

MNA reported kidnapped

LAHORE (INP): Sahibzada Ameer Sultan, a Member of the National Assembly representing Jhang for the Sunni Ittehad Council, has reportedly been kidnapped by unknown assailants. The incident took place late at night at his residence on Sarwar Road. PTI Lahore's General Secretary, Hafiz Zeeshan Rashid, confirmed the abduction, expressing deep concern for the safety of their MNAs.

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Donald Trump survives assasination attempt

Secret service probes how gunman was able to get so close

NEW YORK (AP): The U.S. Secret Service is investigating how a gunman armed with an AR-style rifle was able to get close enough to shoot and injure former President Donald Trump at a rally Saturday in Pennsylvania, a monumental failure of one the agency's core duties.

The gunman, who was killed by Secret Service personnel, fired multiple shots at the stage from an "elevated position outside of the rally venue," the agency said.

An Associated Press analysis of more than a dozen videos and photos taken at the Trump rally, as well as satellite imagery of the site, shows the shooter was able to get astonishingly close to the stage where the former president was speaking. A video posted to social media and geolocated by the AP shows the body of a man wearing gray camouflage lying motionless on the roof of a manufacturing plant just north of the Butler Farm Show grounds, where Trump's rally was held.

The roof was less than 150 meters (yards) from where Trump was speaking, a distance from which a decent marksman could reasonably hit a human-sized target. For reference, 150 meters is a distance at which U.S. Army recruits must hit a scaled human-

sized silhouette to qualify with the M16 assault rifle in basic training. The AR-15, like the shooter at the Trump rally had, is the semi-automatic civilian version of the military M16.

The FBI early Sunday identified the shooter as Thomas Matthew Crooks, 20, of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.

The Secret Service didn't have anybody at a late-night news conference where FBI and Pennsylvania State Police officials briefed reporters on the shooting investigation. FBI Special Agent in Charge Kevin Rojek said it was "surprising" that the gunman was able to fire at the stage before he was killed.

Members of the Secret Service's counter sniper team and counter assault team were at the rally, according to two law enforcement officials. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss details of the investigation.

The heavily-armed counter assault team, whose Secret Service code name is "Hawkeye," is responsible for eliminating threats so that other agents can shield and take away the person they are protecting. The counter sniper team, known by the code name "Hercules," uses long-range binoculars and

is equipped with sniper rifles to deal with long-range threats.

U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said his department and the Secret Service are working with law enforcement to investigate the shooting. Maintaining the security of presidential candidates and their campaign events is one of the department's "most vital priorities," he said.

"We condemn this violence in the strongest possible terms and commend the Secret Service for their swift action today," Mayorkas said. "We are engaged with President Biden, former President Trump and their campaigns, and are taking every possible measure to ensure their safety and security."

Calls for an investigation came from all sides.

James Comer, a Kentucky Republican who is the House Oversight Committee chairman, said he contacted the Service for a briefing and called on Director Kimberly Cheatle to appear for a hearing. Comer said his committee will send a formal invitation soon.

"Political violence in all forms is unamerican and unacceptable. There are many questions and Americans demand answers," Comer said in a

statement.

U.S. Rep. Ritchie Torres, a New York Democrat, called for investigating "security failures" at the rally.

"The federal government must constantly learn from security failures in order to avoid repeating them, especially when those failures have implications for the nation," Torres said.

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, a Democrat, posted on X that he and his staff are in contact with security planning coordinators ahead of the Republican National Convention set to begin Monday in Milwaukee. "We cannot be a country that accepts political violence of any kind — that is not who we are as Americans," Evers said.

The FBI said it will lead the investigation into the shooting, working with the Secret Service and local and state law enforcement.

Attorney General Merrick Garland said the Justice Department "will bring every available resource to bear to this investigation."

"My heart is with the former President, those injured, and the family of the spectator killed in this horrific attack," Garland said in a statement. "We will not tolerate violence of any kind, and violence like this is an attack on our democracy."



PENNSYLVANIA: Republican presidential candidate and former President Donald Trump is surrounded by US Secrete Service agents at a campaign rally after he was shot injured.

President, PM flay attack on Trump

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday strongly condemned an attack on former US President Donald Trump during an election rally in Pennsylvania.

President Zardari expressed deep shock over the attack saying that such violence had no place in politics.

The president expressed his best wishes for the speedy recovery of Donald Trump and also offered heartfelt condolences over the loss of life in the attack, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister, on X account, said just learnt that former President Trump was shot at an election rally.

"This is a shocking development. I condemn all violence in politics. Wish the former President swift recovery and good health," he further posted.

China ready to work with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong's on Sunday said China was ready to work with Pakistan to "actively implement" its Global South initiative of common development and shared cooperation.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has recently announced a series of measures for the Global South countries including establishing a Global South research center, 1,000 scholarships under the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence Scholarship of Excellence and 100,000 training opportunities to Global South countries in the next five years.

In an interview with APP, the Chinese envoy expressed his country's readiness to implement these measures for Pakistan along with other countries, which he said showed "China's firm determination to promote the development and revitalization of the Global South".

Ambassador Jiang highlighted that China's five principles of peaceful coexistence provided a vision to address the global challenges and ensure a shared vision of global peace, security and prosperity.

The Global South region, he said, in recent years stood out with a strong momentum, with its contribution to world economic growth in the past two decades as high as 80%, and the global share of GDP increased from 24% to more than 40% in the past 40 years.

He said in political field, the Global South countries were no longer the silent majority on the international stage, and were regarded as the "key force for the transformation of the international order".

PM directs to form committee to reactivate Neelum-Jhelum project

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday directed to form a committee on an urgent basis with respect to reactivating the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project.

The prime minister was chairing a meeting to review the progress of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower project here at the PM House.

During the meeting, he was informed in a detailed briefing that on April 29, 2024, due to the pressure drop in the right and left head race tunnels of Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project, there was a reduction in power generation and on May 2, 2024, power generation from the power plant was completely stopped.

A preliminary investigation report was presented in the meeting by former Federal Interior Secretary Shahid Khan, the head of the investigation committee investigating the recent faults in the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project.

He told the meeting that the closure of the project is causing a loss of millions of rupees to the national exchequer.

It was informed in the meeting that the place

where the current fault occurred was the rock burst zone.

The meeting was further informed that during the PTI regime in the year 2021 also due to abnormal drop in pressure in the headrace tunnel, a significant decrease in power generation was seen from the project but this abnormal change in pressure was ignored and not reported. "The matter deliberately suppressed."

During the PTI regime, no repair work was done regarding the failure of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project in 2021, which continued to increase the losses, the meeting was informed. "It was a criminal negligence."

Defects in Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project in 2021 are also being made part of investigation report, the meeting was informed adding that power generation suspended in 2022 due to fault in tailrace tunnel of project.

Geophysical and seismic factors were also ignored in construction of Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project and adequate concrete lining of head race tunnel were also not done.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Shaifir issued the directives to immediately complete

the investigation report regarding the recent closure of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project and identify those responsible for the defects in the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project and take strict action against them.

Experts pointed out that there were defects in the design, concrete lining was not done, how unfortunate that such a big and important project was neglected, the prime minister added.

He questioned that why had detailed geological survey not been conducted regarding the project?

Criminal negligence was committed by not doing third party validation of the project, the prime minister added.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Information Minister Ata Ullah Tararr, Power Minister Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Jehanzeb Khan, Coordinator to PM Rana Ehsaan Afzal, Chairman WAPDA Lt. Gen (retd) Sajjad Ghani, former Interior Secretary Shahid Khan and other high officials.

Court approves 8-day remand of Imran, wife

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Accountability Court has granted an 8-day physical remand for the founder of PTI, Imran Khan, and his wife, Bushra Bibi, amid ongoing investigations by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The duo is set to be produced again in court on July 20.

During the hearing, presided over by Judge Muhammad Ali Waraich at Adiala Jail, NAB Deputy Director Mohsin Haroon emphasized the need for the remand to gather further evidence. Initially approved for 6 days, the court extended the remand to 8 days following a request from PTI's legal counsel.

Both Khan and Bushra

Bibi are accused of illicit transactions involving Baral jewelry sets valued at a staggering Rs 750 lakhs from the Tosha Khana. The accused will remain in Adiala Jail as the investigation continues.

New Toshakhana reference jail trial against Imran notified

The federal government Sunday issued a notification for the new Toshakhana reference jail trial of the PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi under Section 16B of NAB Ordinance 1999.

Given peace and order, the court may consider it necessary to do the trial in jail, notification reads.

The lawyers of Imran Khan and Bashra Bibi were

informed about the notification of the jail trial.

On Saturday, the Founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan, and his wife, Bushra Bibi, were arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in connection with the new Toshakhana case.

The anti-graft watchdog team led by Deputy Director Mohsin Haroon at Adiala Jail carried out the arrest. The second Toshakhana investigation is reportedly focused on various expensive watches and jewellery. According to sources, Bushra Bibi has been implicated in the investigation and may face arrest due to her alleged lack of cooperation with the authorities.

Court reserves decision on Sanam Javed's remand

ISLAMABAD (INP): An Islamabad court has reserved its decision on the physical remand request for PTI activist and social worker Sanam Javed. The case was presented in front of Duty Magistrate Malik Imran at the District and Sessions Courts.

Sanam Javed was brought to court by the FIA, which sought his physical remand. However, his lawyer, Mian Ali Ashfaq Advocate, argued

that the Lahore High Court had previously acquitted Javed, citing a lack of legal evidence against him.

He highlighted a troubling pattern of repeated arrests and acquittals, detailing how Javed had been transferred from Lahore to Sargodha for the May 9 incidents and later acquitted, only to face new charges in Gujranwala.

Advocate Ashfaq insisted that Sanam Javed should be discharged from

the current case, noting that the Advocate General Punjab had previously stated in the Lahore High Court that Javed was not wanted in any ongoing cases.

Sanam Javed was arrested from Gujranwala yesterday, shortly after his release from Central Jail, when Islamabad police took him into custody again. The court's decision on the physical remand request is pending.

Hamas says it has not left ceasefire talks after Israeli attacks

CAIRO/JERUSALEM (Reuters): A senior Hamas official said on Sunday that the Islamist group has not withdrawn from ceasefire talks with Israel after this weekend's deadly attacks in Gaza that Israel said had targeted the group's military leader Mohammed Deif.

But Izzat El-Reshiq, a member of the political office of Hamas, accused Israel of trying to derail efforts by Arab mediators and the United States to reach a ceasefire deal by stepping up its attacks in the enclave.

Saturday's strike in the Khan Younis area of Gaza, in which at least 90 Palestinians were killed according to local health authorities, has put the ceasefire talks in doubt.

There had been increasingly hopeful signs in recent days that a deal could be reached to halt fighting and return hostages held in Gaza.

Two Egyptian security sources at ceasefire talks in Doha and Cairo said on Saturday that negotiations

had been halted after three days of intense talks.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was expected to convene his close circle of ministers later on Sunday to discuss the talks.

The strike on Saturday which targeted Deif killed Rafa Salama, commander of Hamas's Khan Younis brigade, the Israeli military said on Sunday, but there was no confirmation about the fate of Deif.

"The strike in Khan Younis was a result of surgical intelligence," the head of the Shin Bet domestic security service said in a video released by the service from Rafah. He said 25 Hamas operatives who took part in the deadly Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel that triggered the war had been killed in the past week.

On Saturday, a senior Hamas official denied that Deif had been killed and the group said Israeli claims were aimed at justifying the attack.

On Sunday, Israeli forces continued to press ahead with aerial and ground shelling of several areas across the coastal enclave, home to 2.3 million people, most of whom have been displaced by the war.

A strike on a UN-run school in Nuseirat camp, one of the Gaza Strip's eight longstanding refugee camps, killed 15 Palestinians and wounded dozens more, Hamas media and health officials said. The Israeli military said the site was used as a base for Hamas fighters to attack Israeli forces and said numerous steps were taken to limit the risk of harming civilians, including the use of precise munitions and intelligence.

Residents said two missiles targeted the upper floor of the school, not far from the camp's local market, usually busy with shoppers, where displaced families have also taken shelter nearby.

Earlier on Sunday, Israeli air strikes on four

houses in Gaza City killed at least 16 Palestinians and wounded dozens of others, medics said.

The Gaza health ministry said at least 38,584 Palestinians have been killed and 88,881 others injured in Israel's military offensive since Oct. 7.

It added that 141 Palestinians were killed by Israeli military strikes across the Gaza Strip in the past day, the biggest one-day death toll in many weeks. Gaza's health ministry does not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants but officials say most of the dead throughout the war have been civilians. Israel has lost 326 soldiers in Gaza and says at least a third of the Palestinian fatalities are fighters.

The war began after a Hamas-led attack inside Israel on Oct. 7, that killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and saw around 250 taken hostage to Gaza, according to Israeli authorities.

Senior journalist Hassan Zeb shot dead

Ali Sheikh

PESHAWAR: In a tragic incident on Sunday afternoon, Hassan Zeb, a senior journalist associated with the Daily Aaf newspaper in Peshawar, was fatally shot by unknown assailants in broad day light.

A CCTV footage shows two unidentified assailants on motorbike opened indiscriminate firing on Hassan Zeb as he was driving his car.

The news of his murder has reverberated through the journalist community, prompting widespread condemnation and calls for swift justice.

Hassan Zeb, a resident of Akberpura (Nowshera), was well-regarded among his peers.

The Khyber Union of Journalists (KhUJ) swiftly



condemned the killing, with President Nasir Hussain and General Secretary Imran Yousafzai extending condolences to the bereaved family and demanding immediate action against the perpetrators.

Leadership from the

Peshawar Press Club, including President Arshad Aziz Malik and General Secretary Irfan Musazai, also denounced the incident, stressing the urgent need for enhanced safety measures for journalists across the province.

The brutal murder has

underscored the perilous conditions faced by journalists in Pakistan. Senior journalists united in expressing grave concern over the safety of their profession.

Authorities have launched an investigation into the killing, with efforts underway to apprehend those responsible.

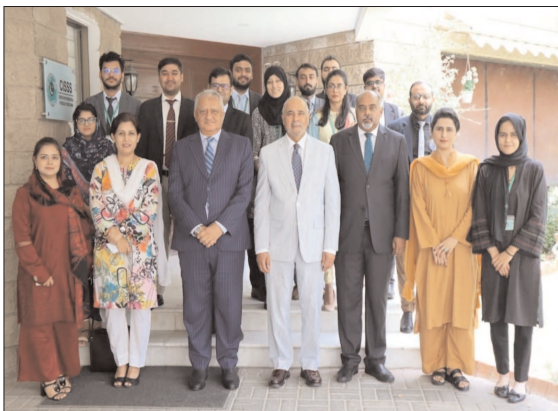
The journalist community awaits developments in the case, hopeful that justice will prevail and that measures will be taken to ensure the safety of journalists performing their duties.

The tragic death of Hassan Zeb serves as a stark reminder of the dangers journalists often confront in the line of duty, calling for immediate action to protect their fundamental right to report without fear.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah joins the Bohra community at Taheri Masjid to hear the sermon of Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin, the spiritual leader of the Bohra community.

Intellectual property termed backbone of national security



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Ambassador (R) Farukh Amil, Chair IPO-Pakistan, emphasized the critical role of intellectual property in safeguarding national security and driving economic growth during a meeting with Ambassador (Retd) Qazi M Khalilullah, Executive Director, Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS).

Chair IPO-Pakistan stressed that a robust intellectual property system is vital for attracting investments, promoting entrepreneurship, and protecting innovations in strategic

technologies.

"The effective protection and management of intellectual property is essential for a nation's economic and national security," Farukh Amil said. "It encourages innovation, attracts foreign investment, and helps to build a competitive edge in the global market."

He further emphasized that intellectual property protection is critical for the development of strategic industries such as telecommunications, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity.

The meeting was attended by key officials from

CISSS and IPO-Pakistan, including Mr. Aftab Hussain, Director Research, CISSS, Dr. Saba Sahar, Associate Director, CISSS, Lt Col Azfar Bilal Qureshi TI (M) (Retd), Associate Director Research, CISSS, and Ms. Saima Kanwal, Senior Patent Examiner, IPO-Pakistan.

The participants discussed the importance of intellectual property in the knowledge economy and its impact on national security and economic prosperity.

Ambassador (R) Qazi M Khalilullah expressed interest in exploring areas of mutual collaboration between CISSS and IPO-Pakistan to strengthen intellectual property regimes and promote research and development in strategic technologies.

"This collaboration will help to identify and protect innovation and intellectual property in strategic sectors, ultimately contributing to the economic growth and national security of Pakistan," Ambassador Khalilullah said.

Bilal for expediting supply of flour

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Food Minister Bilal Yaseen has directed to expedite the supply of flour to the market.

According to official sources here on Saturday, he said that officers of the Punjab food department should ensure the provision of flour in the market.

In view of Muharram there should be no complaints with regard to shortages of flour or high rates in any district, he added.

He said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz was herself monitoring the supply and price of flour.

Bilal Yaseen directed the Punjab Food department not to compromise on prices of flour and 'Roti'.

He further said people should lodge their complaints on toll free number 080002345.

Bilal Yaseen said that foolproof security arrangements were being made for Muharram and added that he himself was in the field to check the arrangements as per the direction of the CM.

Commissioner Visits Control Centers For Muharram Procession Monitoring

Lahore Divisional Commissioner Zaid bin Maqsood visited the central control centers established for monitoring Muharram processions.

He reviewed the operations at the Punjab Home Department's Muharram Control and Monitoring Center as well as the control and monitoring center set up at the DC Office Lahore.

At the Home Department's control center, online monitoring feeds were being received from all districts.

Murad, Tessori, Kundi join Bohras Ashara Mubarak congregation

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi called upon with His Holiness Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin, the leader of the Dawoodi Bohra community, at Taheri Masjid, Karachi. The official delegation participated in the eighth sermon of Ashara Mubarak on Sunday.

The dignitaries, along with other senior government officials, visited the landmark Dawoodi Bohra masjid in Saddar, where they were warmly greeted by Syedna, his family members, and thousands of com-

munity members gathered there.

Syedna Saifuddin welcomed the guests and then briefly explained the significance of the Ashara Mubarak gatherings. He highlighted Imam Husain ibn Ali's principled stand for Islam, justice and humanity, for which he sacrificed his life and those of the Ahle Bayt.

Syedna drew inspiration from Nabi Mohammed's SAW hadith where he stated: 'All of Creation is a single family dependent upon Allah' and declared that 'the most beloved to Allah is the one who benefits His family the most.' Syedna explained that Creation comprises all things, and as such we

should strive to benefit not just all one another but all of Creation.

He also cited the hadith where Nabi Mohammed SAW establishes that 'Love for one's homeland is an integral element of faith'. Syedna exhorted the Dawoodi Bohra community to be law-abiding and honest citizens, partaking in all activities that result in the progress of the nation.

Syedna extended his gratitude to the Governor and Chief Minister, and the Pakistani government for providing the Dawoodi Bohra community with every assistance and cooperation in making necessary arrangements for the Ashara Mubarak congregations in

Karachi.

Addressing the gathering, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said, "Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin's arrival in Karachi is a matter of pride for Sindh. We welcome him and Dawoodi Bohra community members who have come from all over the world to Karachi for the Moharram congregation."

Governor of Sindh, Kamran Khan Tessori expressed his appreciation to Syedna for selecting Karachi to host this year's Ashara Mubarak. He mentioned, "along with Syedna's prayers the community's arrival has had a positive impact on the economic conditions of the city."

Kundi discusses political, economic situations with Tessori



KARACHI (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday arrived at the Governor House Sindh, Karachi, where he was warmly received by Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori.

The meeting between the two governors included dis-

cussions on various aspects of political, economic, and security situations in both provinces.

They exchanged views on trade and public welfare matters between KP and Sindh. Educational standards, university affairs, financial matters, and administrative issues were

also deliberated upon during their one-on-one meeting.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi emphasized KP's efforts to maintain peace and security, stating, "Peace is essential for progress and prosperity not only in KP but across the country."

He highlighted the significance of improving business connectivity between Karachi and KP, particularly along the border, to facilitate trade. Governor Faisal Kundi also acknowledged the active role of KP's large population in Karachi's business sector.

He stressed the need for providing facilities to KP's business community residing in Sindh to promote business growth.

Governor Faisal Kundi underscored KP's importance as a province rich in tourism potential and strategic geographical location.

Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori assured for all kinds of cooperation.

The meeting concluded with mutual optimism for enhancing cooperation between KP and Sindh across various sectors, aiming to foster economic development and stability in the region.

CM launches 'Mera Punjab Smog Free' internship programme

LAHORE (APP): On the direction of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, 'Mera Punjab Smog Free' Chief Minister Climate Leadership Development Internship Programme has been launched by taking durable steps for the improvement of environment in Punjab.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "We need to undertake steps collectively for the permanent elimination of smog. Under the Smog-Free Punjab Initiative, the young graduates will render distinctive

community service. The graduates completing their degrees in the last two years can apply."

The CM added the interns will be paid Rs25,000 scholarship per month under the Chief Minister Punjab Climate Leadership Development Internship Programme. It provides a platform for community service and environmental protection.

The CM said registration

in the Climate Leadership Development Internship Programme can be done by 20th July 2024. The youths between the ages of 18 and 25 will be awarded 'Community Service Certificate' on the completion of their internship programme. The Community Service Certificate will be given on behalf of the Environment Protection Department and Punjab Higher Education

Commission.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif appealed to citizens to support the government in its efforts for resolving a serious and hazardous issue of smog. She urged to undertake maximum plantation along with mitigating smoke emission from the vehicles and factories. CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif exhorted to reduce the usage of plastic and refrain from burning the crops stubble and residue.



LAHORE: Female students participating in calligraphy workshop at The Book Studio organized by The Knowledge of Art Academy. — APP photo

Homemade mango pickle – a diminishing tradition

MULTAN (APP): Like many other food items, the homemade mango pickle, once a source of earning for village women, is gradually diminishing from our society after its mass production by commercial entities.

In every mango season, women in different parts of the country especially rural areas, used to prepare this product for their own use and selling to other people for earning some living. But, different mango pickle producing companies gradually took over this small scale business leaving thousands rural women attached to this business since decades, jobless.

Besides viewing it as a small business, Mango pickle is also a vital component of our diet being an additional cuisine and appetizer as well as taste developer. It offers health benefits with antioxidants, vitamins and minerals like fenugreek, mustard seeds to support skin, vision, digestion, neutralize free radicals, stimulate appetite, improve nutrient absorption and boost immunity.

