

Nawaz not to attend Budget session
LAHORE (INP): Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz president Nawaz Sharif has decided to skip National Assembly's Budget 2024-25 session. Nawaz Sharif sought leave from the NA budget session from the assembly secretariat. The plea was approved by the assembly secretariat.

Karachi's 'feels like' 44°C
KARACHI (INP): As hot and humid weather continues to grip various parts of Sindh, Karachiites have been left sweltering after the city's "feels like" temperature reached 44 degrees Celsius on Sunday. According to the MET Office, the city's temperature was recorded at 37 around 1:30pm. Currently, sea breeze is suspended in the port city. 30pc humidity was recorded in the air.

Over 1,000 pilgrims died during Hajj, officials say

CAIRO (AP): More than 1,000 people died during this year's Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia as the faithful faced extreme high temperatures at Islamic holy sites in the desert kingdom, officials said Sunday.

More than half of the fatalities were people from Egypt, according to two officials in Cairo. Egypt revoked the licenses of 16 travel agencies that helped unauthorized pilgrims travel to Saudi Arabia, authorities said. Saudi Arabia has not commented on the deaths during the pilgrimage, which is required of every able Muslim once in their life.

The Egyptian government announced the death of 31 authorized pilgrims due to chronic diseases during this year's Hajj, but didn't offer an official tally for other pilgrims.

However, a Cabinet official said that at least 630 other Egyptians died during the pilgrimage, with most reported at the Emergency Complex in Mecca's Al-Muaiseem neighborhood. Confirming the tally, an Egyptian diplomat said most of the dead have been buried in Saudi Arabia.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief jour-

nalists.

Saudi authorities cracked down on unauthorized pilgrims, expelling tens of thousands of people. But many, mostly Egyptians, managed to reach holy sites in and around Mecca, some on foot. Unlike authorized pilgrims, they had no hotels to escape from the scorching heat.

In its statement, the government said the 16 travel agencies failed to provide adequate services for pilgrims. It said these agencies illegally facilitated the travel of pilgrims to Saudi Arabia using visas that don't allow holders to travel to Mecca. The government also said officials from the companies have been referred to the public prosecutor for investigations. The fatalities also included 165 pilgrims from Indonesia, 98 from India and dozens more from Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Malaysia, according to an Associated Press tally. Two U.S. pilgrims were also reported dead.

The AP could not independently confirm the causes of death, but some countries like Jordan and Tunisia blamed the soaring heat.

Associated Press journalists saw pilgrims fainting from the scorching

heat during the Hajj, especially on the second and third days. Some vomited and collapsed.

Deaths are not uncommon at the Hajj, which has seen at times over 2 million people travel to Saudi Arabia for a five-day pilgrimage. The pilgrimage's history has also seen deadly stampedes and epidemics.

But this year's tally was unusually high, suggesting exceptional circumstances.

A 2015 stampede in Mina during the Hajj killed over 2,400 pilgrims, the deadliest incident ever to strike the pilgrimage, according to an AP count. Saudi Arabia has never acknowledged the full toll of the stampede. A separate crane collapse at Mecca's Grand Mosque earlier the same year killed 111. The second-deadliest incident at the Hajj was a 1990 stampede that killed 1,426 people.

During this year's Hajj period, daily high temperatures ranged between 46 degrees Celsius (117 degrees Fahrenheit) and 49 degrees Celsius (120 degrees Fahrenheit) in Mecca and sacred sites in and around the city, according to the Saudi National Center for Meteorology. Some people fainted while trying to per-

form the symbolic stoning of the devil.

The Hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam, is one of the world's largest religious gatherings. More than 1.83 million Muslims performed the Hajj in 2024, including more than 1.6 million from 22 countries, and around 222,000 Saudi citizens and residents, according to the Saudi Hajj authorities.

Saudi Arabia has spent billions of dollars on crowd control and safety measures for those attending the annual five-day pilgrimage, but the sheer number of participants makes ensuring their safety difficult.

Climate change could make the risk even greater. A 2019 study by experts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that even if the world succeeds in mitigating the worst effects of climate change, the Hajj would be held in temperatures exceeding an "extreme danger threshold" from 2047 to 2052, and from 2079 to 2086.

Islam follows a lunar calendar, so the Hajj comes around 11 days earlier each year. By 2029, the Hajj will occur in April, and for several years after that it will fall in the winter, when temperatures are milder.



ISLAMABAD: PPP leader MNA Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, daughter of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and President Asif Ali Zardari addressing in NA session on Sunday.

Aseefa calls for people-centered policies

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In an emotionally charged address to the National Assembly on Sunday, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari called for unity and a focus on policies that prioritize the welfare of Pakistan's citizens. Aseefa, representing Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), highlighted the historical significance of her address, noting her deep connection to the House through her grandparents, parents, and brother.

Expressing gratitude towards PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, President Asif Ali Zardari, and the party's senior leadership, Aseefa also thanked the residents of Nawabshah and the dedicated supporters of PPP for the opportunity to represent them.

She painted a somber picture of the current state of the nation, citing unprecedented unemployment, inflation, poverty, and climate change as key challenges.

Aseefa criticized the recently presented government budget, questioning its alignment with the needs of the people. She advocated for a budget that prioritizes the welfare of farmers, laborers, and the working class over large corporations.

"We needed a budget that did not seek to benefit large corporations at the expense of the most vulnerable in our society," she asserted, calling for measures that provide relief and subsidies to the poor, farmers, and the working class, thereby addressing wealth inequality.

Turning to the Speaker of the National Assembly, Aseefa questioned whether the current budget truly met the people's needs and aspirations.

"The people of Pakistan deserve better. Mr. Speaker, and we must work together to do better for our citizens," she declared. She emphasized the need for unity in the face of divisive politics and polarization, urging elected members to rise above differences and work collectively for the nation's welfare.

Aseefa highlighted critical issues such as extensive load-shedding, which she described as "torture" for those enduring fifteen

hours without electricity in the sweltering heat.

She called for immediate solutions to support farmers devastated by floods and poor policy decisions, as well as job security for blue-collar workers.

"We must find ways to develop our human capital and provide relief directly to the poorest of the poor in this country," she emphasized.

Aseefa expressed hope for a new political era, one marked by collaboration for the prosperity and progress of Pakistan and its citizens. Her address resonated with many in the Assembly, reflecting a desire for change and a commitment to addressing the pressing needs of the nation.

Swat lynching Police arrest 23, JIT formed to unearth truth

Shafi ullah

SWAT: Police have arrested 23 suspects for their alleged involvement in the lynching and killing of a person along with the torching of Madyan Police Station said on Sunday.

The arrested individuals, the police said, have been shifted to an unknown location while efforts are underway to arrest others who were allegedly involved in the incident.

The development comes after a violent mob had beaten a local tourist to death on Thursday night after accusing him of desecrating the Holy Quran, and later set his body as well as the Madyan Police Station ablaze.

A day earlier, a report by a federal agency had revealed that the hotel management had asked the deceased, accused of blasphemy, to open the door.

The accused, the report added, had then opened the door and denied the allegations of blasphemy, after which the police took him to the police station — a move criticised in the report which termed it as a "grave" mistake.

The report further says that neither the station house officer (SHO) of the said police station took guidance from the higher-ups on the matter nor shifted the suspect to a "safe" spot.

Also, the absence of high police officials or political leaders during the mob violence also contributed to the loss, it added.

Furthermore, the report mentions that the accused was in police custody for around 40 minutes during which he denied the blasphemy allegations hurled against him.

The report said that an exchange of fire also took place between the mob and police during which 11 people and five cops sustained injuries. The mob set on fire the building of the police station, a police van, five other vehicles and two motorcycles, reported on Sunday.

However, Swat's district police officer has expressed ignorance about any such report, saying the investigation in the case was still ongoing and its report will be sent to the IGP as well as the government.

Meanwhile, a joint investigation team (JIT) including Additional Inspector General Special Branch Kashif Alam and Additional IGP Investigation Alam Shinwari visited the place of the incident and collected evidence from the room of a local hotel where the deceased Sulaiman, a resident of Sialkot, was staying, reported on Sunday.

The JIT, established under Superintendent of Police Investigation Badshah Hazrat, will also have members from Intelligence Bureau, Special Branch and other departments.

Earlier, the DPO had said that members of the mob had been identified and "efforts for their arrest are underway".

He said that two first information reports (FIR) had also been registered under the charges of blasphemy and damaging state property, respectively.

The official further said that the suspect was reportedly a drug addict and had been booked in a case of domestic violence on the complaint of his mother.

Saif wants clarity from Centre on Azm-e-Istehkam

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Saif, the Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information and Public Relations, has stated that the elimination of terrorism and the establishment of stability are everyone's top priorities.

He emphasized that the federal government should clarify the methodology, duration, and other relevant aspects of the Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, as discussed by the Prime Minister.

Dr. Saif highlighted the necessity of involving the Senate, National, and Provincial Assemblies in this crucial matter. He also stressed the importance of consulting all stakeholders, including political parties.

In a statement issued here, the Information Advisor mentioned that the PTI has organized a grand jirga of tribal elders on June 26 to address the issues of the merged districts.

"The detailed and clear outlines of the Operation Azm-e-Istehkam have not yet been presented. The specifics of where and when to commence this operation are still unknown," Saif said while noting that it is premature to associate the Operation Azm-e-Istehkam with only one province and assured that the consultation with the relevant province will not be overlooked.

The Prime Minister has clearly stated that the elimination of terrorism is not the responsibility of a single institution. Similarly, terrorism is not just an issue of one province but of the entire country, affecting regions from Khyber to Karachi.

Barrister Dr. Saif clarified that the statement by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur regarding 'good and bad Taliban' has been taken out of context. The Chief Minister disassociates himself from such baseless statements. Misinformation will hinder the eradication of terrorism in the country.

Kurram IED blast martyrs laid to rest with full military honours

E.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The martyrs of Kurram District improvised explosive device (IED) blast occurred on June 21st were laid to rest with full military honours in their native towns on Sunday.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, "Five brave soldiers of the motherland, Havaldar Aqeel Ahmed Shaheed (age: 33 years, District Okara), Lance Naik Muhammad Tafer Shaheed (age: 30 years, District Poonch), Sepoy Anush Rafoon Shaheed (Age: 24 years, District Attock), Sepoy Muhammad Azam Khan Shaheed (Age: 26 years, District Haripur) and Sepoy Haroon William Shaheed (Age: 29 years, Islamabad) who embraced martyrdom on June 21, 2024, in the explosion of a land mine planted by terrorists in Kurram district were buried with full military honours in their native areas."

A large number of senior serving officers and soldiers, families of martyrs and local people participated in the funeral

prayer and burial.

"Pakistan's security forces are committed to eradicating the menace of terrorism and the sacrifices of our brave martyrs reinforce our resolve," the ISPR said.



Israeli airstrike kills eight at Gaza aid centre, witnesses say

CAIRO (Reuters): Eight Palestinians were killed on Sunday in an Israeli airstrike on a training college near Gaza City being used to distribute aid, Palestinian witnesses said, as Israeli tanks pushed further into the southern city of Rafah.

The strike hit part of a vocational college run by the U.N. Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA that is now providing aid to displaced families, the witnesses said.

"Some people were coming to receive coupons and others had been displaced from their houses and they were sheltering here. Some were filling up water, others were receiving coupons, and suddenly we heard something falling. We ran away, those who were carrying water let it spill," said Mohammed Tafesh, one of the witnesses.

A Reuters photographer saw a low-rise building completely demolished and bodies wrapped in blankets laid out beside the road, waiting to be taken away.

"We pulled out martyrs (from beneath the rubble), one who used to sell cold drinks and another who used to sell pastries and others who distributed or received coupons," Tafesh said. "There are about four or five martyrs and 10 injured. Thank God, the condition of the injured is good."

The Israeli military said the site, which it said had served in the past as a UNRWA headquarters, has been used by Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants. It added that precautionary measures were taken before the strike to reduce the risk of harming civilians.

"This morning (Sunday), IAF fighter jets directed by IDF and ISA intelligence struck terrorist infrastructure in which Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists were operating," the military said in a statement.

"This is another example of Hamas' systematic exploitation of civilian infrastructure and the civilian population as a human shield for its terrorist activities," it added.

Hamas denies Israeli accusations it uses civilians as human shields or uses civilian facilities for military purposes.

Juliette Touma, UNRWA's Director of Communications, said the agency was looking into the details of the reported attack before providing more information.

"Since the beginning of the war, we have recorded that nearly 190 of our buildings have been hit. This is the vast majority of

our buildings in Gaza," she said. A total of 193 UNRWA team members have been killed in the conflict, she added.

ADVANCE INTO RAFAH

More than eight months into Israel's war in the Hamas-administered Palestinian enclave, its advance is focused on the two areas its forces have yet to seize - Rafah on Gaza's southern tip and the area surrounding Deir al-Balah in the centre.

Israel's ground and air campaign in Gaza was triggered when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing around 1,200 people and seizing more than 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

The offensive has killed almost 37,600 people, according to Palestinian health authorities, and left Gaza in ruins.

Govt to arrange in-camera briefing for MPs: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Law and Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar on Sunday informed the National Assembly that the government would arrange an in-camera briefing in the parliament for the lawmakers.

Speaking on the floor of the House, referring to the leadership of the Sunni Ittehad Council, he said, "Your Prime Minister has not attended the in-camera briefing on security issues in the parliament, but my Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, along with the cabinet, will attend the in-camera briefing."

The minister said that the government will call an in-camera session to take all the political parties into confidence on the country's security issues. He said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the entire cabinet will also participate in the in-camera briefing.

Azam Nazeer Tarar said that in the past the prime minister was refusing to sit with the opposition, but Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif wants to take all the political parties into confidence and work together on the issue. He said that the resolution and legislation presented in the Parliament are significant for national security and defence which is not only an issue of the government.

The minister said that the sanctity of the house is very important which all the stakeholders want to take care of, and the government wants to take all the political parties along with it.

On this occasion, MQM MNA, Khawaja Izharul Hassan urged the house to run according to the constitution and said that the opposition must show responsibility.

Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said that the Parliament is the supreme institution and no one can supersede the Parliament. He said that the government should take the opposition into confidence and move forward, especially regarding the decisions of agreement with foreign countries.

He said that the opposition will always cooperate with the government on economic and trade cooperation with friendly countries.



Ashrafi condemns Swat incident, calls for speedy trial of similar cases

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Chairman Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi has called for joint efforts to eliminate extremism from the country and to educate society.

Addressing a press conference at Lahore Press Club here on Sunday, he strongly condemned the tragic incident of Swat, emphasising that neither Islamic laws nor the Constitution and laws of Pakistan permit the killing or immolating any human being.

Ashrafi expressed his deep regret over the increasing frequency of such incidents, highlighting that the measures taken against the perpetrators have been insufficient. It is responsibility of the state and judiciary to administer punishment to an accused of blasphemy acts or desecration of the holy book, he said. He also condemned

the ongoing trend of individuals taking the law into their own hands, acting as judge, jury, and executioner, as wholly unacceptable. He stressed that cases of blasphemy, religious disrespect, and holy books' desecration should be resolved within three months, calling on the chief justice to prioritise these cases over political and other matters.

In a passionate call for unity and mutual cooperation, he urged local religious and political leaders and authorities to have an effective collaboration and liaison to usher in positive changes in society. He underlined the principles of Islam that laid full emphasis on social peace, cohesion and security.

The PUC chairman said that during Hajj 2024, some pilgrims violated the Saudi regulations and guidelines, leading to unfortunate fatal-

ities. The Saudi government advised pilgrims to avoid going outside during peak heat hours. He said this year, 168,000 Pakistanis performed Hajj, with 90,000 under private arrangements and the rest through government system. He mentioned that the number of deaths among Pakistani pilgrims was lower compared to the previous year and also less than those from other countries. He pointed out that most of the deceased were those performing Hajj without proper authorisation.

Regarding complaints from pilgrims, Pakistani officials are present in Saudi Arabia to address them. Ashrafi assured that any grievances would be resolved and that the facts about the challenges faced in the government system would soon be made public.



LAHORE: Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council, Allama Tahir Ashrafi is addressing a press conference at the Press Club. —APP Photo

IGP releases Rs 600,000 medical funds for cops

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has released an additional Rs 600,000 funds for medical treatment of employees and their families deputed in Lahore and various other districts.

According to the details, Constable Murad Ali of Pakpattan Police was granted Rs 100,000 for treatment of various ailments. Special Branch's Intelligence Operator Muhammad Zubair Khan received Rs 100,000 for treatment of brain tumour.

Retired Head Constable Shabbir Ahmad of Lahore Police was provided Rs 100,000 for heart surgery expenses, while Constable Muhammad Waqas Mahmood Ahmed received Rs 100,000 for knee treatment. Constable Shahbaz Ali of Kasur Police was given Rs 100,000 for treatment of a leg fracture, and Constable Aqib Nadeem Khan of Mianwali was granted Rs 100,000 for medical treatment.

A committee, chaired by Additional IG Welfare and Finance, Riaz Nazir Gara, approved these cases after scrutiny. IG Punjab emphasized that the best health welfare of the police force is a top priority and that the department is providing all possible support to its employees for a speedy recovery from illness.

Home Minister orders recovery of girl

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjar has taken notice of torturing a girl here on Sunday. He had also sought details of the incident from SSP Malir, a communicate said. The Minister said that the girl should be recovered as soon as possible. He directed that the accused should be brought to justice who tortured the girl.

305175 complaints resolved

KARACHI (APP): The Chief Secretary Sindh Complaint Cell has received a total of 351457 complaints, out of which 305175 have been resolved.

According to a Chief Secretary (CS) Spokesman, the Cell directly received 21,457 complaints since 2019 and out of which, 9788 complaints had been resolved. 10,000 complaints were in the process of verification out of which 1263 complaints had been sent to various departments.

The relief had been provided to the complainants by taking prompt action on 9788 complaints by the administration. The Spokesman said that the people could send their complaints online and by post to the Chief Secretary Complaint Cell for their resolution.

Moreover, the Chief Secretary Complaint Cell received 3,30,000 complaints from the Prime Minister Complaint Cell out of them 2,95,387 complaints had been resolved.

CM message on UN Public Service Day

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, in her message on United Nations Public Service Day, said that today is a day to reiterate the government's commitment to improve public service.

The CM said: "I salute the government employees who work with dedication and honesty to serve people." She highlighted that people who dedicate their lives to service with integrity and dedication are admirable. Without hard work and dedication, the dream of development of Punjab cannot be realized, she vowed.

The CM added the Punjab government is well aware of its primary responsibility to serve people and make their lives easier. She underscored that Punjab government is discharging its responsibilities with a spirit of public service.

Punjab government reiterates its commitment to transparency, accountability and excellence in public service. She added restructuring of departments is being reviewed for better service delivery and good governance. She vowed that the government policies will improve service delivery.

CM seeks report on swing collapse: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has taken strict notice of an incident of collapse of a swing in Khushab, Joharabad, in which 24 people including children were injured.

The CM also sought a detailed report on the incident, saying that a thorough inquiry should be conducted to fix responsibility, and strict action should be taken against the accused. The chief minister directed authorities concerned to provide best medical treatment facilities to the injured.

‘Digital School on Wheel’ 50,000 school students to benefit from project

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has taken a principled decision to launch the 'Digital School on Wheel' project across the province.

Punjab Education Department official sources told APP that in this connection three major stakeholders including Allied, Tech Valley and 'Google for Education' have shown their interest to accomplish the project.

The government has further decided that in collaboration with the Australian organisation 'Allied', the assembly of 'Chromebooks' will be done in Punjab; 50,000 students of government schools of Punjab will be provided with Google ID, free of charge, and 1000 teachers of government schools will receive free digital certification courses.

These stakeholders will

work on the possibilities of cooperation in digital education projects, smart classroom and digital educational ecosystem, the sources informed. In this connection 'Google for Education' will compile authentic data of out-of-school children. Digital certification courses will be conducted and Google for Education will support the free certification courses project for 15,000 university students.

PFA imposes Rs1.730m fine on 132 food points

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) Sunday launched a province-wide inspection drive at Motorway Service areas, Lorry Adda and Railway Stations to ensure provision of safe, healthy and quality food for commuters.

In this connection, PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javaid paid surprise visits to different cafes, tuck shops, restaurants and other eateries at the motorway service areas from Lahore to Faisalabad.

They have thoroughly examined the production area, kitchens and other parts of the food outlets. The purpose of the surprise visits was to check the performance of the PFA's field teams and ensure the availability of sterile and standard food as per the vision of the Punjab Chief Minister

Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

The authority shut down a famous restaurant, punished 132 food business operators (FBO) with Rs1.730 million fine and issued warning notices for improvement to others. The teams inspected more than 1,180 food points including 860 eateries in Lorry Adda and 322 at Motorway Service areas.

Meanwhile, they also discarded 318 litres of spurious drinks, 390 litres of standard drinking water, 150kg of expired snacks and 140 litres of rancid edible oil.

Muhammad Asim Javaid said that the authority took action against FBOs due to selling expired snacks and substandard drinking water, using rotten vegetables and failing to present the product registration certificates and medicals of workers.

He further said that hefty

finances were imposed over violations of the Punjab Pure Food Regulations and served warning notices for improvement to others, asking them to improve hygiene conditions and remove minor issues.

He said that the use of substandard cooking oil and expired items has very harmful effects on human health. Food business across Punjab can be done only as per the Punjab Food Authority rules, PFA DG said.

He further said that the authority would continue its indiscriminate action against counterfeiters and adulterators till complete elimination from Punjab. He said commuters should check the food quality before buying food items from service areas. In case of any issues, register your complaint on the PFA 1223 helpline, he said.

PPP defends Operation Azm-e-Istehkam

LAHORE (APP): Raja Pervez Ashraf, former speaker National Assembly and President of Pakistan People's Party Central Punjab, declared on Sunday that the PPP would thwart any attempts to make the 'Operation Azm-e-Istehkam' controversial.

Addressing a press conference here, he emphasised that Parliament remains the supreme institution and called on the opposition to respect its sanctity.

He criticised the opposition for what he described as an undemocratic stance on key national issues.

He reiterated the importance of Operation Azm-e-Istehkam in the fight against extremism and terrorism, underscoring its necessity for national security. He noted, "Parliament is a forum for positive debate, not for personal attacks and slander."

He affirmed the PPP's commitment to its parliamentary role, ensuring active participation in addressing every national issue through constructive dialogue and responsible governance.

Punjab govt enacts new law to control inflation

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has launched the Price Control Council (PCC) to determine the prices of 49 commodities.

Official sources in City District government told APP that the government has enacted a new law to control the prices of essential commodities, whereas in this regard a Price Control Council has also been established under the 'Punjab Price Control Essential Commodities Act'.

Punjab Governor Saleem Haider signed the bill after the approval of the Punjab Assembly. The Minister of Industry will be the convener of the Price Council, the Minister of Food and the Chief Secretary will be members of the council.

Home, Livestock, Food, and other secretaries will also join the council, sources added.

Monsoon rains in Punjab from July 1

LAHORE (APP): Monsoon rains are likely to increase by 35 percent this year, the PDMA said on Sunday.

