

Child killed in Bajaur blast
F.P. Report

KHAR: A child was killed and another injured when they fell prey to a blast of an IED in Mamond tehsil of Bajaur on Wednesday. Police said the incident occurred in Loi Kharkai area of Mamond tehsil where two children who were on their way to home were hit by an IED blast. One of the children was killed on the scene while the other child sustained critical wounds and was shifted to hospital.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 134

Regd. No. 241

ZIQAAD 28 1445 -- THURSDAY, JUNE 06 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

PM promises blanket security to Chinese investment

— stresses B2B cooperation for a bright future

SHENZHEN (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday, assuring all-out facilitation to Chinese investors, and security of Chinese individuals, projects and investments in Pakistan, emphasised that mutually rewarding business-to-business cooperation was key to a bright future for the two people.

The prime minister, addressing the Pakistan-China Business Forum during his five-day China visit, highlighted bilateral trade and investment potential, especially in key sectors including transfer of Chinese technology, industry and partnership in IT, agriculture, mining, steel, textiles and renewable energy.

The prime minister repeatedly lauded the Chinese model of development and economic transformation and vowed to replicate the same in Pakistan. "I will go back to Pakistan with this resolve, come what may, we will follow this model of great economic transformation in Pakistan. This model is enough to copy and simulate if we are sincere to our purpose and people. By God, I can tell you this is difficult but not impossible," he told the gathering of hundreds of business leaders from Pakistan and China.

As the Business Forum also marked the B2B matchmaking, he urged the Pakistani businessmen to sit with their Chinese counterparts and find out ways to move Chinese textile industries to Pakistan and make joint collaborations in steel and other industries. "Today is the opportunity, time and moment to capture. Sit down with Chinese friends to have serious discussions. I want to ensure you not as prime minister but as Chief Executive of Pakistan that I will give you the fullest support so that busi-

nessmen of Pakistan and China get benefits jointly," he remarked.

He informed the Forum that Pakistan had mineral deposits of around \$10 trillion while the country's exports stood at \$30 billion. The minerals deposits offer huge potential to dig out and convert them into finished and semi-finished goods for exports, he added. He assured the Chinese side that his government had already initiated structural changes in Pakistan to control corruption.

Prime Minister Shehbaz drew a comparison between the \$500 billion GDP of the 13-million city of Shenzhen and the \$380 billion GDP of Pakistan with 250 million population and called it the Chinese city's swift transformation a "miracle of this century" and the "eighth wonder of the world", necessitating for others to learn the lesson from. He appreciated Chinese President Xi Jinping's dynamic and visionary leadership which elevated his country to become the second-largest economy and military power within a short span of time and steered 700 million people out of poverty, despite pressures and challenges.

He also recalled that during the decades of 50s or 60s, Pakistan's economic indicators were better than those of China and called for a collective resolve to regain its stature. The prime minister also lauded President Xi's vision of peace and development including the Belt and Road Initiative under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that had benefited Pakistan immensely through huge investment.

Referring to a terror attack on Chinese workers in Besham in the recent past, the prime minister conveyed his condolence for the "das-

tardly and heart-wrenching" incident and called it "one of the saddest" days of his life when the whole nation felt saddened. He said the government had taken various measures to ensure foolproof security to protect the lives of Chinese workers in Pakistan.

"I will spare no effort to protect the lives of Chinese workers and assure and guarantee that we will provide them security more than our children. This will never happen again," he assured. In his remarks, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar sharing a past account of Pakistan's good track record of economic performance being 24th largest economy, said the frequent change of governments and political uncertainty led to serious setbacks in the program.

However, he said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had a very clear roadmap featuring export-led growth coupled with industrialization and import-substitution driven industry with a core idea to reduce the fiscal deficit. The deputy prime minister highlighted the country's potential in IT, agriculture, mining and minerals and said that the Business Forum was different from the previous typical events as it featured matchmaking of business entities from Pakistan and China.

He urged the Chinese businessmen to look into Pakistan's potential and told them that the labor costs in Pakistan were very competitive. Besides, for facilitation and smooth processing of investment, the Special Investment Facilitation Council has been formed under the prime minister with all relevant ministries and provincial chief ministers working under one umbrella for the purpose.



BEIJING: Vice Foreign Minister of China, Sun Weidong receiving Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at airport.

US condemns 'digital terrorism'

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: During the daily press briefing yesterday, The Frontier Post posed a crucial question to Matthew Miller, the US State Department spokesperson. The query revolved around the recent Corps Commanders Conference in Pakistan, where a press release introduced a new term: "digital terrorism."

This term referred to individuals in the West allegedly spreading misinformation online to incite chaos in Pakistan. The Frontier Post sought Miller's perspective on this pressing issue.

Miller, maintaining a composed demeanor, responded that he had not yet reviewed the statement issued by Pakistan's military. However, he unequivocally emphasized that the United States does not condone terrorism in any form, including the digital variant mentioned. His response highlighted America's firm stance against all kinds of terrorism, reinforcing the nation's commitment to global peace and stability.

The introduction of "digital terrorism" by Pakistan's military raises significant concerns about the potential misuse of digital platforms to destabilize regions. It underscores the urgent need for international cooperation in combating online misinformation and ensuring that digital spaces are not exploited for malicious purposes. As the world grapples with evolving threats in the digital age, the dialogue between nations becomes ever more crucial in safeguarding global security.

PM brought innovation in CPEC: Tarar

SHENZHEN (AP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday said that Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif had brought an innovation within China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Talking to the media here, the minister said that a new era was beginning in CPEC under the vision of the Prime Minister. More than 500 Pakistani and Shenzhen businessmen participated in Business to Business Conference in Shenzhen, he added. "The relations between Pakistan and China are entering a new era which is an important milestone for the Pakistani economy," the minister said.

He opined that business-to-business meetings and conferences in Shenzhen will play a significant role in the stability and development of Pakistan's economy.

Bilawal wants end to politics of 'reshuffle'

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday called for an end to the politics of 'reshuffling' to improve service delivery.

Addressing a party meeting in Karachi, the former foreign minister stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif should fulfill his promise regarding transfers and postings in Sindh province to enable the provincial government to perform better.

Speaking to the parliamentarians, the PPP chairman noted that some members of his Sindh team appeared lethargic after the Feb 8 polls. "I want to see you working energetically and ending the lethargic attitude towards official duties. We must provide maximum relief to the people with our

limited resources," he added.

He urged the parliamentarians to work tirelessly to meet public expectations. "We must restore public engagement to improve service delivery. Dedicate time to your constituencies and connect with the people to achieve good results," he maintained. He also stressed that all transfers and postings should be based on merit.

"We need to set aside our differences for the sake of the party and the country. We should work together to address the problems faced by the masses," he said. The former foreign minister praised teamwork of Sindh government. "The entire country is disheartened by the politics of polarisation. Public issues should be highlighted and resolved," he stated.

Bilawal added, "I have shared the 5-year plan with Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah. The plan will be

implemented on priority." Bilawal said the main purpose of politics should be to serve the people of the country and called upon the rulers to pay heed to the masses' issues instead of engaging in politics.

In the same presser, Bilawal also complained of the "laziness" witnessed among the elected representatives in Sindh. "[The Sindh] cabinet members should work day and night to meet the expectations of the people," he said adding that all decisions regarding government policies and upcoming budget to be made after taking into account public opinion. "We are receiving good reports about some reports, while reports about [some ministers] are not good," he added. He also told the party members that they did not win elections due to development schemes.

Imran being asked to strike deal and leave country: Alvi

F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: A day after clarifying his party's position on political dialogues, former president, former prime minister — Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Dr Arif Alvi has claimed that the incarcerated party founder Imran Khan is being told to "strike a deal and leave the country".

Alvi, while talking to journalists in Faisalabad on Wednesday, said that Khan rejected the offer and

decided not to leave the country "at any cost". The former president predicted that those who were colluding to sentence Khan — the former prime minister — would face a complete failure.

Commenting on dialogue offers, the politico said that his party is ready to hold talks with "stakeholders but not with the non-stakeholders". He asked the stakeholders to let go of hatred and practice compassion. He also said

that the stakeholders should not be afraid of any kind of risks after the PTI founder's release. Alvi demanded releasing the former prime minister, the supremacy of law in the country and returning the party's mandate. Alvi further said that his party could not hold the incumbent rulers who were as much "powerless" as they came into power via "Form 47" and didn't have "authority" to make decisions.

Has Modi Turned India Into A Hindu State?

Jalil Afridi

Washington DC: At the daily press briefing of the U.S. State Department, The Frontier Post posed a provocative question to spokesperson Matthew Miller about the significant disparity in India's parliamentary representation, noting that while the Indian Parliament has over 500 seats, only 27 have been won by Muslim candidates. This is despite India's substantial Muslim population, which exceeds 300 million out of a total population of over one billion. The Frontier Post questioned whether the U.S. agrees that the third-time winning Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been successful in transforming India into a "Hindu state." Matthew

Miller responded with measured diplomacy, stating that the U.S. will continue to address human rights and minority rights issues with India both privately and through diplomatic channels. He emphasized the importance of these discussions in maintaining bilateral relations and upholding global standards of human rights. It is important to note that during Prime Minister Modi's previous two tenures, Muslims and other religious minorities have faced significant challenges. Many have reported increased discrimination and violence, and these issues are expected to persist as Modi prepares for another term as Prime Minister. This situation has led to an exodus of several influential

Muslims and Sikhs from India, who have sought refuge in other countries due to these policies. The policies of Prime Minister Modi's government have significantly tarnished India's image as a secular nation. Once celebrated for its diversity and pluralism, India now faces international scrutiny and criticism. The U.S. State Department's stance underscores the importance of addressing these human rights concerns to ensure that all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation, are treated with dignity and respect. The ongoing dialogue between the U.S. and India will be crucial in addressing these issues and promoting a more inclusive and equitable society.

SBP may cut policy rate by 1%

ISLAMABAD (Reuters): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is expected to lower its main interest rate by 1% (or 100 basis points) next week, a survey conducted by Reuters showed on Wednesday.

This decision, if taken, will signify the first signs of a dovish shift in the ongoing hawkish monetary policy stance that kept the rate at a record high of 22% for seven consecutive meetings of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) — since July 2023. The SBP is scheduled to meet on Monday, only a week after the release of the country's lowest inflation rate in 30 months, which was 11.8% in May.

The state bank will meet to decide the interest rate before the announcement of the annual budget for the fiscal year 2024-25. This inflation rate was lower than most market and official expectations. The country has been beset by inflation above 20% since May 2022.

According to the Reuters survey of 16 analysts, the majority predict that the SBP will reduce the interest rate by 1%. Specifically, ten analysts forecast a 1% cut, one analyst expects a 1.5% cut, and four analysts predict a 2% cut. One analyst believes the bank will keep the rate unchanged. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, speaking at a business conference in China on Wednesday, said he expected rates to come down in the face of falling inflation.

Commercial activity has been slow in the country for the last two years as it implemented tough reforms under an IMF deal in a bid to stabilise its economy. The GDP growth was expected to be at 2% in the current financial year, which ends in June, and was negative in the previous year. The government says it will target 3.5% this year as it expects an uptick in economic activity.

The government will formally approach the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a new longer-term bailout this summer after completing a short-term programme earlier this year that helped it avoid a default.

ADB approves \$250m loan for Pakistan

MANILA (PPI): The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$250 million policy-based loan to help the Government of Pakistan drive sustainable investments in infrastructure and services through public-private partnerships (PPPs), according to the bank's information on Wednesday.

Promoting Sustainable Public-Private Partnerships Program supports implementation of government policies to create an enabling environment for fiscally affordable PPPs and promote inclusive economic growth.

"This program is part of our comprehensive and integrated package of public sector management support that balances the country's fiscal consolidation and growth objectives," said ADB Director General for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov. "The program will help the Government of Pakistan create an environment that is conducive to strategic, fiscally affordable PPPs that will bring the country

closer to its development goals."

ADB's program supports reforms that will increase the absorptive capacity of PPP infrastructure investments by creating a more robust and integrated legal and institutional framework for public investment management and public financial management for PPPs.

The program supports implementation of an integrated PPP policy. The reforms will facilitate efficient infrastructure planning and promote sustainable development practices in infrastructure projects, such as climate risk screening and gender considerations in project feasibility assessments and PPP contracts.

"Mobilizing private finance through PPPs can help to bridge the financing gap in public sector infrastructure projects—which is vital," said ADB Economist Sana Masood. "This program will help ensure PPPs in Pakistan are structured correctly and implemented effectively in

order to deliver more efficiency, innovation, and value for money."

A \$700,000 technical assistance grant is financing the program's preparation and implementation. In December 2023, an additional \$950,000 was approved by ADB to support PPP pipeline identification, capacity building, and sector strategy development. Pakistan was a founding member of ADB. Since 1966, ADB has committed over \$52 billion in public and private sector loans, grants, and other forms of financing to promote inclusive economic growth in Pakistan and improve the country's infrastructure, energy and food security, transport networks, and social services.

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region.

Proposals for 10% to 20% wage hike under consideration

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government is mulling over different proposals for pay raise of civil servants — a move which increases the expenditure amid the prevailing financial crunch but is necessary to mitigate the effects of inflation, which has reduced people's purchasing power drastically.

On the other hand, there is also a suggestion, sources in finance ministry say, to revise the monetisation policy — payment of benefits being enjoyed by public servants in cash en-bloc.

Although Pakistan's annual inflation has been on a constant decline since January this year as the consumer price index (CPI) for May dipped to a 30-month low of 11.8 per cent, the target population will certainly welcome the move, if materialised, though at least some of

them may call it insufficient. Initially, the Budget 2024-25 was to be tabled in National Assembly on June 8, but the move has been postponed till next week due to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's five-day visit to China.

Meanwhile, the delay also means that the budget will now be presented after the central bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting scheduled for June 10, as the market and experts are expecting around 300 basis points [3pc] cut interest rates, which are currently at 22pc, thus crippling the national economy.

The sources say separate summaries prepared for the purpose suggest 15 per cent to 20 per cent wage hike for government servants falling in BPS-1 to BPS-16, while another proposal envisages a 10pc pay raise for all — from BPS-1 to BPS-22 — a move that will

increase the government pay bill by Rs80 billion in 2024-25.

Coming back to the monetisation policy, the sources maintain that the limit for BPS-1 to BPS-16 government servants is to be increased from Rs40,000 to Rs60,000 per month, followed by from Rs65,000 to Rs105,000 for BPS-17 to BPS-20 per month. The proposed monthly increase under this head for BPS-21 is from Rs75,000 to Rs110,000 and Rs95,000 to Rs155,000 for BPS-22.

Hence, the proposal says conveyance allowance and medical allowance is proposed to be increased by 200pc from the current levels of Rs1,800 and Rs15,00 respectively. A similar 200pc increase is proposed in the case of conveyance allowance for the officials working in BPS-17 and BPS-18, who are currently getting Rs5,000.

No place for criminal elements in Peshawar, claims SSP operations

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: In a press conference held on Wednesday, SSP Operations Peshawar, Kashif Zulfiqar, highlighted the success of a targeted operation against street crime across the district. The initiative, driven by an effective strategy, has exposed 94 criminal gangs involved in serious offenses this year.

SSP Kashif Zulfiqar emphasized the commitment to maintaining law

and order by intensifying actions against active criminal groups.

Since October, the successful operation has led to the death of six notorious snatchers in police shootouts.

A total of 119 dangerous suspects involved in street crimes have been apprehended in injured conditions during police encounters.

During the "Operation Snatchers," police recovered 130 valuable mobile phones and 34 motorcy-

cles from these suspects. Additionally, five cars and various weapons used in criminal activities were seized.

SSP Kashif Zulfiqar assured that there would be no compromise on public safety and the preservation of law and order. He mentioned that all available resources are being utilized to protect citizens' lives and property.

The press conference also revealed a significant decrease in street crime

incidents this year, with a 48% reduction compared to the previous year.

The crackdown has led to the arrest of 250 suspects from 94 uncovered gangs, with recoveries amounting to over 13.7 million rupees, 181 stolen mobile phones, 38 motorcycles, 12 cars, and six rickshaws, along with gold jewelry. SSP Kashif Zulfiqar reaffirmed the commitment to uncompromising efforts in ensuring the safety and security of the public.



PESHAWAR: Residents of Peshawar Saddar blocked the main Saddar Road in protest against hours long electricity load shedding in the area. They protested and chanted slogans against Cantonment Board Peshawar. — F.P. Photo

Maintaining peace needs shared responsibility: Kundi

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, has stated that this province belongs to all of us, and as citizens of this province, it is our collective responsibility to maintain law and order. No one will be allowed to disturb the peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under any circumstances.

The central leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party stands firmly against all forms of terrorism and sectarianism. The doors of the Governor House are open to followers of all sects and religions. He expressed these views on Wednesday during a meeting with a 9-member representative delegation of the Imamia Council at Governor House Peshawar.

The delegation from the Imamia Council for Muslim Unity and Religious Harmony included Syed Azhar Ali Shah, Allama Abid Hasan Shakiri, Allama Syed Jamil Hussain Shirazi, Allama Syed Zaki Al-Hasan Al-Hussaini, Allama Syed Alam Shah Al-Hussaini, Shahid Imdad Beg, Gulzar Hussain Bangash, Shabbir Hussain Imam, and Allama Syed Taqi Zaidi.

The delegation requested the implementation of the National Action Plan, discouraging those who spread religious hatred to ensure exemplary law and order during Muharram,

and contributing to the solarization of Shia mosques and seminaries in Peshawar.

The Imamia Council also invited the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to attend a memorial reference for the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Martyr Ibrahim Raisi, and other martyrs, and to visit the Martyr Arif Hussain Al-Hussaini Seminary.

Governor Meets Mohmand Chamber of Commerce and Industry delegation

Meanwhile, a delegation from the Mohmand Chamber of Commerce and Industry met with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, at the Governor House.

The delegation requested the Governor to play a constitutional role in the establishment of a Special Economic Zone and an Industrial Estate to promote the marble industry in the merged district of Mohmand. They emphasized that the creation of an Industrial Estate and Special Economic Zone would attract external investment.

The delegation also requested immediate construction of the Warsak Dam royalty and the road from Yaka Ghund to the Afghan border. They highlighted that due to current conditions, import and export activities in the merged district of

Mohmand are completely halted.

Expressing their concerns, the delegation mentioned issues such as the lack of electricity, imposition of taxes, and the impact of insecurity on business activities.

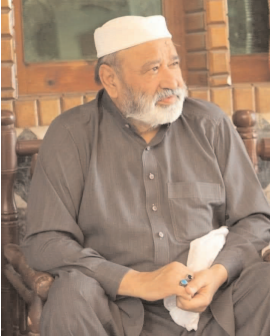
Governor Kundi acknowledged the deprivations faced by the people of the merged districts and emphasized the need to improve the infrastructure for electricity, health, and education in all merged districts, including Mohmand. He assured the delegation of complete cooperation in continuing their business activities.

Governor Kundi mentioned his discussions with Prime Minister and President Zardari regarding the issues faced by the merged tribal districts. He regretted that the funds allocated for the merged districts were not spent there. He assured his commitment to fulfill the promises made during the merger and to play his constitutional role.

Governor Kundi also expressed his efforts to bring maximum funds to the province to ensure its development. The meeting was attended by PPP Provincial President Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, former Provincial Assembly member Nisar Khan, Mohmand Chamber President Khawaja Abdul Qudus, Haji Malik Sultan, Malik Ataullah, and other chamber officials and business personalities.

Haji Gul Muhammad passes away

F.P. Report



PESHAWAR: Haji Gul Muhammad, retired Superintendent of Customs, son of Haji Gul Ahmad, has passed away by the will of Allah. His funeral prayer was held yesterday, Wednesday, June 5th, at Al-Hafiz Colony, near Kabootar Chowk. He is survived by his sons Haji Ibrahim (former Vice Chairman of Peshawar Market Committee), Haji Ghulam, and Haji Javed (Sarwar Plaza).

World Environment Day observed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU) Prime Minister Green Youth Movement, commemorated World Environment Day with a seminar and plantation drive at the Dr. Hafeezullah Auditorium. The event aimed to raise awareness about environmental conservation through plantation initiatives. Dr. Mujeeb ur Rahman, the Focal Person of the Green Youth Movement, spearheaded the event with his dedicated team.

The seminar featured Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli, Dean of Basic Medical Sciences, as the chief guest. Other notable attendees included Director IPS Dr. Sami Siraj, Dr. Haji Bahadar, Mr. Soban Karim Siddiqi, Chartered Accountant and Co-Founder of Scout Station, Mr. Shahab udin, Head of the Climate Dialogue Team Peshawar, and Director Ismail Khan of the CDE and GAD. Faculty members, Oversight GYM committee members Dr. Nabi and Dr. Afshen, administrative staff, and a large number of students were also present.

The event commenced with the national anthem, followed by a welcome address from Dr. Mujeeb ur Rahman. He provided an in-depth discussion on World Environment Day and showcased a visual presentation on the tree planting campaign. Dr. Mujeeb expressed his gratitude to all participants for their involvement and emphasized the importance of raising awareness, participating in cleanliness and plantation drives, and adopting green practices.