"I liked mango pickle from my childhood. We used to see our grandmother preparing it at home. Besides mangoes as raw material she used to add oil, kalongi and other items to make it tasty," said Tahir Mahmood, a middle aged man. "We used to interestingly see her chopping the green mangoes, removing the seed and putting the eatable component in a jar and then

adding oil and other items into it. This way, they used to preserve it for the whole year."

Even in recent past our rural women, had good command in preparing pickle and using special techniques to preserving it and saving from weather effects. But, most of citizens, especially with urban background, might be ignorant of this art of preparing homemade pickle.

Besides using it for their personal use, the mango pickle was also gifted to relatives and sold out locally to earn some money.

"Pickle is one of the spicy, nutritious and cheapest cuisines in our country. Our rural women were once much trained in preparing it and making it tasty and nutritious by adding Kalonji, meathi, long and dar-cheeni into it," said a farmer Shahid Hameed Bhutta.

"It was also a source of earning for rural women. But, its domestic preparation has gradually diminished after commercial firms started its mass production," he said and opined to promote domestic pickle producing as a cottage industry. "The women should be imparted specialized training on modern techniques of preparing, packing, branding and marketing homemade pickle."

Shahid said pickle has also immense potential for export to Europe, America and countries in Middle East. "If Small and Medium Enterprises Authority

(SMEDA) comes forward and provide facilities to rural women for preparing mango pickle, it may enhance our exports and make poor families to earn their living."

As life goes on year after year, the elderly people still remember the taste of homemade pickle, their mothers and grandmothers used to prepare once. Even today we can preserve this tradition by educating people on its preparation for their own use and selling in markets.

The practice of making pickle for household consumption, usually carried out by women, could be extended to small-scale commercial production, enabling women to generate a small income from rejected fruit and reduce postharvest waste and losses. "A large number of immature mangoes fall down due to wind storms. Such mangoes can be used in pickle preparation and help save growers from losses," said a farmer, Malik Arif. "If production of pickle is commercialized at small scale, it may reduce crop losses and generate economic opportunities for female entrepreneurs in rural areas."

Advocating promotion of local level pickle production is not simply for the sake of an argument as there are success stories where domestic pickle producers tried this business on small level and prospered.

"In the past our mothers and grandmothers, used to prepare

pickle for domestic use only. But, later relatives and neighbors started offering them money for their product," said Ejaz Ahmed a shopkeeper in Burewala. "Their rising demand encouraged us and we started preparing it on commercial basis and soon it turned into a profit earning business."

He said pickle is equally popular among the rich and poor. "The poor, especially daily wagers and farm workers use it as their daily diet as it costs them very nominal for being domestically produced."

As pickle is a commonly used product by poor, middle class and rich families, its consumption continues to grow. But, now its dividend is grabbed by big commercial firms and the poor rural women who were once the main author of this product were left idle.

Not simply the mango pickle, but there were many other products, the rural women once used to prepare domestically to earn their living. But, all this activity vanished with dying cottage industry culture that left many of our domestic workers jobless and badly affected our economy.

Therefore, it is urgently needed to revive cottage industry to help out poor workers and farmers to establish small scale business and earn some money. It would greatly help in creating business opportunities for them and alleviate poverty from our country.



Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution Information Technology Department

Request for Proposal

for providing maintenance and support services for Database & Software applications.

Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) intends to hire services of a software/technology firm for the maintenance and support of its in-house applications for two years extendable up to one year on the same terms and conditions. The project will be titled "Maintenance, Support, and enhancement for Software and Database". Bids are invited from reputable firms to undertake the project in an efficient/timely manner and as per bid documents. Bidding will be conducted according to Rule 36(b), Single Stage Two Envelope procedure of PPRA Rules 2004 and is open to all bidders who meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The bidder is a registered firm under the Companies Act 2017 and is operating in Pakistan for at least five years.
- Must be in the latest active taxpayer list of FBR.
- The bidder must have completed at least two projects of database and software development/support/maintenance during last five years.
- The bidder should have, at least, an average annual revenue of Rs. 200 million during the last five years.
- The bidder must not be in litigation with EOBI and Federal/Provincial Governments and has not been blacklisted by the Federal and/or Provincial Governments or law courts in or outside Pakistan.

AVAILABILITY OF BID DOCUMENTS

Bid documents shall be available from the date of publication of tender notice in the newspapers from the below mentioned address at Karachi or from EOBI Zonal Offices situated at **57-L, Gulberg-III, Lahore, and Plot No. 32, 33, & 34, Sector G-10/4, Mauve Area, Islamabad**, on production of a pay order of Rs. 5000 (non-refundable) drawn on any Pakistan-based commercial bank in favor of 'EMPLOYEES' OLD-AGE BENEFITS INSTITUTION, HEAD OFFICE, KARACHI."

BID CLOSING, OPENING, VALIDITY & BID SECURITY

Bids prepared in accordance with the instructions in the bidding documents contained in the technical and financial proposals in separate envelopes, must reach at the below given address on or before **06.08.2024**, at 11:00 am. Opening of technical bids is set for **06.08.2024**, at 11:30 am at EOBI Board Room, 8th Floor, EOBI Head Office, PECHS Block-2, Karachi. All bids submitted must have a validity of 180 days. Financial bids shall be opened after the technical evaluation of the bids received for which the technically qualified bidders shall be informed in writing. All bids are to be accompanied with a "SECURITY DEPOSIT" of Rs. 02 million in favor of 'EMPLOYEES' OLD-AGE BENEFITS INSTITUTION, HEAD OFFICE, KARACHI.

INQUIRIES

Administrative and technical inquiries may be directed at director.gad@eobi.gov.pk or director.web@eobi.gov.pk, respectively.

BID REJECTION

Incomplete, conditional, and/or bids without Bid Security shall be instantly rejected. Bids without proof of eligibility conditions stated above shall also be rejected.

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اپنے اور اہل خانہ کے محفوظ مستقبل کے لیے، ای او بی آئی میں مصروف رہیں

BISP Chairmperson meets with Sikhs community in Buner

F.P. Report

P E S H A W A R : Chairperson, Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) Senator Rubina Khalid here Sunday visited Pir Baba Gordwara whete she met with Sikh community.

She said that BISP was a pro- poor welfare program aimed at financial empowerment of under-privileged segment of the society and all poor Pakistanis are eligible irrespective of their religious belief and political affiliation.

She met with women of Sikhs community and guide them about registration of this landmark program and directed the staff to facilitate them in the survey process besides addressing problems of all minorities so that they could become part of the program. Rubina Khalid assured to include deserving women in the program after the survey.

She advised women to obtain disability certificate of the persons with disabilities in their families to include them in the program on priority basis.

She said that this program was above politics and all deserving Pakistani are eligible irrespective of their religious belief.

Senator Rubina Khalid was thanked by the Sikh community on arrival at Gordwara and appreciate her services for betterment of the minority community.



KMU explores avenues for collaboration with BISEP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU) has expressed keen interest in acquiring the advanced web-based application developed indigenously by the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Peshawar. This initiative is aimed at enhancing efficiency, transparency and responsiveness of the examination management system of the university.

In this connection, a team of KMU officials from Examination and IT Departments, comprising of Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Gandapur Controller of Examinations, Dr. Syed Hafeez Ahmed Additional Controller, Mr. Khalil Ullah Deputy Controller Muhammad Sohail Additional Director (IT), Mr. Imtiaz Ali, Deputy Director (IT) and Muhammad Shezad, Deputy Director (IT) visited BISE, Peshawar to discuss modalities for collaboration in the field of IT with focus on Examination Management System.

The KMU Team was briefed by the BISE, Peshawar Chairman, Prof. Nasrullah Khan and his IT team. Discussion centered around the potential benefits, suitability and usability of BISE Peshawar's examination related web application and its various modules for KMU converging on long-term usage, licensing arrangements, customization options and essential training and support services required for its urgent deployment at KMU.

Prof. Nasrullah Khan Chairman BISE Peshawar said that our web application has demonstrated remarkable efficiency and transparency in administering every single step of examination system digitally.

This preliminary interaction was followed by a visit of BISE, Peshawar IT Team, comprising of Muhammad Ijaz Deputy Director (IT), Mr. Hassan Khan Web Admin, Mr. Rahat Ali Assistant Director (IT) to KMU where they met KMU officials. Details discussion was held on various modules developed in-house by the IT Team of BISE, Peshawar.

It was agreed that BISE, Peshawar shall provide online services to KMU via web portal for quick and efficient processing of affiliation cases, annual retention fee management, degree registration management system, exam admission management system, migration management system and digital attendance management system etc.

The web portal access will be given to all the affiliated institutions of KMU where the aforementioned processes will be carried out without any foot traffic. The affiliated institutions of KMU will be in complete liaison with KMU throughout the session and will share real-time data, updates and notifications via this web portal. As a result, the processes will be executed fastly, efficiently and accurately in all respects.

VC KMU Meritoious Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq told the BISE Peshawar visiting Team that KMU has embraced a paperless environment and remains committed to adopting innovative digital solutions.

The university acknowledges the important role played by BISE Peshawar in digitalizing examination processes through its robust web application system that aligns closely with KMU's goals of enhancing efficiency and transparency of its examination system. He appreciated the efforts of BISE, Peshawar IT Team, for being a public sector entity, has remarkably improved its Examination Management System and various aligned processes through the best use of latest IT resources which is unprecedented. He concluded, "We are confident that by integrating this web-based application into KMU's operations will further improve the performance of our examination system".

The IT Team of BISE Peshawar, highlighted the application's success in improving administration and result delivery, underscoring its suitability for KMU's rigorous academic standards.

Both the teams agreed that collaboration between KMU and BISE Peshawar marks an important milestone towards modernizing assessment practices in KPK.

It reflects KMU's proactive approach to leveraging technology for academic excellence and operational efficiency and BISE's willingness to share expertise with other aspiring organizations in the field for which a formal MOU shall be signed between the two parties in due course of time.

ACS Abid Majeed to hold additional duties of CS KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Additional Chief Secretary Interior Muhammad Abid Majeed has been assigned the additional duties of Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Aslam Chaudhary is leaving for an official visit abroad.

The Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will participate in the 23rd meeting of the Independent Monitoring Board for Global Polio Eradication Initiatives from July 13 to July 17 in Switzerland.

Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Interior and Tribal Affairs, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Abid Majeed will also hold the additional charge of Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Department of Administrative Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has issued a formal notification in this connection.

Call of repeated sensitization of masses against overpopulation

PESHAWAR (APP): Every year, world population day is marked on this day to sensitize masses against overpopulation and its adverse effects on food security, socioeconomic services and living creatures on earth.

Like other provinces, the day was also observed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the government and private institutions organized special functions, seminars and walks, highlighting significance of the controlled population and ill effects of overpopulation especially on sustainability of environment, education and healthcare services, food, agriculture, livestock, wildlife and other creatures living on earth.

The population welfare department of KP, NGO, civil society and general public organized awareness functions and rallies to educate masses against the negative effects of overpopulation.

The day was observed on July 11, 1987 after the world population reached the five billion mark. The call was made by Dr KC Zachariah, a senior Demographer at the World Bank who suggested that July 11 should be observed as world population day every year. The theme of this year's World Population Day is 'leave no one behind, count everyone.'

The UN World Population Report 2022 has revealed that the world's population was growing fast and is likely to reach 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.4 billion in 2100. Like other developing countries, Pakistan was also confronted to the monster challenge of overpopulation having around 243 million people with 1.91 percent annual growth rate recorded early this year.

Being the fifth most populous country in the world and second largest population in the Muslims countries after Indonesia, Pakistan's increasing population started exerting tremendous pressures on agriculture, forests, biodiversity and food services.

Overpopulation has emerged as big social issue for Pakistan that not only poses enormous challenges to food security but also causes economic imbalances, poverty, encourages corruption and undermines merits and development in the country, said Niaz Ali Khan, former Chief Conservator of Forests while talking to APP.

Forests and wildlife resources in lower alpine areas in northern KP and Gilgit Baltistan is under tremendous pressure due to population explosion, he said, adding national animal of Markhor, Ibex, Snow Leopards besides green gold including Dodara and pine forests in higher mountainous areas were also under heightening pressure of increased population budge.

Underlining the need for special policies to control population, he said the Govt needs to encourage cash value crops and growing tree species in the wake of uncontrolled population to fulfill their food needs in years to come.

He said the uncontrolled population was eating the country's resources like a termite and time has come to think seriously about addressing this issue before it create hunger and starvation for people.

Having only 20 percent domestic production of total requirement, the country spends approximately US\$ 4 billion annually on import of edible oil to meet the pressing demand of its around 243 million population.

Pakistan's annual requirement of edible oil is about five million tons (MT) with approximately 16kg per capita use and most of its chunk is imported from Malaysia and Indonesia," said Dr Ehsan Khan, Director Edible Oil Productivity Institute.

Over 4.4 million hectares of fertile land is suitable for cultivation of olive, sunflower, soybean, corn, canola and other oils in Pakistan. In 2006, he said edible oil's import bill was only US\$ 615 million that jumped to US\$ 3.8 billion in 2022 with the country producing around six MT. If edible oil prices

Meeting discusses 1122 staff performance, formulates future action

PESHAWAR (APP): On the instructions of Director General Rescue 1122 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Muhammad Ayaz, an important meeting was held under the chairmanship of Regional Director North Rescue 1122 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Arshad Iqbal in which all District Emergency Officers of North Region participated.

The purpose of the meeting was to review the performance of the emergency rescue services of the North Region and formulate the best strategy for the future. In the meeting, the district officers discussed the problems occurring in their respective areas and presented various suggestions for their solution.

On this occasion, Director North Region also discussed Muharram with all district officers that all possible efforts should be made to provide all kinds of facilities in the districts where Muharram processions take place and besides monsoon.

Regarding the dangers of rains, he informed that a plan should be made in advance for all those districts that may be affected by the coming rains and be on high alert to deal with any kind of situation.

Director North Arshad Iqbal further said that better performance of emergency rescue services and providing timely possible assistance to the public is the first priority of the rescue services, so all the district officers should ensure that they have all their rescuers in their respective districts.

Pay special attention to training and the use of modern equipment so that services can be provided quickly and efficiently in any emergency situation. On this occasion, various emergencies were also discussed, such as earthquake, flood, fire, traffic accidents or how can the loss of human life and property be reduced in other emergency situations.

On this occasion, Director North also emphasized that awareness campaigns and training sessions on first aid should be conducted in all districts so that people can also protect themselves in case of any kind of emergency.

The first aid guideline is aimed at saving the lives of their loved ones before the rescue arrives. At the end of the meeting, Arshad Iqbal issued instructions to all district officers to continue their excellent performance in the future and provide facilities and services to the people at their doorsteps.

Training workshop organized

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In order to increase the efficiency and capacity of trade union representatives in major construction projects, Building and Wood Workers International in collaboration with ACE Employees Union organized a training workshop in Peshawar. In the training the people of various projects including Mohmand Dam were briefed on labor laws, Awareness was given on health and safety, grievance redressal and trade union education and training.

ACE Employees Union President Ishtiaq Wark, Vice President Shahid Imran, PWF Master Trainer Asad Mehmood, Environmentalist Sameen Khokhar, Kifayatullah Khan, Arshad Latif and others from ACE and PWF participated in the workshop.

The representatives said that in large construction projects, workers face health and safety, transportation, dust, low wages, lack of unionization or ignorance, exploitation of workers under the contract system without privileges, among other problems.

Trade union and elected representatives of unions must be aware of workers' rights.

He said that in these difficult conditions, it is necessary to organize the workers, and the contractors and government agencies should take care of the health and safety of the workers and pay them legally fixed compensation, provide them with water, shelter, food, Provide suitable environment and other needs so that the hardships of the workers can be reduced.

Secretary Energy & Power for investment in hydropower

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Secretary Energy and Power Nisar Ahmad Khan has called foreign investment as a milestone in the coming days for the development of the energy sector in the province and said that the natural resources of hydropower found in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are a valuable treasure here, which if not utilized will only save the country from the current energy crisis.

Lower Spat Gah Power Project in Kohistan district with the cooperation of KHNP, a state-owned company working in the energy sector of South Korea, and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government under the leadership of Wan Seok, Bae, the chief executive officer of the Korean engineering and construction company LSG Hydropower Ltd.

While addressing the meeting organized by the investor delegation, Chief Executive Officer PEDO Engineer Riaz Ahmed Jan, Chief Engineer Khurram Durrani, Deputy Director Renewable Energy Engineer Safdar Hayat, Senior Planning Officer E&P Engineer Luqman Hakeem and Project Coordinator of the Korean company Khurram Khan were also present in the meeting.

Meanwhile during the briefing, it was said that under the Public Private Partnership, 470 megawatts of electricity will be generated from the Spat Gah hydropower project with the mutual cooperation of the Korean company and the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the province will have an annual income of about 3 billion rupees.

The project will be completed in 5 years, which is the largest in the history of the province. The meeting discussed the issues faced at the federal level with NEPRA including IGCEP Plan and NTDC.

Similarly, various options were also discussed to raise the obstacles in the issuance of generation license for the project and other issues with the federal government at the provincial level.

On this occasion, Secretary Energy Nisar Ahmad Khan and CEO PEDO Engineer Riaz Ahmed Jan assured the Korean investor delegation that they would do their best to bring out the area by highlighting the problems facing the province with the federation at high level forums.

Minister for launching Gems processing, export city project

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Industry Amir Afaz, Senior Planning Officer Basit Khalil, Urban Mobility Authority, KP Azdemik, Board of Investment and Trade, BRT and other institutions officers and all office-bearers of the Pakistan Commercial Exporter Association.

Chairman Minhajuddin and association official Sartaj Khan participated. In the meeting, the efforts made so far and the goals achieved to implement this important project were informed to the forum. A city equipped with a comprehensive and global facility for processing and trading of gems will be set up but a lot of progress has been made and with the consent of the relevant stakeholders, it will be established at BRT's commercial plaza in Chamkani.

A plan has been proposed. In this way, International Mailing Office (IMO), Customs Office, banking facility and other global facilities will be provided in this city, while trying to facilitate the steps required for foreign investors to come here.

On this occasion, the Special Assistant strictly instructed that this project is a very important project for the economic and economic development of the province and unnecessary length and delay in its establishment is not acceptable.

He instructed on this occasion that the responsibilities assigned to the concerned institutions should be fulfilled within the timeline.



In brief

2 bodies fished out of river

UPPER DIR (INP): Rescue 1122 workers have managed to fish out bodies of two, out of a total of three persons, who had drowned in River Asheeri in Upper Dir on Sunday. The body of Gohar was fished out from River Pinchkorra at Khal, while that of Abdur Rehman from Kattan. However, one of the bodies was still missing and the rescue workers were looking for it till last reports came in.

Man killed in road accident

HYDERABAD (INP): A man was killed and two others injured in collision between an over speeding car and trailer here on Sunday. According to details, a private car with two people on board rammed into a trailer on Motorway near Nooriabad area of Hyderabad. As a result of collision, one person was killed while two others sustained injuries. The body and injured was shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities. Police impounded both vehicles and after registering a case into the incident started investigations.

Police arrest killer of 11

KHAIRPUR (INP): Khairpur police have arrested the main suspect who had killed 11 people during local body elections nine years ago, police said on Sunday. According to police, the Sindh government had kept a reward of Rs2 million for the arrest of Zulfiqar alias Bhutto Junejo. A Kalashnikov and bullets have been recovered from the possession of the accused, said SSP Zubair Nazir Sheikh. SSP Khairpur said it should be remembered that the arrested accused had killed 11 people during the municipal elections in Ranipur limits of Darza Sharif in 2015. The arrested accused killed 11 people and went into hiding for 9 years, SSP said.

Govt employee shot dead

CHUNIA (INP): A dispenser of the forest department was shot dead in Changa Manga police station limits Chunia, reported on Sunday. According to the police, unknown persons shot and killed Naeem near Badhoki village. The victim was returning home from Badhoki dispensary. The body was shifted to THQ Hospital Chunia.

RPO visits Imambargahs

SIALKOT (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Gujranwala Tayyab Hafeez Cheema visited various Imambargahs of Sialkot for security during Muharram. According to a police spokesperson, the RPO checked security arrangements along with DPO Sialkot Muhammad Hasan Iqbal and Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zulqarnain. He also inspected the main procession routes of the main Imam Bargah, Adda Pasrurian and Imam Bargah Mistri Abdullah. He also met procession organizers, peace committee members and Anjuman-e-Tajran.

13 held with contraband

SARGODHA (APP): Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested 13 criminals and recovered narcotics and illegal weapons from their possession. The teams of different police stations raided at various localities and arrested 13 criminals and recovered 2 kg hashish, 3 kg heroin, 12 pistols, 08 guns, 3 revolvers, 2 klashnikovs, 234 liter liquor and valuables worth millions of rupees from them. Cases have been registered against the accused.

Khabir for upholding spirit of patience, sacrifice, tolerance

KHANEWAL (APP): The Chairman Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabir Azad called upon religious scholars of all school of thoughts to uphold the values of patience, sacrifice, and tolerance.

He said this while addressing a conference in Khanewal. Muhammad Abdul Khabir Azad urged them to avoid any statements in their sermons that could hurt others. He stated that unity was vital to maintain stability in the country. Peace Ambassador Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabir Azad stressed the significance of Pakistan as a divine blessing as achieved through the sacrifices of millions of

people. He highlighted that Pakistan was founded on the principles of Islam and the "Kalma Tayyaba" and termed it as a fortress of the Islamic world.

Maulana Azad expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, for organizing programs promoting unity among Muslims at divisional and district levels across Punjab during Muharram.

He stated these efforts symbolize peace, love, brotherhood, and national unity, aligning with the Islamic teachings to hold firmly to the rope of Allah and avoid divisions.

Maulana Azad also stressed the importance of

adhering to the guidelines of "Paigham-e-Pakistan," a national code of conduct, and to avoid provocative speeches during Muharram programs. He reminded the audience to respect all sects and their religious beliefs, abide by procession schedules, and use loudspeakers responsibly.

He acknowledged the positive impact of "Paigham-e-Pakistan" in thwarting the agendas of enemy forces and praised the Pakistan Army and national security institutions for their sacrifices in ensuring the country's safety.