The Punjab Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has predicted that monsoon rains will start in Punjab from July 1.

It said in the alert that there is a risk of 35 percent increase in monsoon rains this year, while 15 to 50 mm of rain is expected in the first week of July. Likewise, 25 to 35 mm of rain is predicted in the second week of July.

Furthermore, the statement says that in the third week of July, 15 to 25 mm of rain may fall in Upper and South Punjab, while 50 to 70 mm of rain has been predicted in the fourth week of July.

PTDC launches campaign

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), in collaboration with Sustainable Tourism Foundation Pakistan (STFP), has initiated a comprehensive public awareness campaign aimed at promoting responsible tourism in Pakistan's mountainous regions.

Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director of PTDC, highlighted that the campaign seeks to raise awareness among tourists regarding eco-friendly practices when visiting Pakistan's breathtaking mountain areas.

He emphasized the

detrimental impact of irresponsible tourist behavior, such as littering, which not only harms the natural environment but also jeopardizes the local cultural heritage and traditions.

"While tourism has brought economic benefits to local communities, it has also led to environmental pollution, resource depletion, and overcrowding," Mr. Rana noted. "Our campaign, themed 'Let's Green our Summer Vacations', aims to educate tourists on the principles of Responsible Tourism."

By adhering to our guidelines and code of conduct, tourists can minimize their footprint and ensure that socio-economic bene-

fits reach local residents."

The joint initiative by PTDC and STFP includes the development of guidelines disseminated through various media channels, including print, electronic, and social media platforms.

These guidelines outline practical steps for visitors to preserve the fragile natural ecosystems and respect local cultures.

Aftab ur Rehman Rana also proposed that provincial governments implement robust waste management systems at tourist sites and enforce strict anti-littering measures, including fines, to curb environmental degradation caused by tourism activities.



KARACHI: People selecting used books at Reagal Chowk. —APP Photo

Traditional Donkey Cart Race begins in Karachi

KARACHI (APP): The Commissioner Karachi Donkey Cart Race was held on Sunday which starting from ICI Bridge and ended at the Commissioner Karachi Office, Club Road. The Race was inaugurated by Additional Commissioner Syed Ghulam Mehdi, who waved the flag to start the race.

Mayor Karachi, Barrister Murtaza Wahab attended the event as the chief guest and distributed prizes among the winners. Abdul Khalid secured first position, Muhammad Javed second, and Shahjehan alias Durga third position. 25,000 to the first place winner, 20,000 to the second place and 15,000 rupees to the third place, while each of the 50 participating races was given a cash prize of 1,000 rupees.

Mayor Murtaza Wahab praised the event, stating that donkey cart racing was part of Karachi's ancient culture and heritage.

He appreciated the love of the people of Lyari for sports and their efforts to preserve their cultural heritage. The Mayor expressed his commitment to providing opportunities for youth to engage in positive activities through sports.

PHA launches botanical garden project in Murree

LAHORE (APP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) of Lahore has begun work on establishing a cutting-edge botanical garden in the picturesque hill station of Murree, confirmed its director general Muhammad Tahir Wattoo on Sunday.

Set against the backdrop of the majestic Himalayan foothills, this 10-acre facility will showcase a variety of gardens, including Japanese Sakura and perfume gardens, a giant water lily pond, and a tunnel adorned with Wisteria trees of different varieties and colors, the DG said.

This ambitious project, poised to be the country's first of its kind, will also offer public amenities such as a children's play area, zip lines, skybridges, a glow-in-the-dark garden, and dedicated parking.

PHA also operates a botanical garden near Jallo Park in Lahore, covering 80 acres. Around 30 acres feature diverse landscapes and attractions for visitors, including Rose, Bonsai, and Cactus Gardens, a creeper-covered tunnel, a Rhizotron for viewing plant roots, tree houses, gazebos, a Treetop Walkway, and the popular Butterfly House.

Highlighting the new garden's floral diversity, the

DG mentioned it will feature dazzling flowers like Tulip, Tiger Lily, and Geranium, typically found in mountainous tropical regions. He noted Murree's unique climate accelerates the growth period of tulips by at least two months compared to urban centers like Lahore, which could help conserve foreign exchange by cultivating the national flower of the Netherlands.

Additionally, PHA plans to host a groundbreaking Tulip exhibition in Lahore this December to celebrate the flower's rich cultural history. Wattoo recalled that tulips originated from lilies in East Asia 21 million years ago, later cultivated in Kazakhstan and used as food by nomads. In Persia from the 11th century, tulips symbolised the start of spring, celebrated for their beauty in art and poetry long before gaining fame in the Netherlands.

"Visitors can expect to embark on educational journeys through themed gardens, each representing distinct ecosystems from around the globe," the DG said and emphasised that the initiative underscores Punjab government's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable tourism development.



LAHORE: A large number of people visiting Gulshan e Iqbal Park to spend their holiday in Provincial Capital. —APP Photo



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi in a group photo with delegation of Peoples Doctors Forum at Governor's House.

Govt working to end deprivations of southern districts: Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture of Major (R) Muhammad Sajjad Barakwal has said that the provincial government is seriously working on ending of all the deprivations of the southern districts in particular and the entire province in general.

He added that the uplift canal feasibility from Indus River through Shakardarra is in progress to resolve the serious water problem in Karak district while special Canal from Kurram Tangi Dam will also be provided to Karak and the southern districts, which will bring an agricultural revolution, the barren land will be made cultivable which will not only bring food autarky in Karak but in the other districts also.

These views he expressed while talking to mediapersons after congratulating the newly elected Cabinet of the Karak Press Club on Sunday.

The minister said that work on the Medical College and Institute of Medical Sciences will be started in Karak this year while all obstacles to the establishment of Gypsum City have been cleared and work on it will also be taken soon.

Similarly 32 KM Khora Road has been approved to make access to the mineral resources of Sheenghar mountains of Karak district, he added.

Barakwal further said that the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has increased the royalty fund by 5% i. e. from 10 to 15% in Karak.

At present there are Rs.17 to Rs.20 billion

arrears of royalty of Kohat Division, for which efforts are being made to release, he maintained.

Barakwal said that SNGPL took Rs.7 billion for the gas project, which is royalty money, and it will be investigated where and how such a huge amount was spent while now they are demanding another Rs14 billion to deliver gas to homes.

He regretted that the SNGPL has made our streets and roads ruins.

The minister continued that the royalty fund will be spent on such mega projects from which the district will get revenue adding that if the royalty is stopped tomorrow, the Karak will continue to get its income.

The minister said that giving all the control over 10% to the MOL company is injustice

while the oil companies are extracting oil and gas in excess of their contract and quantity for which we are demanding a third party and a gauge to find out that how much oil and gas they are extracted in a day.

The Agriculture Minister said, unlike the past, he is paying special attention to the important sector of agriculture.

Apart from upgrading the Ahmedwala agricultural Farm, we are establishing 2 more sub-agricultural Research Farms in Ghondi Shahbaz Khan and Tehsil Banda where we will cultivate saffron on experimental basis, if the experiment is successful, it will generate huge profits and income.

Similarly, in different areas gardens will be developed for which public awareness campaign will be launched for the people, he concluded.

Tourists flock to Galiyat on Eid days amid great fun, laughter

PESHAWAR (APP): Amid hide and seek between the sun and clouds over Thandiyani hills, tourists thronged to Galiyat to enjoy pleasant change in the weather during Eid days in the picturesque mountains resorts of Pakistan.

Arrived with cooked food, fruits and tents for camping at the picturesque Thandiyani resort, Zeeshan Khan's family, an employee of the KP government department, was rejoiced after visiting their dream tourists' resort to enjoy trekking and adventure sports during Eid holidays.

Enjoying the national song "Dil Dil Pakistan" along with his children and other family members on his music system, Zeeshan Khan and his brother Ehtisham Khan were busy in hammering and fixing tents' bolts at a suitable place at Thandiyani to spend few days in its relaxed environment without any charge.

Amid disappearing sun behind clouds hovering over Thandiyani hills amid blossom of seasonal flowers in pre monsoon season, Zeeshan's wife who belonged to Wapda Town Nowshera, was seen preparing green tea on gas stove after warming up the Peshawari's famous Chappli Kabab, BBQ, Paye and Polao rice dishes they brought along and making it ready on 'Dastarkhwans' to serve her family members on third day of Eid.

"Tandiyani is my favorite tourists place. I have planned Galiyat's tour few years ago but postponed it due officials engagements and today the dream of my family to see its mesmerising natural beauty with soothing environment came true," Zeeshan told APP.

The Nowshera born tourist said that he was stunned to see the nearby black clouds, natural beauty and cool fresh air of Thandiyani and advised families to come here in large numbers due to its better road connectivity.

Wearing traditional Peshawari Chappal, the



35-year-old tourist said that he had brought tents and other stuff along as the hotel room and food cost was very high for a common man at Galiyat.

"The rent of a normal two-bedroom per night in Thandiyani and Nathiyagali is approximately Rs10,000 to Rs12,000 that was beyond of hiring capacity of middle class," he said, adding that it was the responsibility of the KP government to regulate prices of hotels and restaurants in Galiyat.

The tourist said he selected Thandiyani as first camping site as the tourists can see the snow-covered Pir Panjal mountain range of Kashmir and lush green terrains of Kaghan and Kohistan besides snow-clad ranges of Swat and Chitral from Thandiyani top having 2,750 meters height of the above sea level, which are taking nature lovers and adventure sports enthusiasts over the moon.

Like Zeeshan Khan, hundreds of thousand families and tourists arrived at northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa especially Malakand and Hazara divisions including Galiyat and Thandiyani on Eid days to explore its waterfalls, gushing rivers, Saiful Malook, Ansoo, Dudipath and Mahoodhand lakes and colonial era tracks besides enjoying the expansive trout fish and water boating in River Kunhar at Kaghan and Khanpur dam at Haripur.

"Despite recent rains in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces, the response of tourists,

adventurers and adventure sportsmen in Malakand and Hazara during Eid holidays was very impressive," Saad Khan, the spokesman of Cultural and Tourism Authority told APP.

He said thossnds of tourists and adventure sports enthusiasts visited Malakand and Hazara divisions during vacation of Eid exploring its breathtaking beauty.

Dir Upper, Malam Jabba Swat, Galiyat including Thandiyani and Nathiyagali, Chitral Lower including Kaslah valley and Kaghan and Naran including Saiful Malook and Ansoo lakes in Manshera distric were the most visited destinations during Eid holidays.

He said that domestic tourists' response to Swat during eid days was higher than last year due to enhanced roads infrastructure and Swat Expressway.

Tourists families from other cities including Karachi, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore have visited Swat in large numbers during Eid days due to better roads connectivity and enjoyed trout fish besides water rafting and paragliding in Kalam.

Tourism has started growing in KP due to better roads connectivity. To promote sustainable tourism, Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZ) would be developed at Mankiyal Swat, Thandiyani Abbottabad, Ganol Manshera and Madaklasht Lower Chitral.

These ITZs would be

constructed with an assistance of the World Bank. ITZs Thandiyani and Mankiyal would be connected with Swat and Hazara motorways through link roads that would open up entire Malakand and Hazara for tourists and make Pakistan a hub of international tourism.

KP government had signed 44 memorandum of understanding worth USD 8 billion with international firms during Dubai Expo 2022. To promote skiing sports, the government has taken a principle decision to establish ski resorts at Kaghan, Chitral and Swat.

Four new hill stations including one each in Chitral and Abbottabad besides two in Kaghan would be developed.

The spokesman said construction of four colonial era tracks between Thandiyani-Nathiyagali having 8,200 feet height, Thandiyani-Biringali track, Dagri Bangal Meera Jan-Nathiyagali track and Kaghan-Mahmnoor trak starting from Singkayari to Kund Bangla and onward to Shaheed Pani Nadai Bangla to Musa Ka Musllaha were in pipeline.

Waterfalls is a big source of attraction of tourists and the government decided to develop Lamchar, Sajkot, Noori, Chajjan Haripur, Jarogo Swat, Lanchar Dir and Umbrella Abbottabad waterfall on modern lines to bolster ecotourism.

Jarogo Abshar, Sulatar Swat, Lashkargas Broghal and Surlaspur Shandur in Upper Chitral, Kumrat Dir Upper, Kalam, Lilowani and Alpuri Shangla, Samani top Hangu/Orakzai , Laram top and Bin Shahi in Lower Dir were selected for establishment of new camping pods.

Besides construction of the theme park at Hundi Swabi, he said the government policies have helped improve Pakistan's international place from 89 to 83 in the international travel and tourism development index, which was a great honour for the country.

Kundi underlines need of development of health sector on modern lines

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi here Sunday said that health was an important sector in the province and its development on modern line was imperative to provide better facilities to ailing people.

He was addressing a representative delegation of Peoples Doctors Forum that called on him here at Governor House.

Matters pertaining to improvement in health sec-

tor in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and treatment facilities came under discussion.

The delegation informed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor about problems and difficulties faced by doctors and medical staff in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi said that provision of best healthcare facilities was one of the top most basic responsibilities of the gov-

ernment. He underscored the need for reforms in existing health system in hospitals of the province.

The Governor said that MTI system in heath treatment process was not proved impressive in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

KP Governor underlined the need for enforcement of Sindh province health model system in the entire country.

Faisal Karim Kundi said that visible change in health sector could be wit-

nessed by establishing hospitals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the pattern of Sindh province.

He asked the medical experts to prepare paper work and suggestions for establishment of Medical Commission.

During the meeting, the delegation led by Dr Janbaz thanked the Governor's suggestions and cooperation for improvement of health sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Mayor Peshawar reaches home

PESHAWAR (APP): Capital Metropolitan Government Peshawar Mayor Haji Zubair Ali has returned home after performing Hajj and the local chairmen and leaders of all political and religious parties were thronging his residence to congratulate him.

People belonging to every school of thought, including representatives of the business community, came to congratulate him at his residence and garlanded him with flowers and congratulated him. Mayor Haji Zubair Ali thanked all the visiting guests. Paid and prayed for them.

Two killed in firing incident

PESHAWAR (APP): As many as two people were killed in a firing incident in the Badaber Police Station in the rural area, Police Control confirmed the incident of firing here Sunday.

According to Police Control Peshawar, the firing incident occurred in the Badhaber village, a rural area of provincial capital wherein some unknown gunmen opened indiscriminate firing, killing two persons on the spot and made their escape good.

Police control said that the incident of firing is an indication of personal enmity and the bodies were shifted to the hospital for post-mortem. After collecting evidence from the crime scene, further investigation has started, Police control said. Raids are being conducted to arrest the accused, the Police Control said.

Faiq rejects imposition of fixed charges of electricity

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) chairman Muhammad Faiq Shah has lambasted the incumbent coalition government, saying that the rulers have snatched people's right to live from people. Shah slammed the government for imposing fixed charge of electricity on all consumers and expressed fear that a storm of inflation would come after the passage of federal budget.

He said "Every child in the country is bearing witness to the worst government in the last 75 years."

Faiq severely criticized the economic policies of the present rulers, saying the unprecedented price-hike and unemployment had never been seen in the history of the country.

He maintained the government has started implementing prior demands of the IMF after availing another bailout programme, saying that an inflation storm will come as a result of imposing new taxes.

Prices of essential food commodities are on the rise, Mr Shah said while talking to a group of reporters here on Sunday. He said the poor masses have left on mercy of hoarders and profiteers. The party chief criticized the governments and local administration for keeping mum.

Chanzeb grieves over Hazara Valley waterfall incident

PESHAWAR (APP): Advisor to Chief Minister on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb on Sunday expressed deep sense of grief and sorrow over the tragic incident at Hazara Waterfall in Jab Valley wherein two youths drowned while swimming in the pond under the fall.

He in a condolence message expressed heartfelt sympathies with the affected families and directed the Tourism Department to review the safety measures of all waterfalls in the area and ensure the security of all the nearby lakes in coordination with the local administration.

He also instructed for the construction of special viewing points for the tourists adjacent to the waterfalls through out the province.

Meanwhile the KP Chief Minister's Aide on Tourism and Culture expressed satisfaction over the record number of over 400,000 tourists visiting the serene places across the province during Eid ul Azha.

He eulogized the active role and round the clock efforts of the officials of Tourism Department, Rescue 1122, divisional and concerned district administrations in this regard.

However at the same time he was also grieved over the unfortunate incident in Madyan Swat in

which a stranger was lynched with allegations of the desecration of the Holy Quran.

He appealed to the people to have a full trust in their elected government and not to take the law into their own hands.

He expressed concern that the incident may also be part of any conspiracy to defame tourist destinations.

He assured that the provincial government will never disappoint its people in any matter including the all the national and religious affairs, and will take prompt decisions and actions on every occurrence according to public expectations.

Adulterated foods pose severe risks to public health

PESHAWAR (APP): The deliberate addition or contamination of food products with non-food substances can pose severe health risks, ranging from mild discomfort to life-threatening conditions. Food adulteration is a pervasive issue with serious health implications. The risks associated with adulterated food had far-reaching consequences from acute illnesses to chronic health conditions.

The authority concerned need to ensure round-the-clock vigilance in food markets and take stern action against the violators for playing havoc with the public lives. The experts said that food adulteration was an act of adding or mixing low-quality, non-nutritive, or harmful substances to food products for economic gains. This practice often compromises on the quality, safety, and nutritional value of the food, potentially leading to serious health risks.

Explaining food adulteration, Deputy Director Food Department Punjab Zahir Qaiser said that the first kind of food adulteration involves the deliberate addition of substances to increase product weight or volume. He said for example, adding water to milk, starch to spices, or chalk powder to flour is an intentional adulteration. While sometimes due to negligence or lack of proper hygienic practices during the production, storage, and handling of food, the quality is compromised which is also called incidental adulteration, he added. The Deputy Director said that contaminants such as pesticides, heavy metals, and environmental pollutants can inadvertently enter the food supply. He said that another kind of adulteration is metallic contamination caused either during processing or packaging. The type of chemical adulteration is caused due to unauthorized or harmful chemicals for enhancing the appearance or shelf-life of food.

Dr Furqan Malik, a medicine specialist of the Mayo Hospital, sharing details about the impacts of the food adulteration on health said that consuming adulterated food can lead to immediate health issues such as food poisoning, gastrointestinal disorders, and allergic reactions. He said that contaminants like pesticides, heavy metals, and microbial pathogens can cause symptoms ranging from nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea to severe abdominal pain and fever.

Zahir said that contamination of food with pathogenic microorganisms like bacteria, viruses, and fungi due to improper handling or storage conditions is called microbial adulteration. He said the primary driver of food adulteration is economic gains. Producers may adulterate food to reduce production costs and increase profits. For instance, diluting milk with water or mixing low-quality grains with premium ones can significantly cut costs.

He said the second cause of food adulteration is inadequate regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms. Countries with weak food safety regulations often see higher instances of adulteration due to minimal accountability.

Dr Furqan said that addressing food adulteration requires a multifaceted approach involving regulatory measures, public awareness, and technological advancements. He urged the government to implement stringent food safety regulations. This includes setting clear standards for food quality, conducting regular inspections, and penalizing violators. Zahir Qaiser said that producers may resort to adulteration to meet market demands and maintain competitive pricing. He said that ignorance and lack of awareness is also one of the causes of food adulteration, adding that both producers and consumers may lack awareness about the dangers of food adulteration.

Poor quality control measures and lack of proper testing facilities can result in undetected adulteration of food products. This is especially prevalent in regions with limited access to advanced food testing technologies.

Dr Malik said that it also causes chronic health issues, adding that prolonged exposure to adulterated food can result in chronic health problems like consuming food contaminated with heavy metals like lead or arsenic can lead to long-term health issues such as neurological disorders, kidney damage, and cancer. Similarly, continuous intake of food laced with harmful chemicals can cause hormonal imbalances, reproductive issues, and compromised immune function, he added.

Dr Furqan said that children are vulnerable to the effects of adulterated food. Consumption of contaminated or nutritionally compromised food can hinder physical and cognitive development, leading to developmental delays, learning difficulties, and weakened immune systems. He said that regular consumption of adulterated food can increase the risk of developing serious health conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, liver damage, and respiratory problems.



PESHAWAR: Capital Metropolitan Government Peshawar Mayor Haji Zubair Ali talking to people from different walks of life after he returned from Hajj.



In brief

Two robbers killed

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Two robbers involved in injuring Elite Force personnel were killed in police encounter here on Sunday. The exchange of fire between robbers and police took place in village Gajiana Nau of Sheikhupura. In cross firing, two robbers wanted by police in a number of cases were killed. The bodies were shifted to mortuary and will be handed over to heirs after legal formalities.

Five of a family injured

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Five members of a family including women were injured in collision between over speeding car and a truck here on Sunday, rescue sources said. According to details, a car carrying a family got out of control due to over speeding and rammed into a hay laden truck near Chaudhry Stop at Lahore road in Sheikhupura. As a result of collision, five people including Shaukat Masih 55, Irshad Bibi 50, Niamat Masih 62, Nasreen Bibi 62, and 8-year-old Andlia were seriously injured. The rescue teams reached the scene of accident and shifted the injured to hospital for treatment. The police impounded both vehicles and after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

Budget termed people-friendly

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Minister for Local Government Sardar Sarfraz Chakar Khan Domki has termed the budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 as the development-oriented and people-friendly budget in the history of Balochistan. He said the 70 percent of the approved development projects have been included in the provincial public sector development program to initiate public interest project purely on merit and provide relief to maximum number of people. In a statement issued here Sunday, Sardar Sarfraz Chakar Khan Domki said the Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has also expressed his determination that 100 approved development projects would be included in the next financial year budget. The provincial minister said that in the budget 2024-24, priority had been given to health and education sector as huge allocation had been awarded for the improvement of these sectors to facilitate the poor masses. He said in the budget 2024-25, the allocations of agriculture, livestock and other departments have also been increased which will start a new era of development in the province. He said that there was coalition government in Balochistan and the Pakistan People's Party led government had presented a people-friendly budget on the instructions of the central leadership of the Party and its positive results would reach to the people soon. PPP is the party of the poor which has always represented the poor class and struggled for the rights of the people, he expressed.

DC for preventing accidents

SIALKOT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zulqarnain has said that all departments must make efforts to prevent accidents on highways. He issued these instructions at a meeting of the District Regional Transport Authority (DRTA) and Accident Review Committee. An awareness campaign should be conducted at all levels to raise awareness about safe driving among citizens, he added.

JI stages protest against taxes in utility bills

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: Hundreds of the Jamaat-i-Islami workers led by its district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari held a protest rally against the government for including extra taxes and fuel price adjustment charges in utility bills. The rally was held on the call of the JI chief Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman.

The protesters came out from the JI district headquarters in Balambat and walked on the roads. Carrying party glags, banners and placards the protesters chanted slogans against the government and Pesco authorities.

The rally was addressed by the JI district chief Izazul Mulk, general secretary Hafiz Yaqub ur Rehman, former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, Malik Sher Bahadar and others.

The speakers said that

power consumers were being looted by the government and Pesco on the pretext of fuel price adjustment and many other taxes. They said the current inflation, unemployment and devaluation of Pakistani currency had broken the back of lower and middle class.