He called on the vice-chancellor to set an example by committing to green energy, proper waste disposal, reduced disposable use, imposition of fines for littering, and maintaining data for green metrics. Dr. Mujeeb concluded his speech with an oath: "I pledge to take action against pollution and strive for a cleaner, greener Pakistan. I will raise awareness, adopt sustainable practices, and participate in initiatives to combat climate change and environmental degradation."

Senior artists calls on Advisor Tourism, Culture Chanzeb urges artists to focus on educational films

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism and Culture, Zahid Chanzeb, has urged the artists to create educational feature films and documentaries for the reformation of the society, that would also tantamount to increase their respect in the society, while the provincial government would spared no effort in encouraging talented actors, he added.

He was talking to a delegation of senior artists at his office in Peshawar. The delegation called on him in the leadership of presidential award-winning actor Ishrat Abbas and apprised him of some of the problems and demands of the artist community of the province.

Director General Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) Barkatullah



Marwat and General Manager

Culture Ajmal Khan were also present on the occasion while Javed Babar, Ahmed Sajjad Buffawal, Zulfiqar Qureshi and other senior actors were among the delegation.

The culture advisor regretted that heroin and drug culture has ruined the talents of our younger generation. Henceforth apart from the law enforcement agencies, the artist commu-

nity should also play a leading role in drug prevention.

Zahid Chanzeb while agreeing to the demand for an endowment fund for the financial assistance of the artists assured that PTI led provincial government considered the establishment of this fund as the right of the artists and it will be officially announced in the next few weeks after the approval of the Provincial Assembly. He also agreed in principle to represent the

artist community in nominations for presidential awards.

The delegation expressed its sincere gratitude to the Advisor on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb for listening to their grievances attentively and taking personal interest in their solution and assured of their full cooperation in implementing the people-friendly development policies of the provincial government.

Speakers emphasize strengthening of democratic system

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Speakers during a daylong event held in Peshawar emphasized the need to strengthen democracy and democratic systems at the local level.

The Showcasing Conference of "Localizing the Democracy" project was held at Peshawar which was attended by Prof. Aamer Taj, Public Policy Expert and Development Consultant, Naema Hayat, Research Coordinator, Dr. Anoush, Chairperson of the Gender Studies Department, University of Peshawar,

Adv. Tariq Afghan, lawyer, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali, Tehsil Chairmen, Village and Neighborhood Council representatives and Students.

Under the auspices of the Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network (PUAN) and the Culture Literature Arts and oratic values by strengthening local government system.

They said adding the importance of raising political awareness among youth and familiarizing them with democratic values. Public policy experts said that elected representatives at the grassroots level

have easy access to the public and are well aware of the basic issues and their solutions, which can bring positive change to the lives of marginalized communities.

Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali said that the local government system is the nursery of democracy, so the Local Government Act 2013 should be restored to its original form and municipal representatives should be given administrative, financial, and political powers.

He added that the bureaucracy and members of the national and provin-

cial assemblies do not want to transfer powers to the lower levels, but if municipal representatives are given powers, the public's trust in the democratic system will be restored.

The project lead, Haris Shinwari said that Localizing the Democracy and strengthening the Local Government system is the only solution to the problem we are facing. Our aim, to Educate, Equip, and Engage for Civic Rights, Inclusive Governance, and the Promotion of Democratic Values, has been at the forefront of our efforts.

Payment of arrears to Community Girls Schools Teachers

Muzammil announces release of one month salary

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Finance Advisor, Muzammil Aslam, has announced that one month's salary will be immediately released for the teachers of Community Girls Schools, with a plan being formulated for the payment of other arrears.

He made this statement while addressing a meeting alongside Provincial Education Minister Faisal Khan Tarakai.

The meeting was also attended by Additional Secretary Abdul Akram and other officials.

During the briefing, it was revealed that 3,600 teachers are currently serv-

ing in Community Girls Schools in the remote areas of the province, and their salaries have been withheld for several months.

In response, Finance Advisor Muzammil Aslam instructed the immediate release of one month's salary for these teachers and discussed a detailed plan to settle the remaining

arrears.

Provincial Education Minister Faisal Khan Tarakai highlighted that approximately 276,000 students are registered in these Community Girls Schools, which are located in the province's remote areas, providing education to girls in underdeveloped regions.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Agriculture Major (Retd) Sajjad Barkwal chairing a meeting regarding Farm Water Management.

Financial issues of ICP to be resolved: Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Higher Education, Mina Khan Afridi, has announced ongoing efforts to address the financial difficulties faced by Islamia College Peshawar.

Speaking during a visit to the college on Wednesday, Afridi highlighted that various regulations are being formulated to manage all affairs smoothly.

He emphasized the provincial government's responsibility to provide quality education in higher educational institutions and its commitment to resolving the financial issues of universities.

During the visit, the Minister met with several key figures, including the University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Ali Muhammad Yousafzai, Senior Alumni President Muhammad Zaman Muhammad Zai, General Secretary Fayyaz Khan, Teaching Association President Fazal Waheed, Registrar Arbab Daud, Assistant Commissioner

Charsadda, and Administrator Officer Dr. Shabbir Ahmed Kakakhel, along with members and professors from various faculties.

Discussions were held regarding properties in Khyber Bazaar, Charsadda, and Hari Chand, which are currently rented out at below-market rates. The Minister noted that revising these rental agreements to reflect current market values could significantly enhance the college's income, thereby addressing its financial challenges and establishing it as a financially robust institution.

Afridi praised the college's financial discipline and expressed satisfaction

with its current financial status. He commended the Vice-Chancellor's efforts to resolve students' educational difficulties and provide them with necessary facilities, noting that the Vice-Chancellor's proactive approach in supporting and guiding students is commendable.

The Minister also provided several suggestions to the Vice-Chancellor for further enhancing student welfare. As part of his visit, Afridi planted a tree on the university campus, symbolizing growth and sustainability. The Vice-Chancellor presented a commemorative shield to the Minister in recognition of his visit to Islamia College.





In brief

Nine alleged culprits held F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: Police arrested nine alleged culprits including three facilitators and one proclaimed offender during search and strike operations while recovered arms with bullets in the premises Lund Khwar police station. Police recovered one Kalashnikov, one Kalakov and four pistols along 269 bullets from the possession of culprits. Police had registered First Information Reports and started further investigations. Meanwhile, Additional Assistant Commissioner Abdul Gaffar inspected shops in Lund Khwar bazaars and directed to ensure office prices otherwise stern actions would be initiated against culprits.

Herd of stray dogs injure boy

LIAQATPUR (INP): A herd of stray dogs attacked and injured a 10-year-old boy seriously while he was coming from mosque after offering prayer in Liaquatpur, local people said on Wednesday. Bloodthirsty dogs bit the child on the head, arms, legs and other body parts. The injured child was shifted to Rahim Yar Khan when THQ hospital doctors refused to admit the child. Area people said that the dogs also injured a passer-by when he tried to save the child from the dogs. The locals demanded the administration to kill the stray dogs instead of nominal dog culling campaign.

Two young girls drown in Canal

SANGHAR (INP): Two girls drowned while bathing in Jamrao Canal in Sanghar district on Wednesday, rescuers said. The victims were identified as 11-year-old Premi and 12-year-old Rubina. They had come from Tharparkar area to Sanghar to work alongside their parents. Rescuers said the dead bodies were handed over to the heirs after necessary medico-legal procedures.

Review meeting held F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Muhammad Naem Sindhua chaired performance review meeting of price control magistrates at his office, on Wednesday. Additional Deputy Commissioner Zeeshan Labbha Masih, DO Industries and all Price Control Magistrates participated in the meeting. DC directed all Price Control Magistrates to check the prices of bread, fruits, vegetables, chicken, meat, grocery items and double bread under the public relief program of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. He also ordered strict actions against the wholesalers and those responsible should be sent to jail along with heavy fines. He said that the price lists should be displayed in prominent places. Action will be taken against concerned price control magistrate for poor performance.

Fire breaks out

SUKKUR (INP): A severe fire broke out in Excise Office Sukkur Tuesday night. According to police the cause of the fire is not known. After the incident, police and fire brigade personnel arrived. Vehicles parked in the Excise Office premises have been damaged badly, police said. It seems that there was sparking from electric wires or someone threw a burning cigarette butt. Meanwhile, a fire broke out at a jewelry shop in Pakpattan's Dargah Bazaar as a result many shops in the market were engulfed in flames.

Unavailability of money Flood victims' cheques bounced

F.P. Report

BANNU: A unique fraud has come to light that accounts of the relief checks of Rs3 million is empty which was distributed among flood's victims in Bannu district. In case of non-payment of the compensation deadline, a protest and a boycott of polio campaigns in front of the relief secretary and FDMA's DG AFS in Peshawar from the current government, the victims threatened.

This was revealed by Malik Pakhtoon Yar Khan. He demanded action while addressing a press conference in the press club together with dozens of victims. Saqib Khan, Zahid Khan, Dilbar Mita Khel, Muhammad Gul Shah and others said that we are experiencing natural disasters in different areas, walls falling, electrocution.

And in the burning incidents, hundreds of families have been affected, who were given relief checks of 30 million as financial aid

by the caretaker government, but when we went to cash in the banks, we found out that there were only seven thousand rupees in the relief account and the caretaker government did not help us and rubbed salt in our wounds, which we condemn in the strongest terms. They kept us humiliated for almost a year, and now we are deprived of our rights.

They are forced to eat. Our demands were not accepted, so we will be forced to protest, and more than five hundred affected families, including Peshawar, will go and protest in front of the offices of the PDMA Office and the Relief Secretary, and this sit-in will continue until now. Until we are not given rights, we will take the chairmen of our area into confidence and announce a boycott against polio. Play the role for the poor people and use your resources to make the payment of the said amount possible.

Eidul Azha plan prepared: A special plan has

been prepared for Eidul Azha under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner ensure security and maintenance of peace. The display of weapons, and bathing and boating in the dam without a life jacket will be prohibited during Eid al-Adha.

All officers will be present at the station and all types of holidays will be considered canceled. will go Special control rooms will be set up where the public will be able to register their complaints. There will be a regular check of swings, etc. in the parks so that children do not get into an accident. will be Drivers and vehicles who rent more than the official rent will spend Eid in jail.

A traffic plan should be made to maintain the flow of traffic so that there is no trouble in coming and going. Rescue 1122 will be opened for traffic and the health department will remain on alert. There will be special checking to ensure the supply of petrol at the official price.

Protest against blown up of school gate held

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: A protest rally against sabotaging peace was held at Charwazai square of Landi Kotal district Khyber on Wednesday. It is to be stated here that last night unknown armed persons blew up the main gate of a private school in Khuga Khel village of Landi Kotal.

Under the auspices of All Private Schools Association, Landi Kotal, a large number of students, teachers and people from different walks of life while holding black flags and placards inscribed with slogans in their favor, gathered at Charzai square.

The marchers chanted slogans against the miscreants' event and asked the concerned authorities to provide security to the private educational institutions.

Addressing on the occasion head of the Association Haji Iqbal Afridi, Abdurrazziq Shinwari and others categorically condemned the bomb blast incident at main entrance of a private school, created chaos among the tribesmen and said such kind of happen could not discourage them to impart knowledge to the tribal youth. Installing explosive devices to the main gates of the school and residency of the owner of

the institution in a short period put a question mark on the efficiency of security agencies, they remarked.

Private schools play a key role in spreading education in the locality; they added and said they will foil miscreant activities by standing stern with the security agencies to wipe out militancy. Peace is the guarantee of every positive development therefore the government should ensure it for smooth flow of education in private schools. They demanded the authorities concerned to probe into the matter and punish those who were found guilty in the bomb blasts.



QUETTA: Activists of Balochistan Workers Joint Action Movement holding a protest in favour of their demands.

‘Balochistan livestock sector on modern lines’

QUETTA (PPI): Provincial Minister for Livestock and Dairy Development, Bakht Mohammad Kakar, on Wednesday said that under the vision of Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti, the provincial government is trying hard to develop the livestock sector on modern lines.

Talking to PPI, he remarked, "Most of the people in our province are directly and indirectly related to cattle rearing

and shepherding which is playing a key role in the economy of the province and also providing employment to the youth of the province", adding, "Most of families depend on it as a source of income and food".

He said Balochistan was known for its fertile pastures and pleasant climate which were very suitable for animals. Kakar added, "Balochistan is home to many breeds of cows,

sheep and goats and Balochistan is often referred to as the "livestock hub" of Pakistan".

The region's rugged terrain and dry climate make it suitable for nomadic shepherds and herders, and many communities have mastered the breeding and raising of livestock over generations who play a central role in the development, prosperity of the common people of the province, he said.

Court awards death sentence in murder case

ATTOCK (APP): A local court awarded death sentence to a person found guilty of killing a man in 2021, in the limits of Hazro police station. The court announced the judgment of death sentence on Tuesday in a murder case registered against the convict for killing a man in 2021, in the jurisdiction of Hazro Police Station.

The judge also imposed a fine on the convict to pay for damages. According to the FIR registered under Sections 302 and 311 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) at Hazro Police Station, the suspect Sajid shot dead a man over an

old enmity and fled away.

Later, police arrested the accused from a hideout through human and digital intelligence. During the trial, the prosecution produced substantial evidence against the accused, which established his involvement in the murder of the deceased. The judge, after hearing the arguments of defense and prosecution counsels, announced the verdict. The judge also imposed a fine Rs. 0.3 million on the convict as damages.

153.60 kilograms of narcotics smuggling bid foiled: The National Highway and Motorway

Police foiled a bid to smuggle 153.60 tons of narcotics from Khyber Pukhtunkhawa to Punjab through the Peshawar-Islamabad motorway (M-1) on Tuesday and arrested two members of an inter-provincial gang of narcotics smugglers.

Sources said that acting on a tip-off, patrolling staff of the National Highway and Motorway Police intercepted a car near the Chach interchange and, during the search, recovered 153.60 kilograms of narcotics, including 117.60 kilograms of hashish and 36 kilograms of opium.



KHAR: Officials offering fateha for the departed soul of Shaheed policeman after funeral prayer in Bajaur.

Cop killed, two injured in firing with dacoits

F.P. Report

KASHMIRE: The acoits attacked police check post in Ghehalpur, Kacha area of district Kashmir. As soon as the information about the presence of bandits was received, police force reached and firing started between the bandits and the heavy police force of the district.

As a result, one policeman, Abdul Aziz Brahmani was martyred on the spot, while two policemen, Shahmir Brahmani and Molabakhsh Khoso was critically injured and was shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. On receiving the information, Deputy Inspector General of Police Range, Larkana, Nasir Aftab Patahan issued strict orders and sent more police force from the range along with the APC Chain to Kacha area.

DIG Larkana contacted the SSP District Kashmir at Kandakot expressing regret over the martyrdom of Shaheed police man and ordered to ensure the implementation of the instructions to completely eliminate dacoits in the district. given, while according to the sources, after attacking the officials, the robbers have also taken away the weapons of the officials.

Hydro Labor Union hold protest

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Hydro Labor Union Kohat staged protest on call of central leadership in favor of their demands, on Wednesday.

A large number of WAPDA employees participated in the protest. The protesters raised slogans in favor of their demands. Addressing the protesters, Union leaders Younus Shah, Dawood Jan, Abbas Raza, Muhammad Isa and others said that they will not accept the decision of privatization in any case.

Recruitments are not taking place due to the increase in workload, the workers are suffering from mental stress and every day precious lives are being lost in accidents. The elected representatives also did nothing for Kohat, they demanded that the shortage of staff should be met immediately and the legitimate demands of the workers should be accepted.

Coast Guards seize hashish

QUETTA (INP): The Pakistan Coast Guard in a major counter-narcotics operation, seized a large haul of hashish worth billions of Pakistani rupees during an operation near Jiواني, Gwadar district.

According to PCG spokesperson, acting on intelligence, Coast Guard personnel intercepted a vehicle in the General Area Kaldan Jiواني. A search uncovered 1176 kilograms of hashish concealed within the vehicle.

Authorities estimate the international market value of the seized drugs at USD 19.62 million, translating to approximately PKR 4.3 billion (as of June 5, 2024, based on representative exchange rates).

Girl's education at stake in Waziristan

F.P. Report

WANA: The future of female students at Government Girls High School, Dubkot is at stake due to the lack of qualified teachers. Zainullah Wazir, a senior leader of the National Democratic Movement (NDM), expressed his concern while talking to the media.

He said that it is a matter of great regret that the school has been without qualified lady teachers for many years, despite being a government institution. Zainullah Wazir stated that instead of qualified teachers, inexperienced and unqualified teachers are teaching middle and high school classes, who themselves are unaware of the basics of education (Alf, Bay).

Students have been complaining to their parents about the difficulties they are facing in their studies due to unqualified teachers. He warned that the upcoming board exams are looming over the students' heads, but the lack of qual-

ified teachers may hinder their progress and put their future at risk. He demanded that the Education Department and other high authorities take notice of this situation.

GHQ hospital issues to be resolved: In a significant development, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's MPA, Ajab Gul Wazir, has successfully resolved the long-standing issues plaguing DHQ Hospital Wana. The hospital's staff, who had been struggling without salaries for months, will now receive their dues before Eid.

According to sources, Ajab gul wazir met with the Secretary of Health and urged him to address the crisis facing the health department. The Secretary assured Ajab Gul Wazir that the hospital's obstacles would be removed, and funds would be released immediately to ensure smooth operations.

DHQ hospital, a vital healthcare facility in South Waziristan Lower, had been struggling due to financial constraints. Wazir's inter-

vention has ensured that the hospital's staff will receive their salaries, and the facility will continue to provide essential healthcare services to the region's residents.

"This is a significant achievement for the people of South Waziristan Lower," Ajab Gul wazir said. "As a representative of this constituency, it is my duty to ensure that our basic healthcare needs are met. I will continue to work tirelessly to address the health sector's challenges."

One killed by unknown armed men: Unknown assailants killed Shakam Khan in a firing incident in the Upper South Waziristan area, according to police sources.

The deceased Shakam Khan, a resident of Mantoi, tehsil Tiarza, was traveling to Tank when the incident occurred. Police sources revealed that he was targeted at the Khaisoor to Barwand road near Tangai. The motive behind the killing is still unknown, and an investigation has been launched to apprehend the culprits.

Wali-e-Swat 116th birth anniversary observed

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The 116th birth anniversary of the last ruler of princely state Mian Gul Abdul Haq Jahanbani (famously known as Wali-e-Swat) observed at Wadudia Hall. During the ceremony, Wali Swat awards and cash prizes were distributed to top schools in recognition of outstanding performance in the field of education. Mian Gul Amirzeb Shehryar, ADC Swat Hameed Buner, Zibu Jilani, along with officers and students from various educational institutions, participated in the event.

On this occasion, Additional Deputy Commissioner Hameed Buner addressed the gathering, stating that the Swat Award from SRI is a commendable initiative, as such activities encourage the community. SRI Chairperson Zebu Jilani highlighted Wali Swat's contributions to education,

noting that he established educational institutions and built a model state.

She emphasized the significant advancements made in education and health during the state period, mentioning that the Governor of Swat expressed his affection for the people by constructing educational institutions even on mountaintops. She assured that the mission of Swat would continue through SRI, pledging ongoing support for the community. Additionally, there was a demonstration of the Pashto Atanr dance.

Legal fraternity demands judicial probe on Musa Khan death: Peshawar High Court Bar Association (PHCBA) Mingora bench demanded judicial probe against accidental death of student named Musa Khan as well as restoration Student's Unions in the academic institutions.

The Malakand lawyers' community has demanded a

judicial inquiry into the death of Malakand University student, Musa Khan, and has announced free legal aid and financial assistance to his family. This was demanded by PHCBA Mingora bench president Shamsul Haadi and General Secretary Shah Faisal Khan in a joint statement issued to media and called for a judicial inquiry into the incident, stating that the death of a student is a serious matter and such incidents are damaging the education system.

PHCBA Mingora bench also demanded the lifting of the ban on student unions and the restoration of extracurricular activities for students. The Bar Association condemned the issuance of notices to two other students and demanded their immediate withdrawal.

The Association expressed condolences with Musa Khan's family and assured them of legal and financial support.

LSI new cabinet commits for welfare of public

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Larkana Social Ittehad (LSI) held meeting at the central office in Allahabad area, which was jointly chaired by Sheikh Hafiz Bashir Ahmad Hussaini. The social leaders also participated in the meeting and a new body was elected by the leaders.

The office bearers including Hafiz Basheer Ahmad Hussaini Vice Chairman Zahid Khan Junior Central President Mir Liaquat Ali Umrani Senior Vice President Nazar Hussain Abro Junior Vice President Ghulam Umar Junior Vice President Zahid Hussain Chaudio Vice President Yousuf Ali Abro General Secretary Deedar Ali Shaikh Deputy General Secretary Muhammad Mithal Bhutto Treasurer Haji Ghulam Hussain Jatoi Press Secretary Asif Ali Junjo Liaison

Secretary Zwar Ghulamullah Kori Office Secretary Arbab Ali Solangi Action Committee Chairman Mukhtar Ali Sheikh Vice Chairman Ifitikhar Akbar Phull Chairman Line Order Committee Syed Fida Hussain Shah Vice Chairman Comrade Naseer Ahmed Kalhoro Chairman Legal Aid Committee Muhammad Saleh Khuhro Lawyer Vice Chairman Gul Mohammad Mughal Lawyer Member Asad Ali Abro Lawyer Pardeep Kumar Bathani Lawyer Chief District Advisor Ehsan Khan Bardi Vice Chief Ustad Ali Gul Soomro Member Maulana Manthar Chaudio Chief Media Coordinator Zwar Mujahid Ali Mirani Journalist Vice Chief Wahid Nawaz Shaikh Journalist Agha Nazeer Khan, Muhammad Farooq Chaudio, Asif Ali Rathore Journalist Press

Spokesperson Hafiz Muhammad Aslam Kandharo Hussaini Record Events Secretary Deedar Ali Sheikh President City Larkana Raja Munir Jatoi President Larkana Taluk Fayyaz Hussain Kahower General Secretary Ghulam Rasool Umrani President Taluk Ratodero Muhammad Amin Jatoi General Secretary Wali Muhammad Sunani, Social Adviser, Niaz Hussain Abro.

