

ECP's decision suspended
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has suspended the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding changing the election tribunal. Hearing the case on Monday, Chief Justice Aamer Farooq issued a contempt of court notice to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Member National Assembly (MNA) Anjum Aqeel Khan.



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ISLAMABAD: Chairman Gates Foundation, Mr. Bill Gates called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

KP CM demands return of 'stolen mandate'

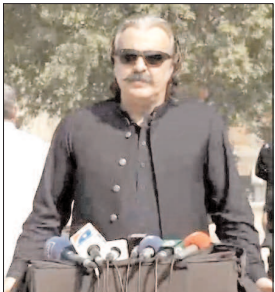
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur stated his willingness to negotiate, stressing that the primary issue to address first is the 'stolen mandate' and Form 45.

The CM also noted that they cannot escape accountability by declaring former commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Chhatta a crazy man. Gandapur mentioned that a policy discussion had taken place with the PTI founder, during an Apex Committee meeting, focusing on law and order and ending terrorism. The name 'Azam Pakistan' was mentioned in the meeting.

He clarified that the term 'operation' was not mentioned before nor after and highlighted that terrorism decreased during the PTI founder's government. He said that their government improved the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and their policy was to gain the public's confidence before combating terrorism, and consulting provinces and parliament before making decisions. Gandapur also blamed Bilawal Bhutto for traveling globally without visiting Afghanistan.

He reiterated the eagerness to play a role in formulating a dialogue policy with Afghanistan, to end terrorism in Pakistan, and expressed willingness to go to any extent for this cause. He highlighted that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as a producer of electricity, has consti-



tutional rights that are being neglected. Despite the government's claims of 12-hour load shedding, it extended to 16 hours, which he found inappropriate given the people's misery.

Gandapur demanded of the federal government the payment of Rs510 billion for electricity and stressed the need to fight for constitutional rights. He claimed the recovery of Rs1 billion in a month. Lastly, he pointed out that constitutionally, the governor has no role in provincial politics, yet the governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa accused him of numerous things. Gandapur expressed his patience and underlined that the grievances of his people should not be ignored.

UNHCR delegation calls on KP CM: A delegation led by the representative of United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) for Pakistan Ms. Philippa Cadler called on the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur here in Islamabad and discussed with him matters related to refugees living in the province. The dignitaries

on this occasion, agreed to further strengthen the partnership for providing improved facilities to the refugees living in the province and to resolve their issues on sustainable basis.

The Chief Minister while talking to the delegates has said that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been hosting the Afghan brethren for several decades in the province, adding that during the repatriation process of illegal immigrants, over 3 lac refugees have returned voluntarily to their homeland. The provincial government as per traditions of the land, had extended all possible facilities to the immigrants going back to their homeland voluntarily, he said and added that the humanitarian aspect of the matter is fully taken care of; not a single complaint was received during this entire process.

He made it clear that the repatriation of undocumented immigrants to their homelands was a decision of the government of Pakistan, which would be implemented, however immigrants with the valid documents would have no issue to stay here. He also underlined the need for strengthening partnership between the provincial government and UNHCR for facilitating the immigrants living in the province in a more efficient manner and said that the provincial government was committed to extend all out support to UNHCR in this regard.

Law ministry notifies elevation of 3 judges to SC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Law and Justice on Monday notified the appointments of three high court judges to the Supreme Court following the approval of President Asif Ali Zardari.

The judges who have been elevated to the top court include Lahore High Court (LHC) Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan, LHC Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan and Sindh High Court (SHC) Chief Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi. The new appointments were approved by the president under Article 177.

After Lahore High Court's Chief Justice Shahzad's elevation, Justice Shujaat Ali Khan was appointed as acting LHC CJ by President Zardari under Article 196, according to a notification issued by the law ministry. Justice Shujaat will perform duties as acting LHC CJ until the appointment to the top post, it further stated. The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) had recommended the elevation of chief justices of the LHC and the SHC to the apex court, besides recommending the elevation of the LHC judge to the apex court earlier this month.

The decision was taken by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa, chairman of the commission, in the SC chaired a meeting of the JCP, a constitutional forum for the judges' appointment in the superior courts. It was learnt by media that after detailed deliberations, the commission by a 5-4 majority approved the elevation of Justice Shahzad. The JCP also approved elevation of Justice Shahid.

Of nine members of the commission, four JCP members, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi and Justice (ret'd) Manzoor Ahmed Malik, opposed the elevation of the LHC chief justice to the Supreme Court, while CJP Isa, Justice Amin-ud-Din, Azam Tarar, AG Mansoor Usman Awan and PBC representative Akhtar Hussain voted in favour of Justice Shahzad's elevation. The JCP was constituted under the 18th Constitutional Amendment. As the commission recommended appointment of the LHC and SHC judges as judges of the Supreme Court, their names would now be referred to the Parliamentary Committee on Judges Appointment, which has the authority to approve or disapprove it.

unity among political parties, saying they should put aside their differences and work together for the country's survival. The presser came after a meeting of the Central Apex Committee of National Action Plan, which was chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

"The prime minister approved a reinvigorated and re-energised nati-onal counterterrorism campaign thro-ugh the launching of Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, with the consensus of all stakeholders including the provinces, Gilgit-Balistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, symbolising the national resolve to eradicate extremism and terrorism from the country," the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement issued after the meeting.

JUI-F chief opposes 'Azm-e-Istehkam' operation

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman strongly opposing the newly announced operation Azm-e-Istehkam has said that it will further destabilize and weaken the country.

While addressing a press conference here on Monday, the chief of his own faction said that it was their operation "Adm-e-Istehkam" aimed to weaken the basis of Pakistan further. Stressing on equality of all citizens under the same national identity, Maulana Fazlur Rehman asserted, "Our history is about fighting against slavery. Did we achieve Pakistan to be the slaves?"

He regretted that the state had almost no writ in the country, adding that the

armed militant groups were carrying out operations in areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The JUI-F chief also castigated the 'one-sided decision' for launching another operation, asserting: "What is the Apex Committee? Democracy and Parliament have lost their case".

Emphasizing the need for a new approach to ensure Pakistan's stability and security, he also expressed concern over the growing divide between the people and the state and said that the government was treating its citizens as enemies.

Fazl announced that his party will launch a movement for the protection of Pakistan, which he said is facing internal and external threats. He also called for

Nawaz to 'play active role to strengthen political system'

F.P. Report

LAHORE: After getting back Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) presidency last month, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has decided to play "an active role in national politics", sources told media on Monday.

The development came after the PML-N president held a meeting with senior party leaders — including Rana Sanaullah and Khawaja Saad Rafique — which lasted for nearly

two hours, the sources said, adding that Nawaz decided to become more active in the political affairs of the country. The politico would hold more meetings with the party's leaders and workers besides playing an active role in strengthening the prevailing political system, they added.

Nawaz had lost the prime minister's office in 2017 and the presidency of his party in 2018, as a result of the Supreme Court's ruling in the assets beyond means case. After the ouster of Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-

e-Insaf (PTI) government in April 2022, the Nawaz-led party came to power.

The parties under the flag of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) got a chance to transfer the power to the then-largest opposition party — PML-N — and elected Shehbaz Sharif as the new premier for the remaining 1.5 years of the rule. The Nawaz-led party was reelected to power after forming a coalition with the PPP and the MQM-P in the Centre after the general elections this year.

The Frontier Post

Pak team reaches Jammu

JAMMU (PPI): Pakistan delegation arrived in Jammu to review the Hydro-projects in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir that include Kishenganga and Ratle Power Project. According to a Kashmir Media Service report, the Pakistani team during its stay will inspect the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric power projects in the Chenab valley under Indus Waters Treaty.

Shehbaz, Gates for continuing efforts to eradicate polio

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chair of Gates Foundation Bill Gates on Monday agreed to continue working together to not only eradicate polio, but also to strengthen health systems across the provinces, and to ensure prosperity for all Pakistanis, especially women and girls.

During a meeting at the PM House, the prime minister reiterated the firm commitment to eradicating polio as it remained the highest priority for the government and emphasized that all resources of the state would be employed to provide security to the polio workers.

"I will personally monitor national efforts until the crippling disease is wiped-out from our soil," Bill Gates visited Pakistan at the invitation of the prime minister which he extended during his meeting with him in Riyadh on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

Welcoming Mr Gates on his visit to Pakistan, the prime minister updated him about the government's efforts to achieve economic stability and key advances in digital financial services, increased health coverage, climate change adaptation and efforts to eradicate polio. The prime minister deeply appreciated the Gates Foundation's valuable support for the government's initiatives to digitize the economy.

A digitized eco-system of the entire government structure would result in enhanced revenues that would help improve governance and the government would be able to spend more on public welfare schemes, he added. PM Shehbaz underlined that both the Government of Pakistan and Gates Foundation shared many goals including closing the gender gap, increasing

health coverage, improving food security, climate change adaptation, and financial inclusion. He updated Bill Gates about key metrics of the progress made and the challenges faced in these areas.

Thanking the Gates Foundation for being the largest donor for the polio eradication programme, the prime minister outlined a robust and focused strategy to counter threats of increased wild poliovirus infections and the actions needed to overcome the challenge to completely wipe out the disease in Pakistan. Bill Gates thanked the prime minister for his continued dedication and personal interest in eradicating wild polio from the country.

He also expressed his confidence that with a sustained vaccination campaign and firm commitment of the government, polio eradication drive would get back on track to end polio following the recent surge in environmental detections. Bill Gates also underscored how Pakistan's deployment of data science tools and digital technology were important resources to continue to improve the lives of Pakistanis across the country.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Gates Foundation Chairman Bill Gates visited the National Emergencies Operations Centre (NEOC).

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Chairman Lt General Inam Haider Malik gave a comprehensive briefing about the NDMA and NEOC encompassing the pre and post-disaster mechanisms that are in place to predict and cope any disaster including both natural catastrophes and human-induced incidents.

The prime minister and the Gates Foundation chairman visited different sections of the NEOC whereby

experts briefed them about the operations of the organization. Bill Gates appreciated the state of the art facilities at NEOC and underscored the importance of predictions of disasters to mitigate the losses and to expedite reconstruction and rehabilitation in the aftermath.

He also appreciated the efforts of the current government in prioritizing the important area as climate change was adversely affecting the vulnerable countries as happened in Pakistan during the floods of 2022. Afterwards, an interactive session including the prime minister, Gates Foundation chairman, Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Cultural Heritage Attaullah Tarar, Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khursheed Alam, entrepreneurs, climate change activists and experts was held.

The session discussed innovative steps and tailor made solutions for Pakistan regarding health, nutrition, gender balance, preventive diseases, climate change, disaster management, climate resilient agriculture and other multiple areas. The meeting concluded with a firm resolve of cooperation between the Gates Foundation and Pakistan to come up with solutions to the issues with mutual cooperation. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif thanked Bill Gates for his resolve to help Pakistan in multiple areas that would benefit the common man. Moreover, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif reiterated that the Federal Government along with all the provincial governments resolved to eliminate the menace of polio forever and said they were fully committed to control its spread through collective efforts.

(Continued on Back Page)

CJP Isa calls PTI merger with SIC a 'suicide'

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa referred to the PTI's merger with the SIC a political "suicide" during the hearing on Monday of a petition filed by the Sunni Ittehad Council against the denial of reserved seats for women and minorities in the national and provincial assemblies.

Following the Feb 8 general elections, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, which had been stripped of its electoral symbol 'bat', had directed the independent candidates who won election with its backing to join the Sunni Ittehad Council under a merger.

A full-court bench, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, is conducting the proceedings. Other judges on the bench are Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Ayesha A. Malik, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Syed Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan. The proceedings are being live-streamed.

At the outset of the proceedings, Advocate Faisal Siddiqui representing the SIC, advanced his arguments. The lawyer referred to various judgements of the apex court, including those handed down by Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Jamal Mandokhail and Justice Mansoor Ali Shah.

The counsel contended that independent candidates could join any political party, saying the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had ignored the law related to reserved seats. Referring to Articles 51 and 106, Siddiqui also delved into what he called some basic aspects of the constitutional provisions. At this juncture, Justice Mandokhail questioned how a political party which did not participate in the elections could be given reserved seats.

Justice Minallah questioned if the PTI existed as a

SC moved for early hearing of civilians' military trial cases

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An application was filed in the Supreme Court for an early hearing of the case concerning the trial of civilians in the military courts. It should be noted that the Supreme Court had directed that the case be fixed in the third week of January 2024. Senior advocate Latif Khan Khosa filed the petition, requesting the top court that the case be scheduled for the week beginning July 1. The application states that despite the court's order, the case has not been scheduled for a hearing. The Supreme Court's proceedings have halted the resolution of cases involving those detained in military courts. The case has not been heard since December 13.

political party [following the revocation of its electoral symbol and nullification of its intra-party polls], why did they [the PTI-backed candidates] join another party. At this point, Chief Justice Isa wondered why the PTI "committed suicide" by merging with another political group.

Justice Muneeb observed that the political parties were the basis of parliamentary democracy, adding that the Election Commission declared the PTI candidates independent candidates due to the Supreme Court decision which, according to him, was a very dangerous interpretation. Justice Aminuddin Khan inquired why the nominations filed under the banner of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-Nazriati, a splinter group of the PTI, were withdrawn after submission.

During the course of hearing, a dialogue started between SIC lawyer Faisal Siddiqui and CJP Isa. The chief justice asked the lawyer that the court would not hear any excuse painting the Election Commission as an abuser of the PTI. "We are here to listen to what is in accordance with the constitution and law. You are the lawyer of the Sunni Ittehad Council, and not of the PTI. Your arguments in favour of the PTI come in conflict of interest," added Justice Isa.

The CJP further remarked that the election symbol had not been withdrawn from the SIC. "You are only representing the Sunni Ittehad Council. We are not going into what the Election Commission did," he said, addressing the lawyer. Justice Mandokhail

inquired that if the Election Commission declared the [PTI] candidates independently, why an appeal was not filed. At this, lawyer Siddiqui said that this question would be answered by Advocate Salman Akram Raja. At this point, CJP Isa asked the SIC lawyer when the PTI founder was serving as the prime minister, why he did not hold intra-party elections. "Do not point fingers at anyone."

Following the elections, the ECP ruled that the SIC was not entitled to claim quota for reserved seats "due to having non-curable legal defects and violation of a mandatory provision of submission of party list for reserved seats". In March, the ECP accepted applications of the opposing parties and decided that the seats in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies would not remain vacant and would be allocated by a proportional representation process on the basis of seats won by political parties.

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, during the proceedings, remarked that the mandate given by the people should be properly represented in parliament. The court sent the matter of reserved seats to the Judges Committee to decide whether the case would be heard by the same bench or a larger bench would be constituted. The court also ordered the ECP to suspend victory notifications of 77 lawmakers [on reserved seats], causing the ruling coalition to lose its two-thirds majority in the National Assembly. In late May, a full court was constituted to hear the case.

PTI leaders held during rally gets bail

F.P. Report

KARACHI: PTI Sindh chapter said on Monday that the party leaders and workers arrested during a rally in Korangi area of Karachi were presented in the City Court before the Civil Judge and Judicial Magistrate, Karachi East, where they were granted bail.

According to a PTI Sindh statement on Monday, PTI Sindh Additional General Secretary Rizwan Niazi, Karachi General Secretary Arslan Khalid, Wali Mugheri, Sultan Rehmat, Abdul Qadeer, and nine other workers were arrested last night during the rally in Korangi, who have obtained the bail. An FIR was registered against them at the Korangi Police Station, including charges of a police encounter and other offenses.

Prominent PTI figures, including PTI Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh, Karachi President Raja Azhar, former MNA Faheem Khan, PTI leader Jamal Siddiqui, Advocate Zahoore Mehsud, Advocate Nazir Mehsud, Advocate Muhammad Ashraf Samoo, Advocate Shujaat Ali Khan, and others attended the court proceedings.

The case was pursued by PTI Sindh leaders Advocate Muhammad Ashraf Samoo, Advocate Abdul Jaleel Marwat, Advocate Khan Zaman Khattak, Advocate Shujaat Khan, and other ILF lawyers. The court granted bail to the PTI leaders due to insufficient evidence presented by the police, setting a bond of ten thousand rupees each.

In a media briefing at the court, PTI Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh asserted that justice always prevails. He condemned the false FIRs and arrests made by the police, expressing hope for justice from the courts. He emphasized that the bail grant was a victory for justice. Sheikh highlighted that PTI Chairman Imran Khan is imprisoned for the nation's cause, and the entire nation desires his release and leadership. Sheikh criticized the current government, accusing it of stealing PTI's mandate in the 2024 general elections through conspiracies and seating defeated candidates in the assemblies.

PHC accepts govt appeal against acquittal in financial embezzlement

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A single member bench of Peshawar High Court comprised Justice Sahibzada Asadullah accepted appeal against acquittal of former accountant at Islamia University Peshawar named Tariq Khan, who was accused of embezzling Rs 4.4 million from the university's funds and issued notice, on Monday.

During the hearing, Additional Advocate General Nauman ul Haq Kakakhel argued against former accountant Tariq Khan's acquittal. He stated that Tariq Khan had admitted to the crime during the inquiry and had

also returned Rs 10 lakh to the university.

Additional Advocate General argued that the Anti-Corruption Court's decision is incorrect and against the law. He added that the prosecution had sufficient evidence to prove the charges.

PHC told that Tariq Khan, as the accountant of Islamia University Peshawar responsible for collecting fees from students. However, he had failed to deposit Rs 44 lakh into the university's account and instead had misappropriated the funds for personal gain.

PHC accepted provincial government's appeal against Tariq Khan's acquittal and the case has

to be heard on regular basis.

Additional Advocate General Nauman Kakakhel argued PHC to set aside the acquittal Tariq Khan and added that the case is a clear example of corruption and that the accused has already admitted to the crime.

PHC rejects alleged murderer bail plea

A single member bench of Peshawar High Court comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah rejected bail plea of a suspect, Mansif Ali allegedly involved in killing of two policemen in a land dispute in Mardan, on Monday.

The defense lawyer argued that the suspect

was not directly involved in the shooting and was himself injured in the crossfire, while the prosecution lawyer argued that the suspect's pistol was used in the firing and that he was previously nominated in a similar case.

The prosecution had earlier filed a case against the suspect and his accomplice, Jamshed, on April 28, 2024, under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

The suspect's lawyer had argued that the case was a result of a personal enmity and that the suspect was not involved in the shooting, but the court rejected his arguments and upheld the decision of the Anti-Terrorism Court to deny bail to the suspect.



PESHAWAR: Chief of Political and Economic Section at US Consulate Peshawar, Dustin Degrande called on Special Assistant to KP Chief Minister on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Khan Tordher.

APTA demands promotion as per KP govt approval

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The provincial government should issue the notification for up-gradation of all cadres of teachers including primary teachers from 1st July 2023 following the rule of law and ensure the rule of law.

This was demanded by All Primary Teacher Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Aziz Ullah Khan and said that we are working with patience and persistence.

On January 17, 2023, the provincial government, headed by the Chief Minister, unanimously approved AAP gradation for all cadre teachers, including primary teachers.

Work has been done on all the projects approved for the departments on the cabinet agenda of 17 January 2023, but on the presentation of the Department of Education, the approved grading is not being implemented. Could not be executed.

APTA President Aziz Ullah has demanded party Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, Central General Secretary Umar Ayub Khan, Former Education Minister Shahram Khan Turkai, senior party leader Atif Khan, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif and Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur.

That the supremacy of the rule of law is being trampled underfoot in Khudara Khabir Pakhtunkhwa and the implementation of the law has not been going on for the last 2 years.

In this regard, you should play your role so that all cadre teachers including primary teachers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can get their legitimate and legal rights.

In this regard, we have not left any MPA or minister of the present provincial government to whom we have not gone, but we are not getting justice.

US Consulate official calls on CM's aide

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief of Political and Economic Section at US Consulate Peshawar, Dustin Degrande called on Special Assistant to KP Chief Minister on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Khan Tordher here on Monday.

Beside matters of bilateral interest, other matters especially trade relations, cooperation in social sectors and possibilities of further expansion in them also come under discussion during the meeting.

Besides, Secretary Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Aamir Aafaq, Managing Director (MD) Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) Habibullah Arif, Additional Secretary Shama Niamat, Director TEVTA Munir Gul, Director Business Facilitation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (BoIT) Iqbal Sarwar and authorities of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company

(KP-EZDMC) and Department of Industries also attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the special assistant spoke in detail regarding foreign investment and especially the possibilities of assistance while keeping in view the peculiar situation and its requirements in the province.

The special assistant said that the development of the merged districts required foreign assistance while they are also looking for foreign cooperation in the provision of energy to the industrial sector of the province.

He said that due to its geographical location, the province has a unique status in industrialization, which requires more focus on the progress and development of the region.

Abdul Karim Khan said that despite all these confronting challenges, the provincial government is making all-out efforts for the sustainable development and in this connection special concentration is being given to the sector of trade and industry.

He said that they welcome foreign investment and are hopeful of US investment and sustainable grants for various sectors.

On this occasion, the US representative was also given briefing regarding possibilities of cooperation in various sectors including technical education and vocational training, investment and financial assistance.