The speakers said the power consumers were not ready to accept extra taxes and FPA charges in their bills. They also complained that over 12 hours of power outages had affected the business class and they were too unable to pay exorbitant bills.

They demanded the government to immediately abolish FPA and other irrelevant taxes. They warned to bring all people onto the roads if their demands were not met. Later the protesters dispersed peacefully.

T R A N S P O R T

FARES: Following the directives of deputy commissioner, the assistant commissioner Tariq along with traffic police and President of the transporters visited the Timergara general bus stand and a private bus terminal here on Sunday.

The visiting team inquired about transport fares and got information from the passenger and drivers. One violator was charged for overcharging passengers.

The AC directed the bus stand managers to ensure the availability of vehicles at Peshawar and Pindi stands with the help of the President of the general bus stand.

Necessary, directions were issued to traffic police to establish a check point at Jail chawak and Zolam check point in order to penalize the drivers on overcharging.

Minister assures solution to problems of Kohat

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Law and Finance Minister Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate took an immediate notice of the scarcity of drinking water in the far-flung area of his constituency Ziarat Sheikh Allah Dad and rushed to the area along with the Chairman Tehsil Gambat Sajid Iqbal and PTI local leader Ishfaq Qureshi.

He inspected the Shadipur Water Supply Scheme in Ziarat Sheikh

Allah Dad where Minister was told that the water requirement of the area is not being met by the Shadipur Water Supply Scheme as its water is not reachable to the entire area due to which the drinking water problem is very serious.

The Law Minister on the spot approved allocation of more funds for the said scheme on the request of the elders of the area. He assured, InshaAllah drinking water will be delivered to every house in the area

and the drinking water scarcity problem of the people here will be solved on permanent basis.

He also assured to solve other basic problems of the area on priority basis. Elders of the area thanked the minister for taking immediate notice of this key problem of the area and for his determination to solve it permanently.

They assured their wholehearted support and cooperation to the Minister for his keen interest in the area development.

JI chief to starts agitation movement from Buner

A R Abid Bunery

BUNER: District Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Muhammad Haleem Bacha has announced in a crowded press conference at Center Islami Swari that Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Central Ameer Hafiz Naeemur Rahman would start a nationwide protest movement from Buner on July 9.

He added the ajamaat central Ameer would address public gathering at Swari. He shared the Jamaat central chief would take the people together against the government to solve the problems and difficulties being faced by the people in the current situa-

tion and would hold the largest protest meeting in the history of the country in Islamabad finally.

District Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Muhammad Halim Bacha has accused the present central and Pakhtunkhwa governments of neglecting public problems. He added both the governments have adopted the position so that both governments are engaged in political point scoring and the basic needs of people's lives such as health, education and drinking water electricity and gas facilities. He continued to say today the inflation has taken away the food from the mouth of the poor and

everyone is confused and forced to commit suicide with children. But both governments are not satisfied with their own fights, he alleged. He argued both governments looking down on each other, for which both governments have started dumping public wealth on favored individuals and parties, due to which the debt burden is increasing and causing inflation to rise.

The District Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami, Muhammad Halim Bacha, has further said that health facilities are lacking in Buner and even a syringe is not available in the big hospital in DHQ Daggar.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan presiding over the cabinet meeting regarding the approval of budget of 2024-25 of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Five held for aerial firing at wedding

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, (APP): The Dera police arrested five people for engaging in aerial firing during a wedding ceremony here on Sunday.

The police took action after receiving public complaints in the limits of Cantt Police station, said a police spokesman.

He said a team of Cant Police Station led by SDPO City Circle Muhammad Adnan along with SHO Arslan Khan Gandapur conducted a raid at the wedding ceremony and arrested five accused of aerial firing. The arrested accused included Zahid Khan son of Mir Alam, Abid son of Noor Ali, Aman Ullah son of Ramzan Ali, Usman son of Soorat Khan and Yousaf son of Ibrahim.

The police also recovered a Kalashnikov along with 10 cartridges, two pistols along with 20 cartridges and two maulers along with 15 cartridges. The police registered a case against the arrested accused.

Meanwhile, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority seized two containers and discarded about 3000 litres of contaminated milk supplied from Punjab here on Sunday.

According to the details, the action was taken based on information that containers of adulterated milk transported from Punjab through Dera Ismail Khan would be supplied to different franchises in KP.

The contaminated milk was seized by a raiding party headed by Deputy Director Muhammad Asif and Food Safety Officer Rizwan Ullah with team.

The team inspected all the two containers through the mobile laboratory on the spot and found the milk adulterated and unhygienic.

The official said that more than 3,000 litres of substandard milk were destroyed from tankers after water contamination was proved during checking.

Saira hails efforts of sanitary workers

Hafiz M Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Former Federal Minister and Central Leadr of PMLN Saira Afzal Tarar said that present government is well aware of people's problems and taking revolutionary and historic steps to address problems and to provide maximum relief to the people at their doorsteps whereas on the directions of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, ideal arrangements were made by the district administration, district councils and Municipal Committees of the Punjab including Sukheki Mandi to ensure cleanliness and to remove offal of sacrificial animals timely on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha for providing healthy and pleasant atmosphere to the people.

She expressed these views while addressing a function held to appreciate performance of sanitary workers and other cleanliness staff at Sukheki Mandi, on Sunday.

Chief Officer MC Sukheki Mandi Ikram Ullah Sandhu, vice-Chairman PMLN Hafizabad district Rai Qamar Zaman, ex-Chairman District Zakat Committee Hafizabad Ch. Nasrullah Khan Bhatti, Ex-Chairman MC Sukheki Mandi Ch. Nasir Qayyum Bhatti, ex-members MC Ch. Tajamal Raza Advocate, Malik Maqsood Ahmad, Rashid Awan, Rana Afzal, workers of PMLN and citizens attended the function.

Saira Afzal further said that sanitary workers and other staff of local government was set a new record in the history of the country to remove offal of sacrificial animals quickly and to provide

healthy and pleasant atmosphere to people during Eid Days under the clean and neat Punjab vision of the CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

While lauding performance of sanitary workers, she expressed hope that sanitary workers and other staff of MC Sukheki Mandi would continue duty with spirit of serving the people in future to come up expectations of Chief Minister of the Punjab, district administration and people.

She also appreciated the good governance of Chief Officer Ikram Ullah Sandhu who keep vigilant eye upon his subordinate and provide all necessary assistance and needs to sanitary workers.

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad urged the officers and officials of all departments to continue their consolidated efforts for implementing on anti-dengue preventive measures to save the people from dengue.

While addressing a meeting held to review Anti-Dengue Measures being taken by the different government departments, she directed the officers to achieve target of their indoor and outdoor anti-dengue activities so that growth of dengue mosquito and his larva could be contained in upcoming rainy season.

DC directed the officers of health department Municipal Committees and other departments to continue inspections and survey of public parks, graveyards and public places so that dengue larva could not be breed beside all departments be ensure cleanliness of offices and surroundings and also continue awareness campaign.



SIALKOT: A vendor displaying and selling Mango at his roadside setup.

Ailing soil calls for chemicals-free farming practices



MULTAN (APP): Excessive and disproportionate use of chemical pesticides in agriculture damages the soil fertility, causes deficiency in essential nutrients resulting in decreased crop productivity and consequently affecting human health.

Since our farmers started using fertilizers in place of organic matter and pesticides to kill worms, insects and other harmful creatures, massive use of these chemicals showed to have adverse effects on our land as well as our health.

South Punjab is one of important regions in this respect being a food bas-

ket for the country where the agriculturalists have warned of fast decreasing land fertility due to excessive use of chemicals and pesticides; and lack of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, zinc and some other ingredients. Similarly, the use of organic matter is also than one percent.

"Excessive use of pesticides is causing significant harm to soil fertility as pesticides reduce microbial diversity in the soil," stated Dr Muhammad Mubeen, Associate Professor of Biotechnology at COM-SATS University Vehari.

"The micro-organisms are

of vital importance for nutrient cycle and decomposition of organic matter and its decline could affect soil's overall health."

The total cultivation land in Pakistan is about 79.61 million hectare, out of which 20.63 million hectare is in Punjab. But, in recent decades, the dilemma of housing societies and use of harmful ingredients has badly affected our agricultural land.

"Chemical residue in soil changes its pH value and excessive pesticides break down soil aggregates, lead to compaction and reduces aeration and

water infiltration," informed Dr Alamgir Khan, Coordinator Faculty of Biosystem, Engineering and Technology at Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture, Multan.

"Nutrient imbalance caused by pesticide is another challenge for farmers as pesticides interfere with nutrient availability and leads to deficiencies or toxicities," he said. "Water retention capacity and soil structure degradation due to chemicals usage are other major factors impacting plant growth."

Progressive Farmer Laique Shiekhna of

Nawabpur, a mangoes rich area, was also critical of using chemical pesticide. "Pesticides not only damage crops, soil health and environment but also affect lives of farmers."

Urging the government to limit use of chemical pesticides, he said, the world was shifting to organic farming by using bio-pesticides. "Therefore, we also need to promote bio-pesticides for killing harmful insects and pests as well as safeguarding our labor and land from harmful effects of poisonous insecticides and pesticides and cut farming expenses to benefit farmers economically."

Laiq said the farmers can themselves prepare bio-pesticides by soaking leaves of "neem tree, aak, Kortuma, tobacco and moringa" in five-liter water for 10 hours and then boil. After boiling, about 120-liter water should be mixed in the solution and then sprayed.

Secretary Agriculture South Punjab Saqib Ateel has mentioned to efforts for improving organic farming in the region. "We are working on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) model for last three years and the department has achieved satisfactory results. Hundreds of Organic Farming plots are being introduced in the region."

Supplementing his

official of Agriculture Department mentioned to efforts for motivating farmers to use organic pesticides as it is soil friendly and inexpensive. "The damage caused by indiscriminate usage of pesticides and fertilizers is alarming as excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers not only leave residues in soil, water and air but also have adverse effects on human health."

However, the agriculture experts Dr Alamgir Khan and Dr Muhammad Mubeen suggested a set of guidelines to reduce use of chemical pesticides and improve soils' fertility. They said that incorporating organic mulches could improve water retention and reduce evaporation. This is very important method which helps in ensuring that crops have adequate water supply, even during dry periods.

The experts also stated that decrease in use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizer was also a key to get maximum benefits. "Using organic amendments like compost, manure and green manure is vital to enhance soil organic matter as it has ability to restore soil health."

Both Dr Amin and Dr Alamgir observed that organic farming practices not only improve soil fertility but also sustainable agriculture as they also

suggested crop rotation and diversity, introducing diverse plant species to support a variety of microorganisms terming it very important to improve soils' efficacy.

They further opined that such diversity was essential for maintaining a healthy soil ecosystem. By rotating crops and introducing different species, farmers can naturally improve soil fertility and reduce dependency on chemical inputs.

The experts also advocated Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy that minimizes pesticide usage and said, IPM strategies like biological control, mechanical control and selective chemical use can reduce pesticide dependency. Monitoring pest populations and applying pesticides only, when necessary, helps maintain a balanced ecosystem. IPM also promotes a more sustainable approach to pest control and reduce negative impacts on soil health.

As the farmer community spends billions of rupees every year on these pesticides and insecticides despite their harmful effects for our crops, land and human life, there is dire need for having and alternative system of promoting use of organic fertilizers and pesticides to save our land and coming generations from harmful effects of these chemical products.



A year after mutiny, Kremlin controls Wagner remnants

MOSCOW (BBC): Russia has effectively dismantled and replaced the Wagner Group in the year since the mercenaries shocked the world by launching a mutiny against President Vladimir Putin's government, experts have told the BBC.

Yevgeny Prigozhin – the late leader of the paramilitary force – crossed from Ukraine on 23 June 2023 and seized the southern city of Rostov after months of increasing tensions with military leaders in Moscow.

His forces then began a brief charge towards the capital, meeting virtually no resistance. The “march for justice”, as Prigozhin called it, came to an abrupt end the following day after he called off the advance.

Just two months later, Prigozhin's plane crashed and he was killed along with several other senior Wagner members, throwing the group's future into uncertainty.

Dr Sorcha MacLeod, a member of the UN's working group on mercenaries and lecturer at the University of Copenhagen, said ex-Wagner troops had fragmented across the Russian state.

“[Wagner] may not exist in exactly the form it did previously, but a version - or even versions - of it continue to

exist,” she told the BBC. “There's been this sort of dispersal amongst the Russian state so there is no one overall controller.”

“The Wagner Group was incredibly important geopolitically and economically to Russia, so it was never going to disappear as some people suggested,” she added.

For years, Prigozhin's forces had been a valuable and deniable tool for Russian operations across Africa and Syria. But it was in Ukraine – as Moscow's conventional forces struggled to dent Kyiv's defences – that Prigozhin and Wagner came into the open.

Throughout late 2022 and early 2023, Wagner was key to Russia's few battlefield victories. Its forces – largely made up of ex-prisoners – managed to take the eastern city of Soledar, before it became entrenched in months of intense fighting in the meat-grinder of Bakhmut.

At its peak Wagner had around 50,000 mercenaries in Ukraine, according to the US National Security Council.

Now, experts say Wagner's operations in Ukraine have been subsumed by other Russian state and paramilitary units. One ex-Wagner commander recently told BBC

Russian that the mercenaries had been ordered to “join the ministry of defence” or to go away.

UK intelligence officials have suggested that some of the group's infantry units have been subsumed by the Rosgvardia, or National Guard. The unit, established in 2016, has been described as Mr Putin's “private army” and is controlled by his former bodyguard Viktor Zolotov.

The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) has said elements of the Wagner Group started coming under the National Guard's control in October 2023. Referred to as “volunteer formations”, the ex-Wagner troops were to be deployed to Ukraine on six-month contracts and to Africa on nine-month contracts, it said.

Anton Yelizarov – a long term Wagner operator who is said to have commanded the mercenaries' bloody operations in Bakhmut – appeared to confirm the integration days later. In a video posted to a Wagner-linked Telegram channel, he said he was present at the construction of a camp where Wagner troops would “work for the good of Russia” and join with National Guard units in a new formation.

UK officials said the “incorporation of former Wagner assault detachments into Rosgvardia's Volunteer Corps highly likely indicated that Wagner has been successfully subordinated into Rosgvardia, increasing the Russian state control over the Wagner Group”.

Other ex-Wagner forces have signed up to fight with Vladimir Putin's strongman in Chechnya – Ramzan Kadyrov – and his Akhmat forces, a recent BBC Russian investigation found.

A tangible example of the group's decline came when its logo was reportedly stripped from the tower block it had occupied in Russia's second city of St Petersburg.

In the days after the mutiny, Prigozhin was said to have cut a deal with Mr Putin to focus his group's operations in Africa, propping up regimes and securing resources for Russia. Following his death, deputy Defence Minister Yunus-Bek Yevkurov reportedly toured African capitals, assuring officials that the services provided by the group would not dissipate.

Earlier this month the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) think tank observed that in the wake of

Prigozhin's death “the Russian state's attention in [Africa] not only did not weaken, but strengthened”.

In February, the BBC obtained documents revealing that Moscow was offering a “regime survival package” in exchange for access to strategically important natural resources – an approach previously favoured by the Wagner Group. The plan was being offered by a so-called Russian “expeditionary group” – nicknamed the Africa Corps – and commanded by former GRU Gen Andrey Averyanov. He previously oversaw secretive operations specialising in targeting killings and destabilising foreign governments.

Experts told the BBC that the Africa Corps has effectively replaced Wagner in West Africa. On Telegram, the unit boasted of offering recruits salaries of up to 110,000 roubles per year and service “under the leadership of competent commanders with extensive combat experience”.

In January, it announced its first deployment of 100 troops to Burkina Faso. Another 100 reportedly arrived in Niger in April.

Ruslan Trad, a security analyst with the Atlantic Council, told the BBC that, in effect,

Wagner “became the Africa Corps and now serves the full purposes of military intelligence” and the ministry of defence.

“In Africa, these soldiers are doing much the same thing - guarding trade routes, securing resources that Moscow uses to circumvent sanctions, and more - serving local juntas and directing the flow of migrants,” he observed.

The PISM noted that the Africa Corps is intended to be used “more openly” than Wagner was on the continent with the intention of replacing Western - and particularly French - influence in Africa.

BBC Russian reported that only in the Central African Republic (CAR) is Wagner still operating in any shadow of its former shape, allegedly controlled by Prigozhin's son Pavel. “Moscow has given the heir the go-ahead to continue doing what his father did in Africa, on condition that it does not contradict Russia's interests,” a source who used to work with Yevgeny Prigozhin told BBC Russian.

Last week, Le Monde reported that around 1,500 Wagner troops had assisted local security forces in attacks on rebel-held areas.

However, the PISM

observed that the overall importance of the CAR in Moscow's strategic thinking “is diminishing”.

Dr MacLeod suggested that Wagner's original goal in the CAR had been to show “proof of concept” that mercenary groups can be “used as a successful counter-terrorism actor”, a goal Moscow may now view as having been achieved.

But she added that Wagner was “utterly enmeshed” within the CAR, making it harder to replace it with the new, developing Africa Corps.

Despite the threat posed by Prigozhin's mutiny, Sunday's anniversary largely passed without incident in Russia.

Dan Storyev of the OVD-Info monitoring group told the BBC that Prigozhin's legacy mostly lay with those aligned with the Kremlin.

“Generally speaking the Wagner mutiny hasn't had much, if any, real grassroots support for there to be, say, mass rallies marking the anniversary - perhaps because it had no genuine anti-war messaging,” he noted.

“There are people who organise protests in Russia, but they're focused on anti-war activism and don't have anything to do with [Prigozhin].”

France's far right National Rally still leading ahead of election, poll shows



PARIS (Reuters): France's far right National Rally (RN) party and its allies are seen leading the first round of the country's parliamentary elections with 35.5% of the vote, according to a poll published Sunday.

The Ipsos survey - conducted for Le Parisien newspaper and Radio France on June 19-20 - showed the left-wing New Popular Front (NPF)

64%, which would be much higher than the 47.5% seen at the last general election in June 2022.

The RN's lead in polls ahead of the election that will take place in two rounds, on June 30 and July 7, is unlikely to win the party an absolute majority. Macron called the ballot after his alliance's crushing defeat at EU elections earlier this month. In a separate Ipsos survey, published by the Financial Times, the National Rally is seen as the most trustworthy when it comes to managing the economy and public finances.

According to the survey, 25% of respondents trust Marine Le Pen's RN the most to take the right decisions on economic issues, versus 22% for the New Popular Front and 20% for Macron's alliance.



NEW YORK: People visit the beach at Coney Island on a sweltering afternoon on the first weekend of summer in the Brooklyn borough of New York City.

Bangladesh reels from surge in snake bites

DHAKA (BBC): All health centres and hospitals in Bangladesh have been ordered to stock antivenom after reports of a surge in snake bites across the country.

Health Minister Dr Samanta Lal Sen also urged the public to take precautions, such as reducing outdoor activities. Vessels operating in or transiting affected waters should return to ports or take detours.

China has a four-tier weather warning system, with red representing the most severe warning, followed by orange, yellow and blue.

in recent weeks.

As it feeds on rodents, the Russell's viper is often found near human settlements, and in farmland particularly during harvest season.

A 2023 study said about

7,000 people die in Bangladesh every year from snake bites. Most victims survive if treated with anti-venom quickly.

The Russell's viper was declared extinct in Bangladesh in 2002 but the species has now returned.

Scientists believe the snake, which usually lives found in dry areas, has adapted to different climate conditions, and has now spread to more than 25 districts in Bangladesh.

The World Health Organization says snakes bites are one of the most neglected tropical diseases and has made tackling them a priority.



China issues alerts for rainstorms, severe convective weather

BEIJING (APP): China's National Meteorological Center has renewed an orange alert for rainstorms and issued a blue alert for severe convective weather Sunday morning.

From now to Monday morning, heavy rains and rainstorms are forecast to hit parts of Anhui, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Jiangxi and Fujian, among other regions, the center said.

According to the meteorological center, parts of Anhui, Jiangxi, Zhejiang and Guizhou are forecast to be hit by torrential rains.

Local governments have been urged to cut dangerous outdoor power supplies and suspend outdoor operations in open areas. The center also issued a blue alert for severe convective weather in multiple regions of the

country from Sunday morning to Monday morning, Xinhua reported.

Thunderstorms, gales and hail will sweep parts of Jilin, Liaoning, Hebei, Shandong, Anhui, Shanghai, Hunan, Jiangxi and Zhejiang.

Short and heavy rainfall with hourly precipitation of over 20 mm will lash parts of Jilin, Liaoning, Hebei, Anhui, Jiangsu, Shanghai and some other

regions, the center said.

The center has advised the public to take precautions, such as reducing outdoor activities. Vessels operating in or transiting affected waters should return to ports or take detours.

China has a four-tier weather warning system, with red representing the most severe warning, followed by orange, yellow and blue.

Seventeen: The K-pop band about to make history at UK festival

LONDON (BBC): The biggest act on Glastonbury's Pyramid Stage this year isn't Coldplay or Dua Lipa. In fact, you might not even have heard of them.

The act in question is Seventeen - a K-pop boy-band that boasts a whopping 13 members, and which sold more than 10 million albums last year.

The only act to sell more? Taylor Swift.

But despite K-pop's global success, the UK has remained frosty towards the genre.

Even though bands like BTS, Blackpink, Stray Kids and Aespa have broken out, their biggest hits have tended to come in collaboration with Western artists like Selena Gomez, Lady Gaga or Coldplay.

Seventeen don't do collaborations. Unlike most Korean pop acts, they also write and produce their own material. Now, they're making history as the first K-pop act on Glastonbury's main stage.

The scale of the honour isn't lost on them.

“There's a great sense of responsibility,” says Choi Seungcheol, aka band leader S Coups.

“We'll keep coming back to that feeling and do our best to prepare, so that we can blow everybody away... Not just our fans, but every other member of

the audience.”

Seventeen play the festival in a year that sees it moving further away from its rock roots than ever.

Reflecting the audience's evolving listening habits, they'll be joined on the Pyramid Stage by Afrobeat icons Burna Boy and Ayra Starr, while pop star Dua Lipa and R&B sensation SZA gain head-line status.

Seventeen play shortly after lunchtime on Friday afternoon. It's a far cry from the late-night sets they play in Asia but S Coups is unfazed.

“The time of day doesn't really matter to us,” he says.

“It's actually even better that we'll be performing in the afternoon because the audience can see us better under sunlight.”

That positivity will be familiar to anyone who's listened to Seventeen's music.

Lemonade fresh and full of zing, songs like Shining Diamond and Very Nice are a welcome reminder that pop can be fun.

The band's origins lie in the pistachio green basement of South Korean entertainment company Pledis.

That's where members were selected, rejected, coached and pruned over a long and gruelling appren-

ticeship.

“It lasted maybe four to five years,” says rapper Jeon Won-woo, known to fans as Wonwoo.

He was one of the first recruits back in 2013 and survived several rounds of auditions, all of which were documented in the online series Seventeen TV.

The show was unscripted and unedited, often running for hours at a time. Fans on the livestream could choose the camera angles, watching as the teenage trainees ate meals, faced evaluations and, on one notorious occasion, were scolded for fooling around.