They said that today is a happy day for us because we have joined a party whose job is to sympathize with humanity without serving the interests of this Manifesto. Education, Health. We will play our role by continuing our struggle to make cleanliness and order common, and we demand the government from time to review all the legitimate issues in Larkana and play their role for the elimination of social evils.



Mexican mayor killed after first woman elected president

MEXICO CITY (BBC): Gunmen have killed the female mayor of a town in Mexico just hours after the country celebrated the election of Claudia Sheinbaum as the nation's first woman president. Yolanda Sánchez was shot in the town of Cotija, which she had governed since September 2021.

She was the first woman to be elected to the post. Widespread violence against politicians has overshadowed Mexico's general election, which saw two women run for the presidency. Yolanda Sánchez was ambushed by gunmen in the centre of Cotija, Michoacán. Local media say she was shot 19 times and died in hospital shortly after the attack. Her bodyguard was also killed in the gun battle.

No arrests have been made so far in connection with the attack but it is widely thought that the gunmen belonged to an organised crime group. Ms Sánchez had reported receiving death threats after taking up office in September 2021. She was held for three days by armed men who had seized her at gunpoint during a visit to the neigh-

bouring state of Jalisco in 2023. The politician said that her kidnappers had made "demands" and inflicted "psychological terror" before releasing her. While she said that she did not know what criminal group they belonged to, local newspapers said the most likely culprits were the Jalisco New Generation cartel (CJNG).

The CJNG engages in drug trafficking as well as kidnapping for ransom and extortion. It is also infamous for targeting public officials who refuse to do its bidding. Ms Sánchez had said that the men who had threatened her after she had taken office had demanded that she hand the security of the town over to state police officers in the pay of organised crime groups.

She refused and asked for the military to reinforce the town. The mayor was also provided with armed bodyguards after the incident. Her murder came less than a day after a general election that was overshadowed by the murder of local candidates. More than 20 people running for office have been killed since September according to

official figures, but independent surveys have put the number closer to 40. The presidential race was won by Claudia Sheinbaum, who will be sworn in on 1 October as the first woman to hold the top office in Mexico.

Ms Sheinbaum's defeated rival, Xóchitl Gálvez, has been critical of the violence which marred the campaign.

Ms Gálvez said that when she called Ms Sheinbaum, she told her that "I saw a Mexico with a lot of pain and violence. I wished that she could solve the severe problems our people have". While Ms Gálvez conceded defeat after Ms Sheinbaum's unassailable lead in the polls was announced, she has since described the campaign for the presidency as an "unequal competition against the entire state apparatus dedicated to favouring its candidate". She also said that she would challenge Ms Sheinbaum's win without specifying how she would do that. With more than 95% of the votes tallied in the preliminary count, Ms Sheinbaum had a lead of over 31 percentage points over Ms Gálvez.

Russian missile attack on Dnipro injures 8

KYIV (Reuters): A Russian missile attack on Ukraine's central city Dnipro injured eight people, including two children, and damaged civilian infrastructure, Ukrainian authorities said.

The Ukrainian air force said it shot down two Iskander-K cruise missiles over the region. The missile debris damaged civilian infrastructure, causing a fire and injuring residents, according to Serhiy Lysak, the regional governor. A month-old boy and a seven-year-old were among those injured, in addition to six adults, based on preliminary information from the governor and the state emergency services.

The attack damaged cars and knocked windows out in residential buildings and a hospital, Lysak wrote on the Telegram messaging app. Dnipro Mayor Borys Filatov added that at least 47 residences and a school were damaged. Emergency services put out the fire caused by the attack. Russian forces also launched four drones in the overnight attack. The Ukrainian air force said it shot down two of them over the northern region of Chernihiv.

Ukrainian officials have repeatedly emphasised the urgent need for air defence systems as Russia has pummelled the country with air strikes targeting critical infrastructure this spring.

Interpol and FBI break up cyber scheme

PARIS (AP): A multinational operation by Interpol and the FBI cracked down on attempts in Moldova to sabotage one of the international police agency's key tools, the Red Notice system, officials said. Four people were detained in the eastern European country.

The joint sting, which also involved cooperation with French and British authorities, uncovered an international criminal organization with ties to individuals in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus suspected of cybercrime. Moldova's anticorruption chief said. The suspected individuals "paid intermediaries and public figures in Moldova to inform wanted criminals of (their) Red Notice status," Veronica Dragalin, the anticorruption chief, told reporters.

The notice flags people deemed fugitives to law enforcement worldwide and is one of Interpol's most important tools. The investigation led to the detention of four people for 72 hours on suspicion of interfering with the notices, Dragalin said. The scheme sought to have people subject to Red Notices "obtain asylum or refugee status" in Moldova and other countries "with the aim of blocking and deleting" the notices by bribing public officials, she added. The sums of money involved, she said, amount to several million dollars (euros).

Interpol said the operation by the international policing agency, headquartered in Lyon, France, followed the detection of attempts to "block and delete" the notices, which flag people deemed fugitives to law enforcement worldwide. Moldova opened an investigation on April 2, after receiving information from France's National Financial Prosecutor's Office, and subsequently requested the assistance of the FBI. "We are committed to fighting high-level corruption in all of its forms, particularly those schemes that put in jeopardy criminal investigations worldwide," Dragalin said.

A statement from Interpol said the agency has taken steps to prevent further "misuse of its systems." "Our robust monitoring systems identified suspicious activity," said Interpol Secretary General Jürgen Stock. "We took immediate action, including reporting the issue to law enforcement authorities in our host country France." Stock highlighting the vast number of individuals subject to Red Notices - over 70,000 people - but did not elaborate on the attempted sabotage. When reached by The Associated Press, Interpol said because it was a Moldovan-French probe, it would not be appropriate for the agency to elaborate on an ongoing investigation.



BERLIN: A flooded street in Baar-Ebenhausen, Bavaria in southern Germany.

Meloni visits Albania to thank country for hosting migrant centers

TIRANA, Albania (AP): Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni is traveling to Albania to thank the country for its willingness to host thousands of asylum seekers and tour the sites of two migrant detention centers, a visit coming just days before local and European Parliament elections, where migration is a top campaign issue.

In November, Meloni and Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama signed a 5-year deal in which Albania agreed to shelter up to 3,000 migrants rescued from international waters each month while Italy processes their asylum claims. With asylum requests expected to take around a month to process, the number of asylum seekers sent to Albania could reach up to 36,000 in a year. Meloni has defended the controversial plan as a necessary component of her crackdown on migration, aiming to deter would-be refugees from paying smugglers to make the dangerous Mediterranean crossing. Human rights groups and opposition lawmakers have warned that refugee protections could be compromised.

Meloni will kick off her visit to the tiny Western Balkan nation at Gjader, a former military airport, 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of the capital, Tirana, and where work for one of the two migrant centers has started. Then she moves to the port of Shengjin, 20 kilometers (12 miles) southwest of Gjader, where an accommodation

center is set in a rectangular area covering 4,000 square meters (4,800 square yards). Shengjin's migrant reception center is ready to host migrants.

Meloni's visit comes a day before the June 6-9 European elections in which migration has been a key campaign issue. Meloni and her right-wing allies have long demanded European countries share more of the migration burden, and have held up the Albania agreement as an innovative solution to a problem that has vexed the EU for years. Meloni, of the far-right Brothers of Italy party, has also championed her so-called Mattei Plan to fund projects in African countries along migrant routes in exchange for better controls, while pressing ahead with plans to run migrant centers in Albania.

The two processing centers in Albania will cost Italy more than 600 million euros (about \$650 million) over 5 years. The facilities would be fully run by Italy while it fast-tracks migrants' asylum requests. They are expected to become fully operational later this year. Both centers are under Italian jurisdiction while Albanian guards will provide outside security. Italy would welcome the migrants if they are granted international protection or organize their deportation from Albania if refused. Those picked up within Italy's territorial waters, or by rescue ships operated by nongovernmental organizations, would retain

their right under international and EU law to apply for asylum in Italy and have their claims processed there. Data from the Italian Interior Ministry show the number of migrants arriving in Italy is way down compared to the same period last year: As, 21,574 people had arrived in Italy via boat so far this year, compared to 51,628 during the same period in 2023.

Albania is not a European Union member, and the idea of sending asylum seekers outside the bloc is controversial. The deal was endorsed by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen as an example of "out-of-the-box thinking," but has been widely criticized by rights groups. Rama, of Albania's left-wing governing Socialist Party, has said the deal is a sign of gratitude on behalf of Albanians who found refuge in Italy and "escaped hell and imagined a better life" following the collapse of communism in the 1990s. Albania. Tirana has refused other countries' requests for deals similar to that of Italy, according to Rama.

Italy's center-left opposition has called the deal an expensive exercise in propaganda ahead of European elections and a shameful bid to turn Albania into Italy's "Guantánamo." A group of 30 Albanian opposition conservative lawmakers took the case to the Constitutional Court in an unsuccessful effort to block the Italy-Albania deal on the grounds of human rights.

Biden imposes strict restrictions on asylum at southern US border

WASHINGTON: United States President Joe Biden has imposed new restrictions that would bar most migrants who cross the US southern border without authorization from seeking asylum in the country. The White House announced the new measures, saying that the US "must secure" its borders. "These actions will be in effect when high levels of encounters at the Southern Border exceed our ability to deliver timely consequences, as is the case today," the White House said in a statement. "They will make it easier for immigration officers to remove those without a lawful basis to remain and reduce the burden on our Border Patrol agents."

The measure will prevent any migrant who crosses the southern border without authorization from applying for asylum if the average number of unauthorised daily crossings passes 2,500. CBS News reported last month that the average number of unauthorised daily crossings reported by the US Border Patrol was 3,700.

The new regulations will come into effect early on Wednesday and remain in

place until the number of unauthorised crossings drops below a daily average of 1,500 for a week. The restrictions would be reimposed if the numbers increase again. The decree makes exceptions for unaccompanied minors and people determined to be victims of human trafficking.

While Biden has previously imposed restrictions on asylum seeking, measures are the most sweeping curbs that he has placed on migration at the southern border. The announcement comes amid Biden's campaign for the presidential election in November, when he will face off against his predecessor and Republican rival Donald Trump. Hannah Flamm, policy counsel at the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), said the decree will "effectively close" the border to asylum seekers.

"Before this rule, there were innumerable obstacles to seeking asylum that the Biden administration has exacerbated and compounded in the last weeks and months. But there was the ability to do it," Flamm told Al Jazeera. "With this rule, once the 2,500-person

encounter per day average cap is hit, the default is you do not have the chance to seek asylum." Immigration and civil rights groups were quick to slam the restrictions, calling it an "asylum ban" akin to Trump's policies when he was in office. "The Biden administration just announced an executive order that will severely restrict people's legal right to seek asylum, putting tens of thousands of lives at risk," the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said in a social media post. "This action takes the same approach as the Trump administration's asylum ban. We will be challenging this order in court." US law allows anyone on American soil to apply for asylum by alleging persecution at home. Federal officials and immigration courts would then have to assess the claim, a lengthy process that could take years to be resolved.

But the White House cited sections of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which grant the president powers over regulating migration, as the legal basis for the restriction. Trump had used the same legislation to impose his so-called

"Muslim ban" in 2017, when he barred citizens of several Muslim-majority countries from entering the US. However, Biden tried to draw a distinction between himself and Trump when announcing the executive order on Wednesday. "I will never demonise immigrants," Biden told reporters. "I will never refer to immigrants as poisoning the blood of our country. And further, I'll never separate children from their families at the border. I will not ban people from this country because of their religious beliefs." He also slammed Republicans for not working with the White House to address the immigration issue and increase resources for border security. Still, many lawmakers from Biden's own Democratic Party have criticised the measure. "This attempt to shut down the border to asylum seekers uses the same section of US immigration laws that convicted felon Donald Trump used to implement the Muslim Ban and in attempts to cut off all access to asylum," Democratic Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said in a statement. — Aljazeera

Spanish court summons PM's wife in graft probe

BARCELONA (AP): A Spanish investigative judge summoned the wife of Spain's prime minister to give testimony as part of a probe into allegations that she used her position to influence business deals.

Begoña Gómez is to appear at the Madrid-based court on July 5 to answer questions. Gómez has yet to speak out about the probe that was made public in April, but Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has repeatedly called it a "smear campaign" to damage Spain's leftist coalition government led by his Socialist party.

The probe is based on allegations against Gómez made by a group called Manos Limpias, or "Clean Hands." Manos Limpias describes itself as a union, but its main activity is as a platform pursuing legal cases. Many have been linked to right-wing causes targeting leftist politicians, and most of them never succeed. After the probe was launched, Sánchez stunned the nation by saying in an open letter published on social media that he would contemplate step-

ping down for what he said was the "attack without precedent" against his wife. After five days of silence, Sánchez said he had decided to remain in office.

Sánchez responded to the summoning of his wife with another letter published on his X account. "We are absolutely calm," Sánchez wrote. "There is nothing behind these accusations, only a cheap hoax created by far-right groups." The summoning of Gómez comes before this week's European Parliament election, with Spaniards voting. Far-right parties across Europe aim for big gains. "I want to express our surprise for the fact and coincidence that this news is coming out precisely this week," said Pilar Alegria, spokeswoman for Spain's government.

"We are absolutely calm because we know there is nothing (to the allegations)," Alegria said. "What does exist is a mudslinging campaign by the right and far right." Manos Limpias has said its allegations against Gómez

were entirely based on media reports: "If they are not true, it would be up to those who published them to admit to their falsehood, but if they are true, then we believe that the legal case should continue forward." Spain's public prosecutors' office recommended the probe be thrown out, but a provincial court ruled that the lower-court judge could continue the investigation. The judge will either table the probe or recommend it go to trial. Earlier this year, Spain's government watchdog for conflicts of interest tossed out a complaint made by the Popular Party against Sánchez in which the opposition party claimed that Gómez had influenced her husband in a decision related to an airline. Gómez, 49, does not hold public office and maintains a low political profile. She studied marketing and has been involved with fundraising projects and non-governmental organizations. The Popular Party insisted that Sánchez should offer explanations.

The Frontier Post

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

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Visit lays firm foundation for CPEC 2.0

THE large business delegation Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has brought with him on his five-day visit to China, that started on Tuesday, indicates deepening pragmatic economic cooperation is a key part of the agenda for his second visit to China since he took office in March.

Apart from Beijing, where the Pakistani prime minister and the Chinese leadership will burnish the traditional friendship between the two countries, Shehbaz and the business delegation he leads will also visit Xi'an and Shenzhen, regional growth engines in Northeast and South China, respectively, with the aim of exploring new opportunities for cooperation.

High inflation and unemployment have exerted considerable downward pressure on Pakistan's economy. That's an important reason why the Shehbaz government attaches tremendous significance to upgrading the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The CPEC is a flagship program of the Belt and Road Initiative that has stimulated Pakistan's economic growth and brought tangible benefits to local people since it was launched in 2015. Reportedly, the two sides are looking to raise the CPEC to a higher level by promoting industry, energy, technology, innovation, green transition and opening-up of the Pakistani market to provide sustainable impetus for the country's socioeconomic development over the next decade.

Both sides have expressed the hope that Shehbaz's visit will help lay a solid foundation for the second phase of the program, which is expected to yield further economic benefits for the two countries, by building on the achievements of the first phase. During that process, the two sides should encourage more Pakistani companies to cooperate with Chinese enterprises, and more Chinese businesses to invest in the South Asian country.

That the Pakistani business delegation consists of representatives of 79 enterprises in industry, agriculture, mining, energy and information technology shows the fields in which Pakistan is seeking to strengthen its cooperation with China. And aerospace, science and technology, education and cultural and people-to-people exchanges are reportedly other sectors in which the Shehbaz government would like to tap the potential for expanded cooperation.

To facilitate the broadening and deepening of cooperation, Pakistan should formulate more reasonable pro-investment policies and implement related reforms to substantially improve the country's business environment so as to attract more Chinese companies to invest in Pakistan. Meanwhile, as urged by Beijing, Islamabad should take more concrete actions to ensure the safety of Chinese people living and working in Pakistan.

How to further strengthen bilateral anti-terrorist cooperation has likely been a focus of Shehbaz's meeting in Beijing. Shortly before Shehbaz's China visit, eleven militants were put in custody. They were accused of being involved in carrying out a deadly suicide attack at Dasu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, on March 26 that killed five Chinese engineers, along with their Pakistani driver. It is expected that the Pakistani military will step up its crack-down on militants in the coming months in a bid to show its resolve to address the safety concerns of the Chinese people working and living in Pakistan.

China is also willing to strengthen cooperation with Pakistan within the framework of the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to strengthen counterterrorism cooperation, promote regional unity and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries. It is to be hoped that under the leadership of the Shehbaz government, Pakistan will enter a new stage of political unity, social stability, controllable security and sustainable development. Shehbaz's visit shows that China and Pakistan will continue to support each other, and work hand in hand to push the China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership to a new level.

Modi gets historic third term

INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi won the election for a third time on Tuesday. This time round, Modi leads a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. In 2014 and in 2019, Modi was in a comfortable position when the BJP had a simple majority when it had won 283 and 303 seats. This time round it is leading in 240 seats, and along with its NDA partners the BJP has an unassailable 291 members.

So, Modi is set to become the prime minister for a third consecutive term, which is a historic record. The last time an Indian prime minister won a third consecutive term was Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister. It has to be remembered that despite a simple majority of its own, Modi and the BJP did not abandon the NDA. It was an NDA government with Modi as the prime minister that has governed India for the last 10 years.

The major shift that has occurred in this election is that India again has a coalition government because the major partners, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) of Andhra Pradesh and Janata Dal (United) in Bihar, are crucial for the NDA government to remain in office. The expectation is that both the TDP and the JD (U) will remain stable partners of the BJP, and the NDA will finish its third term.

When the seven-phase election began in the first week of April, the BJP's aim was to win 370 seats on its own, and more than 400 along with its alliance partners. The BJP and NDA failed to get to the target. Similarly, the opposition alliance of INDIA, comprising Congress and others, said that it would win 295 seats and form the government. It failed to do so.

This was not a victory for any of the contesting parties as much as it is a victory of the voters. They seemed to have delivered a result where the ruling party's strength has been curtailed, and the opposition has been given just enough numbers to remain a good opposition. The opposition was decimated in 2014 and 2019, and the BJP remained an unchallenged power. The situation has changed now. It is a little more balanced between the government and the opposition.

There is fierce debate among different sections as to who has won and who has lost. Some people think that the BJP has lost majority. But the BJP's counter-argument is that it has been an NDA government for the last 10 years, and it will be an NDA government in the next five years. Congress has barely managed to improve its tally from 52 in 2019 to 99 in this election. Congress had 44 seats in the 2014 election. So, the main opposition party has only recovered partially. It cannot claim to have won. The BJP has lost its majority, and the Congress has just improved its tally.

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Will Israel move toward 2030, or stay stuck in 1967?

Faisal J. Abbas

IN case you missed the headline, or saw it but thought you might have misread it, allow me to repeat: the Middle East — despite all its woes, wars and wounds — still has a chance to “change for the better.”

These enthusiastic words are not mine, but are rather what the US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Michael Ratney, repeatedly told Arab News in an exclusive interview this week with our flagship talk show “Frankly Speaking.”

The ambassador acknowledged that the word “historic” was a cliché, but still insisted on using it to describe a proposed new Saudi-US pact that would give birth to a written security agreement, normalize ties, integrate Israel into the region and guarantee Palestinians a state. “All the elements ... are of extraordinary value,” he said. “The real value is taking it all together.” Such comments from a US ambassador are a big thing, which is why they were quickly translated into Arabic and widely shared online. Moreover, Ratney is not just any ambassador: before Riyadh, he served in the US Embassy in Israel and, in total, has devoted nearly three decades to trying to resolve Middle Eastern conflicts and counter violent extremism.

A few days after our interview, US President Joe Biden said it was time for the Gaza war to end and laid out the details of a reasonable three-phase peace plan: an initial six-week ceasefire for the release of Israeli hostages

and Palestinian prisoners, negotiations for a permanent end to all hostilities, and finally the reconstruction of the devastated Gaza Strip. Some, including me, might argue that this is all too little, too late, but let's be realistic too: it is better late than never.

Those who burn American flags and think that by boycotting hamburgers and caramel lattes they are serving the Palestinian cause are delusional if they believe that any peace deal or regional stability can be achieved without the deployment of the carrots and sticks available only to the US. The fact is, America remains the world's most significant superpower and it alone has leverage over Israel.