On this occasion, Ulema, Mashaikh, and officers from various departments were also present.

Mourning processions taken out on 7th Muharram

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Two main mourning processions and 'Zuljinnah' were taken out amid tight security here on Sunday.

The mourners reciting Noha and beating their chest took out the first procession from Masjid Latu-Faqir and culminated peacefully at Imambargah Haider Shah Sherazi after passing through designated routes.

Likewise, another mourning procession appeared from Imambargah Haider Shah Sherazi and ended peacefully at Masjid Latu-Faqir after passing through traditional routes.

According to the district police, tight security measures have been made as personnel of law enforcement agencies along with Shia community volunteers, escorted mourning

processions.

CCTV cameras have been installed along with all the routes of processions besides establishing a control room to monitor the movement of participants and to keep a vigil eye over suspicious elements.

The district had been divided into various sectors with deployment of over 8500 police officers and personnel to maintain peace during Muharram ul Haram in the district.

The concerned police officials regularly pay visits to various places and procession routes to review security arrangements and ensure foolproof security.

DC and DPO visit Imambargahs, review arrangements: DC Dera Mansoor Arshad along with DPO Nasir Mehmood visited various Thalass, Imamb-

argahs and procession routes and reviewed arrangements for Ashura.

The deputy commissioner met with guardians of Imambargahs and listened to their issues. He also issued on the spot orders for addressing administrative issues related to Imambargahs and procession routes.

DPO Nasir Mehmood checked the security arrangements for mourning processions and Majalis. Sub-Division Police Officer City Circle Muhammad Adnan briefed the visiting officers about the security arrangements on procession routes and Imambargahs.

The DPO expressed satisfaction over the security arrangements and issued directions to further tighten the checking system.

Hussainia Conference: Example of Ittehad Bain-ul-Muslimeen held

MULTAN (APP): In order to maintain and promote peaceful environment and "Ittehad Bain-ul-Muslimeen", the tradition of holding of "Hussainia Conference", participated by scholars from different school of thoughts, civil society workers and politicians is regular feature and shining example of religious harmony.

The very first "Hussainia Conference" was organized in 1978 at Iqbal Secondary School. Some youngsters named Sabtain Lodhi, Shakir Hussain Shakir and some others under banner of Youth Anjuman-e-Saqafat Pakistan. Ex Governor Punjab Makhdoom Sajjad Hussain was the chief guest of the first Hussainia Conference.

Besides this, a good number of Islamic scholars including Khair Muhammad Jalandhary, and some others also joined the conference and gave message of unity.

However, the tradition is in progress still as 46th Hussainia Conference will be held on 9TH Muharram at Raza Hall.

Out of total 119 Muharram Processions (Licensed) taken out in the city, 89 processions belonged to Ahl-e-Sunnat sect. This is one of best example of Ittehad Bain Ul Muslimeen and the credit went to all school of thoughts as they demonstrate exemplary unity.

Sabtain Raza Lodhi, Zain Baloch, Syed Zahid Raza Gardezi, Syed Zuhaib

Gillani, Khawar Shafqat Bhutta and some others while holding press conference on Sunday stated that Hussainia Conference was a very important platform to give message of unity and peace.

They stated that government should forge "Rawadari" committees at union council level for maintenance and promotion of peace.

They stated that provocative material should be discouraged. Similarly, recreational programs at mainstream media should be banned especially during Muharram. They also informed that a good number of scholars would join upcoming Hussainia Conference to be held on July 16 at Raza Hall.

Rs1.0285b fine imposed on 10186 power pilferers

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) caught 10186 power pilferers during last 309 days and imposed a fine of over Rs.1.0285 billion for stealing electricity in six circles of the company during the ongoing special anti-power theft drive.

FESCO spokesman Tahir Sheikh said here on Sunday that over 23.9 million detection units were charged and more than 10,000 cases were registered against power theft in various police stations.

The police arrested 7521

pilferers so far including 42 accused during past 24 hours in addition to recovering Rs.737.4 million from the power pilferers.

Giving further details, he said that the FESCO teams detected electricity theft at 2446 points in Faisalabad First Circle and imposed a fine of Rs.243.8 million on them under the head of 5785,000 detection units.

In Faisalabad Second Circle, the FESCO teams caught 1902 electricity thieves and imposed a fine of Rs.192 million under 4870,000 detection units.

Similarly, 1133 cases of

electricity theft were detected in Jhang circle and the company fined them Rs.112 million under 3259,000 detection units.

He further said that 1488 electricity thieves were caught from Sargodha circle and they were imposed a fine of Rs.153.8 million under 3349,000 detection units.

In Mianwali circle, 2554 consumers were found involved in electricity theft and they were fined Rs.245.6 million for 5065,000 detection units. The FESCO teams also caught 663 power pilferers from Toba Tek Singh circle and they were fined Rs.81 million for 1585,000 detection units, spokesman added.

FESCO open courts today: Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) will hold open courts (Khulli Katcheries) in all subdivisions of its region on Monday (July 15).

FESCO spokesman Tahir Sheikh said here on Sunday that Sub Divisional Officers (SDOs) will hear public complaints related to electricity issues in the open courts which would be arranged from 11am. to 1pm.



MULTAN: Security officials holding a flag march to develop a sense of protection among masses and maintain law and order.

4 die as car falls in gorge in Chitral

CHITRAL (INP): At least four people including died while four others injured when a vehicle fell into a deep gorge here on Sunday, police said.

According to details, a car heading to Yarkhun Lush from Chitral skidded off road due to dilapidated condition of road and plunged into a ravine.

As a result of accident, four people including two children and a woman died on the spot while others sustained serious injuries.

The rescue personnel in assistance with local people pulled out the bodies and injured from the gorge and shifted them to Tehsil Headquarter Hospital.

3 killed as two groups trade fire

LARKANA (INP): Three people including two brothers were killed in armed clash between two rival groups here on Sunday, police said.

According to details, armed men of two groups which were in old dispute exchanged fire near Lakhani mountain in Qambar area of Larkana.

In cross firing, two brothers including Ghulam Qambar and Ali Chandio and a passerby Abdul Raheem were killed.

Police reached the area after prolonged delay due to difficult track leading to the area.

The bodies were shifted to hospital for postmortem and police after registering a case into the incident started investigation.

Rains causes flooding in Khyber

BARA (INP): Heavy rains and hailstorms have caused flooding in the bazaars of Tirah Valley, a remote area of Tehsil Bara, District Khyber which caused loss of hundreds of thousands of rupees to traders on Sunday.

The heavy rains and hailstorms also caused panic for the people of the valley. The people of the valley also demanded financial support for the traders.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department has forecast that the weather in Lahore will remain cloudy during the next 24 hours.

The city is partly cloudy, the temperature of the city is recorded 31 degrees Celsius, Lahore is the top in terms of air pollution.

Man killed as car overturns

CHISHTIAN (INP): One person was killed and two others critically injured when a car overturned after hitting a footpath here on Sunday, rescue sources said.

The according top place on Hasilpur in Chishtian district Bahawalnagar where a private car with three people on board got out of control of driver due to over speeding and turned turtle after hitting footpath.

One person identified as Akram 45, was killed on the spot while two others sustained critical wounds.

The rescue teams reached the scene and shifted the body and injured to hospital. The police was also investigating into the incident.

Internet services to remain suspended

QUETTA (INP): The Balochistan government has decided to suspend mobile and internet services in various cities on 7, 9, and 10 Muharram.

Balochistan home ministry spokesperson said that the suspension will affect Quetta, Kachhi, Jhal Magsi, Jaffarabad, and Usta Muhammad.

The government has deployed over 18,000 personnel in Quetta to ensure security on Youm-e-Ashurah. Additionally, two helicopters will be used for aerial surveillance of processions on 7, 9, and 10 Muharram.

Section 144 has also

been imposed in seven districts until 10 Muharram, banning pillion riding and imposing other restrictions to maintain law and order.

Earlier, the federal government approved the deployment of armed forces across the country to ensure security during the month of Muharram.

The move comes at the request of the authorities in Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir to deploy military to control the law and order situation.

The Centre, under

Article 245 of the Constitution, authorized the "deployment of army troops/assets and civil armed forces troops/assets" to ensure peace.

It is pertinent to mention here that Ashura will be observed in Pakistan on July 17 (Wednesday). The provincial government has imposed a ban on pillion riding in Sindh during 10 days of Muharram.

Ashura is observed on the 10th day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic year, which marks the great martyrdom of Imam Hussain (RA) and his companions in the Battle of Karbala.

Ahmad Kundi meets Allama Ramzan Tauqeer — extends Governor's message

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Parliamentary

Leader in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Ahmad Karim Kundi meets with Central Vice President of Shia Ulema Council Allama Muhammad Ramzan Tauqeer and extends Governor Faisal Karim Kundi's special message in connection with Muharram ul Haram.

Both the leaders also discussed the security and

administrative matters during the holy month.

Speaking on this occasion, MPA Ahmed Karim Khan Kundi said that arrived to deliver the message of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi to Allama Ramzan Tauqeer.

Ahmad Kundi said that he would remain in contact with Shia leaders and custodians of Imambargahs, especially during the days of

Muharram ul Haram for resolving their issues.

Allama Muhammad Ramzan Tauqeer expressed satisfaction over the security and other arrangements for the Majalis and mourning processions and hoped that the district administration would further improve these arrangements in coming days.

He said the consultative meetings were also being held with the administration maintaining peace.

Bahawalpur police arrest suspects

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Bahawalpur police have arrested kidnappers of a builder and bandits who snatched six million rupees from traders of Karachi in Sama Satta area of Bahawalpur district, respectively.

Addressing a news conference here, ASP (Sadar Circle), Babar Ali said that a gang of kidnappers had kidnapped renowned builder and businessman, Ahmad Aalam for ransom.

He said that by utilization of modern technology tools and devices, Sadar police have successfully apprehended gang who was involved in kidnapping the builder for ransom.

He said that CCTV cameras provided footage of a Mehran car which was used to kidnap the builder. "The

kidnappers shifted the builder in a house and later, parked the car at the parking stand of a hospital," he said, adding that the police teams got finger print and utilized geo fencing to trace out the suspects.

He further said that the police also traced out the phone set that was used by kidnappers and later, successfully arrested the gang. "Action is underway to trace out and arrest the facilitator of the gang who provided car and phone set to them," he said.

Telling details of another case, he said that a gang of bandits snatched a sum of Rs 6 million from traders of Karachi in Sama Satta area who arrived in Bahawalpur to purchase cattle from cattle market. "The police

arrested the gang and recovered snatched money from their possession.

The senior police official said that suspects from Multan, Muzaffargarh and other areas used to arrive in Bahawalpur to commit robberies and other crimes and later, they fled the area.

10 illegal LPG refilling shops sealed

MULTAN (APP): District administration has sealed ten shops for illegally refilling LPG during a special crackdown launched here on Sunday.

In line with special directives of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Wasim Hamid Sandhu, the Assistant Commissioner (AC) Seemal Mushtaq along with the departments concerned launched a special crackdown against the mafia involved in the illegal LPG business.

The officer sealed ten shops involved in illegally refilling LPG and took the material into custody. The team also seized various illegal mini petrol pumps during the crackdown.

AC Seemal Mushtaq said that the shopkeepers involved in putting public lives at risk would not be tolerated. She said that as per instructions of the DC, strict monitoring was being ensured to control prices of LPG.

The DC Wasim Hamid Sandhu said in a statement that crackdown would continue against illegal mini petrol pumps and LPG refilling shops to prevent mishaps.

Police recover four persons from katcha area

SHIKARPUR (INP): Police in Shikarpur have secured the release of four persons from the captivity of dacoits following an encounter in the katcha area on Sunday.

Briefing the media, SP Shahzeb Chachar has said that those recovered are Muhammad Umar Qureshi, Muhammad Asif Qureshi, Badshah Qureshi and Mir Hassan Jagirani.

Giving further details, the SP has said that 10 days ago, dacoits had intercepted a passenger van in the jurisdiction of Rustam police station and whisked away three passengers namely

Asif, Badshah and Umar Qureshi, while on May 2 this year, they had kidnapped Mir Jagirani.

The police official has said that the dacoits were shifting the captives from one place to another in the katcha area when they had an exchange of fire with the police. "Following an encounter, the dacoits left the captives behind and fled," he has said, adding, "The police have cordoned off the area and are looking for the outlaws."

The release of captives has made their families ecstatic. They have thanked the police for their efforts.



Scientists, a journalist and even a bakery worker are among those convicted of treason in Russia

TALLINN (AP): Over the past decade, Russia has seen a sharp increase in treason and espionage cases.

Lawyers and experts say prosecutions for these high crimes started to grow after 2014 — the year that Russia illegally annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine. That’s also when Moscow backed a separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine.

The number of treason and espionage cases in Russia really spiked after the Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, and President Vladimir Putin urged the security services to “harshly suppress the actions of foreign intelligence services (and) promptly identify traitors, spies and saboteurs.” The crackdown has ensnared scientists and journalists, as well as ordinary citizens.

A look at some treason cases prosecuted in Russia in recent years:

Oksana Sevastidi

In April 2008, bakery worker Oksana Sevastidi saw military equipment on the railway near Sochi, the Russian Black Sea resort where she lived. She texted a friend who lived in neighboring Georgia about it. Weeks later, in August, the two countries fought a brief war, which ended with Moscow recognizing South Ossetia and another Georgian province, Abkhazia, as independent states and bolstering its military presence there.

Sevastidi was arrested in 2015, stemming from her text messages, and convicted of treason the following year. The case made national headlines after Ivan Pavlov and Evgeny Smirnov, prominent lawyers specializing in treason cases, took it on in 2016. That same year, Pavlov’s team revealed that several other Sochi women were convicted of treason in eerily similar cases.

President Vladimir Putin was asked about Sevastidi at his annual news conference in December 2016. He called her sentence “harsh” and promised to look into it, saying that “she wrote what she saw” in her texts and that it didn’t constitute a state secret. In 2017, Putin pardoned Sevastidi and two other women.

Ivan Safronov

Ivan Safronov, a former journalist who went on to work for the Russian space agency Roscosmos, was arrested in 2020 and accused of passing military secrets to Czech intelligence and a German national. In September 2022, a court in Moscow convicted him of treason and sentenced him to 22 years in prison.

Safronov rose to prominence as a military affairs reporter for Kommersant, a leading business newspaper. He vehemently rejected the charges against him, arguing that he collected all the information from open sources as part of his journalistic work and did nothing illegal.

Colleagues denounced the verdict as unfounded and pushed for Safronov’s release, suggesting authorities may have wanted to punish him for his reporting about military and space incidents and arms deals.

His fiancée, Ksenia Mironova, told The Associated



Press that she believes such treason cases, which are investigated in secret with trials held behind closed doors, are convenient for law enforcement because their accusations can go unchallenged.

“They don’t have to explain anything to anyone at all. Not that they bother anyway. ... But (with open trials), there is still a chance that some unfortunate journalists will come and write something. With treason, the case is closed, and they can just concoct something, and that’s it,” said Mironova, who also is a journalist and has reported on the rise of treason prosecutions.

Valery Golubkin

Valery Golubkin, now 71, was a physicist specializing in aerodynamics when he was arrested in 2021 and convicted of treason in June 2023. He was sentenced to 12 years in a maximum-security prison.

According to his lawyers, the authorities accused Golubkin of sharing state secrets with a foreign country. The scientist and his defense team argued that he merely submitted research reports on an international project of a hypersonic civilian aircraft that his state-run institute was involved in.

The reports didn’t contain state secrets and were vetted in accordance with regulations before they were sent abroad, according to lawyer Smirnov.

In a letter from behind bars to the Russian news outlet RBK in 2021, Golubkin said the project in question was approved by the Trade Ministry, and that the charges against him are based on the testimony of his supervisor, Anatoly Gubanov, who was arrested several months before Golubkin.

Gubanov, 66, also was convicted of treason and sentenced to 12 years in prison in 2023.

Lawyers for Golubkin appealed his verdict and lost. In April 2024, the Supreme Court overturned the ruling on the appeal and ordered another review of it, but in the end, the original sentence was upheld.

His daughter, Lyudmila Golubkina, told AP that neither the family nor Golubkin have had high expectations after the Supreme Court ruling, and they now hope he can be released on parole after serving two-thirds of his sentence.

“When a person has something to live for, a goal, it helps

them to overcome everything,” she said. “I hope we will still get to see him a free man.”

Igor Pokusin

Igor Pokusin, a 62-year-old retired pilot who was born in Ukraine, was arrested in the southern Siberian city of Abakan, for protesting Russia’s 2022 invasion of his native land. He was convicted of vandalism and sentenced to six months of parole-like restrictions.

He later was arrested again on the more serious charge of “preparing for treason,” according to the First Department, a rights group that investigates treason cases.

The charges against him stemmed from his phone calls to relatives and friends in which he mulled moving to Ukraine and volunteering as a pilot there to ferry the wounded or deliver humanitarian aid, according to the rights group and media reports.

In January 2024, Pokusin was convicted of the “preparing for treason” charge and sentenced to eight years in prison. The First Department said he died behind bars in June.

Advocates from Memorial, Russia’s oldest and most prominent human rights group, have declared Pokusin, Sevastidi, Safronov and a number of others accused of treason to be designated as political prisoners.

Why a fair election in Venezuela could change the fate of millions

BOGOTA (CNN): A small corner of Venezuela is spreading slowly along 77th Street in Bogota, the capital of Colombia.

Municipal plans formally refer to that neighborhood as Unir II (“unite”), but to many of its inhabitants it is known as Barrio Hugo Chavez, after the late Venezuelan president.

Many of the more than seven million Venezuelans who fled their country over the past decade or more now call Bogota home. The city is brimming with informal communities where migrants come together to help each other integrate and combat the ever-present melancholy and homesickness.

Maria Alvarez is one such migrant. A 27-year-old single mother from Valencia, Alvarez left Venezuela in 2017 when her son Gabriel was only one. They haven’t returned since. Gabriel knows his grandparents only from the photos on his mother’s phone and the occasional video call.

“Everyone left... I’ve got family in Brazil, the US, here in Colombia, in Ecuador, in Chile too. We are all abroad: uncles, aunts, cousins... only my mom and my dad, and one of my brothers remain in Venezuela,” Alvarez told CNN.

Most of those seven million migrants left Venezuela after 2014, according to the United Nations, amid an economic and political crisis brought about by a crash in the price of oil — a key export for Venezuela — combined with chronic corruption and mismanagement at the hands of government officials.

Almost two million of them have been granted work permits to work in Colombia, where life is working out well for Alvarez and many others like her. After the Covid pandemic, she helped create a foundation in Unir II to provide Venezuelans and Colombians with professional classes and psychological counseling. She now makes a living as a manicurist and has met a new partner.

Even so, she still feels the draw of Venezuela. “I just dream of going home and building a life there. Colombia has been good, I feel welcome here, but well, I long to go back,” she told CNN, tearfully.

An election and a credible opposition

But with the authoritarian government of Nicolas Maduro firmly ensconced in power, for many years those dreams of returning have remained just that. Until now.

This month, for the first time in a decade, Venezuela will hold an election in which Maduro’s gov-

ernment is being challenged by an opposition candidate, Edmundo Gonzalez, who has a credible chance of winning.

In October last year, Maduro formally pledged to grant free and fair elections in 2024 at the end of a long and secretive negotiation process with the US State Department.

That pledge was at least partially compromised amid a new spat between Washington and Caracas: the leading opposition candidate, Maria Corina Machado, was barred from running earlier this year, as was her immediate replacement Corina Yoris. The Venezuelan government has accused the White House of not lifting all economic sanctions against government officials, and in recent weeks opposition supporters and members of Machado’s team have been detained.

Even so, many experts believe that come the July 28 election the opposition has a real chance of pushing Maduro out of power.

Recent polls put Gonzalez more than twenty percentage points ahead of Maduro and, for the first time in years, electoral observers from the Carter Center and the UN have been invited to monitor the election.

Such a lead would make Gonzalez the heavy favorite if this were almost any other democratic country. Yet in Venezuela, the government has a habit of clinging to power. Critics have long accused it of rigging votes and silencing the opposition.

Opposition protests were repeatedly repressed in 2014, 2017 and 2019, and hundreds of opposition leaders have been arrested, or exiled.

Still, to many, this year feels different.

“I personally find it difficult to believe Maduro will just give up power,” said Laura Dib, a Venezuela expert at the Washington Office for Latin America.

“However, you know, if there’s massive participation with international observation and, of course, with pressure from inside the government itself and international pressure... that could create some avenues,” she told CNN.

Alvarez and many other migrants in Bogota, think similarly: “Maduro can only win the election if he steals it. But if there’s a new government, I’d go back the same day. Not just me, hundreds, thousands... there won’t be enough planes for everyone to return home,” said Endel Gonzalez, a 54-year-old from Maracaibo who has worked as a

‘Despicable Me 4’ reigns at box office

NEW YORK (AP): Gru and the minions celebrated a second week in first place at the North American box office this weekend, while Alvarez and millions of others like her that are making this such a closely watched election.

Before the pandemic, it was common for Venezuelan migrants to seek opportunities in neighboring countries, but in the past three years more than half a million have headed to the United States’ southern border, moving directly via land from Colombia to Panama and Central America, all the way to Northern Mexico.

Venezuelans were the second largest group of migrants apprehended by US Customs and Border Patrol in 2023, totaling over 260,000 encounters, a fivefold increase from 2020 when there were less than 50,000, putting pressure on the White House to stem the flow.

With the Democratic administration facing an uncertain election in November and migration policies squarely on the ballot, this month’s contest in Caracas could hold profound consequences for US President Joe Biden.

Most experts who spoke to CNN believe that if Gonzalez wins, many migrants will decide to return to Venezuela — but if Maduro clings to power, even more will be tempted to head to the US border, both for political reasons and practical ones.

In the early years of Venezuela’s migration boom, many Latin American countries offered emergency permits and ad hoc policies for migrants from the country, but now many are erecting barriers to deter the free movement of people.

Colombia for example has stopped issuing documents for recently arrived migrants, while the newly elected president of Panama, Jose Raul Mulino, has proposed fencing off the jungles that connect his country to Colombia.

Dib estimates that up to two million more migrants could be on the move by next year. What next?

The Biden administration has been instrumental in reaching this moment. Maduro’s agreement to a free and fair election came only after the US partially lifted oil sanctions, and only after repatriation flights for undocumented migrants back to Caracas resumed in October.