At one point, the series vanished for eight months, leaving fans wondering if the group had been dropped.

Looking back, S Coups says that hiatus – during which three members were replaced without explanation - helped Seventeen take control of their destiny.

“Our deal was pushed back a little and Woozi, one of our members, thought we could debut earlier than planned if we made our own music.”

Woozi, real name Lee Ji-hoon, turned out to be the band's ace card.

A classically-trained musician, he has co-written and produced the

majority of their output – more than 140 songs to date.

“He inspired the other members to take an interest in making their own music, so they started to learn song-writing and lyric-making, too,” says S Coups.

“Being engaged in our creative process goes a long way towards making our music more authentic, so we take great pride in it.”

“That's the great weapon we have,” adds Wonwoo.

'No fighting'

It seems improbable that Pledis would surrender creative control after four years of moulding their young recruits - but the band say the relationship is based on mutual trust.

“Sometimes we'd make something and it would come out differently than the company had planned,” says S Coups, “but I wouldn't necessarily call it a fight”.

“It's more like convincing them to come over to our side and understand our vision.”

Seventeen finally made their debut in May 2015, with an hour-long live showcase on South Korean TV, followed by the release of their first EP, 17 Carat.

At that point, the line-

up was settled as (deep breath) S Coups, Jeonghan, Joshua, Jun, Hoshi, Wonwoo, Woozi, DK, Mingyu, The8, Seungkwan, Vernon and Dino.

From there, they're divided into a vocal team, a hip-hop team and a dance team. The band's name is derived from tripartite set-up: 13 people + 3 units + 1 band = 17.

S Coups, born in 1995, is the oldest member of the group and its official leader - a role he approaches with humility.

“I try to listen to what every member has to say and have everybody aligned on the same path,” he says.

“My goal is to make sure we can last as long as possible, so we can make as much music as possible.”

That's not to say the band lacks hierarchy: Woozi takes charge of the music and Hoshi leads the choreography, but each member is encouraged to contribute.

US-born Joshua plays guitar, Seungkwan and DK are the strongest vocalists, The8 is the resident fashionista.

As the name suggests, they're more than the sum of their parts. Each member brings a different flavour, but when they perform together, they

move like a pack.

Fans have even observed that when Seventeen rehearse, the squeak of their trainers is so in sync that it sounds like one shoe, not 26.

But it's not always so smooth.

The8 (real name Xu Minghao) threw out his back in one rehearsal, Seungkwan has undergone corrective ankle surgery, and S Coups only recently returned to the stage after damaging his anterior cruciate ligament.

“I'm great now,” he smiles, acknowledging that injuries are an accepted part of the job.

“The choreo is so physically exhausting, our bones and ligaments and muscles are tired all the time,” he says.

As the band know all too well, hard work doesn't guarantee instant results.

Seventeen's debut EP sold just 1,400 copies in its first week and it's taken a decade to reach the point where they can achieve millions of sales in pre-orders alone.

Along the way, their sound has progressed from the frothy pop of 2015's Adore U to the broody, syncopated EDM of 2017's Don't Wanna Cry and the genre-hopping exuberance of 2020 single Left & Right.

More recently, they've experimented with Amapiano, deep house and distorted guitars. And last year's mini-album FML raised eyebrows for its atypically downbeat title track.

“I'm getting so numb to this life that it feels like I'm shrinking away,” sang The8 over an old-skool hip-hop groove.

“When we were putting together the album, some of the members were going through a rough time,” explains Wonwoo. “Our mindset is reflected in the songs.”

“But when we honestly, openly talk about our feelings, it really helps to get rid of the negativity.”

As if to prove it, FML's sister single, Super, was an upbeat celebration of the band's internal strength: “I love my team, I love my crew”.

Speaking through a translator in Seoul, S Coups, Wonwoo and The8 all pick Super as the perfect primer for any newcomers (Jeonghan, who also joins the Zoom call, opts for the posse cut Very Nice).

“It's such an intense song, it really shows Seventeen's presence,” says Wonwoo.

The two singles propelled Seventeen to new heights. The FML EP was the biggest-selling record

of 2023, shifting more than 6.3 million copies and winning album of the year at the Asian Music Awards.

“I expected it to do well, but not this well,” laughs S Coups.

To get new fans up to speed, the band have just released a 33-track compilation, 17 Is Right Here, collecting all of their singles to date – as well as a new track, Maestro, that acts as a manifesto for their free-wheeling sound.

“Mix and match, it's our thing,” raps Vernon. “Crazy is the new normal!”

“In a way,” says Wonwoo, “the song is us applauding ourselves for all the effort that we've put in, and the journey we've had to take to stand where we are right now.”

But even the world's biggest-selling artists have goals.

Glastonbury is part of a plan to expand their audience even further – with a world tour on the cards for the end of the year.

“We'd like to reach fans in as many countries as possible, because we don't really get to see them that often in person,” says S Coups.

“I still believe that we have a long way to go and we want to become even more successful.”

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Talks only way to prevent trade war

ALTHOUGH Vice-Chancellor of Germany and Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action Robert Habeck does not represent the European Commission, his three-day visit to China, which concluded on Sunday, has helped to ease tensions between China and the European Union over the issue to a certain degree.

In his packed itinerary that consisted of stops in Beijing, Shanghai and Hangzhou, Habeck not only met with business leaders of both China and Germany, he also had face-to-face meetings with Chinese Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao and Minister of the National Development and Reform Commission Zheng Shanjie in Beijing on Saturday.

Habecks respective meetings with the Chinese commerce chief and head of the country's economic policymaking body have served to reinforce the two sides' consensus on the need to avoid a damaging trade war and produced some concrete bilateral cooperation agreements and projects on trade facilitation, the green economy and energy.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Germany. Both have been beneficiaries of economic globalization, and the two countries' economic interests are deeply intertwined. Both Beijing and Berlin know clearly that cooperation poses no risk, but that decoupling does.

Habeck's hosts reaffirmed that China is willing to work with Germany to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation between the two sides' enterprises, create an open and fair competition environment, and inject more positive energy into the healthy and stable development of China-Germany and China-EU economic and trade relations.

The productive exchanges during Habeck's visit clearly convey the common pro-free trade stance of the EU's largest economy and the world's second-largest economy, as well as their joint concerns over the dire implications of the European Commission's planned punitive tariffs on Chinese EVs. If implemented, the tariffs will unavoidably plunge the EU and China into a damaging trade war that will actually harm the EU's green transition and consumers' interests, as Habeck said. Beijing's announcement that it is launching an anti-dumping probe into imports of EU pork products indicates that China will resolutely defend its legitimate rights and interests.

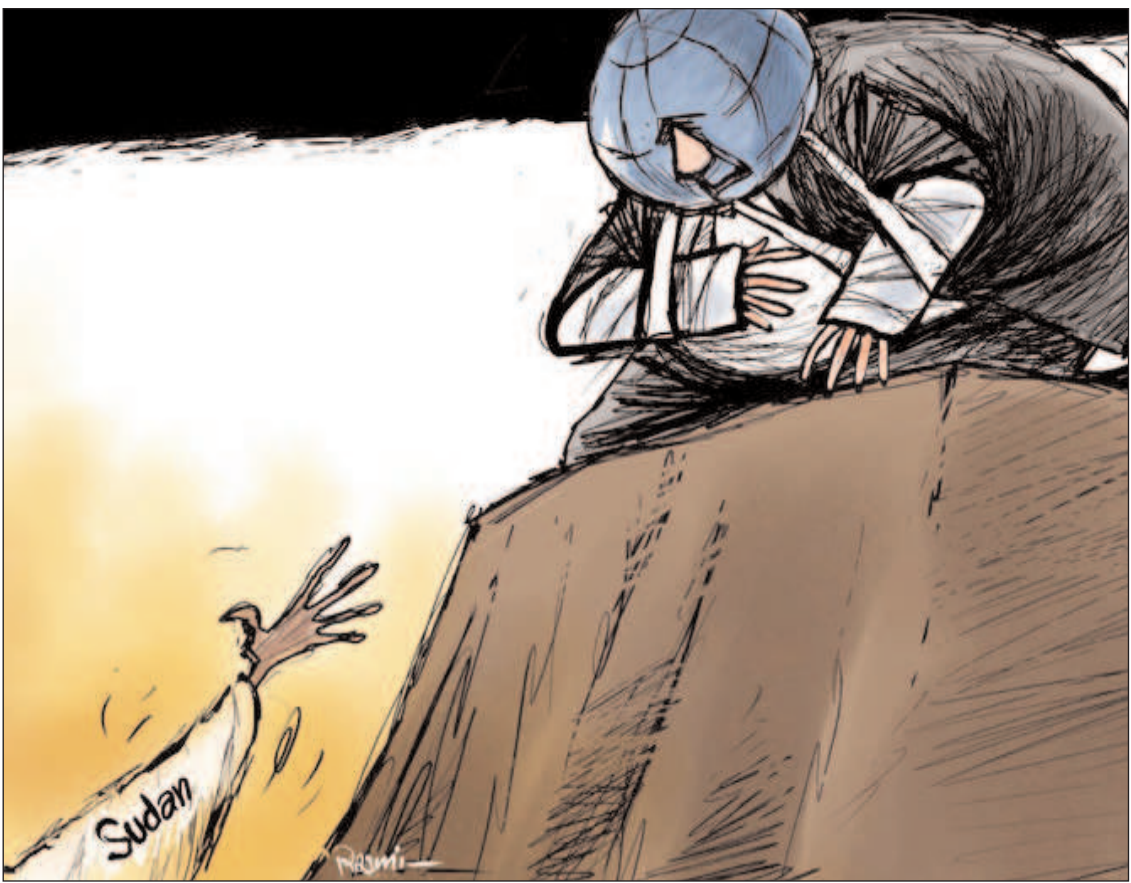
The EU launched its anti-subsidy investigation on Chinese EVs in October, without any application from member states or the industry. And the details that have been disclosed regarding the investigation clearly indicate that the probe and the resulting planned punitive tariffs violate World Trade Organization rules. By adopting such protectionist measures, the EU aims to suppress the development of Chinese companies, which is doomed to failure, and will not help boost the global competitiveness of the EU's EV companies either.

As both China and Germany urge, Brussels should try and resolve its differences with Beijing through dialogue and consultation in good faith. In that sense, it is good to hear that after a video conference between the Chinese commerce chief and Executive Vice-President of European Commission Valdis Dombrovskis on Saturday, the two sides have agreed to launch consultations on the EU's anti-subsidy investigations into Chinese EVs.

If the EU is sincere in sitting down at the negotiating table, China is also willing to engage in dialogue to try and resolve the reasonable concerns of the EU. It is to be hoped that the EU will strive to avoid the expansion and escalation of trade frictions in a rational and professional manner by meeting China halfway in that direction.

Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Israel's narrow coalition — narrow minded with narrowing options

Yossi Mekelberg

The greater the challenges Israel faces, the more it becomes apparent that its current government is utterly inept and chaotic, simply not up to the tasks at hand.

Things have become considerably worse since this coalition returned to its far-right, narrow, pre-October form following the departure of Benny Gantz and his National Unity party from the government — and that was only two weeks ago.

Gantz's departure was inevitable, justified and, arguably, several months overdue. In hindsight it could be quite comfortably asserted that his rush to join the coalition was a mistake, even if it was motivated by a genuine desire to avoid leaving the country in the hands of extremists with messianic delusions and no experience or competency in guiding their country through its worst-ever crisis.

But considering the manner in which this government has presided over the war, the effectiveness of Gantz's mitigating influence is questionable, especially given that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a defendant in a corruption trial and unpopular among the wider public, continues to cling to power despite the interests of the country, and to do so he is ready to let the warmongers in his government influence his decisions on how to conduct the war.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Netanyahu government is endangering the country's national interests in terms of security, and damaging Israeli society to the extent that it might take years to repair, if that is possible at all.

The war in Gaza is heading in the unfortunate, though all-too-familiar, direction that invasions of this nature usually take. After inflicting immeasurable devastation, not only on

the military capabilities of Hamas but even more so on ordinary Gazans, the Israeli military is, for all intents and purposes, occupying this tiny and densely populated strip of land that it abandoned nearly two decades ago after it became obvious that remaining there was a security burden.

Now, and under much worse conditions, Israel occupies most of Gaza and is engaged in guerrilla warfare with Hamas that is exacting a heavy price. Tragically, and at the expense of ordinary Gazans, Hamas has a strategy-less Israel exactly where it wants it: engaged in a prolonged, low-intensity war in which its army loses soldiers and uses excessively disproportionate force in retaliation that exacerbates the humanitarian crisis for ordinary Gazans and results in Israel becoming increasingly internationally isolated and domestically divided.

As if this were not enough, concurrent tensions on the border with Lebanon are reaching a fever pitch, to the extent that most observers warn that a full-scale confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah is a matter of "when" rather than "if."

To prepare for this, the Israeli government has raised the number of reservists the army is authorized to call up to 350,000.

Israel's military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, did not mince words this month when he announced that Israel was close to reaching a decision regarding a response to Hezbollah's daily attacks on northern Israel. Soon after, Netanyahu joined in with a warning that the country was "prepared for an extremely powerful action in the north."

In the early days of the war in Gaza, Hezbollah was careful to concentrate

on merely playing a supporting role in the war between Hamas and Israel, showing solidarity through limited provocations along the Israeli-Lebanese border. As the tit-for-tat continues along that border, the vast majority of Israelis living close to it have left their homes and become displaced. Meanwhile, it is estimated that Hezbollah has lost more than 300 of its fighters and commanders in the clashes.

This confrontation now runs the risk of escalating for its own reasons, regardless of whether Israel reaches a ceasefire agreement with Hamas in Gaza. Hezbollah is increasingly brazen and recently released a video of an Israeli military base at the Port of Haifa with missile ships visible, claiming that the footage was captured using an undetected drone that was able to safely return to Lebanon. This can only be interpreted as a warning that it can — and will if necessary — penetrate deep into Israeli territory to hit highly strategic targets.

What the country requires under such circumstances, when there is the painful, daily loss of young lives, when many of its soldiers are injured or suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and when many of the Oct. 7 hostages have yet to be returned, is a selfless and able government.

The economy has also been hit hard because so many reservists are serving for months on end in the military, accompanied by a marked decrease in tourism and the reluctance of many companies abroad to do business with Israel in its current form.

With the national mood at an all-time low, Israel needs a unifying government that will put the interests of the country above its own political survival but

that is the direct opposite of what it actually has.

Last week, on a day on which eight more soldiers were killed in Gaza, the coalition passed a bill that continues to ensure ultra-orthodox youths are exempt from conscription. Netanyahu was all smiles when the vote on this bill in the Knesset ended in victory for his coalition, while at the same time eight families were being told about the loss of their loved ones. Many more young Israelis will now have to serve longer because others will not serve at all.

This insensitive and reckless behavior has struck a raw nerve among Israelis and it does not stop there. A corrupt bill relating to the appointment of rabbis is being pushed in the Knesset. Another bill that would give more power to the minister of national security with regard to police investigations — the minister in this case being the convicted criminal Itamar Ben Gvir — was deliberated in the High Court of Justice at the same time police were becoming increasingly violent in their responses to protesters, including the families of Oct. 7 hostages.

This is the unfortunate reality of Israel under its present government: It is becoming more deeply embroiled in wars it cannot win, governed by an increasingly authoritarian prime minister and government.

There is only so much that a society can and should tolerate, and there is only so much that can be demanded of a relatively small part of society to carry a country's security and economic burdens by those who are exploiting their own political power and the weakness of a prime minister who will do anything to remain in power and avoid justice in his corruption trial, before that society breaks down or rises up.

Sheikh Sabah the ideal candidate to guide Kuwait

Dr. Bashayer Al-Majed

As a writer who values thoroughness and insight, I chose not to rush this article, opting instead to observe the current climate before offering my analysis.

The nomination of Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as crown prince by Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has generated significant excitement and optimism. Sheikh Sabah is undeniably a strong and commendable choice for Kuwait and his selection marks a pivotal moment in the nation's political landscape.

Sheikh Sabah is perhaps the most noncontroversial and unifying choice. By not selecting from the traditional Al-Jaber line or other expected candidates, this decision mitigates potential hierarchical unrest that could have disrupted state politics. His selection is based on merit and competence rather than purely on bloodline, reflecting a modern and progressive approach to leadership in Kuwait. This decision is

During his tenure as prime minister, he demonstrated a deep commitment to transparency and reform, addressing key issues such as corruption and economic diversification. His efforts to foster a more inclusive and dynamic political environment have been well received, further solidifying his reputation as a leader who prioritizes the well-being of his country above all else.

In the international arena, Sheikh Sabah has been instrumental in strengthening Kuwait's diplomatic relations and enhancing its global standing. His diplomatic acumen and strategic vision have played a crucial role in navigating complex geopolitical landscapes, ensuring that Kuwait remains a respected and influential player on the world stage. His experience and insight are invaluable assets as Kuwait continues to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Moreover, Sheikh Sabah's leadership style is characterized by a calm and

Sheikh Sabah has had a distinguished history of public service. His career began in 1978 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he has since held numerous key positions, including representing Kuwait at the US, serving as ambassador to Saudi Arabia, attending Gulf Cooperation Council Ministerial Council meetings, and acting as minister of social affairs and labor, chief of national security and foreign minister, before assuming the role of prime minister in 2019. His calm and effective leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic earned him applause and commendation from members of parliament.

expected to contribute significantly to stabilizing the recent political upheaval.

Sheikh Sabah has had a distinguished history of public service. His career began in 1978 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he has since held numerous key positions, including representing Kuwait at the US, serving as ambassador to Saudi Arabia, attending Gulf Cooperation Council Ministerial Council meetings, and acting as minister of social affairs and labor, chief of national security and foreign minister, before assuming the role of prime minister in 2019. His calm and effective leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic earned him applause and commendation from members of parliament.

As a seasoned politician and experienced diplomat, Sheikh Sabah is well versed in international politics and adept at handling internal disputes. His extensive experience and proven track record make him a remarkable choice for crown prince, promising a future of stability and progress for Kuwait.

His steady and fair approach to governance has earned him respect and admiration from both his peers and the public.

measured approach, which has been particularly evident during times of crisis.

His handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, showcased his ability to manage unprecedented challenges with poise and effectiveness. This capability has not only earned him widespread praise but also reinforced his suitability for the role of crown prince.

In conclusion, the nomination of Sheikh Sabah as crown prince is a strategic and forward-thinking decision. His extensive experience, proven leadership, and unwavering commitment to Kuwait's progress make him an ideal candidate to guide the nation into a prosperous future. I wholeheartedly support this nomination and am confident that, under his stewardship, Kuwait will continue to thrive.

However, there is now a huge burden on him to ensure the government functions effectively without the tension of parliament. This presents a golden opportunity to demonstrate the government's ability to operate smoothly and efficiently, paving the way for further advancements and stability in Kuwait's political and social landscape.

Taliban and National Resistance Front of Afghanistan

Luke Coffey

Since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan, most of the international focus has been on the worsening humanitarian situation in the country. Millions of Afghans live in poverty and the economic situation remains bleak.

This month, Afghanistan also reached a grim milestone: It has been more than 1,000 days since young girls were able to attend school.

But there is another story that offers a glimmer of hope for the country and deserves more attention: the activities of the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan.

The NRF is the main, nonextremist, armed opposition group the Taliban faces. Its leader is Ahmad Massoud, the son of the late Ahmad Shah Massoud, who led resistance efforts against the Soviets and Taliban in the 1980s and 1990s.

When the Taliban rolled into Kabul in August 2021, Massoud returned to his ancestral homeland in the predominantly ethnically Tajik Panjshir Valley.

Known as one of the most impregnable regions in Afghanistan, and located

about 100 km north of Kabul, it was a perfect place to build a resistance movement. He was joined by thousands of members of the Afghan army, police and other security officials who had been abandoned by the US but wanted to continue the fight against the Taliban.

Almost three years later, the NRF has three primary goals. The first is to lead efforts among the various anti-Taliban groups to align and coordinate their activities. One of the main platforms for achieving this will continue next week in Austria when the so-called Vienna Process holds its fourth meeting.

The Vienna Process offers a way for disparate anti-Taliban groups to meet and, when appropriate, coordinate and align their efforts. The first such meeting took place in September 2022, a year after the Taliban regained power. An outcome of the meeting was that Massoud became the de facto leader of the anti-Taliban resistance.

However, it is quite clear that the Vienna Process is not only a platform for Afghanistan's ethnic Tajik population. More than 50 groups participated during

its most recent meeting in December 2023. They included representatives of the Hazara, Uzbek and even Sikh minorities. Almost half the participants were women. Representatives of more than 65 groups are expected to attend next week's meeting.

The second goal of the NRF is connected to the first: The group seeks more engagement, and even simply recognition, from the international community. Tajikistan allows the NRF to maintain a political office in Dushanbe but, other than this, the group has not received support from any other country.

It is not only economic or even security support the NRF is seeking. It also wants the international community to engage with it and start a dialogue about the situation in Afghanistan.

The meeting in Vienna, which is funded by a private civil society organization and not the Austrian government, is also intended to raise the international profile of the NRF. During previous gatherings, some European parliamentarians attended as observers but

this has been the extent of the international engagement with the group so far.

If the international community can engage with the Taliban, as the de facto rulers of Afghanistan, then there is no reason why a dialogue cannot be established with the NRF.

The third goal of the group is to expand the scope and size of its anti-Taliban security operations across the country. The first winter the NRF spent in the rugged mountains of Panjshir was solely about survival. By the summer of 2022 it had started to carry out ambushes and limited attacks against Taliban forces in provinces near Panjshir and the predominantly ethnically Tajik regions of northeastern Afghanistan. Since then, the scope of its attacks has expanded to include eastern Afghanistan and Kabul.

During the spring and summer months, not a week goes by without the NRF attacking Taliban positions somewhere in the country. A quick tally of social media posts shows that it has already launched about 160 attacks this year. Interestingly, there have

even been several attacks in the past month on Taliban targets in Herat province, hundreds of kilometers from the NRF's typical area of operations. It has also hit targets in the heart of Kabul, which is considered to be the Taliban's sanctuary.

The NRF is mindful of its limited military capabilities right now. After all, the Taliban inherited billions of dollars worth of US military hardware, including rifles, armored vehicles, night-vision devices, and even helicopters left behind as the Americans rushed out.

Meanwhile, the NRF is getting no outside military support and relies on existing arms stockpiles or the purchase of weapons from corrupt Taliban officials. Therefore, while the group is continuously looking for opportunities to attack and weaken the Taliban, its efforts will remain limited until some level of military support is provided.

After more than two decades of international engagement and intervention in Afghanistan, it is understandable that there is a sense of "Afghan-fatigue" among policymakers. However, this is no excuse for ignoring the situation in the country.

If there is fatigue among the international community, imagine how the average Afghan must feel, considering their country has been in some state of perpetual conflict since 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded.

It is in the interests of the international community to engage with the NRF. The group offers an alternative view to that of the Taliban that could be useful when developing policies on Afghanistan. This is particularly true as Afghanistan continues to be a safe haven for transnational terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, and also a hotbed of Daesh activity.