On the subject of Israel, eight months after this war began, all that Benjamin Netanyahu and his war Cabinet have managed to achieve is a human-made famine, the loss of approaching 40,000 Palestinian lives — mostly civilians, women and children — and the reduction of Gaza's infrastructure to debris and rubble.

They have achieved none of their stated war aims: the hostages remain in captivity, Israel is no safer and, as for eradicating Hamas — well, the Israeli prime minister and his right-wing extremist government may well have sown the seeds and applied the fertilizer that will grow into Hamas 2.0 in generations to come.

That would be nothing new for Netanyahu: in fact, it would be a continuation

of his policy for the past 16 years, which has sought to empower Hamas and discredit the legitimate Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Again, don't take my word for it but take it from Tal Schneider, The Times of Israel columnist who wrote an op-ed published the day after the Oct. 7 attack on Israel under the headline: “For years, Netanyahu propped up Hamas. Now it's blown up in our faces.”

That newspaper also reported recently that Saudi Arabia was removing antisemitic materials from educational curriculums. This should not be surprising; it is not new and the Kingdom's Education Ministry seldom gets credit for the incredible work done so far. The truth is that Saudi reforms have been underway since 2016 and the Kingdom is ensuring that its entire ecosystem reflects its long-standing point of view — which is that the issue with Israel is not religious, it is a land dispute and, once it is resolved, there will be recognition, reconciliation and rewards for both sides.

This newspaper, for example, has published reports celebrating Judaism as part and parcel of our social fabric as Arabs; we were the first to wish Jews “Shana Tova,” or happy new year; and we have published interviews and columns by leading rabbis and community leaders from Ronald Lauder to Deborah Lipstadt, Biden's envoy for combating antisemitism. In fact, it is the actions and rhetoric on the

Israeli side that need to be monitored and accounted for.

As The New York Times writer Tom Friedman put it in a column published last month, Saudi Arabia and Israel are now “trading places” in terms of how they are viewed by the US. While elected Israeli officials are calling for Gaza to be nuked and citing biblical references that they claim justify the killing of women, children and even animals, Saudi officials are pushing for peace, investing in artificial intelligence and sending the first female Arab Muslim astronaut into space.

With our compass set to 2030, Saudi Arabia is determined to keep progressing and longtime partners such as the US are invited to be part of the journey.

Israel, too, has a pending invitation and could benefit greatly from being part of the 2030 club. Saudi Arabia offers legitimacy and Arab/Muslim world recognition, along with its huge diplomatic weight and vast international relations network to support the legitimate Palestinian Authority in being a peaceful and prosperous neighbor to Israel — which simply has to choose between being stuck in 1967 or boarding the bullet train toward 2030 with the rest of us. All Israel needs to do is end the hostilities, trust in Biden's peace plan and recognize that only by allowing a legitimate Palestinian state to exist can it guarantee its security and end its isolation, which is increasing on a daily basis.

How Biden can overcome his Middle East credibility problem

Daoud Kuttab

PRESIDENT Joe Biden took a risk on May 31 by announcing a US plan that he hoped both Israel and Hamas would agree to. He said that the offer to Hamas was an Israeli plan, but before his words even reached the group's leadership, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had ruled it out.

Hamas, which had given its initial approval, might hesitate after hearing the Israeli negativity and Netanyahu's insistence on not ending the war. For Hamas officials, the last proposal that was given to them as a US-backed offer, which they also accepted only to have Israel reject it without any consequences, is still fresh in their memory. After that acceptance by Hamas, Israel launched its attack on Rafah, capturing the Egypt-Palestine border crossing and the entire Philadelphia Corridor, in violation of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty.

This is exactly the problem with the Biden administration's policy. The American officials are fickle. They do not put real weight behind their own proposals. This time, Biden might hope that, by using the bully pulpit, he can get the Israelis to agree.

Whether it was done on purpose or not, the timing of the presidential statement appeared to have ensured at least a 24-hour window during which the hard-line religious Zionists in Israel would not be able to respond. The announcement was made after Friday sundown in Israel, meaning that Cabinet ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, devout Jews who do not listen to the radio or watch TV on the Sabbath, would most likely not know of it and would surely not be able to respond until after sundown on Saturday.

The Biden administration has a huge credibility gap that it needs to overcome. Suppose the ceasefire and prisoner exchange deal is accepted by both sides. In that case, the White House and all the levers of power in the US must be used to ensure that all parties take America and what it wants seriously. Another area that Biden can use to show seriousness is to deliver on his electoral promises. He promised to allow the reopening of the Palestinian mission in Washington and to reopen the US consulate in Jerusalem to serve the people of Palestine, as was the case for decades before former President Donald Trump closed it down.

Sundown on Saturday is exactly when the weekly protests by families of the hostages and others who want the war to end are at their climax. The American offer to save the lives of Israeli hostages came a day after Israel's National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi appeared to dash any hopes of the hostages being released alive. On Saturday night, a much more powerful demonstration took place. But that has hardly made a difference to the far-right Israelis who Netanyahu depends on to stay in power. Both Ben-Gvir and Smotrich have said they will force the government to collapse if Netanyahu agrees to the plan. Opposition leader Yair Lapid has offered a safety net to ensure the government does not fall if the PM approves the ceasefire and prisoner release deal.

The potential for either or both sides to refuse the American offer is largely because Biden has been unable to say what he wants and to mean what he says. For months, the US president strongly advised Netanyahu not to invade Rafah, only to have the Israeli leader ignore the suggestions of Israel's closest ally by bombing and then moving into Rafah. Why would the Israelis or Hamas believe that Biden is now serious?

One way to overcome such suspicions would be for Washington to turn the

the US consulate in Jerusalem to serve the people of Palestine, as was the case for decades before former President Donald Trump closed it down. No one can blame a president for attempting to fulfill a promise he ran on in 2020.

One more point of pressure that this and every president can and should utilize is to honor US law. American law is clear that countries that put any obstacles in the way of the delivery of humanitarian aid cannot receive US taxpayer support. Israel receives billions of dollars annually from Washington, while it has now failed in the simple task of ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Biden and his entire administration have long been pushing Israel in this direction, with Tel Aviv merely going through the motions and failing to fully respect this request. The president has a legal obligation to enforce US law on this, as well as on American weapons being used by Israel to commit war crimes.

Engaging with Hamas and asking it to come to the table requires that the Biden administration build up the political courage to take on Netanyahu and his choir of supporters in the US. It requires the willingness to show seriousness in more than just words, even after those words have come from the White House itself.

US' Taiwan card finds no takers in Global South

Mushahid Hussain Sayed

THE second serving of stale food is always unpalatable. Similarly, by trying to once again use the “Taiwan card” — a tried and tested but failed formula — the United States is serving a doubly stale dish that has no takers in the Global South.

Periodically, as part of its “check-China-rise strategy” and its zero-sum-game mindset, fuelled by the US' military-industrial-complex, China hawks in Washington believe they have come up with new tactics in pursuit of their evil design.

In the past three decades since the Cold War was over, US politicians have openly said Americans and others may take extraordinary measures, including kindling separatism, to stop China's rise.

No wonder even in today's world, despite being a declining superpower, the US continues to fan the flames of “Taiwan independence”. The reason: the US' mindset has not changed since the Cold War days.

Such a mindset, along with its irresponsible statements, is contrary to the pledges and commitments the US has made in

the Three Joint Communiques. On Oct 25, 1971, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously passed Resolution 2758, which unequivocally states “the representatives of the Government of the People's Republic of China are the only lawful representatives of China to the United Nations”.

Six months after the historic UN General Assembly resolution, in February 1972, to be precise, the US and China inked the Shanghai Communiqué which categorically states: “All Chinese, on either side of the Taiwan Strait, maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China.”

Breaking solemn pledges and renege on its international commitments are sadly a big part of the US' track record, especially in foreign policy, be it the Paris Agreement, which former president Donald Trump withdrew from and incumbent President Joe Biden rejoined, or the Iran nuclear deal, signed by the Barack Obama administration but unfortunately abandoned by Trump.

Reinforcing this track record is the US' obsession

with “regime change”. Documented evidence shows that during the Cold War, the US tried 72 times to change regimes and governments, especially in countries in the Global South, using such agencies as the CIA.

Why is the US' latest attempt to foment trouble in the Asia-Pacific region, by playing the “Taiwan card”, doomed to failure? First, as many media outlets and scholars said, the Western-supported post World War II global order is coming apart, due to the widening chasm between what is professed and what is practiced.

For instance, the US talks of “human rights” in China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region but is silent on Israel relentlessly pounding the Gaza Strip, which is a grave crime against humanity. But how can the US protect human rights of the Palestinian people when it has been supplying weapons and military equipment, and providing monetary aid and diplomatic support to Israel?

Second, the world is witnessing two contrasting pursuits: while China is making efforts to help democratize international

relations through connectivity and cooperation, as exemplified by the Belt and Road Initiative, which has seen \$1 trillion being invested in projects in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe over the past 10 years. In contrast, the US, since the Sept 11, 2001, terrorist attacks has been trying to militarize international relations, triggering confrontations and conflicts. Also, the US has squandered \$6.5 trillion of US taxpayers' money in the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Somalia.

Third, the Global South, including large parts of the Asia-Pacific, is in no mood to return to the Cold War days. That's why there are no “buyers” for the US' recipe of confrontation or a new Cold War, which is supplemented by hundreds of its overseas military bases worldwide and new security alliances and blocs such as AUKUS and QUAD.

The “Taiwan card” is already well past its expiry date and the sooner US policymakers realize this, the better, although for them, especially in this year of presidential election, politics always takes precedence over principles.

— China Daily

If we are to lower food prices and support farmers, we need to restore land

IN recent years, people everywhere have endured soaring food prices, coupled with growing concerns for the wellbeing of those who produce food. There are multiple reasons for these higher food costs: from geopolitical tensions to the COVID-19 pandemic to accelerating climate change. Farmers, retailers and consumers are all feeling the heat.

However, drought and land degradation, which are exacerbated by climate change, are the gravest threats to livestock and crops worldwide. This is one of the reasons why this year's World Environment Day is calling for land protection and restoration to address land degradation, drought and desertification – and bring immediate social, economic and environmental net gains.

Land degradation and drought harm 3.2 billion people worldwide, including across East Africa, India, the Amazon basin, and large swaths of the United States. In Europe, even though summer is not yet in full swing, some areas are already on drought alert. In the near future, one in five people in China will face more droughts. Australia's farmers are bracing for a 20-year-long megadrought.

In the next 25 years, land degradation might reduce food productivity by 12 percent and raise food prices by almost a third. In the same period, the average family income will drop by 20 percent because of climate change. This is a global problem.

Delaying action on climate and nature loss pushes us into a vicious cycle: climate change further degrades soils,

which makes farmers' work harder and less profitable. They need more subsidies, chemicals and fertilisers to make more of less-fertile land, delivering less-nutritious food, and exacerbating the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and land loss, and pollution and waste.

We can stop this vicious cycle by helping

Inger Andersen

creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs. This is happening across the Mediterranean, in Africa, South and East Asia and in Small Island Developing States like Vanuatu. Areas like the Central American corridor that previously depended on aid have become self-sufficient following restoration

Nations Environment Programme, half the world's gross domestic product (GDP) depends on nature and every US dollar invested in restoration creates up to \$30 in economic benefits.

UN member states recognised the power of restoring land and other ecosystems in a unanimous vote at the 2019 UN General Assembly, which dedicated this

year, six countries pledged to restore 300,000km² (about 186,400 miles) of rivers and 350 million hectares (865 million acres) of wetlands. Such efforts not only restore nature, bolster food security and improve livelihoods – they advance climate goals by helping to store carbon. But they need to be backed by strong efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including by ending the era of fossil fuels, as climate change is a major driver of land degradation, desertification and drought.

This year, Saudi Arabia is hosting the 2024 World Environment Day and the largest-ever UN conference on land and drought, with a focus on land restoration, desertification and drought resilience. This is a welcome effort for the world and the region. Three-quarters of arable land in the Middle East is already affected by land degradation. With global warming affecting the region twice as fast as the global average, its entire population will face water scarcity by 2050.

World Environment Day, which we mark on June 5 every year, offers everyone an opportunity to act.

Organise or join an event wherever you are. Incorporate nature goals into your business. If you are able to vote this year, consider the climate and nature policies that are on the ballot. And we must all act. The cost-of-living crisis and the issues facing farmers are real. The solution is also real: restoring land and other ecosystems for a functioning food system, for healthier nature, for higher incomes and for a stable climate.

Land degradation and drought harm 3.2 billion people worldwide, including across East Africa, India, the Amazon basin, and large swaths of the United States. In Europe, even though summer is not yet in full swing, some areas are already on drought alert. In the near future, one in five people in China will face more droughts. Australia's farmers are bracing for a 20-year-long megadrought. In the next 25 years, land degradation might reduce food productivity by 12 percent and raise food prices by almost a third. In the same period, the average family income will drop by 20 percent because of climate change. This is a global problem. Delaying action on climate and nature loss pushes us into a vicious cycle: climate change further degrades soils, which makes farmers' work harder and less profitable. They need more subsidies, chemicals and fertilisers to make more of less-fertile land, delivering less-nutritious food, and exacerbating the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and land loss, and pollution and waste.

nature to regenerate. The results already in are phenomenal. Multiple initiatives to build back degraded farmlands, forests, savannas, grasslands, peatlands and cities are making vast areas arable again and

efforts. Expanding such actions is a good deal for nature, for people and for economies.

In fact, the cost of action is six times lower than inaction. According to a report by the United

decade to ecosystem restoration. Action is accelerating. Governments across the world have pledged to restore a total of 1 billion hectares (2.47 billion acres) of land – an area larger than China. Last

Trump's campaign persists despite legal conviction

FORMER US President Donald Trump has vehemently denounced his criminal trial in New York, describing it as "extremely unfair" after being convicted last week of falsifying accounting records to cover up a payment intended to silence an adult film actress. The high-profile trial culminated in 34 guilty verdicts related to a \$130,000 payment to Stormy Daniels, with whom he allegedly had an affair before the 2016 presidential election.

In a fiery speech from the lobby of Trump Tower in Manhattan, Trump – who is once again the Republican candidate for the upcoming November election – did not hold back his contempt for the legal proceedings and the current administration. He accused Democratic President Joe Biden and his administration of being "sick" and "fascists," framing the trial as a politically motivated attack designed to undermine his candidacy.

The former president passionately criticized the decision, labeling it "unfair" and the trial itself as "fake." He asserted that the verdict resulted from a biased judicial process, emphasizing: "We will challenge this fraud." Despite his strong words, Trump acknowledged that he would have to wait until the final ruling on July 11 before he can initiate an

appeal. Addressing a crowd of supporters and media, Trump claimed that the case against him was part of a broader effort by his political adversaries to sabotage his campaign. As he portrayed himself as a victim of a corrupt system, he insisted that the charges were fabricated to prevent him from returning to the White House.

The sentence handed down will likely be suspended until the appeals process plays out, meaning Trump will not serve any time or face any penalties in the short term. This process could take months or even years, allowing Trump to continue his activities, including his presidential campaign, without immediate legal consequences.

Trump's conviction marks a significant moment in his post-presidential life, as he continues to grapple with multiple legal challenges while also campaigning for a return to power. His defiant stance and allegations of political persecution are likely to further polarize an already-divided electorate, setting the stage for a contentious and high-stakes election season.

The GOP quickly rallied around its presidential candidate to send a unifying message to its base. Several high-ranking Republicans launched strong attacks against the justice system, arguing that the legal actions taken against Trump

Dalia Al-Aqidi

are politically motivated and intended to undermine his candidacy. They emphasized that these actions are part of a broader attempt by Democrats to influence the outcome of the 2024 election.

At the same time, these Republican leaders are underscoring the importance of the upcoming election, framing it as a pivotal moment for the party and the country. They argue that the election's outcome will determine the nation's future direction and the preservation of conservative values. In their statements, they defend Trump and call on their supporters to mobilize and participate actively in the electoral process.

Many of these leaders also seized the opportunity to make fundraising appeals, urging their supporters to contribute to their campaigns and the party. Financial support is crucial to counteract political attacks and ensure a robust campaign leading up to November. By doing so, they aim to galvanize their base, generate enthusiasm and secure the necessary resources to compete effectively against their Democratic opponents at every level.

Indeed, a significant influx of money began to flow toward the GOP presidential candidate following the verdict. According to

Lara Trump, the Republican National Committee co-chair and the former president's daughter-in-law, more than \$70 million was raised from small-donor contributions in just three days. This substantial fundraising surge demonstrates the solid financial support and loyalty from the party's grassroots base. The rapid accumulation of funds highlights the energized response from Trump's supporters, who are rallying behind him despite his legal challenges.

The looming question is whether Trump will end up behind bars. The judge has set July 11 as the sentencing date, a moment when the world will discover the former American president's future.

The minimum penalty for first-degree falsification of business records starts at zero, meaning Trump could be given probation or a conditional discharge, resulting in no jail time. Alternatively, he could be sentenced to up to four years for each offense. However, any prison time would likely be served concurrently, meaning the maximum duration would be four years in total.

Trump might also face the possibility of home detention as an alternative to jail time. This would require him to wear an ankle bracelet for electronic monitoring, allowing the authorities to keep track of

his movements without confining him to a cell. Such a sentence would allow some freedoms that jail does not, enabling him to serve his time in the comfort of his own home.

Home detention would allow Trump to continue his political activities uninterrupted. He could campaign virtually from his residence, utilizing video conferencing technology to connect with supporters and hold press briefings. This arrangement would also permit him to remain highly active on social media, giving him a direct line of communication to his base. By staying engaged in the political discourse, Trump could sustain his influence and visibility, effectively running a campaign from home.

He could pursue a delay in serving any sentence by appealing the verdict, effectively postponing his time behind bars until an appeals court makes its ruling. This strategy could push back any incarceration until after the election or even further.

Despite the hurdles that a possible prison sentence might introduce to Trump's presidential campaign, his conviction does not prevent him from running for office. Even if he were to be incarcerated, the legal judgment does not disqualify him from continuing his bid for the presidency. Thus, his political aspirations remain viable, irrespective of the legal challenges he encounters.

Hassan Al-Mustafa

Iran is home to several Bahraini opposition figures, some of whom have had their nationalities revoked, such as Sheikh Isa Qassim, a prominent Shiite cleric. Sheikh Isa has been recognized as one of the key figures in the so-called axis of resistance in recent times.

Iran also hosts leaders from the dissolved Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, along with radical figures calling for violent change in Bahrain, such as the extremist cleric Murtadha Al-Sindi, one of the symbols of the Islamic Wafa Party, who publicly promotes the use of weapons in his speeches.

Manama claims that Tehran is sheltering wanted individuals and accuses

the Revolutionary Guard of backing terrorist groups like Al-Ashtar Brigades and Al-Mukhtar Brigades.

This is one of the serious files that need to be resolved in order for diplomatic relations between the two countries to return to normal. A source monitoring Bahraini-Iranian relations told me that "Iran is being stubborn (in this matter). Oman tried to facilitate a breakthrough in relations between Manama and Tehran, but Tehran did not change its positions." The source added: "Iran wants Bahrain to release Shiite prisoners and allow the opposition to return and operate inside the country, in exchange for restoring relations between the two countries."

Virtual signaling

Cai Cuihong and Li Yuhua

THE Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is an informal dialogue mechanism comprising the United States, Japan, India and Australia. As the Joe Biden administration pushes ahead with its "Indo-Pacific" strategy, greater weight has been given to the Quad mechanism. Notably, with global cyberspace governance plagued by disorder and the proliferation of security issues, the Quad countries have ramped up their efforts in cybersecurity cooperation.

Since the Quad's launch in 2017, meetings have been elevated first to the ministerial level and later to the level of heads of state, with six senior working groups established, including the Quad Senior Cyber Group and the Quad Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group. In addition, the role of the private sector in cybersecurity cooperation has also been enhanced.

Quad countries have expanded cooperation in areas such as cyber intelligence and information sharing, communication technology development and deployment, software security standards and practices, and the building of resilient supply chains. As the leader of this group, the US has been seeking to enhance strategic trust and foundation for military cooperation among the four nations, and to exclude China from cyberspace cooperation.

The Quad has engaged countries such as the Republic of Korea and Vietnam to form the "Quad plus", and collaborated with other US-led multilateral security mechanisms such as AUKUS, US-Japan-ROK trilateral relations, and NATO, thereby building a complex network of cooperation. Through these collaboration frameworks, the US has cemented its central role in the mechanisms, which helps it push for more flexible cooperation on related issues, thus forming a greater encirclement against China.

The enhanced cybersecurity cooperation of the Quad poses severe challenges to regional security and cyberspace governance as well as global connectivity. First, it has exacerbated regional tensions and disrupted regional stability. The enhanced collaboration among the US, India, Japan and Australia in military intelligence and information sharing and the joint military drills including cyberattack and defense have strengthened the US' intervention in the "Indo-Pacific" region. Should a US-led "Indo-Pacific NATO" be formed, it will undermine the long-standing stability of the region, and threaten the regional and global security order.