Direct negotiations between Maduro and the State Department seem to have halted, although Maduro announced last week that his chief negotiator, Jorge Rodriguez, held a meeting with US officials to resume talks.

Apple has not yet announced when it will debut on its streaming service.

The movie opened in 3,356 locations this weekend, attracting an audience that was mostly over 45. In this case, the audience was kinder than the critics, giving it an A- CinemaScore against a 67% on Rotten Tomatoes, suggesting that word-of-mouth may work in its favor over the long run.

The year-to-date gap between box office performance this year and last is getting moderately slimmer. It’s now down 16.1% from 2023 thanks to a run of recent successes.

In Saudi Arabia, Indonesian health workers build careers

JAKARTA (Arab News): For more than a decade, Ade Koswara has served as a perfusionist of the cardiac surgery team at one of Saudi Arabia’s top hospitals, working alongside some of the best in the field.

The 42-year-old Indonesian, who is originally from Sukabumi, West Java, was responsible for operating the machine that artificially replaces a patient’s heart or lung functions during surgery.

Since joining the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center in Riyadh in 2010, he said he has been able to develop his skills and has gained new, previously

at the hospital, which has sent him abroad for training to upgrade his skills.

“I had the opportunity to go to Germany and it was amazing because there was a time when I’d dreamed of going there and it came true ... It makes me happy and motivated,” he said.

“Opportunities here are equal. It’s not just for the Saudis, it’s also there when they see potential in any staff, even when they’re not Saudi nationals.”

Koswara said there is much potential for other Indonesian nurses to pursue a career in Saudi Arabia.

“For Indonesian nurses especially, the opportunity for an international career in the Middle East, especially in Saudi Arabia, is huge. We have the potential to enter this market, to gain new and better experiences, and hopefully a better financial reward,” he said.

Saudi Arabia is among the top destination countries for Indonesian migrant workers and ranked seventh last year, according to government data.

But as most of them are domestic workers, Koswara estimated that there are at least around 600 Indonesian nurses currently working in the Kingdom.

Another one is Akhir Fahrudin, who first went to the Kingdom in 2015 to work under the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, which has since become the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development.

After working for almost three years, Fahrudin came back to Indonesia to continue his studies before returning to Riyadh in 2021 to work as an occupational health nurse, now specializing in protecting and promoting the health and well-being of workers.

The 33-year-old is now serving a company in Oxagon, a floating port city in the flagship multi-billion-dollar NEOM

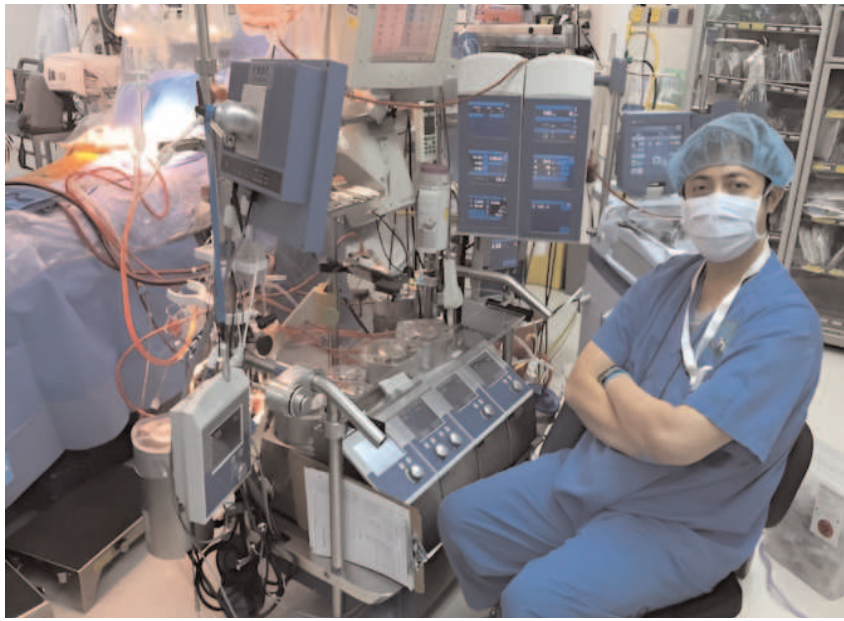
project.

From the Saudi healthcare system, Fahrudin said he learned about the value of collaboration and respect among health workers.

“There is no such thing as one person being more superior than another, it’s a positive thing that I’ve learned while working in Saudi Arabia,” he told Arab News.

“I feel appreciated. When someone appreciates us in practicing our roles, I feel they are valuing my skills, and that’s something that I experienced firsthand.”

He is also grateful for the time he is permitted to offer prayers, which he has learned from friends



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US sanctions against West Bank settlers

THE US State Department and Department of Treasury have on Thursday sanctioned three Israeli individuals and four settlements connected to West Bank settlers. The individuals are Isachar Manne, Reut Ben Heim, Aviad Shlomo Sarid, and the four settlements are Manne Farm, Meitarim Farm, Hamahoch Farm and Neriya's Farm. Lehava, an umbrella group of settlers with more than 10,000 members, has also been blacklisted.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller in a statement on Thursday said, "The United States remains deeply concerned about extremist violence and instability in the West Bank, which undermines Israel's own security." He added, "We strongly encourage the Government of Israel to take immediate steps to hold these individuals and entities accountable. In the absence of such steps, we will continue to impose our own accountability measures."

This is the first time that the US has taken a tough stance against Israel. America has supported the state without conditions. Only after the eruption of war in Gaza after the Hamas attack on October 7, which left 1,200 dead, and 250 were taken hostage there seems to be a shift. The US took a clear stand that the only solution to the problem is the two-state one of Israel and Palestine. In the immediate aftermath of the October 7, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not want to accept a two-state solution.

American President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken refused to budge from their stance of a two-state solution. President Biden even went to the extent of saying that American military supply would be held back if Israel did not agree to a humanitarian ceasefire. Netanyahu was furious but the Americans refused to step back from their stated position. The US Congress did release a bill sanctioning military aid to Israel though the legislators were not in favour of releasing a military package to Ukraine.

Critics of America's Israel policy would say that the sanctions against the West Bank settlers are a mere eyewash, and that until there are sanctions against the Government of Israel, singling out individuals and groups is of no avail. The West Bank settlers are supported and encouraged by the Israeli government. If the economic sanctions were to have any impact on government policy then the sanctions have to be against the state of Israel. For example, the American sanctions against Iran are against the Iranian state. But it does not appear that the US is willing to act against the state of Israel as yet. So, sanctioning individuals and groups in the West Bank will prove to be ineffective.

As a matter of fact Israel remains defiant of the American position. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is being blamed for the rising tension in the US-Israeli relations. But the West Bank settlers are defiant of the American government position. Lehava said, "Biden's measures won't deter us - we'll continue to act fearlessly to save Israel's daughters, much to the dismay of Biden and Israel's other enemies."

Biden has tried to prove that America is indeed a close ally of Israel. As a matter of fact, he had flown to Tel Aviv in the wake of the October 7 Hamas attack. But Israel's unrelenting attack on civilians in Gaza has turned public opinion in America as well as in Europe. Biden had to toughen his stance against Israel because of the eruption of public outrage across the campuses in the country.

University students form an important electoral base for the Democrats. Biden was aware of this. Among the protesting students were also Jews in America. Biden cannot retreat now from his tough stance on Israel. It is also true that Biden cannot also press too forward with the presidential elections drawing near in November.

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Decisive UK election results leave many questions unanswered

Yossi Mekelberg

Labour's landslide victory in the UK general election on July 4 confirmed the most optimistic forecasts, and represented a sense of hope and trust in Sir Keir Starmer and his party to rejuvenate the country during the five-year term it has won.

It was a great night for Labour, as the party celebrated its first general election victory since 2005, and after being out of office since 2010. It was equally, if not more so, a complete rejection of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's premiership and his government, and of his chaotic and deeply divided Conservative Party.

The election campaign provided a vivid illustration of the huge differences between the two dominant parties in British politics. The Conservative Party had lost its way. Led by its third prime minister in the five years since the last election, it looked out of its depth and rudderless, and ran a truly shambling election campaign.

Meanwhile, the cautious (some would say too cautious) Starmer proved that his way of quietly but ruthlessly transforming his party, and his belief that elections would be won by positioning Labour closer to the center of the political spectrum, was more than vindicated.

Winning 412 of the 650 seats in the House of Commons gives the new government a stable majority that should allow it to implement its agenda almost with a free hand. Furthermore, the margin of victory leaves Labour with the prospect of being able to consolidate its vision of change during not only one term but most likely two, if not more.

Its victory was astonishing, surpassing even that of Tony Blair in 1997, because at that time Labour was on an upward trajectory, while in the 2019 general election, under the stewardship of former leader Jeremy Corbyn, the party suffered its worst defeat since 1935.

One argument that tries to explain this turnaround, which I do not find convincing, is that there has been an increase in "voter volatility," which could perhaps better be described as less-rigid voting patterns. This idea will have to be examined over the course of several elections to see whether there is indeed a sustained trend of diminishing party loyalty in favor of a more scrutinizing, less tribal, more tactical voting approach by the electorate in an attempt to maximize their interests, or whether what we witnessed on July 4 was the result of the special circumstances.

How much of the Conservatives' failure, for instance, can be attributed to the Brexit debacle? Or to their inadequate response to the COVID-19 pandemic, during which both Boris Johnson, the first of the trio of Tory prime ministers during the five-year lifetime of the last Parliament, and Rishi Sunak, the last of them, broke the lockdown rules they had set for the rest of us and were fined by police. Or to Liz Truss, whose 45 days as prime minister in 2022 was the shortest term as premier in British history, and whose deluded "Trussonomics"

ideology brought the UK economy to its knees and left many people still paying for it as a result of enormous hikes in mortgage interest rates.

Many Conservatives, as well as supporters of the populist, right-wing Reform UK party led by Nigel Farage, have pointed out that Labour did not significantly increase its share of the vote at the election and that the turnout, at 59.9 percent, was the lowest in more than 20 years.

They are clutching at

The Conservatives are faced with the mammoth task of clawing their way back to political relevance if they are at some point in the future to once again be viewed as a viable contender for power. Their ranks in Parliament have been greatly depleted. After losing, for better or for worse, some of their most prominent MPs, especially those with experience in government, there is a very small pool from which to select their next leader and shadow government. The Conservatives run the risk of concluding from the relative success of the populist, anti-migrant Reform UK party that to counter their decline they should veer even further to the right. Farage and his lieutenants are a one-trick, xenophobic media machine. They are chancers who offer no real solutions, opportunists who found a niche that eventually helped them to gain five seats in Parliament and 14 percent of the popular vote. Several Conservative politicians have suggested that their party hemorrhaged votes to Reform because it was "not conservative enough." This could not be further from the truth; the opposite is the case. Whether through opportunism or ideology, while in government the Conservatives released the racist, anti-immigration genie from the bottle and, with it, their attacks on multiculturalism.

straws here, although Labour certainly should not ignore either of those facts. Both could be a result of the timing of the election, during the summer, and/or the fact that given Labour's huge, unchanging lead in the polls for nearly two years, victory seemed to be a foregone conclusion and so many people opted to vote tactically for a Liberal Democrat contender in seats where that party had a better chance of beating the Conservative candidate.

This certainly helped the Lib Dems increase their representation in the House of Commons from 11 to 72 seats. Other smaller parties also benefited from the anti-Conservative vote, notably the Greens, who quadrupled their number of seats from one to four.

What is undeniable is the scale of the challenges the new government faces both at home and abroad: the dire state of the National Health Service, the education system, the housing situation, the immigration system, an understaffed police force, overflowing

prisons and an overwhelmed justice system, and stormy labor relations, all of which are broken or close to breaking point and deprived of resources.

The public coffers are rather drained and so the forecast for economic growth is not very promising (it is expected to be 0.8 per cent this year) and the UK has long been experiencing significantly slower productivity growth than comparable economies.

In terms of foreign affairs, reviving strained

been greatly depleted. After losing, for better or for worse, some of their most prominent MPs, especially those with experience in government, there is a very small pool from which to select their next leader and shadow government.

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This played straight into the hands of Reform, which positioned itself as the "can-do-it-better" party. Its leaders know there are no boundaries to the claims and promises they can make as they will never be tested in practice.

If the Conservatives attempt to out-Farage Farage, they will fail and fall into Reform's demagogical trap. They need to address the concerns of his voters with pragmatism and a moral compass. They need to propose ways to fix a failing immigration system and turn it into an effective one that can tell the difference between much-needed legal immigration and illegal immigration; recognize the UK's obligations to asylum seekers; create opportunities for everyone in education; create well-paid jobs and affordable homes; develop programs to improve social tolerance and cohesion; and end the divide-and-rule approach of the far right. This would render Farage and his ilk irrelevant and both big parties should, in their own ways, concentrate on that, not on him.

In the meantime, the Starmer government has already made its first move in the right direction by scrapping Sunak's scheme to deport immigrants to Rwanda. This was an expensive, cheap gimmick designed to appease the right wing of his party and his client media. Starmer has instead announced the creation of a Border Security Command as part of the effort to prevent people-smuggling. These are first signs of a mature approach to dealing with a complex issue head on, instead of embarking on a program of hollow politics.

All we can wish for ourselves is that after 14 chaotic and toxic years, the new government will deliver what Prime Minister Starmer promised the day he entered office: "A Britain once more in the service of working people. Country first, party second."

Jeddah talks a viable path to resolving Sudan conflict

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

THE conflict in Sudan, which began more than a year ago between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, continues unabated as both factions strive to dominate the nation. This prolonged struggle has led to catastrophic outcomes, with millions forced to flee their homes, resulting in what is being characterized as the worst displacement crisis in the world. Resuming and prioritizing the Jeddah talks, a diplomatic initiative led by Saudi Arabia, is paramount. Equally essential is an intensified international commitment to reengage diplomatically and advocate forcefully for an immediate ceasefire to effectively address the unfolding humanitarian crisis.

To fully grasp the present humanitarian crisis in Sudan, it is essential to recognize that the country was already in a dire state even before the ongoing conflict erupted. Prolonged political instability and relentless economic hardships had left Sudan teetering on the edge, with nearly 16 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. These conditions have only been exacerbated by the violence, which is amplifying the suffering and desperation of the Sudanese people.

Currently, nearly 25 million individuals — more than half of Sudan's entire population — are in desperate need of assistance. The brutal ongoing conflict has claimed the lives of tens of thousands, creating a tragic toll of death and destruction. Moreover, the violence has driven millions from their homes, resulting in a staggering displacement crisis. According to data from June, about 12 million people have been forcibly displaced, highlighting the profound and widespread impact of the turmoil on

Central to the Jeddah talks is the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan, which is firmly grounded in international human rights principles. It places significant emphasis on crucial aspects, such as the differentiation between civilians and combatants, ensuring the unhindered movement and safety of civilians, safeguarding medical personnel, facilitating the delivery of vital humanitarian aid to the population in need, and staunchly opposing the recruitment of children into armed conflict.

Sudan's population.

Another significant risk is that the war in Sudan has repercussions that extend beyond its borders, precipitating a widespread refugee crisis that impacts neighboring countries, especially Chad, which has seen a substantial influx of people seeking refuge. This sudden and massive arrival of refugees has placed an enormous strain on Chad's already fragile economy and its limited resources. This situation exacerbates existing hardships and creates a precarious environment for both the refugees and the host communities, highlighting the far-reaching and destabilizing effects of the conflict in Sudan.

The conflict has also wreaked havoc on the country's infrastructure. Among the hardest-hit areas is the healthcare system, which is now largely nonfunctional. The medical sector is grappling with a dire shortage of personnel, financial resources and essential medical supplies. This already grim situation is compounded by frequent assaults and looting, rendering medical staff unable to provide even basic care. It has left countless individuals without access to medical services, exacerbating the suffering of a population already in distress. In addition, the delivery of humanitarian aid has faced significant challenges due to the ongoing conflict.

It is also essential to highlight the grave risks faced by children in Sudan, who are among the most vulnerable in the conflict. The violence has forced the closure of thousands of schools in the affected regions, disrupting the education of millions. It is esti-

mated that about 20 million children are being deprived of their right to education. This lack of schooling not only hampers their academic growth, but also exposes them to heightened risks and various forms of harm and exploitation. Without the protective environment that schools and a stable environment provide, these children are increasingly vulnerable to abuse, compounding the humanitarian crisis and threatening the future of an entire generation.

The final and perhaps most alarming threat posed by the ongoing conflict in Sudan is the potential for the country to become a breeding ground for terrorist and militia groups. As the war drags on, Sudan risks transforming into a completely lawless region where extremist groups can easily establish a foothold. The lack of governance and prolonged instability creates an environment ripe for these dangerous organizations to recruit, train and expand their operations.

The implications of such a development extend far beyond Sudan's borders, posing a significant security threat to the entire region and potentially impacting global stability. These groups could launch cross-border attacks, disrupt international peace and contribute to a surge in global terrorism, making the resolution of Sudan's conflict not only a national priority but a crucial international concern.

To effectively address and resolve the conflict in Sudan, it is imperative that the international community increases its level of engagement and intervention. Sudan's stability should be elevated to a top priority, as the total collapse of the nation offers no benefit to anyone and could have far-reaching negative consequences. The global community, recognizing

the urgent need for peace, must initiate a renewed and robust diplomatic effort aimed at securing a ceasefire. This initiative should be comprehensive and inclusive, prominently involving the African Union and other regional stakeholders, which can exert influence and mediate between the conflicting parties.

A resumption of and heightened focus on the Jeddah talks is critical to bringing an end to the conflict in Sudan. This diplomatic initiative, which could be revived following talks between Sudan and Saudi Arabia this week, still stands out as the most viable, comprehensive and practical approach currently available to de-escalate tensions and ultimately resolve the conflict.

Central to the Jeddah talks is the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan, which is firmly grounded in international human rights principles. It places significant emphasis on crucial aspects, such as the differentiation between civilians and combatants, ensuring the unhindered movement and safety of civilians, safeguarding medical personnel, facilitating the delivery of vital humanitarian aid to the population in need, and staunchly opposing the recruitment of children into armed conflict.

By adhering to these provisions, the Jeddah Declaration is not only seeking to mitigate the immediate suffering, but also lay the groundwork for sustainable peace and stability in Sudan, underscoring the importance of international collaboration and humanitarian imperatives in achieving these goals.

Biden, Trump loom large over NATO summit

Western leaders this week marked the 75th anniversary of NATO. Yet most of the attention during the organization's annual summit in Washington was focused on US President Joe Biden.

Several US allies around the world were alarmed by his poor performance during the recent presidential debate, which cemented a growing belief that should he remain the Democrat candidate, he will lose the election in November to his Republican rival, the NATO-skeptic Donald Trump; so much so that some in the military alliance are already predicting transatlantic turmoil at the next NATO summit, due to take place in The Hague in June next year.

Former Trump administration officials, including National Security Adviser John Bolton, have confirmed that the former president came close to announcing a US withdrawal from the alliance while he was in power between 2017 and 2021. Despite the strength of other NATO members, there is no question that a US exit would be a body blow to its credibility.

Behind the scenes, there is much scenario-planning going on in Western capitals regarding the feasibility of a NATO without US participation. It is possible that the alliance could try to remain functional for a few years in the hope that a successor to a second Trump presidency might return the US to the fold.

However, there are splits within the alliance on these issues, as illustrated by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, whose nation currently holds the rotating,

six-month presidency of the EU. Orban made a controversial visit to Moscow this week to meet President Vladimir Putin. Last month, he leveraged his power to veto the appointment of Mark Rutte as secretary-general of NATO to secure an opt-out for Hungary from the alliance's activities in support of Ukraine. He has also voiced opposition to NATO's growing focus on China.

Andrew Hammond

Korea — attended the NATO summit. The alliance has low-level partnerships with all four and wants to build on this.

However, it was Ukraine and NATO's broader future that were the main items on the agenda and here there were some positive announcements, despite the uncertainty about a possible Trump presidential victory.

Canada, Italy, and Spain.

On the issue of Ukraine, a major, one-year, €40 billion (\$43.6 billion) pledge of support was announced. While this is less ambitious than the initial proposal for a multi-year, €92 billion package, it nonetheless provides some future clarity for Kyiv.

The alliance also agreed to take over much of the coordination of arms deliv-

French President Emmanuel Macron suggesting it was "brain dead" as a result of the rapidly changing geopolitical landscape, in particular the diminished commitment of the US under Trump. Fast forward to today and Macron has said Russia's invasion of Ukraine woke up NATO with the "worst of electroshocks."

It has been an unexpected turnaround of fortunes, in the most serious of circumstances, and one that could further be fueled by Western concerns about China.

The war in Ukraine has underlined the continuing relevance of NATO, the members of which have a collective population of about 1 billion. For all its remaining weaknesses, the alliance remains one of the most successful military organizations in history. It has helped underpin the longer period of sustained peace in the modern history of the West, while its combined membership accounts for about half of global GDP.

In this context, Rutte and many other Western leaders have asserted that the best way to prepare for a possible second Trump presidency is to transform the alliance and increase defense spending by its members.

Here, a combination not only of Russian military assertiveness but also the legacy of Trump's uncertain commitment to Europe's security is turning the picture around. In the longer term, higher spending on defense might become locked in by concerns about wider global security shifts, including threats posed by China.

The unspoken horrors of migration

Hafed Al-Ghwell

As thousands of migrants continue to embark on treacherous journeys to Europe, seeking refuge and opportunities, their paths often lead them not to safety but further, imminent danger.

Pushed by dire circumstances at home to seek better lives elsewhere, these desperate masses are met with equal measures of peril along the way. Despite this, Europe still stands as a symbol of hope for so many, even when the harsh realities of the journeys they face, including systemic abuse and a catalog of human rights violations, paint a grim picture.

In their quest for a better life, thousands continue to set off on journeys that, paradoxically, are likely to bring them closer to death than the hopes and dreams they are chasing. In the past six months alone, migrant arrivals have surged by 174 percent along the West African route, and 61 percent in the central Mediterranean. Unfortunately, recent reports and investigations indicate that EU funding earmarked for efforts to curb irregular migrant flows along these two routes is instead being used to sustain punitive detentions and expulsions in situations where the principles of the rule of law, accountability, and transparency are sidelined.