There is no shortage of problems in Afghanistan. Human-made problems such as the Taliban's inability to properly govern the country, and the international community's failure to support the Afghan people, are compounded by natural disasters such as earthquakes and flooding.

However, the NRF offers an opportunity for the international community to engage with a group that has the best interests of all Afghans at heart. The world should, therefore, keep a close eye on the meeting in Vienna next week.

Trillion-dollar reconstruction of Ukraine is back on Europe’s agenda

Almost 850 days into the war in Ukraine, a sustainable deal to end the conflict seems as distant a prospect as ever, despite a peace summit in Switzerland last week attended by representatives of about 100 nations.

This is part of the reason why Western leaders, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, also hosted a separate, two-day Ukraine Recovery Conference with President Volodymyr Zelensky last week. Many of those leaders view the international stakes in the rebuilding of Ukraine as being so great that any failures could have profound consequences not only for Ukraine, but also for the broader region and the wider West to boot.

The rebuilding of the nation will resemble what took place in Western Europe after the Second World War, Eastern Europe after the Cold War, and the Western Balkans after the breakup of Yugoslavia. It will cost more than \$1 trillion and be the most ambitious post-war reconstruction effort of the 21st century.

Last week in Berlin, the EU announced several new, big financial commitments, building on approximately \$100 billion that the 27-member bloc has already provided in financial, humanitarian, emergency, budgetary, and military support to Kyiv.

The announcement included agreements worth \$1.6 billion with partner banks to attract private sector investment in Ukraine; the delivery of an additional \$2 billion from the EU’s Kyiv aid facility by the end of June; and more than \$500 million for urgent repairs to Ukraine’s energy sector through the European Energy Support

Fund. Zelensky told the conference that in the coming months Ukraine will urgently require equipment for heating and repairs to electricity plants that are currently out of action. He said 9 gigawatts of electricity generating capacity has been destroyed, including 80 percent of thermal power and 33 percent of

Andrew Hammond

training, economic assistance, and the sharing of intelligence.

Beyond the questions of money and security, however, lies the issue of Western political strategy toward Ukraine. This is linked to the future enlargement of the EU.

The European integra-

nations such as Turkiye and those in the Western Balkans, has been much more challenging than was the case for Central and East European countries 20 years ago. This reflects the so-called “enlargement fatigue” that set in after the 2004 expansion. Following the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, and the eurozone crisis of 2009-

ment process might appear unrelated to the rebuilding of Ukraine, they are in fact closely linked in the eyes of many stakeholders. The EU accession process is widely expected to occur in parallel with reconstruction. In part, this is because there is an acknowledgment of the need for wider political and institutional changes in Ukraine, following criticisms prior to the war about several issues including corruption.

Ukraine has developed a National Recovery Plan that sets out the country’s initial road map not only for rebuilding but also transforming the country. It is divided into three phases: immediate needs, medium-term needs, and longer-term needs for a modernization phase stretching into the 2030s.

The first phase of this plan is therefore ongoing, including work by local authorities to clean up damaged areas and restore key facilities destroyed by the war.

A subsequent phase, which might begin immediately after mass hostilities end, will focus more on recovery, including restoration of water supplies and the provision of housing. Only after this can there potentially be a fully fledged restoration of Ukrainian infrastructure and transport systems, which will be the most costly and longest phase of the process.

So while the war might go on significantly longer, the event last week in Berlin, plus the G7 and Swiss conferences, have nonetheless rebooted the reconstruction agenda. However, Ukraine’s immediate-term future is still about survival, amid renewed Russian attacks, and until the large-scale fighting ends much of the massive reconstruction process will remain frozen.

The process for the further enlargement of the EU, and possible admission of nations such as Turkiye and those in the Western Balkans, has been much more challenging than was the case for Central and East European countries 20 years ago. This reflects the so-called “enlargement fatigue” that set in after the 2004 expansion. Following the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, and the eurozone crisis of 2009-10, Brussels set stricter conditions for reforms in accession states. After stalling for years, the EU’s enlargement agenda has been revitalized as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the European Council has sought to fast-track the membership process for the nation. Von der Leyen said last week in Berlin that accession talks will start at the end of this month.

hydroelectric power.

So although the war continues to rage, Western decision-makers are now thinking more intently about reconstruction. At the G7 summit, too, this month Ukraine was top of the agenda. The most eye-catching announcement there was a \$50 billion G7 loan to the country, which will use profits from the \$300 billion of Russian assets frozen by the West to boost funding for Kyiv.

A number of other security deals were agreed with Kyiv, among which the standout was a 10-year bilateral agreement with the US, viewed by many in the West as a potential stepping stone for Ukraine on the road to joining NATO. It includes commitments to prolonged aid encompassing aspects such as military

tion process began in the 1950s when the six founding members of the bloc — Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Luxembourg — sought to prevent the possibility of another large war on the continent. In the decades that followed, the EU steadily expanded, Brexit aside, while espousing the idea that economic and political integration among nations is the best way to promote general prosperity and peace.

This approach paved the way for the creation of the single euro currency in 1999, and the accession in 2004 of 10 new members from formerly Communist Central and Eastern Europe.

In recent years, however, the process for the further enlargement of the EU, and possible admission of

10, Brussels set stricter conditions for reforms in accession states.

After stalling for years, the EU’s enlargement agenda has been revitalized as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the European Council has sought to fast-track the membership process for the nation. Von der Leyen said last week in Berlin that accession talks will start at the end of this month, Kyiv having fulfilled the necessary reforms requirements to enable it to become a member of the bloc.

However, while there is much energy behind Ukraine’s bid, French President Emmanuel Macron in particular has warned it could take several decades for Kyiv to become a full member.

While the EU enlarge-

Biden has no answer to Hezbollah’s spreading threat

Amid increasingly violent cross-border exchanges of fire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, and growing fears of a full-scale war, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah last week threatened to attack Cyprus if the Mediterranean island made its military bases available to Israel.

Washington has cautioned Israel against any escalation that might encourage other Iran-backed Shiite militias from Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and Syria to join in, but that warning poses questions: What would the US advise European capitals to do if Nasrallah threatened them over any disagreements they might have with Tehran? And who will guarantee that Tehran, once it produces nuclear weapons, will not threaten to use them against Cyprus or the rest of Europe?

Cyprus has caught Iran’s attention for its role in inspecting humanitarian aid bound for Gaza. Hamas opposes aid not channelled through its militia, fearing that losing control over aid distribution might weaken its grip on power.

It is no secret that America is restraining Israel from restoring calm in its north by engaging Hezbollah. What is puzzling is that Washington offers no alternative other

than asking Israel to accept Nasrallah’s terms: Hezbollah will stop attacking Israel only if it ends its war in Gaza, a position Nasrallah restated last week.

If Israel followed American advice and Lebanese demands, it would give Nasrallah a say in matters that do not con-

The resolution also required Lebanon and Israel to negotiate border disputes. In 2022, they demarcated their maritime border, but Hezbollah has since refused to negotiate the 13 disputed land points, insisting that Israel withdraw unilaterally or face battle. Hezbollah launched an offensive against Israel last October, the day after the Hamas attack on Israel and Israel’s retaliatory invasion of Gaza. Nasrallah declared that this war was not about the border, but to pin down Israeli forces in the north, diverting them from the Gaza front. Hezbollah’s offensive had not only occupied 100,000 Israeli soldiers in the north but also displaced tens of thousands of Israelis and inflicted economic and tourism losses, he said, and analysts were now discussing a Hezbollah security zone in northern Israel.

cern him — specifically, relations between Israel and the Palestinians. That would undermine the concept of the nation state and the foundation of the global order, but US President Joe Biden appears to be fine with it.

In July 2006, Hezbollah

Hussain Abdul-Hussain

initiated a devastating 33-day war with Israel, ostensibly to force the latter into a prisoner swap, which occurred after the war. The conflict ended with UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which ordered the disarmament of all militias in Lebanon, the redeployment of Hezbollah fighters north of

the Litani River (about 30 kilometers from the Lebanese Israeli border), and the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces alongside an expanded UN Interim Force in Lebanon between the river and the border.

The resolution also

required Lebanon and Israel to negotiate border disputes. In 2022, they demarcated their maritime border, but Hezbollah has since refused to negotiate the 13 disputed land points, insisting that Israel withdraw unilaterally or face battle.

Hezbollah launched an offensive against Israel last

October, the day after the Hamas attack on Israel and Israel’s retaliatory invasion of Gaza. Nasrallah declared that this war was not about the border, but to pin down Israeli forces in the north, diverting them from the Gaza front. Hezbollah’s offensive had not only

occupied 100,000 Israeli soldiers in the north but also displaced tens of thousands of Israelis and inflicted economic and tourism losses, he said, and analysts were now discussing a Hezbollah security zone in northern Israel.

Taking a victory lap even before the fighting has escalated into full-scale conflict, Nasrallah assured his followers that the forthcoming battle with Israel would change the region, be the most honorable battle since 1948, and lead to Israel’s annihilation.

The Biden administration appears to have few strategies to help Israel beyond asking it to stop its southern offensive to avoid northern conflict.

Washington merely echoes Iran and Hezbollah’s threats, advising Israel — and perhaps now Cyprus too — to heed them. This reverses the classic diplomatic strategy of speaking softly while wielding a big stick. Instead, the Biden administration talks tough against Iran and its militias but has yet to make its threats look believable.

Nasrallah probably understands that Biden is more focused on his reelection in November than on Middle Eastern affairs, and he may believe the US will allow Hezbollah to continue its aggression against Israel — and now apparently Europe too.

How Saudi women entrepreneurs can be encouraged to flourish

Maha Akeel

During the past few weeks, I have attended several events for women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia and a common complaint was a lack of networking opportunities and financing.

At an event hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce in Saudi Arabia on “Navigating scalability for women entrepreneurs,” held in Jeddah, the panel of young, creative Saudi women entrepreneurs spoke with enthusiasm about the prospects that had been opened up to them to expand and grow their businesses since the launch of Vision 2030, as well as the support they have received from public and private institutions through initiatives, programs and incubators.

However, they also pointed to the challenge of raising funds and accessing markets that require networking and relationship-building. Although they said there are many opportunities for networking, including through apps and social media, it seemed that they still roamed the same circles. In the big events, it can be daunting and difficult to get access, to make contact and to make an impression. At LEAP24, held in Riyadh in March, male-led startups accounted for almost 90 percent of the deals, while female-led startups made up only 0.2 percent of transactions and the rest went to mixed-gender founders.

The advantage of small events such as the one organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Saudi Arabia is in engaging and sharing knowledge with a select number of attendees who can offer support technically and financially and open doors. In addition, it was great to have a keynote speaker who spoke of her pioneering journey as an entrepreneur and provided valuable insights and recommendations on overcoming challenges.

Learning from role models and creating mentorship opportunities is essential. Women entering or thinking of entering the business world and starting their own business need to see and hear the experiences of those who have gone through it before them. As more women enter the workforce and are promoted to leadership positions, they can learn from other women’s experiences, as well as men’s, about the ups and downs, the positives and negatives and the opportunities and the challenges.

The challenge of networking does not seem to be a Saudi-specific issue. I had the opportunity to talk with Maryam Hassani, a young and ambitious Emirati tech entrepreneur, who said that it is harder for women to network and find funding for their startups, as well as to access the market. She co-founded Zealous, a platform for connecting professionals based on their needs, making networking less random, ambiguous and time-consuming.

In May 2023, Hassani launched a service where, with the help of artificial intelligence, her app would suggest the contacts of people with common interests and goals within the vicinity. The response has been amazing. Interestingly, it is mostly men who are using the service.

She commented that it seems like women generally stay in their comfort

zone and are hesitant to adventure and meet new people. She stressed the need to hear and talk about failures, struggles and losses, rather than just the successes and achievements, to encourage and give confidence to entrepreneurs. In this sense, she agrees on the importance of having mentors and role models.

Another valuable observation Hassani made was on the common problem for startups of finding the right people to work with. She recommends having co-partners who complement each other’s skills, expertise and even personality, not someone who is too similar, so that they complete and balance each other. She also recommends being open to

in the final quarter of last year to more than 1.3 million, driven by strong public investment, robust personal initiatives and the highest venture capital investments of any ecosystem in the region. However, SMEs face challenges in making a profit and sustaining their business due to financial expenses and debt, managerial inexperience and inefficient staff, which could be the result of not conducting a feasibility study and having a business plan.

Nevertheless, Monsha’at has been vigilant in providing training, financing and support programs. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor’s 2024 report on Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom continues to uphold its position as a top-three entrepreneur-

Financing is the other major challenge, especially for female entrepreneurs. While it is easy to start a business, it is important to focus on sustaining and scaling the business. This has been a challenge for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. According to the SME Monitor quarterly report by Monsha’at, the number of SMEs in Saudi Arabia grew an impressive 3.1 percent in the final quarter of last year to more than 1.3 million, driven by strong public investment, robust personal initiatives and the highest venture capital investments of any ecosystem in the region. However, SMEs face challenges in making a profit and sustaining their business due to financial expenses and debt, managerial inexperience and inefficient staff, which could be the result of not conducting a feasibility study and having a business plan. Nevertheless, Monsha’at has been vigilant in providing training, financing and support programs. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor’s 2024 report on Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom continues to uphold its position as a top-three entrepreneurial economy among 49 leading global economies.

change, going through the experience and learning, and being honest with oneself in getting to the truth. As indicated by the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2024, gender parity in the workforce can be enhanced through informal factors such as professional networks, which provide resources and capital to bridge professional gaps. Networks provide access to job, mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, as well as exchanges leading to innovation and the adoption of best practices. This includes online professional networks such as LinkedIn, where men also typically have larger and stronger networks than women.

Financing is the other major challenge, especially for female entrepreneurs. While it is easy to start a business, it is important to focus on sustaining and scaling the business. This has been a challenge for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

According to the SME Monitor quarterly report by Monsha’at, the number of SMEs in Saudi Arabia grew an impressive 3.1 percent

ial economy among 49 leading global economies. The established business ownership rate has reached a new peak of nearly 14 percent, an almost threefold increase from 2021. Furthermore, the ratio of women to men starting or running a new business jumped from one woman for every 10 men in 2009 to eight for every 10 in 2023.

However, as pointed out in the report, the fear of failure continues to be a major inhibitor for starting a new business among Saudi entrepreneurs, which requires regulatory safeguards to overcome. The report acknowledges several areas for improving the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including enhancing access to financing, strengthening entrepreneurship education, fortifying business infrastructure and enhancing legislative support.

Entrepreneurs and business owners in general need to be innovative — especially in using technology — adaptive to market changes and needs, and be customer-centered. Female entrepreneurs also need more networking and financing opportunities.

Algeria a key part of Turkiye’s North Africa strategy

Algeria occupies a key position in Turkiye’s Africa pivot, being neither distant nor an ally, while presenting both opportunities and challenges in its relations with Ankara. Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf was in Ankara last week, having a closed-door meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Although no details were disclosed about the meeting at the presidential complex, a closer look at Turkish-Algerian relations will provide insights into their trajectory.

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune’s state visit to Turkiye in 2022 and Erdogan’s reciprocal visit last year cemented their two countries’ growing ties. During Erdogan’s visit to Algeria, Ankara and Algiers elevated their relations to strategic level, marking a signifi-

cant advancement in ties since Tebboune assumed office in 2019.

There were several reasons for the setbacks in Turkish-Algerian relations, but now there are compelling reasons for progress. In 1955, Turkiye sided with the Western world and abstained from a vote on Algeria’s self-determination at the UN General Assembly thanks to its Western-oriented foreign policy line. The wartime independence movement perceived Turkiye’s abstention as siding with France, yet the Turkish stance was rooted in its commitment to support its NATO allies. In 1960, following a change in government, Turkiye voted to support Algeria’s independence.

Despite having a common historical legacy, Turkiye and Algeria, due to their differing political and ideological tendencies, had

a distant relationship throughout the Cold War era. In 1985, then-Prime Minister Turgut Ozal apologized for Turkiye’s partiality toward France in the 1950s. Despite these overtures and the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the two countries failed to find common ground on which to build closer relations.

The so-called Arab Spring of 2010 introduced another dimension to their relations, albeit not in a positive manner. It is particularly important to add the Iranian dimension to the equilibrium in the post-2010 era. Iran has tried to exploit the lackluster performance on ties between Turkiye and Algeria. The Syrian crisis was an important ground for this Iranian strategy.

The increasing alignment in the policies of Algeria and Iran have gained momentum since

the Syrian crisis, while Turkiye stood in the opposite camp to the Algerian-Iranian axis. Iran and Algeria have adamantly opposed any foreign interference in Syria’s internal affairs. They took a similar stance at the 2012 meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Makkah, where the suspension of Syria was approved by an absolute majority, with the only objections coming from Iran and Algeria.

Iranian leaders have underlined several times that Iran and Algeria have the capacity to create a new world order, adding that they could be an exemplar of brotherly ties via the expansion and diversification of relations in all spheres. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has said several times that the North

Sinem Cengiz

African state has been a good partner and an anti-Syrian resistance front since the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

The other point that brings Algeria and Iran together is their anti-imperialist stance. Algeria has moved closer to Iran in an attempt to challenge the West’s preference for Morocco as its partner in the region.

Against this backdrop, Iran stands as a regional rival for Turkiye in its Algeria pivot, as Tehran and Algiers have more in common when it comes to several regional dossiers.

However, the waning French influence in Algeria is playing into the hands of Turkiye. France is seeing a serious decline in its traditional colonial influence across the Maghreb, particularly among the new

elites, who are less inclined toward a pro-French ideology. For instance, the Algerian government’s 2021 decision to prohibit French military planes from using its airspace carried significant implications beyond symbolism. Algeria aims to show to France that its historical role in the region, shaped by its colonial past, is not as strong as before.

This reflects a shift in mindset among Algerian leaders and paves the way for Turkiye to fill the vacuum of France, which is alarmed by the growing Turkish-Algerian relationship. The French concern is not only related to economic or political losses, but also its military influence across the Maghreb.

Turkiye is trying to consolidate its political and military presence in Libya, it has already fixed its ties with Egypt and it is careful-

ly maintaining a balanced relationship with Tunisia and Morocco. Within this context, Ankara is placing great importance on its relations with Algeria, which shares a border with Libya, where Turkiye has increased its military activity. Algeria is also a strategic gate to Turkiye’s Maghreb policy, in which it has economic, energy and military objectives.

Algeria is the fourth-largest economy in Africa and an important source of energy due to its large reserves of natural resources. Turkish investments in Algeria have already surpassed China’s and are significant across a multitude of sectors. In terms of economic cooperation, the prospective membership of Turkiye and Algeria in the BRICS grouping is expected to add yet another dimension to these relations.

Although recent economic and political cooperation is making it an important partner for Turkiye, Algeria is still a new foreign policy arena for Turkish policymakers as they seek to establish a permanent relationship based on mutually beneficial interests. Material cooperation should be supported by nonmaterial cooperation. In this regard, cooperation on the Palestinian cause offers a significant avenue for Turkish-Algerian relations because, for many years, their bilateral ties were complicated by Ankara’s close relations with Israel.

Also, Turkiye should walk a fine line in its relations with Algeria and Morocco, which are at odds. So, while Algeria offers opportunities for Turkiye, it also has its challenges related to other countries’ competitive influence there.



PIAF warns of high inflation on proposed taxes

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has opposed the imposition of more taxes in the 2024-25 budget before its approval by the parliament, questioning how inflation can be maintained at 12% when more than 40% of revenue targets will be achieved from tax and non-tax measures and the elimination of tax exemptions.

The PIAF chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that the PIAF had taken all trade and industry associations on board for preparation of proposals for the upcoming budget. He said that efforts were made to give government a set of suggestions for upcoming budget to make it business-friendly.

The PIAF Chairman said that Pakistan's inflation rate is the highest among all the South Asian nations. He said that the world is moving towards alternative sources of electricity generation but the Pakistan government's policies are con-

trary to it.

Pakistan is the most frequent customer of the IMF and the governments often depend on borrowing from the lending arm and accepted stringent conditions, despite the fact that this institution is merciless money lender, which has always forced Pakistan to adopt bad policies like new taxes in the budget, rupee depreciation and massive increases in the electricity and gas tariffs.

He said the business community understands that government was utilizing its abilities to overcome economic challenges but at the same time the private sector considers itself duty-bound to point out the government hitches for speedy economic recovery.

The PIAF chairman said that the FBR's reforms initiatives are not bearing fruit, as the revenue collecting agency could increase the number of sales tax return filers mainly due to rise in the type of those filers, who haven't paid any tax, implying that bad governance and weak tax man-

agement of the tax department still persist.

He emphasized the evident expectations drawn from the budget 2024-25. It highlighted the same measures which have been in discussion for the success of the IMF program, he added.

First of all, she indicated the prosperous increase in the revenue which was targeted at Rs9.4 trillion in the previous year, however, it has jumped to Rs12.97 trillion which is nearly Rs13 trillion for the current fiscal year. This is a significant jump and is an over-ambitious target for the FBR to collect revenue," she said.

He urged the authorities to introduce new tax incentives and extend the period of existing ones for attracting new foreign direct investments in line with the potential of the country. With a view to wipe out corruption there needs to develop local software and Apps with simplified system in Urdu so that interaction of human resource should be reduced, he suggested.

He suggested that taxes

should be charged one time by any provincial or federal government, as provinces levy same kind of tax which the federal government has already imposed, escalating the cost of production and discouraging the registered manufacturers.

He called for harmonization of Sales Tax and Income Tax laws, getting rid of conflicting provisions, suggesting enhancing tax base by automation. He urged the government to improve tax structure so that business and investment could flourish in the country, as the existing tax structure discourages investment. He requested the government to focus on reducing tax rates and expanding tax base by bringing all exempted sectors into the tax net.

He said that coordination between the government and the private sector was vital for economic growth, proposing the government to develop policies that could provide environment conducive to business in the country.



SIALKOT: A vendor displaying and selling Mango at his roadside setup.

SNGPL: 28 connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 28 connections; Rs 0.7 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the team disconnected 06 connections on illegal use of gas.

In Multan the team disconnected 14 connections on illegal use of gas.

The regional team of Shiekhpura booked an amount of Rs 0.68 million against gas theft cases.

In Bahawalpur the team disconnected 08 connections on use of compressors.

The regional team of Faisalabad imposed a fine of thousand against gas theft cases.

Malik for enhanced connectivity

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former president Iftikhar Ali Malik said here Sunday that South Asia, a region of two billion people, has great potentials to emerge like the EU (European Union) and ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations).

He added that South Asia countries must also capitalise their proximity that would definitely gear up overall socio-economic development in the region.

He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of leading industrialists led by Engineer Mian Sultan Mahmood Arain, Secretary General of the Federation of Engineering Institutions of South and Central Asia.

Malik said Pakistan has much to offer, especially to smaller countries and even making inroads through the use of drone technology in agriculture. If Pak made footballs are used in World Cup matches then why not in South Asia, he argued and said that trade among SAARC countries can reduce abject poverty in the region. Setting aside mistrust, businesses need to be less cumbersome and transport and digital connectivity must be improved.

