matter "highly unsatisfactory", saying that it did not mention whether any ISI official was approached by the police to verify the ATC judge's allegations against the agency.

In one of many examples cited in the order about police and state departments impeding the work of the judges, LHC chief justice said that 12 transfer applications were filed by the Punjab prosecutor general for the transfer of cases from Rawalpindi ATC-1. "In the said transfer applications, it was main ground of the prosecution branch that as a reference/complaint has been filed against the judge of the abovementioned court, therefore, the cases pending in his court may be transferred to any other court of competent jurisdiction.

"While arguing the said transfer applications learned prosecutor general Punjab repeatedly referred to the reference filed against the abovementioned judicial officer, in order to establish that sufficient material was available on the record of said reference to show the malafide and biasness of the abovementioned judicial officer, therefore, file of the said reference/complaint was summoned from the office. "Perusal of

the file of the reference/complaint shows that a reply was requisitioned from the abovementioned judicial officer and in his reply the learned judge ATC-1, Rawalpindi pointed out different incidents to establish that in fact the intelligence agencies and jail authorities have been trying to hamper the court process in a jail trial of May 9, 2023, case bearing FIR No. 2106/23.

"The accused arrested in the case fixed before his court were not produced before him and he had to mark their attendance in the barracks of the jail. Likewise, the accused, who were on bail were not allowed to enter the jail premises and he had to mark their attendance on the running road situated outside the jail building. Similarly, the lawyers who have been engaged by the accused to defend their cases were also not allowed to enter the jail premises to conduct the trial. "He further mentioned in his reply that even his staff was humiliated and disgraced by the jail authorities. He added that the jail authorities on the asking of intelligence agencies made all sorts of efforts to hamper the court proceedings. Similar tactics have been adopted by the State departments in the instant case," the order reads.

It said the Sargodha district police officer, deputy superintendent of police (DSP), Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) regional officer (RO) and the station house officer had acted in a "malafide and contemptuous manner" and thus contempt notices were being issued to them to show cause for why action should not be taken against them for "willful and deliberate contempt of the court".