Speaking on the occasion, the representative of the United States said that Pakistan and the United States have old and long bilateral relations and assistance is being provided in energy, potable water, technical and vocational training and other sectors.

He said that there is vast potential of investment in the IT, mineral and hydel sectors of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in future will continue mutual contacts regarding investment in different projects and possibilities of mutual cooperation while the provincial government will also be kept in loop regarding US assistance in different projects.

Governor assures support for Hamza foundation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi visited Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Hospital while the foundation chairman and founder Ijaz Ali Khan briefed him, on Monday.

As many as 1499 thalassemia, hemophilia, and cancer patients are registered with Hamza Foundation and providing free medical facilities, including blood transfusions, medicine, and food. The foundation has been operating since 2006 and has been facing financial difficulties due to the lack of government funding.

The governor praised the foundation's efforts and promised to provide support and funding to the organization. He also announced that he would hold a ceremony at the Governor's House to honor thalassemia



patients and would contact the provincial government to provide a grant-in-aid to the foundation.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also emphasized the importance of blood donation and encour-

aged people to come forward to donate blood to save the lives of thalassemia patients. He also met with thalassemia patients and distributed shields among the staff and guests.

The governor's visit was aimed at raising awareness about thalassemia and its treatment, and to support the efforts of the Hamza Foundation in providing medical facilities to thalassemia patients.

KP govt to encourage transporters for tourism: Zahid

Invites private sector to invest in the tourism industry

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Zahid Chanzeb, Adviser to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture, has invited the private sector to over-whelmly take part in the promotion of tourism sector.

He said that it is not only a profitable business but also a creative and healthy industry at national and international level wherein interest of tourists constantly increasing. He assured that the provincial government will encourage the transporters in every way like other sectors in this regard and their investment will be provided with all possible protection.

He announced this while talking to prominent transporter and chief executive of Niazi Express, Farooq Azam Niazi, who called on him at his office, Civil Secretariat, Peshawar, accompanied by some transporters of good repute, and offered their services for promotion of Tourism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

On this occasion, the Advisor Tourism also gave licenses to transporters for quality and cheap group tours of different hill stations and serene places of the province. Director General KP Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) Barkatullah Marwat was also present on the occasion.

Zahid Chanzeb said that in view of its limited financial resources, the government alone cannot develop

any sector at the official level unless the private sector participates in it. He urged the transporters to prepare the programs of tourist groups to Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and border areas by completing the necessary formalities and also advertise them through the mass media so that maximum tourists visit these healthy places, enjoy the tours, and the soft image of the natural and touristic

places and the people of this region to be seen at the global level.

The CM's Aide on Tourism hoped that the transporters would take full advantage of the opportunities and facilities provided by the provincial government to invest in the development of tourism and play a key role in the development of this industry by establishing their good reputation in the tourism sector.



Operation Azm-e-Istehkam: A comprehensive strategy against terrorism

Syed Abdullah Haroon



IN a time when extremism and terrorism are ever-present and threaten the peace of the country, Pakistan has launched Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, an unprecedented undertaking with the goal of completely eradicating these problems. This complex operation aims to improve regional cooperation in the political and diplomatic spheres while simultaneously coordinating efforts on

various fronts to overcome both the issues that are now being faced and the basic reasons that are causing them.

Additionally, the redoubted efforts of the armed forces are bolstered by Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, which has the full backing of all relevant law enforcement authorities. Through collaborative efforts, we have the ability to strengthen the rule of law and effectively respond to any danger to the authority of the state. On the other hand, the success of this endeavour is contingent upon the level of engagement that is included from both the military and the local population who are most likely to suffer the consequences of the operation.

The formulation of new legislation is under underway with the purpose of addressing existing legal weaknesses and imposing exemplary punish-

ments on those who commit acts of terrorism. This is being done in order to guarantee that incidents involving terrorism are appropriately punished. Some examples of novel amendments to the statute include the implementation of more stringent punishments for those who are engaged in terrorist activities and the acceleration of the trial procedure. The implementation of these measures is very necessary in order to safeguard against acts of terrorism and ensure that justice is carried out in a timely manner.

These security measures are complemented by socio-economic efforts that make an effort to alleviate the actual problems that people are experiencing. A culture that discourages extremism and supports community resilience is something that the government hopes to create via the enhancement of

educational programmes and the provision of job possibilities. These deeds are absolutely necessary in order to maintain peace and stability over the long run.

The need of regional collaboration is also brought to light by Operation Azm-e-Istehkam during this conflict. Pakistan is working towards the establishment of a unified front against extremism and terrorism by participating in diplomatic discourse and coordinating its efforts with those of its neighbouring governments. This strategic alignment is very necessary in the current situation, which is characterised by concerns that are typically of a multinational nature. In order for the government and the military to be successful in their mission of Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, it is essential that they take a people-centered approach. The establishment of trust, as

well as the reduction of fear and suspicion among the populace, may be facilitated by engaging with local communities via open and honest communication. In addition, it is of the utmost importance to avoid causing collateral damage and to preserve the lives of civilians by carrying out precise operations that are inspired by reliable information. In order to maintain public support and guarantee that humanitarian needs are met, it will be essential to establish support systems for communities that have been impacted by the operation. These support systems should include temporary shelters, medical help, and psychological support.

Another essential component of a successful company is the implementation of inclusive governance. It is possible that the efficiency of the operation might be improved by

ensuring that community representatives and local leaders are included in the decision-making process. In order to develop solutions that are not only efficient but also sensitive to the issues that are being faced by local communities, their thoughts and collaboration will be of the utmost importance. Procedures for monitoring and accountability have to be put into place in order to oversee the acts of law enforcement and military personnel while the operation is being carried out. Consequently, this will help to preserve discipline and guarantee that human rights are maintained, which will ultimately result in the preservation of the firm's integrity as well as the confidence of the communities in which it operates.

Operation Azm-e-Istehkam is a method to fighting terrorism and extremism in Pakistan that is both broad and encompasses a variety of different

aspects. Pakistan is making significant headway towards a more secure and stable future by focusing on both the current dangers and the core roots of the problem. On the other hand, the success of this operation is contingent upon the government's capacity to effectively engage with the communities that are located in the area and to uphold the principles of justice and human rights. Pakistan is in a position to overcome the challenges provided by extremism and terrorism, so ensuring the nation's continued existence and well-being. This may be accomplished by strategic alignment, legislative reforms, and socio-economic measures.

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In brief

Father dies while rescuing daughter F.P. Report

SWABI: A man fell to death while retrieving his 12-year-old daughter from a narrow well in Malakabad village of Kaludher area in Razar tehsil here on Monday. Police said a 12-year-old girl fell into a well of her house and his father, named Lal Zarin in a bid to rescue his daughter also fell into the deep well. Soon after receiving information, a team of Rescue 1122 headed by District Emergency Officer, Owais Babar reached the site and after a brief effort retrieved both the father and daughter from the well. The victims were rushed to a nearby hospital where the doctors pronounced the father as dead while the condition of the girl was stated to be out of danger.

Two killed in Lakki firing F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: At least two persons were killed in two separate incidents of firing in Lakki Marwat district, police informed on Monday. The first incident took place in Noor Lawangkhel area where a man named Munir Khan was shot dead by unknown assailants. In another incident an unknown man was killed by armed men in Sulaiman Khel area. A passerby was also injured in the firing. The two dead bodies and the injured were taken to District Headquarters Hospital Lakki Marwat. Police have starting investigation in both the cases after registering FIRs. At least five people have been killed and two others injured in separate firing incident in Lakki Marwat district during the last three days.

Three dead in Faisalabad firing

FAISALABAD (INP): A firing incident in Bahmani Wala area of Faisalabad has left three people dead. According to police, the deceased have been identified as 45-year-old Siddique, 22-year-old Zubair, and 23-year-old Ghaffran. Police say that the firing was allegedly carried out by a man identified as Atif and his accomplices. The bodies have been shifted to the Rural Health Center by the police. In a separate incident, at least two died including a woman in Jacobabad firing incident. The incident occurred in the jurisdiction of Ghari Khairu police station where a man identified as Lal Bakhsh Buledi opened fire on his niece and one other youth and killed them. The police officials said that the dead bodies have been moved to the nearby hospital and further investigation is underway.

Rare leopard killed

DERA BUGTI (INP): A group of armed villagers in Balochistan's Dera Bugti killed a rare leopard after finding the animal in the vicinity of Sui. As per details, the villagers after spotting the leopard chased it and killed it in its den. After killing the predator, the villagers dragged its body from the den and filmed it. The villagers said they killed the predator because it was attacking their goats. The district administration has so far not taken any action regarding the killing of the endangered species, but people on social media have expressed sorrow over the villagers' act of killing the rare animal. Back in April, a Persian leopard was found at the Nani Mandir, located in Hinglaj, a town in the Lasbela district of Balochistan province. The predator was located by a pilgrim visiting the temple inside the Hingol National Park along the Balochistan coast.



CHARSADDA: QWP leader, Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao addressing a press conference.

Solar system installed at Sialkot Int'l Airport

F.P. Report

SIALKOT: Sialkot International Airport is the first privately-owned public airport in Pakistan, serving as a key hub for domestic and international flights. Committed to providing exceptional services and facilities, the airport continually invests in infrastructure and technology to enhance passenger experience and operational efficiency. Through our sustainability initiatives, we aim to lead the aviation industry towards a greener future.

Sialkot International Airport is proud to announce the successful installation of a 1.8 MW solar power system, a significant milestone in our journey towards achieving self-sustainability and reducing our environmental impact.

In a move that accentuates our commitment to sustainable development and innovative energy solutions, the new solar power system is now operational, providing a substantial portion of the airport's energy requirements. This initiative will not only reduce our reliance on non-renewable energy sources but



also contribute to significant cost savings and a reduction in our carbon footprint. The Capacity of the installed solar system holds 1.8 Megawatts (MW) and is expected to produce approximately 2.4 million kWh annually. With a phenomenal Environmental Impact this will help reduce of approximately 1500 tons of CO2 emissions per year. The Economic Benefits of this will reflect the significant reduction in energy costs, contributing to long-term financial sustainability.

Spokesperson Sialkot International Airport, expressed that this significant step towards energy self-sufficiency and environmental stewardship. This solar power system aligns with our vision of a greener, more sustainable future for the aviation industry. We believe that this project will set a prece-

dent for other airports in the region to follow.

The installation of the solar power system is part of a broader strategy to incorporate renewable energy solutions and enhance energy efficiency across all airport operations. This project reflects Sialkot International Airport's dedication to contributing positively to global efforts in combating climate change and promoting sustainable development.

As the first privately-owned public airport in Pakistan, Sialkot International Airport continues to lead by example in implementing innovative solutions that benefit both the environment and the economy.

This solar power initiative is just one of many steps we are taking to ensure a sustainable future for our community and the aviation industry at large.

PESCO, FIA crackdowns against power theft F.P. Report

PABBI: In a joint operation of Peshawar Electricity Supply Company (PESCO) and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) conducted crackdown against electricity theft in various areas of Pabbi tehsil.

The team led by PESCO SDO Rizwan Khan and FIA Inspector Haseeb Khan recovered direct connections, tampered meters, and bill payments worth millions of rupees. The team also removed illegal connections and installed new meters.

The officials appealed to the public to cooperate with PESCO and pay their bills on time to avoid legal action. They emphasized that electricity theft is a national crime and can lead to grid stations tripping and damage to national assets. PESCO team is available anytime to facilitate the public.

Police blamed for illegal detention F.P. Report

BANNU: A woman belonging to a poor family of Bannu demanded the release of her innocent husband named Muhammad Riaz Khan accused the Bannu police and said that my husband has been detained by the police for the last five days and kept in custody illegally.

I am being presented. They said that my husband is sick and physically weak. If something happens to him, then I will not bury his body, but I will protest by keeping it in front of the police station. My husband is not guilty of any crime and the police is innocent.

She is showing solidarity with us. If my husband has really committed a crime, then he should be registered and presented in the court. Kent is in police custody, he is unwell, if something happens to him, I will file an FIR with the police. My husband is a poor and working man. If there is a crime, why is it not presented in court, why is it not sent to jail? Since the day my husband was arrested, the financial situation has worsened because there is no one to earn in the house. I have small children, now who will give them employment.

More than three lac tourists visited Swat including foreigners

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: More than three lac tourists have visited the tourist spots including foreign tourists from Canada, France, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia and China during Eidul Azha season.

This was claimed by Upper Swat Development Authority spokesperson Saeed-u-Rehman while talking to media personnel and added that during the five days of Eid-ul-Adha, over 300,000 tourists entered Swat in more than 50,000 vehicles from all over the country, including foreign tourists from China, Canada, France, Kyrgyzstan, and Malaysia.

For the convenience of tourists, the Upper Swat Development Authority has established convenience centers at Landake, Malam Jabba, Gabin Jabba, Madian, Bahrain, Kalam, and other places under the direction of Deputy Commissioner Swat and Director General Upper Swat Development Authority Shahzad Mahboob under the supervision of Deputy Director Karamat ali. At these centers, tourists were welcomed by the Swat Police, Tourism Police, and the district administration.

He said that the tourists visited various recreational spots, including Fizagat Park, Murghazar Valley, Malam Jabba, Myandam, Gabin Jabba, and Kalam, to enjoy their Eid holidays. He added that the large influx of tourists in Swat reflects the hospitality of the people here, and the Upper Swat Development Authority, District Administration, and Swat Police are doing their best to guide and provide facilities.

All possible steps are being taken to ensure their comfort. The arrival of a large number of tourists proves that the Swat Valley is a peaceful destination for domestic and foreign tourists. He also mentioned that the highest number of tourists was recorded in Malam Jabba.

PML-N govt revolutionary steps for public uplift

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Former Federal Minister and Central Leader Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Saira Afzal Tarrar 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 PML-N 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 PML-N and citizens attended the function.

Former Federal Minister 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.

PML-N leader 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.

DC reviews anti-dengue campaign: 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.

NBP pensioners demands restoration of pension

Anees Takar

MARDAN: National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) Pensioners and Action Committee Pakistan along with the central secretary-general Zafar Sadiq, Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Hukam Siddique, Secretary-General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Manzoor Elahi Laghari, Chief Organizer Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Naeemullah Khan, and Media In-charge Anjum Khan.

The statement urged the

National Bank of Pakistan's administration and board of directors to immediately implement the Supreme Court's decision regarding pension restoration.

The pensioners praised the federal government's recent budget announcement, which increased salaries by 22% for federal employees but expressed disappointment that the bank's administration had not taken similar measures for its retired employees. They argued that the bank, being a national institution

and a valuable asset, should prioritize its loyal employees who had dedicated their lives to its success.

The statement warned that if the bank's administration failed to comply with the Supreme Court's order, legal action would be taken and protests would be held. The pensioners demanded the immediate restoration of their pensions which had been denied since 2010, despite their tireless efforts and contributions to the bank's success.

Two die, three injured in van-car collision

LAYYAH (INP): Two including mother and son died while three others injured in collision between passenger van and a car here on Monday, rescue sources said. An over speeding passenger van hit a

car carrying a family in tehsil Chaubara of district Layyah. As a result of accident, mother and a son died on the spot while three others including father and son were injured. Police and rescue teams

reached the scene of accident, shifted the bodies and injured to hospital. The police impounded both vehicles and after registering a case into the incident started investigations.

Political parties committed for sustainable peace in tribal belt

F.P. Report

WANA: In a significant step towards promoting peace and stability in the region, political parties in Wana, held a crucial meeting today to discuss the pressing issues of peace and security. The meeting was attended by all political parties, who put aside their differences to unite for the common cause of ensuring peace and security in the region.

The meeting was chaired by the leaders of the political parties and workers, who engaged in a detailed discussion on the responsibility of the state to maintain peace and security. The participants unanimously agreed that the state institutions must fulfill their constitutional and legal responsibilities to ensure peace and security in the region.

The meeting also decided to form a coordination committee, comprising representatives from all political parties, to engage in dialogue with various stakeholders, including local elders, religious leaders, and civil society

organizations. The committee will work towards developing a comprehensive plan to address the root causes of insecurity and ensure lasting peace in Lower Waziristan.

The participants emphasized the need for a collective effort to address the security challenges facing the region and agreed to work together to create a peaceful environment, free from target killings, terrorism, and other security threats. This important meeting aimed to promote unity and coordination among political parties to address the security challenges facing the region and ensure a peaceful future for the people of Waziristan.

Scouts Commandant visits press club: Acting Commandant South Waziristan Scouts, Saqib Iqbal, accompanied by Colonel Safdar Abbas, visited the District Press Club Wana on the instructions of IG FC South, Major General Haroon Hameed.

The Commandant conducted a thorough inspection of the press club's facilities, including

various rooms and halls. This visit followed a meeting between IG FC South Major General Haroon Hameed and journalists at the Scouts camp Wana before Eid, where he had pledged to repair, renovate, and decorate the press club.

Today's inspection marks a significant step towards fulfilling this promise. The members of the District Press Club Wana expressed their gratitude to IG FC South Major General Haroon Hameed and Commandant South Waziristan for their commitment to enhancing the press club's facilities. This gesture demonstrates the military's support for the journalistic community.

TUJ demands arrest of murderers involved in journalist's killing: The Tribal Union of Journalists (TUJ) is outraged and grief-stricken by the brutal murder of journalist Khalil Jibrani, who was senselessly gunned down by unknown individuals in Khyber district. TUJ Central President, Awardin, vehemently condemns this

heinous act, highlighting the alarming trend of tribal journalists being targeted and killed without any accountability.

President Awardin urged tribal journalists to prioritize their safety and take necessary precautions to protect their lives, as their families and children depend on them. He also lambasted the government's inaction in supporting the families of martyred journalists, leaving their orphaned children to suffer without concrete assistance.

The TUJ demanded immediate action from the government to arrest and punish those responsible for Khalil Jibrani's martyrdom and provide tangible support to the families of victims. The union vowed to continue advocating for the rights of tribal journalists and seeking justice for those who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

JI protests against inflation, load shedding: Jamiat Islami staged a protest rally in Wana bazaar, vocally opposing the excessive load shedding, rampant inflation, and anti-people

budget. The event drew a large crowd, including notable figures such as Nadim Khan, Amir Jamiat Islami Lower South Waziristan, Asadullah Baheer, District Qazi, Naveed, Nazim Islami Jamiat Talaba, Senior Leader Jamiat Islami Ijaz Wazir, and Omar Wazir.

The protesters passionately chanted slogans, rejecting the government's policies and demanding immediate relief from the prolonged power outages and soaring price hikes. Their voices echoed through the Wana bazaar, urging the authorities to address the grievances of the people.

For far too long, the residents of Wana bazaar have suffered under the weight of load shedding, with power outages lasting up to 22 hours a day. This has not only disrupted daily life but also affected businesses and industries, leading to significant economic losses. The protesters demanded a reliable and consistent power supply, free from the shackles of load shedding.

The scourge of inflation has

also reached alarming levels, with prices of essential commodities skyrocketing beyond the reach of common people. The protesters condemned the government's inability to control inflation, demanding measures to reduce prices and provide relief to the masses. Furthermore, the anti-people budget, which favors the elite at the expense of the common man, was a major point of contention. The protesters demanded a budget that prioritizes the needs of the people, providing relief and support to those who need it most.

The protest rally was a clear message to the government that the people will no longer tolerate such anti-people policies. The protesters vowed to continue their struggle until their demands are met, and their voices are heard. The rally ended with a resolve to intensify the protest movement if their demands are not met, sending a strong message to the government to take their grievances seriously.



Tuesday, June 25, 2024



GAZA: Palestinian women make their way past destroyed buildings in Khan Younis.

Milei meets German officials in controversial lap around Europe

MEXICO CITY (AP): Argentina's self-described anarcho-capitalist President Javier Milei met with German officials in Berlin, part of his ongoing lap of Europe which has been greeted with both celebration and outrage.

In a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, the two leaders discussed Argentina's radical economic shifts and "the importance of having critical minerals" - likely Argentina's vast stores of lithium used in the global energy transition - wrote Manuel Adroni, a spokesperson for Milei, in a statement.

"The meeting between President Milei and Chancellor Scholz and their teams showed two leaders with a convergent vision, with the same principles and values in international politics and focused on solving key geopolitical challenges for the West," Adroni wrote. The German government said in a short statement the leaders spoke about the repercussions Milei's drastic economic cuts could have on Argentines and said Scholz reminded Milei of the importance of maintaining "social cohesion" while the leader attempts to control Argentina's sharp inflation.

Also on the agenda was their sustained support for Ukraine and Israel, a trade agreement between the European Union and the countries of the Latin American Mercosur trade

bloc, and concerns about democracy in the upcoming Venezuelan elections, according to Argentina's government. Center-left leader Scholz's politics and style contrast sharply with those of the Argentine president.

Milei, a right-wing figure known for his unfiltered way of speaking, was elected last year on the promise to fix Argentina's troubled economy and to "make Argentina great again." His austerity measures have fueled waves of mass protests in the South American nation, with protesters saying cuts have put the poor even more at risk and have endangered public universities. Milei has also drawn the ire of human rights activists after he called abortion "murder" and lambasted the country's feminist movement as a "cult of a gender ideology." Scholz's spokesperson, Steffen Hebestreit, said it would be a "very short working visit, expressly at the wish of the Argentine president" and that there had been a "clear refusal" by Milei to hold a news conference. A greeting with military honors and a joint news conference that the German government originally announced were later canceled.