From Tunisia to Mauritania, migrants are not only detained but forcibly transported to, and abandoned in, harsh, remote desert areas where basic human necessities, including food and water, are either scarce or unavailable.

Yet the EU money continues to flow, from €400 million (\$436 million) between 2015 and 2021, to more recent allocations in the billions to North African countries in anticipation of the implementation of the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, ostensibly for the management of migration but with little regard for the grave implications for migrants' welfare.

The collective expulsion operations funded by European money are responsible for the dumping of dozens of migrants at a time in remote desert areas, among other rights violations that have been corroborated by visual evidence and the testimonies of those who survive to tell of the horrors.

In one case, a group of migrants that included two pregnant women was left to traverse a barren wilderness without provisions after coast guards intercepted the boat on which they were traveling.

It is a tale that is all-too familiar among migrants, refugees and other displaced people who face unspeakable horrors long before they even get within sight of the Mediterranean. Human rights organizations continue to record and report their experiences, including instances of detention in unofficial camps where abuse and torture are rampant, followed by abandonment in desert expanses where many perish.

Ironically, the very measures put in place by European and African nations in their attempts to curb illegal migration have inadvertently supercharged the migrant-smuggling industry across North Africa, particularly along the Central Mediterranean route.

While EU policies have reinforced border controls, they have simultaneously escalated the market dynamics of these smuggling operations. Migrants pay anywhere between \$1,000 and \$5,000 for passage as the traffickers increasingly leverage sophisticated methods to bypass security measures. These high costs reflect

migrant flows, despite the chilling reality of increased human suffering.

It is an ongoing crisis in which fundamental rights and dignities are not only set aside but doing so has become a state-sanctioned act, blessed by Brussels' knack for looking the other way. Meanwhile, the migrants, whose only crime is daring to seek a better life, remain trapped in a cycle of exploitation and disregard as the world's tolerance for such horrors continues to grow.

As Europe continues to face persistent challenges along its southern borders, the limits of the present strategy of border reinforcement have been revealed. Despite efforts to outsource EU border controls to North African countries, irregular migration via the treacherous central Mediterranean route has surged since 2020, calling into question the efficacy of this border externalization.

The approach has not only failed to curb migration but continues to increase human suffering, as resource allocation focuses on securitization over addressing the root causes of displacement. Rather than doubling down on impermanent solutions

Tragically, funding to support EU border-externalization programs in North Africa continues to increase without a commensurate broadening of oversight and tighter restrictions on where and how that funding is spent. As a result, Brussels now appears complicit, albeit indirectly, in the atrocious human rights violations and rising death tolls that result from this haphazardly managed intervention. Moreover, the training of personnel and the provision of equipment intended to enhance border management and combat human trafficking are instead implicated in severe abuses. Allegations of such misuse are not unknown to EU officials, given their own internal discussions, and the extensive reporting by European Border and Coastguard Agency.

which illicit pathways become the only viable option open to many, thereby worsening the very crisis the policies aim to manage.

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However, Brussels seems undeterred and unlikely to change course, given the large vote share of the far right in Europe, which inhibits any potential revision of its misguided migration policies. Therefore, it will continue to double down on its policies in the coming years, bolstering its borders as part of its narrative of stemming

that attempt to seal borders, European nations should recalibrate their approach and focus on the reasons why people undertake these desperate journeys in the first place.

If Europe is to align its migration policies with its professed values and long-term geopolitical aims, it must consider investments in capacity building for democratic institutions, sustainable economic development, and climate adaptation in countries of origin and transit.

Brussels can also reallocate resources to create viable pathways for legal migration, such as visa schemes, that deter the dangerous crossings managed by smugglers and traffickers while simultaneously helping the bloc to address growing shortages in skilled labor. By partnering with nations in North Africa, the EU can balance its immediate migration-management needs with longer-term investments that dismantle the political economy of migration.

By tackling irregular migration through a comprehensive framework that emphasizes partnerships over unilateral security concerns, Europe can shape a resilient and cooperative regional environment that lessens the imperative for migration, ultimately serving its dual ambition of managing migrant flows while standing firm on the bloc's commitments to its fundamental values.

The usual suspects fear a Turkiye-Syria thaw

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed openness last July to talks with Syrian President Bashar Assad, but not if withdrawing Turkish troops from Syrian territory was a condition.

A year later, Erdogan has indicated that he would invite Assad "any time" for discussions to "restore Turkiye-Syria relations to the same level as in the past," which was a groundbreaking statement. Interestingly, there was no mention of a condition involving the withdrawal of Turkish troops from northern Syria. Iraq and Russia have been advocating this meeting for a while, and recent developments in Syria have been fostering the possibility.

Turkiye would have two objectives: first, to establish full control over its border with Syria, as on its border with Iraq, aimed at eliminating elements of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces and the PYD. The Iraqi government, previously critical of Turkish operations, has given the green light for Turkiye's new security policy in Iraq. Turkiye now seeks a similar understanding from Damascus to ensure that northern Syria does not pose a threat to its national security. The second objective is the safe return of Syrian refugees, a complex issue with both security and humanitarian dimensions. Turkiye has hosted over three million Syrians for more than a decade, always viewing this as a temporary measure while pushing for a political solution.

Turkiye's policies toward Iraq and Syria have significant distinctions, but also parallels, both aimed at securing its borders with

the approval of the other two governments. Turkiye signed critical deals with both countries in the 1980s and 1990s.

The 1998 Adana Agreement lays the groundwork for a possible Turkish-Syrian thaw, as it did decades ago. It was signed at a time when relations between Turkiye and Syria were strained to the brink of war.

Sinem Cengiz

restore relations: some described it as a Turkish-Syrian version of the Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel. Syria's decision to expel Ocalan and negotiate with Turkiye was linked to its concern about the strength of the Turkish military compared with its own weakness. In an interview later, however,

forces in the north. Significant signs suggest it may opt for normalization. Fears of a permanent Kurdish presence in northern Syria could lead to Ankara-Damascus talks, with discussions underway to launch a joint military operation against Kurdish groups who Turkiye considers terrorists. This process began with intelligence officer meetings in

Damascus now has a choice: normalize relations with Turkiye and join forces against the Kurds, or continue its policy of the past decade, allowing Turkiye to maintain its forces in the north. Significant signs suggest it may opt for normalization. Fears of a permanent Kurdish presence in northern Syria could lead to Ankara-Damascus talks, with discussions underway to launch a joint military operation against Kurdish groups who Turkiye considers terrorists. This process began with intelligence officer meetings in 2020 and progressed to meetings between defense and foreign ministers, though subsequent progress has been a challenge. An Erdogan-Assad meeting would be driven by the need to address mutual issues, and to solve Syrian problems cooperatively. However, as Turkiye's last ambassador to Damascus Omer Onhon has pointed out, even if they met soon the process would be complex, with intertwined issues and no quick solutions.

Damascus had been allowing Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the outlawed Kurdish separatist PKK — who is now serving a life sentence on the Turkish island of Imrali — to take shelter in Syria and direct the group's activities for years. When Turkiye threatened military action, Damascus deported Ocalan and closed PKK camps in Syria.

The Adana agreement was designed to help

Assad said: "The deportation of Ocalan was not out of fear, but because we preferred you. We could either be friends with the Turkish people or prefer the Kurds and lose you. Because our preference was with you, we sent Ocalan out."

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issues and no quick solutions.

Who would worried about a Turkish-Syrian thaw? Well, the usual suspects: first, the PYD and SDF. As primary opponents, they stand to lose the most. Second, the US. As the Kurds' patron, Washington's influence could wane in Syria at the expense of Russia. Third, the Syrian armed opposition. Dependent on Turkish support, they might feel betrayed by Turkiye's shift toward Assad. Fourth, the Syrian refugees; those living in Turkiye and in Turkish-dominated areas in northern Syria could face uncertainty and upheaval. There have already been protests against the Turkish government in northern Syria, and attacks on Syrian migrants by Turks in parts of Turkiye. Northwest Syria, home to about five million people, including local populations and displaced opposition Syrians from areas under Assad's control, remains volatile. Moreover, there are members of armed groups and other opposition Syrians who have been living in northern Syria within the framework of the de-escalation zone agreements signed in 2017.

How Turkiye and Syria can agree on groups they perceive as threats remains to be seen. For instance, Turkiye considers the Kurds terrorists, while Damascus views armed groups fighting against the Assad regime as terrorists. The differing perspectives, the complex humanitarian situation, and the vested interests of stakeholders all pose challenges to this process. These fundamental differences will be a significant hurdle in any potential rapprochement.

Hassan bin Youssef Yassin

Fish don't buy umbrellas to survive in the sea

Umbrellas are of even less use to fish, seeing as the fish are already dying due to our human excess and irresponsibility. For the best part of 50 years, we humans have been well-aware of the damage we are inflicting on our environment and its likely consequences on our planet and the survivability of future generations. While we have been attending one conference after another, the degradation of our environment has only accelerated, global temperatures have risen even further. Although 194 countries signed the supposedly groundbreaking Paris

Agreement of 2015, we have still not seen any changes in our behavior indicating any hope that we are slowing the effects of climate change.

I remember a movie called "Mississippi Burning," where the FBI is called in to investigate the disappearance of three civil rights workers — two whites and one black man — in a Mississippi town run by the Ku Klux Klan. The imagery of fire and hatred is one that unfortunately marks our present day in my mind, with devastating conflicts raging, uninhibited hatred and racism, far-right election

gains across the West, and a US election year that was a farce before it even began, now descending into a media feeding frenzy where the losers, as always, are ordinary citizens. It is not just Mississippi that is burning today; we stare on indifferently as the world is burning.

Shame on us for allowing ourselves to be diverted by all this as we blindly do absolutely nothing about the greatest existential challenge humanity has ever faced, namely climate change. In a recent issue of Financial Times, Martin Wolf published an article entitled "Market forces are

not enough to halt climate change," in which he illustrates how all our good intentions and supposed efforts are making no difference to the devastating climate change already underway, to the "folly of running irreversible long-term experiments on the only habitable planet we have."

The bottom line is that we are simply not prepared to pay the price of decarbonizing the economy or of halting growth in order to halt ever-growing demand for electricity. Although electricity generation from

non-fossil fuel sources has risen 44 percent over the last eight years, that from fossil fuel sources also rose 12 percent, meaning carbon emissions are still significantly on the rise, ultimately fueling ever more rapid and irreversible climate change.

"Alas, the atmosphere responds to emissions, not good intentions: we have been running forward, but going backwards," Wolf says.

Wolf cited a recent study from researchers at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact, who assert that "the costs of mitigating

(climate change) by limiting the temperature increase to 2C, are just a sixth of the costs of the likely climate change."

Wolf adds that although "even a free-market fanatic cannot deny that environmental externalities are a form of market failure ... the market will not fix this global market failure," a "tragic failure" if there ever was one. Our global economy is simply not made to deal with such tremendous negative externalities, such long-term damage, and such a huge amount of waste being built into our economic reality.

Indeed, "among the most

important problems in this area is the failure of capital markets to price the future appropriately," as Lord Nicholas Stern and Joseph Stiglitz argue in "Climate Change and Growth." Shame on us for watching our planet and the future of humanity decline so rapidly in front of our eyes. Mother Nature will adapt; we, seemingly, will not.

We should be educating everyone from kindergartners to retirees on the realities and the limits of our planet in its collision course with our rapacious economic system. We must open new avenues of dialogue and encourage our best

minds to find new paths for a solution to this existential threat.

Our empty conferences, our meaningless signatures, our false bravado are all worthless. We must stop rewriting the stories of old and find new ways to bring about the meaningful participation of every human being on the planet, rather than rely on governments and businesses, whose interests lie elsewhere. Most of all, we must learn to value and respect what God and Nature have given us in birth, ensuring that in death we bequeath something better, not worse, to future generations.



Major Pakistani airports to get smart gates for seamless travel

ISLAMABAD (INP): Traveling out of Pakistan is set to become more seamless as the authorities plan to install new smart gates at the country's major airports.

The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the regulatory body overseeing the aviation sector, has invited companies to submit bids for installing e-gates at the country's primary airports in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad.

"The project has been

conceived as a self-service immigration system for airport installation to cut costs and improve passenger satisfaction.

The system shall be placed at the airports' arrival and departure gates, which validate passengers' identity using top-trending technologies," the CAA said in its bid documents.

"In the context of increasing numbers of passengers and with the recent expansion of airports, it is

intended to modernize its border control solution to enable a seamless Immigration process of travelers at Pakistani airports while improving security processing," the CAA added.

The Civil Aviation Authority stated that the initiative would alleviate the workload on manned immigration counters and establish a standardized automated immigration process, including docu-

ment verification and personal authentication, to maintain the security and integrity of the borders.

The scope of services includes providing, installing, integrating, testing, and commissioning e-gate systems, followed by operation and maintenance.

The Civil Aviation Authority has asked interested local and international companies to submit their bids by August 13, 2024.

Anjum says billions can be saved through payments in rupees to IPPs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI)'s Businessmen Panel (BMP) has stressed the need for revisiting terms of power purchase agreements with a view to restore the viability of country's energy sector, as billions of rupees could be saved by making payments to IPPs in local currency instead of dollars.

The FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar also supported the government stance of the audit of dozens of Independent Power Producers agreements established during the last 30 years, after a Senate penal chief termed the contracts of IPPs as dacoity, seeking project-wise details including heat rates and regional comparison of price of the same technology.

He said that Pakistan has been facing a high inflation for the past couple of years partly due to massive depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar and partly due to a surge in global commodity prices like energy cost. The country largely meets its energy demand through expensive imports. He stressing the need for putting the economy on a sustainable growth trajectory by providing incentives to the industry, lamented that the economy is facing multiple challenges of falling exports, high inflation, low growth and declining foreign reserves, with

fiscal accounts under immense pressure on account of heavy interest payments. Businessmen Panel (BMP) chairman said that the drop shows the government would find it difficult to achieve the industrial growth and export target, leading to more pressure on foreign exchange reserves of country.

The FPCCI former president said that in view of decreasing cost of production and lessen energy tariffs, the government should bring some major changes in the agreements with IPPs, who are earning high profits due to certain terms and conditions of their agreements.

He further disclosed that the high cost of power tariff was due to a host of factors, including snowballing capacity payments, net hydel profit, transmission constraints, minimum plant factor provision for RLNG based plants, gas price anomalies and financing cost of circular debt.

The FPCCI former president said that Pakistan pursued an aggressive policy to add power capacity, but years of slow economic growth, power theft, and under-investment in transmission and distribution networks have meant that bill recovery has not been at par.

He said that most IPPs had an investment payback period of 2-4 years, profits generated were as high as 18.37 times the investment and dividends 23 times the investment and under the 1994 Power Policy, 16 out of 17 IPPs invested a com-

bined capital of Rs52 billion and earned profits in excess of Rs417 billion. The governments' failure to contain the circular debt had cost the country over Rs5,082 billion in the past 15 years, with an annual loss of Rs370 billion.

Mian Anjum Nisar added that restoring energy sector viability requires strong cost-side reforms, including continuation of efforts to improve transmission infrastructure, better integration and expansion of renewable energy capacity, improving DISCO performance via either privatization or long-term management concessions, moving captive power demand to the grid, revisiting, the terms of power purchase agreements and continuing to convert publicly-guaranteed PHPL debt into cheaper public debt.

He outlined the reforms' agenda that has either been undertaken by Pakistan or where Islamabad needs to put more efforts. In the case of the energy sector, terms of power purchase agreements have not come heavily under the scanner as the focus has first been on taking recovery and tariffs to a sustainable level.

Higher energy prices triggered mass protests across Pakistan last year and have also stifled energy demand with policymakers scratching their heads on how to move forward for the sector's viability.

With runaway inflation triggering record high interest rates, demand for energy has reduced further,

leaving the government in a 'catch-22' situation.

In a report, it is also admitted that the only sustainable solution for the sector is decisive action to address cost-side and infrastructure issues. He quoted the IMF report which is an important document as many see it as a guideline in the light of Pakistan's pursuit for a longer, larger program with the IMF.

In the letter of intent, part of the IMF staff report, Pakistan also agreed that it will focus on mobilising significant additional revenue especially in under-taxed sectors.

In its recommendations, he suggested to the government that basic tariff of IPPs should be changed in Pakistani currency instead of dollars and if this change is not made, an amount of Rs5,463 billion will have to be paid. Similarly, the profits to the IPPs owners should be given in Pakistani rupees instead of dollars.

The country could save Rs5,400 billion only with change of currency in the agreement, instead of Take or Pay contract. The government is suggested to revoke the practice of capacity payment based on 'Take or Pay' with the owners of IPPs. The report also claimed that the IPPs' owners showed extra cost to get extra tariff at the time of the contract, with NEPRA failing to check the veracity of cost. The cost of the power plant prepared by the companies was also accepted by the authorities, it further reveals.



MULTAN: Labourers packing seasonal fruit mangoes in wooden box to deliver in market.

29 illegal connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: In a continued effort to combat gas theft, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has disconnected 29 illegal gas connections across Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad, imposing fines totaling Rs 0.6 million.

In Lahore, the SNGPL team disconnected 4 connections for illegal gas use and imposed fines amounting to Rs 0.12 million.

In Multan, 12 connections were disconnected for illegal gas use and an additional 2 for using compressors.

The Faisalabad team disconnected 3 connections for illegal use and levied fines of Rs 0.04 million.

In Bahawalpur, 3 connections were cut for illegal gas use, and 2 more for compressor use.

In Gujranwala, one connection was disconnected for illegal use, resulting in fines of Rs 0.19 million.

The Sahiwal team disconnected 2 connections for illegal gas use, and in Sheikhupura, fines totaling Rs 0.308 million were imposed for gas theft.

SIFC plays role in real estate uplift

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Special Investment Facilitation Council plays a significant role in development of real estate projects to increase foreign investment in the country.

According to the details, an agreement has been reached between the world-renowned company Reportage Properties of the United Arab Emirates and the well-known Pakistani company Empire Holding.

The agreement includes the establishment of a company called Reportage Empire Pakistan. The company's first project based on international engineering standards will be launched in Lahore.

Launching various projects in major cities of Pakistan and attract foreign direct investment to boost the economy and create employment opportunities are among top priorities of the company.

IPO-Pak drive economic growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Farukh Amil, Chairman IPO-Pakistan, emphasized the critical role of intellectual property in driving economic growth and prosperity.

The Chairman IPO - Pakistan has stressed for the critical role of intellectual property in safeguarding national security and driving economic growth during a meeting with Ambassador (Retd) Qazi M Khalilullah, Executive Director, Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS)for, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

Chair IPO-Pakistan stressed that a robust intellectual property system is vital for attracting investments, promoting entrepreneurship, and protecting innovations in strategic technologies. "The effective protection and management of intellectual property is essential for a nation's economic and national security," Faruk Amil said.

China-Pakistan to introduce eco-friendly solar e-bikes soon

BEIJING (INP): Road King, a leading electric scooter brand in Pakistan, and AGAO Solar Mobility, a China-based startup specializing in solar-powered scooters, reached a preliminary cooperation agreement to introduce eco-friendly solar e-bikes to Pakistan.

Solar scooters are eco-friendly electric scooters equipped with solar panels. These panels harness solar energy to charge the scooter's battery, reducing the need for traditional charging.

"The combination of solar energy and scooters is dedicated to short-distance travel with zero carbon emissions," said the Chinese company, according to China Economic Net.

During the meeting, both sides engaged in detailed discussions on Pakistan's local transportation market demand, product development trends, and specific cooperation modalities.

The Chinese company expressed its willingness to provide Road King with technical support, product optimization, and market-

ing assistance for solar e-bikes.

The goal is to jointly create high-quality transportation products that meet local market needs.

"We will actively promote cooperation with the Chinese side and introduce solar e-bikes to the Pakistani market," stated the delegation from Road King, noting that the environmental friendliness and high-efficiency performance of solar e-bikes perfectly align with Pakistan's current demand for green transportation.

Zafar holds meeting with British Parliamentarian

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary General Federation Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Prominent Pakistani business leader Zafar Bakhtawari on Sunday held meeting with the Parliamentarian in London.

Newly elected Pro-Palestine independent MP from Perry Barr, Birmingham, constituency, Ayoub Khan has reiterated his unwavering commitment to championing the Palestinian cause, dedicating his victory to the resilient people of Gaza, said a press release issued here on Saturday.

Khan lambasted the global community's hypocritical stance on the issue, vowing to persistently raise awareness in the British Parliament.

He said this during an

exclusive session in London with prominent Pakistani business leader, former President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari.

The MP also drew parallels with the occupied Kashmir region, highlighting the similarities in the struggles faced by both populations. He acknowledged the critical role of social media in amplifying the Palestinian narrative, leveraging graphics to convey the severity of the situation.

In contrast, Khan noted the technological limitations hindering the Kashmiri people's ability to share their stories, resulting in relatively less global attention.

Ayoub Khan reassured the Kashmiri community

that they have a strong advocate in the British Parliament, pledging to vocally support their cause and echo their concerns. He also expressed his desire to strengthen UK-Pakistan relations, bridging the gap between the two nations through enhanced business connectivity and cultural exchange.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Secretary General of the United Business Group, briefed Khan on Pakistan's investment opportunities and the business community's role in youth development through industry-academia linkages. Bakhtawari extended an invitation to Khan to visit Pakistan and explore its tourism potential, which he accepted.

PFC calls for preserving forests

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan's meagre forest cover is dwindling fast and the country's five percent forests of its total land are essential for maintaining ecological balance, supporting biodiversity and combating hovering climate threats.

Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq stated this while talking to media here Sunday.

He added that the consequences of dwindling forests are severe as reduced forest cover leads to soil erosion, loss of habitat for wildlife, and a decrease in the natural absorption of carbon dioxide, exacerbating the

effects of climate change. Furthermore, the loss of forests impacts water cycles, leading to reduced rainfall and increased risk of floods and droughts, he warned.

Mian Kashif said that in order to address this issue, Pakistan needs to implement strict regulations on logging, promote reforestation and afforestation programmes, and raise awareness about the importance of forests.

Sustainable practices and community involvement are crucial to preserving the country's remaining forests and ensuring a healthier environment for future generations.

He said these vital

resources are under significant threat from deforestation, illegal logging, urban expansion, and agricultural activities.

He said deforestation in Pakistan is driven by a combination of factors including the demand for timber, firewood, and land for agriculture.