CTI chairman stresses measures — to save handmade carpet industry

LAHORE (APP): Carpet Training Institute (CTI) Chairman Ejazur Rehman has said that Pakistan's exports of handmade carpets have since long been declining due to long-standing problems.

On the contrary, China, Turkey and India have shown significant performance in the carpet exports. "Punjab played a key role in the activities of handwoven carpets industry which is now shrinking hence stakeholders would have to pay special attention towards its factors," he said while talking to a delegation of manufacturers and exporters of handmade carpets.

Ejazur Rehman observed that financial and infrastructural problems faced by skilled workers have hindered the development and promotion of handwoven carpet industry in Pakistan and most of the women are involved in this industry, but they also face unfavorable conditions with long working hours while illiteracy and high number of family members and low wages are also major reasons that need to be improved.

He said, "There is tough competition in global markets for which we have to formulate strict regulations and standards; and intro-

duce new skills to compete with competing countries but unfortunately there are no technical institutions of this capacity for this. We have also not been successful in gaining access to new global markets as needed. The biggest problem facing our industry right now is the lack of relevant talent which will only get worse if not addressed."

He said that all the stakeholders, especially the relevant departments of Punjab, have to play their active role and provide institutional support for the survival of handwoven carpets industry.

Pakistan earns \$2.593b from IT services' export

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned US \$2.593 billion by providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first ten months of the current fiscal year 2023-24.

This shows a growth of 20.41 per cent as compared with the US \$2.135 billion earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2022-23, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the months under review, the export of computer services grew by 24.55 per cent as it surged from US \$1.729 billion last year to US \$2.153 billion during July-April 2023-24.

Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 10.80 per cent, from US\$ 633.107 million to US\$ 701.456 million this year while the export of hardware consultancy services also surged by 19.24 per cent, from US\$ 4.793 million to US\$ 5.715 million.

The export of repair and maintenance services however decreased by 45.69 per cent from US \$2.762 million to US \$1.500 million whereas the export and imports of computer soft-

ware services surged by 6.77%, from \$489.737 million to \$522.909 million.

Meanwhile, the export of information services during the months under review witnessed an increase of 105.90 per cent from US \$4.240 million to US \$8.730 million.

Among the information services, the exports of news agency services surged by 167.58 per cent, from US \$2.505 million to US \$6.730 million whereas the exports of other information-related services increased by 16.83 per cent, from US \$1.735 million to US \$2.027 million.

The export of telecommunication services increased by 7.04 per cent as these went up from US \$402.260 million to US \$430.590 million, the data revealed.

Among the telecommunication services, the export of call centres services increased by 17.59 per cent during the months as its exports increased from US \$180.682 million to US \$212.467 million whereas the export of other telecommunication services witnessed a decrease of 1.56 per cent, from US \$221.578 million to US \$218.123 million during this year, the PBS data revealed.

Online payment introduced for membership renewal

SIALKOT (APP): The Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) president said that online payment had been introduced for chamber membership renewal. SCCI President Abdul Ghafoor Malik said that now instead of visiting the Sialkot chamber for the renewal of their firms, members can renew their firms from home. He said that the chamber had always endeavored to ensure the provision of best services to its members and businessmen. Malik said that he and his team had rendered valuable services to solve the problems of members. "Being the SCCI president, I would continue to play my role in the betterment of members and concrete steps are being taken in this regard," he added. He assured SCCI members and the business community of Sialkot that other facilities of the chamber would also be digitized soon. He also expressed his determination for promotion of exports.

PFC demands strict action against timber mafia

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) has urged the government to take decisive action against the timber mafia to protect the wealth of country's forests.

Highlighting the rampant illegal cutting of trees and logging, the PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq told media men here Sunday that the timber mafia is a threat to Pakistan's ecological balance and emphasised the urgent need for strict enforcement of forestry laws and the implementation of sustainable practices.

He urged the government to strengthen the legal framework governing

forestry and enhance the capacity of enforcement agencies to effectively combat illegal logging. This includes deploying more forest rangers; utilizing modern surveillance technology; and imposing major penalties on those found guilty of illegal timber activities, he added.

Moreover, the council called for the promotion of reforestation and afforestation initiatives to restore degraded areas and improve forest cover.

He said through concerted efforts and strong policy interventions, Pakistan can protect its natural heritage and promote sustainable development.

The furniture sector,

which relies heavily on timber, is also affected by the activities of the timber mafia. Illegal logging disrupts the supply chain, inflates raw material costs, and undermines the efforts of businesses committed to sustainable practices.

Kashif Ashfaq noted that supporting legal and sustainable timber sources is essential for the long-term viability of the industry and the conservation of forests.

He stressed the importance of raising public awareness about the impact of deforestation and encouraging community participation in forest conservation efforts. He said the council believes that Pakistan can safeguard its

forests for future generations.

The CEO said forests are a vital natural resource, providing numerous ecological, economic, and social benefits. They play a crucial role in carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, and climate regulation, however, the unchecked activities of the timber mafia have led to significant deforestation, posing severe environmental risks.

The PFC feared that if these destructive practices are not curbed, the country could face grave consequences, including increased soil erosion, reduced water quality, and loss of wildlife habitats.

Saudi Arabia's FDI soars to \$65b post-pandemic: Report

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia attracted \$65.1 billion in foreign direct investment in the three years post-pandemic until 2023, placing it among West Asia's top recipients, according to new data.

According to the latest World Investment Report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the Kingdom's FDI outflows totaled \$73.1 billion over the same period, with \$16 billion recorded last year alone. This places Saudi Arabia among the top 20 economies globally for FDI outflows, ranking 16th.

In accordance with the goals set out in the National Investment Strategy and Vision 2030 targets, Saudi Arabia has enacted substantial legal, economic, and social reforms aimed at stimulating inflows of foreign direct investment.

Launched in 2021, NIS looks to develop comprehensive investment plans across various sectors such

as manufacturing, renewable energy, transport and logistics, tourism, digital infrastructure, and healthcare. Furthermore, it aims to increase annual FDI flows to over \$103 billion and boost annual domestic investment to more than \$453 billion by 2030.

The UN report also noted a 55 percent annual increase in the value of international project finance deals in Saudi Arabia in 2023, reaching \$22 billion.

Last year, the nation witnessed 19 deals, marking a 90 percent growth compared to the previous year.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia saw 389 announced greenfield projects in 2023, totaling \$29 billion, reflecting a 108 percent annual increase in value.

On a global level, FDI experienced a marginal yearly decline of 2 percent in 2023, dropping to \$1.3 trillion.

The analysis highlighted that the overall figure was significantly influenced by substantial financial flows

through a few European conduit economies.

Excluding the impact of these conduits, global FDI flows were more than 10 percent lower than in 2022.

Conduit economies refer to countries that act as intermediaries for financial flows, especially foreign direct investment.

These economies attract multinational corporations with favorable tax laws and regulatory environments, allowing funds to pass through on their way to final investment destinations, often for tax optimization and regulatory benefits. Examples include the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Switzerland, as well as Cyprus and Ireland.

The challenges UNCTAD stated that the global landscape for international investment remains challenging in 2024. Factors such as declining growth prospects, economic fragmentation, and trade

and geopolitical tensions are influencing FDI patterns. Industrial policies and the diversification of supply chains also present limitations.

These factors have prompted many multinational enterprises to adopt a cautious approach to overseas expansion.

"However, MNE profit levels remain high, financing conditions are easing and increased greenfield project announcements in 2023 will positively affect FDI. Modest growth for the full year appears possible," the report stated.

International project finance and cross-border mergers and acquisitions were particularly weak in 2023. M&As, which predominantly impact FDI in developed countries, fell in value by 46 percent, while project finance, a crucial factor for infrastructure investment, was down 26 percent.

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has asked the government to fix the anomalies in the 2024-25 budget before its passage by parliament, as the budget has no incentive for trade and industry.

The FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar urged the government to solve their problems on a priority basis in consultation with

the traders, as the BMP's mission was to create a stable economy and prosperous business community, he added.

He said that he sensed no appetite for reforms in the federal budget. He added that the incumbent government took some difficult steps due to the pressure of the International Monetary Fund. He also pointed out that the federal government made some announcements in the recent budget which lacked logic. He added that he was not criticizing the government's steps for end-

PUBLIC NOTICE (LEGAL HEIR TRANSFER)

Beware that Aftab Ali Shah (CNIC 17301 34210479), Son of Wajid Ali Shah, died on 2 January 2024. We are the legal heirs of his Property Unit No. SH-1897-A-H-1901-A.BK(R)-1898-A, Sheikhabad number 2, Muallah Syed Colony, Peshawar, Pakistan. 1. Syed Baqir Ali Shah 2. Syeda Qandeel Bukhari 3. Syed Mehar Ali Shah 4. Syed Muhammad Fakhr Ali Shah



Anybody having objections to the above may contact the Nadra office and High Court Peshawar, within 15 (Fifteen) Days of the publication of this notice.

Court Notice

In the Court of Sidra Jalal Civil Judge-III/Illaga Qazi, Matta, Swat. Case # 126/1. Institution 05/07/23. Next hearing date 28/06/2024. Rehman Gul Vs. Sayed Alam Jan. Notice to defendant Sayed Alam Jan through legal heirs (1/1) Mst. Sultan Begum (widow), (1/2) Anwar Saeed (son), (4/1) Azat Begum, (4/4) Jamal Nasir sons, daughters Sayed Muhammad Ali Jan, (5) Mst. Watan Ziata, 6) Mst. Saima, (7) Mst. Pashmeena, (8) Mst. Raham Bibi daughters Mian Gulam Jan r/o Mera Chaparral, Tehsil Matta, Swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:00 a.m. dated 28/06/2024. Ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Sidra Jalal Civil Judge-III/Judicial Magistrate-II, Matta, Swat. Case # 217/1. Institution 27/05/2024. Next hearing date 28/06/2024. Muslim Khan Vs. Taj Muhammad etc. Notice to (2/1) Sardar Ali, (2/2) Bahadar, (2/4) Gohir Ali, (2/5) Mst. Iqbal, (2/6) Mst. Neelam, (2/7) Mst. Salma daughters Momen Khan, (2/8) Sardara widow Momen Khan, (3/2) Nawab Ali, (3/3) Naiz Ali, (3/4) Seena, (3/5) Haseena, (3/6) Aqsa, (3/7) Hussna Begum widow Anwar Ali r/o Bar Palow Cut, Tehsil Matta, Swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:00 a.m. dated 28/06/2024. Ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this Court.



In brief

Pak athletes depart for Russia

ISLAMABAD (APP): A nine-member Pakistani athletics team is set to depart for Russia on Monday (June 24) to feature in the 8th Children of Asia Games, scheduled to take place from June 25 to July 7. According to Athletics Federation of Pakistan (AFP) President Brig (R) Wajahat Hussain, Chaudhry Asghar Ali Gul will lead the team as Chief of Mission, while Madam Nazima Azhar Samdani will serve as the coach. The team comprises seven talented athletes including Ghulam Murtaza, Muhammad Sharif, Iqra Riaz, Anaya Ahsan Feroze, Alina Asif, Zanoreen Qayyum, and Zarlina Wasim. He said the team was selected through rigorous trials, and he was optimistic that the players will return home with medals after a stellar performance in the event. The 8th Children of Asia Games will be held in Russia from June 25 to July 7, and Pakistan's participation is expected to be a significant milestone in the country's athletics history.

Sinner edges Hurkacz

HALLE WESTFALEN (AFP): World number one Jannik Sinner won his first ever grass court tournament on Sunday beating former champion Hubert Hurkacz 7-6 (10/8), 7-6 (7/2) in the Wimbledon warm-up ATP Halle tournament. The 22-year-old Italian went to the top of the ATP rankings thanks to his semi-final run at the French Open this month. "It means a lot. It was a tough match against Hubi," said Sinner after playing his doubles partner. "I knew I had to serve really well and you play only a couple of really important points throughout the whole set. So I was happy and I tried to produce in the best possible way in the important moments. "I'm very happy about this tournament because [winning for] the first time on a grass court, it's a good feeling." The triumph means Sinner is the first player since Andy Murray in 2016 to win his first tournament after becoming world No.1. The fifth-seeded Pole Hurkacz, 27, won Halle two years ago and was chasing a second title of the season after winning on clay at Estoril in April. There were no service breaks in the match but Sinner won 85 per cent of his service points compared to only 69 per cent for Hurkacz. In the second-set tie-break Sinner took the early lead and never relinquished his advantage to claim a fourth title of the season as Hurkacz missed a final backhand.

'Calm' Kane rounds on England's Euro 2024 critics

BLANKENHAIN (AFP): England captain Harry Kane said there was no need to panic over the Three Lions slow start to Euro 2024 as he rounded on critics back home of their performances in Germany. Gareth Southgate's men have taken four points from their opening two games, but have not lived up to their billing as pre-tournament favourites. Kane scored in Thursday's disappointing 1-1 draw against Denmark after an edgy 1-0 win over Serbia. "We are calm. We have been here before. We've got a lot of experience, so it's not a time to panic," Kane told reporters on Sunday. "I think always in these tournaments, especially these early stages, is almost like a boxer in the first couple of rounds trying to see where everyone is at, or a golfer in the first round of a major - don't play yourself out of tournament."

England thrash USA to secure semi-final place

BRIDGETOWN (Agencies): England charged into the semi-finals of the T20 World Cup with a ruthless 10-wicket thrashing of the United States.

Chris Jordan took a hat-trick - England's first in men's T20s - as the USA were dismissed for just 115 in Barbados.

And defending champions England chased their target in just 9.4 overs meaning they are guaranteed to progress because of their excellent net run-rate.

Captain Jos Buttler ended on a brutal 83 not out - a knock which included five sixes in one Harmeet Singh over which cost 31.

Earlier Jordan's hat-trick was part of a run of five wickets in six balls, four taken by the 35-year-old on the island of his birth as he returned figures of 4-10.

England do not yet know when, where or who they will play their semi-final but it will be on Wednesday (Thursday 01:30 BST) in

Trinidad or Thursday (15:30 BST) in Guyana.

They could yet top Group 2 if West Indies beat South Africa later on Sunday (Monday 01:30 BST).

After that the picture will become clearer when Australia meet India on Monday in what is likely to be a must-win fixture for England's Ashes rivals.

England could meet either of those two, Afghanistan or less likely Bangladesh, in the last four as they hunt a third world T20 title in a campaign that almost met a premature end two weeks ago.

England romp into last four

What a difference two weeks makes. When England left Barbados after their second match of this World Cup, a damaging defeat by Australia, their title defence was floundering.

On their return they have romped into the last four to keep their hopes alive.

Of course it must be said

that three of their four wins have come against associate sides - Oman, Namibia and now the US.

They have lost two of their three against top-tier opposition, having been beaten by South Africa on Friday. But they go into the semi-finals with momentum thanks to a savage demolition.

After Jordan's delight, Buttler put two sixes onto the roof of the famous Worrell, Weekes and Walcott Stand as he found form with England's fastest fifty of the tournament and his first half-century since arriving in the Caribbean.

Phil Salt was able to admire from the non-striker's end with an unbeaten 25.

Buttler's side came into this game needing to win and boost their net run-rate to ensure another nervy night awaiting the outcome of West Indies's meeting with South Africa was not needed. In truth such a victory was never in doubt.



BRIDGETOWN: Jos Buttler and Phil Salt of England after winning the ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup West Indies & USA 2024 Super Eight match between USA and England.

Rania, Nimra to play in Asian Junior Squash

PESHAWAR (APP): Two of the promising and upcoming new squash stars from Hazara Region Rania Qazi and Nimra Rehman have

been selected in the Pakistan squash to participate in the forthcoming Asian Junior Squash Championship to be played in Islamabad from June 24, 2024.

Both Rania Qazi and Nimra Rehman represented Hazara Region in the recently concluded U23 Regional Games held in Peshawar and they got silver medals for Hazara region by giving outstanding performances.

Just recently Rania Qazi also got a gold medal in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Junior U17 Women Squash Championship played at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex by defeating top seeded Manahil Aqel in the final in a thrilling 3-2 battle.

It is a big honor for Hazara Region squash, said Regional Sports Officer Ahmad Zaman while talk-

ing to APP on phone from Haripur. He said the aim and objective of the U23 Inter-Region Games was to spot out new talent and thanks to Almighty Allah new entrant two squash players from Abbottabad showed tremendous performance against a strong Peshawar team besides winning KP Women Junior Squash Championship.

He also appreciated the Hazara District Squash Association for their untiring efforts in providing competitive exposures to the players. Former Director Sports and himself a squash player, Tariq Mehmood on this occasion said that Rania Qazi is the current U17 KP and Nimra Rehman in U15 KP Champions, which is certainly a proud moment for the players and people of Hazara Region. He said PAF is looking after the Jansher Khan Squash Complex which is a well maintained squash court where a lot of boys and girls are training squash.

Pakistan Squash Federation selected both the players for the Asian Junior Women's Squash Championship held in Islamabad. Syed Abrar Shah Vice President, Qasim Khan Director Jansher Khan Squash Abbottabad Shakir Hafeez Squash Management Committee have congratulated both Rania and Nimra Rehman and expressed the hope that they would perform well in the event.

Miller reprimanded for breaching ICC code of conduct

ISLAMABAD (APP): South Africa player David Miller has been handed an official reprimand for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during a Super Eights Group 2 match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 against England at the Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium in St Lucia on Friday.

Miller was found to have breached Article 2.8 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "showing dissent at an Umpire's decision during an International Match."

In addition to this, one demerit point has been added to Miller's disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in 24 months, said a press release.

The incident occurred in the 19th over of South Africa's innings. Miller played a full toss from Sam Curran and expected it to be called a 'no ball' for height. When it was not declared a 'no ball', he showed dissent at the umpire's decision by signalling to review the decision when it could not have been reviewed.

Miller admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Jeff Crowe of the Emirates Elite Panel of ICC Match Referees, so there was no need for a formal hearing.

On-field umpires Chris Brown and Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid, third umpire Joel Wilson and fourth umpire Chris Gaffaney levelled the charge. Level 1 breaches carry a minimum penalty of an official reprimand, a maximum penalty of 50 per cent of a player's match fee, and one or two demerit points.

LONDON (AFP): Confusion surrounded the Wimbledon fate of two-time former champion Andy Murray after back surgery appeared to rule him out of this year's tournament.

The Scot had been aiming to make a farewell appearance at the grass court Grand Slam, which he won in 2013 and 2016.

However, the 37-year-old will need an expected six weeks to recover from a spinal cyst operation, with Wimbledon starting on July 1.

He now also faces a race against time to be fit for next month's Paris Olympics, with Murray twice a gold medalist in the singles. The ATP Tour, in a post on X, formerly Twitter, said Sunday that Murray had been ruled out of Wimbledon. But the post was subsequently deleted, with neither Murray nor his management company yet to confirm if he will be appearing at Wimbledon.

The ATP post said: "After an operation on a spinal cyst, Andy Murray is

sadly out of Wimbledon. Rest up and recover Andy, we'll miss seeing you there," Murray managed just five games before a back injury forced him to withdraw from his second-round match against Australia's Jordan Thompson at the Queen's warm-up event in London on Wednesday.

The former world number one, who plays with a metal hip, struggled from the start of his match against Thompson and said afterwards he had a feeling of weakness in his right leg and had lost coordination.

"I never had that loss of coordination, control and strength in my leg before," Murray said shortly after retiring from his match with Thompson. "I've been struggling with my back for a while -- I had lost the power in my right leg so lost all motor control, I had no coordination and couldn't really move."

Asked then about his prospects of playing at Wimbledon, he added: "Like all tennis players, we have degenerative joints

and stuff in the back, but it's all predominantly been left-sided for me my whole career. "I have never had too many issues with the right side. So maybe there is something that can be done between now and then to help the right side."

Murray underwent minor back surgery in 2013 and following a first-round loss at the recent French Open he said he would need treatment to address soreness. The three-time Grand Slam champion only returned to competitive action in May after nearly two months' out with an ankle injury.

He had been due to play singles and doubles with his brother Jamie at Wimbledon before potentially ending his career at the Olympics in Paris. Murray has had previous back injuries and underwent surgery in 2013, while also suffering from soreness in recent weeks. Queen's -- a tournament he has won five times -- was just his fourth event following almost two months out with an ankle injury.

Verstappen holds off Norris to win in Spain

BARCELONA (Agencies): Red Bull's Max Verstappen prevailed in a tense, strategic battle with McLaren's Lando Norris to win the Spanish Grand Prix.

Verstappen's seventh victory in 10 races this year hinged on a decisive opening phase of the race from the Dutchman. Verstappen was in the lead by lap three while Norris stayed stuck behind Mercedes' George Russell for 15 laps.

It left Norris too much to do and Verstappen was able to measure his pace to control the McLaren behind. Lewis Hamilton took his first podium finish of the year for Mercedes in third, ahead of Russell, as Britons finished second, third and fourth. Charles Leclerc was fifth, leading home Ferrari team-mate Carlos Sainz.

The race underlined the fact that Red Bull have lost the massive advantage they held over the first five races of the season, but also that Verstappen is operating at a level of consistent excellence in the cockpit and will be tough to beat - not only for the championship, on which he has a stranglehold, but also on individual race weekends.

McLaren have been on Red Bull's pace since the Miami Grand Prix in early May, and Verstappen has not taken a pole position since the Chinese Grand Prix in April. Even so, Verstappen has won three of the past five races and consolidated his championship advantage. Norris has moved ahead of Leclerc into second place but is 69 points behind Verstappen after 10 of 24 races.

Verstappen decisive and imperious

Verstappen grabbed the race by the throat with a



brilliant opening few laps at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya.

He made a slightly better start than Norris and was able to get his front wing inside the McLaren on the run to the first corner.

Norris defended robustly, even forcing Verstappen on to the grass, but was able to fend off the Red Bull.

Verstappen passed Norris on the inside as Russell took advantage of their tussle to pass both to grab the lead.

Verstappen then passed Russell at the start of lap three in a decisive and committed move around the outside of Turn One, while Norris was stuck behind the Mercedes for a further 12 laps.

It forced Norris and McLaren into an off-set strategy, trying to run longer and then come back at Verstappen on fresher tyres.

But it left him too much to do and he had to settle for second behind the Red Bull driver, who yet again proved himself the class of the field.

Verstappen had a four-second advantage when he made his first stop on lap 17, and McLaren decided to leave Norris out, waiting a further seven laps before his stop.

He had to fight his way back past first the Ferrari of Carlos Sainz and then the Mercedes of Russell and Hamilton before closing in on Verstappen.

Norris got to within 4.7 seconds of the Red Bull before Verstappen peeled in for his final stop on lap 44, and was 6.8secs adrift after emerging from his own final stop three laps later.

Norris edged closer to Verstappen over the final stint but he had been left with too much to do and crossed the line two seconds behind.

Hamilton's third place - thanks to some decisive overtaking moves, including a very aggressive one on Sainz - confirmed Mercedes' emergence as contenders after a series of upgrades, while fifth and sixth on the grid and in the race was a disappointing result for a Ferrari team who had a major upgrade for this race.