The meeting came after Milei accepted an award from the neoliberal Augusto von Hayek Foundation in the German port city of Hamburg for "freeing the population from shackles" and restoring "hope." In a speech

as he accepted the award, Milei declared he was defeating the "socialists" with "the largest fiscal adjustment in history of Argentina." He was met with chants of "freedom!" in Spanish. Meanwhile there were small protests outside both the awards ceremony and the meeting between Milei and Scholz, with demonstrators carrying signs reading "down with Milei, down with the far-right government" and "Argentina is not for sale" in Spanish and German. The award and demonstrations have underscored Milei's reputation as a globally polarizing figure, fueling the adoration of some and hatred of others. The trip in Germany comes after a controversial trip to Spain, where Milei made no plans to meet with senior government officials, amid a diplomatic crisis engulfing the long-standing allies.

Instead, Milei met with Madrid's powerful rightwing regional president, Isabel Diaz Ayuso, who is an outspoken opponent of Spain's center-left Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. Milei was met by cheering crowds in some parts of Madrid. Milei has generated a number of diplomatic spats with his outspoken style and controversial opinions since becoming president last December. On Monday, he is expected in the Czech Republic, where he will meet with Czech leaders.

Leader of NATO member Poland visits China

BEIJING (AP): Poland's President Andrzej Duda is in China on a visit that brings the leader of a NATO member to a country that has backed Russia in its full-on invasion of Ukraine. "I am trying to maintain friendly relations with China, Poland has always had decent relations with China and I would like that to be continued," Duda said in an interview on private Radio Zet.

He was scheduled to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Monday and has said peace in Ukraine will be discussed. Asked if he believes that China is holding a key to peace in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Duda said: "I think that to a large degree, yes." While China says it is neutral in the fighting, it has blamed NATO's expansion for provoking Russian President Vladimir Putin into launching the invasion and has maintained robust trade and diplomatic relations with Moscow. Poland borders Ukraine and has provided refuge for those fleeing the fighting and maintained a hard line against further expansion of Russian aggression. Duda said he will also talk to Xi about Belarus exerting migration pressure on the border with Poland, as a form of hybrid war that also includes cyberattacks.

Duda will also seek a visa waiver for Poles traveling to China and will seek possibilities of increasing Poland's exports there, to balance their trade relations. State Statistics Poland said 13.9% of the nation's imports last year were from China, while Polish exports to China were just a fraction of that amount. Some trade agreements are to be signed during the visit. On Wednesday Duda will fly to the financial hub of Shanghai to attend a Poland-China economic forum.

A year after mutiny, Kremlin controls Wagner remnants

LONDON (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 strug-

gled 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 Prigozhin's 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.

EU negotiator says Ukraine won't seek 'discount' on entry commitment

KYIV (AP): Ukraine's top official for Europe says the war-torn country is on an "irreversible" course of Western integration after the European Union agreed to formally start entry negotiations this week.

The decision to launch accession talks this week is a "big day" for her country, Olga Stefanishyna, the deputy prime minister for European and Euro-Atlantic integration, said. "This is the utmost will of the Ukrainian people. And this is the irreversibility. And you've seen Ukrainians stand up for their choice," Stefanishyna said, speaking in Kyiv.

It was her first interview since being appointed chief negotiator for EU accession. EU leaders agreed to start the entry talks with Ukraine and Moldova - overcoming vocal opposition led by Hungary which takes over the EU's rotating presidency on July 1. Stefanishyna will head the opening of the accession talks in Luxembourg Tuesday, joined by several top government officials. Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected to give a speech at the launch ceremony, but Stefanishyna did not elaborate whether he would do so in person or online.

Zelenskyy described decision as a "historic step," adding in an online post: "Generations of our people are realizing their European dream. Ukraine is returning to Europe. A survey of opinion polling by the European Parliament earlier this year suggested that EU citizens broadly back Ukraine's membership bid but are less supportive of fast-tracking the process. Ukraine, Stefanishyna said, was not seeking special treatment.

"Ukraine is moving fast," she said, "without skipping any elements of the process (and) without asking (for) any discount." Russia has used economic pressure and ultimately military force to try and reverse the aspirations of its former Soviet neighbor to join Western alliances it regards as hostile. Deadly protests a decade ago to demand that the government stick to a pledge to

forge closer ties with the EU put the country on a collision course with Russia. "It's a big day for everybody," said Stefanishyna, who frequently showed emotion while describing the integration process. "It has been around two years since Ukraine applied for membership. The war is still raging on, but the accession is starting right now."

Stefanishyna, a 38-year-old lawyer who has worked in civil service and government positions since her early twenties, will lead Ukraine's 35-member delegation for negotiations with the EU. In 2019, Ukraine changed its constitution to include those aspirations and formally applied to join the EU on Feb. 28, 2022 - five days after Russia launched its full-scale invasion.

Bordering EU members Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, Ukraine would overtake France to become the largest member of the bloc if it joined, shifting its center of gravity further eastward. Together

with Moldova, it's in a long line with other candidates - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey - some with membership aspirations spanning decades. Ukraine is hoping to join by 2030.

While praised for making progress since its application, Ukraine must carry out dozens of institutional and legal reforms required for membership. The daunting list is led by steps to combat corruption, and includes broad reforms to public administration, the judiciary, and market rules. More than 1000 people in Ukraine are already involved in the accession process which will proceed without a summer break. "The next half a year will be crucial for our key negotiators," she said, adding that Ukraine needs to come up with a clear reform roadmap. "The accession process and Ukraine's membership is the top priority of our president," she said. "Ukraine is a bit crazy and obsessed with the EU accession process."

Seven dead after attack in Nigeria

KATSINA: At least seven people were killed and 100 kidnapped when gunmen attacked a rural community in Nigeria's north-western Katsina state, residents and police said, in the latest attack against residents in the north of the country.

State police spokesperson Abubakar Aliyu Sadiq confirmed the attack and the seven deaths, but would not say whether anyone was missing. He said police were investigating. "The remaining men who did not flee are living in fear ... and waiting to hear news about their abducted loved ones," said Muhammad Sani, whose sister was abducted.

Residents said gunmen on motorbikes arrived in Maidabino village in the Danmusa local government area of Katsina, and started shooting sporadically, forcing residents to flee. Hassan Aliyu told Reuters news agency by phone that the attack took residents by surprise and dozens of women and children were confirmed missing. "They killed seven people, including burning two children," Aliyu said. "They spent more than six hours destroying our properties." Auwalu Ismail, another resident, said the gunmen first blocked all roads leading to Maidabino before the attack. "They burned down our shops, vehicles, and took away our livestock. They also kidnapped my wife and more than 100 women and children," he said. In recent years, such abductions have been concentrated in Nigeria's north-west and central regions, where dozens of armed groups often target villagers and travellers for large ransoms.

In March, gunmen attacked a school in the northwestern state of Kaduna and kidnapped dozens of pupils as they were about to start the school day, according to local residents and authorities. Last year, gunmen took more than 80 students in a raid on a school in the northwestern state of Kebbi. — Aljazeera

Macedonia's parliament approves a new govt

SKOPJE, North Macedonia (AP): North Macedonia's center-right leader secured parliamentary approval to lead a new coalition government in a vote.

Hristijan Mickoski, 46, faces significant challenges in his four-year term in office - above all to advance the small Balkan NATO member's lengthy efforts to join the 27-nation European Union. At the same time, his VMRO-DPMNE party's nationalist bent is antagonizing neighboring members of the affluent bloc, in stark contrast to the previous center-left government it defeated in a May's national elections.

A total 77 lawmakers in the 120-seat house voted in favor of the new government, and 22 voted against. The remaining 21 lawmakers were absent during the ballot. Mickoski's VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition gained 43% of the vote on May 8, winning 58 seats - three short of a governing majority. Mickoski then struck a deal to form a government with an ethnic Albanian and a leftist party, which together have 20 seats. Mickoski, a former professor of engineering, has pledged to continue his center-left predecessors' efforts to shepherd North Macedonia into the EU. However, VMRO-

DPMNE's questioning of key agreements with neighboring Bulgaria and Greece - both which can block North Macedonia's accession - could put the brakes on the EU project, said political analyst Petar Arsovski. "(VMRO-DPMNE) basically demands a reinterpretation of both the (deal with Greece) and the agreement with Bulgaria," he told The Associated Press. "They will face a serious challenge from the international community, which will treat these agreements as a done deal," he said. Arsovski added that the center-right party must also keep happy its own conservative voters whose expectations it raised during campaigning. "I don't expect them to make a breakthrough too quickly on any of those issues," Arsovski said.

North Macedonia joined NATO in 2019 after a historic deal with Greece to change its official name from Macedonia, following decades of disputes over history and cultural heritage. But VMRO-DPMNE has made clear its distaste for the agreement. Speaking at the start of the two-day parliamentary debate leading to vote, Mickoski repeatedly used the former name, Macedonia. North

Macedonia's new President Gordana Siljanovska Davkova - a VMRO-DPMNE candidate - had already riled Greek and EU officials by doing the same when she took the formal oath of office. She later insisted that she had a "human right" to refer to her country as she liked. Relations with Bulgaria are also likely to suffer. North Macedonia's previous government had accepted - but failed to win parliamentary backing for - a Bulgarian demand to recognize a Bulgarian minority through constitutional amendment. In exchange, Bulgaria had agreed to drop its objections to North Macedonia joining the EU. VMRO-DPMNE has denounced the prospect of a constitutional amendment as a "capitulation (to) Bulgarian dictators."

EU membership negotiations with North Macedonia and neighboring Albania began in 2022 and are expected to take years. Mickoski's domestic challenges include strengthening the rule of law while addressing corruption and poverty and reviving a sluggish economy. He promised to cut taxes and raise pensions, while growing the economy by 5% this year and cutting inflation to no more than 2.5%.

A Romanian village is set to become NATO's biggest airbase in Europe

BUCHAREST (BBC): Six RAF Eurofighter Typhoons sit on the taxiway, engines roaring on two, as the ground staff hurry about, adding the finishing touches before take-off.

In the distance, a cloud of dust rises in the summer haze over the construction site of the second runway, 3.5km (2 miles) long, beside the first. The hot northerly wind buffets the new hangars and the old. Mihai Kogalniceanu (MK) airbase takes its name from the village nearby, itself named after a 19th Century liberal politician.

Now, it is the unlikely setting for what is turning into the biggest Nato base in Europe, bigger even than Ramstein in Germany. Russian President Vladimir Putin justified his war in Ukraine on the grounds that Nato is encroaching on

Russia's European flank. In response to his invasion, more pieces have moved forward on the Nato chessboard. The MK base will soon have a squadron of Romanian F-16s - recently bought from Norway - as well as MQ-9 Reaper drones, and a military city through which Nato army, air force and naval personnel from 32 countries will rotate. The latest arrivals are the Finns. Just 20km (12 miles) from the Black Sea coast, the base is 300km from Odesa, as the fighter flies, and 400km from Sevastopol in Russian-occupied Crimea. This is RAF pilot Flt Lt Charlie Tagg's third and final tour of duty here. "There's a much bigger US presence here, a lot more infrastructure, accommodation, people and equipment." Russia's invasion of Ukraine has changed both

the areas he flies over, he says, and the strategic posture of the mission. In 2021, on his last tour, Nato fighter pilots flew far out over international waters in the Black Sea. But now they stick to the 12 nautical mile zone above Romanian and Bulgarian territorial waters, "to avoid misunderstandings, escalatory situations with the Russians." "Previously we were here as a deterrence to any Russian aggression. Now it's more as a reassurance to other Nato countries, such as Romania, that we are here, and we're willing to defend."

There has been no call to intercept a Russian plane since he arrived, he says, though there were on previous missions, over the Baltic. "They will just be blundering through - it's not against any international law, they are entitled to do

that. But we'll put an aircraft next to that adversary aircraft. From a posturing point of view, it shows the Russians... that we are active. We're flying with armed jets, so it sends a clear message." "And it also provides valuable intelligence for us, we're recording serial numbers of aircraft, and the weapons that those aircraft are carrying, so it feeds into the whole intelligence picture as well." Late at night at the British compound on the MK base he watches the war unfold in his radar screens. "We could see Shahed drones going into Odesa. The heat sources on the ground, where the weapons are impacting, to radar feeds that are tracking aircraft, both friendly aircraft and not so friendly aircraft as well. So it is quite surreal."

their fate behind a new iron curtain." She was referencing the physical division of Europe during the Cold War between the Western countries and those connected to or influenced by the Soviet Union. In 2020 Ms Tikhonovskaya went became a symbol of opposition when she ran against Mr Lukashenko in presidential elections after her husband was jailed by the regime.

She claimed victory in the polls, which were widely thought to be rigged, but was forced into exile in Lithuania with her children the day after the vote. She was later sentenced in absentia to 15 years in jail for treason and conspiracy to seize power.

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Risk of all-out war looming

FOR those who have been hoping for peace in the Middle East since the war broke out between Israel and Hamas last October, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's remarks on Sunday will have brought little comfort.

This is because, despite saying the military operation in Gaza is "winding down", he indicated it could set the stage for Israel to send more troops to its northern border to fight the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, raising concerns that it could spark an all-out war in the region.

"We can fight on several fronts and we are prepared to do that," the Israeli leader said in an interview. Israel's army last week also said it had "approved and validated" a new plan for a Lebanon offensive.

Hezbollah began attacking Israel shortly after Hamas' Oct 7 assault triggered the war in Gaza, and the two sides have been trading fire across the border since then, with the Iran-backed group saying it will only stop if there is a truce in Gaza. Earlier this month, Hezbollah targeted Israeli towns and military sites with the largest volleys of rockets and drones used in the hostilities so far, after an Israeli strike killed the most senior Hezbollah commander yet.

A full-blown war between Israel and Hezbollah could escalate the conflict in the region to an uncontrollable scale, given the military group is much larger in size — it claims to have about 100,000 fighters — compared with Hamas, which has between 20,000 and 25,000 members — and boasts a more sophisticated military arsenal equipped with precision rockets and drones. It also risks drawing the United States and its allies and Iran and its proxies into a conflict. Israel's offensive in Gaza has so far killed more than 37,400 people, most of them civilians, according to the Palestinian health authorities, and left nearly the entire population of the enclave homeless and destitute. It is hard to imagine how severe the humanitarian crisis would be if the cross-border attacks between Israel and Hezbollah turn into an all-out war. That scenario has prompted UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to warn of a catastrophe "beyond imagination". "The people of the region and the people of the world cannot afford Lebanon to become another Gaza," he said on Friday, as he called for de-escalation in the hostilities between the two sides, which he believes is not only possible, but also "essential". Even US Air Force General Charles Brown Jr, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, cautioned that a Lebanon offensive "can drive up the potential for a broader conflict".

As the biggest supplier of weapons to Israel, the US has a moral obligation to use its sway over Israel to push for a cease-fire plan in Gaza, and prevent more suffering and more potentially catastrophic consequences from happening in the region. It is time for Washington to take action to end the crisis in the Middle East.

Iran's presidential election

IRANIANS will choose a new president on Friday (June 28). The election was due in 2025, but an early election became necessary because of the untimely death of President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash last month. Six candidates are in the race after the Guardian Council rejected 74 of them, including former president Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, who had served two terms from 2005 to 2013.

Another of the prominent politicians rejected by the Council was former Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani. The six contenders for the presidency are: Alireza Zakani, mayor of Tehran, Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, head of Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, Mostafa Pourmohammadi, former interior and justice minister, Saeed Jalili, former chief nuclear negotiator, Masoud Pezeshkian, Member of Parliament, and Mohammed Bagher Ghalibaf, former mayor of Tehran.

Interestingly, of the six, five are conservatives, and there is a lone reformer. Conservatives are those who would not impose the strict puritanical regime, and the late Raisi was one of them. The lone reformer is Pezeshkian. The two favourites are Jalili and Ghalibaf. While Jalili is seen as a hardliner, Ghalibaf, a technocrat is a moderate conservative. In the last 24 years, there have been two reformist presidents, Mohammad Khatami and Hassan Rouhani. The others were conservatives. And in a way, the reformers and conservatives alternated as presidents. Khatami, the reformist was followed by Ahmedinejad, the hardliner. Ahmedinejad was followed by Rouhani, the reformer. And Rouhani has been followed by conservative Raisi. The Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei seemed to have remained above the fray, though he is considered to be a conservative.

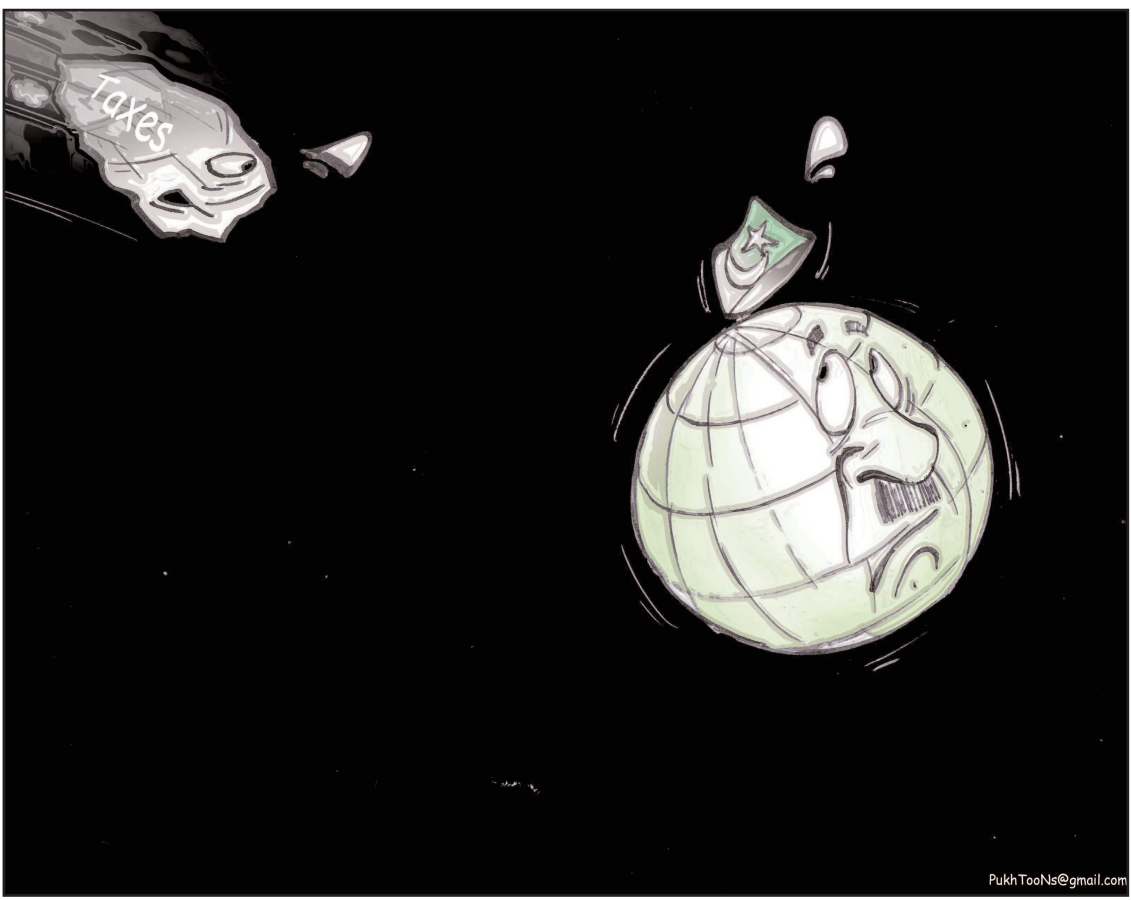
It appears that the people of Iran are not bothered by the ideological labels of whether the candidates are conservatives or reformers. They are facing a tough economic situation, and they are looking to the presidential candidates to offer a way out of the economic distress.

And they find that none of the six contenders are offering any economic programme. Says a 54-year-old shop-owner in Teheran's Grand Bazar, Hamid Habibi, "They promise change, but won't do much. I've watched the debates and campaigns; they speak beautifully but need to back their words with action." Iran is facing challenges at home and on the international front. At home, young people are fretting against the puritanical dress code, especially after the nationwide protests in 2022 when a Kurdish young woman, Mahsina Amini, 22, died in the custody of the moral police. The Raisi government had managed to put down the protests, but the people, especially the young, are not willing to remain passive. Then there is the depressing economic situation. The economic hardship is connected to the position of Iran on nuclear power and the negotiations with the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, China and Russia.

The US-led Western countries want Iran to be open to inspection from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is seen by Iran as a proxy of the United States. The economic sanctions imposed by the West on Iran because of the enrichment of uranium in the Natx nuclear reactor has been pinching the ordinary Iranian's daily life and it had also dampened Iran's international trade and domestic economic growth. If a conservative were to win the election on June 28, and Donald Trump were to win the November presidential election in America, then there would be a deadlock. It was Trump who had pulled out of the nuclear deal with Iran which Democrat president Barack Obama had managed to clinch. So, Iran's presidential election is a matter of concern beyond Iran.