Second, it will poison the environment of global cyberspace governance. Global cyberspace governance requires the concerted efforts of all countries. But Quad countries' cooperation in cybersecurity is essentially a pseudo multilateralism that is exclusive in nature. Rather than alleviating the global governance deficit in cyberspace, it will escalate competition among major countries and disrupt technological cooperation in the virtual realm, further turning cyber issues into political and security issues. Third, it will fuel the trend of de-globalization and fragmentation of

the global economy. The Quad countries' enhanced cooperation in building resilient supply chains and critical infrastructure is aimed at creating a technological and economic small clique with the US at the core. This will disrupt global supply chains and fragment technology standards, and increase the costs and risks of doing business, thereby impeding global economic growth. In addition, it will increase tensions in international relations and complicate global efforts to tackle common challenges such as climate change and public health crises.

Despite the strengthening of Quad cybersecurity cooperation, some impediments to it still exist.

First, the four countries

Quad countries have expanded cooperation in areas such as cyber intelligence and information sharing, communication technology development and deployment, software security standards and practices, and the building of resilient supply chains. As the leader of this group, the US has been seeking to enhance strategic trust and foundation for military cooperation among the four nations, and to exclude China from cyberspace cooperation. The Quad has engaged countries such as the Republic of Korea and Vietnam to form the "Quad plus", and collaborated with other US-led multilateral security mechanisms such as AUKUS, US-Japan-ROK trilateral relations, and NATO, thereby building a complex network of cooperation. Through these collaboration frameworks, the US has cemented its central role in the mechanisms, which helps it push for more flexible cooperation on related issues, thus forming a greater encirclement against China.

within the grouping have divergent interests and concerns in many aspects. The US is pushing for Quad cooperation with the aim of implementing its "Indo-Pacific" strategy, thus maintaining its dominance in cyberspace. Japan closely follows the US, sometimes acting even more enthusiastically than the latter. India is seeking greater strategic autonomy, thus downplaying the military significance of the Quad. Australia is trying to repair its relations with China, and is therefore unwilling to fully toe the US line.

Second, the four countries vary considerably in cybersecurity capacity. With different starting points in cyberspace development, the four also have significant differences in investments in technology, talent and capital in the field. Even if they push forward cooperation through compromises and concessions, their disparities in development level will hinder the implementation of cybersecurity cooperation. For instance, India is lagging behind in cybersecurity development, making it difficult for the country to coordinate with the other Quad members.

Third, a question mark remains over the allies' trust in Washington. The track record of the US surveillance and eavesdropping on its allies has raised concerns over its credibility. After Donald Trump took office, the US has demanded its allies to take more responsibilities in global affairs, dampening the allies' confidence in the US commitment to their security.

Although the Biden administration has pledged to enhance cooperation with US allies, real inputs

have been limited due to the international situation and domestic political strife. Moreover, the Russia-Ukraine crisis and Palestine-Israel conflict as well as the uncertainties in the US presidential election have cast further doubt over the US' commitment to its allies.

Nonetheless, the Quad attempts to form an anti-China bloc in cyberspace, which poses a grave threat to China's national security and development interests. China should take precautions in this regard.

First, China needs to closely monitor the Quad's latest moves on cybersecurity cooperation and address any spillover effects. The Quad has laid bare its ambition to draw Pacific island nations and Southeast Asian nations

into its cybersecurity cooperation framework, which may escalate geopolitical tensions in China's neighborhood and further squeeze China's development space. China needs to keep a close eye on these developments, and communicate with regional countries in a timely manner. Second, China should use its advantages to break the anti-China cyber alliance. Quad countries and other nations in the "Indo-Pacific" region have close political and economic ties with China, with many using China's telecommunications and cyber technologies. China should have an open and inclusive mind, and promote multilateral cooperation in cyberspace via platforms such as the Digital Silk Road to break up the loose anti-China alliance. Last, China needs to enhance the capacity building of its cybersecurity system. China should optimize cybersecurity policies and regulations, improve the cybersecurity mechanism, and raise national awareness of cybersecurity, especially in areas such as data security, information infrastructure, emerging technologies, and application security risk prevention. At the same time, the country needs to establish domestic industry alliances and technology partners, and push for the opening-up of industry standards and interoperability, thus raising the overall cybersecurity capacity.

Only by deepening international cooperation in cyberspace can all countries build an open, fair, just, and non-discriminatory digital environment, thus building a community with a shared future in cyberspace.

Are Iran and Bahrain about to restore diplomatic relations?

DURING their meeting in Moscow last month, King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain discussed his country's vision for relations with neighboring countries with Russian President Vladimir Putin. King Hamad emphasized that Bahrain is "considering fostering good relations with its neighbors in general." He also stressed the importance of having "natural diplomatic, trade and cultural relations with neighboring countries."

In this discussion about improving ties with neighboring nations, the Bahraini king was not only referring to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries or Iraq, but also

openly referring to his country's eastern neighbor, the Islamic Republic of Iran. Relations with Iran have been strained in recent years, with security and political concerns causing a diplomatic rift. King Hamad told President Putin on May 23: "We have good relations with all countries. Iran is the only one with which we will work to resolve issues and, in fact, there are no significant problems to mention." The ruler of Bahrain expressed his wish for "progress in development, trade and overall quality of life."

The Bahraini king's open discussion with the Russian president shows that Manama wants to move on from its disagreements with Tehran. Diplomatic relations

between the two countries were severed in January 2016.

Bahrain has always complained about Iran's interference in its internal affairs, while Iran claims that it only expresses general political positions in support of the demands of the "Bahraini opposition." However, the government in Manama sees this as interference in a local matter that Iran should not be involved in.

Observers of the Bahraini-Iranian file consider it complex from a security perspective. To solve the problems, it is necessary to have open and honest discussions. Merely restoring relations without addressing the root causes will result in the issues resurfacing in the future.



SBP Governor chaired implementation meeting

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Jameel Ahmed chaired the first Steering Committee Meeting for the implementation of priority sectors initiatives recommended by the Pakistan Banks' Association (PBA). The meeting focused on enhancing support from the banking industry in three key sectors of Agriculture, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and Digital & Technology in Pakistan.

The meeting was in continuation of an earlier discussion chaired by the Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue, Muham-

mad Aurangzeb last month, where he urged the banking sector to extend its full support to the government in operationalizing its strategic economic priorities pertaining to these sectors.

Governor SBP said, "Our goal is to create a robust economic environment where businesses of all sizes can prosper. These measures are designed to stimulate growth, encourage innovation, and support sustainable development. We are committed to ensuring that our financial system provides the necessary support to drive economic recovery and long-term prosperity."

The strategic measures

are currently being implemented with the support of the PBA's dedicated task forces and in close consultation with the SBP and the Ministry of Finance. Once implemented these measures will result in sustained increase in financing to the priority sectors.

Zafar Masud, Chairman - PBA stated, "These measures, initiated by the banking sector as desired by the Finance Minister, come at a crucial time when businesses and consumers alike are seeking stability and growth opportunities. By targeting these essential sectors, the Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance are laying the groundwork

for a resilient and dynamic economy going into the future."

The meeting was attended by Saleemullah, Deputy Governor - SBP, Syed Irfan Ali, Executive Director (Financial Inclusion Group) - SBP, Sheharyar Sultan, Additional Secretary - Ministry of Finance, and the PBA Steering Committee comprising of Zafar Masud, Chairman - PBA, Irfan Siddiqui, President & CEO Meezan Bank, Ltd., Yousaf Hussain, Senior Vice Chairman - PBA, and Ahmed Bozai, Vice Chairman - PBA. Other senior officials from the SBP and PBA were also present at the meeting.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce & Industry Fuad Ishaq presenting Chamber's shield to Directorate Staff of 35th SMC National Institute of Management Lahore Dr. Muhammad Farooq. Vice President SCCI Ejaz Khan Afridi also present on occasion.

SCCI chief suggests jointly preparation of fiscal budget

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: President, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fuad Ishaq suggested Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Industry (FPCCI), chambers, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan and economic wing of Army should jointly prepare the fiscal budget.

The SCCI said the budget is a reflection of people's aspiration and the budget shouldn't be jugular of words but it must be aggressive, progressive and as per economic, business, trade and industries situation along with expectations and wishes of people.

Faiz demanded bringing tax to single digit by reviewing the current custom, sale, and income tax system. He called for making a public report of IPPs which had been presented in the Senate of Pakistan.

All constitutional rights on gas, electricity and other

natural resources should be ensured Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to flourish business, trade and industry in the province and create employment opportunities to youth, the SCCI chief stressed while speaking during an inland visit of 35th Senior Management Course Officers of National Institute of Management, Islamabad here at the chamber house on Wednesday.

The delegation was headed by Directing Staff NIM Lahore Dr Muhammad Farooq.

On the occasion, the chamber senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, executive members of the SCCI Monawar Khurshid, Qurat Ul Ain, former presidents Zulfiqar Ali Khan, and Faiz Muhammad, Sadder Gul, Fazal e Wahid, members of business community present in meeting.

Abundant of natural resources available in KP despite that this province is

lagging behind in race of progress with other province, Ishaq said, adding that owing the front line province in terrorism, business community of this province has confronted with severe hardships and continued their business, trade and industry by rendering matchless sacrifices, which is highly laudable.

He expressed concern over putting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the RLNG basket despite surplus production of gas.

Similarly, he said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is producing low cost and surplus despite charging equal electricity tariffs with major provinces, which is completely unfair and unjust.

The chamber president informed KP oil production of 31,000/per day which is 42 percent of the total production of the country, therefore he demanded establishment of an oil refinery in the province.

He said owing to the prevailing scenario, more than 400 to 600 units have shut in the province.

Fuad mentioned Pak-Afghan bilateral trade has dropped at \$ 500-800million, which had touched \$3billion in 2012-13, blaming inconsistent policies for declining the mutual trade volume.

He added that the vacuum between documented and undocumented trade is widening.

The SCCI chief expressed anguish that commercial bank deposits have surged at 15-16 percent in KP against the lending ratio of less than one per cent.

Fuad Ishaq called for the provision of benefits under the One Belt One Road Initiative of China.

He demanded that the army should take over PESCO and SNGPL as their line losses have touched Rs 102 Billion and 47 percent respectively.

UBL extends Rs20b finance facility to Engro Fertilizers



F.P. Report

KARACHI: United Bank Limited (UBL) concluded a PKR 20 Billion bilateral finance facility for Engro Fertilizers Limited, a transaction that marks a significant milestone in bilateral relationship between a major conglomerate and a leading bank.

The signing ceremony

was held at the United Bank Limited (UBL) Digital Lab in Karachi.

Participants included senior executives from both institutions including Farooq Barkat Ali - Group CFO (Engro Corporation), Imran Khalil - CFO (Engro Fertilizers Ltd.), Manzoor Hussain Zaidi - Group Executive (CIBG UBL), Imran Sarwar - Group

Executive (Risk & Credit UBL) and Ms. Nadia Tabassum - Deputy Head (CIBG UBL).

At the event, Farooq Barkat Ali, Group CFO (Engro Corporation) expressed his appreciation for United Bank Limited (UBL) executing one of the largest bilateral financings by any bank in an exceptionally short time frame.

European stocks climbed

LONDON (AFP/APP): Europe's equity markets climbed Wednesday with traders boosted on the eve of an expected interest-rate cut by the European Central Bank, but Asia slid on renewed US economic worries.

London, Paris and Frankfurt rose, with the ECB forecast to start cutting eurozone borrowing costs from historic highs on Thursday, although sticky inflation means the move is unlikely to kickstart a rapidly easing cycle.

Falling interest rates tend to boost share prices because they cut loan costs for businesses and individuals, and so tend to stimulate investment, consumer spending and economic activity.

Asian indices however declined as optimism that the US Federal Reserve would cut interest rates before the end of the year was eclipsed by resurfacing fears over the health of the world's biggest economy.

"Thursday's ECB announcement is shaping up to be the main event this week," said Matthew Ryan, head of market strategy at global financial services firm Ebury.

"We think that a first 25-basis-point cut remains essentially guaranteed," he added.

"We expect the ECB to maintain its data-dependent approach and await confirmation of the downtrend in inflation before committing to additional cuts. This could lead to a relatively muted response in financial markets."

Wall Street had pushed higher Tuesday, even as a below-forecast read on job openings indicated the labour market was showing signs of softening a day after a big downside miss on factory activity.

That suggested a long-running period of high inflation and borrowing costs was taking its toll on the US economy.

Tokyo stocks end lower

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks ended lower on Wednesday as investors brushed off gains on Wall Street, where soft US jobs data boosted hopes for an interest rate cut.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index was down 0.89 percent, or 347.29 points, to end at 38,490.17, while the broader Topix index was down 1.41 percent, or 39.26 points, at 2,748.22.

The Tokyo market was dragged down mostly by "high-tech growth stocks, and the pressure to sell strengthened", Daiwa Securities said.

US investors welcomed figures showing US job openings slipped below 8.1 million in April, 300,000 down from the previous month, and worse than expectations, according to Briefing.com.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where five ships, Maersk Hartford, Kypros Sea, Chem Leona, Clyde and Lima Trader carrying Container, Canola Seed, Chemicals, Gas oil and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Grain Terminal, Engro Terminal, Oil Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Hyundai Busan and Simaisma with Container and LNG also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on today.

A total of 10 ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them Liquid Natural Gas carrier 'Al-Marrouna' left the port on today morning, while three more ships, MSC Positano, Chem

Leona and Clyde are expected to sail on today.

Cargo volume of 170,812 tonnes, comprising 122,062 tonnes imports cargo and 48,750 tonnes export cargo carried in 5,994 Containers (3,794 TEUs Imports and 2,200 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 05 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them a Liquid Natural Gas carrier 'Simaisma' & three more ships, Opera, MSC Aby and Maersk Cape Town carrying LNG, Chemicals and Container are expected to take berths at respectively EETL, EVTL and QICT on today, while another containers ship 'Zhong Gu Bo Hai' is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

PSX presents Federal Budget 2024-25 proposals

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has submitted a series of important tax proposals to the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for consideration in the federal budget for the fiscal year 2024-25. The measures recommended are revenue positive and will encourage resource allocation towards productive and documented

sectors of the economy. This is important for economic growth and employment generation in Pakistan.

Pakistan Stock Exchange has recently seen an upsurge in its performance in response to the stability measures introduced in the macro economy. The market capitalisation has increased by almost Rs. 4 trillion in the outgoing year, creating a significant wealth impact in the economy. Foreign inflows amounting to approximately USD 132 million have

been invested into the country through the stock market from July 2023. It is imperative that the Ministry of Finance and the FBR consider the proposals presented by PSX to ensure that the stock market continues to contribute towards economic growth, taxes, foreign investor inflows and documentation of the economy. This is a crucial step to ensuring the continuity of the positive momentum of the capital market and economic recovery.

PSX emphasizes that the government prioritise the comprehensive documentation of all economic activities. Capital markets are among the most documented sectors of the economy. A broad-based capital market supports key economic and social objectives, such as increasing the number of taxpayers, boosting savings and investment rates, and reducing wealth inequality. To meet these objectives, investors need favourable and stable tax treatment. Pakistan Stock Exchange has presented several proposals to the Ministry of Finance and the Federal Board of Revenue for the federal budget FY 2024-25. The most important proposals, which aim to positively impact Government revenues, include the following:

Align rates of Capital Gains Tax (CGT) on disposal of listed securities with the rates of CGT on

sale of immovable property: It is important to remove the tax driven distortions amongst different asset classes to create a level playing field. Essentially, tax on capital gains on listed securities should be uniform with that on real estate and other classes of assets. Therefore, PSX proposes that CGT rates on listed securities be brought in line with CGT on sale of immovable property.

Align rates of Capital Gains Tax on all Derivatives and Future Contracts traded on PSX with Future Commodity Contracts traded on PMEX: CGT on all derivatives and future contracts traded on PSX be taxed in line with future commodity contracts traded at PMEX. Review of local and international markets revealed that Cash Settled Derivative Contracts available on exchanges have a lower taxation rate. Currently, all derivatives and future contracts traded on PSX are subject to higher CGT that should be aligned with future commodity contracts traded at PMEX.

Exchange traded derivatives are also viewed as better alternatives to leveraged trading platforms. Hence, it is crucial to have a favourable treatment for all derivatives and futures, including Cash Settled Derivative Contracts traded on PSX to establish a robust and efficient

Derivative Market.

Rationalise the current tax rate on Dividend: Tax rate on dividends be rationalised as it would generate more investment in stocks and thus more revenue for the Government. As it is, corporate business profits are already taxed twice. Once at company level @ 29% and on dividend distribution @ 15%. This is in addition to the Super Tax up to 10% for the year 2023 and onwards based on income brackets imposed through the Finance Act 2023 on high earning persons and corporates. Any possibility of further increase in the said tax rate will be confiscatory in nature and will discourage investment in stocks which in turn will slow down business growth and industrialisation in the country.

Treatment of Bonus Shares as an income of shareholders: Bonus shares are capitalisation of a company's reserves and not a profit distribution to shareholders. Hence no tax is due on such issuances. Moreover, the bonus shares issued do not increase the resources of the recipient against any payment consideration. Thus it cannot be termed as income in the hand of recipient and distribution by the issuer resultantly applying a tax on such issue does not fall under the ambit of the Ordinance as it is merely an accounting treatment of

reclassification of reserves of the issuing company resulting in diluted earnings per share. Therefore, PSX proposed that the amendment made in clause (29) of Section 2 and newly inserted section 236Z of the Ordinance through Finance Act 2023 may be withdrawn. It is pertinent to mention that in the period July 01, 2022 to June 30, 2023, 53 companies announced bonus shares amounting (at Face Value) to over Rs 31.4 billion; whereas for the period July 01, 2023 to February 29, 2024, only 04 companies announced bonus shares amounting (at Face Value) to Rs 446 million. Resultantly, the Government has not fetched any significant revenue under this head; rather, the Government has lost CGT which could have been earned on trading of such increased number of shares has the same quantum of bonus shares also been issued this year.

Documenting real estate sector & promoting REITs structures: REITs are an ideal instrument to document and help develop the real estate sector, a priority of the Government. They also allow smaller investors to gain exposure to the real estate sector. Real estate sector is a major investment avenue in Pakistan albeit undocumented. REITs can prove to be an effective tool in bringing this sector in the

tax net and encourage documentation. It is, therefore, important to incentivise REITs. This will attract more investments particularly by companies with disclosure of actual prices and income. It will generate indirect and additional revenues from allied businesses and is revenue positive. Moreover, speculative pressure on real estate property prices will also ease. It is proposed to exempt advance tax on property transfers to/from a REIT Scheme and to remove sunset clause, i.e. June 2023 for all categories of REIT.

Reinstatement of exemption on Inter-Corporate Dividend: Until June 2020, under clause 103C of Second Schedule, the dividend income derived by a company was exempt if recipient of the dividend for the tax year was eligible for Group Relief u/s 59B. The said clause was omitted by Finance Act 2021. This discourages formation of efficient group structures and large scale companies that can compete regionally and globally. Therefore, PSX proposes to restore such exemption on inter-corporate dividend between companies eligible for group taxation.

Tax credit: Tax credit for all companies doing an IPO: In order to encourage companies to engage in an IPO and list on the Exchange, tax rates be rationalised vis a vis

unlisted companies. Companies in the Asian region are taxed at 19.8% whereas in Pakistan the corporate tax rate is 39% including super tax. In this context, it is proposed that the rate of tax for all listed companies be permanently lowered by giving tax credit of 20% that meet the prescribed requirements including a minimum free float of 25%. This will result in higher tax revenue from listed companies along with increased documentation and transparency once listed, as well as higher revenue from CGT.

Reinstatement of tax credit on investment in shares: Tax credits are essential for small savers, specially salaried class, to promote long term savings for their retirement and other life goals. These savings are channelised towards the stock market and government securities. Withdrawal under Finance Act 2022 of tax credits available to individual investors for investment in new shares, mutual funds, sukus, and life insurance policies has diverted public funds towards undocumented sectors. In order to counter this situation, PSX proposes to reinstate Section 62 of the Income Tax Ordinance that was removed in the Federal Budget 2022-23. This step will promote savings for the taxpayers with no major impact on revenue.

Court Notice

In the Court of Jauhar Ali Safi Civil Judge-I/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No. 459/1. Institution 12/4/2023. Date of hearing 15/7/2023. Hafizur Rehman etc Vs. Mst. Dothana etc. Notice to No. 2/5 Dilawar Husain s/o Fazal Rabi, 4/4 Mohamad Ghani s/o Zeef Ahmed, 5/2 Ejazul Haq s/o Zaren Dad, 10 Shamsher Khan resident of Dewana Baba Tehsil Gagra Buner at present abroad. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:00 a.m. dated 8/6/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court,

Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge-II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 1/10. Institution 21/6/2022. Date of hearing 6/6/2024. Rozi Khan Vs. Tehseldar etc. Notice to No. 2/5 Bakhtiar, 5/6 Israr, 5/7 Shafiq, 5/8 Kynat Allah resident of Daggar Kalay Tehsil Daggar District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:00 a.m. dated 6/6/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court,



In brief

Afridi terms Pakistan vs India match as cricket's Super Bowl

KARACHI (Web Desk): Pakistan legend Shahid Afridi is excited that the American public will witness cricket's equivalent of the Super Bowl in New York on June 9 (Sunday). Shahid Afridi, the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 ambassador, was thrilled at the prospect of an India-Pakistan showdown in New York during this edition of the T20 World Cup. Comparing it to the famous Super Bowl, Afridi said that America's cricket-loving crowd will witness the 'greatest cricketing rivalry' at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium. "For those Americans discovering the tournament, they should know that Pakistan's game against India is like our Super Bowl," Afridi wrote in his column for the ICC. "I used to absolutely love playing India and I really believe it is the biggest rivalry in sport. "When I played in those games, I got a lot of love and respect from the Indian fans and it means so much to both sides. "Against India, it is about handling the pressure of the occasion. There is so much talent in both teams, they just need to put it together on the day." Afridi believed that the big expat community from South Asia will provide great love and support for the game, while also paving the way for its future growth. While he refused to pick any favourites from the India-Pakistan contest, he backed the Men in Green to overcome their recent indifferent form and bring their A-game out during the tournament.