Illegal logging is rampant, with forests being cut down at an alarming rate. Urban expansion also plays a critical role, as cities grow and encroach upon forested areas.

Additionally, many rural communities rely on wood for cooking and heating, further contributing to the loss of forest cover, he concluded.

Automobile sale increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sale of cars in the country witnessed an increase of 137.91% in June 2024 compared to the same month of the preceding year (2022-23), a data released by the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA) said.

Sale of cars rose to 10,128 units in June 2024 compared from 4,257 units during the same month of the previous year. Sale of cars during the fiscal year 2023-24 (July-June) however decreased by 15.63% when compared to the sale during the same period of

the last year 2022-23. As many as 81,677 cars were sold during the period under review as opposed to 96,811 units in the same period of last year. The breakup figures showed that 11,501 units of Honda Civic and City were sold as compared to the sale of 12,823 units in last fiscal year (2022-23). Toyota Corolla and Yaris car sales also declined by 13.44 per cent as it went down to 16,305 units from 18,838 units in last year.

Suzuki Swift's sales also decreased by 40.38 per cent as its sales went down to 5,567 units from 9,338

units last year.

Sale of Suzuki Cultus declined to 3,689 units during the fiscal year under review, whereas during the same period of last year, the sale was recorded at 6,956 units while the sale of Suzuki WagonR also decreased to 3,595 units from 5,434 units last year.

Suzuki Alto's sales however also witnessed an increase of 1.42% from 35,379 units to 35,883 units during the year under review, whereas the sales of Suzuki Bolan decreased to 2,774 units as opposed to sales of 4,447 units in last year.

More industrial groups, bodies make alliance with PIAF

F.P. Report

LAHORE: More industrial groups and trade bodies have announced their support for the PIAF in the upcoming LCCI elections, expressing full confidence of the leadership of Mian Anjum Nisar, rejecting all other so-called groups altogether.

In a large gathering, organized by Darughawala Industry Owners Association and attended by a large number of business representatives from across the city and the members of the PIAF posed their confidence of the Anjum Nisar group, assuring him of full support in the upcoming election of the LCCI.

On the invitation of the former President of Darughawala Industry Owners Association and Executive Member PIAF Shaban Akhtar, the whole leadership of PIAF, including Patron-in-Chief PIAF Mian Anjum Nisar, Chairman PIAF Fahimur

Rehman Sehgal and other PIAF members attended that important meeting. Hundreds of members of Lahore Chamber, executive committee members of PIAF, members of Darughawala Industry Owners Association and market presidents of adjacent areas participated in the ceremony.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mian Najam Nisar and Fahimur Rehman Saigol said that the service of traders from the platform of PIAF has been going on for the past 52 years and the presence of a large number of traders and industrialists in every event is the proof in this regard. It shows that PIAF is not just a show but a name of service to the business community and the voters of Lahore Chamber make the Alliance successful-- thanks to the performance of PIAF Founders Alliance.

In this power show, in addition to dozens of association officials, PIAF

Patron-in-Chief Mian Anjum Nisar, Chairman PIAF Fahimur Rahman, Mian Muhammad Ali, Rafat Malik, Abuzar Shad, Vice Chairman PIAF Nasrullah Mughal, Vice Chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry, Senior Vice President Lahore Chamber Zafar Mehmood Chaudhry, Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt, Ghulam Sarwar Hajwari, Sheikh Tanveer, Khalid Khokhar, Sajjad Afzal Sheikh, Malik Nadeem, Malik Khalid, Sheikh Abdul Manan, Rana Nadim, Naeem Hanif, Malik Majeed, Shahid Baig, Shahbaz Aslam, Waqar Ali Patna and others participated.

PIAF Fahimur Rahman Saigol, addressing the meeting, said that PIAF has an excellent record of 22 years of service to the business community because PIAF brings qualified and working people to Lahore to advocate for the business community.

He advocated for the policy rate to be reduced to a single-digit figure to alleviate the financial burden on the business community and stimulate economic activity.

Anjum Nisar highlighted that the tight monetary policy, combined with the government's significant domestic borrowing, has left minimal room for business growth.

He stressed the urgent need for the government to freeze both domestic and foreign borrowing and to devise a comprehensive strategy to showcase Pakistan's economic potential to international investors.

On this occasion, he condemned the central bank, stating the policy rate should be further reduced. In the budget, relief should be given to exports so that exports can be increased. In the last one month, only 3.5 billion dollars of remittances have come, which can be increased further.

‘Pakistan needs economic plan to offset debt servicing impact’

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan is blessed with huge potentials to flood the world markets with its goods and fetch billions of dollars in return. Pakistan needs an urgent economic growth plan to offset the impact of debt servicing, which consumes half of the national fiscal budget annually.

SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former President Iftikhar Ali Malik expressed these views in a meeting with former ambassador and founder Secretary General of

SAARC Chamber, Rehmat Ullah Javed, here Sunday.

He said the government should formulate economic policies with the sole objective to facilitate the private sector, which is the engine of growth and successive governments should carry on the same policy to retain the private sector's confidence, besides helping a stable exchange rate for investments and the governments should remove all taxes from the exports sector, promote digital economy and step up for the

research and development in all fields.

He said that exporters facilitation centres under one-window, simplifying cumbersome procedures, ending of bureaucratic and other hurdles, ensuring the allocations of sufficient energy supplies to the exports manufacturing units and initiation of the technical, vocational education in the country, are key factors achieving economic growth.

Iftikhar Ali Malik also asked the private sector to

stop going for tax concessions and subsidies, start training its workforce, appoint laborers on a permanent basis and not on contract or daily wagers to give them a sense of job protections.

He also urged the private sector to stop looking to the EU for GSP plus facility or the US markets for its exports, rather shift its focus to the Asian nation like China, Japan etc., for huge returns. One percent exports to China will fetch \$24 billions, he cited.



Will Argentina make Copa America history ?

MIAMI (bbc): Argentina face Colombia in Monday's Copa America final bidding to make history.

Victory for Lionel Messi's side in Miami will see them win the competition for an outright record 16th time.

Messi, who now plays for Inter Miami, was on the scoresheet as Argentina beat Canada 2-0 to reach the final, while Colombia overcame Uruguay 1-0 in a semi-final marred by an angry confrontation between some players and fans in the stands after the final whistle.

The match kicks off at 01:00 BST.

Football is one of the main threads linking the two countries at opposite ends of South America - and it is almost a father-and-son relationship.

Along with Uruguay, Argentina were first out of the blocks in South American football. Of the continent's 10 nations, Colombia were the ninth to take part in the Copa, entering for the first time in the 18th edition, in 1945.

Soon afterwards, Colombia launched a pirate professional league. Outside the control of Fifa, it did not have to pay transfer fees.

At this very moment Argentina's players went on strike. And so Colombia lured many of the big names north - including the great Alfredo di Stefano, who starred up front for Millonarios of Bogota for a few years before going on to change European football with Real Madrid.

Since then there has always been a strong Argentine influence on Colombian football. Frequently the national team coach comes from Argentina, as is the case now, with one-time Swindon Town defender Nestor Lorenzo doing a fine job.

Defending world and continental champions, Argentina have won the Copa 15 times. Victory on Sunday will put them one ahead of Uruguay as the most successful team in the competition's history.

Colombia have just one title to their name - on home ground in 2001, a tournament to which Argentina refused to turn up. The greatest triumph in Colombia's history was a 5-0 World Cup qualification rout of Argentina in Buenos Aires back in 1993 - the first time La Albiceleste had ever lost a qualifier at home.

However they get over the line, that win will be surpassed in prestige if Colombia can overcome their old mentor on Sunday with a title at stake.

At club level James Rodriguez is a forgotten man. In a career of ever-decreasing circles, he is currently surplus to requirements at Sao Paulo in Brazil. But with the national team he is shining once more.

In a highly structured side he is allowed to roam free, finding little pockets of space from which to work his left-footed magic. His cross-pass for Daniel Munoz to set up Colombia's opening goal against Paraguay was perhaps the outstanding moment of the tournament, a glorious piece of vision that took out the entire defence.

Rodriguez turned 33 on Friday, and has used this tournament to show there is plenty of football still left in him.

But how much is left in Lionel Messi, who has reached 37 while the ball was rolling?

Sunday will be Angel di Maria's last match in the national team. Might it also be team-mate Messi's, at least as far as tournaments are concerned? This is a real possibility.

Messi is using the Copa as a test to judge if he can do himself justice in the next World Cup. On the evidence so far he has clearly declined since Qatar.

He is finding it harder to kick away from defenders. Messi is still capable of brilliance, but it is more sporadic.

Coach Lionel Scaloni confessed as much when he dropped Lautaro Martinez for the semi final in favour of the running power and the extra man in the build-up of Julian Alvarez.

Alcaraz crushes Djokovic to retain Wimbledon title

LONDON (Agencies): The passing of the baton, the changing of the guard - call it what you like, The simple fact is that Carlos Alcaraz is the new king of the Centre Court and Novak Djokovic, the mighty collector of Grand Slam titles, has been deposed.

Alcaraz defended his Wimbledon title with a masterclass, dismissing Djokovic 6-2, 6-2 7-6(4).

"He had it all today," Djokovic said. "He was an absolutely deserved winner today."

Alcaraz's parents looked as proud as punch. Djokovic looked resigned to his future: young Carlitos standing between him and the 25th Grand Slam title he so desperately craves.

It was a fascinating match-up between the two champions, past and present, and no one - be they pundit, punter or player - could identify a clear favourite before the match.

The problem was that the numbers were so one-sided as to be irrelevant. Titles won: Djokovic 98, Alcaraz 15. Grand Slam titles won: Djokovic 24, Alcaraz three. Wimbledon titles won: Djokovic seven, Alcaraz one.

Yet Alcaraz was the defending champion and he had beaten Djokovic on this court before. As they walked through the Clubhouse to the court, there was a jovial discussion about who should go first. "I don't know the protocol, you go first," Alcaraz said with his usual, beaming smile.

Little did Djokovic know that that would be the only time the defending champion would give way to him for the rest of the day. Winning the toss and electing to receive, Alcaraz took 14 minutes, seven deuces and five break points to break the Djokovic serve in the opening game. The tone had been set and, for that set at least, the damage had been done. Djokovic never recovered.

Last year, both men were at their absolute peak and the five set, four-and-three-quarter hour final was as tight as tight can be.

This year, both men have been below their best in every round; now the final promised to be even tighter than tight. And it was - but only for those 14 minutes. Then again, this was not the rock-solid, baseline Djokovic we had come to know over the years. From the very first points, it was clear that the Serb was going to attack the net.

The first time he won here in 2011, Djoko came to the net eight times over the course of seven rounds. That equated to less than one per cent of the total number of points he played during the Fortnight. In the first set alone, he had almost doubled that: 13 points played at the net although only four of them won.

What was also becoming increasingly clear was that Alcaraz was warming to his task. After that first, long game, any hint of pre-final jitters had gone and he was free to let his imagination run riot. Able to create magic out of thin air from any quarter of the court, he was dismantling Djokovic piece by piece.

One of the greatest returners the game has seen; one of the finest defenders, able to neutralise any form of attack, Djokovic was stumped. He simply could not find an answer to the barrage of winners coming his way.

A crisp, forehand volley? Alcaraz chased it down and bunted a forehand winner down the line. A regulation rally point? Another forehand, this one blasted down the line.

Under that sort of pressure, Djokovic was crumbling before our eyes: a volley error and a double fault offered up his serve for the second time in the second set. The final was running away from him and he could only stand and watch.

If Djokovic played an average shot, Alcaraz punished it with glee. Even if he came up with a shot that against any other player would have been a clean winner, Alcaraz chased it down and swatted it away for a winner of his own.

And then he would turn to his box and smile. This was a Wimbledon final and he was loving it; he was having fun. No one, not even Djokovic, can put pressure on Alcaraz when he is in that sort of mood.

The third set offered Djokovic a glimmer of hope: he won the opening game. It was the first time he had managed all afternoon it and it was only a hold of serve, but it was a start. Then, a few moments later, he won another marathon, 10-minute game of five deuces and four breakpoints. But that was only another hold. Still, he was on level terms in this set, at least. These were the first, small building blocks of a potential Djokovic comeback.

After two hours and 11 minutes, he dropped serve for the first time. Admittedly, the tension that goes with serving for a Wimbledon title is like no other and from holding three championship points, he offered up his serve with a collection of errors. Once into the tie-break, he was not going to do that again. Djokovic fought hard but Alcaraz was brilliant. He won on his fourth match point.

He had won his second Wimbledon crown and his fourth Grand Slam title. He has never lost a Grand Slam final. And he is still only 21.

Princess Kate delivers meaningful message with Wimbledon outfit

LONDON (Agencies): Princess Kate has made a triumphant return to Wimbledon Sunday and stunned in a show-stopping purple Safiyya midi dress.

The Princess of Wales, 42, delighted fans as she arrived with Princess Charlotte, nine, to watch Novak Djokovic take on Carlos Alcaraz.

The royal mum-of-three - who was also accompanied by sister Pippa Middleton - looked sensational in her purple midi dress with ruffle detailing, which she paired with a beige bag and heels.

Princess Kate added her small dark green and purple bow pinned onto her dress, and it has a significant meaning.

The bow is a nod to the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club - of which Kate is a patron - and features its official colours.

Meanwhile, Princess Charlotte looked smart in a polka dot dress, with her hair pulled back in a neat plait.

Colour expert Jules Standish told Fabulous that purple - as seen with Kate's dress - is seen as a "calming" shade to wear.

It was also once the exclusive preserve of monarchs as it was such an expensive hue to produce.

Jules says: "This colour is often associated with power, luxury and glamour, yet is calming at the same time. "It highlights Kate's unique personality and her understated leadership qualities in a creative and visionary way."

Avid tennis fan Kate has rarely missed a Wimbledon tournament, and her attendance was confirmed by Kensington Palace. Royal expert Hugh Vickers shared how the announcement is a "huge step forward" for the Princess of Wales and is "very positive news" amid her cancer treatment.

Speaking of the announcement, Royal Historian Hugh Vickers told The Sun: "I think it's extremely good news because not only will Wimbledon have the most exciting match tomorrow in the men's finals, with Djokovic playing Alcaraz, but also the presence of Catherine, Princess of Wales will just be the icing on the cake because everybody had been hoping so much that she would be well enough to attend. "And we are told that



she is still having treatment and so she has to take things day by day.

"She told us in the last message at the time of Trooping the Colour that she isn't out of the woods yet.

"So each appearance is a step forward, and I can't think of a better way of celebrating tomorrow than her being at Wimbledon."

The royal expert added that both the crowd and viewers will be "absolutely thrilled" at seeing the Princess of Wales.

Kate was last seen in public at Trooping the Colour on June 15 - with Prince William proudly standing at her side.

Prior to Trooping the Colour, Kate had not been seen with the Royal Family since Christmas Day last year at Sandringham.

Hugh continued: "In every possible way, it's a good sign.

"Catherine became president of the All England tennis club in 2016 - the Duke of Kent was always the person who was there before, and there's been a sort of gradual handover - and she loves tennis.

"And so rather than having to watch it at home, it's wonderful to think that she'll be in the royal box because we've rather missed her this year. "And I gather that she

will also present the trophy. So this is all very positive news."

Deborah Jevans, chair of the AELTC, presented the Ladies' trophy at the request of the princess to Barbora Krejickova.

Tennis bosses recently revealed they remained hopeful the Princess of Wales would head to Wimbledon this year and AELTC chair Debbie previously said they were "staying flexible" over who will present trophies.

Traditionally Kate does the honour, in her role as patron of the group.

Debbie told Telegraph Sport: "We're hopeful that the Princess of Wales will be able to present the trophies as the Club's patron, but her health and recovery is the priority.

"We don't know what we don't know. All we've said is that we'll work with her and give her as much flexibility as possible."

She added: "I don't know who would present the trophies as an alternative - that's something to consider nearer the time if necessary.

"We're staying flexible. When we hear we'll then think about what's the right thing to do.

"Legendary former royal correspondent Charles Rae told The Sun's Royal Exclusive show

there is a big reason why Wimbledon organisers would "love" to have her back.

Speaking to our Royal Editor Matt Wilkinson, he said: "I think the people at Wimbledon would love to have Catherine back in again because it will boost the viewing audience and boost people being there. "The problem with it is that when we first found out about her cancer, various people were putting dates on about when she was due to come back.

"She was going to be back in late April, she's going to be back for Trooping or back for whatever.

"We just don't know when she is going to be back."

Another expert previously said Kate "would love" to go to Wimbledon this year if her health allows.

ROYAL'S HEALTH JOURNEY

Kate was taken into hospital for planned abdominal surgery in January and spent 13 nights at the London Clinic before continuing her recovery at home with her family.

In March, Kate bravely released a video revealing "tests after the operation found cancer had been present" and that she had started preventative cancer treatment.

The Princess said the diagnosis had come as a "huge shock" - but vowed: "I am well and getting stronger every day".

Princess Kate gave an update on her health last month - just hours before Trooping the Colour.

KATE'S MESSAGE

She told how her treatment is "ongoing and will be for a few more months" as she revealed she is "not out of the woods yet".

But she told how it is a "joy" for her to still engage with school life and spend time "on the things that give me energy and positivity, as well as starting to do a little work from home".

She said: "I have been blown away by all the kind messages of support and encouragement over the last couple of months.

"It really has made the world of difference to William and me and has helped us both through some of the harder times.

"I am making good progress, but as anyone going through chemotherapy will know, there are good days and bad days.



LONDON: Carlos Alcaraz with his Wimbledon Tennis Championship trophy.

Pak athletes to feature in SAAF Athletics C'ships

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani athletes would feature in the SAAF Junior Athletics Championship and 4th SAAF Athletics Championship to be held in India. According to Chairman South Asia Athletics Federation Major Gen (R) Mohammad Akram Sahi, the SAAF Junior Athletics Championship would be held in Chennai, India from

September 11, while the 4th SAAF Athletics Championship will take place in Ranchi, India from October 4.

He said the men's and women's teams from seven countries are participating in the Junior Athletics Championship. The teams include Pakistan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The championship will continue till September 13 and prizes will be distributed among the winning players at the end of the championship.

He said seven men teams and as many women teams would take part in the SAAF Athletics Championship. The participating teams include Pakistan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The championship will continue till October 6.

Pogacar storms to stage 15 win to stretch lead

PARIS (BBC): Tadej Pogacar took a huge step towards reclaiming the Tour de France title as he produced another superb ride to secure a second straight stage win.

As the race headed into the Pyrenees this weekend, the two big mountain stages were seen as a chance for Pogacar's general classification rivals to potentially close the gap on the race leader.

But the two-time champion soloed to victory on stage 14 and followed that up by dismissing his competition on a gruelling climb to the stage 15 finish in Plateau de Beille.

Pogacar, 25, left Jonas Vingegaard behind to claim his 14th stage win by one minute eight seconds, while Remco Evenepoel crossed down in third.

Vingegaard, the two-time defending champion, now trails the Slovenian by three minutes nine seconds, while Evenepoel is five minutes nine seconds off the overall lead in third.

Sunday's 197.7km mountain stage from Loudenvielle promised to be one of the toughest days on the Tour.

It featured four category one climbs, with a hors categorie climb - the toughest - to finish, and 4,831 metres of elevation gain - 9% of this year's total.

It was also hotter, and Pogacar admits he usually struggles in the heat, so in a bid to hit back after Saturday's win for UAE Team Emirates, Vingegaard's Visma-Lease a Bike team pushed the pace for most of the day.

The Dane's team-mate Matteo Jorgenson led the peloton up a brutal final climb, before handing over to Vingegaard to try to crack Pogacar.

They caught the

breakaway group with about 9km remaining and Vingegaard, who was seriously injured in a crash three months ago, was out of his saddle with about 5km left.

The Dane glanced back to see if that effort had had any impact on Pogacar and that was a signal to the race leader that, in fact, it was Vingegaard who was at his limit.

Like on Saturday, Pogacar sensed the opportunity to hit the front and he continued to go clear to claim his third stage win on this year's Tour and give himself a commanding lead heading into Monday's rest day.

British sprinter Mark Cavendish, the Tour's all-time stage record-holder with 35, made the cut-off time with less than two minutes to spare to keep alive his hopes of securing a final stage win in his farewell to the race.

Man Utd sign Bologna striker Zirkzee for £36.5m

MANCHESTER (BBC): Manchester United have signed Bologna and Netherlands striker Joshua Zirkzee in a deal worth £36.54m.

The 23-year-old has signed a five-year contract at Old Trafford, with the option of a further 12 months.

Zirkzee's Bologna contract included a 40m euros (£33.6m) release clause, but United opted to agree a slightly increased price in order to pay the fee over a three-year period to help with Profit and Sustainability Rules.

Zirkzee becomes the first signing the men's side have made since Sir Jim Ratcliffe became co-owner by purchasing a 27.7% stake in the club last December.

He scored 12 goals in 37 appearances last season as Serie A side Bologna claimed a surprise spot in this season's Champions League.

Zirkzee joined Bayern Munich from Feyenoord in 2017, before moving to Bologna for about £7.15m five years later after loan spells with Parma and Anderlecht.

He was named in Ronald Koeman's Euro 2024 squad but made just two substitute appearances for the Netherlands, who lost to England in the semi-finals.

Zirkzee, the 2023/24 Serie A Under-23 Player of the Year, said it was "a privilege to join such an iconic club" and he is "ready for this next challenge, to go to another level in my career

and win more trophies".

Dan Ashworth, United's new sporting director, said adding to the club's group of forward players was "a key aim for this summer".

He called Zirkzee "an outstanding talent who was ready to make an impact for Manchester United", adding the frontman's "ability and desire to grow into a world-class player means that he will be a great addition to the squad that we are building for the exciting season ahead and beyond".

United boss Erik ten Hag has seen his attacking options depleted by the departure of Anthony Martial in June following the expiry of his contract.

Rasmus Hojlund, a £72m signing from Atalanta in 2023, scored 16 goals in 43 appearances





In brief

‘IOJK needs leadership’

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Conference (NC) leader Omar Abdullah on Sunday said that IOJK deserves better than a powerless, rubber stamp unelected chief minister. In a statement issued in Srinagar, he said that Modi wants to impose Hindutva rule in the occupied territory by enhancing powers of the Lt Governor, Kashmir Media Service reported. The move of the Modi-led Indian government to give more powers to Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor is aimed at further dis-empowering Kashmiris. He further said giving more powers to unelected LG is a clear attempt to undermine the future of democratically elected IOJK government. It said empowering unelected LG is another move of the Modi regime to systematically dis-empower Kashmiris post August 2019 when it repealed Kashmir’s special status and imposed military siege in the territory.