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Israeli army's options on Gaza: Marginalization or confrontation

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said last week that "there will be no civil war" in Israel. But he might be wrong.

Netanyahu's statement was made in the context of the growing popular protests in the country, especially following the long-anticipated resignations of several members of his war Cabinet, including Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot — both former chiefs of staff in the Israeli army.

These resignations did not necessarily isolate Netanyahu, as his popularity rests almost entirely on the support of the right and the far right. However, the move further illustrated the deep and growing rifts in Israeli society, which could ultimately take the country from a state of political upheaval to an actual civil war.

The divisions in Israel cannot be viewed the same way as the political polarizations that are currently rife in Western democracies. This assertion is not necessarily linked to the legitimate view that, at its core, Israel is not an actual democracy but is, rather, due to the fact that Israel's political formation is unique.

The story began long before the current Gaza war. In February 2019, the leaders of three Israeli parties formed a coalition known as "Kahol Lavan" (Blue and White). Two of Kahol Lavan's founders, Gantz and Moshe Ya'alon, were military men, widely respected in the country's powerful military establishment and, thus, society at large. However, despite their relative electoral success, they failed to dislodge Netanyahu from office. So, they went to the streets.

Taking the conflict to the streets of Tel Aviv and other Israeli cities was not a decision made lightly. It followed the collapse of a strange government coalition, cobbled together by all of Netanyahu's enemies and unified by the single objective of ending the right and far right's reign. The failure of Naftali Bennett, the leader of that coalition, was the last

straw.

The terms "right" and "far right" may give the impression that the political conflict in Israel is essentially ideological. Although ideology does play a role in Israeli politics, the anger at Netanyahu and his allies is largely motivated by the feeling that the new right is attempting to reconfigure the political nature of the country.

So, starting in January 2023, hundreds of thousands of Israelis launched unprecedented mass protests that lasted until the

resulting from Netanyahu's wish to marginalize Israel's judicial institutions for personal reasons, the roots of the event, which threatened a civil war, were quite different.

The story of the potential Israeli civil war is as old as the Israeli state itself and recent comments by Netanyahu suggesting otherwise are yet another false claim by the prime minister.

Indeed, on June 16, Netanyahu lashed out at rebellious military generals, stating: "We have a

The divisions in Israel cannot be viewed the same way as the political polarizations that are currently rife in Western democracies. This assertion is not necessarily linked to the legitimate view that, at its core, Israel is not an actual democracy but is, rather, due to the fact that Israel's political formation is unique. The story began long before the current Gaza war. In February 2019, the leaders of three Israeli parties formed a coalition known as "Kahol Lavan" (Blue and White). Two of Kahol Lavan's founders, Gantz and Moshe Ya'alon, were military men, widely respected in the country's powerful military establishment and, thus, society at large. However, despite their relative electoral success, they failed to dislodge Netanyahu from office.

start of the Israeli war on Gaza. The initial collective demand of the protesters, supported by Gantz and a who's who of the Israeli military and liberal elites, was to prevent Netanyahu from altering the political balances of power that have governed Israeli society for the last 75 years. With time, however, the demands turned into a collective call for regime change.

Though the issue was largely discussed in the media as a political rift

country with an army and not an army with a country." In truth, however, Israel was founded through war and sustained through war.

This meant that the Israeli military had, from the very start, a special status in Israeli society — an unwritten contract that allowed army generals a special and often central seat in Israel's political decision-making. The likes of Ariel Sharon, Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak and oth-

ers, including the founder of Israel, David Ben Gurion, have all reached the helm of Israeli politics, mainly because of their military affiliations.

But Netanyahu changed all of this when he began to actively restructure Israel's political institutions to keep the military marginal and politically disempowered. In doing so, he has violated the main pillar of Israel's political balance since 1948.

Even before Israel finished the task of ethnically cleansing the Palestinian people during the Nakba, the nascent country almost immediately entered into a civil war. As Ben Gurion issued an order regarding the formation of the Israeli Defense Forces on May 26, 1948, some Zionist militias, including the Irgun and Lehi (the Stern Gang) fought to preserve a degree of political independence.

That was the start of the so-called Altalena Affair, in which the Haganah-dominated IDF tried to block a shipment of weapons that was on its way to the Irgun, then under the leadership of future Prime Minister Menachem Begin. The confrontation was deadly. It resulted in the killing of many members of the Irgun, mass arrests and the shelling of the ship itself.

References to the Altalena Affair are heard quite frequently in Israeli media debates these days, as the Israeli war on Gaza is splintering an already divided society. This division is compelling the military to abandon the historical balance that was achieved following that mini-civil war, which could have ended the Israeli state only days after its formation.

The internal Israeli conflict over Gaza is not just about Gaza, Hamas or Hezbollah, but the future of Israel itself. If the Israeli army finds itself scapegoated for Oct. 7 and the failed military campaigns that followed, it will have to make a choice: between accepting its indefinite marginalization and clashing with the political institution. If the latter takes place, a civil war might become a real possibility.

State-building key to challenging Iran's network of influence

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami

THE Iranian network of influence extends across the broader Middle East. Tehran's nonstate proxies take advantage of power vacuums in countries where state institutions are fragile. From Iran's perspective, the network of influence is a means to find strategic depth and become an indispensable regional power, while insulating its leadership from the full risk of its actions. The use of nonstate actors allows Iran to build leverage in the region without paying the full political cost of its ideological ambitions because of the tactic of plausible deniability.

The opaque nature of Iran's actions makes it difficult to provide an accurate policy answer that could effectively reduce the scope of its ideological ambition, while avoiding the complete destabilization of the region. To build an effective strategy to counter Iranian proxies and partners — and avoid a military escalation — the best and most sustainable option is to implement a policy focusing on strengthening statehood and institutions in weak and fragile states like Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen.

Strengthening the state and its institutions and providing some incentives and support to the process will contribute to the emergence of a local and indigenous pushback against Iran and its militias. Indeed, the recurring political crises in these countries can be explained first and foremost by the nature of their political systems.

To counter Iran, a new strategy is needed beyond the use of force that has aimed to restore deterrence after every military escalation since Oct. 7. The new strategy should focus on promoting state-building after the end of military conflicts. Indeed, the military response to Iran's regional activities is not sufficient to roll back its ideological influence in the region. The end goal of this new strategy could be to address the grassroots cause of Iran's regional influence.

To achieve this aim, the priority should be to foster a local and indigenous pushback against Iran's influence. The strategy should encompass the following key components. Firstly, focus on improving governance and state-building. One step in this first component could be to enhance government capacity in conflict-ridden countries through reforming public administrations. This would improve the efficiency of state institutions, while national authorities should also put in place anti-corruption measures to root out systemic corruption.

Secondly, there is a need to reform the security sector to promote community policing initiatives and build trust between security forces and local communities.

Third is a focus on economic development to attract foreign investment, while promoting a conducive environment for foreign investors. There is also a need to invest in critical infrastructure and services to spur economic growth. Eventually, the strategy should promote

social cohesion and inclusivity for the sake of national reconciliation after decades of conflict. At the diplomatic level, engagement with regional powers will reduce external interference and help in promoting regional cooperation initiatives to address shared challenges such as terrorism, smuggling and environmental issues.

At the international level, fragile states should establish strategic bilateral partnerships with international powers that have a vested interest in regional stability. This will help in improving governance and reducing the influence of belligerent actors. This comprehensive approach will not only address immediate security concerns, but also lay the foundation for long-term stability and prosperity.

The proliferation of nonstate actors has been evident for more than two decades because of US wars in Afghanistan (2001-2021) and in Iraq (2003-2011). The risk of a regional war amid tensions between Iran and Israel should push Arab and international actors to seek a political response to the risks posed by fragile states. This situation of fragility deserves our attention because of the risk of it spreading across the region.

Local responses to Iran's exploitation of fragility are the only possibility to avoid the worst-case scenario of a regional military escalation. These responses should cover the social, economic and political dimensions. Iran is exploiting ideological polarization in Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen. Nevertheless, there is no quick fix to this fragility; a long-term investment is needed to devise comprehensive responses to internal challenges, which are also a regional concern.

National reconciliation is a key prerequisite in the quest to roll back Iranian influence for the sake of promoting national interests and going beyond the zero-sum game that has characterized regional and international competition.

Finally, national reconciliation could be fostered by a regional entente, to avoid great powers' interests conflicting, especially at a time when regional states are seeking to reduce their dependence on external powers. This rise of Arab states' independent agendas could serve as a model for fragile states that must focus on their socioeconomic development, rather than being part of zero-sum games.

A successful strategy of state-building appears to be the only possible answer to the activities of the Iranian network of influence that could help in avoiding any risk of regional military escalation. In addition, in the Palestinian context, there is a need for the Palestinians themselves to set their own political agenda and trajectory beyond external determinants to meet their aspirations and hopes. This will ensure that there is collective buy-in and the agenda is local, organic and in tandem with local interests and needs. This is the challenge for the Palestinians and others facing fragile conditions and crisis situations across the region.

US should recalibrate its relationship with Israel

Chris Doyle

AMONG the slew of myths that bedevil the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is that the US-Israel relationship is predicated on Israel being a loyal ally — a reliable partner that has a shared value system.

Israel has been content to receive the US' billions in funds and also the huge transfers in weaponry, amounting to \$310 billion since 1948 when adjusted for inflation. The US also provides intelligence and security assistance and acts as its diplomatic shield, vetoing endless draft resolutions at the UN Security Council. Congress has even voted to sanction International Criminal Court officials. The US has enabled Israel to violate international law at will with no cost. One would have thought this would have rendered the Israeli leadership immensely grateful.

However, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in par-

ticular, has been a most ungrateful ally. President Joe Biden has plenty of reasons to resent the Israel leader. Back in 2010, when he was vice president, Biden was seething over an Israeli settlement building announcement during his visit, at a time when he was pushing negotiations. Netanyahu also embarrassed the Obama administration when addressing Congress in 2015 on the Iran nuclear deal, directly contradicting and lobbying against the White House. And then there is Gaza.

From October, the Israeli leadership has been obstinate. Biden pushed for improved aid access to Gaza but only received grudging Israeli mini-steps. Biden, rather than challenge this spoiled behavior, indulged it to the extent that the US engaged in the folly of air-drops and wasting \$230 million on a pier that has so far delivered just 250 truckloads of assistance. On May 31,

Biden presented what he claimed was an Israeli plan for a ceasefire for Gaza. Netanyahu denied paternity. He could not have done more to distance himself from it and to bury all hopes for a ceasefire. Biden cannot even get Netanyahu to outline any strategy for the future of Gaza. The US president's weakness has been laid embarrassingly bare.

Netanyahu then castigated the US for pausing one single weapons shipment. "I am ready to suffer personal attacks provided that Israel receives from the US the ammunition it needs in the war for its existence," he said. This was some cheek given the monumental pipeline of bombs the US taxpayer has been forking out for over the last eight months. The White House's public response was that it was "disappointed, perplexed" — diplomatic code for angered. It canceled a

high-level US-Israeli meeting on Iran, the second time this has happened in recent times. Netanyahu will not have broken sweat. Unsurprisingly, Biden's frustrations boiled over. In an interview, he acknowledged that people have "every reason" to believe that Netanyahu was extending the war on Gaza for his own personal reasons and to stay in power.

Biden is still to learn, after all these years, that Netanyahu is a taker not a giver. To exercise any major influence over his actions, he will have to be far tougher. Biden may want a ceasefire, not least for his own electoral reasons, but he will have to drag Netanyahu kicking and screaming to the negotiating table.

If not, the US can expect Israel to remain a liability. If Netanyahu sees it as being in his interest, he will ignore any advice from his

American counterparts.

But the current spats between Netanyahu and Biden are just the tip of the matter. The Israeli leadership frequently and brazenly does not repay the US with support on key American concerns. Take Russia. Israel has hardly uttered a word of criticism of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. In fact, Netanyahu has a rich history of summits with Vladimir Putin and has boasted of his excellent relations with the Russian leader.

Israel also has warm ties with China. Only three years ago, Israel opened a Chinese-operated port in Haifa. The US was not happy. This was not the first time Washington had objected to Chinese investment in key Israeli infrastructure. This even happened during the Trump administration, when Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made direct objections to Chinese investments in Israel's largest desalination plant. Going

back to the 1990s, the US was incandescent about Israel selling advanced US stealth technology to the Chinese.

For sure, many nations engage with the US, China and Russia. But Israel is meant to be the US' primary military and security partner in the region. Washington might expect some support.

US politicians must recalibrate their assessments of the relationship with Israel. It is a one-way deal. It is lazy and simplistic to argue either that Israel controls the US or the other way round. They agree at times, but often there are huge divergences. But what is clear, at least under Netanyahu, is that the US has little to no influence over Israel's choices — until such time as when whoever is in the White House is prepared to bare their teeth and change the dynamic. The costs to the US are considerable, with the international reputational harm far more potent than the financial loss.

China offers high-tech road to success

Chris Pereira

No country changes as rapidly as China. Every decade marks a new era in business, governance, innovation, and socioeconomic development. This constant evolution is not merely a characteristic but the essence of China's dynamism, presenting a unique and compelling proposition for multinational companies to grow with the Chinese economy.

Each era creates immense opportunities for multinational companies to succeed in China. As China evolves, business strategies must adapt to stay ahead of the trends. Success here demands agility, foresight, and a deep understanding of the ever-shifting market dynamics.

In the 1980s, forward-thinking companies invested in early manufacturing, laying the foundation for China to become the "factory of the world". Those pioneers saw beyond the immediate challenges, envisioning the huge potential in China's vast, untapped resources and workforce. The 1990s saw a dramatic surge in foreign direct investment, expanding into diverse sectors such as infrastructure, communications and agriculture. That period was marked by a symbiotic relationship where China provided the growth environment, and multinational companies brought in expertise and capital.

Over the last 20 years, China's supply chain has evolved into a diversified powerhouse, offering everything from shoes and shirts to smartphones and satellites, and the massive domestic consumer base has created a vast market for international products. The sophistication and scale of China's manufacturing capabilities have

reshaped global commerce.

The impact of China's transformation on global trade has been profound. And China's focus on new quality productive forces is bound to make the present era into a new phase of quality production and technological advancement.

While China's consumer market remains enormous, international brands now face fierce competition from sophisticated local brands which align closely with Chinese consumers' tastes and demands. To succeed in such a market, international brands need to offer products that suit Chinese consumers' tastes. Understanding the nuanced preferences of Chinese consumers is crucial, and those who do so by integrating local insights with global best practices will thrive in the vast Chinese market.

The investment and manufacturing landscape too is evolving in this new era of higher competition, rapidly advancing technology and globally-focused Chinese companies. Previously, knowledge, investment and technologies flowed into China, now they are flowing outward. This shift marks a significant change in China's role on the global stage, from a receiver of foreign expertise to an innovation and export powerhouse.

Chinese companies are occupying the global stage like never before. Nearly every global industry now has competitive Chinese companies, and some sectors such as clean energy technology, electric vehicles and smart home appliances are dominated by Chinese brands. The global presence of Chinese companies offers

new avenues for international collaboration and competition.

These companies have developed technologies at home and expanded worldwide, creating new investment opportunities. The narrative is no longer about foreign companies coming to China to sell and manufacture goods; it is about partnering with Chinese companies to innovate and grow on a global scale.

China's new era is characterized by high-tech innovation, industrial development and robust industry and supply chains. Despite complexities isolating China's high-tech innovation for long, intense domestic and global competition has driven its progress. Global investors not engaged in this development are missing out on significant opportunities, especially because China's emphasis on research and development has led to breakthroughs in fields such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology and renewable energy.

One of the biggest opportunities lies in being part of China's future industrial development. Foreign companies have the chance to collaborate with China in developing technologies for the future. Given China's complete industry and supply chains, world-class infrastructure and skilled workforce, foreign companies and researchers will find an ideal environment for developing new technologies. This collaboration is not just about leveraging resources but also about being part of an ecosystem that fosters rapid prototyping, testing and scaling.

Another key opportunity for foreign companies is China's focus

on further improving its industry and supply chains. With decades of infrastructure development and competent regional high-tech hubs, China is set to promote rapid innovation, and improve production and distribution. The efficiency and speed with which products can be developed and supplied to the market in China are unmatched.

In today's China, companies can find everything they need to develop and make high-tech products in one city. From the software development hub of Shenzhen to energy storage and EVs in Hefei, Anhui province, companies can complete projects without sourcing from around the world. This concentration of resources not only reduces costs but also enhances the speed of innovation cycles.

This system also benefits low-end goods production. China's vast network of original design manufacturers (ODMs) and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) allows companies to utilize existing facilities and personnel to expeditiously manufacture products. Many of the world's biggest companies, both domestic and foreign, have taken advantage of China's mature ODM/OEM networks for producing everything from apparel to tools and appliances, and quickly meet market demands.

While nothing beats being on the ground to seize these opportunities, a willingness to adapt to the Chinese market is the first step toward success. Indeed, the future of global business will be shaped by those who can navigate and leverage the intricate and ever-evolving landscape of China.

— China Daily

Keir Starmer's empty promise of British renewal

Jamie Maxwell

British investment, draining wealth away from the country's peripheries – Northern England, Central Scotland, South Wales – and redirecting it towards the asset-rich English South East. Or, just as often, out of the UK altogether and into offshore tax havens.

Naturally, the social effects of this system have been devastating. According to the consulting firm EY, London and its surrounding regions – which are booming – will account for a full 40 percent of the UK's economic growth by 2027. The rest of Britain, meanwhile, will continue down the path of Tory stagnation.

Under the Conservatives, spending cuts hit poor northern cities twice as hard as they did prosperous southern ones, amplifying health inequalities and pushing local services to the limit.

As the party has made clear, Labour might mitigate these cuts, but it won't reverse them – in

earnings, nationalise Britain's price-gouging energy companies, and end the incremental privatisation of the NHS have all been jettisoned or watered down. So, too, has his promise to abolish the House of Lords, the single largest unelected legislative chamber anywhere in the Western world.

Speaking to The Guardian in 2022, Starmer was emphatic: dissolving the Lords, an institution stuffed full of "Tory lackeys and donors", would "restore trust" in the British state. "People have lost faith in the ability of politicians to bring about change," he said.

"As well as fixing our economy, we need to fix our politics." By the middle of last year, however, repairing Britain's broken political model had slipped down Starmer's agenda. "Constitutional [reform] takes time and drains energy," Thangam Debbonaire, a senior Starmer ally, told The i Newspaper in June 2023. "We've got a lot to do to fix a country where nothing works from getting a

Actually running Britain – a country recently characterised by The Financial Times as “poor” with “pockets of rich people” – will be much harder. Starmer doesn’t look even slightly up to the task. Labour’s economic policy – the centrepiece of that opaque cluster of ideas collectively known as “Starmerism” – is a case in point. In a speech to the City of London in March, the party’s shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, set out what she saw as the primary drivers of British decay: the lowest productivity in the G7, a dearth of strategic investment, and long-term regional neglect.

Reeves then hinted at a solution: a new “strategic partnership” between the state and the private sector, reform of the UK’s restrictive planning laws, and a national wealth fund to help channel cash into industrially deprived areas. Yet, in the same speech, Reeves failed to acknowledge the central role played by the City of London itself in amplifying the UK’s abnormally high rates of regional inequality. Instead, she lauded the British capital’s “world-leading professional and financial services”, pausing only to acknowledge the damage banking sectors can cause to national economies when left “under-regulated.”

One survey, published at the start of June, even indicated that he could win the largest Westminster majority of any British politician since Stanley Baldwin in 1924. But dispatching Sunak's desperate and beleaguered right-wing government will be the easy part.

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The omission was revealing. For decades, the City has acted as a vortex for domestic

the next parliament, budgetary discipline will take priority over social democratic largesse.

As if to underline the point, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the UK's spending watchdog, estimates that, in the absence of substantial tax hikes, savings of up to £16 billion (\$20bn) will be needed to eliminate Britain's deficit over the coming years, regardless of who takes power on July 4.

Bringing the UK's day-to-day spending into balance is one of Labour's economic goals. “We will not waver from strong fiscal rules,” Reeves – for six years, an economist at the Bank of England – warned in March.

On this, at least, Starmer has been true to his word. In February, Labour ditched its flagship pledge to spend £28 billion per year on a “green investment plan”. In its place, Starmer unveiled a more modest commitment: £5 billion per year, by 2028/29, to decarbonise the UK economy. Environmental groups condemned the U-turn. Labour had “caved like a house of cards in the wind” to pressure from the climate-denying right, said Areeba Hamid of Greenpeace.

But the shift was inevitable. Starmer, anxious about the softness of Labour's support, wants to limit the space for Tory attack lines. At the same time, four years after replacing Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, he remains determined to expunge any trace of Corbyn's influence from within his party's ranks.

Starmer's assault on the Labour left has produced a bonfire of progressive policies.

His initial vows to scrap university tuition fees, raise taxes on top

passport to fixing pot-holes.”

