

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

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COAS says

Army well aware of constitutional limits, expect same from others

General Munir says Article 19 clearly defines boundaries within which freedom of speech and opinions exist; Those flouting Constitutional restrictions on freedom of expression "can't point fingers at others".

RISALPUR (APP): The army is well aware of its constitutional limits and expects others to prioritise upholding the Constitution as well, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir said on Thursday.

"Those who blatantly disregard these limitations cannot point fingers at others," he said while addressing the passing out parade of the Pakistan Air Force. "Article 19 of the Constitution clearly defines the boundaries of freedom of expression."

The Army Chief was addressing the passing out parade of the Pakistan Air Force.

He said that the growing arms race was likely to disturb the balance of power in the South Asia region.

The COAS said, "Advanced technologies, including

artificial intelligence, robotics and quantum computing are changing the use of air power as well as expanding its scope. However, without a strong air force, a country is at the mercy of any aggressor."

He said the Pakistan Air Force had always lived up to the expectations of the nation. It patrolled the airspace in all kinds of difficulties with unparalleled bravery and professionalism, a great example of which was demonstrated before all in February 2019.

The Army Chief, while addressing the passing out parade of cadets, said, "You are the center of our hopes, the guardian of the skies and the guarantor of regional unity. You are expected to lead a life adorned with the virtues of

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RISALPUR: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir addressing graduation Ceremony of 149th General Duty (Pilot), 95th Engineering, 105th Air Defence, 25th A&SD, Eighth Log and 131st Combat Support Courses at the PAF Academy Risalpur.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Khazar Farhadov calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Positive results of PM Saudi Arabia visit to accrue within few months: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar on Thursday said highly successful second visit of Prime Minister to Saudi Arabia within a month to participate in World Economic Forum, was historic and major development, which would eventually bring about extensive positive results within next few months.

Addressing a press conference along with Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, he said comprehensive planning by Saudi Arabia for investment in Pakistan was a turning point in the bilateral relations.

Tarar said that multiple meetings were held with the Saudi ministers on the sidelines of the WEF during the Prime Minister's visit. "In two days, 12 high-level meetings were held with ministers and major personalities of Saudi Arabia including ministers for fi-

nance, industries, investment, energy and climate change," he said.

The Saudi ministers expressed their commitment to work with Pakistan with regard to bilateral cooperation and investment on the special directives of Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, he added.

Within a short span of just one month, the Prime Minister had two meetings with the Saudi Crown Prince that had a historic significance for the two brotherly nations.

He said immediately after Eidul Fitr, the Saudi Finance Minister visited Pakistan along with relevant ministers and extensive consultations were held regarding economic cooperation and investment.

On the directives of the Saudi Crown Prince, the Saudi ministers formulated a comprehensive programme for cooperation with Pakistan, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar and Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar held an important press conference.

One killed, 20 injured in landmine blasts in Dukki

Minister for Home condemns landmine explosions; seeks report from high ups

Independent Report

QUETTA: One person was killed and 20 others injured in two landmine explosions in Dukki district of Balochistan on Thursday.

According to details, a coal-laden truck hit a landmine planted by unknown culprits in Takhidar stream of Dukki district.

After people gathered at scene of the explosion, the second landmine blast also took place.

One person was killed and 20 others were injured in the two landmine explosions.

The injured were shifted to hospital for treatment.

The police gathered the evidences from the scene of blasts and started investigations into the incident.

The Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Ziaullah Langove has condemned the landmine explosions took place in Dukki.

In a condemnation statement issued here on Thursday, the Minister for Home sought report of the terrorism incidents from the concerned authorities.

He directed the concerned high ups to arrest those involved in the landmine blasts in Dukki.

He said that it our responsibility to protect life and property of the general public.

He asserted that those targeting innocent people don't deserve any letup. The Minister directed to the concerned to provide best medical treatment to those injured in the explosions.

Asif Zardari resigns as PPPP chairman

KARACHI (INP): President Asif Zardari has resigned from the chairmanship of the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP).

Sources say Asif Zardari has informed the Election Commission of Pakistan about his resignation from the presidency of the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians.

Sources further revealed that after Asif Zardari's resignation from the party presidency, there is consideration being given to appointing Asif Zardari's sister and provincial assembly member Faryal Talpur as the new president of the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians.

ECP reappoints Omar as secretary for two-year term

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday reappointed Omar Hamid Khan as its secretary for the period of two years.

A notification issued here said that Omar Hamid Khan, a retired BS-22 officer of the Secretariat Group, had been reemployed as Secretary for a two-year term in the public interest, in accordance with Rules 8 & 11 of the Election Commission (Officers and Servants) Rules, 1989.

The development comes after the incumbent secretary, Asif Hussain, who was appointed in January of this year, resigned due to health issues.

The notification regarding Hussain's resignation stated that the officer tendered the resignation 'on account of poor health condition.'