Anti-dengue action gear up

RAWALPINDI (APP): District Health Authority Rawalpindi gears up anti-dengue measures in the district during monsoon season which favours dengue larva. According to the details, a review meeting of UC in-charges of Rawal Town was held under the chairmanship of District Health Officer (DHO) Dr. Ehsan Ghani. The meeting discussed the implementation of anti-dengue measures. Addressing the meeting, DHO Dr. Ehsan Ghani stressed to ensure implementation of anti-dengue SOPs. Anti-dengue activities will be continued with more effective measures in view of monsoon rains. No one will be allowed to violate the Anti-Dengue SOPs, he said. On the other hand, training of health workers was also conducted by the District Health Authority regarding the prevention and control of dengue. Health workers were given lectures by entomologists regarding anti-dengue activities during the training session. CEO District Health Authority Rawalpindi Dr. Muhammad Asif Khan, DHO Dr. Ehsan Ghani and DDHO Dr. Javed Iqbal Soomro reviewed the training and expressed their hope that the deliberations during the training would further enhance capacity building of the workers to address targeted issues towards anti dengue campaign.

RWMC clears waste

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) completed its cleanliness operation by removing all waste materials on the routes of the 7th Muharram procession besides finalizing the arrangements for the Ashura procession. According to a RWMC spokesman, the cleanliness operation was carried out from Transformer Chowk Sadiqabad to Imambargah Qadeemi. The cleanliness of procession routes from Transformer Chowk including Kuri Road, Chah Sultan, Glass Factory Road, Zafar ul Haq Road, Iqbal Road, Committee Chowk, College Road, Raja Bazaar, Purana Qila, Pul Shah Nazar Deewan, Imambara chowk and adjacent areas had been completed, he added. He further said the RWMC had finalized all the arrangements under a special cleanliness programme prepared for Muharram and Ashura Day while the holidays of all the staff of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company had been cancelled.

Wani for setup scout units in all educational centers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Secretary of Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani on Sunday called for establishing scout units in all private and government educational institutions to make children good citizens.

“There is no better forum for training the new generation than scouting around the world”, Mohyuddin added.

Muhyiddin Ahmad Wani while addressing the opening ceremony of the one-day commissioner forum organized by Islamabad Boys Scout Association (IBSA) said that children should be made good citizens by establishing scout units in all private and public educational institutions.

He said that ending of exams up to fifth grade in the federal capital was to bring out the children from

the fear of exams and “Ratta” system and teach them the life skills that will make them useful and useful in the society.

He was of the view that after adopting this, the students can become useful and useful citizens of the society. He also gave instructions to join all the senior scouts in the federal capital who are now responsible for different sectors.

IBSA Provincial Commissioner Tariq Aleem Gul while presented his welcome speech and presented the four-year report in which scouts mentioned camping, hiking, emergency response, tree plantation, first aid and self-defense training, hospital service, traffic control and other activities.

Tariq Aleem Gul emphasized that now all these activities will be done by forming scout units in every educational institution.

The chief guest Muhyiddin Ahmad Wani inaugurated the plantation drive at the IBSA headquarters and also visited the campus planted by around 200 Boy and Girl Scouts.

Former National Secretary and Senior Scout Qazi Zahoarul Hasan presented the painting made by his hand to the Chief Guest.

Senior Assistant Provincial Commissioner Najamuddin Qureshi, Provincial Secretary Muhammad Younis Bajwa, Divisional Commissioner and Central President Private Schools Network Dr. Muhammad Afzal Babar, Director Federal College of Education Dr. Samia were present in the conference. Rehman Dogar, Co-ordinating Commissioner Forum Zahid Mehboob, Abdul Sattarigil, all district commissioners and other scouts leaders also participated.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis & Religious Affairs Chaudhry Salik Hussain presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of Iraq Hamid Abbas Lafta.

CDA setup climate change fund

ISLAMABAD (INP): On the directive of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has established an Environmental Change Fund for the first time in history to protect Islamabad from the impacts of climate change.

The Minister praised CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa and the relevant team for their efforts in establishing the Environmental Fund.

Mohsin Naqvi commended the CDA for leading the way by creating the fund, emphasising that the CDA team deserves congratulations.

According to CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa, a carbon credit programme will also be launched in the city. He added that under the carbon credit programme, areas ranging from 2,000 to 10,000 kanals have been designated for tree plantations.

He said the designated areas, located in new sectors, avenues, and other open spaces, will see the planting of 4 to 5 million trees.

He said approval has also been given for the Margalla Hills Fund, which will allocate 1.5% of the revenue from recreational sites in the Margalla Hills.

He said the funds raised will ensure the protection and beautification of the Margalla Hills.

Certificate issuance to be digitalised

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) moved to digitalise the disability certificate issuance mechanism for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). This initiative aimed to streamline the process, reduce delays, and enhance accessibility.

A high-level meeting was held to discuss this initiative, attended by representatives from the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, PIMS, Poly-clinic, NIRM, Chairman Medical Assessment Board Dr. Faridullah Zimri, and ED SPRC.

Key decisions made during the meeting included developing an online application and tracking system to facilitate easier access and progress monitoring for applicants. Digital certificates will be issued to replace traditional physical copies, enhancing efficiency and security.

NADRA's database will be integrated for seamless verification, ensuring the authenticity of the information provided, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

Collaboration among stakeholders from the healthcare, social welfare, and IT sectors was emphasized to ensure the successful implementation of the digital system. This joint effort aims to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for PWDs in Pakistan.

Federal Secretary for Human Rights, Allah Dino Khawaja stated, “This initiative will facilitate PWDs, ensuring their rights and dignity are respected. This digitization effort promises to bring convenience, efficiency, and empowerment to PWDs, aligning with the Ministry's commitment to inclusive development.”

The Ministry of Human Rights remains dedicated to advancing policies and initiatives that promote the well-being and rights of all citizens, particularly Persons with Disabilities.

6 wildlife protectors get national awards

ISLAMABAD (INP): A joint committee of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MOCC&EC), the Snow Leopard Foundation Pakistan (SLF), and provincial wildlife departments here on Saturday announced the six winners of the Pakistan Wildlife Protection Awards 2024.

The announcement recognizes outstanding contributions to wildlife conservation across Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The initiative is supported by the British government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund (IWTTCF), a news release said.

Sarmad Shafa, Range Forest Officer of the Gilgit-Baltistan Forest, Wildlife & Environment Department won the Snow Leopard Award in the national category. Faizan

Dukhi, Range Forest Officer, and Kamaluddin, Wildlife Inspector, of the Gilgit-Baltistan Forest, Wildlife & Environment Department win the Ibeex Award and the Blue Sheep Award for their conservation and protection efforts in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Two seasoned officers of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department, the Wildlife Ranger Syed Mussadiq Ali Shah, and the Deputy Ranger Wildlife Zahid Ahmad were declared winners of the Markhor Award and the Wolf Award respectively.

The Musk Deer Award is earned by Jan Muhammad Nasir, Game Watcher, Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries Department AJK.

The Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Romina Khursheed Alam, praised the winners for their invaluable

contributions.

“These awards are a testament to the dedication and hard work of individuals and organizations who are at the forefront of wildlife conservation in Pakistan.

Their efforts are crucial in maintaining biodiversity and ensuring that future generations can enjoy the natural heritage of our country.”

The Wildlife Ambassador, Senator Sardar Jamal Khan Leghari, appreciated the initiative and said: The importance of wildlife protection extends beyond preserving individual species. It plays a critical role in maintaining healthy ecosystems, which in turn support local communities. Wildlife contributes to ecosystem services such as pollination, pest control, and soil fertility, all of which are vital for agriculture and food security.

IHC serves notices to CDA, PIC on plot case

ISLAMABAD (APP): A division bench of Islamabad High Court (IHC) has served notices to Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Pakistan Information Commission (PIC) in a case seeking issuance of a plot's no demand certificate (NDC).

A two-judge bench comprising Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the intra court appeal filed by a journalist Ilyas Bhatti.

The court in its order said that it appears that a civil suit has been filed by affectees from whom the land of the said plot was acquired by the CDA for payment of compensation. In the said civil suit, an injunctive order has been issued.

The writ petition filed by the appellant was dismissed on the sole ground that a civil suit regarding the same plot is already pending adjudication.

The court said that the

petitioner is a senior citizen and it is imperative that the said civil suit ought to be decided at the earliest. The petitioner submits that when he purchased the plot, he had no knowledge of any litigation pending before any court in respect of the plot.

The petitioner has also named CDA's Additional Director Estate Affectees sector G-7 as respondent in the case. The further hearing of the case was then adjourned till October 22.

RDA lodges FIR against illegal housing scheme

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Director General, Kinza Murtaza, has lodged FIR against illegal housing scheme, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) Employees Cooperative Housing Society.

According to RDA spokesman, the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate RDA lodged FIR against the team members of illegal housing scheme, PAEC, Employees Cooperative Housing Society located in Mouza Ibn-e-Chak, Rawat at GT Road.

FIR was registered against Rafaqat Ali, Muhammad Mukhtar Ahmad, Urooj Javed Butt, Khuram Shahzad, Munawar Khan, Sheikh Khawar Naeem, Muhammad Aamir, Abdul Nasir Jaral and Muhammad

Najam Khan, the RDA spokesperson informed.

The MP&TE Directorate RDA was taking legal action against the illegal advertisements and marketing of illegal housing schemes, he said adding, before lodging FIRs, the authority issues notices to the illegal housing schemes.

He said, RDA had warned that without getting NOC for launching the housing schemes, apartment projects, commercial buildings, etc. within the controlled area of RDA, all sorts of advertisements, marketing and development work of such projects is illegal.

RDA had also advised the citizens not to invest in illegal housing schemes, the spokesman said adding, illegal housing societies were also instructed to immediately stop the marketing of their unapproved

and illegal housing schemes and contact RDA for getting NOC and approval of the schemes as per law, otherwise, strict legal action would be taken against the rules violators.

He said, RDA had sent letters with request/information to the Governor State Bank of Pakistan, NAB Rawalpindi, FIA Cyber Crime Islamabad, Overseas Pakistanis Foundation Islamabad, SNGPL Islamabad, the District Collector Rawalpindi, District Council Rawalpindi, PEMRA Islamabad and Commissioner Islamabad about illegal advertisements of private housing schemes on social media.

The DG had directed the MP&TE Directorate to take strict action against illegal and unauthorized housing schemes without any discrimination, he added.

River Kabul still runs in low flood: FFC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Flood Commission (FFC) has said that river Kabul continues to flow in low flood at Warsak-Nowsheera reach while all other major rivers Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi and Sutlej run normal.

According to daily FFC report on Sunday, the current combined live storage of the country's major reservoirs including Tarbela, Mangla and Chashma stood at 8.374 million feet of water (MAF) which is 62.86 per cent of the total 13.321 MAF.

According to Flood Forecasting Division (FFD) Lahore, yesterday's trough Westerly Wave over Kashmir and adjoining areas has moved away Eastwards and a fresh trough of Westerly Wave lies over northern parts of Afghanistan. Weak moisture from Arabian Sea is penetrating and converging directionally over Southern Punjab and adjoining areas upto 3000 feet, while moisture from Bay of Bengal is still cut off however it is likely to revive from tomorrow.

Seasonal Low is located

over Eastern Balochistan and adjoining areas whereas weak monsoon trough axis lies South of the foothill of Himalayas range.

FFD has forecasted isolated thunderstorm/rain of moderate intensity over Islamabad, Punjab (Lahore), Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Sargodha and Bahawalpur Divisions), KP (Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and D I Khan Divisions) and Balochistan (Zhob, Kalat, Nasirabad and Sibbi Division) including upper catchment of all major rivers during the next 24 hours.

Implementation of labour laws demanded

ISLAMABAD (INP): The brick kiln workers voicing serious concerns over low wages against the minimum wages rules have demanded of the implementation of the existing laws.

The brick kiln workers were of the opinion that they were paid less amount against the declared minimum wage which has made it difficult for them to meet both ends of their lives.

They also expressed serious concerns over the challenges faced by them including lack of basic facilities, long working hours, leaves in emergency, medical facility and hazardous working conditions.

During visit to different brick kiln, they said that

bonded labor, harassment, child labor, exploitation and not paying minimum wages to employees were common issues.

Nasreen Bibi worker at brick kiln said: “I don't even remember the exact year, when I came here to work, my kids grew up here to work and now they are part of the same system”.

She said that there are number of women here who were facing various challenges but continue their work to feed their families.

Afshen Safdar a social activist said that brick kiln industry is actually run by businessmen and owners don't register their kilns with labor department so

that they don't have to provide social security and old-age benefits to the workers.

She said that their living condition is alarming, with lack of basic amenities throwing them in a vicious cycle of poverty.

Afshen Safdar urged proper implementation of existing laws towards the most neglected sector, while its workers are largely deprived of their legal rights and entitlements and forced to work in unhealthy and unsafe environments and demanded new laws for their protection and safety. She said that there should be a regulatory body to resolve the issues of these workers.

ITP; stretched thin amid growing challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Islamabad's population has surged by 193.56% since 2006, the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) is grappling with the pressure of an escalating number of vehicles and increasing daily traffic.

Despite the city's rapid growth, the ITP continues to operate with the same resources allocated nearly two decades ago, when it was first established.

Established in 2006 with ample resources, the ITP has played a crucial role in maintaining traffic flow, enforcing laws, and educating the public about road safety.

However, the exponential increase in registered vehicles by 775.68% and daily traffic volume by 107.49% has highlighted the urgent need for additional resources and support.

The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP)'s responsibilities are diverse and demanding, managing extraordinary movements daily while ensuring normal traffic flow.

It is providing escorts for dignitaries, including foreign and provincial del-

egations.

Similarly, overseeing permanent parking in the Red Zone and various public spaces was its responsibilities.

Placing diversions during rallies, sit-ins, and national events, devising alternative routes, easing traffic congestion during rush hours with a dedicated unit also comes in its jurisdiction.

It was mandated from conducting educational programs in institutions and public spaces via the ITP Education Wing and disseminating traffic rule information and updates through ITP FM 92.4 and public relations.

The ITP offers mandatory classes for repeat or serious traffic violators.

It conducts routine and special enforcement campaigns, including the “ITP Highway Patrol” and “ITP Night Patrol.”

It also provides licensing facilities at various points, including mobile services for institutions and commercial areas.

Offering help through “ITP Mechanic on Wheels” for vehicle breakdowns, besides assisting

Safe City in electronic challan issuance and enforcement.

Despite their commendable efforts, the ITP's current workforce of 685 officers and 207 vehicles/motorcycles, sanctioned in 2006, is proving insufficient for today's demands.

The pending proposal for 2,616 new posts and 499 additional vehicles/motorcycles, initiated in 2021, underscores the pressing need for resource expansion.

Furthermore, advancements in traffic engineering and technological innovations could significantly enhance traffic management and safety in the Capital.

As Islamabad continues to grow, bolstering the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) with adequate resources is imperative to maintain order and ensure the safety of road users.

The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP)'s dedication and professionalism have set a high standard, but without the necessary support, sustaining this level of service may become increasingly challenging.

Thunderstorms and rain expected across country

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has issued a weather forecast predicting thunderstorms, gusty winds, and rain across most parts of the country, including Islamabad, over the next 24 hours.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) expects heavy rain accompanied by strong winds and thunderstorms in Islamabad, Murree, Galiyat, Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan. Similar weather conditions are anticipated in Dir, Swat, Chitral, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Batagram, Abbottabad, Mans-ehra, Khyber, Mardan, Peshawar, and Waziristan.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) also forecasts heavy rain in parts of northeastern and

southern Punjab, and northeastern Balochistan. Meanwhile, the southern regions are expected to experience warm and humid weather.

The weather forecasters predict warm and humid conditions in most districts of Sindh, with partly cloudy skies and light rain in coastal areas.

Thunderstorms and rain are expected in Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Sargodha, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Lahore, Sialkot, Sahiwal, Pakpattan, Bahawalpur, and Bahawalnagar.

Over the past 24 hours, various parts of Punjab, northeastern Balochistan, and upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa experienced thunderstorms, gusty winds, and rain. Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan saw

rain in some areas, while the rest of the country experienced warm and humid weather.

The highest rainfall recorded in the past 24 hours was 50mm in Bahawalpur, followed by 40mm in Kot Adu, 29mm in DG Khan, 20mm in Layyah, and 7mm in Multan.

Balochistan recorded 36mm of rain in Barkhan, 10mm in Sibi, and 8mm in Zhob. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded 4mm of rain in Dir, 3mm in Malam Jabba, 1mm in Saidu Sharif, 2mm in Bagrot, and 1mm in Astor and Bunji.

The highest temperatures recorded on Saturday were 43°C in Turbat, Dalbandin, and Nokundi, and 41°C in Shaheed Benazirabad.

US confirmed 3 held by IEA

KABUL (Ariana News): US confirmed that Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) is currently holding three US citizens, namely George Glezmman, Mahmood Habibi and Ryan Corbet in their custody. The official revealed the names answering a query by Washington Examiner. Earlier, Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, confirmed that two Americans are imprisoned in Afghanistan and that they have discussed prisoner exchange with US officials.

Rains, flash floods predicted

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation (MoTCA) has predicted heavy rains, windstorms and flash flooding in 22 provinces. MoTCA wrote on X handle heavy rains could possibly unleash flash floods in Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz, Balkh, Sar-i-Pul, Bamyan, Samangan, Baghlan, Panjsher, Parwan, Kapisa, Nuristan, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Kabul, Logar, Paktia, Khost, Paktika, Ghazni and Wardak province.

Daesh detained in Kabul raid: Police

KABUL (Pajhwok): Security forces have arrested a group of Daesh militants during a raid in the 5th police district of Kabul, an official said on Sunday. The detainees wanted to target Muharram gatherings in the capital, police spokesman Khalid Zadran wrote on his X page. "The General Directorate of Intelligence forces conducted an operation targeting a hideout of Daesh insurgents in limits of the 5th police district," he said. During the raid a number of militants were detained and some explosives, weapons and ammunition seized, the spokesman added. Zadran quoted Al-Mirsad media outlet as saying the Daesh members planned to attack Shiite rallies during Muharram. The raid was conducted on Wednesday. He added: "The man in charge of the hideout is an Afghan who lives in a neighbouring country. He was recruited by the Khorasan branch of Daesh, whose headquarters is in Balochistan. He married a Pakistani woman and sent to Afghanistan after training." Without providing details, the report said a Daesh fighter, who had attacked a car belonging to a Shia group in the Kota-i-Sangi area of Kabul a few months ago, was among the detainees. The report said: "A list of some religious scholars, government figures and politicians in Pakistan has been obtained from this network, who Daesh wanted to target and some of them have already been assassinated. Also, a list of some of their targets in Afghanistan and another neighbouring country has been recovered."

IEA sets up anti-drugs commission



KABUL (Ariana News): The Office of the Political Deputy of the Prime Minister announced that a commission has been set up on the fight against intoxicants and narcotics. Maulawi Abdul Kabir, the political deputy of the Prime Minister, said in a meeting that the purpose of creating a high commission is to fight against intoxicants and narcotics across the country, to find alternative crops for farmers and to treat drug addicts. In the meeting, Abdulhaq Akhund, deputy interior minister for counter-narcotics, emphasized that poppy fields have been entirely destroyed and a large number of drug dealers have been arrested. He added that the Islamic Emirate has acted successfully against drugs and the international community also acknowledges this success. According to a United Nations report, opium poppy cultivation declined by 95% in Afghanistan last year. The fight against drugs and providing alternative livelihoods for farmers was one of the key topics for discussion at the third UN-sponsored international meeting on Afghanistan in Doha.

Minister, envoy discuss TAPI project progress



KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Mullah Hedayatullah Badri, met with the Turkmen Ambassador to Afghanistan, Khawaja Awadov, to discuss the progress and future plans for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI) project. According to a statement from the Ministry, the meeting focused on strengthening bilateral economic and trade cooperation. They discussed the swift progress of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI) project, emphasizing the importance of its completion. Both sides also addressed the economic and transit significance of the Wakhan Corridor, investment interests of Chinese companies in Afghanistan, and the enhancement of trade volume. Ambassador Awadov congratulated Minister Mullah Badri on his new role and wished him success. He provided updates on recent developments in the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline project, particularly in the technical and legal areas, and discussed practical steps for the project's near-term implementation. Mullah Hedayatullah Badri expressed satisfaction with the project's current pace and reiterated the ministry's eagerness to see the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI) project completed swiftly. Both parties stressed the importance of accelerating the work to ensure timely completion.

Sunflower planted on 500 hectares

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): The Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Department of northern Balkh province says about 500 hectares of land has been cultivated with sunflowers in the province this year –doubled compared to last year. Mohammad Hussain Azimi, an official of the department, told Pajhwok Afghan News sunflowers were planted on 250 hectares of land last year in Dawlat Abad, Sholgara, Chamtal, Chahar Bolak, Balkh, Nahar Shahi and Dehdadi districts of the province. He said the interest of farmers in growing this plant had increase this year. He added sunflowers were planted on 500 hectares of land this year, showing a two-fold increase. He linked the increase in sunflower cultivation with the ban on narcotics by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) across the country. On the other hand, farmers said they were happy with the harvest, but concerned about lack of market. Taqullah, a farmer in Balkh district, said he was happy for the harvest, but grumbled about the lack of buyers. He asked the government and businesspeople to find foreign market for their produce. Salam Bai, another farmer, also asked relevant authorities to support farmers. Meanwhile, owners of sunflower oil producing firms assured the farmers they would purchase their produce at a reasonable price. At the same time, a number of doctors also recommended consuming sunflower oil foe being beneficial in preventing some diseases. Dr. Bakhtar Rezaei said sunflower oil could prevent accumulation of cholesterol in the blood in addition to keeping the skin transparent. Earlier, sunflower seeds were imported from Saudi Arabia, Iran, China and Sudan, but this year, it is expected that domestic product will meet the country's need.