Starmer and his team are right to argue that the Conservatives have left Britain in a mess. From Cameron's austerity cuts to Truss's market-spooking fiscal experiments, the UK is a poorer, weaker, and more divided place now than it was a decade and a half ago. And yet, despite shedding virtually every policy capable of addressing Britain's problems, Starmer has actually grown more, not less, grandiose as the race for Number 10 has progressed.

It is time to “turn the page” on Tory decline and embrace “a decade of national renewal with Labour,” he has said repeatedly since Sunak kickstarted the campaign in May. Such rhetoric is not new. In 1997, Tony Blair, celebrating his landmark election victory over the Conservatives, asked and answered his own question: “A new dawn has broken, has it not? And it is wonderful.”

But it wasn't wonderful. By the time Blair's successor, Gordon Brown, resigned in 2010, inaugurating the most recent stretch of Tory rule, New Labour had become synonymous with three things: Iraq, corruption, and financial collapse.

The UK didn't flourish during the Blair-Brown era, it fractured, shifting the national doom loop back into gear. Starmer – a former director of public prosecutions – is a far less ambitious figure than Blair, and shares none of Blair's disruptive vision. He has pledged a great British rebirth but has no intention of delivering one. Reality lies in wait for the next Labour government. Decline is Britain's reality.

— Aljazeera

Via intermediates

ZHANG MONAN

Despite Washington's push for decoupling, the US and China continue to maintain close trade relations through third parties. Deglobalization, trade frictions and geopolitical conflicts have led to a reshuffle of the global industry and value chains. Amid the changing international division of labor and trade structure, the United States' push for "decoupling" from China is affecting the future of the international division of labor.

For several decades before the global financial crisis, world trade had been growing almost uninterrupted, before the US-China trade frictions, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Ukraine crisis accelerated the restructuring of the global industry and supply chains.

In 2018, the Donald Trump administration imposed high tariffs on Chinese goods, and it subsequently expanded them from high-tech manufacturing such as machinery, electronics, pharmaceuticals and automo-

geopolitical factors have severely impacted US-China economic and trade relations in terms of scale and structure.

First, the US-China trade volume has significantly declined. In 2023, bilateral trade was \$664.45 billion, down 11.6 percent year-on-year. Specifically, China exports totaled \$500.29 billion, down 13.1 percent; imports from the US totaled \$164.16 billion, down 6.8 percent; China's trade surplus with the US was \$336.1 billion, down 16.8 percent year-on-year, and the US trade deficit with China fell to its lowest level in more than a decade.

Second, bilateral trade dependence has decreased. From 2018 to 2022, the share of the US imports from China was 21.2 percent, 18 percent, 18.6 percent, 17.8 percent, and 16.5 percent of its total imports. In 2023, the percentage further dropped to around 14 percent, which is 7 percentage points lower than the pre-trade war figure in 2018.

"friend-shoring" have led to the sourcing of some products from places other than China.

Similarly, China has shifted some foreign purchases away from the US. Since 2023, China has exported increasingly more intermediate and capital goods to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Mexico, and has formed closer industry ties with ASEAN and other emerging economies.

While tariffs have altered the bilateral trade volume between the US and China, they have not significantly changed their positions in the global trade landscape. Though influenced by the Biden administration's substantial industrial subsidies and supply chain reshoring efforts, and the US has entered a "super investment cycle" over the past two years, Chinese manufacturing remains competitive globally.

The US is pursuing "decoupling" from China under the guise of "de-risking", but the

industry and value chains between the two countries have been extended. The trade surplus of China with the US has shifted to countries such as Vietnam, India and Mexico, known as "friend-shoring" and "nearshoring" substitutes.

Here is the paradox: the US tariffs and decoupling efforts against China have boosted China's industry and value chain relations with emerging economies; with these third-party countries as intermediaries, indirect trade ties between the US and China have actually been strengthened.

From 2019 to 2022, China-Mexico trade grew at an average annual rate of 15.2 percent. China is now Mexico's second-largest global trading partner, second-largest source of imports and third-largest export destination.

In 2022, the trade volume between China and Mexico approached \$95 billion, up 9.8 percent year-on-year, with Chinese exports to Mexico growing by 15.1 percent. China maintains a trade surplus, while Mexico faces big trade deficit challenges.

China's top exports to the Mexican market include telephones, LCD equipment, computer parts, electronic integrated circuits, auto parts, power transformers, and parts for telephone and television transmitters and receivers.

The share of added value created by China in Mexican exports to the US has risen from 5.9 percent in 2017 to 8.4 percent in 2021, an increase of 2.5 percentage points, while the share of added value from the US has fallen from 20.1 percent in 2017 to 18 percent in 2021.

Among the electronic and optical products exported from Mexico to the US, the share of added value from China has increased by 5.0 percentage points, while that from the US has decreased by 4.2 percentage points. In terms of transportation equipment, the share of Chinese added value has increased by 2.7 percentage points, while that from the US has decreased by 1.8 percentage points.

Moreover, while the US has been promoting India as a substitute for China, Sino-Indian trade has maintained rapid growth. In particular, Indian imports from China have surged, with top imports including electromechanical products, chemicals, auto parts and intermediate products.

"Friend-shoring" and "nearshoring" may have had strong impacts on direct US-China trade relations, but when indirect trade is taken into consideration, decoupling is no easy task. It will incur additional costs and distort the market's allocation of resources.

According to a 2023 research report by the US National Bureau of Economic Research, from 2017 to 2022, for every 1 percentage point decline in China's share of US imports, the unit prices of imports from Vietnam rose by 2 percent, those of Mexico by 0.6 percent, and those of the Republic of Korea, Singapore and China's Taiwan region by 0.5 percentage points. This is a loss of efficiency in the international division of labor, as well as a disruption to the collaboration among the global industry, supply and value chains.

biles to raw materials such as chemicals and metals, and even end-user products such as clothing and food. The Joe Biden administration has largely maintained the high tariffs levied on about \$300 billion worth of Chinese goods.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 prompted many governments to prioritize the resilience of global supply chains. Countries such as the US and Japan are actively pursuing a "de-risking" strategy, diversifying their supply chains aiming to reduce their reliance on China. However, this has expanded the list of industries with high economic risks.

The restructuring of the global industry and value chains and

China has dropped to be the second-largest source of US imports.

In 2023, the share of Chinese capital goods and intermediate goods in US imports was 16.1 percent and 9.2 percent, respectively, a drop of 15.2 percentage points and 4.6 percentage points from 2017. Specifically, capital goods and parts and accessories (except transport equipment), as well as industrial supplies experienced the largest falls.

Third, both China and the US are shifting trade elsewhere. In recent years, the US has drastically cut its exports of semiconductors, liquefied natural gas, and coal to China. The US' manufacturing "reshoring" and supply chain "nearshoring" and

changes mentioned above do not represent the entirety of US-China trade relations. The US and China continue to maintain close trade relations through third parties.

Although external shocks have accelerated the restructuring of global value chains, the core factors driving this restructuring are technological advancements and market optimization behaviors.

With further analysis, it can be seen that China is actually gaining a greater share in the indirect trade of US capital goods and intermediate goods. This means that the direct bilateral trade between the US and China is occurring through intermediate third parties and the



BF, SCCI term budget anti-traders and IMF-dictated

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Businessman Forum leader former Senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour and president Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fuad Ishaq termed fiscal budget 2024-25 as IMF-dictated and anti-traders and masses and was tantamount to the last nail in coffin of industry and export and categorically rejected.

Addressing a news conference at the SCCI house on Monday, heavily attended by traders, industrialists and representatives business community and media, Ilyas Bilour and Fuad Ishaq said government has presented next year fiscal budget by following harsh conditions of IMF, in which massive taxation measures

were taken, making it clear that SCCI and business community will never accept any additional taxes and not allow to implement them and will take steps against them under an organized strategy.

They said the main purpose of the budget was to further damage the economy, business, trade and industry and put them in severe danger.

Pakistan economy needs taxes, but it is essential to bring new people to broaden the tax-base instead of further burdened existing taxpayers with new taxation measures, Faud Ishaq said.

He added SCCI has given proposal to approve the government-introduced Tajir Dost Scheme for next 20 year and should give

guarantee to traders after that no new tax will be imposed on them but making this scheme part of the budget document, the Tajir Dost Scheme has become anti-trader step, therefore, business community didn't accept it.

The presser was attended by SCCI senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, Anjuman e Tajran Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Shaukat Ali Khan, Tajir Insaf president Shahid Khan, Tajir Ittehad Peshawar Cantt President Mujeeb Rehman, FPCCI former president Ghazanfar Bilour, former presidents of SCCI Malik Niaz Ahmad, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Riaz Arshad, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Sherbaz Bilour, former senior vice presidents

Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Imran Khan Mohmand, Shahid Hussain, former vice president Inayat Khan, Industrialists Association Peshawar President Ayub Zakori, executive members Affaf Ali Khan, Pervez Khan Khattak, Monawar Khurshid, Qurat Ul Ain, Muhammad Ismail Safi, and Nadeem Rauf Saddar Gul, Ihsanullah, Faiz Rasool, Ihsanullah Mohmand, Ishfaq Paracha, different bazaars and trader organisations leaders, presidents, office bearers, industrialists, importers and exporters.

Fuad Ishaq said taxes were exorbitantly increased in export, which is detrimental for the country's economy, even sales tax imposed on advance order, which is reflection of anti-

trade and business.

Calling the IPPs cancer for the country's economy, the SCCI chief said a hefty amount of Rs 2200 Billion had been paid in capacity to the IPPs from the national kitty.

He disclosed Rs 2800 Billion would be paid to IPPs on head of capacity in the next fiscal year, which is completely unjust with the people and business community of the country.

Fuad Ishaq said PESCO line losses is approximately Rs102billion and outstanding amount on head of electricity is nearly Rs1.8trillion if Rs 102 Billion would be adjusted and rest of the amount will be given to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, so it will change destiny of the province.

Ilyas Bilour said the

business community wants to pay taxes but it is essential to bring new people under the tax-net instead of further imposing taxes on the existing taxpayers.

Calling the budget 2024-25 as anti-trader and business, Mr Bilour outrightly rejected it, adding that imposition of 2 percent tax on export is highly inappropriate and completely unjust, which has made it clear that the government didn't want to flourish export.

The BF leader said those people who made IPPs have earned billions of rupees and demanded the review of the IPPs and get rid the whole nation from this menace forever. He also termed the imposition of fixed charge of electricity on people, and increase

on industry as a highly unjust move of the government, demanding its immediate withdrawal.

Ilyas Bilour said the federal finance minister has no knowledge about the budget which has been imported from America. He said 35lakh metric tons of wheat was put in the warehouse but people have been forced to buy flour on high rates and demanded to allow import of wheat products.

Fuad Ishaq said KP, wherein natural gas production is surplus, has been put in an RNLG basket, which is unacceptable.

He made it clear that if gas prices continue to increase with current ratios, people and industries will be forced to use alternative sources of energy. He

expressed grave concern over increasing low water tables in Peshawar.

Ilyas Bilour while replying to a question said that a revenue collection target of Rs 12000 Billion has been given to FBR which is unachievable and collection of heavy amounts of taxes will break the backbone of people and business community.

Shaukat Ali Khan, trader leader also addressed the press conference and said that the government is collecting taxes like London and giving facilities even not like Somalia.

He said traders were receiving extortion calls and when the government and police department requested to provide traders security they simply asked to install security cameras.



PESHAWAR: Businessman Forum leader Ilyas Ahmad Bilour addressing a press conference at SCCI's House.

Pakistani mangoes arrive in China, delighting e-commerce shoppers

GUANGZHOU (INP): Chinese consumers are able to enjoy the sweet taste of Pakistani mangoes, as 800 cartons of the prized fruit arrived in China, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday.

This shipment, weighing over 3 tons (3,200 kilograms), marks the latest collaboration between Zhitong Batie Ltd in Guangzhou, China and MERA P C Solutions in Pakistan.

The mangoes, renowned as the "King of Fruits" in Pakistan, are available for purchase through various Chinese e-commerce platforms, including JD.com's Pakistan Pavilion, Douyin shops, and WeChat accounts.

This is the first batch of mangoes imported by Zhitong Batie company this year. They hit the shelves in China at a price of 168 yuan per carton, inclusive of express delivery. Each carton contains mangoes with a net weight of 4 to 4.2 kilograms.

Cindy Chen, regional director of the company, explained that they had carefully selected two varieties, Sindhri and Chaunsa, which are widely considered the tastiest in Pakistan.

"Pakistan boasts over 300 mango varieties. We partner with premium mango orchards, providing guidance on variety selection, cultivation techniques,

harvesting, and packaging," said Chen.

"Pakistani mangoes are grown naturally, using traditional methods and naturally fermented fertilizers without artificial growth enhancers or bagging. This ensures a pure mango flavor that Chinese consumers love."

To maintain the unique taste of Pakistani mangoes while ensuring smooth logistics, a rigorous process is followed from orchards to consumers.

Mangoes are harvested, heat-treated and packed before being transported by cold chain to Pakistani airports for air shipment to China. Domestic delivery

in China is then handled by SF Express, ensuring freshness and quality.

The company once faced challenges in preserving the freshness of mangoes during transportation.

These issues were addressed through various trials, including proper packaging, employment of air cushions and specialized preservation methods.

By combining pre-sales with swift customs clearance and delivery, customers now receive mangoes that are not only fresh but can also be stored at room temperature for up to 13-15 days, allowing them to ripen naturally and achieve optimal flavor.

Rupee shed 11 paisa against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Rupee on Monday lost 11 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.62 against the previous day's closing at Rs278.51.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market, however, were Rs277.6 and Rs280.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 88 paisa to close at Rs298.44 against the last day's closing of Rs297.56, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen lost 01 paisa and closed at Rs1.74, whereas an increase of 31 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs352.59 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs352.28.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 and 04 paisa to close at Rs75.85 and Rs74.27.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Three ships, Doris, Al-Jassasiya and Chemtrans Ionian carrying chemicals, LNG and Mogas, berthed at Grain Terminal, Elengy Terminal and Oil Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile four more ships, Sea Journey, Sinar Mendawai, Horizon-1 and Gaslog Geneva with Canola, Palm oil, LPG and LNG also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

Four ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them none ship left the port on Monday. Cargo volume of 78,492 tonnes, comprising 68,668 tonnes imports cargo and 9,824 tonnes export cargo carried in 727 Containers was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Four ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Sinar Mendawai, Horizon-1 and Gaslog Geneva & another ship 'TSS Amber' carrying Palm oil, LPG, LNG and Container are expected to take berths at respectively LCT, EVTL, PGPCL and QICT on Monday, while two more container ships, Maersk Kinloss and Atlantic Ibisare due to arrive at Port Qasim on Tuesday.

PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 578 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Monday, losing 578.40 points, a negative change of 0.73 percent, closing at 78,232.10 points against 78,810.49 points on the last working day.

A total of 385,176,598 shares were traded during the day as compared to 471,344,897 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs15.450 billion against Rs20.475 billion on the last

trading day.

Around 432 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 122 of them recorded gains and 254 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 56 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Pervez Ahmed Co. with 46,842,856 shares at Rs2.11 per share, World Call Telecom with 20,763,371 shares at Rs1.27 per share, and Hub Power Co. with 20,112,895 shares at

Rs165.14 per share.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs112.27 per share price, closing at Rs7,196.00, whereas the runner-up was Bhanero Textile Mills Limited with a Rs55.41 rise in its per share price to Rs1,050.00.

Mehmood Textile Mills Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs52.41 per share closing at Rs530.08, followed by Bata Pakistan Limited with a Rs24.64 decline to close at Rs1,674.36.

PBC presents specific suggestions, tax proposals

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Business Council (PBC) on Monday presented specific suggestions and tax proposals for consideration to Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb.

A delegation of PBC led by Chairman PBC Mr. Shabbir Diwan called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb at Finance Division.

Minister of State for Finance & Revenue Mr. Ali

Pervez Malik, Chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Malik Amjed Zubair Tiwana also attended the meeting.

The delegation appreciated the ongoing efforts of government and discussed the Federal Budget 2024-25 with the Finance Minister. They also presented specific suggestions and tax proposals for consideration.

Federal Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb acknowledged and thanked the PBC for their insights.

He assured that their recommendations are being noted and will be considered in the finalization of the budget to whatever extent possible.

The Minister also highlighted the FBR's ongoing efforts aimed at broadening the tax base and bringing retailers in tax net. He assured that decisions would be made through mutual consultation to ensure favorable outcomes for both the public and the business community.

Pakistan's regional exports increase 20%

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's exports to the seven regional countries witnessed an increase of 20.61 per cent in the first eleven months of the financial year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding months of last year.

"The country's exports to the regional countries including Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and the Maldives account for a small amount of \$4043.371 million, which is 14.09 per cent of Pakistan's overall exports of \$28,678.265 million during July-May (2023-24)," State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

China tops the list of countries in terms of Pakistan's exports to its neighbouring, leaving behind other countries such as Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

Pakistan carried out its border trade with the farther neighbour Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and Maldives.

Pakistan's exports to China witnessed an increase of 35.61 per cent to \$2,553.481 million in eleven months of this year from \$1,889.195 million last year while exports to Afghanistan also witnessed an increase of 6.12 percent from \$478.614 million to \$507.935 million.

The country's exports to Bangladesh decreased by 14.56 percent to \$605.744 million this year from \$709.050 whereas exports to Sri Lanka rose by 36.68 percent to \$361.690 million from \$264.608.

The exports to India increased to \$3.552 million from \$0.769 million in the previous year.

Exports to Nepal decreased by 7.83 per cent to \$2.552 million from \$2.769 million while to Maldives increased by 8.99 cent to \$8.419 million from 7.724 million, it added.

On the other hand, the imports from seven regional countries were recorded

at \$12,454.030 million during the period under review as compared to \$9,344.623 million during last year, showing an increase of 33.27 per cent.

The imports from China during July-May 2023-24 were recorded at \$12,148.884 million against the \$9,039.079 million during July-May 2022-23, showing an increase of 56.33 per cent during the period.

Among other countries, imports from India are worth \$189.075 million against the imports of \$173.499 million, an increase of 8.97 per cent while imports from Afghanistan decreased by 33.56 percent from \$15.277 million to \$10.150 million.

Meanwhile, imports from Sri Lanka increased to \$53.629 million from \$44.295 million whereas Pakistan imports from Bangladesh recorded \$ 51.673 million from \$71.711 million during last year.

Gold rates up by Rs500 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of per tola of 24 karat gold increased by Rs500 and was sold at Rs242,000 on Monday against its sale at Rs241,500 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs429 to Rs207,476 from Rs207,047 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs190,186 from Rs189,793, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs2,850 and Rs2,443.41 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$8 to \$2,328 from \$2,320, the Association reported.

Tokyo stocks end higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo shares ended higher on Monday, supported by a cheaper yen against the dollar following falls on Wall Street and losses in early trade for the key Nikkei index.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index was up 0.54 percent, or 208.18 points, to end at 38,804.65, while the broader Topix index added 0.57 percent, or 15.50 points, to 2,740.19.

The dollar fetched 159.71 yen, against 159.90 in Tokyo's early hours, when the Japanese currency nearly hit a new three-decade low.

"Against the backdrop of a weakening yen, auto-linked shares like Toyota rallied across the board," IwaiCosmo Securities said.

A cheaper yen is generally good for Japanese manufacturers as it inflates their repatriated profits, but it causes a rise in imported goods and ultimately hits household spending.

The yen's latest slide has put traders on intervention watch after Japan's finance ministry spent 9.79 trillion yen (\$61 billion) to prop up the yen between April 26 and May 29.

Among major shares in Tokyo, Toyota gained 2.47 percent to 3,150 yen, and Honda increased 1.68 percent to 1,688 yen.

Sony Group rose 0.89 percent to 12,925 yen and Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing was up 0.27 percent to 40,460 yen.

Court Notice

In the Court of Arbab Waheed Alam, Civil Judge-VI, Swabi. Ahmed Abbas Vs. Fazal Rehman. Suit No. 86/6. Institution date 10-11-2021. Hearing date 06-07-2024. Subject "Restoration". Notice to (1) Fazal Rehman Son Taj Bangush, (2) Mst. Ghazala, (3) Zameera, (4) Andeeza daughters Taj Bangush, Mst. Kheda Begum, (6) Rasheedat Begum widows of Taj Bangush R/o Mohallah Barkat Allah, Yousafzai Koroon, Kohat, Distt, Kohat. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the Court on 06-07-2024 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian and European markets were mixed Monday after last week's poor run as investors look ahead to the release of key US inflation data, while eyes are on Japan as the yen sits around three-decade lows.

A forecast-topping read on the US services sector provided further evidence that the world's top economy remained in rude health and dealt a blow to hopes for interest rate cuts.

A surge in the tech sector has helped push markets to record or multi-year highs, but concerns that the buying has gone too far have set in and profit-taking has weighed on equities in recent weeks.

That saw Wall Street end broadly lower Friday, with the better-than-expected read on the US

services sector, which is at a more than two-year high, weighing on sentiment.

The next major indicator will come at the end of this week with the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) index -- the Federal Reserve's preferred gauge of inflation -- which could play a key role in the bank's plans for monetary policy.