Leclerc was on Russell's tail on the final lap but the Mercedes managed to hold him off. McLaren's Oscar Piastri moved up from 10th on the grid to finish seventh, while Red Bull's Sergio Perez passed Pierre Gasly's Alpine late on to take eighth. The second Alpine of Esteban Ocon took the final point in 10th place.

Afghanistan creates history after defeating Australia

PESHAWAR (APP): Afghanistan created history after defeating Australia by 21 runs in the Super 8 stage of the World Twenty20 Cup Cricket being played simultaneously in West Indies and America after an interesting match.

It is the first victory of Afghanistan against Australia in any format. The biggest upset and with this success, Afghanistan's chances of reaching the semi-finals have increased because Afghanistan will now face Bangladesh in Group One, as well as Australia's last match against India.

If India and Afghanistan win these matches, both will reach the semi-finals. There is also an interesting situation in Group 2. England has to play against America and the West Indies has a match against South Africa as well.

If both win their matches, West Indies can enter the semi-finals based on run rate. Likewise, if England and West Indies win the remaining two matches, then three teams - England, West Indies and South Africa - will have four points each. West Indies' emphatic win against South Africa means that if they lose by any margin, they

will lead with a higher net run rate than South Africa.

Afghanistan's hopes of reaching the semi-finals remain, Afghanistan can create new history by defeating Bangladesh. Australia's Pat Cummins became the first to take two T20 World Cup hat-tricks during the Super Eight match against Afghanistan in Kingston, St. Vincent.

It was the second hat-trick in two matches for Cummins, who took a hat-trick against Bangladesh in the previous Super Eight match. After dismissing Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan on the last ball of his third over, Cummins In the last over of the innings, he dismissed Karim Jannat and Gulbuddin Naib on consecutive balls and has created a world record in the World Cup. The first major upset of the Super 8 stage of the ICT20 World Cup has come to light, Afghanistan avenged their World Cup 2023 defeat after defeating Australia by 21 runs.

The entire Australian team was bowled out for 127 runs chasing Afghanistan's 148 runs. At one stage when Maxwell was playing, victory was certain. MATCHES CATCHES WIN

THE well-illustrated Afghanistan team who did superb fielding as well and did not miss catches.

In pursuit of the target, the Kangaroos did not have a good start, Travis Head was bowled by Naveen-ul-Haq for no runs in three balls, and T20 specialist David Warner could only score 3 runs. Captain Mitchell Marsh's resistance was limited to just 12 runs, Glenn Maxwell was the most prominent batsman who played an innings of 59 runs, and Marcus Stoinis' innings could not go beyond 12 runs. Adam Zampa scored 9 runs. Gulbuddin Naib was the outstanding bowler from Afghanistan who hunted 4 Australian batters, Naveen ul Haq also dismissed 3 kangaroos, Rashid Khan, Azmatullah Umarzai and Mohammad Nabi got one out each.

Australia won the toss and invited Afghanistan to bat first. Afghanistan scored 148 runs for the loss of 6 wickets in the allotted 20 overs. The openers from Afghanistan made a century partnership, but the partnership of 118 runs in 15.5 overs.

However, the team could not make a big score. Rahmanullah Garbaz scored 60 and Ibrahim



Zardan scored 51 runs, Karim Jannat scored 13 runs. On behalf of the Kangaroos, Pete Cummins scored a hat-trick by scoring 3 players. Adam Zampa took 2 wickets and Marcus Stoinis took 1 wicket.

In the previous match, the Indian bowlers have continued their good performance in this tournament. Batting first, the Indian team made a big score of 196 runs in 20 overs, in response to which the Bangladeshi team could only score 146 runs.

Hardik Pandya and Kuldeep Yadav were the heroes of Team India's win. Hardik took a wicket with a half-century.

Team India defeated Bangladesh by 50 runs in a one-sided manner at the ground in Antigua. Batting first, the Indian team made a huge score of 196 runs in 20 overs, in response to which the Bangladeshi team could only score 146 runs. Hardik Pandya and Kuldeep Yadav were the heroes of Team India's win. Hardik took a wicket with a half-

century. Kuldeep Yadav bowled brilliantly and took 3 wickets for just 19 runs in 4 overs.

With a big win over Bangladesh, it is now certain that Team India will reach the semi-finals. Team India has won 2 matches and their net run rate is also amazing. Now the Indian team will face Australia on June 24. However, Team India will want to win this match as well, to stay on top of the points table, it can take advantage of it in the semi-finals.



In brief

ANF recovers 3.6 kg charras

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting an operation managed to recover 3.6 kg charras and arrested two accused. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, ANF conducted a raid on Sambrial Road near Wazirabad and recovered 3.6 kg charras from a vehicle. ANF also arrested two accused, residents of Nowshera. A case has been registered against the arrested accused while further investigation is under process.

International Widows' Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Widows' Day was observed on Sunday to raise awareness of the problems and difficulties they face and to inspire the special assistance they require. The United Nations observes 23 June as International Widows Day since 2011, to draw attention to the voices and experiences of widows and to galvanize the unique support that they need. International Widow's Day is an important occasion for acknowledging and resolving the struggles widows have globally. This day highlights the significant social, cultural, and economic obstacles widows frequently face. Programmes and policies for ending violence against widows and their children, poverty alleviation, education and other support to widows of all ages also need to be undertaken.

Three killed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Out of four car lifter gang members, three were killed and a woman accomplice was apprehended in a police encounter on Sunday near Kashmir Chowk, Islamabad. According to a private news channel, police received a tip about a car-lifting gang comprising three males and one female member who were entering Islamabad from Murree. Following the information, police set up a checkpoint and the gang members opened fire when they were stopped for checking. Consequently, three gang members were killed in a crossfire, while a female gang member was apprehended. Police had already seized a stolen car, weapons, and number plates of cars and lodged a First Information Report (FIR) for further investigation.

11 commercial properties sealed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of Director General (DG) Kinza Murtaza has sealed 11 commercial buildings on Caltex Road in the Morgah area. According to the RDA spokesman, the RDA Enforcement Squad conducted an operation against unauthorised commercial buildings and sealed 11 properties, including seven shops, two warehouses and two restaurants. The Assistant Director Building Control, Building Inspectors and other officials took part in the operation. The RDA Enforcement team took action in accordance with the law as the owners of the properties namely Ch. Akram, Osama, Nouman, Saeed, Nasir Kiyani, Naem, Ajmal, Muhammad Razaq, Zahoor Hashmi, Dr Waheed and Mirza Shamim Baig in violation of the rules, approved building plans and maps conducted illegal commercial buildings. The DG had directed the Land Use & Building Control (LU&BC) Wing to take strict action against encroachments, unauthorised constructions and commercial activities in residential areas without any discrimination.

PM's visit to China highly significant, says Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal said that the recent visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to China was termed highly significant in the context of Pak-China friendly relationship.

He expressed these words while talking in a programme aired on a private news channel the other day. He said he had been participated along with the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in all meetings there in China.

He said that Chinese leadership was very enthusiastic and committed to help Pakistan in different ventures. He said that it was Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's wish to enhance Industrial-level contacts with China to promote industrialization between the two states.

Minister said that we had focused on enhancing business-to-business relationships to promote the industries.

He said that China's leading telecom company,

Hawaii, would become a strategic partner of Pakistan in the transformation of the Pakistani economy to a digital economy.

He was also optimistic that the company would provide IT training to 0.3 million Pakistani youth. While talking about the gains in the larger context of CPEC he said China was committed to starting five corridors in the upgraded version of CPEC in Pakistan.

He said that the first corridor would be a 'corridor of growth' bringing rapid economic growth to Pakistan, and the second corridor would be a 'corridor of livelihood' under which socioeconomic programs would be developed, poverty would be eradicated, and jobs would be created.

Speaking about the third corridor, which he called the "corridor of innovation, we had a special focus on artificial intelligence (AI) and as everyone knows that the world was far away in this sector and China was also competing with the world,

we would take advantage from Chinese's experts and make Pakistan more reliable and self-sufficient in this sector.

The other corridor, he spoke was 'corridor of the green economy' in which we would tackle the challenges imposed by the environment and climate change. He also said we had to find a way to shift our energy sector from 'fossil fuel' to green energy, i.e., renewable resources.

In the last but not least, he said, the fifth corridor is the 'corridor of regional development' in which we would increase our regional cooperation and share the fruits of CPEC with other countries in the region by including them in the CPEC program, bringing prosperity and stability.

Regarding political stability and security measures for Chinese workers, he assured that we would take all necessary measures to protect the workers from any threat and political stability also be brought through dialogues.

Commissioner directs to finalise arrangements

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak here on Sunday directed the authorities concerned to finalise all the arrangements for Monsoon. Chairing a meeting held here the Commissioner said that 30 per cent more rainfall is predicted this year in Monsoon.

The Commissioner directed the authorities to complete the dredging and de-silting project of Nullahs particularly Nullah Lai as soon as possible.

Section-144 should be fully implemented to prevent the dumping of garbage and solid waste in nullahs, he said adding that the damages in natural calamities could be reduced by early measures. Solid steps should be taken regarding pre-monsoon rains, he ordered.

All the arrangements should be finalised as soon as possible to prevent possible flooding, Engineer Aamir Khattak said. He

further directed that the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi should timely clean 11 main nullahs of Rawalpindi which fall into Nullah Lai.

The Commissioner instructed Rawalpindi Waste Management Company to clean the drains to improve the sewerage system across the city. The sewage system should be activated before the start of monsoon rains, he said adding, proper water drainage system should be maintained.

There should be no complaints of blocked drains anywhere in the city, he directed and said that the Municipal Corporation should keep the banks of the drains free from encroachment. Provincial Disaster Management Authority should keep its alert system updated and keep the citizens informed about the weather situation in time, he directed.

Engineer Aamir Khattak ordered the

WASA authorities to keep the roads and streets clear during rains and the stagnant rainwater should be removed within the shortest possible time frame.

Special attention should be given to all vulnerable areas particularly low-lying localities including Rattaamral, Katarian, Tippu Road, Dhoke Naju, Gawalmundi and Zia ul Haq Colony, where the risks of being affected by flood water during monsoons are high. Gawalmundi which is most vulnerable area near Nullah Lai should be given special attention, he directed.

The commissioner ordered the authorities of all the government departments to fully cooperate with the Rescue-1122 personnel and WASA in the pre-monsoon measures. The health department should finalize all the arrangements to ensure the provision of adequate medical facilities to the citizens in case of any untoward situation, he instructed.



ISLAMABAD: Delegation of Member National Assembly belonging to Balochistan led by Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan in a meeting with Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament House. —APP Photo

Dengue larvae found at 8,064 sites in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): The District Health Authority has detected larvae at 8,064 sites during anti-dengue surveillance from January 1, 2024 to date.

District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control Dr Sajjad Mehmood told APP that 999 teams including 788 indoor teams and 211 outdoor teams were carrying out the surveillance in the district to control the breeding of larvae.

Giving details of the detection of dengue larvae, the health officer said that during indoor surveillance the teams detected larvae at 6,735 homes while larvae were found at 1,361 sites during outdoor surveillance.

He said that the required activity was also done and urged the residents to keep their water tanks clean and leave no place wet or with stagnant water as they are the leading cause of larvae breeding.

Dr Sajjad said the government was making all-out efforts to control the spread of dengue larvae, however, no campaign could be substantiated without the active participation of the people.

Rawalpindi Police nab 9 drug peddlers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have intensified their efforts against drug dealers and liquor suppliers on Sunday and arrested nine drug peddlers by recovering drugs and liquor from their possession.

Airport Police apprehended Dil Nawaz and recovered 1.3 kg drugs from his possession.

Similarly, Waris Khan police held Shaan, Karim and Mohiuddin and recovered 560, 540 and 105 gram charras from their possession, respectively.

Following an operation, Race Course Police recovered 530 grams charras from Abid, Bani Police seized 20 liters of liquor from Mushtaq and 5 liters from Yasir while Mandra Police nabbed Babar and found 04 bottles of liquor from his possession. Additionally, Kahuta Police confiscated 5 liters from Junaid.

Police had registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. Divisional SPs commended the police teams and assured that the arrested accused would be prosecuted with solid evidence and would be punished.

Shezra urges political parties to solve issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Member National Assembly (MNA) Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), Dr Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal on Sunday said that all parties should sit together on core issues of the country.

Talking to a private news channel, she conveyed her confidence and expressed her satisfaction at the recent all parties meeting, where members from all parties came

together to voice their support for the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

While commenting on the reservations of coalition partners, she expressed her viewpoint that the beauty of democracy was to form a coalition government and coalition partners always had demands and reservations.

She hailed the role of the Prime Minister and said that most of the demands of the

coalition partners had been accepted and committees had also been constituted to work out the ways to address the remaining one.

According to her, the Charter of Democracy (CoD), which was signed by the leaders Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, urged the political parties to engage in dialogue rather than to drag the country into chaos like situation.

Significant renovation work underway at IMCB I-8/3

ISLAMABAD (APP): A significant renovation and development project has commenced at the Islamabad Model College for Boys I-8/3 Islamabad.

The college staff while talking to APP expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Ministry of Education for initiating these much-needed improvements.

The extensive work started at the onset of the summer vacation, aimed to provide an improved learning environment for students and enhance the overall infrastructure of the college. The renovation includes repainting all classrooms and enhancing the college's appearance. Additionally, construction of new rooms has begun, alongside the renovation of the college auditorium. Washroom facilities are being upgraded with new sanitary installations and tiles.

A filtration plant will also be established to ensure the

provision of clean drinking water for students and staff. A state-of-the-art computer lab equipped with forty advanced computers is being created. Seven smart classrooms are also being developed. Science labs will receive modern equipment to ensure students have access to the latest technology and resources for their studies.

The ministry is also investing in student health and fitness by adding an infirmary dedicated to student healthcare and an open gym. A state-of-the-art library will be established, providing students with a comprehensive resource for their academic needs. The college cafeteria is set to be revamped and a waiting area for parents and students will be constructed at the reception.

The junior section of the college, which accommodates grades 1 to 5, will have colourful new furni-

ture, creating a vibrant and welcoming environment for young learners. The basketball court will be renovated, and overall sports facilities will be expanded to encourage physical activities among students.

A teacher at the college while talking to APP stated, "After completing the renovation and addressing the missing facilities, students will experience an exceptional learning environment which will enhance their grades and learning style. This transformation is expected to significantly enhance their educational experience".

The faculty members and the principal of the college have extended their gratitude to Education Secretary Mr. Muhayyudin Wani and Chairman of the Federal Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education Junaid Akhlaq for their interest in launching this initiative.

Sanitary workers termed heroes

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) Rana Sajid Safdar on Sunday said that Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz's acknowledgement of the best cleanliness arrangements on Eid ul Azha showed her confidence in sanitation workers.

He said that sanitary workers are the heroes of successful Eid ul Azha cleanliness operations who performed their duties diligently despite holidays, epidemics, rains and others.

He cherished the entire staff of RWMC for their exceptional performance during the Eid holidays and said that RWMC had removed over 9,000 tons of animal waste from the district during the three days of Eid ul Azha despite rain.

He informed that around 3,000 sanitary workers were engaged in the cleanliness of the city while 230 vehicles were also being utilized to lift the garbage. He added that the Company had placed as many as 3,964 trash trolleys in various parts of the city to keep the city neat and clean.

He also said that the social and mobilization communication teams were also conducting an anti-dengue drive to aware the masses about the hazards of the fatal virus and motivate them to keep their surroundings clean for the elimination of the dengue virus.

The purpose of the anti-dengue campaign was to educate the residents about the fundamental standards of cleanliness so that the citizens could apply these standards in their lives to make their surroundings neat and clean, he added.

Manufacturers and retailers are encouraged to transition to sustainable materials, with tax benefits and subsidies provided to support this shift, she highlighted.

She said further that for enhanced, improved waste management systems in the country, investments were also being made to improve the country's waste management infrastructure by encouraging establishment of more recycling facilities, better waste segregation practices, and increased capacity for plastic waste processing.

Meanwhile, PM's aide Romina Khurshid Alam urged businesses and industries to adopt sustainable practices and reduce plastic usage in their operations as a part of the corporate social responsibility and to support the government's efforts to make the country plastics free.



ISLAMABAD: A view of rain in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Ban on plastic bags commendable: Romina Khurshid

ISLAMABAD (INP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam has appreciated Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif for enforcing ban on plastic bags in the province.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, she said that ban on plastic bags was a long-awaited move to deal with its hazardous effects on the environment and human health. Romina Khurshid said that the Punjab chief minister has enforced a comprehensive ban on the manufacturing, distribution, sale and purchase of plastic all over the province in its strict form. She urged other provincial governments to follow suit to make Pakistan a plastic-free country.

"Achieving plastic-free Pakistan is an extremely challenging goal, but it is possible with coordinated efforts by all provincial governments to completely ban manufacturing, distribution and sale and purchase of plastics in all forms and manifestations at

all levels," she remarked.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif enforced the province-wide ban on plastics on June 5, a move deliberately coincided with World Environment Day marked every globally on the same day.

The Punjab chief minister had announced weeks before that the provincial plastic ban policy would be strictly enforced, particularly in hotels, restaurants and eateries, citing the detrimental effects of plastics on the environment and public health and stating that "No to Plastic" campaign is core of the anti-plastic policy, which aims at reducing environmental pollution and promoting eco-friendly initiatives.

Coordinator to PM on Climate Change Romina Khurshid recalled that when the ban on plastics was being imposed in Islamabad under a relevant law, all the provincial, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir governments were requested by the federal government to impose

plastic bag in their respective provincial and administrative territories as a part of the federal government's 'Plastic-Free Pakistan' campaign.

She said, "Now it is heartening to note all provincial governments are making efforts to rid the country of environmentally-damaging plastics in support to achieve the goal of Plastics-Free Plastic."

The PM's aide recalled that in Islamabad implementation ban on single-use plastics and other plastic items faced stiff challenges including resistance from businesses, lack of alternatives, and enforcement issues. But, continuous efforts are needed to ensure compliance and address these challenges.

However, she underlined the urgency of banning the production, distribution and use of polythene bags, citing their detrimental environmental impact and contribution to respiratory ailments and other life-threatening conditions.

Romina Khurshid also urged

the provincial governments to promote use of eco-friendly alternatives like cotton bags to replace plastic bags, appealing to the citizens to switch to cloth and paper bags as alternatives to plastic.

She also highlighted the unprecedented importance of the public engagement through awareness campaigns to reduce the environmental impact of plastic waste and promote the use of more sustainable alternatives.

"Without engaging public through sensitization and awareness about adverse impacts of plastics on environment and public health, the country cannot get rid of the plastic pollution," the PM's aide cautioned. She emphasized that plastic waste has become a major source of various kinds of pollutants, contaminating land, water bodies and oceans and it takes hundreds to thousands of years to decompose, leading to long-term pollution.

Highlighting adverse impacts of plastics on the marine life, she

PM's aide Romina Khurshid said that plastics in the ocean harms marine animals through ingestion and entanglement. Microplastics, tiny plastic particles, are ingested by marine organisms, entering the food chain and affecting biodiversity, she added.

She said further that the production and disposal of plastics contribute to climate changing greenhouse gas emissions because, plastic production relies heavily on fossil fuels and incineration of plastic waste releases carbon dioxide and other harmful gases. "Developing and promoting the use of biodegradable plastics, adopting recycling technologies and alternative materials would significantly mitigate the negative impacts of traditional plastics in our lives," Romina Khurshid suggested and added, the present PM Shehbaz Sharif-led government is committed to weeding out plastics from our environment and making efforts to adopted the afore-mentioned

Commission facilitates return of ex-minister to country

KABUL (BNA): The Liaison Commission for Contact with Afghan Personalities has announced the return of the Deputy Minister of Communication and Information Technology in previous administration, to the country. The commission posted on its X page that Wahabuddin Sadat, the former Deputy Administrative and Financial Head of IT Ministry, has returned to Afghanistan.

Residents donate 69 acres of land for school construction

KABUL (BNA): The residents of Khas district in Uruzgan have generously donated 69 acres of land for the construction of schools buildings. The Ministry of Education announced on Sunday that residents of a Khas district in Uruzgan have donated 69 acres of land to support the country's educational system. This generous contribution will aid in the reconstruction of 42 Madrasas and 4 schools.

200-bed hospital in Kunar to open soon

KUNAR (TOLONews): Noor Jalal Jalali, acting Minister of Public Health, announced during his visit to Kunar province that the remaining work on the 200-bed hospital in the province will be completed soon and it will be put into operation.

Jalali said that with the construction of the hospital, the health challenges of the residents of this area will be reduced.

Jalali added: "I met with Amir al-Mu'minin regarding this matter. He told me to send the proposals. The proposals have been written and sent. God willing, it is hoped that the order will be issued shortly, and this project will begin."

Officials of the Kunar provincial hospital also said that with the construction of this hospital, the health problems in this province will be significantly reduced.

"The infectious diseases ward, which is an essential need of the community, sometimes becomes a source of infection due to lack of space in our hospital. Additionally, our surgery and emergency rooms are located in one place, and both use the same room," said Muladad, the head of the Kunar provincial hospital.

"Sometimes in emergencies, due to lack of space, we face situations where there is no place for patients on the beds, and patients are even lying on the ground," said Ansarullah Hamid, the chief physician of the Kunar provincial hospital.

Residents of Kunar also emphasized that this mountainous province needs more attention to health issues because patients from Nooristan also come to this hospital for treatment.

"The current hospital is small, and many people visit it. Patients from Nooristan also come here. There are many problems, and it is not possible to address all of them," said Samiullah, a resident of Kunar.

"Considering the population, the staff and equipment of the Kunar provincial hospital are insufficient. People face many problems, and in emergencies, even patients from Nooristan are brought to the Kunar provincial hospital," said Tahzibullah Muhazib, another resident of Kunar.

According to the officials of the Kunar provincial hospital, the current structure of this hospital was built in 1354 (solar year) with a capacity of 10 beds, which over time, beds were activated in a non-standard manner, and currently, 150 beds are used.

IEA hails Lavrov's 'substantive dialogue' remarks

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday welcomed Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks that the Collective Security Organization (CSO) stand's for developing a more regular, sustainable and substantive dialogue with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA).

Abdul Qahar Balkhi, the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said in a statement that the Islamic Emirate has always emphasized that as a responsible government, it is ready to have comprehensive and result-oriented discussions with all sides on common issues.

Lavrov had also claimed that Afghanistan is still a source of threat and that the cells of ISIS, Al-Qaeda and its affiliated organizations are present in the country.

Balkhi, however, said that "with the end of the occupation" the insecurity factors in Afghanistan have disappeared and the conditions for investment and the implementation of large projects have become favorable.

Afghan pilgrims returns home from Hajj



KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation said that

the first group of Afghan pilgrims from Saudi Arabia returned to Kabul late

Saturday. The ministry said in a post on X that the flight carrying 346 Afghan

pilgrims from Saudi Arabia has landed at Kabul International Airport.

Nasrat Haqparast defeats American opponent

KABUL (Khaama Press): Nasrat Haqparast, an Afghan free fighter, defeated his American rival Jarred Gordon in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) night combat tournament.