Salarzai passes away

KABUL (Pajhwok): Khan Wali Salarzai, Pajhwok's ex-reporter in eastern Kunar province, has passed away, with multiple media outlets expressed their grief over his demise. After battling his illness for a while, Salarzai passed away last night, his nephew Faridullah Salarzai told Pajhwok on Sunday. The journalist's funeral held on Sunday in the Chahar Dara district of northern Kunduz province, according to Faridullah Salarzai. Apart from working for Pajhwok, Salazai also served as director of the National Radio Television in Kunar province. Media support outlets such as Afghanistan's Journalists' Union (AFJC), Afghanistan Independent Journalists' Union (AIJU), Afghan Journalists' Safety Committee (AJSC), Pamir Media Group of eastern Badakhshan province and a number of media people expressed grief over the death of Salarzai.

Hanafi reaffirms support for private sector growth



KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, reaffirmed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's commitment to supporting the private sector and providing necessary facilities. During a meeting with Ibrahim Mohib, President of the Afghanistan International Bank (AIB), Deputy PM Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi was briefed on the bank's services and future plans. Mohib assured that AIB continues to offer banking services and plans to expand into healthcare, construction materials, and hospitality. He also highlighted the facilities provided by the Islamic Emirate for trade and investment, expressing Afghanistan International Bank (AIB)'s readiness to support domestic and foreign traders and companies. Additionally, the Deputy Prime Minister Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi emphasized the crucial role of private banks in the country's development and reiterated the Islamic Emirate's support and facilitation for the private sector.

Individual wage drops to 80 afs in Ghazni's Nawa district

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): Some residents in the Nawa district of Ghazni province have complained against the lack of work opportunities and said if there was some work one person gets 80 afs as daily wage. They said no development work took place in Nawa district during the past government due to which they faced acute economic problems. Abdul Habib, the resident of Nawa district, told Pajhwok Afghan News they faced a number of economic problems and could not purchase a bread for themselves. He said: "It is common trend here that a labour is paid 80 afs from dawn to dusk meaning that hourly wage is up to seven afs." Mohammad, another resident, said he led a 15 member family but due to unemployment he was faced with economic issues. "We are searching of bread to earn, there is no work if something is found for doing people pay up to 80 afs daily and he work is related to construction which is not easy," he said. "I work in Nawa district and load a tractor from sand against 80 afs once in a day." Mohammad Abid, a tribal elder told Pajhwok Afghan News the unemployment level is high in the district. Work on the construction of district building started few months earlier but still worker come and demand work. "We have thousands of unemployed youths and daily wage is also low, if the government and NGO want they could launch work on scores of public welfare projects — roads, culverts, ditches, retaining walls, Karez and others — at a low cost," he said. Economic Affairs Expert Hafzullah Hakimi said that several Ghazni youth were ready for work but there were limited work opportunities in the province. He said if the government open factories in the province it would help restrict growing unemployment. Government officials also acknowledged growing unemployment in Ghazni province. Governor Hafizullah Amin Jan Umari said people were busy working in some projects in Nawa and some other districts but it was not enough. He asked the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) and international organisations to work for the eradication of unemployment in Afghanistan. It is pertinent to mention that besides Ghazni province people in some other provinces also complained against unemployment.

Iran says 95 per cent of foreign prisoners Afghans

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghan nationals constitute 95 percent of foreigners imprisoned in Iran, Kazem Gharib Abadi, Vice-President of the Judiciary of Iran for International Affairs, has said. The officials said that the necessary follow-ups for the transfer of prisoners based on the bilateral agreement are being carried out and there is hope that it will be completed by the end of this year, according to ISNA news agency. He did not provide details about the exact number of Afghan prisoners or the total number of foreign prisoners in Iran. Last year, Alireza Mahmoudi, Iranian Foreign Ministry's Director General of Consular Affairs, said that about 6,000 Afghan citizens were imprisoned in Iran. In March last year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan said that the process of repatriating prisoners from Iran had started.



Nearly 10,000 Afghan migrants return home in past 24 hours

KABUL (BNA): In the past 24 hours, a total of 9,730 Afghan migrants have returned to the country through various border points, including Pul-e-Abrisham in Nimroz province, Islam Qala in Herat province, Spin Boldak in Kandahar province, and Torkham in Nangarhar, both voluntarily and involuntarily. According to a statement from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, based on reports from the border authorities of the mentioned provinces, 532 individuals returned through Torkham, 821 through Spin Boldak, 4,797 through Islam Qala in Herat province, and 3,580 through Pul-e-Abrisham in Nimroz province. The statement added that upon their return, these individuals were registered and referred to the offices of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the World Food Programme (WFP) for assistance.

6 people killed in Afghanistan violent incidents last week

KABUL: (Pajhwok): The United Nations last week expressed concern about the human rights situation and the presence of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, but the Islamic Emirate rejected the claims while India and Russia praised the interim government's steps taken against 'terrorism'. Casualties Last week, six people were killed and one person was injured in separate incidents of violence across Afghanistan. Unknown assailants shot dead three members of a family in Kandahar, a 19-year-old girl was beheaded in Faryab, and a young man was killed during an armed clash between two families in Nangarhar province. A blast caused by an old mortar shell in southern Ghazni province killed one child and injured another. Nearly a dozen people had been killed and a dozen more injured in various incidents of violence in the country in the previous week. Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of people, including civilians, security forces and insurgents, would get killed and injured every week. Inclusive government in Afghanistan Last week, China and Tajikistan in a joint statement said "a free, united, inclusive, peaceful and terrorism- and drug-free Afghanistan is the interest of Afghans and the region." The statement was issued during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Tajikistan. But before that, Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid had said a coalition government was Afghanistan's internal matter. Also last week UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his speech at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, said: "We need peace in Afghanistan and an inclusive government that respects human rights and united with the world community." UNAMA's concern about human rights and IEA response Last week, the UN political mission in Afghanistan or UNAM criticized the Ministry of Vice and Virtue for some of its actions in its latest report, which called some restrictions, especially on women, as 'worrisome'. In its report, UNAMA claimed the ministry implemented instructions and orders in ways that led to violation of human rights. The report says: "From August 15, 2021, to March 31, 2024, UNAMA documented at least 1,033 cases, 205 against women and 828 against men, in which Ministry of Vice and Virtue officials used force while implementing orders, leaving negative impacts on people's freedom, physical and mental health". However, Zabihullah rejected UNAMA's criticism of Ministry of Vice and Virtue's actions as unfounded and said its actions were based on known Islamic rules. Mujahid remarked: "Unfortunately, the authors of the UNAMA report see Afghanistan from a Western angle, which is wrong. Afghanistan should be evaluated like a Muslim society." He added the absolute majority of Afghanistan's population was Muslims who had rendered great sacrifices for the establishment of the Sharia system. He said all Shariah rights of the citizens were guaranteed under the Islamic Emirate government in Afghanistan. The Ministry of Vice and Virtue also rejected the UNAMA report as 'far from the truth' and asked the UN mission to avoid statements that hurt the feelings of Muslims. Alleged Al Qaeda presence in Afghanistan and IEA reaction Last week, the UN Security Council sanctions committee in a report alleged 'terrorist groups' continued to see Afghanistan as a safe haven and the caretaker government had a soft stance against them living in some provinces. The report also claimed that Al Qaeda had widened its network of training camps in Afghanistan. However, Mujahid strongly rejected the claims and said no such groups existed in Afghanistan. The UN report praised the caretaker government's efforts against Daesh group, but expressed concern over its presence in Afghanistan. Mujahid said: "The fitna called Daesh has been suppressed. Even if they commit crimes in a small area, they will be chased and destroyed. There is no such thing, it is unfortunate that the UN Security Council makes such reports". He said the IEA had repeatedly it would allow no one to use Afghanistan's soil against others. Problems of Afghan refugees in Pakistan Last week, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said that Pakistani authorities had assured him of stopping the forced deportation of Afghan refugees

statements that hurt the feelings of Muslims. He said the IEA had repeatedly it would allow no one to use Afghanistan's soil against others. Problems of Afghan refugees in Pakistan Last week, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said that Pakistani authorities had assured him of stopping the forced deportation of Afghan refugees

Grandi said: "We know the forced deportation of Afghan refugees is largely political." He said a tripartite meeting between Afghanistan, Pakistan and UNHCR would discuss extension in the refugee cards in Pakistan and protection of their rights and depoliticizing the refugee crisis. Deputy prime minister for political affairs Maulvi Abdul Kabir urged neighboring countries to refrain from misbehaving with Afghan refugees and provide them with necessary facilities. Pakistan embarked on expelling illegal Afghan refugees in October last year and has forcibly expelled more than half a million Afghan refugees so far.

Gandapur meets Chinese delegation to discusses investment in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation of Chinese private sector

Investment Company called on Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur here at Chief Minister's House Peshawar the other day, and discussed with him the matters related to investment in the different sectors of the province.

The delegates on this occasion, expressed their willingness to invest in the industrial and mineral sectors of the province, saying that the company

will submit it's viable proposals within a week in this regard.

The Chief Minister has directed the concerned authorities to attentively examine the proposals to be submitted by the company, and come up with an action plan for further progress.

While highlighting the extensive investment opportunities in the different potential sectors of the province, the Chief Minister offered them

investment in agriculture, livestock, solar energy and other important sectors, adding that we will

not only encourage foreign investment but also provide all possible facilities to the investors.

He said that the provincial government plans to utilize China's advanced technology for the sustainable development of agriculture sector, and looks forward to cooperation in this regard.

The Chief Minister maintained that his government is also working on the solarization projects, under which government offices, educational institutions and deserving households would be provided with solar energy.

This province has abundant mineral deposits used in manufacturing the solar panels and batteries, and that's why his government wants to establish solar panels manufacturing industry in the province, he said and added that the provincial government will encourage the Chinese investment in this sector as well.

Special Assistant to Chief Minister for Industries Abdul Karim and high ups of Board of Investment & Trade were also present on the occasion.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur meeting a delegation of Chinese private sector Investment Company at Chief Minister's House Peshawar.

Treason and espionage cases are rising in Russia

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — When Maksim Kolker's phone rang at 6 a.m., and the voice on the other end said his father had been arrested, he thought it was a scam to extort money. A day earlier, he had taken his father, prominent Russian physicist Dmitry Kolker, to the hospital in his native Novosibirsk, when his advanced pancreatic cancer had suddenly worsened.

The phone kept ringing and Kolker kept hanging up until finally his father called to confirm the grim news. The elder Kolker had been charged with treason, the family later learned, a crime that is probed and prosecuted in absolute secrecy in Russia and punished with long prison terms.

Treason cases have been rare in Russia in the last 30 years, with a handful annually. But since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, they have skyrocketed, along with espionage prosecutions, ensnaring citizens and foreigners alike, regardless of their politics.

That has brought comparisons to the show trials under Soviet dictator Josef Stalin in the 1930s.

The more recent victims range from Kremlin critics and independent journalists to veteran scientists working with countries that Moscow considers friendly.

These cases stand out from the crackdown on dissent that has reached unprecedented levels under President Vladimir Putin. They are investigated almost exclusively by the powerful Federal Security Service, or FSB, with specific charges and evidence not always revealed.

The accused are often held in strict isolation in Moscow's notorious Lefortovo Prison, tried behind closed doors, and almost always convicted, with long prison sentences.

In 2022, Putin urged the security services to "harshly suppress the actions of foreign intelligence services, promptly identify traitors, spies

and saboteurs."

The First Department, a rights group that specializes in such prosecutions and takes its name from a division of the security service, counted over 100 known treason cases in 2023, lawyer Evgeny Smirnov told The Associated Press. He added there probably were another 100 that nobody knows about.

The longer the war goes on, "the more traitors" the authorities want to round up, Smirnov said.

Treason cases began growing after 2014, when Russia illegally annexed Crimea from Ukraine, threw its weight behind a separatist insurgency in the eastern part of the country and fell out with the West for the first time since the Cold War.

Two years earlier, the legal definition of treason was expanded to include providing vaguely defined "assistance" to foreign countries or organizations, effectively exposing to prosecution anyone in contact with foreigners.

The move followed mass anti-government protests in 2011-12 in Moscow that officials claimed were instigated by the West. Those changes to the law were heavily criticized by rights advocates, including those in the Presidential Human Rights Council.

Faced with that criticism at the time, Putin promised to look into the amended law and agreed "there shouldn't be any broad interpretation of what high treason is."

And yet, that's exactly what began happening.

In 2015, authorities arrested Svetlana Davydova, a mother of seven in the western region of Smolensk, on treason charges in accordance with the new, expanded definition of the offense.

She was charged over contacting the Ukrainian Embassy in Moscow in 2014 to warn officials there that she thought Russia was sending troops into eastern Ukraine, where the separatist insurgency against Kyiv was unfolding.

The case drew national attention and public outrage. Russia at the time denied its troops were involved in eastern Ukraine, and many pointed out that the case against Davydova contradicted that narrative. The charges against her were eventually dropped.

That outcome was a rare exception to the multiplying treason and espionage cases in subsequent years that consistently ended in convictions and prison terms.

Paul Whelan, a United States corporate security executive who traveled to Moscow to attend a wedding, was arrested in 2018 and convicted of espionage two years later, and sentenced to 16 years in prison. He denied the charges.

Ivan Safronov, an adviser to the Roscosmos space agency and a former military affairs journalist, was convicted of treason in 2022 and sentenced to 22 years in prison. His prosecution was widely seen as retaliation for his reporting exposing military incidents and shady arms deals.

"It's a very good cautionary tale case for them that journalists shouldn't write anything about the defense sector," his fiancée and fellow reporter Ksenia Mironova told AP.

The FSB also went after scientists who study aerodynamics, hypersonics and other fields that could be used in weapons development.

Such arrests swelled after 2018, when Putin in his annual state-of-the-nation address touted new and unique hypersonic weapons that Russia was developing, according to Smirnov, the lawyer.

In his view, it was the security services' way of showing the Kremlin that Russian scientific advances, especially those used to develop weapons, are so valuable that "all foreign intelligence services in the world are after it."

He stressed that all the arrested scientists were civilians, and that "they practically never go after military scientists."

KP Govt to challenge new Tosha Khana case

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has announced its decision to file a legal challenge against the latest Tosha Khana case involving former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi.

Mossadeq Abbasi, the Special Assistant on Anti-Corruption, labeled the case as "baseless," drawing parallels to the previ-

ously contested marriage case.

Abbasi stated that the allegations against Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi stem from claims that gifts were not procured through Tosha Khana and that their prices were allegedly undervalued, with records modified accordingly.

It's noteworthy that both Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi had previously

faced convictions in the Tosha Khana case, which were later overturned by a higher court, leading to their acquittal.

Recently, the Additional Sessions Court in Islamabad ordered the acquittal of both figures while suspending the sentences imposed in the Iddat case, further complicating the ongoing legal battles they face.

Navy's SSG commando recovers body of drowned tourist

F.P. Report



ISLAMABAD: The boy, belonging to Sargodha, came to visit his relatives in Samahni Jandala, district Bhimber.

The boy drowned while swimming in the local river.

Rescue 1122 teams called Pakistan Navy SSG Commando Ummar Ali for help who was attending his Walima Ceremony.

Ummar left his Walima and reached the Scene of Incident for leading the rescue ops.

After 2 hours, Ummar succeeded in recovering the dead body of drowned boy.

Local community of Azad Kashmir widely praised Ummar Ali on Social Media for his unprecedented spirit and courage

Kim sacks 'irresponsible' officials

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has sacked or demoted some senior officials for their "irresponsible" handling of his flagship project to build a new town in the country's north, state media KCNA said on Sunday.

Kim announced the decision while visiting Samjiyon, where North Korea has been building what it called a "socialist utopia" and "a model of highly-civilised mountain city" with new apartments, hotels, a ski resort and commercial, cultural and medical facilities.

While praising builders for their achievements so far, Kim said the irresponsibility of senior officials had caused a series of serious deviations including poor construction work and financial losses.

He singled out Ri Sun Chol, minister of state construction control who was appointed in September, as a "good-for-nothing person" who has never even been to the site since December, suspending him and calling for a formal investigation.

Kim also suspended all members of a construction inspection committee for the project, demoted a ruling Worker's Party official responsible for the matter, and vowed to reexamine vice premier and others over their neglect of duty.

Thousands of Israelis take to streets demanding a hostage deal

TEL AVIV (DPA): Thousands of Israelis demonstrated in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem on Saturday, demanding an agreement that would allow around 120 hostages still held by Hamas to come back to Israel.

Participants in the rallies accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of sabotaging the indirect talks with the Islamists to reach an agreement.

"Netanyahu is killing the hostages," read a huge banner carried by demonstrators in Tel Aviv. One of the speakers, a former hostage, said, "I may seem OK on the outside, but the pain weighs on me more than anyone can imagine."

He was one of the lucky ones who had been held captive in a house and not in a tunnel. "So if I suffered brutal conditions and abuse, what about the other 120 hostages?"

Thousands demonstrated in Jerusalem outside Netanyahu's residence and in the seaside resort of Caesarea outside one of Netanyahu's villas, according to reports.

Smaller rallies were held in Haifa, Beersheba and Herzliya.

Several hundred relatives and supporters had marched on foot from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem over the past four days.

The Gaza war was triggered by the unprecedented terrorist massacre of more than 1,200 people in Israel, killed by militants from Hamas and other groups on October 7. Up to 250 were kidnapped to Gaza, and some 120 may be still alive.

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Israel responded with massive airstrikes and a ground offensive. In view of the high number of civilian casualties and the catastrophic situation in the Gaza Strip, Israel has come under international criticism.

Negotiations to release the hostages have stalled for months as Qatar, Egypt and the US act as mediators to try and bring about a ceasefire in Gaza and an exchange of the remaining hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners being held in Israeli jails.

Biden, Democrats scramble after Trump shooting upends campaign

WASHINGTON (Reuters): President Joe Biden's reelection campaign is scrambling for a new strategy after an assassination attempt on US Republican rival Donald Trump in western Pennsylvania, including deciding to call off attacks on the former president for now.

Within hours of Saturday's shooting, Biden's campaign was pulling down television ads and suspending other political communications, including those that had highlighted Trump's May conviction in New York state court on felony charges relating to hush money paid to a porn star to avert a sex scandal before the 2016 US election.

Rather than attacking Trump in the coming days, the White House and the Biden campaign will draw on the president's history of condemning all sorts of political violence including his sharp criticism of the "disorder" created by campus protests over the Israel-Gaza conflict,

according to campaign officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Biden's advisers had hoped to tamp down recent calls from some of his fellow Democrats and others that he step aside and let another candidate represent the party in the November 5 election, sharpening his focus on the dangers he has said Trump presents to US democratic norms and reproductive rights as well as Trump's false statements that he won the 2020 election.

"This changes everything," one campaign official said of the assassination attempt. "We're still assessing. Making the case against Trump, drawing that split screen, will get much harder."

"The president is trying to lower the temperature," the official added.

The Biden campaign officials said they expect that the assassination attempt will lower the pressure from congressional Democrats for Biden, 81, to step aside in the race amid concerns about his fitness for

office.

Some Democrats in the House of Representatives and Senate have publicly called upon Biden to drop out in the aftermath of his shaky performance in a June debate against Trump.

Biden's planned trip on Monday to the Lyndon B. Johnson presidential library in Austin, Texas — where he was expected to speak on the landmark Civil Rights Act that Johnson signed into law in the 1960s and criticise Trump's attacks on immigrants and American diversity — is under review and may be cancelled, the officials said.

Because the shooting happened in the election battleground state of Pennsylvania, which Biden won over Trump in 2020 by a narrow margin, the incident could be especially impactful, according to some political strategists, by increasing Republican turnout by voters sympathetic to Trump.

"This doesn't guarantee that Trump flips Pennsylvania,"

Republican pollster Frank Luntz wrote on social media. "But the long and winding road for Joe Biden just became even longer and windier.

Just as what happened to George Floyd had a lasting impact on tens of millions of Americans, the shooting of Donald Trump will be significantly consequential in a way the shooter never intended."

Floyd is the Black man who was killed by a white police officer in Minneapolis in 2020, a murder that prompted protests in many U.S. cities and abroad.

Other Democratic candidates running this year are also rethinking their plans to focus on the dangers they have said Trump poses if elected.

"The real question is whether in two weeks we can go back and declare Trump a threat to the country.

That was our playbook, and it's fair, but unclear how much of our spurs were taken off," said a Democrat involved in a Senate campaign.

Kremlin blames Biden admin for Trump shooting

MOSCOW (Reuters): The Kremlin on Sunday said it did not believe the current US administration was responsible for Saturday's assassination attempt on US presidential candidate Donald Trump, but that it had created an atmosphere that provoked the attack.

Trump was shot, opens new tab in the ear during a Saturday rally in Pennsylvania, in an attack now being investigated as an assassination attempt that left the Republican

presidential candidate's face streaked with blood.

"We do not believe that the attempt to eliminate and assassinate Trump was organised by the current authorities," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"But the atmosphere around Trump...provoked what America is confronting today.

"After numerous attempts to remove candidate Trump from the political

arena - using first legal tools, the courts, prosecutors, attempts to politically discredit and compromise the candidate - it was obvious to all outside observers that his life was in danger."

US President Joe Biden condemned the attack, saying there was no place for that kind of violence in America.

Peskov said there were no plans for Putin to call Trump in light of the incident.

Sri Lanka budget to seek recovery for crisis-hit economy

COLOMBO (Reuters): On Monday (Today), Sri Lanka unveils a budget attempting to put the South Asian government's finances in order, with reforms to advance a \$2.9 global billion bailout from the island's worst financial crisis since its independence in 1948.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe's first full-year budget to parliament will include measures

aimed at helping Sri Lanka restructure its debt, increase revenues, and trim spending, as it works on the bailout with the International Monetary Fund, analysts say.

"This is a budget that is being presented at a time Sri Lanka is facing an unprecedented crisis," said State Minister for Finance Ranjith Siyambalapitiya.

"More than 70% of families are asking the govern-

ment for support and the economy is estimated to shrink 8.3% this year," he said in a statement.

"This budget will present a political and economic way forward for the country."

The World Bank estimates Sri Lanka's economy will contract by 9.2 per cent this year and 4.2 per cent in 2023.

The nation of 22 million people plunged into crisis

this year as a loss of tourism revenue from the Covid-19 pandemic compounded tax cuts and years of economic mismanagement, leading to a severe dollar drought.

Unable to pay for critical imports, Sri Lanka struggled to buy essentials such as fuel, and the public faced soaring inflation, a rapidly depreciating currency and sharply shrinking growth.