Decision-makers have pushed back against speculation they could cut interest rates in September, with some even suggesting they are happy to keep them elevated into the new year.

Asian markets got off to a weak start for the week, with Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Taipei and Wellington all in negative territory.

Hong Kong was flat, while Tokyo, Bangkok, Mumbai, Singapore,

Manila and Jakarta edged higher.

London, Paris and Frankfurt rose.

Investors are also tracking developments in Japan as the yen struggles against the dollar, leading the country's top currency official to warn that authorities were ready to step in to provide support.

The Japanese unit is approaching the 160.17 per dollar mark that forced authorities to intervene in currency markets earlier in the year.

The movement led vice finance minister Masato Kanda to say officials were ready to step in 24 hours a day.

"If there are excessive currency fluctuations, it has a negative impact on the national economy," he said.

"In the event of excessive moves based on spec-



In brief

Costa learning Ricardo's penalty tricks

HARSEWINKEL (AFP): Portugal goalkeeper Diogo Costa said Monday he would wear his gloves if his team end up in a Euro 2024 penalty shoot-out, 20 years to the day after Ricardo famously removed his to knock England out on penalties. Ricardo is now Portugal's goalkeeping coach and working with Costa, with the nation already guaranteed to finish top of Group F ahead of their final match against Georgia. Former stopper Ricardo, 48, took his gloves off before saving Darius Vassell's penalty and then scored the winning spot-kick himself to send hosts Portugal through to the Euro 2004 semi-finals. "We haven't talked about that yet, (but) it's a privilege to have Ricardo with us every day, to share moments and train with him," Costa told a news conference. "He gives me all the advice so that I can save penalties... but I think it will always be with gloves on." Portugal finished as runners-up to Greece in 2004, but won the Euros for the first time in 2016. They face Georgia on Wednesday in Gelsenkirchen having already booked their spot in the last 16 with a 2-1 win over the Czech Republic followed by a 3-0 victory against Turkey. "Representing the national team is always the top of the top," continued Porto goalkeeper Costa, 24. "(If we won the Euros) I envision great madness, an immense joy. It will be something indescribable. "But our focus is on beating Georgia and playing well."

Khatri bags title

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan's ace Waseem Khatri on Monday won the 36th Pakistan Scrabble Championship that concluded at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Karachi. Khatri emerged as the National Champion after a hard fought battle lasting three days. The defending champion Hassan Hadi was unable to compete this year due to his professional engagements, said a press release. This is the 11th national title for Waseem confirming his status as the best scrabble player ever produced by Pakistan. The former world youth champion Ali Salman was the runner-up and his younger brother Affan Salman finished 3rd. An open tournament was also organized on the 3rd and last day which was attended by 110 players. In the Beginners category, Syed Hussain emerged as the winner while the Novice category was won by Hamad Asif and the Recreational category was won by Syeda Munhal.

World 100m champion Lyles qualifies

PARIS (Agencies): World champion Noah Lyles won the 100m at the US Olympic trials to qualify for this summer's Games in Paris. Lyles, who missed out on the 100m at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics after finishing seventh at the trials, equalled his personal best of 9.83 seconds in Eugene, Oregon. Kenny Bednarek, who was second in 9.87, and Tokyo 2020 silver medalist Fred Kerley, who was third in 9.88, also qualified. "Three years ago I got second to last. This year I came and won it," said Lyles, who ran a wind-assisted 9.80 in the semi-finals. "Part of the plan. Nothing changed. Might be a shock to everybody else, but when you know the goal, you know the goal."



TULA: Pakistan Military Attache to Russian Federation Brig Muhammad Asif Khan alongwith Pakistan Military Cadets who are participating in games in Russian city of Tula after the opening ceremony. —APP Photo

Australia on brink of exit after defeat by India

ST LUCIA (Agencies): Australia's T20 World Cup hopes are hanging by a thread after Rohit Sharma's scintillating 92 led India to a 24-run win in St Lucia. India finish top of Super 8s Group 1 with a perfect record and will face defending champions England in the semi-finals in Guyana on Thursday (15:30 BST).

Mitchell Starc in the 12th with the score at 127-2. Australia actually fought back well to limit India to 205-5. David Warner, in probably his last international innings, was caught at slip off Arshdeep Singh in the first over of the Australia reply for six, before Travis Head and captain Mitchell Marsh took the attack to

from Rohit, the India captain perhaps fuelled by the memory of defeat at the hands of Australia in a home 50-over World Cup final last autumn.

He got up and running in the third over with back-to-back sixes over the covers off Mitchell Starc. With two more maximums in the same over, it cost a total of 29 runs.

Hazlewood returned remarkable figures of 1-14 from his four overs.

India found the boundary only four times in the final five overs, though that included two sixes from Hardik Pandya off Marcus Stoinis in the 19th and another six by Ravindra Jadeja off Pat Cummins in the 20th. Still, thanks to Rohit, India already had plenty.

South Africa beat West Indies to reach T20 World Cup semi-finals : South Africa edged the West Indies by three wickets in a rain-affected Super Eights match on Sunday to reach the T20 World Cup semi-finals and eliminate the hosts.

Chasing a revised 123 off 17 overs, South Africa stuttered to 110-7 as Roston Chase took three wickets, but they reached their target when Marco Jansen hit the first ball of the final over for six. Man of the match Tabraiz Shamsi took 3-27 after South Africa won the toss and restricted the West Indies to 135-8 at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua.

All-rounder Chase top scored with 52, featuring in an 81-run third-wicket partnership with Kyle Mayers (35 off 34 balls) before giving the West Indies hope by taking 3-12 with his off-spin. Jansen's unbeaten 21 saw the Proteas to victory at 124-7 when he smashed the final six off Obed McCoy. "The last time I played here I went for 50 runs and there was a lot of chatter going around," said Shamsi. "I was happy to come back and perform my role, but credit as well to the guys who bowled before me because they set it up beautifully."

First time ever Pak Contingent taking part in games

F.P. Report

TULA: For the first time ever a Pakistani sports contingent comprising cadets from 3 Military Colleges are participating in multiple sports events organised in Russian City, Tula under the auspices of Intl Military Sports Council.

The opening ceremony was held today at Tula, Russia, witnessed by Russian Dy Def minister, Mr Evkurov Yunys- Bek as guest of honour. Brig Muhammad Asif Khan, Pakistan's Defence Attaché to Russian Federation attended the ceremony. Delegation comprises 3 officers and 15 Cadets from Military college Jhelum, Military College Murree and Military College Sui. Sports events will include many track events, volley ball, basket ball and Boxing competitions. The sports Events will be conducted from 24 Jun to 30 Jun 2024.

Khawaja comments on Babar Azam's future

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Australia's left-handed opener Usman Khawaja shared his opinion on Babar Azam's future as Pakistan's white-ball captain after the former champions' dismal run at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024.

Khawaja, while addressing the media, at an event in Melbourne on Monday, threw his weight behind Babar to continue leading the Green Shirts in white-ball cricket.

"It's Babar Azam's decision to captain, if he can, he should," stated Usman Khawaja.

The Pakistan-born Australian cricketer also pointed out the lack of stability in Pakistan Cricket, stating such uncertainty makes it difficult for the players to perform.

"When I look from the outside, changes are constant in the Pakistan cricket. Selection committee, staff and players keep changing," said Khawaja.

"Such a situation is difficult because stability is very important. When there is no stability, it is difficult for players to perform. Pakistan cricket team never sees stability," he added.

It is worth mentioning here that Pakistan's white-ball captain Babar Azam has been under hot water following the national men's team's early exit from the ongoing T20 World Cup 2024.

Pakistan had a disastrous start to their campaign as they suffered a shock loss against the co-host United States of America (USA) after a Super Over.

The 2009 champions then succumbed to a gut-wrenching defeat at the hands of arch-rivals India at a jam-packed Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York on June 9.

The back-to-back defeats put Pakistan on the verge of an early exit and despite their victories over Canada and Ireland, they failed to reach the Super Eights stage.

Malaysia to host 3-day Pakistani Tape Ball Cricket contest

MIRPUR (APP): For the first time in Malaysia's history, the city of Kuala Lumpur will host a three-day Pakistani tape ball cricket tournament titled "Meri Cricket Meri Jeet," starting on June 28. This highly anticipated event is organized in collaboration with Bank Al Habib and IPG, a press release said on Monday.

The tournament will feature regional teams from various parts of Pakistan, including Swat Cheeta, Swabi Champion, Sialkot Badshah, Rawalpindi Express, Buner Bahadur, Karachi Heroes, Lahore Sherdl, and Peshawar Leopards. Entry to the "Meri Cricket Meri Jeet" festival will be free for cricket fans, with special programmes arranged for families and children.

Pakistani cricket legends Sarfraz Ahmed, Rashid Latif, and Imran Nazir will attend the event to encourage and support the players. The event will also feature a lucky draw with various prizes, including a grand prize of a return air ticket to Pakistan.

Fans that catch the ball outside the boundary will have the opportunity to take pictures with the legendary Pakistani cricketers. A joint meeting involving representatives from mainstream Pakistani media houses in Malaysia, the Malaysia Pakistan Business Council, and other dignitaries was held at a renowned Pakistani restaurant in Kuala Lumpur.

The meeting, chaired by Dato' Sri Nazir Mira Salam, Chairman of the Malaysia Pakistan Business Council, reviewed arrangements to promote a positive image of Pakistan through the cricket festival and to strengthen the bonds between the people of Malaysia and Pakistan.

The meeting also discussed plans to welcome Pakistani cricket superstars Sarfraz Ahmed, Imran Nazir, and Rashid Latif. Dato' Sri Nazir Mira Salam and other officials thanked the organizers for elevating Pakistan's profile abroad and invited the Pakistani community in Malaysia to attend the event in large numbers.

To entertain the community, renowned Pakistani singers Jabran Raheel and Sofia Kaif will perform at the festival. The meeting was attended by officials of the Pakistan Business Council Malaysia, including Humayun Habib, Muhammad Saleem, Muhammad Shuja, Irfan Latif Seifi, Waqar Ahmed Khan, Dato' Muhammad Jamil, MS Athar Qureshi, Haji Wajid Ali Khan, and several prominent social personalities and journalists.

Thousands of Pakistanis residing in Malaysia are expected to attend the event with their families and friends to witness the much-anticipated tournament featuring national heroes of Pakistan.

Asian Jr Individual Squash C'ship from Tuesday

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) is set to host the 31st Asian Junior Individual Squash Championship from June 25 to 29, here at the Mushaf Squash Complex.

In a press conference here at a local hotel on Monday, Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) General Secretary Air Commodore (R) Amir Nawaz along with Former World Champion Qamar Zaman and Group Captain Irfan Asghar announced that the Asian Junior Boys and Girls Individual Squash Championship 2024 will be held in collaboration with the Asian Squash Federation. The championship will feature 12 countries, including Hong Kong, India, Iran, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Singapore, and Sri Lanka, with a total of 107 men players, 84 women players, 36 officials, and 44 parents participating.

Players will compete in the U-19, U-17, U-15, and U-13 events of the Asian Junior Individual Squash Championship. The PSF considers it an honor to host this historic event, aiming to provide a conducive environment for both domestic and international players.

Pakistan has entered 24 men and 19 women players in various age groups, who have undergone rigorous training to excel in the championship. Senior officials of the Asian Squash Federation will participate in the event, which promises to be a thrilling spectacle for squash enthusiasts. The Technical Delegate appointed by Asian Squash Federation (ASF) is Al-Ardy Ally, while WSF International Referee Tahir Khanzada will lead a panel of 23 referees to conduct matches at both venues.

The Pakistan Squash Federation has made elaborate arrangements for the championship, ensuring a memorable experience for all participants. Pakistan has a remarkable history in the Asian Junior Individual Championship, with numerous Gold and Silver Medal wins. The first Asian Junior Individual was held at Singapore in 1983 in which Umar Hayat of Pakistan won gold and his country mate Ahmed Gul won a silver medal.

A total of 30 Asian Junior Individual Squash Championships were conducted till 2023 in which Pakistani players showed excellent performance and won a gold and silver medals. Apart from Jansher Khan, Abdul Rashid, Amjad Khan, Mansoor Zaman, Farhan Mehboob, Amir Atlas, Danish Atlas, Ali Bukhari, Tayyab Aslam, Israr Ahmed and Noor Zamam has also won Asian Junior Championship titles.

Michael Vaughan labels Afghanistan 'second best Asian team'

LONDON (Agencies): Former England captain and renowned commentator Michael Vaughan made a massive claim as he called Afghanistan the second-best Asian team following the side's astonishing victory over Australia in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024.

Vaughan lauded the Afghanistan cricket team, stating that it has extremely skilful players, who were led brilliantly by star spinner Rashid Khan. "Great win for Afghanistan .. they have a genuine chance now of reaching the final. They will fancy beating any of the teams in the other group in Trinidad with their bowling attack," wrote Vaughan.

"It's no surprise anymore that Afghanistan produce performances like we have just witnessed .. Extremely skilful set of players & brilliantly led by [Rashid Khan]," he added. Michael Vaughan then acknowledged a user's remarks, who said Afghanistan is the second-best team in Asia, but the former cricketer specified the claim to white-ball cricket. Afghanistan, on Saturday, created history, when they registered a comfortable 21-run victory over one of the most dominant forces in the world, Australia.

The victory also revived Afghanistan's chances to qualify for the T20 World Cup 2024 as they now need to win their last Super Eights fixture against Bangladesh and hope India beat Australia. Put into bat first, Afghanistan registered a formidable total of 148/6 in the allotted 20 overs, courtesy of a solid start provided by the openers. Both Afghan openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran scored half-centuries while the rest made modest contributions. In response, Australia were bundled out on a paltry 127 and thus succumbed to a gut-wrenching defeat. Glenn Maxwell waged a lone battle for the 2021 champions with a gutsy half-century but his efforts were not enough to steer his side to victory.



Australia will go out if Afghanistan beat Bangladesh in the final group game (01:30 BST on Tuesday), with South Africa waiting in a semi-final in Trinidad.

A win would have put Australia on the brink of the last four, but they were overwhelmed by the brilliance of Rohit, who clobbered eight sixes and seven fours in 41 balls for one of the all-time great knocks at a T20 World Cup.

After Australia won the toss, India reached three figures inside nine overs and Rohit was bowled by

India. Their stand of 81, from eight overs, was ended by Axar Patel's astonishing one-handed catch on the deep square leg boundary to dismiss Marsh for 37.

Head continued, but boundaries dwindled and the required rate climbed. When Head miscued Jasprit Bumrah to Rohit for 76, the game was up. Australia lurched to 181-7 and are left hoping for a huge favour from Bangladesh in order to avoid going out.

Remarkable Rohit leads ominous India This was a brutal display

Not helped by a strong crosswind, the majority of Australia's attack was decimated. Rohit added 87 from just 38 balls for the second wicket with Rishabh Pant, whose contribution was only 15.

Rohit was on course to break Chris Gayle's 47-ball record for the fastest century in a men's T20 World Cup when Starc returned to squeeze a yorker underneath an attempted swipe over the leg side.

India's momentum stalled as Australia finally found some composure. Given the carnage, Josh

Chairman PCB presides important meeting over quality of domestic cricket

F.P. Report

LAHORE : Chairman PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi presided over an important meeting regarding the quality of domestic cricket at the National Cricket Academy. The meeting, which lasted for three hours, focused on strengthening domestic cricket. Chairman Naqvi gave principled approval to the plan aimed at promoting quality domestic cricket.

COO PCB, Salman Naseer, CFO PCB, Javed Murtaza, and directors of International Cricket, High Performance Domestic

Cricket, Commercial, and other relevant PCB officials attended the meeting.

Chairman emphasised the promotion of quality domestic cricket at all levels. He announced that various tournaments would be consistently organised from the club level to the national level.

Chairman directed that promising players must be groomed professionally and stated that excellent coaches should train the new talent to enhance their skills. Performance, fitness, and merit will be the key criteria for advancing players.

The participants also decided to improve the standard of coaching in the upcoming domestic cricket season and to review the domestic contracts. A master coach will be appointed to train domestic cricket coaches.

It was also discussed that players must participate in domestic cricket tournaments to be considered for the national team selection. Furthermore, the selection criteria for the national team will be strictly based on performance and fitness showcased in the domestic events.

A mutual agreement over zero compromise on

merit, performance, and fitness was reached.

The meeting decided to hold tournaments for all three formats of the game to promote quality domestic cricket in the 2024-25 season. The chairman also highlighted the need for urgent efforts to unearth new talent at the grassroots level.

He reiterated that investment in new talent will promote cricket at the grassroots level and yield positive results.

The meeting participants also reviewed the domestic cricket structures of various high-performing cricket nations.



PESHAWAR: A group photo of chief guest Malik Abdullah Saraf, Chairman KP Netball Association Manzarkhan, General Secretary Naveed Khan with the players at Peshawar Stadium.



In brief

Crime review meeting held

RAWALPINDI (APP): A crime review meeting was held in chair of Superintendent of Police (SP) Pothohar Nasir Nawaz here on Monday. According to police spokesman, the police officials from Cantt, Civil Lines circles present on the occasion. It was discussed in a meeting to combat crime and to review ongoing cases while devising strategies to apprehend suspects swiftly. Emphasizing the timely preparation of legal documents, SP Nasir Nawaz underscored the importance of arresting individuals involved in ongoing investigations. He further stressed accelerating efforts against vehicle and motorcycle thefts, intensifying operations against drug traffickers, and ensuring the safety and security of citizens' lives and property. Nasir Nawaz reiterated that providing a courteous and efficient service to citizens visiting police stations must be top priority. He said that all available resources will be utilized to maintain law and order and uphold peace in the region.

09 illegal arm holders apprehended

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested nine illegal arm holders and recovered arms, ammunition from their possession during crackdown here on Monday. According to police spokesman, Rata Amaral police held Fayyaz and Umar recovered 01 pistol 30 bore each from his possession. Similarly, Waris Khan police recovered 01 pistol 09mm from Haroon and Tariq. Following operation, Naseerabad police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Nasir.Gujjar Khan police recovered 01 rifle 30 bore from Rafiqat and 01 pistol 30 bore was recovered from Talib.Dhamyal police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Usman. Kahuta Police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Faisal.Police have registered cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. Divisional SPs commended police teams said that operations will be continued against those who possesses illegal weapons without any discrimination.

AIOU celebrates Golden Jubilee

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has completed 50 years of its educational journey (1974 to 2024). According to the AIOU, Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, had decided to celebrate the Golden Jubilee by organizing 24 events throughout the year (January to December 2024). In this regard, seminars, conferences organized by various departments, alumni ceremony, education expo and Islamabad, Punjab and KPK chapter of convocations were held. Convocation of Balochistan and Sindh chapters is in the pipeline. A two-day International Conference on Modern Trends in Chemistry was held on February 14 and 15, a two-day International Conference on Research and Practices in Education on February 28 and 29, while a three-day International Conference on Ijtihad Bil Maqasid was held on May 22-24, 2024. The 37th annual international conference of Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) will be held on October 15-17, in which more than 100 vice-chancellors, rectors, professors and around 250 national-level education experts and researchers of open universities of Asian countries will present papers. The 2nd International Conference on Cultural Dialogue is being held on 2nd and 3rd July 2024.

Pakistan's economy hinges on stability, security: Mushahid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed on Monday said that political stability and security are vital for boosting economy of this country.

Improved security conditions and political stability are crucial for attracting foreign investment in this part of the region, he said while talking to a private news channel. In the past, our security operations, like Zarb-e-Azb, Radd-ul-Fasaad and Rah-e-Nijat had been successful due to political support of the governments, he said adding

that Azm-e-Istehkam could achieve the results if the political parties and stakeholders fully cooperate with the incumbent government.

Replying to a question about the achievement of the last operations, he said that in the Army Public School (APS) tragic incident, the then prime minister, Mian Nawaz Sharif, called a meeting of all political parties to formulate a National Action Plan (NAP) to launch the action against the miscreants and terrorists, he added.

After the NAP imple-

mentation and political support, the valiant Pakistan Jawan's, law enforcement agencies, security institutions and civil organizations had made tremendous success in war against terrorism, he said.

Commenting on BRICS, he hoped that after the inclusion of Pakistan in BRICS nations, we could address all the issues being face by many countries.

To another question, he said that Russia is keen to expand economic, diplomatic and business relations with Pakistan.

Sabzwari: Limit of Taxable income of salaried class may be increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary leader of Muthidda Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQMP) in the upper house Senator Faisal Sabzwari on Monday advised the government to increase the limit of Taxable income of salaried class and the tax burden may be decreased.

Taking part in the budget debate, the senator said that all stakeholders are well aware with the difficulties of the country however the existing tax system cannot alone provide a solution to

get out of the economic trap.

He said people will pay taxes voluntarily if the burden on them is decreased and in the meantime untaxed areas may be found.

Farmer should be given blanket exemption, said the senator adding that indirect taxes are more ruthless and they a common Pakistani are paying tax more than his capacity through indirect taxes.

"We must think out of the box" said the senator suggesting that the provinces should be taken on board for the repayment

of debt and none of the province should be allowed to return the lapsed budget to the government for the payment of IMF.