Waseem completes Level-II Coaching Course

PESHAWAR (APP): Promising squash coach of Directorate of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Waseem has achieved a prominent position by completing the Level-II Advanced Coaching Course organized by the Pakistan Squash Federation with the collaboration of World Squash Federation. He has also completed his Squash Refereeing Course and twice received the certificate of Advanced Coaching Course which includes Endurance, Speed, Stamina and Biomechanics of Games organized by Pakistan Sports Board. Muhammad Waseem, hailing from Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has obtained his Master Degree in Sports Sciences and Physical Education. World Squash Coaching Tutor, Michael Khan who is the program Manager World Squash Federation while appreciating the performance of Muhammad Waseem said that he had proved to be a good coach who also performed coaching duties with Pakistan Age Group teams visited Hong Kong, twice Malaysia, and Thailand. International Course Conductor and Tutor World Squash Federation Major Maniam who belongs to Malaysia conducted the course and Muhammad Waseem completed his course under the Michael Khan and Major Maniam supervision.



NEW YORK: Andrew Balbirnie of Ireland is bowled by Arshdeep Singh of India during ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup West Indies & USA 2024 match between India.

Out-of-sorts Sabalenka knocked out by Andreeva, 17

PARIS (AFP): Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva became the youngest Grand Slam semi-finalist since 1997 with a shock victory over second seed Aryna Sabalenka, who was struggling with an apparent illness, at the French Open on Wednesday. The 17-year-old fought back from a set down against her ailing opponent to win 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 6-4 after two hours and 29 minutes and set up a last-four meeting with Italy's Jasmine Paolini. Andreeva, aged 17 and 29 days, is the youngest woman to make the semis at a major event since Martina Hingis at the US Open 27 years ago and also the youngest at Roland Garros since Hingis in 1997. "Honestly I was really nervous before the match, I knew she'd have an advantage," said Andreeva, who had lost both her previous meetings with Sabalenka in straight sets. "I see the game, I play whenever I want, I don't really have a plan. When I see an open space on the court I try to play, I try to play behind her back or something like this. "Me and my coach, we had a plan today but again I didn't remember anything. I just try to play as I feel." She will fancy her chances of going all the way to the final when she faces



Paolini -- who had never got past the second round at a Grand Slam before this year -- on Thursday. Sabalenka called for multiple medical time-outs as she complained of not feeling well and Andreeva, playing in her maiden Slam quarter-final, eventually took advantage with a composed display. Two-time Australian Open champion Sabalenka had powered through the first four rounds but was clearly having difficulties, breathing heavily between points. Andreeva, currently ranked 38th, had already secured a breakthrough into the world's top 30 with her run to the last eight, but is now poised to rise further. Tournament favourite Iga Swiatek plays US Open champion Coco Gauff in the other semi-final. Sabalenka had been targeting a seventh straight Slam semi-final and had won 11 consecutive matches at the majors following her second Melbourne title earlier this year.

Sabalenka toils It was immediately clear that Sabalenka was not at her best, as she made four double-faults across her opening two service games. But Andreeva suffered from nerves in key moments, failing to serve out the first set when leading 5-4, before Sabalenka rallied to take a tie-break. It appeared as though Sabalenka would race away from her young rival -- the youngest woman to make the quarter-finals since 2005 -- when she broke in the first game of the second set. But Andreeva hit straight back, with Sabalenka continuing to shake her head and crouch down between points in apparent pain. The pair traded breaks once more before Sabalenka again called for the trainer, saying she needed "something to make me feel better". Andreeva was starting to get on top and levelled the match on her second set point as Sabalenka dumped a tired backhand into the bottom of the net. Sabalenka was still grimacing and complaining towards her box early in the third set, but suddenly found her groove to break to love for a 3-2 advantage. She could not back it up with a hold, though, as Andreeva quickly drew level and then moved 5-4 ahead.

Shayan of KP wins medals in South Asian Table Tennis C'ship

PESHAWAR (APP): Hailing from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shayan Farooq warmly received here Wednesday soon after arrival at Peshawar Sports Complex after winning three medals; a silver medal and two bronze medals in the individual and team event in the recently concluded South Asian Table Tennis Championship played at Colombo, Sri Lanka. Provincial Sports Minister Syed Fakhar Jahan and Director Operation Sports Azizullah Khan welcomed Shayan Farooq, who is hailing from District Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Administrator Peshawar Sports Complex Syed Jaffar Shah, Table Tennis Association Central Vice President Kifayatullah Khan, table tennis coaches and players of the Table Tennis Academy Peshawar welcomed him. Adviser to the Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jahan congratulated Shayan Farooq by placing a garland around his neck and reiterated his commitment that the provincial government of Tehreek-e-Insaf will provide all kinds of facilities to the players and those who succeed in making it to the national team. The sports department will fully support them. He said that sports is one of the priorities of the current government. He stressed that they should work harder and make the name of their province known all over the world.

Rohit in the runs as India rout Ireland in T20 World Cup

NEW YORK (AFP): Rohit Sharma made 52 before retiring hurt as India overwhelmed Ireland by eight wickets in the teams' T20 World Cup opener in New York on Wednesday. India only required 97 to win after a dominant display by their attack, with left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh striking twice in the third over to reduce Ireland to 9-2 after Rohit won the toss. All-rounder Hardik Pandya took two wickets in two balls on his way to 3-27 and Jasprit Bumrah, the player of the match, 2-6. Ireland needed to hold every chance that came their way to have any chance of a shock upset. But off the last ball of the first over of the chase, India captain Rohit -- on two -- edged Mark Adair through the hands of Andrew Balbirnie at second slip.

Rohit punished Ireland with a 37-ball innings, including four fours and three well-struck sixes as he shared a stand of 54 with Rishabh Pant. The wicketkeeper, returning to international cricket after a horror car crash in December 2022, finished on 36 not out and ended the match with a typically flamboyant reverse-scooped six off Barry McCarthy as India won with more than seven overs left. Rohit was not there alongside him, however, having been previously struck on the arm by Josh Little, although he struck the two balls he faced immediately afterwards from the paceman for resounding sixes. Star batsman Virat Kohli fell for just one, slicing Adair to deep third man, but it made little difference to India, bidding

to win a major tournament since their 2013 Champions Trophy triumph. Victory was all but secured for India, the inaugural 2007 T20 World Cup champions, when they dismissed Ireland for just 96 as a drop-in pitch of variable bounce at a Long Island ground built specially for the tournament again proved tough to bat on. India's joy in dismissing Ireland cheaply would have been tempered by the thought they too could be batting first on a similar surface when they return to the ground on Sunday to play arch-rivals Pakistan in the showpiece match of the group phase. Only four Ireland batsmen reached double figures, Gareth Delany top-scoring with 26 before he was run out as the innings ended in the 16th over.

Ricky Ponting predicts bright future for Saim Ayub



ISLAMABAD (APP): Australia great Ricky Ponting believes Pakistan look like a much more settled team with Babar Azam at the helm and has nominated a young batter at the top of the order who is ready to turn heads at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. Babar was reinstated as Pakistan's white-ball captain earlier this year following a brief period where star fast bowler Shaheen Afridi was in charge in the shortest format of the game. And Ponting thinks Pakistan's chances of going one better than their runner-up finish at the most recent edition of the T20 World Cup in Australia in 2022 and matching their sole title success from 2009, appear much brighter with Babar in charge. "Captaincy just sits

numbers went down on the back of it. So I think he might have learned a bit from that." "Shaheen didn't set the world on fire as a leader either, so I think going back into a World Cup it just looks like a more settled team when you've got someone like Babar as captain rather than Afridi." While much of Pakistan's fortunes at the T20 World Cup will rest with Babar and reliable lieutenant Mohammad Rizwan, Ponting believes there is a young batter at the top of their batting order that might cause a surprise. Saim Ayub opened the batting alongside Rizwan during Pakistan's recent T20I series against Ireland and Ponting thinks the hard-hitting left-hander may be worth keeping an eye on at the T20 World Cup. "I loved the look of Ayub out here during the Australian summer," Ponting noted. He played that Test match in Sydney, I reckon it was and I didn't know much about him then. "When I'm sitting there commenting, I like to know about players and what they can do, so I actually went back and had a look at some of his PSL stuff. "And he's a proper player. I think he's a real star in the making."

Babar believes in horses-for-courses policy as Pakistan launch T20 WC campaign on Thursday

DALLAS (APP): Babar Azam will be hoping it is third time lucky for him when he captains Pakistan in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, which started in the United States and Caribbean on 1 June. The 2009 champions will kick-start their journey in the 2024 event on Thursday against hosts United States at the Grand Prairie Cricket Stadium in Dallas, with the first ball to be bowled at 10:30am local time (8:30pm Pakistan time). On 9 June in New York, Pakistan will go head-to-head with traditional rivals India before taking on Canada at the same venue on 11 June. Their final first-round match will be against Ireland on 16 June in Florida. If Pakistan qualifies for the Super-Eight stage, their three matches will be in Antigua and Barbados from 19 to 23 June. Babar was the captain when Pakistan won five straight matches before narrowly losing to Australia in the second semi-final of the 2021 event in the United Arab Emirates after the eventual champions needed 50 runs in the last four overs. Babar, the No. 4 batter in the world, was again at the helm when Pakistan lost to England in the 2022 final in Melbourne after Jos Buttler's side had slipped to 45 for three, then 84 for four and finally 132 for five before achieving the 138-run target with six balls and five wickets to spare. Apart from Babar, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah,

Shadab Khan, and Shaheen Shah Afridi were involved in the 2022 tournament. The side has been strengthened with the return of Mohammad Amir (also a member of the 2009 winning squad) and Imad Wasim, who last played in a T20 World Cup in 2016 and the 2021, respectively. Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Saim Ayub, and Usman Khan are the five players who will be appearing at this level for the first time. However, Imad Wasim will not be available for selection for Thursday's match as he has been advised rest by the PCB Medical Team. Ahead of the fourth T20I against England late last month, Imad had experienced discomfort in his right rib cage while batting in the nets and consequently missed the match. He is expected to be available for selection for the 9 June match against India in New York. Coincidentally, Pakistan's T20 World Cup success in 2009 at Lord's under Younis Khan came after Pakistan had lost the previous T20 World Cup final to India by five runs in Johannesburg. However, the shortest format of the game has evolved significantly in the past 15 years with T20 specialists taking over, strike-rates becoming the most talked about, totals of over 180 considered par scores, the introduction of batting and bowling innovations, data-driven strategies and even the non-Test playing nations consistently posing

challenges to the more experienced and fancied opponents, as was the case last week when the USA defeated Bangladesh 2-1 in a three-match series. Babar Azam was 14 years old and slowly making a name for himself in age-group cricket when Younis Khan lifted the silverware at the home of cricket in 2009. Eight years later, Babar was a member of Sarfaraz Ahmed's side that won the ICC Champions Trophy 2017 at The Oval, approximately 10 miles from Lord's. "I still remember Pakistan's 2009 victory at Lord's and Younis Khan lifting the trophy in front of the pavilion. It was an event that further motivated and inspired me to follow in the footsteps of stars of the 2009 side and before. And then, to be a member of the side in 2017 and feel the same sense of achievement and pride is something I still relish. "It is now my career objective and target to win the T20 World Cup, relive those memories and present the title to the passionate people of Pakistan, who have always stood behind us like a rock in good and not so very good days. "I, like all my teammates, am extremely confident going into the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024. It is time for the big one and I know each and every member of the side is anxiously waiting to start so that they can play their part and contribute to a strong and successful campaign. "We have and we will

continue to work hard, try to give our absolute best each time we step onto the field and hope our preparations and commitments will support us in this journey. "All 20 teams are here believing they can win the tournament. As such, it is going to be an exciting but extremely challenging and testing tournament, and that's the beauty of world championships. "We will follow the horses-for-courses policy in team selections as the conditions in the USA will be new and a couple of opponents we have not played before. In modern-day cricket, the concept and importance of floating players has become more critical than ever before and our players are aware of this as well as their roles and responsibilities. "It will be a proud moment and a big occasion for the USA when they play a former champion on Thursday. After beating Bangladesh 2-1 and then Canada in the tournament opener, they have demonstrated they deserve to be here, which is excellent news for cricket promotion and development in the region. We will give them the respect they deserve without being complacent." Pakistan has one of the most impressive records in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup since its inception in 2007 in South Africa. Besides winning the 2009 event, it has reached the finals in 2007 and 2022, and featured in semifinals in 2010, 2012, and 2021. In 47 matches Pakistan has played to date in the

ICC Men's T20 World Cup, it has won 28 with a success percentage of 60.63. Only India (63.95), South Africa (62.5), and Australia (62.5) have better success percentages than Pakistan among the Test-playing nations. Squad: Babar Azam (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Usman Khan. **Pakistan's schedule of matches:** 6 June -- vs USA, Grand Prairie Cricket Stadium, Dallas 9 June -- vs India, Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, New York 11 June -- vs Canada, Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, New York 16 June -- vs Ireland, Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium, Lauderdale, Florida **1st round Groups:** Group A -- India (A1), Pakistan (A2), USA, Canada and Ireland Group B -- England (B1), Australia (B2), Namibia, Scotland and Oman Group C -- New Zealand (C1), West Indies (C2), Afghanistan, Uganda and Papua New Guinea (PNG) Group D -- South Africa (D1), Sri Lanka (D2), Bangladesh, Netherlands and Nepal **Super Eight (if Pakistan qualify):** 19 June -- vs D1, Antigua 21 June -- vs C2, Barbados 23 June -- vs B1, Barbados.

FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifiers Saudi Arabia football team arrives in Pakistan



ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): The Saudi Arabia football team landed here on Wednesday ahead of their FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifiers match against Pakistan, scheduled to be played at the Jinnah Stadium on June 6. The Saudi Arabian team was warmly welcomed by the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) officials as well as KSA ambassador Nawaf Bin-Said Al-Malki at Islamabad International Airport. The visiting team reached here on a chartered flight, accompanied by renowned manager Roberto Mancini and assistant coach Yaya Toure. Notably, PFF named a 24-member squad for the FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifiers clash against Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. The national team will have the services of former Manchester United youngster and Grimsby Town attacking midfielder Otis Khan, who will lead the team's attack that features Mckael Abdullah, Imran Kayani, Fareed Ullah, Shayek Dost and Adeel Younas. Notably, the captain and lead defender Easah Suliman was not named in the Pakistan squad as he is planning to perform Hajj. Besides him, goalkeeper Adam Khan, who participated in the national team's training camp, also failed to make a cut. For the unversed, Pakistan are at the bottom of Group G as they lost all four matches in the second round of the FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifiers. Pakistan had an unwanted start to their second-round campaign as they succumbed to a 4-0 defeat against Saudi Arabia in November, followed by a 6-1 thrashing at the hands of Tajikistan at Islamabad in the same month. The national football team then lost to Jordan 3-0 in the home leg of the qualifiers at Jinnah Stadium before they were humbled 7-0 at the Amman International Stadium. After Saudi Arabia, Pakistan next face Tajikistan in their final group match in the second round of the FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifiers.



In brief

Fake news creates unease among masses

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Power Division Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari on Wednesday said that some private television channels were trying to create confusion and unease among the masses by airing fake news about net-metering policy despite repeated contradictions by the Ministry. He regretted that fake news was being aired on some channels in our country without verification which was totally against the spirit of responsible journalism, said a statement issued here.

ANF recovers over 64 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations across the country managed to recover over 64 kg drugs and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He said, 918 grams heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Sharjah at Faisalabad Airport. 44 grams of weed was recovered from a parcel sent from the UK at a courier office in Rawalpindi. In the third operation, 60 kg hashish was recovered from Pasni Gwadar. In the fourth operation, 3.6 kg hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up in Ahmedabad Attock. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

10 drug peddlers netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers and other law-breakers here on Wednesday arrested 10 accused besides recovering over six kg charras, 45 liters liquor, two liquor bottles and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Rattaamral police held Arslan and recovered 2200 grams charras. Sadder Wah police conducted a raid and netted Zafar with 1400 grams charras and Nasir for having 1220 grams charras. Taxila police arrested Adnan for possessing 1280 grams charras. He informed that Bani and City police arrested Arslan, Arslan Ali, Amir, Zubair, Ghulam Abbas, and Mazhar and recovered 45 liters liquor from their possession. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other law-breakers, he added.

IRSA releases 301,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 301,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 288,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1463.70 feet and was 65.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. The water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 107,000 cusecs and 120,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1188.60 feet, which was 138.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 55,000 cusecs each. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 191,700, 146,500, 141,600 and 91,500 cusecs respectively.

Land degradation serious risk to Pakistan's food security: Romina

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam on Wednesday said land degradation due to rising impacts of climate change was a serious risk to Pakistan's food and water security amid Indian violations of Indus Water Treaty (IWT).

She was addressing the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS)'s High-Level Panel Discussion on UN World Environment Day under the theme Land Restoration, Desertification and Drought Resilience.

Romina said the country was facing the worst impacts of climate change that emanated interconnected challenges of food security, water scarcity, and land degradation.

"Land degradation is damaging millions of hectares land annually and forcing millions of masses to displace around the world. Agriculture is the life one of Pakistan and land degradation would cast serious impacts coupled with forest degradation that would further aggravate the problem," she said. The PM's Coordinator mentioned that Indian construction of dams on rivers providing water to Pakistan was also a concern for the latter as a low riparian country.

She added that declining soil quantity and salinization directly caused reduced crop yields that

was driving poverty, and rural to urban migration.

Romina noted that sustainable development was only possible through a holistic policy initiative to address land degradation whereas resource pooling for technology and capacity building of farmers on use of modern technology solutions was pertinent for improving crop resilience.

She urged partners to provide platform in tandem with Ministry of Climate Change to scientists for knowledge sharing.

She highlighted the Ministry's various projects intended to enhance climate resilience, mitigate land degradation and forest degradation addressing community and biodiversity resilience collectively.

She said the local communities and indigenous people have tremendous knowledge that could be used to devise strategies to address land degradation. She demanded all to pledge to empower local communities, foster greener collaborations for supporting each other to counter land degradation, deforestation and drought mitigation.

In his welcome remarks, Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Mohammad Nafees Zakaria said World Environment Day was an important event and the dialogue was a manifestation of sincere commitment of the government to the cause of environmental preservation.

He said the growth and supply demand surges were occurring in the countries around the globe leading to land degradation whereas it's serious consequences were neglected that resulted into inadequate responses.

"Awareness is crucial to guide high level policy making that will set the pace for sustainable development and eco-friendly economic growth. Climate change, poverty and hunger are intrinsically linked issues and the way forward is technology based solutions with improved knowledge," Ambassador Zakaria said.

He added that big land data sets could be used for better land use as in the existing highly competitive environment, it was important for the nation to develop capacities and improve technology.

He informed that COMSATS is an intergovernmental organisation of 28 countries formed by Prof Dr Abdus Salam to bridge technology gaps among developing and developed nations of Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East.

The COMSATS, he said had worked on green hydrogen, remote sensing modelling and simulation, fuel cell technology and others, whereas the Commission had active working relationship with leading international platforms like Commonwealth and renowned scientific and environmental forums of global scope.

Ambassador Reza lauds Imam Khomeini as unique, irreplaceable

ISLAMABAD (APP): Iranian Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghaddam, highlighting the unparalleled stature of Imam Khomeini in a single sentence, stated that Imam Khomeini was unique and irreplaceable, his successors may resemble him, but there is no true substitute for him.

He made these remarks while addressing a seminar titled 'Palestine and Resistance in the Light of Imam Khomeini's Thoughts and Ideas,' organised by the Iranian Embassy in collaboration with the Iranian Cultural Consulate on the 35th death anniversary of Imam Khomeini.

Imam Khomeini was an Iranian Islamic revolutionary, politician, and religious leader who served as the first supreme leader of Iran from 1979 until his death in 1989.

Ambassador Reza emphasised that the most significant way to honour Imam Khomeini's memory is to perpetuate his ideology so that future generations can understand and benefit from it.

He said whenever Imam Khomeini initiated a task, it was deeply rooted, with no possibility of turning back. When Khomeini began his efforts against the Shah of Iran, his companions suggested to speak out against those around the Shah, but he refused, insisting that his opposition was directed



squarely at the Shah himself, he maintained.

Ambassador Reza recounted that after the revolution's success, Imam Khomeini was advised to establish a flexible legal system that could be amended over time. However, he said that Khomeini rejected this idea, stating that he had achieved success in the name of Islam and would establish an Islamic system in the country.

He noted that, despite 46 years passing, anti-Iranian revolutionary elements have tried their utmost to crush the revolution, but have not succeeded. He added that many of those who opposed the revolution are no longer alive, yet Iran's revolution continues to advance towards new milestones with unwavering zeal and enthusiasm.