According to reports, the fight occurred last night, Saturday in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Haqparast surpassed his powerful opponent based on judges' scores and emerged victorious.

This marks Haqparast's seventeenth professional victory in freestyle competitions.

He has competed in 20 professional bouts so far, with a record of over 15 wins and 5 losses.

Haqparast has now increased his victories to 7

and has 4 losses in his UFC fighting career.

In 2017, he became the second Afghan free fighter to join the UFC after Siyar Bahadurzada.

Afghan athletes, particularly those in lesser-known sports, face dire circumstances in their homeland. Amid ongoing conflicts and instability, attention and resources for sports have been minimal.

Many athletes struggle with inadequate facilities, coaching, and financial support, hindering their development and participation in international competitions.

The situation has been particularly challenging for Afghan female athletes, who face societal barriers

and cultural constraints that limit their access to training and competition opportunities.

Despite these obstacles, some athletes have shown remarkable resilience, representing Afghanistan globally with limited resources and support.

The international community and sports organizations have been urged to provide more assistance and visibility to Afghan athletes, advocating for improved facilities, training programs, and opportunities to compete internationally.

This support is crucial in empowering Afghan athletes and promoting sports as a means of resilience and hope amid difficult circumstances.

100 airplanes cross Afghan airspace daily

KABUL (Khaama Press): Officials at the Ministry of Transport and Aviation of the Taliban claim that over 100 planes pass through Afghanistan's airspace every 24 hours, with a fee of \$700 charged per plane.

According to the Ministry of Transport and Aviation, with the commencement of international flights from Khost province, there are five international-standard airports across the country, handling 30 foreign flights daily.

Imamuddin Ahmadi, the Ministry of Transport and Aviation spokesperson, stated that the Nangarhar airport, which was used for military purposes years ago, is now ready for international flights.

Mr. Ahmadi added that between 100 and 120 planes pass through Afghanistan's airspace every 24 hours, with a fee of \$700 per plane collected.

According to information from the Taliban Ministry of Transport and Aviation, there are 27 operational airports across Afghanistan, five of which are international and the rest local.

Following the Taliban's takeover of power in Afghanistan, most international airlines changed their routes and halted flights to the country; however, nearly three years later, some regional airlines have resumed their flights from Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, the international community has not recognized the current regime, leading to the country's increasing isolation. This lack of recognition has resulted in severe economic sanctions and reduced foreign aid, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

The situation in Afghanistan has become dire, with widespread human rights violations and severe restrictions on women.

Women have been banned from education and employment, significantly affecting their rights and livelihoods. The humanitarian crisis is further deepened by food shortages, inadequate healthcare, and limited access to basic necessities, leaving millions in desperate need of assistance.

Ministry advances construction projects along Amu River

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Energy and Water said that work on six major projects and twenty other projects aimed at strengthening the Amu River area, valued at 400 million afghanis, is ongoing. Matiullah Abed, the spokesman of Energy and Water, described these projects as significant in terms of water management, agricultural land irrigation, and electricity production. The major projects include the reconstruction of Kamal Khan Dam, Pashdan Dam, Shah-wa-Aros Dam, Kajaki Dam, and Bakhshabad Dam. Regarding these projects, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Energy and Water said: "The Ministry of Energy and Water is working on twenty projects in the area, costing approximately 400 million Afghani, to strengthen the Amu River areas for water management, and some of these projects have already been completed."

HERAT (TOLONews): After nearly a decade of waiting, the Herat Municipality has begun construction on the province's theater hall.

Herat municipality officials said that this theater hall is expected to be built according to standards in the center of Herat city over the next five months.

Nematullah Hasan, the mayor of Herat, said: "Regarding the theater hall, in coordination with the Department of Information and Culture and the province, we have allocated 14 million afghani from the reserve budget for its construction, and work is currently underway. This building will be constructed in five floors, two of which will be handed over to the

Department of Information and Culture for cultural activities."

According to the officials, the other three floors of this building will be dedicated to a commercial market.

Herat theater artists have expressed their happiness and said that with the construction of this hall, the art of theater in this province will once again grow.

"The day they demolished the theater hall, we cried tears of sorrow. Today, as the hall is being built, we shed tears of joy. When artists have a home, all artists come together, and we are very happy," said Ghulam Sakhi Ghulam, a theater and cinema artist.

"I am very happy that

the theater hall is being built. Indeed, the Islamic Emirate has made great efforts in this regard and has supported the artists," said Qorban Mohammadi, another theater and cinema artist.

According to some Herat theater artists, in the last three years, most of the artists, especially women, have left the country. They urge the interim government to support the arts and create opportunities for the return of artists to the country.

Abdul Karim Mohammadyar, the theater manager of the Herat Department of Information and Culture, said: "Opportunities should be provided to motivate the artists who have gone abroad to return to the

country. One artist sold his house here and invested the money he had in Iran to work, but working in Iran is very difficult. When there is art in the country, we should provide the conditions for artists to come back to the country."

The art of theater in Herat has a history of more than a hundred years. The only theater hall was demolished by the municipality about a decade ago to expand the central road of Herat city.

With the demolition of the theater hall, the opportunity for live theater performances was somewhat taken away from the artists, and their artistic performances were limited to small gatherings and meetings.

‘Our water flowing to neighbors, but we thirsty’



FARYAB (Ariana News): Acting Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Attaullah Omari said that Afghanistan's water is flowing to neighboring countries, but Afghans themselves are thirsty.

Speaking at a meeting in northern Faryab province, Omari said that Afghanistan is the source of water for Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan

and Iran, but nothing has been done to manage the country's water.

"Water does not come from any country. We give water to all our neighbors. Unfortunately, nothing has been done regarding water management in our country. We are the source. We give water to neighbors, but we ourselves are thirsty," he said.

He also said that Afgha-

nistan is dependent on imports from neighboring countries for food items.

"We are dependent on our neighbors for food, clothing, vehicles, resources and daily necessities," Omari said.

The remarks come as the Islamic Emirate is carrying out a project to build a large water canal named Qosh Tepa in northern Afghanistan.

3 dead, over 230 injured due to traffic accidents

HERAT (Ariana News): Doctors at Herat Regional Hospital say three died and more than 230 others have been injured in less than a week due to traffic accidents in the province.

The figure was recorded during the last week and with the beginning of Eid al-Adha holidays, doctors said.

The doctors added that in the past week, up to 60 injured individuals have been transferred to the Herat Regional Hospital because of traffic incidents.

"In total, we had about 60 injured due to traffic accidents and three deaths,"

said Ahmad Farhad Afzali, head of Herat Regional Hospital.

"These categories included women and children, but the majority of them were young people riding motorcycles," he added.

Doctors in the surgery department of this hospital stressed that in most of these incidents, usually young people have lost one of their body parts.

"Sometimes the injuries are so severe that they die on the spot. A number of these are often hospitalized in the neurosurgery ward," said Barkatullah Moham-

madi, doctor in the neurosurgery department of Herat Regional Hospital.

However, a number of Herat residents said that drivers' lack of attention to traffic rules and families' neglect of their children are among the main factors that cause traffic accidents.

With the start of the hot season, the number of traffic accidents in Herat increases.

Most of the youth in this province use motorcycles, but carelessness, speeding, and not paying attention to traffic rules have caused an increase in traffic accidents.

500 at-risk Afghans transferred to Germany in nearly two years

KABUL (Khaama Press): German media reports that since the start of the program to accept at-risk Afghans into Germany, 530 individuals have been transferred to the country.

According to reports, the number of Afghan admissions through this program has been limited due to security checks, which began in August 2022.

German media, quoting a spokesperson for the Interior Ministry, wrote that Germany intends to transfer one thousand at-risk

Afghans to the country monthly through this acceptance program.

These reports indicate that the program was launched in August 2021, with only 13 Afghan entries recorded in the Interior Ministry since August last year.

The at-risk Afghan acceptance program includes individuals vulnerable to Taliban persecution, torture, or harassment or those endangered due to their previous work in critical areas such as justice, education, or politics.

The discussion around accepting at-risk Afghans into Germany comes amid concerns over the increasing presence of Afghan migrants accused of crimes in the country.

Recently, Nancy Faeser, Germany's Interior Minister, stated, "We are working hard to ensure that we can once again deport dangerous Islamists and violent criminals to Afghanistan."

Amid heightened concerns over national security, Germany has intensified efforts to deport criminal

refugees, including Afghans, back to Afghanistan. This initiative comes in response to increased incidents of attacks involving knives, prompting authorities to prioritize national safety.

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan has exacerbated the challenges faced by Afghan migrants in Germany. As the Taliban regime tightens its grip on power, reports of persecution and worsening conditions for civilians have raised alarm globally.

Man lives alone in Pul-i-Alam Park for 11 years

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): Khairuddin, a resident of Kabul Bagrami district, currently lived in a park in Pul-i-Alam, the capital of central Logar province, away from his family facing dozens of problems.

He lived in a half-damaged room in the Municipality Square Park of Pul-i-Alam and wore a torn cap, short black shirt and yellow trouser.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News during Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan he lost his father and brother.

He added after some times his mother also died and was left with a brother



who was drug addicted and has no information about him from the past two years.

Khairuddin worked as daily wage and as waiter in Kabul restaurants but he was unable to perform his duties in a proper manner.

He said after the loss of his parents nobody helped him in his education career and other affairs.

"I spend some year at Kabul Parks as well but had no work there finally I was forced to come to Logar and build a room for living."

He said he started work with a cobbler to give him 50 afs per day and during six months he learned the art of shoemaking.

"Now I have learned how to repair shoes, daily I earned up to 200 afs and support myself this way," he said.

When asked, Khairuddin said: "I wish to have a

house, wife, children and relatives, nobody helped me in this regard so far, I do all my work, I prepare food, tea for myself and wash clothes as well."

He asked the government and well-off individuals for cooperation and support.

Bismillah, another cobbler, said that Khairuddin is known here as Kaka Khairuddin and worked here.

He added Kaka Khairuddin lived in the Pul-i-Alam Park's room alone for the past four years.

It is pertinent to mention that for decades a large number of Afghans had been displaced or faced other similar issues due to decades long conflict.

Hezbollah targets Israeli barracks after Islamist commander's death

BEIRUT (AFP): Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group said Sunday it had targeted a military position in northern Israel with an armed drone in response to the killing of an Islamist commander.

Israel and the powerful Iran-backed group, a Hamas ally, have exchanged near-daily cross-border fire since the Gaza war erupted on October 7.

Hezbollah's announcement came hours after it published a video excerpt purporting to show locations in Israel along with their coordinates, amid heightening fears of an all-out conflict between the two foes.

On Saturday, the Jamaa Islamiya group

announced the death of one of its commanders, Ayman Ghotmeh, saying he was killed "in a treacherous Zionist raid" in Khiara in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa area.

Israel later confirmed it had carried out the strike, saying Ghotmeh was responsible for supplying the Fajr Forces, Jamaa Islamiya's armed wing, and Hamas with weapons in the area.

Hezbollah on Sunday said its fighters launched a strike "with an attack drone" on a military leadership position in the Beit Hillel barracks "in response to the assassination carried out by the Israeli enemy in the town of Khiara."

The Israeli military

meanwhile said in a statement that a drone had "crossed from Lebanon and fell in the area of Beit Hillel," adding that "no injuries were reported."

Cross-border tensions have surged over the past days, with Israel's military announcing on Tuesday that a plan for an offensive in Lebanon had been "approved and validated."

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah responded with threats that no part of Israel would be spared in the event of an all-out war.

The Lebanese armed group on Saturday evening published a video showing Israeli positions and coordinates, along with an excerpt of

Nasrallah's speech in which he says "if war is imposed on Lebanon, the resistance will fight without restrictions or rules."

Days earlier, it had circulated a nine-minute video showing aerial footage purportedly taken by the movement over northern Israel, including what it said were sensitive military, defense and energy facilities and infrastructure in the city and port of Haifa.

The cross-border violence has killed at least 480 people in Lebanon, most of them fighters but also 93 civilians, according to an AFP tally.

Israeli authorities say at least 15 soldiers and 11 civilians have been killed in the country's north.



GAZA: People carrying an injured girl after Eight Palestinians were killed on Sunday in an Israeli airstrike on a training college near Gaza City.

NA passes resolution against mob-lynching incidents

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly (NA) on Sunday passed a resolution vehemently condemning the recent horrific and tragic incidents of mob lynching in various parts of the country.

The resolution, moved by Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, emphasised that the right to life is the most cherished right enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan. "Every person is to be dealt with in accordance with the law and not otherwise," it stated.

The House expressed serious concern over the mob lynching of citizens accused of offences in Swat and Sargodha, noting with grave concern that such incidents have been on the rise. "Such actions cannot be tolerated in any civilized society," it declared.

The NA urged both the federal and provincial governments to ensure the safety and security of all citizens, including religious minorities and other vulnerable segments of society.

It called for the provincial governments of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab to take immediate and necessary measures to identify, investigate, and prosecute those involved in these incidents under the relevant laws.

Furthermore, the House expressed the expectation that the courts would ensure immediate and speedy justice in these cases, underscoring the need for swift legal action to prevent future occurrences of such tragic events.

Naqvi approves FC deployment in AJK

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi here on Sunday met with Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Chaudhary Anwar-ul-Haq at the Ministry of Interior.

Both the prime ministers discussed law & order and overall security situation of Azad Jammu and Kashmir during the meeting.

Moreover, both leaders also exchanged views on the political situation and the upcoming budget for the new financial year.

Mohsin Naqvi approved the deployment of Frontier Constabulary in Azad Kashmir on the request of the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir.

Speaking to the Prime Minister, Mohsin Naqvi said that all possible cooperation would be extended to maintain peace in Azad Kashmir and improve security situation in the area.

He reiterated that the promises made to the people of Azad Kashmir were being fulfilled.

He emphasized that the Government of Pakistan stands with the Government and people of Azad Kashmir adding that all possible cooperation would be extended for the progress and development of Azad Kashmir.

The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir expressed gratitude to the Federal Interior Minister for taking immediate steps to resolve the issues.

Citizens' protection, security top priority, says PM

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif affirmed the protection of Pakistani citizens and foreigners in Pakistan as a paramount state priority during a high-level meeting, held here on Sunday.

The session, which reviewed ongoing security and law-enforcement projects in Islamabad, underscored the government's unwavering commitment to maintaining law and order.

The prime minister

emphasised that any negligence in safeguarding citizens and upholding the law and order would not be tolerated.

He ordered an inquiry into the delays affecting completion of the Islamabad Model Jail and directed that the project be expedited to meet modern standards. Additionally, he mandated the establishment of a professional training institute and hospital within the jail premises.

In his directives, the prime minister called for consultations with

Chinese experts to form the Special Protection Unit in the capital. He also stressed the need for a state-of-the-art forensic lab as part of the Islamabad Safe City initiative. He highlighted the importance of merit-based recruitment and the adoption of advanced technologies across all security projects in Islamabad to align with international standards.

The meeting featured comprehensive briefings on various aspects of Islamabad's security infrastructure, including

the Islamabad Model Jail, Islamabad Safe City, the Federal Counter Terrorism Department, and the Special Protection Unit. Updates were also provided on the Islamabad National Facilitation Centres and the K-9 Unit, aimed at enhancing detection of narcotics and explosives.

Attendees included Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Deputy Chairman of Planning Jehanzeb Khan, federal secretaries, and senior officials from the relevant institutions.

Netanyahu again claims the US is withholding arms shipments

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his Cabinet on Sunday that there had been a "dramatic drop" in U.S. weapons deliveries for Israel's war effort in Gaza, doubling down on a claim that the Biden administration has denied and underscoring the growing strains between the two allies.

Netanyahu told his Cabinet that the drop had occurred four months ago, without specifying which weapons, saying only that "certain items arrived sporadically but the munitions at large remained behind."

The spat highlights how high tensions have surged between Israel and Washington over the war in Gaza, particularly surrounding the Israeli military's conduct in the beleaguered territory and the harm to civilian life there. President Joe Biden has delayed delivering certain heavy bombs since

May over those concerns, but his administration fought back last week against Netanyahu's charges that other shipments had also been affected.

Netanyahu told the Cabinet that he was driven to release a video in English last week after weeks of unsuccessful pleas with American officials to speed up deliveries. He said a resolution appeared close.

"In light of what I have heard over the past day, I hope and believe that this matter will be solved soon," he said, without elaborating.

Netanyahu's video last week sparked an uproar among critics in Israel and was met with denial and confusion from White House officials. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the U.S. was "perplexed" by Netanyahu's claims. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said, "We generally do not

know what he's talking about."

His remarks came hours after Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant traveled to Washington for meetings with senior officials. A statement from Gallant's office said he would discuss "maintaining Israel's qualitative edge in the region" but made no mention of the weapons issue.

The war in Gaza, which was sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel, has tested the U.S.-Israel relationship like never before. While the U.S. has staunchly supported Israel's aims of freeing hostages taken into Gaza and defeating Hamas, it has grown increasingly concerned over the rising Palestinian death toll and the humanitarian crisis created by the war.

Biden has felt pressure from progressive Democrats to take a tougher line against Israel, and he has sharpened

his warnings to Netanyahu over military tactics in the Gaza Strip. But after threatening to impose a more sweeping ban on arms transfers over an assault on Rafah, the administration has avoided any suggestion that Israel's expanding push into the southern Gaza city has crossed a red line.

During an election year, Biden is also facing critics on the right who say he has moderated his support for an essential Mideast ally.

For Netanyahu, the growing daylight with the U.S. also poses political risks and opportunities. His critics see the public spats as the result of a leader prepared to wreck important alliances and tarnish Israel's image in the world for political gain.

But the rift grants the long-serving leader a chance to show his base that he isn't beholden to the U.S. and that he is putting Israel's interests first.

Russia could reduce decision time for use of nuclear weapons

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia, the world's biggest nuclear power, could reduce the decision-making time stipulated in official policy for the use of nuclear weapons if Moscow believes that threats are increasing, parliament's defence committee chairman said.

The war in Ukraine has triggered the biggest confrontation between Russia and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, with President Vladimir Putin last month saying that Russia might change its official nuclear doctrine setting out the conditions

under which such weapons could be used.

On Sunday Andrei Kartapolov, the head of the Russian lower house of parliament's defence committee, was quoted by state news agency RIA as saying that if threats increased then the decision-making time for using such weapons could be changed.

"If we see that the challenges and threats increase, it means that we can correct something in (the doctrine) regarding the timing of the use of nuclear weapons and the decision to make this use," RIA quoted Kartapolov as say-

ing.

Kartapolov, who once commanded Russian forces in Syria and now serves as a lawmaker from the ruling United Russia party, added that it was too early to speak about specific changes to the nuclear doctrine.

Russia's 2020 nuclear doctrine sets out when its president would consider using a nuclear weapon: broadly as a response to an attack using nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction or conventional weapons "when the very existence of the state is put under threat".

Russia and the United States are by far the world's biggest nuclear powers, holding about 88% of the world's nuclear weapons, according to the Federation of American Scientists, opens new tab.

Both are modernising their nuclear arsenals while China is rapidly boosting its nuclear arsenal.

Putin said this month that Russia had no need to use nuclear weapons to secure victory in Ukraine, the Kremlin's strongest signal to date that Europe's deadliest conflict since World War Two will not escalate into nuclear war.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding law & order and security projects.

Zartaj made parliamentary leader of SIC

ISLAMABAD (INP): Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Zartaj Gul has been appointed as Parliamentary Leader of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) in the National Assembly (NA).

An official notification issued by the NA Secretariat on Sunday confirmed her appointment.

Earlier on June 21, the SIC had submitted the nomination papers of Zartaj Gul to the Speaker NA.

CM calls for joint efforts to empower widows

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that the government and civil society have to work together to empower widows.

In her message on International Widows Day, the CM said it is difficult to raise children without the shadow of a father. It is a day to understand difficulties of women who are raising their children alone after the death of their husbands.

The CM said the discriminatory social attitude towards widows is unfortunate, adding that Islam for the first time gave social status and respect to widows.

"I pay tribute to the widows who are raising their children by working hard."

"Thanks Allah Almighty, For the first time in Punjab, widows and destitute women got the blessing of Hajj," she said.



PHILADELPHIA: Former US President Donald Trump arriving to address his voters.

Trump courts Black voters in Philadelphia asks Christians to back him one last time

PHILADELPHIA (Reuters): Donald Trump made two speeches, urging Christian supporters to go to the polls for him one last time and courting Black voters in Philadelphia by promising to fix a city "ravaged by bloodshed" even as data shows a decline in violent crime.

If elected in November, the Republican presidential candidate told a rally of several thousand at Philadelphia's Temple University, he would give police "immunity" to do their jobs and "surge" federal resources to cities battling violence.

Trump dismissed as "fake" FBI statistics that showed a continued drop in levels of violent crime and murder across the country in the first three months of 2024, and accused Democratic President Joe Biden of lying about the data.

"Under crooked Joe Biden the City of Brotherly Love is being ravaged by bloodshed and crime," Trump said in an arena in a historically Black neighborhood, addressing an audience more diverse than a typical rally, but still largely white.

"Under the Trump administration we are going to bring law and order and safety back to our streets."

The promise to fight crime was part of a larger pitch to Black and Hispanic people, who form more than half the city's population.

The Trump campaign has been encouraged by some opinion polls showing he may be gaining ground with these voters this election cycle.

As he often does, Trump portrayed migrants in the country illegally as dangerous and burdensome. He claimed, without citing evidence, that they were taking jobs from Black and Hispanic workers. Joe Biden's open border has also been a disaster for our great African-American and Hispanic-American populations," Trump said.

Trump has little chance of winning Philadelphia, which Biden won easily in 2020. But he hopes to narrow the margin in the region, key to the tally in Pennsylvania, a hotly contested state because it can swing either to Republicans or Democrats.

Trump, who has falsely claimed that systematic cheating cost him Pennsylvania in 2020, told the crowd, "Philadelphia was one of the most egregious places anywhere" for voter fraud. "We are not going to let it happen again."

State lawmaker Malcolm Kenyatta, a Democrat, said Black voters remember Trump's history promoting the bigoted conspiracy theory that questioned whether Barack Obama, the first African American president, was born in the United States, and policies he pursued that hurt the Black

working class.

"Donald Trump is in a Black place, but Donald Trump does not give a damn about Black people," Kenyatta said at a briefing at a Biden campaign office in Philadelphia before the rally.

CHRISTIAN VOTES

Trump and Biden will face off in the first presidential debate of the 2024 race in Atlanta on Thursday.

During a pre-rally stop at a cheesesteak shop in Philadelphia, Trump told supporters he knew whom he planned to choose as his running mate and that person was likely to be at the debate, a video posted to social media by a campaign spokesperson showed.

At an earlier event on Saturday in Washington organized by the Faith and Freedom Coalition, a conservative Christian group, the former president urged churchgoers to go to the polls for him one last time in November.

"Christians go to church, but they don't vote that much. You know the power you have if you would vote," Trump said. "You gotta get out and vote. Just this time. In four years you don't have to vote, OK? In four years don't vote, I don't care." Trump briefly mentioned the politically sensitive issue of abortion, a topic important to the group, reiterating his position that curbs on the procedure should be decided by voters on a state-by-state basis.