Senator Faisal Vawda taking part in the budget debate said that this budget will be approved by the house at all costs and latter the government will privatize the sick units.

He congratulated the finance minister for preparing a budget in a very short span of time and assured full support on behalf of the house on critical issues like privatization.

ICT Admin cracks down on dengue breeding sites

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has ramped up its anti-dengue efforts with a series of targeted actions across the Federal Capital, detecting dengue larvae at 53 locations and arresting 16 people for violations of dengue Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

On the directions of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Assistant Commissioners (ACs) have been conducting extensive surveillance and enforcement activities, resulting in multiple arrests, said the spokesman of the ICT administration.

In a recent operation, AC City led a team to inspect commercial areas in sector F-7 and arrested four individuals after dengue larvae were found on their premises. These actions reflect a

stringent approach towards controlling the mosquito-borne disease.

Meanwhile, AC Secretariat held a meeting with dengue staff at the Rural Health Center (RHC) in Bhara Kahu to review ongoing surveillance strategies. The session focused on refining plans to effectively monitor and control dengue outbreaks in the area.

Similarly, the DC held a review meeting to discuss the status and effectiveness of the current anti-dengue campaign. The meeting included detailed briefings from all Assistant Commissioners, highlighting the comprehensive efforts being made across the city.

On the occasion, the DC emphasized the importance of coordinated action in every neighborhood. The campaign, aimed at identi-

fying and eliminating dengue breeding sites, has seen significant enforcement measures.

In one operation, nine people were arrested at Gol Market in F-7 for failing to take necessary precautions against dengue. The shop linked to the spread of dengue in this area has been sealed, and legal actions were taken against the responsible shopkeepers. Similarly, in sector F-1, three more arrests were made as part of the anti-dengue efforts.

DC Islamabad affirmed that stringent actions would continue against those found responsible for the presence and spread of dengue larvae. The ICT administration is determined to curb the spread of the disease through rigorous enforcement and community cooperation.

Randhawa directs to clean all drains in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chaudhry Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Monday directed to clean and channelize all the drains in both urban and rural areas of the federal capital.

Chairing a meeting to assess the preparations for cleaning Islamabad's drains before the monsoon season, he highlighted the importance of valuing all lives, insisting that the work be done indiscriminately.

He instructed the Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad to supervise the entire operation and directed the Environment Wing to quickly clear any blockages in the drains.

Muhammad Ali also tasked the sanitation staff with ensuring the thorough cleaning of the drains. Machinery from various departments, including the MPO, will be employed, and the cleaning crews will receive the necessary machinery and technical support.

Upon completion of the

cleaning process, the Assistant Commissioner and Rescue 1122 will inspect the drains and submit a report, he added.

He said that drains in low-lying areas would be closely watched, with CDA staff and machinery on duty around the clock during the monsoon season.

Muhammad Ali also directed the immediate activation of all emergency response centers in Islamabad and the issued the helpline numbers for citizens in case of emergencies.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of sunset in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Anjum demands inclusion of locals in CDA board

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz's Anjum Aqeel Khan said on Monday that local representatives should be included in the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Housing Foundation boards. While participating in the general budget debate, he said that representation on these boards would hopefully enhance the performance of the departments.

He said that the stalled development of CDA sectors would accelerate with these incentives. Highlighting issues of water, health, and education in the federal capital, he urged the government to address these issues as a priority. He called for a parliamentary committee to be constituted to examine who has worked for development, good foreign policy, and the construction of motorways and roads.

He also highlighted the 100-day achievements of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and said that the government is determined to provide relief to the people. He said that the best budget had been announced in the current economic situation.

IRSA releases 215,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 215,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 282,800 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1465.74 feet and was 67.74 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 124,700 cusecs and 70,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1182.05 feet, which was 134.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 42,500 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 126,300, 111,000, 127,100 and 86,600 cusecs respectively.

Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 77,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 7,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Amir Muqam for representing his people at all levels

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Engineer Amir Muqam has said that he had always represented FATA, PATA/Malakand Division at the center in 2016, 2018, 2023 and would continue to do so in the future.

He said that he would continue to represent his people at all levels regardless of the results.

In a meeting with the delegation of Malakand

Traders Federation and Swat Chamber of Commerce, Amir Muqam reiterated that he would continue to raise awareness about the sacrifices of the people of FATA and PATA/Malakand Division in the Cabinet and Parliament, said a press release.

The minister said that he was thankful to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the members of the Cabinet and especially Rana

Sanaulah, Advisor to the Prime Minister, for supporting his stand regarding FATA and PATA tax exemption.

The members of the delegation thanked the minister for his efforts for tax exemption of FATA, Pata/Malakand Division.

The minister also discussed with the delegation the problems faced by the business community and assured to resolve the problems of the business community.

DC directs for improvement in education deliverance

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner Murree Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi on Monday visit Government Boys High School Phagwari.

He reviewed the general state of affairs being practiced by the school including staff attendance, teaching methodologies, school discipline and extra curriculum

activities. He also interacted with the students and inquired about the teachers performance.

He said education remains an essential tool for progress of a country, which plays the role of a ladder to take nations at heights of wisdom and intellect. An educated society is capable of solv-

ing its problems with dedication.

The deputy commissioner directed the teachers to adopt educational activities in line with modern requirements to deliver improved quality education. He also directed the school administration to further improve cleanliness and sanitation conditions in the school.

Governor Sindh stresses to promote tourism sites of country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori Monday stressed for the promotion of tourists sites in the country to strengthen Pakistan's economy and enhance 'cultural activities' for youngsters to enable them to be future leaders and effective contributors for society.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that Pakistan is blessed with numerous tourist attractions, from civilizations of antiquity to unique heritage including diverse topography from mountains to beaches and religious sites, adding, we need to project the right image of the country to the outside world.

He said present govern-

ment is committed and taking all possible steps to improve the basic infrastructure including the road network, water and sanitation, safety and security for the promotion of country tourism.

He said government will continuously focus on niche tourism segments such as business events, Eco-tourism, community-based tourism (CBT), medical and wellness, edu-tourism, and experiential travel to bring more tourists in the country, adding, we want to promote local cuisine as part of our cultural heritage and strengthen local culinary identity.

He further pointed out that there is also need to work on new mechanisms

that contribute to boosting tourism between other countries, while we need to focus on increasing the number of flights between other nations.

He stressed the need to further strengthen cultural relations and enhance joint cultural activities with brotherly countries to strengthen cultural and people-to-people relations which will produce positive results.

The Governor Sindh also admired hill station of Murree and heaven like valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan which are a matter of immense attraction for tourists all around the world.

He also urged the youth to value and promote their culture and tradition.

NDMA releases monsoon projection for key regions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Monday issued a comprehensive monsoon forecast, highlighting expected rainfall intensities and potential impacts across various regions of Pakistan for the month of July.

The forecast indicates that rainfall at isolated places of Mardan, Malakand and Hazara Divisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was expected in the third week of July while heavy to very heavy rainfall is expected in the fourth week of July, a news release said.

In the first and second week of July Lahore, Sargodha, Faisalabad and Gujranwala Districts of Punjab and capital territory, Islamabad will receive 15-50 mm rainfall at isolated places while in fourth week potential flooding in ICT, Rawalpindi, Lahore,

Sargodha, Gujranwala & Faisalabad, hill torrents in DG Khan, moderate to heavy rains in Sahiwal, Multan & Bahawalpur is expected.

As per the latest projections from the NEOC Mirpurkhas, Karachi, Hyderabad, Nawabshah, Larkana & Sukkur districts of Sindh will receive 30-75 mm rainfall in the month of July while in second and fourth week of July heavy to very heavy rainfall is expected in these areas. In fourth week of July Astore District of Gilgit-Baltistan and isolated places of AJ&K to receive heavy to very heavy rainfall, potential severe flooding in nullahs and rivers.

Moderate to very heavy rains may cause riverine and flash flooding, urban flooding, landslides in hilly areas, and potential GLOF events. In light of these projections, the National Disaster Management Authority

(NDMA) has advised Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs), District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs), and other relevant line departments to remain vigilant and prepared to respond to any emergent situations. It is imperative for departments to ensure the pre-placement of machinery and the availability of relevant staff in vulnerable areas.

Local departments are urged to sensitize residents living along riverbanks and associated nullahs about the expected increase in water flows, and to facilitate timely evacuation of at-risk populations from low-lying and flood-prone areas as per evacuation plans. Additionally, citizens are advised to take extreme precautionary measures, such as staying away from electric poles and weak infrastructure, and refraining from driving or walking in waterways.



ISLAMABAD: Youngsters taking water buckets for home use at G 7 in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Financial aid extended
KABUL (BNA): ACTED organization steps in to aid 134 families affected by natural disasters with crucial financial assistance. Mawlawi Mohammad Akram Akbari, Head of Natural Disasters Management in Badakhshan province, announced that ACTED, in collaboration with their office, has disbursed more than 3.1m Afghanis to 134 families impacted by natural disasters across the districts of Baharak, Jorm, Yangan, Warduj, Raghistan and Fayzabad center of the province.

Minister stresses transparency
KABUL (BNA): Minister of Agriculture, in a meeting with officials from the "Livelihood Improvement through Inclusive Food Security" project, emphasized the importance of transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency in project implementation. Mawlawi Sadr Azam Osmani, Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, met with officials from the "Livelihood Improvement through Inclusive Food Security" project to discuss its implementation.

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

IEA ensures equal access to education for all prisoners

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Noor-ul-Haq Anwar, the head of the Islamic Emirate's General Directorate of Administrative Affairs, made a notable visit to Kabul's central prison where he personally engaged with detainees and individuals under arrest. His visit aimed to inquire about their well-being and address their concerns.

In this visit, Mawlawi Anwar was accompanied by officials including Mawlawi Mohammad Yusuf Mistari, head of the General Directorate of Prisons, Qari Habibullah Badar, deputy head of the Office of the Prison Administration, and Qari Mohammad Gul Jigar

Khun, chief of Kabul province's detention center.

The head of the General Directorate of Prisons visited the detainees and ensured that their consent is sought in all matters related to the administration of prisons, emphasizing the importance of respecting their human and legal rights without coercion, secrecy, or imposition.

Meanwhile, the head of the General Directorate of Prisons assured Mawlawi Noor-ul-Haq Anwar, the head of the General Directorate of Administrative Affairs, that comprehensive programs in religious studies, modern education, and vocational training have

been provided to inmates in all prisons.

Mawlawi Mistari also mentioned that the civilian and military officials along with personnel work tirelessly day and night to responsibly manage and provide necessary facilities, services, and opportunities for prisoners, ensuring their rights and well-being are upheld effectively.

In the end, Mawlawi Noor-ul-Haq Anwar, the head of General Directorate of Administrative Affairs, expressed satisfaction with the activities undertaken for prisoners by the Directorate of the Prisons and pledged for cooperation and support.

World realizes it needs to interact with IEA govt

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan's acting minister of foreign affairs told ministerial staff on Monday, after the Eid al-Adha holidays, that the IEA's invitation to the upcoming UN-led Doha meeting was testimony to the world realizing it needs to interact with the Islamic Emirate government.

Muttaqi also said that Afghanistan security agencies reported that there had been no security incidents over Eid.

According to him, tens of thousands of travelers returned to the country for Eid, which shows they trust the system.

Muttaqi said Kabul has hosted numerous delegations from a number of countries and organizations over the past few months and had made good progress in interacting with the world.

He said hopes among the regime's enemies "has been reduced to dust and the world community has come to believe that there is no other way but to interact with the Islamic Emirate".

According to Muttaqi, just as the Islamic Emirate has diplomatic, political and commercial relations with neighboring countries and the region, it wants to have such relations with European and Western countries.

Muttaqi also stated that during this solar year, work will commence on numerous developmental projects.

1000 refugees return home from Iran

NIMROZ (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugee Affairs of Afghanistan announced that more than a thousand refugees have returned to Afghanistan from Iran, either voluntarily or forcibly, through the Silk Bridge in Nimroz province of Afghanistan.

In a press release on Monday, June 24, the ministry stated that 486 of these individuals have been introduced to the United Nations for assistance.

According to the press release, the Ministry of Refugee Affairs mentioned that six unaccompanied children were among them and were introduced to a charity organization, while 29 families received assistance from this ministry.

The Ministry of Refugee Affairs also reported the return of 81 refugees from Pakistan.

According to the officials of this ministry, 16 families, including 81 people, were forcibly returned from Pakistan and were introduced to the offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration for assistance after being registered with the Department of Refugee Affairs.

Amid a dire humanitarian crisis, Afghan refugees are being forcibly deported from Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. These deportations have exacerbated the already severe conditions faced by returnees, who struggle with the lack of essential resources such as food, shelter, medical care, and job opportunities in Afghanistan.

In Iran, many Afghan refugees have faced harassment and forced expulsions, leading to a significant number being sent back to Afghanistan without any support systems in place. This sudden return leaves them vulnerable to starvation, homelessness, and health issues, further deepening the humanitarian crisis.

Pakistan has also intensified its deportation efforts, often rounding up Afghan refugees and sending them back across the border. This practice not only disrupts the lives of thousands but also places an additional burden on Afghanistan's fragile infrastructure, which is ill-equipped to handle the influx of returnees and provide them with the necessary support to rebuild their lives.

Afghan mining sector: South Africans and Russians express interest

KABUL (Ariana News): A group of South Africans met with Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the deputy prime minister for economic affairs, in Kabul on Monday to discuss the possibility of investing in Afghanistan's mining sector.

According to Baradar's office, the group is keen to invest in the extraction and processing of minerals.

Among the delegation were health sector experts who also stated they would be willing to work with the ministry of public health in Afghanistan to establish a well-equipped hospital.

Baradar assured the delegation of the Islamic Emirate's full cooperation in both mining and health sectors.

Russian investors

In a separate meeting, Russian investors held talks with Afghanistan's acting minister of mines and petroleum Shahabuddin Delawar on the Balkhab



Copper Mine in Sar-e-Pul and Balkh provinces.

The ministry said in a statement that the Russian investors had been impressed at the opportunities available and had been especially interested in the Balkhab Copper Mine.

Russia is one of the world's leading mineral

industries and is among the leading world producers of a vast range of mineral commodities, including aluminum, cement, copper, magnesium compounds and metals, gas, and oil among others.

In 2019, the country was the second worldwide producer of platinum, vanadium and cobalt. It also has huge reserves of gold, silver and uranium.

South Africa meanwhile has a vast mining industry and is most well-known for its gold, diamonds, platinum and coal resources and the mining industry is a primary economic contributor.

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Citizens criticize delays and rejections of visa applications

KABUL (TOLONews): Some citizens of the country criticized the rejection of their visa applications for Pakistan. They said they face numerous challenges and, even after months of effort, are unable to obtain a visa for Pakistan.

Pakistan is one of the countries that many citizens of the country travel to for various reasons, especially for the treatment of their patients.

Abdul Raziq said that his wife has cancer, and he was able to get a token to take

her to Pakistan for treatment, but now it has been forty days since he applied for a visa to Pakistan, and he still hasn't received it.

He told TOLONews: "At the same time that the patient's visa is given, we also need to get vaccinated. Now who should we send her with, because she is a woman."

Some of these citizens asked the interim government to discuss this challenge with the officials of the Pakistani embassy in the country.

"We applied, but I wish the visa would come so that I can go to Pakistan for treatment. But how long do we have to wait? Six months or a year?" said Afzal, one of the applicants for a Pakistan's visa.

Waisuddin, who established an office for Pakistan's visa applications in Kabul 13 years ago, said that now most applications are rejected, causing a recession in the business of travel companies and a boom in the black market. "Previously, we regis-

tered the visa, and it took 4 to 10 days, now it takes one to one and a half months," said Waisuddin, head of a travel company.

"The black markets have ruined our business. The embassy does not issue visas to patients and young people," said Abdul Samad, another travel company official.

So far, we have not been able to obtain the views of Pakistan's embassy in Kabul regarding the reason for the rejection of citizens' visa applications for Pakistan.

Fruit exporters in Nangarhar concerned about exporting goods

JALALABAD (Ariana News): Exporters of fresh fruits and vegetables in Nangarhar said that they face many problems exporting their goods to neighbor country.

They said neighbor country has raised customs tariffs and also closes border from time to time.

They said these delays often result in the spoilage of fresh produce.

These exporters ask the Islamic Emirate to solve this issue.

Officials of the fresh fruit and vegetable exporters' union in Nangarhar also complain about neighbor country's actions and said that they incur huge losses when exporting.

Meanwhile, Nangarhar officials said they are trying to solve these problems through dialogue with



neighbor country.

"The neighbor country side has promised us that they will solve these problems through dialogue, but unfortunately, despite their promise, the route is still

blocked. The Islamic Emirate tries to think of an alternative way to resolve the matter," said Siddiqullah Qureshi, head of information and culture in Nangarhar.

Provincial officials also announced efforts to create cold storage facilities for storing fresh vegetables and fruits and said that by doing this, they can prevent the loss of perishable goods.

Rights groups upset over exclusion of Afghan women at Doha meeting

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan's Islamic Emirate government is due to send officials to Qatar next weekend to meet top UN officials and envoys from up to 25 countries for a two-day gathering that rights groups have criticized for not including Afghan women, Reuters reported.

It will be the third such UN-led meeting in Doha, but the first attended by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA).

"Excluding women risks legitimizing the Taliban's (IEA) abuses and triggering irreparable harm to the UN's credibility as an advocate for women's rights and women's meaningful participation," Tirana Hassan, executive director at Human Rights Watch, said of the third planned Doha meeting.

UN political affairs chief Rosemary DiCarlo, UN special envoy on Afghanistan Roza Otunbayeva, and envoys from various countries are due to meet separately with

Afghan civil society groups after meeting with the IEA, the UN has said.

The Doha meetings are "part of a process and not a one-off" and women and civil society continue to be part of it, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.

"It also aims to encourage the de facto authorities to engage with the international community through a coordinated and structured approach for the benefit of the Afghan people," Dujarric said.

"Human rights and the rights of women and girls will feature prominently in all the discussions, certainly from the part of the UN," he added.

Since the IEA returned to power, most girls have been barred from high school and women from universities.

The IEA have also stopped most Afghan female staff from working at aid agencies, closed beauty salons, barred women from parks and curtailed travel for women in the absence of a male guardian.

The IEA have however repeatedly said they respect women's rights in accordance with Sharia law.

"Sideline critical discussions on human rights would be unacceptable and set a deeply damaging precedent," Amnesty International Secretary General Agnes Callamard said of the planned Doha meeting.

Otunbayeva has meanwhile said the Doha meeting would focus on private sector business and counter-narcotics, issues she described as linked to

women's rights.

She also said the upcoming meeting had "generated significant expectations that cannot realistically be met in a single meeting."

"We are trying to establish a process and preserve an important mechanism of consultation. We must be realistic about how much each meeting in this process can deliver, especially at this early stage where confidence and trust are insufficient," she told the UN Security Council on Friday.

48 killed in incidents

KABUL (TOLONews): The General Directorate of Traffic Police reported that 48 people have died as a result of 97 traffic incidents across the country during the days of Eid al-Adha. Hasibullah Mokhtar, the director-general of this directorate, told TOLONews that another 161 people were injured in these incidents.

The director-general of traffic police said: "We had 97 incidents resulting in approximately 161 injuries and 48 fatalities." Poor road conditions and reckless driving are cited as the main causes of traffic incidents in the country. A number of residents attribute the increase in traffic incidents to the rise in unregistered vehicles and urge authorities to take serious measures to reduce these incidents.

Minister announces media law update

PAKTIKA (TOLONews): The acting Minister of Information and Culture, in a meeting with journalists in Paktia, said that the previous public media law is in accordance with Sharia and the principles of the Islamic Emirate and, with minor differences, will soon be made available to the media.

Khairullah Khairkhw, the acting Minister of Information and Culture, added that this law emphasizes national interests and the protection of privacy, but some media outlets operating outside the country have crossed these boundaries.

The acting Minister of Information and Culture said: "There have not been many changes made to that law, the concepts are almost similar and are close to Sharia and the principles you mentioned. Besides those principles, no one has the right to intrude on another's privacy. There is a provision that will not take much time, and what is in it guarantees



national interests."

Some journalists in Paktia, in addition to finalizing the media law, also emphasized timely access to information.

"If the law prepared for the media is soon made available to the media, our work will be more organized and better," said Noor Ahmad Hairan, a journalist.

"The sooner the media law is implemented, the easier it will be for journalists to work. Access to information is also an important issue that we need to achieve in a timely

manner," said Saduddin Hakimi, another journalist.

"Our request is that the Ministry of Information and Culture should inform the provinces, either in writing or verbally, that information that is not confidential should be made available to every journalist," said Khalid Zaheen, another journalist.

The acting Minister of Information and Culture said that to achieve reform and healthy criticism, they welcome the media's reporting of the problems and demands of the people.

Herat iron mine secures \$5.5 billion investment

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum announced there will be investment from Türkiye, Iran, and the United Kingdom in the Ghorian iron mine in Herat.

The spokesman for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, Homayoun Afghan, said that the mine has been granted to these countries for 30 years with an investment volume of over \$5.5 billion dollars.