Highlighting the seminar's topic, 'Imam Khomeini and Palestine,' Ambassador Reza stated that Palestine has been forcefully occupied and that the entire land should be

returned to the Palestinian people. He mentioned that Imam Khomeini urged the Muslim Ummah to unite on a common platform and support the just cause of the Palestinian people.

Ambassador Reza described Israel as an oppressor, emphasising that Imam Khomeini truly captured the valour Palestine is displaying against Israel in the current circumstances. He noted that Imam Khomeini did not seek power for its own sake but aimed to establish a government that would continue to uphold his ideology after his passing.

The seminar also featured addresses from prominent religious scholars and leaders, including Dr Abdul Basit Mujahid, Mufti Mir Ishtiaq Ahmed, Khanum Tayyaba Bukhari, Allama Muhammad Ameen Shaheedi, Allama Mufti Amir Shahzad, Allama Raja Nasir Abbas, Allama Syed Sajid Ali Naqvi, and Iranian Cultural Counselor Majid Meshki.

RWMC starts distribution of biodegradable bags

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company has started the free-of-cost distribution of biodegradable bags to the residents of the city for the proper disposing of the sacrificial animal waste ahead of Eid Ul Azha.

Chairing a meeting to review the RWMC Eid cleanliness arrangements, Chairman RWMC Saqib Rafiq said that the Company has finalized a comprehensive cleanliness plan for Eid-ul-Azha to get rid of entrails and offal of the slaughtered animals while all available resources will be utilized to accomplish the task.

He said that RWMC would remove over 9,000 tons of waste on Eid-ul-Azha while as many as 4,000 sanitary workers are deployed in three shifts round the clock during the

drive. Saqib informed that 435 vehicles, including dumpers, tractors, trolleys, pick-ups and excavators would be part of the special drive to remove the remains from every nook and corner of the district.

He added that the staff leaves would be cancelled and sanitary workers and officials of the department would ensure cleanliness during the three Eid days in all tehsil of the district including Murree, Kahuta, Taxila, Gujar Khan and Kallar Syeda.

The chairman said that 61 permanent collection points and mobile transfer stations would be set up in the city and tehils while the distribution of biodegradable bags for the entrails of the sacrificial animals among the citizens had been kicked off.

He added that four of

each worker would be present at 22 collective slaughter points with hand carts for proper disposing of innards.

A large quantity of lime will be used throughout the city, while containers will be washed with fennel and rose water to remove the stench.

Saqib said banners were being displayed at all main points of the city while an awareness campaign on social media platforms was being launched to create awareness among the masses about cleanliness. Along with the Eid special cleanliness the routine garbage would also be collected without interruption, he added.

He hoped that RWMC would succeed in achieving the first position over the best cleanliness arrangements on Eid-Ul-Azha across Punjab.



ISLAMABAD: Governor KPK, Faisal Karim Kundi calls on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar. —APP Photo

Low quality food for pilgrims unacceptable

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Wednesday took notice of media reports about food safety violations by catering companies in Makkah.

He, in a statement, lauded the monitoring team of the Pakistan Hajj mission for its efforts to find food agreement violations during surprise visits.

Minister Salik emphasised the importance of continuous surveillance during food preparation and round-the-clock monitoring of kitchens to ensure the timely and uninterrupted supply of hygienic food to the pilgrims.

He also stressed the need for rechecking the quality and quantity of food upon arrival at the residential buildings of pilgrims.

SSP holds open court

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a bid to directly tackle public complaints, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) investigation in Rawalpindi, Zunaira Azfar, held Khuli Katchery at the Police Lines Headquarters here on Wednesday.

According to a Police spokesman, the SSP issued directives to the officers concerned to take action and submit detailed reports on the complaints submitted by the citizens. She said that negligence on part of the officials concerned would not be tolerated.

Khuli Katchery were being held to provide the citizens immediate relief and address their complaints besides it also helped improve standards of policing, she said and issued orders to the officers to complete inquiries and send reports within the given time frame. All out efforts should be made to ensure the dispensation of speedy justice purely on merit to the people and improve service delivery standards in the district, she added.

The spokesman informed that the Senior Police Officers under the Punjab government's open door policy were holding open courts here to provide relief to the citizens.

KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi meets federal law minister

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday met with Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar in Islamabad and discussed matters relating to provision of justice to people.

KP Governor also dis-

cussed with federal law minister matters pertaining to supremacy of law and the role of judiciary and lawyer fraternity in provision of speedy and inexpensive justice to people, said a press release issued here.

He also highlighted problems being faced by district and high court bar councils and stressed the need of providing special

grant to bar councils of KP. He said that supremacy of law is vital to protect basic right of each and every member of society.

Speaking on the occasion, federal law minister assured cooperation and assistance to address faced by bar councils in KP. He said that efforts would be made to solve problems of bar councils on priority basis.

Country Director CAIE calls on Education Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Country Director of Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) Ms. Uzma Yousaf called on Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddique on Wednesday.

During the meeting, Dr. Khalid said that CAIE is playing a positive role in imparting quality education to the youth of Pakistan. He stressed that CAIE needs to expand the horizon of their role in Pakistan, a press

release said. He especially emphasised its role in creating enhance assessment capabilities of the local education boards. He said that transparency in assessment and enhanced engagement is the need of the hour. He appreciated the fact that now local schools can also conduct CAIE exams.

He was told that almost 25 big local schools are already conducting CAIE exams themselves. Dr. Khalid was briefed that a role in Pakistan, a press National Seminar on

Assessment Reforms will be conducted in coordination with CAIE to lay down a road map aimed at increasing the assessment capabilities of local boards.

Ms. Uzma invited the federal minister to visit Cambridge UK. Dr. Khalid was also told that the role of CAIE will be enhanced in DARE and ASPIRE project as well.

WAPDA initiates legal proceedings against housing societies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has initiated legal proceedings against those cooperative housing societies that have been using WAPDA's name unlawfully.

According to a statement issued on Wednesday, WAPDA has been approaching all legal forums including Registrar Cooperative Housing Societies and FIA to curb this practice.

The statement says that WAPDA, a statutory body corporate established under WAPDA Act 1958, publicly renounces its association, nexus, and direct or indirect affiliation with any cooperative housing society, except WAPDA Town Cooperative Housing Society (Phase I and II), situated in Lahore, which is authorised to use the name of WAPDA.

As such, the unlawful

and illegal use of a registered name i.e. WAPDA, for other housing societies or projects, by any other entity or person, amounts to a gross misrepresentation.

Therefore, WAPDA cannot be held responsible for liabilities, if any, that may be raised by the public, pursuant to investment in such rogue, illegal, and unlawful housing societies, the statement further says.

The housing societies, using WAPDA's name unlawfully and illegally include WAPDA Employees Cooperative Housing Society, Islamabad, WAPDA Employees Cooperative Housing Society Ltd, Multan, WAPDA Employees Cooperative Housing Society (Phase I and II), Gujranwala, WAPDA Employees Cooperative Housing Society Ltd, Faisalabad, WAPDA Employees Cooperative Housing Society Ltd, Sargodha, WAPDA Employees Cooperative Housing Society Ltd, Sheikhupura, WAPDA Employees Cooperative Housing Society Ltd, Kasur, WAPDA Employees Cooperative Housing Society Ltd, Peshawar, WAPDA Employees Cooperative Housing Society Ltd, Quetta, WAPDA Employees Housing Society, Karachi, WAPDA Workers and Officers Cooperative Housing Society, Hyderabad, WAPDA Employees Cooperative Housing Society, KIP, Karachi, WAPDA Employees Cooperative Housing Society, (Southern Zone), WAPDA City Faisalabad and WAPDA City Gujranwala.

Raja Pervaiz calls for concerted efforts to strengthen, uplift PPP

RAWALPINDI (APP): Former Prime Minister and president of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Punjab Raja Pervaiz Ashraf called for concerted efforts to strengthen and uplift the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). He has emphasised the need for unity and hard work within the party to ensure victory in the upcoming general elections.

Addressing a dinner ceremony organised by PPP City in Rawalpindi, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf highlighted the need for talented and respected individuals in government positions. He praised the party's leadership for appointing dedicated leaders as governors in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, aiming to strengthen PPP's presence and influence.

He urged party members to move beyond social media and focus on real efforts to give new energy to

the party. Raja Pervaiz Ashraf called for an immediate increase in party membership to ensure PPP's success in the general elections. He stressed that victory in local elections is a stepping stone to winning the general elections, and every party worker must work hard and organize effectively.

On this occasion, Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, members National Assembly Syeda Shehla Raza, Zumar Khan, Aamir Fida Paracha, Leader of PPP Rawalpindi Malik Khalid Nawaz Bobi, Babar Sultan Jadoon, Malik Qasim Idris, Tawqir Ahmad Abbasi, Numbardar Inam Malik, Malik Hammad Awan and hundreds of workers of PPP participated. Governor Punjab Sardar Salim Haider on the occasion praised the

leadership of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

Governor Haider highlighted that the PPP has consistently promoted workers to high-ranking positions within the government. Under the guidance of Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, the party has demonstrated unity, particularly in Rawalpindi's political sphere, and has a history of close collaboration with Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, he added. He shared his journey, attributing his political success to the PPP's support. He emphasised that the party has entrusted him with significant roles since the district council elections in 1997.

He said that over the years, he has served as a minister three times, an advisor once, and now holds the prestigious position of Governor of

Punjab. This trajectory, he noted, underscores the PPP's commitment to elevating dedicated party workers to honorable positions, he maintained.

Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Faisal Karim Kundi, said that we need to solve our province's problems together. He mentioned that there are two different views of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa one on social media and other in real life.

It is hard to find the real KP on social media and to improve education three billion rupees have been set aside in the budget, he said adding that more steps are needed to improve health-care in KP. Governor Kundi thanked the Pakistan People's Party leadership for choosing him as the governor. He promised to meet the expectations of the party leader and workers with utmost dedication.

Minister to attend forum

KABUL (Ariana News): Abdulmanan Omari, Afghanistan's acting minister of labor and social affairs, will attend this year's St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in Russia, the ministry said in a statement. According to the statement, Omari left for Russia on Wednesday. This trip follows close on the heels of Omari's visit to Qatar. The St. Petersburg International Economic Forum gets underway on Wednesday and will continue through to Saturday.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ziqaad 28, 1445 — Thursday, June 06, 2024

Ministry signs agreements

KABUL (BNA): In a significant move to bolster support for refugees, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations has formalized two cooperation agreements with the Watan Social and Technical Services Organization at the ministry's headquarters. According to a press release from the Ministry's Media Office, sent to BNA, these agreements will see the WSTA invest over \$2.7 million USD in various projects and direct financial aid for those in need.

Commission approves 14 projects



KABUL (Ariana News): In the regular meeting on Wednesday chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the National Procurement Commission reviewed 24 projects and approved 14. These 14 projects are worth 4 billion AFN. In addition, 6 projects were extended, and the contract

of one project was canceled, the deputy PM's office said in a statement.

The Directorate of National Procurement was directed to resubmit one project for open bidding and to comprehensively evaluate the contracts of two projects, with a report to be shared with the Commission's leadership. The approved and

extended projects include completing the Kabul-Kandahar highway, providing electrical equipment for Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat across various provinces, and constructing several key roads in Kabul city, among other initiatives.

Meanwhile, the statement added that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is funding these projects.

30% progress in excavation work of Qush Tepa Canal

KABUL (TOLOnews): The National Development Corporation reports a 30% progress in the excavation work of Phase Two of the Qush Tepa Canal.

Officials at the National Development Corporation state that the construction of the Qush Tepa Canal's intake structure has also progressed by 50%, and the excavation work of Phase Two and the construction of the intake structure are continuing vigorously.

Sayed Zabihullah Miri, the project manager of the Qush Tepa Canal, said: "The intake structure has approximately 50% physical progress, and the excavation work of Phase Two is in progress, with 30% physical advancement."

Meanwhile, some experts say that with the completion of this canal, Afghanistan will witness significant economic progress and achieve self-sufficiency in wheat production.

Najibullah Sadid, an expert in water management, said: "The Qush Tepa Canal and all its subsidiary canals, once completed, can generate an annual revenue of between 470 to 550 million dollars for Afghanistan."

Shakir Yaqubi, an economic expert, said: "The Qush Tepa Canal project is a long-term project. We cannot see its impact in the short term. However, if the implementation of this project is carried out according to the appropriate management methods, it can have an impact on Afghanistan's economy."

According to the National Development Corporation, the excavation work of Phase Two of the Qush Tepa Canal, which is expected to reach Andkhoy district in Faryab by the end of this solar year, is estimated to cost 20 billion Afghanis.

Hanafi criticizes foreign interference in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLOnews): Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Islamic Emirate's deputy prime minister for administrative affairs, stated that the Islamic Emirate does not intervene in the affairs of other countries, and other countries should not interfere in the internal matters of Afghanistan.

Addressing a gathering of "Admiration for Outstanding University and Religious School Students" Hanafi added that if any country interferes in Afghanistan's internal affairs, a similar action will be taken against that country.

"If anyone interferes in Afghanistan's internal affairs and wants to destroy Afghanistan and torment the Afghan people, then our defense is based on our Islamic and international rights, and in that case, we will respond in kind," said Abdul Salam Hanafi.

In his speech, Hanafi also called the concerns of

countries over the existence of religious schools in Afghanistan "baseless."

He emphasized that there is no difference between universities and schools, and no one is allowed to create a gap between these institutions.

He said: "Unfortunately, there are some school phobias. Alhamdulillah, this will not exist in Afghanistan anymore. Some of our neighboring countries still have not seen any schools but have school phobias. All their concerns are baseless."

Neda Mohammad Nadim, the acting Minister of Higher Education, said at the meeting that religious and modern sciences are necessary for society, and the Islamic Emirate is committed in this regard.

"The Islamic Emirate will make Afghanistan prosperous in both religious and modern sciences. We assure the whole nation that we are committed to this



goal," he added.

Khairullah Khairkhwah, the acting Minister of Information and Culture, was also one of the speakers at the meeting. He emphasized the importance of enhancing the capacity of youth in the country.

He said, "The officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan are not sitting idly but are striving to enhance capacities and create working opportunities in the country."

The administrative deputy of the Prime Minister's Office continued to add that strengthening educational institutions is a priority for the Islamic Emirate, and that only these institutions can make Afghanistan self-sufficient.

According to information from Kabul University, approximately 60 scholars and outstanding students from the country's universities and religious schools were praised at meeting.

Baradar meets Indonesian officials

KABUL (Ariana News): Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, hosted a meeting with Muhammad Yusuf Kalla, Chairman of the Red Crescent and Mosques Council of Indonesia and former Vice President of Indonesia, along with his delegation on Wednesday in Kabul.

According to a statement issued by Baradar's office, the discussions centered on

enhancing political, economic, commercial, and developmental ties between Afghanistan and Indonesia. Baradar highlighted the historically strong relations between the two nations, emphasizing that a solid foundation has been established for further development.

He urged both countries to collaborate closely to strengthen these ties.

Baradar also pointed out

that with the establishment of comprehensive security in Afghanistan, significant investment opportunities have arisen in sectors such as energy, mining, dams, infrastructure, and industry.

He encouraged Indonesian investors to explore these opportunities, assuring them that the Islamic Emirate has created conducive conditions and will provide full cooperation for their ventures.

Muhammad Yusuf Kalla commended the IEA for the progress in Afghanistan and expressed his intention to present an accurate portrayal of the country to the Indonesian government, people, and the international community.

He stated Indonesia's desire to expand relations with Afghanistan across various sectors and mentioned the willingness of Indonesian investors to invest in Afghanistan's mining sector.

Kalla announced that an Indonesian economic delegation would visit Kabul soon to discuss joint economic cooperation and potential investments in Afghanistan's mines, the statement read.

Both sides concluded the meeting by underscoring the importance of developing Afghanistan-Indonesia relations in political, economic, commercial, and educational fields.

Ministry initiative to restore historical sites

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Information and Culture says it has undertaken 21 projects to restore the country's historical sites. According to Khubaib Ghufuran, the ministry's spokesperson, work on eleven of these projects has already begun, but funding has not yet been allocated for the other ten projects. Khubaib Ghufuran, spokesperson for the Ministry of Information and Culture, said: "Two projects are in Kandahar province and nine projects are in Herat province, where recent earthquakes have either damaged or endangered them. Restoration work on these sites is ongoing, and the other ten projects are under discussion. Work will begin on them after financial resources and necessary facilities are determined."

At the same time, some archaeologists and cultural figures consider the restoration of the country's historical sites a valuable step towards protecting these areas.

Kitab Khan Faizi, the head of the Kushani International Research Center, said: "Restoration and repair are good actions for the people of Afghanistan, and my suggestion in this regard is that before restoration, thorough research should be completed on the sites."

Anwar Faiz, Academic Member of Archaeological Research Center at the Academy of Sciences, said: "Historical buildings are one of the cultural heritages of our country, reflecting the art, culture, architecture, and tile work of each period, each with its unique characteristics."

Deportation of Afghan migrants continued



KABUL (Khaama Press): As the forced deportation of Afghan migrants from Iran and Pakistan continues, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation reported the expulsion of nearly three thousand Afghan migrants from these countries.

On Wednesday, the ministry announced in a press release that 2,831 Afghan migrants were deported from Iran and 751 from Pakistan.

The Ministry of Refugees stated in the press release that the returnees entered the country on June 4.

According to the press release, the mentioned migrants entered Afghanistan through the borders

of Islam Qala, Torkham, and Spin Boldak after being deported.

Afghan migrants are being deported from Pakistan while the deportation of Afghan migrants from neighboring countries, especially Iran and Pakistan, has significantly increased in recent months.

Recently, following an attack by an Afghan migrant on an anti-Islam rally, leaders of the right-wing Alternative for Germany party called for the cessation of Afghan migrant acceptance and the resumption of their deportation.

The dire situation in Afghanistan, exacerbated by ongoing conflict and economic instability, makes

the forced deportation of migrants a severe humanitarian issue. Many

returnees face dire conditions, lacking access to basic necessities, shelter, and employment opportunities, further straining the already fragile infrastructure and support systems within Afghanistan.

These forced deportations aggravate the current crisis, leaving many Afghan families vulnerable and without support. The international community's focus on addressing these humanitarian concerns is crucial to mitigate the adverse effects on the returnees and the host communities struggling to accommodate them.

63 sentenced receive lashings, imprisonment

SAR-E-PUL (TOLOnews): Local authorities in Sar-e-Pul reported that punitive sentences were carried out on 63 individuals, including 15 women.

According to local officials, these individuals were arrested by security forces for committing various crimes and have now been punished. The crimes committed by these individuals include fleeing from home, armed robbery, adultery, sodomy, and disrespect.

Habibullah Masroor, the spokesperson for the governor of Sar-e-Pul, stated that these sentences were carried out after being reviewed by three courts and sanctioned by the leader of the Islamic Emirate in the stadium of Sar-e-Pul city. Each of these individuals has been sentenced to 15 to 39 lashes and imprisonment ranging from 6 months to 5 years.

Habibullah Masroor added: "Punitive measures were executed on 63 criminals, including 48 men and 15 women."

Some residents of Sar-e-Pul believe that the execution of these punitive sentences will reduce the rate of criminal activities in the province.

Jamshid, a resident of Sar-e-Pul, told TOLOnews: "Young people will learn a lesson from the crimes they committed, and this will result in a decrease in crime and criminal activities."

Dad Mohammad, another resident of Sar-e-Pul, said: "Anyone who is a criminal should be punished. We are happy and satisfied with this."

Meanwhile, the spokesperson for the governor of Panjshir has also reported the implementation of punitive sentences on two individuals who were arrested in this province on charges of illicit relations.

Afghanistan faces serious climate change threats

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan faces serious threats from climate change, and studies indicate that it is among the least prepared to combat these threats.

As the world commemorates World Environment Day, Afghanistan is grappling with the severe consequences of climate change-induced events. Most recently, deadly floods in several provinces have not only destroyed thousands of hectares of agricultural land and endangered the existing ecosystem but also claimed the lives of over 300 people.

Rosa Otunbayeva, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA stated in a video message on World Environment Day that Afghanistan's beautiful and unique environment is under threat. She emphasized the need to restore ecosystems to prevent climate-related floods and droughts.

Officials of the de facto administration also remarked on this occasion that industrial countries play a significant role in producing greenhouse gases, which negatively impacts countries like Afghanistan. Concerns over climate change threats to Afghanistan have increased, especially since, due to political developments in the country, Afghanistan's seat at crucial international meetings on climate change, including the recent COP, has remained vacant.

Additionally, the recent deadly floods have exacerbated the already dire situation. The floods have not only resulted in significant loss of life but also caused extensive damage to infrastructure, displacing thousands of families.

The lack of adequate disaster preparedness and response mechanisms has further highlighted the urgent need for international assistance and support to help Afghanistan cope with the increasing frequency and severity of such natural disasters.

The devastating impact of the floods underscores Afghanistan's vulnerability to climate change and the urgent need for comprehensive climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. The international community's support is crucial to building resilience and ensuring sustainable development in Afghanistan amidst these environmental challenges.

Kabul's fifteenth district installs over 7,000 security cameras

KABUL (TOLOnews): Nazar Mohammad Abuzar, Deputy of Kabul's Fifteenth Security District, has announced the installation of over 7,000 security cameras in various parts of the district with the cooperation of the people.

According to Abuzar, in addition to these cameras, nearly one hundred other security cameras with facial recognition capabilities have also been installed.

Nazar Mohammad Abuzar also added that these cameras monitor key areas of the region twenty-four hours a day.

Nazar Mohammad Abuzar, Deputy of the Fifteenth District, said: "These one hundred cameras, which have been specifically designed, have been initiated by the commanding officer and have yielded very good results. Many criminals have been caught red-handed through radio communication and apprehended."

Some military experts consider the installation of security cameras crucial in reducing criminal activities but emphasize that these cameras should be used according to standards.

Mohammad Zalmi Afghan Yar, a military affairs expert, said: "Security cameras assist investigative and intelligence agencies and are effective in ensuring the security of citizens."



Meanwhile, some residents of the capital also welcome the installation of security cameras and urge security institutions to make greater efforts to ensure the safety of people's property and lives.

Faheem, a resident of Kabul, said: "The installation of security cameras has been very beneficial beca-

use they help ensure people's safety. Additionally, we have another request: that the security forces make efforts to protect people's property and lives."

Previously, the Ministry of Interior reported that over 62,000 security cameras have been installed in Kabul city and some other important locations.

Ministry plans to build townships

KABUL (BNA): During a high-level meeting between Turkish construction company 77 and the Acting Minister of Urban Development and Housing, Sheikh Hamdullah Nomani, plans were announced to establish organized townships for industrial and production factories.

In the meeting, Burak Unsal, the deputy of construction company 77, highlighted the company's activities and production plant located in Kabul's Green Industries Township. Unsal emphasized the need for ample space to meet engineering and quality standards for the construction of large bridges, ensuring their long-term maintenance.

Unsal emphasized that the production of large bridges requires a vast space to meet engineering and quality standards, ensuring the structures can



be maintained in good condition for 28 days.

Acting Minister Sheikh Hamdullah Nomani responded by acknowledging the legal and technical challenges associated with the land in the Green Industries Township, noting that the Ministry is working to resolve these issues.

Sheikh Hamdullah Nomani assured the deputy of construction company 77 and the visiting delegation that land could be made available in the eastern part of the Pirowzi Township to

commence their activities.

He also suggested that another approach could involve making adjustments to the plan of the Green Industries Township in a manner that preserves the green spaces, railway, and residential areas of the Pirowzi Residential Town.

The Ministry of Urban Development and Housing is committed to establishing organized townships for industrial and production factories, in coordination and collaboration with relevant organizations.

Herat Saffron once again ranked best in world

HERAT (Khaama Press): The International Taste Institute of Belgium has announced that Herat saffron has once again secured the top position globally for the ninth time, being recognized as the "most delicious" saffron.

The institute published a report stating that Herat saffron was identified as the best saffron following laboratory tests.

The International Taste Institute, based in Belgium, annually evaluates food products from various countries worldwide based on specific criteria.

It is noteworthy that, according to this institute's assessments, Afghanistan saffron has received the award for the best taste.

It is worth mentioning



that saffron is one of Afghanistan's most valuable industrial crops, consistently receiving the top award for best taste over the years.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation of Afghanistan, in 2023, 8,304 hectares of land in 26 provinces of the country

were cultivated with saffron, yielding 23,249 metric tons of saffron, of which 22,240 metric tons were harvested from Herat province.

Afghan saffron, also known as "red gold," is currently exported to numerous markets in many countries, especially Arab countries, India, and China.

KP CM inaugurates new feeder route of BRT service

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: KP Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur inaugurated the new feeder route DR-14 of the Peshawar Bus Rapid Transit System at the Central Park Regi Model Town on Wednesday.

This new route will connect Board Bazaar to DHA via Regi Model Town, on Nasirbagh Road. This much awaited addition to the Zu Peshawar network brings the total number of routes to 16, further enhancing the city's public transportation infrastructure. The inauguration event was

The new route is expected to further enhance the accessibility and convenience of public transportation, contributing to the city's sustainable growth.

He added that the Zu Peshawar network is testament to the commitment of the government and stakeholders to meet the growing transportation needs of Peshawar's residents. This development reflects the government's forward-looking approach to urban planning and sustainability.

The residents of Peshawar had been eagerly awaiting this route, and

Gandapur launched three new housing schemes under PHA including Hangu Township, Dangram Housing Scheme Swat and Mega City Nowshera, with the aim to ensure provision of better and affordable residential facilities to citizens.

A ceremony in this regard held here at Chief Minister's House Peshawar, attended by Special Assistant to CM Dr. Amjad Ali, MNA Amjad Khan, MPA Mian Sharafat Ali and other senior officials.

As per details, Hangu Township spreading over 8362 Kanals of land will house 10162 both commercial and residential plots of different sizes, Dangram Housing Scheme covering 501 Kanals will house 682 both commercial and residential plots with different sizes. Similarly, Mega City Nowshera covering 1750 Kanals will have 3500 Plots of different sizes both commercial and residential. It is pertinent to mention that aforementioned housing schemes will be collectively developed at an estimated cost of Rs. 21 billion.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony, the chief Minister said that provision of affordable residential facilities to the citizens is responsibility of government adding that the provincial government has launched three new schemes on public private partnership to meet the housing needs of the people. He further said that the incumbent government will give plots of 5 Marlas free of cost to the heirs of those government officials and personnel of various forces who embraced martyrdom in the line of duty. He added that new housing schemes worth Rs 85 billion were also in pipeline, which alongside meeting the housing needs will also generate employment opportunities.

The Chief Minister remarked that the provincial government, since its inception, has completed planning phase of developing different sectors having potential of generating revenue for the province. Ali Amin Gandapur Said that the government will welcome local as well as foreign investment in various sectors including mining, energy, tourism and housing adding that all out facilities will be extended to the investors by ease of doing business policy of the government.



attended by Secretary Transport, CEO TransPeshawar and other officials.

The route is consist of a total of 16 stops namely Islamia College, Board Bazaar, Canal Bank Colony, Naseer Teaching Hospital, PSO Stop, Police Colony, Askari 6 Phase 2, Askari 6 Phase 1, Mian Khan Garhi, Badezai, Regi Model Town, Zone 3 Ground, Government Girls Primary School, Masjid-e-Hamza, Ladies Park and DHA.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, the Chief Minister emphasized the importance of efficient and accessible public transit in promoting sustainable urban development and improving the lives of the residents of Peshawar. He said, "Zu Peshawar caters to approximately 350,000 passengers daily, making it a lifeline for the city's residents and commuters.

its opening represents a significant step forward in TransPeshawar's efforts to enhance its service. A spokesperson for TransPeshawar told media, the route will be beneficial to the people living in Regi Model Town, DHA, Askari, Police Colony etc., as well as students of Islamia College and University of Peshawar, residing in these areas.

"The route is expected to serve as a vital artery for commuters, connecting these crucial areas while reducing travel times and congestion on the roads. With the operationalization of this, Zu Peshawar continues to revolutionize the way people move in Peshawar, offering a reliable and eco-friendly transportation alternative," he concluded.

Three housing schemes launched: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Jordan to Pakistan, Dr. Maen Khreasant, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

PHC disposes of plea after Mashwani removal from PNIL

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court disposed of Member Provincial Assembly Iftikhar Mashwani plea after removal his name from Provisional National Identification List (PNIL), on Wednesday.

The counsel Syed Sikandar Shah advocate argued that petition is sitting MPA and had previously also been elected as member of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's assembly.

However, his name was placed in the PNIL after the 9th May incident, preventing him from traveling abroad, the counsel argued. He added that there was no risk of his client fleeing the country and that he only wanted to travel abroad for a private visit.

Additional Director Legal Federal Investigation Agency Abdul Rehman Afridi informed that the petitioner's name had been removed from the ECL and he was now free to travel abroad. PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Shakeel Ahmad disposed of Iftikhar Mashwani plea after removal of his name from PNIL.

PHC acquits murderer: PHC acquitted a man convicted in honor killing of from 55-year imprisonment for murder of his sister-in-law along with her beloved in the premises of Kalayan police station on 19th November 2020.

The appellant Gul Nazeef was convicted for killing his sister-in-law and her beloved on November 19, 2020, in the jurisdiction of Police Station Kalaya, Orakzai. The lower court had sentenced him to 50 years in prison in 2022. The counsel Altaf Khan argued that the prosecution's case was based on hearsay and that there was no eyewitness testimony or physical evidence linking the accused to the crime. He also pointed out that the victim's father had not accused the appellant at the time of the incident, but later filed a complaint after three months and 26 days. PHC's divisional bench comprising Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Shakeel Ahmed accepted the appeal and acquitted the accused from charges.

Pakistan to 'request' UAE for \$1b loan rollover

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan to 'request' United Arab Emirates (UAE) for rollover of \$1 billion loan, before maturity period, sources said on Wednesday.

As per details, the finance ministry has completed the working on the matter and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is likely to pen down a letter to the UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, for the rollover of the loan. Sources said, overall UAE kept \$3 billion as a safe deposit in the State Bank of Pakistan out of which \$2bn loan has already been rollover by the UAE at Pakistan's request, while a rollover for the remaining \$1 bln will be sought.

They said Pakistan is currently paying 3 to 6.5 per cent interest rate on the overall \$3 billion safe deposit of the United Arab Emirates. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will write a letter to the UAE president, in which he will thank the Emirates for its support to Pakistan and will seek rollover of \$1 billion on the current terms and conditions, the sources said.

Anti-judiciary rhetoric

Apex court rejects Kamal's apology

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday spurned "unconditional" apology tendered by Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Deputy Convener Mustafa Kamal in a contempt case.

A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Irfan Saadat Khan, heard the contempt of court case against Kamal and independent Senator Faisal Vawda.

Kamal tendered an unconditional apology, saying he held "all the judges, in particular, the judges of the superior courts in the highest respect and esteem". However, Senator Vawda adamantly refused to apologise but sought an end to the matter, saying several other people had issued remarks similar to his.

At the outset of hearing, Chief Justice Isa asked Vawda's counsel Moez Ahmad to recite verses from the Holy Quran regarding someone's weaknesses. Instead of addressing a press conference, it would have been better to come to us [judiciary], stand in front of us and speak to us, the CJP remarked.

He asked the lawyer if they introduced a bill in parliament to change law. "Have we [the judges] ever said that so and so senator did not attend sessions of Senate," the CJP added. The chief justice asked him that by holding press conferences, whose purpose they were serving.

Justice Irfan Saadat observed that the press conference was not about the people of Pakistan, it was about two highly respected judges. The chief justice said have we ever asked why parliament granted extension to so and so.

The CJP inquired in what capacity the press conference was held. He pointed towards journalists and said people sitting here posts very serious tweets and addressed the lawyer that "don't tell lies." CJP Isa asked Advocate Moez you don't want to apologise. The lawyer replied that he has submitted his reply and wanted to read it.

The chief justice said let us first see what did your client said. Let us consider

whether it amounted to contempt of court or not. Advocate Moez replied that he would like to read the questions and answers after the press conference.

Justice Irfan Saadat said in response to a journalist's question, he clearly said that he had come to speak against [Justice] Babar Star and [Justice] Athar Minallah. Kamal's lawyer Barrister Farogh Naseem requested the court to accept his client's unconditional apology.

He claimed that his client had in fact talked about pending riba (usury) cases. "Aren't those cases [filed] before the Federal Shariat Court?" CJP Isa questioned. Regarding the decision to take suo motu, the CJP said nobody was subjected to abuse as he was.

"Is such abusive language used in any country?" CJP Isa asked him. He said he would not have taken [suo motu] notice had it targeted him. But your client spoke about the judiciary, he added. Lamenting the media's role in streaming the press conferences, CJP Isa observed that the news channels promoted obscene language the most [...] the press conferences were streamed for 34 minutes. Should we issue notices to them as well? "The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has enforced an absurd law prohibiting court reporting [...] This is unfair, why can't court proceedings be reported?" he added.

"We saved all the journalists," the chief justice said while stressing that people get paid in dollars for telling lies. "If someone wants to criticise my decisions, read them first," he said. The court then issued notices to all the TV channels for broadcasting press conferences live directing them to submit their responses within two weeks. The apex court also sought PEMRA's response regarding the ban on reporting court proceedings.

Later, the court adjourned the hearing till June 28 with direction to Vawda to submit his response within one week. The Supreme Court earlier issued show-cause notices to Senator Faisal Vawda and MQM-Pakistan lawmaker Mustafa Kamal over their blistering criticism of high court judges.

Zardari desires building of 'technology highways'

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday emphasized upon the need of building "technology highways" in the country by enhancing students' access to IT infrastructure, strengthening of educational programmes and equipping them with modern skills to help them fully benefit from the knowledge economy.

He said that providing laptops to students would increase their access to education, bridge the digital divide, and equip them with technology skills to help them compete in the national and international job markets. The president expressed these views while talking to Professor Dr Niaz Ahmad Akhtar, Vice Chancellor of Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) Islamabad, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press

release. The vice chancellor briefed the president about the role of QAU in providing quality education, its educational programmes, and other administrative affairs. Talking to the vice chancellor, the president said that Pakistan was blessed with abundant human resources, which needed to be converted into a strength by imparting the latest education and skills to them.

He highlighted that Pakistan required to train and educate its human resources that could be exported to foreign countries facing a shortage of trained professionals, so as to help Pakistan earn foreign exchange. The president said that universities were pivotal in producing skilled professionals, who could fulfill local and international market needs.

He also underlined the need to focus on producing

more professionals such as doctors, engineers, nurses, and teachers. During the meeting, the vice chancellor informed that QAU was one of the top-ranking universities in Pakistan and was ranked at 315th position globally. He apprised that the QAU was focusing on research that could have a positive impact on society, adding that digitalization was the top priority of the university.

The president urged to further improve the quality of education, besides focusing on the character-building of students, adding that top position holders of QAU should be given Presidential Awards with cash to encourage them in their studies. The president appreciated the role of QAU in Pakistan's academic sector and assured the vice chancellor of his support in resolving the financial issues of the university by taking it up at the appropriate forum.

Hybrid system ruining foundation of country: PTI

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General Omar Ayub asserted that the hybrid system had ruined the foundation of the state.

Speaking to media outside the Islamabad High Court (IHC), he announced that he would take up the FIA notices issue in parliament and court. He said he would file a contempt of court petition against the Capital Development Authority (CDA) for not unsealing the PTI secretariat in Islamabad despite IHC's order.

He stated that the venue

'Rawat' assigned by the Islamabad administration for PTI's public gathering was 30 kilometres away from Islamabad. He added the main Srinagar Highway must be made available to the party for public gathering. He once again highlighted the plight of PTI leaders Aliya Hamza and Sanam Javed in jail. He said the jail SP had expressed his inability to set the two women at liberty.

"Is it a banana republic? We do not accept this regime and this hybrid system is ruining the foundation of Pakistan," he said.

Opposition leader replied to the notice to FIA over the 'controversial' video uploading case on founder PTI Imran Khan's X account and asked the agency for a copy of the Hamood-Ur-Rehman Commission report.

Omar Ayub also announced to challenge the issue of the FIA notice in Parliament and challenge it in the court as well. The defamatory notice was 'vague, dubious and illegal questions'. "The notice is related to the collapse of Dhaka on which the government had constituted a commission.

Live streaming of Imran's court appearance not against law: SC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court Justice Athar Minallah has maintained that live streaming the court appearances of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan in the NAB amendment case is not against the laws as there is "no substantive reason" to deny public the right to have access to court proceedings.

The apex court judge stated this in a dissenting note issued on Wednesday on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's petition seeking live streaming of the hearing of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) amendment case. Last week, the Supreme Court in a detailed verdict stated that broadcasting of the court proceedings of cases involving politicians can be used for political "point-scoring". Justice Minallah however, disagreed with the majority 4-1 judgment.

It may be noted that an investigation was launched by the SC administration after an image of the former prime minister, attending a the NAB amendments case hearing last month, was released by PTI. Khan has been incarcerated in Rawalpindi's Adiala

Jail since August last year after he was sentenced in Toshakhana case. Despite being granted relief in several cases he was booked in after his ouster from power in April 2022, the PTI founder remains behind bars owing to his conviction in iddat case.

In his dissenting note comprising 13 pages, the justice said that there was no substantive reason nor exceptional circumstances to deny the public their right to have access to court proceedings through live streaming. He said that the deposed prime minister was the founder and undisputed leader of a major political party — the PTI.

Citing the principles enunciated by a larger bench of the apex court, the judge stated that the public has a fundamental right under Article 19-A of the Constitution to have access to information in its original jurisdiction under Article 184(3) of the Constitution, including the right to know and see how court proceedings in these cases are conducted by the court. "It becomes inevitable for this court to walk the extra mile to ensure transparency and enforcement of the guaranteed right under Article 19-A of the Constitution by giving access to the public to the court proceedings

through live streaming," Justice Minallah stated, adding that the denial of access to the court proceedings will unjustifiably give rise to suspicions and erode the confidence of the people in this court.

"It is an obligation for this court to be seen as impartial, fair and independent and to dispel any perception to the contrary. The trust of the people will be maintained and promoted by enabling them to know and see for themselves the court proceedings," he stated.

Moreover, Justice Minallah said that the all the cases heard under Article 184(3) had been live streamed after the successful execution of a pilot project regarding the live streaming of cases. "[...] denial of this guaranteed right will amount to violating the principles laid down in the Justice Qazi Faez Isa case," the note read. In its detailed verdict, the apex court had said in reference to Khan that when the head of a political party wants to be heard, who is not an advocate of this court, there is a real probability that these hearings may be used for political purposes and point-scoring and in respect of matters which do not concern these appeals.

Pak-Italy agree to action against illegal immigrants

ROME (INP): Pakistan and Italy have agreed to a coordinated and effective action plan against illegal immigrants and human trafficking. This came at a meeting between Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Italian Interior Minister Matteo Plantadosi in Rome. Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Chaudhry Salik Hussain was also present in the meeting.

The two sides also agreed to undertake joint efforts against drug trafficking. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said: "Steps have been taken at all levels to stop illegal entry of Pakistanis to Italy and to counter drug trafficking. A zero-tolerance policy has been adopted against human trafficking and drug mafia".

Mohsin Naqvi also spoke about the 146 Pakistanis imprisoned in Italy and demanded the handover of 42 to Pakistan. He invited the Italian counterpart to visit Pakistan and that strong mutual cooperation would help stop human trafficking, anti-narcotics and border security. In his remarks, Chaudhry Salik Hussain stated Italy can benefit greatly from Pakistan's skilled manpower. He emphasized the early finalization of the Skilled Manpower Agreement will discourage illegal immigration.

Thousands of Israelis march through Jerusalem

JERUSALEM (AFP): Thousands of Israelis have joined a march through occupied East Jerusalem, with some attacking Palestinians and shouting racist slogans, as part of an annual demonstration marking Israel's occupation of the city.

Footage shared by local journalists on Wednesday showed young men and teenagers chanting, "Death to the Arabs" and "May your village burn" at the so-called "Flag March" on Wednesday. The parade has come amid heightened tensions as Israel pushes on with its war on Gaza, which has killed more than 36,500 people, mostly women and children, according to Palestinian authorities.

The demonstrators danced and waved Israeli flags throughout the city. The Jerusalem Waqf, the Islamic authority that oversees the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, said more than 1,100 Israelis encroached on the site, known to Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) and to Jews as Temple Mount. The AFP news agency published photos of Israeli demonstrators assaulting a Palestinian journalist in the Old City. Several Israeli outlets reported that Haaretz reporter Nir Hasson was also attacked.

Reporting from the Jordanian capital Amman,

Al Jazeera's Imran Khan said this year's march appears to be more violent than in previous years. "Almost as soon as the ultra-nationalist people arrived into occupied East Jerusalem, they started attacking Palestinians. Young kids were attacking older Palestinians — we've seen pictures of that," Khan said. "They were attacking shops; they were running into the shops. The Israeli police simply lost control. In fact, what they did was they asked the Palestinians to simply shutter their shops because they couldn't control these people."

According to Israeli media reports, Israel deployed 3,000 police officers to the march and urged demonstrators to "avoid any physical or verbal violence". AFP footage showed demonstrators holding signs rebuking the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the top United Nations court, which has ordered Israel to halt its assault in Rafah. "The ICJ is corrupt, working with Hamas," one sign read.

Far-right Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir attended the march and called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to "be strong" in an implicit criticism of a proposal for a truce deal to halt the war on Gaza.

"The Damascus Gate is

ours. The Temple Mount is ours. And God willing complete victory is ours," Ben-Gvir said, according to Times of Israel, referring to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound — the third-holiest site in Islam. Israel captured East Jerusalem during the 1967 war and subsequently annexed it in 1980 in a move not recognised by the international community.

Al-Haram al-Sharif has remained under the management of the Jordan-appointed Waqf and only Muslims are allowed to pray at the compound. However, Israel's security forces often allow Israelis to raid the site. In past years, Israeli forces have also attacked worshippers inside Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The second Intifada, the Palestinian uprising that saw years of protests and violent attacks, started in 2000 after Israeli politician Ariel Sharon made a visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque. Hamas also cited Israeli violations at Al-Aqsa as one of the main reasons for its "Al-Aqsa Floods" attack against Israel on October 7, when fighters from Hamas led an attack that killed at least 1,139 people, mostly civilians, and seized about 250 others as captives. On Wednesday, Hamas decried the Israeli parade in Jerusalem, calling it a "blatant aggression" against Arabs and Muslims.