Afghan said: "The investment volume in these 4 blocks is over \$5.5 billion US dollars, which includes exploration, extraction, exploitation, and social services."

According to Afghan, the Ghorian iron mine in

Herat spans about 1,000 square kilometers, and due to a lack of facilities such as electricity and infrastructure, the iron mine processing is not currently carried out in the country.

A number of analysts emphasized the need to extract and process minerals within the country and said providing more facilities for domestic and foreign investors would be effective in increasing the country's internal revenues.

"If Afghanistan is recognized by the international community and banking restrictions are lifted, without a doubt, many countries will be interested in investing, especially in the mining sector," said Abdul

Nasir Reshtia, an economic analyst.

"The financial, energy, and security infrastructure for investors must be provided, which the Islamic Emirate must guarantee," said Taj Mohammad Talash, another economic analyst.

Based on information from the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, in the first two months of the current solar year, eight mining extraction contracts have been signed, with their investment volume reaching \$40 million dollars.

These mines include two large and six small mines, contracted with domestic companies.

IEA hails appointment of ambassador

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate welcomed the appointment of Nicaragua's non-resident ambassador to Afghanistan.

In a statement, the ministry mentioned that the Islamic Emirate views the establishment of diplomatic relations with Nicaragua as a positive development and hopes for the expansion of bilateral relations between the two countries.

According to the statement, the ministry has instructed the Embassy of the Islamic Emirate in China to maintain close working relations with the Nicaraguan Embassy in Beijing.

Part of the statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reads: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs considers the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Republic of Nicaragua a positive step and hopes that bilateral relations in areas of mutual interest will fur-

ther expand."

Earlier, Nicaraguan media reported that the country has appointed Michael Campbell as its non-resident ambassador to Afghanistan.

Rosario Murillo, the Vice President of Nicaragua, confirmed the appointment of their ambassador and added that the current ambassador in China will handle Afghanistan-related matters from Beijing.

The Vice President of Nicaragua said: "We thank the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, its people, its government, for the approval they have given to our comrade Michael Campbell."

"Any country that establishes diplomatic relations is beneficial for Afghanistan. Although Nicaragua is not a significant country, it will have an impact just as other countries establish relations," said Aziz Maarej, a former diplomat.

Some political analysts consider the appointment of Nicaragua's ambassador to Afghanistan important for increased interaction with countries and recognition of the Islamic Emirate.

"Any country from any continent that appoints an ambassador to Afghanistan or accepts Afghanistan's ambassador in their country indicates some level of interaction with Afghanistan," said Idris Khan Zazi, a political analyst.

"Countries with which we have had long-standing relations can engage with Afghanistan because Afghanistan is one of the founding countries of the United Nations," said Moeen Gul Samkanai, a political analyst.

Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America by area, with its capital in Managua. This is the first time the country has appointed a non-resident ambassador to Afghanistan.



SUKKUR: President Asif Ali Zardari chairing a meeting on security, law and order situation in Sindh.

Court grant final chance to PTI members

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Special Judge Anti-Corruption Court Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Salah-u-Din granted final opportunity to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members to present their lawyers before court in malpractices case, on Monday.

The accused including PTI members both former and current lawmakers are facing charges of corruption and illegal recruitment.

During the hearing, former assembly members Kamran Bangash, Timur Saleem Jhagra, and Mahmoud Jan appeared in court, while current assembly members Fazal Elahi, Asif Khan, and former MPA Gul Dad Khan did not appear and sought exemption from attendance.

According to the Anti-Corruption Department, all the accused are facing charges of illegal recruitment in Peshawar and Bajaur, and the department filed cases against them in the Anti-Corruption Court Peshawar and Timergarah respectively after conclusion of inquiry. The court has extended the interim bail of all the accused and adjourned the hearing til July 22 for Kamran Bangash and others while hearing for Gul Dad Khan and others adjourned till 1st July.

PHC orders publication of ad in election's result pleas: Peshawar High Court (PHC) Election Tribunal led by Justice Shakeel Ahmed has ordered the publication of an advertisement in newspapers to ensure presence of all parties involved in the case before the court, on Monday.

The election results challenged by independent candidates including Kamran Bangash, Mahmoud Jan, Malik Shahab, Arbab Jahadad, Arbab Muhammad Asim, and Sajid Nawaz backed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Provincial President Awami National Party (ANP) Mian Iftikhar Hussain also challenged the election results, alleging widespread manipulation.

PTI backed independent candidates represented by Shumail Butt, Ali Gohar and Mubashir Manzoor advocates while Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate appeared on behalf of ANP provincial president at PHC. The lawyers argued that the winners were declared losers, while the losers were declared winners.

The petitioners' lawyers argued that the Election Commission of Pakistan using delaying tactics in the legal process. They added that pleas regarding election results to be concluded within 180 as per Election Act 2018.

Former provincial minister Kamran Bangash said that the Supreme Court will grant reserved seats to PTI. This he said while talking to media personnel after hearing at PHC and stated that the current federal government has failed to prove its mandate and that there is a sense of uncertainty and unrest in the country.

Modi calls for 'consensus'

NEW DELHI (AFP): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to an emboldened opposition for "consensus" Monday, as parliament opened following an election setback that forced him into a coalition government for the first time in a decade.

Expected in the first session, which will run until July 3, is a preview of Modi's plans for his third term and the likely formal appointment of Rahul Gandhi as leader of the opposition — a post vacant since 2014. Modi's first two terms in office followed landslide wins for his right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), allowing his government to drive laws through parliament with only cursory debate.

Kundi for joint efforts to restore peace in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Faisal Karim Kundi announced that the government has initiated consultations with all political parties to address the pressing issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

During his visit to the Bacha Khan Centre of the Awami National Party (ANP), Governor met with senior party leaders to discuss security and political concerns. In his discussions with the ANP leadership, he emphasized the need for collective efforts from all stakeholders to improve the law and order situation in the province.

Governor affirmed his commitment to resolving provincial issues and promised to inform the federal government about the challenges faced by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. ANP's Provincial President, Mian Iftikhar Hussain, underscored the importance of implementing the national action plan in its true spirit.

Meanwhile, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi has said that lawyers have an

important role in ensuring supremacy of law and fulfilling of constitutional role as Governor is his top priority. He expressed these views while talking with a delegation of People's Lawyers Forum that called on him here at Governor House on Monday.

The delegation was led by Gohar Rehman Advocate and General Secretary Lajabar Khan Khalil Advocate. Talking to the delegation members, Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi said that bar and bench can play exemplary role in maintaining supremacy of constitution and dispensation of justice.

In the case of nepotism during dispensation of justice, the legal fraternity will be accountable to Allah and His creatures, Governor told delegation members. He said that when he took office, there were two Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, one was presented on social media to mislead the people, while the real Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is suffering from destruction.

The hard-working youth associated with the People's

Lawyers Forum have an important role to play in making the country in general and KP in particular as developed, he insisted. This is a public governor's house, the doors are open to all, Governor told the visiting guests.

He commended the suggestions given by delegation members and told them to give similar proposals to Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, he will highlight these issues in a better and active manner. He advised People Lawyers Forum to focus on sincere colleagues instead of numbers in organization, it will help you in better performance.

Governor expressed his thanks to party leadership for the appointment as Governor. In the past, the party has also appointed me to several positions to fulfill the trust. I will take your case and bring your rights from the center. President Peoples Lawyers Forum, Gohar Rehman thanked Governor KP to giving them time and said lawyers from all over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province are happy over his appointment.

Saudi Arabia confirms 1,301 deaths during Hajj

RIYADH (AFP): Saudi Arabia said that more than 1,300 faithful died during the hajj pilgrimage which took place during intense heat, and that most of the deceased did not have official permits. "Regrettably, the number of mortalities reached 1,301, with 83 percent being unauthorised to perform hajj and having walked long distances under direct sunlight, without adequate shelter or comfort," the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

An AFP tally last week, based on official statements and reports from diplomats involved in their countries' responses, put the toll at more than 1,100. The dead came from more than 10 countries stretching from the United States to Indonesia, and some governments are continuing to update their totals. Arab diplomats told AFP last week that Egyptians accounted for 658 deaths -- 630 of them unregistered pilgrims. The diplomats said the cause of death in most cases was heat-related.

Temperatures in Mecca this year climbed as high as 51.8 degrees Celsius (125 degrees Fahrenheit), according to Saudi Arabia's national meteorological centre. Riyadh had not publicly commented on the deaths or provided its own toll until Sunday. On Friday, however, a senior Saudi official gave AFP a partial toll of 577 deaths for the two busiest days of hajj: June 15, when pilgrims gathered for hours of prayers in the blazing sun on Mount Arafat, and June 16, when they participated in the "stoning of the devil" ritual in Mina. The official also defended Riyadh's

response, saying: "The state did not fail, but there was a misjudgement on the part of people who did not appreciate the risks."

The Saudi health minister, Fahd Al-Jalajel, on Sunday described management of the hajj this year as "successful", SPA reported. He said the health system "provided more than 465,000 specialised treatment services, including 141,000 services to those who didn't obtain official authorisation to perform hajj," according to SPA, which summarised an interview he gave to the state-affiliated Al-Ekhbariya channel. Jalajel did not specify how many deaths Saudi officials attributed to heat.

"The health system addressed numerous cases of heat stress this year, with some individuals still under care," SPA reported. "Among the deceased were several elderly and chronically ill individuals." The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam that all Muslims with the means must complete at least once in their lives. Saudi officials have said 1.8 million pilgrims took part this year, a similar number to last year, and that 1.6 million came from abroad.

For the past several years the mainly outdoor rituals have fallen during the sweltering Saudi summer. The timing of the hajj moves forward about 11 days each year in the Gregorian calendar, meaning that next year it will take place earlier in June, potentially in cooler conditions. A 2019 study by the journal Geophysical Research Letters said because of climate change, heat stress for hajj pilgrims

will exceed the "extreme danger threshold" from 2047 to 2052 and 2079 to 2086, "with increasing frequency and intensity as the century progresses".

Hajj permits are allocated to countries on a quota system and distributed to individuals by lottery. Even for those who can obtain them, the steep costs spur many to attempt the hajj without a permit, though they risk arrest and deportation if caught. Saudi authorities said before the hajj that they had cleared hundreds of thousands of unregistered pilgrims from Mecca.

But the Saudi official who spoke to AFP on Friday said around 400,000 unregistered pilgrims took part, and that "almost all of them (were) from one nationality", an apparent reference to Egypt. On Saturday, Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly ordered 16 tourism companies stripped of their licences and referred their managers to the public prosecutor over illegal pilgrimages to Mecca, Egypt's cabinet said.

It said the rise in the number of deaths of unregistered Egyptian pilgrims stemmed from some companies which "organised the hajj programmes using a personal visit visa, which prevents its holders from entering Mecca" via official channels. Unregistered pilgrims in many cases did not have access to amenities meant to make the pilgrimage more bearable, including air-conditioned tents. Unregistered Egyptian pilgrims told AFP last week that in some cases they struggled to access hospitals or hail ambulances for loved ones, some of whom ended up dying.

NA continues discussion on budget for FY 2024-25

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly (NA) resumed its session at the Parliament House in Islamabad on Monday with Deputy Speaker Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah in the chair.

The House is continuing discussion on the budget for the next fiscal year. Participating in the discussion, Shahida Rehmani said the budget envisages no measures for women empowerment. Mir Ghulam Ali Talpur said agriculture is greatly supporting the economic

growth rate. He opposed the imposition of taxes on agriculture inputs including tractors, fertilizers and pesticides.

Muhammad Iqbal Khan said the true potential of blue economy should be explored to take the country forward. He emphasized that the fishermen should be equipped with the latest tools and equipment as well as training.

Sheikh Aftab Ahmed said government will get the budget passed with consensus. He said the PML-N has rendered sacrifices for democracy. He called for collective efforts to steer

the country in the right direction.

Muhammad Usman Badini said the resolution of the country's problems lies in abolishing the interest-based financial system. He said special efforts should be made for the development of Balochistan province. Abdul Qadir Gillani demanded the creation of South Punjab. He said South Punjab should be given its share in development. Sehar Kamran was of the view that the revenue collection target set in the budget for the next fiscal year is not realistic.

Punjab PA resolution flays blasphemy incidents

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A resolution unanimously passed by the Punjab Assembly on Monday strongly condemned the blasphemy incidents and sought protection for all citizens.

The provincial assembly resolution comes in the backdrop of the lynching of tourist in Swat over the allegations of desecration of the Holy Quran. A local tourist, suspect of blasphemy was tortured to death by violent mob and later set his body as well as the police station ablaze, where he was kept after allegations.

The resolution, moved by PML-N lawmaker Raheela Khadim Hussain, stated that incidents of blasphemy are "extremely worrying" and "cannot be tolerated in any civilized society." "This House strongly condemns the horrific and condemnable incidents of blasphemy and demands that the government ensure the protection of all citizens. The government should take immediate and necessary steps to identify and prosecute those involved in such incidents," the resolution reads.

Speaking on the occasion, Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Adnan Khan said that such incidents are a violation of the Constitution, which guarantees equal protection to all citizens. A day earlier, the National Assembly Sunday passed a resolution vehemently condemning the recent horrific and tragic incidents of mob-lynching in various parts of Pakistan.

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.

Netanyahu will only agree to partial truce

TEL AVIV (AP): The viability of a US-backed proposal to wind down the eight-month-long war in Gaza was cast into doubt on Monday after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he would only be willing to agree to a "partial" ceasefire deal that would not end the war, comments that sparked an uproar from families of hostages held by Hamas.

In an interview broadcast last Sunday on Israeli Channel 14, a conservative, pro-Netanyahu station, the Israeli leader said he was "prepared to make a partial deal — this is no secret — that will return to us some of the people," referring to the roughly 120 hostages still held in the Gaza Strip. "But we are committed to continuing the war after a pause, in order to complete the goal of eliminating Hamas. I'm not willing to give up on that."

Netanyahu's comments did not deviate dramatically from what he has said previously about his terms for a deal. But they come at a sensitive time as Israel and Hamas appear to be moving further apart over the latest ceasefire proposal, and they could represent another setback for mediators trying to end the war.

Netanyahu's comments stood in sharp contrast to the outlines of the deal detailed late last month by US President Joe Biden, who framed the plan as an Israeli one and which some in Israel refer to as "Netanyahu's deal." His remarks could further strain Israel's ties to the US, its top ally, which launched a major diplomatic push for the latest ceasefire proposal.

President for socio-economic uplift of Kacha areas

F.P. Report

SUKKUR: President Asif Ali Zardari has said that criminals of Kacha Area in Sindh, except hardened criminals, willing to surrender to the state should be gradually brought into the mainstream and rehabilitated to make them responsible and productive citizens of the country. He called for taking stern action against hardcore criminals involved in heinous crimes.

The President further emphasised the need to improve the road, health, and education infrastructure of the Kacha Areas on a priority basis to improve the socio-economic condition of the people. He advised that a Qaumi Jirga, comprising of tribal chiefs, should be convened to engage and negotiate with the local population to bring normalcy, prevent crimes, de-weaponize and improve the security situation in the Area.

The President expressed these views while chairing a meeting on the security/law and order situation in Sindh, at Sukkur, on Monday. Federal Minister for Interior, Mr Mohsin Raza Naqvi, MNA Syed Khurshed Ahmed Shah, Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, Speaker Sindh Assembly Syed Waqar Qadir Shah, Senior Minister Mr Sharjeel Inam Memon, Minister Planning and Development Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Minister Home, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Mr Zia ul Hassan Lanjar, Additional Chief Secretary Sindh Mr Muhammad Iqbal Memon, IG Sindh Mr Ghulam Nabi Memon, DG Ranger Sindh Major General Azhar Waqas, GOC 16 Div Major General Aamer Amin, and senior officials of the federal and provincial governments attended the meeting.

The President was briefed about the law-and-order situation in Sindh and the implementation status of the directions given during the last meeting held on 1st May 2024. He was apprised that the crimes and violence in Sindh, especially in Karachi and Kacha Areas, had witnessed a declining trend due to the effective strate-

gy adopted by the police and Rangers.

IG Police said that dacoit activities had been considerably reduced and no high-ways-related crime had been reported in the past two months. It was highlighted that targeted operations and installation of smart cameras had helped control crimes and identify and arrest criminals and their abettors. DG Rangers told the meeting that 133 joint operations had been conducted by the Sindh Police and the Rangers which led to the arrest of hundreds of dacoits and criminals. He stated that additional check posts had also been established in various parts of Kacha to control crime.

The meeting was further informed that, on the directions of the President, the campaign against drug pedlars was intensified and, in this regard, 308 drug suppliers had been arrested, besides installing smart cameras to monitor the entry points of the province. During the meeting, the President said that the Government of Sindh should focus on raising a police force along modern lines to effectively meet the security challenges and requirements of the province. He underlined the need to strengthen the capacity of the Sindh Police by providing them modern equipment and weapons, adequate human resources, and logistics. He said that police officials should be incentivized enabling them to committedly discharge their duties. "We also need to encourage women to join Sindh Police", he added. He stated that the welfare of the families and children of martyrs of Sindh Police should be ensured.

The President directed to expedite the upgradation of Sakrand Police Commando School as well as the provision of land for the establishment of Cadet College for Police. He added that selected students of the Cadet College would be educated and trained to join the Sindh Police. The President appreciated the performance of the Sindh Government, Police and Rangers in controlling crime and improving the security situation of the province.

Madyan incident: 22 accused arrested

Shafi Ullah

SWAT: 22 accused arrested involved in the Madyan incident of Swat district were handed over to the police on 10-day physical remand by the Anti-Terrorism Court.

On June 20, Muhammad Sulaiman resident of Sialkot, the alleged perpetrator of blaspheming the Holy Quran in Madyan, was killed and burnt and taken to the police station. According to police The 22

accused involved in the burning and damage were produced by the police in the court of Anti-Terrorism Judge Shaukat Ahmad Khan here on Monday.

The police requested a fifteen-day physical remand of the accused for investigation. However, the court handed over the accused to the police on a ten-day physical remand. A case has been registered against these accused under the provisions of murder, attempted murder, arson,

interference in government and anti-terrorism act 7ATA.

The accused were produced in the court under high security and after getting physical remand, they were shifted to an undisclosed location for further investigation. Action is on to arrest 2500 other suspects including 39 nominated accused in the FIR and 5 more suspects have been taken into custody and the investigation is ongoing.



LAHORE: Patient waiting for doctors as young doctors strike continue for the last 9 days in Punjab hospitals.

Shehbaz, Gates

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Addressing a meeting of the National Task Force on Polio Eradication, the prime minister said that the polio eradication campaign in the country was progressing positively and they were close to eliminate polio but unfortunately, things turned negative as the virus returned back in certain parts of Pakistan, still it did not show that they had failed in their efforts.

Gates Foundation Chairman Bill Gates, ministers, senior officials and relevant authorities were present during the meeting. The prime minister assured Bill Gates that the government was fully committed to continue its efforts in our own interests to protect the lives of our children and make them healthier.

He said that during the last six months, they ran two nation-wide polio eradication campaigns successfully along with five others targeting the polio-hit areas. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also stressed that they would have to act swiftly to produce results in the coming days and months.

All the newly formed federal and provincial governments had completely resolved that they would spare no efforts to control the menace, he added. The prime minister told Bill Gates that they held a holis-

tic security conference the other day and held lengthy discussions to counter surge of terrorism and other relevant security issues.

Recalling his meeting with Bill Gates in Riyadh on the sidelines of World Economic Forum (WEF), the prime minister said that they had held comprehensive discussions on polio eradication and health related issues of Pakistan. Lauding the Foundation's efforts and donations for the polio eradication campaigns and for lifting of sufferings of humanity, he said that Pakistan had been a beneficiary of its financial support over malnutrition, and mother and child healthcare issues.

In the polio eradication campaigns, Gates' cooperation and support had been consistent in the last many years to the tunes of millions of dollars, he added. The prime minister said that investment in the polio eradication programmes in Pakistan had been significant as during the year 2022 it stood at \$240 millions, in 2023 \$263 millions and in 2024 \$297 millions.

He further informed that during the WEF, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also pledged \$500 million dollars for the next five years. He said that there were other areas of cooperation between Pakistan and the Foundation, including

the digitization of education and health sectors, expressing gratitude to Bill Gates for support over the digitization of Federal Board of Revenue.

The prime minister said that they would like to seek Gates' advice on education and health sectors also. He viewed digitalization process to ensure huge dividends to Pakistan's economy. He also reassured that the government would utilize all its resources for polio eradication and he would hold regular meetings with the provincial governments and all the stakeholders in that regard.

The prime minister also welcomed Bill Gates and his team to visit Pakistan on behalf of the people, the government and the provincial authorities. Speaking on the occasion, Bill Gates said that they had to address all the areas in a better way in the next few months to keep up the positive momentum. He said that they were committed to Pakistan in its efforts to eradicate polio and address other health related issues, including malnutrition, and mother and child health. Gates underlined that they should dedicate themselves to eradicate polio by making progress in the next six months and should continue their successful efforts in the next few years to completely efface polio virus from the country.