Hussain assumed the additional responsibility of secretary (BS-22) following Omar Hamid Khan's resignation in January this year due to health reasons.

The PTI chief said they had filed a petition in the Supreme Court against the alleged rigging. "But the plea has not been fixed for hearing as yet," he la-



QUETTA: A delegation of World Bank led by Tariq Bajwa meeting with Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan regarding social protection

Lowest inflation rate in two years - result of hard work done by PDM-led govt: PM

Shehbaz directs provincial govts to ensure reduction in petroleum prices and enforce official food item prices

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday, declaring the downward trend of inflation as a welcome news for the people, said that the inflation falling towards the lowest level in two years was a sign of improvement in the economy.

"This is the result of the hard work done during the 16 month-long government led by the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and continued by the interim government," he said in a statement issued by the PM Office.

The prime minister pointed out that the inflation rate had come down from the peak of 39% to 20% last month and then to 17% in the current month.

He said bringing down the inflation rate was the top priority of the government. "With the support of Allah Almighty, the people will get more relief in coming days after increase in the economic activities."

He expressed the hope that the people might also get more relief by further

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Civil & military leadership determined to provide basic facilities to people of southern Balochistan, says CM

Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti directs to start work on pending development package of south Balochistan within three weeks by removing hurdles in way of it's execution

Independent Report QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Khan Bugti has stated that implementation on the proposed package would be ensured for bringing the backward areas of the south Balochistan.

The Chief Minister said that the southern areas of the province remained backward due to insurgency, however, the civil and military leadership is determined to provide basic facilities to the people of south Balochistan.

He directed to start

work on the pending development package of south Balochistan within three weeks by removing hurdles in it's execution.

He also directed to maintain high standard of work on the development projects. For the purpose, Chief Minister Inspection Team would visit the development projects to review quality of work.

The Chief Minister issued these directives while chairing review meeting on the southern Balochistan development package here on Thursday.

The concerned high

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QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti presiding over a meeting to review South Balochistan Development Package

We have to improve our education system on emergent basis: Rahila

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Provincial Minister for Education, Ms. Rahila Hameed Khan Durrani has emphasized upon improving the education system in Balochistan.

She insisted that all of us have to take education system towards improvement on an emergent basis.

Ms Rahila Hameed Durrani was speaking to the ceremony of tablets distribution among the students here at the Chief Minister's secretary on Thursday.

The Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, other provincial ministers,

senior high ups were also present on the occasion.

The Minister Education said that the government has already enforced education emergency in the province.

She said that serious steps are being taken for bringing improvement in education sector.

She also said that the attendance of teachers and provision of educational facilities is being ensured in the institutions.

The Minister on the occasion welcomed cooperation of UNICEF and UNHCR for development of education sector in the province.

Three terrorists gunned down in Tank IBO

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Security Forces on Thursday killed three terrorists including two ring leaders during a joint intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted in Tank District.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), during the conduct of operation, after intense fire exchange, the three terrorists were successfully neutralized who were identified as, Terrorist Ringleader Azmat alias Azmati, Terrorist Ringleader Karamat alias Hanzla and Terrorist Rehan.

The killed terrorists remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area including recent abduction of District & Sessions Judge of South Waziristan District.

The Governor appreciated the public friendly initiatives of the present provincial government and said that different projects launched in the health and education sectors in different districts of the province deserve appreciation.

The Governor was speaking to the Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti who called on him here at the Governor House on Thursday.

During the course of meeting, different matters were discussed about political and economic changes taking place in the region, pleasant relations between federation and provinces, ongoing development projects besides the matters of mutual interest.

Mahmood Achakzai sends legal notices to ex-CT info minister, DC, others

Independent Report

QUETTA: The lawyers of Chairman Pashtoonkhaw Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), Mahmood Khan Achakzai has served a legal notice to the Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Extra Settlement Officer Quetta and former caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai.

The legal notice was served by the lawyers of

Indian campaign of attacking, seizing Kashmiris' properties destined to fail: FO spox

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Thursday reiterated that the ongoing Indian campaign of attacking and seizing the properties of the Kashmiris in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) was destined to fail, just like its colonial strategies and harsh statements.

"Pakistan strongly condemns India's continued campaign of attacking and seizing the properties

of Kashmiris in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The reality is that the harsh statements and colonial strategies have been unsuccessful in quelling the determination of Kashmiris for freedom, and these measures are destined to face similar outcomes in the future," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said at her

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CM Bugti meets Abdul Wali Kakar: Governor calls for taking more steps for strengthening relations between federation and provinces

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stated that there are pleasant relations between the federation and provinces. However, there is



a need to take more steps for strengthening the federation and provinces further.

The Governor appreciated the public friendly initiatives of the present provincial government and said that different projects launched in the health and education sectors in different districts of the province deserve appreciation.

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The legal notice was served by the lawyers of

Mehmood Khan Achakzai including Habibullah Nasar and Naimatullah Achakzai. As per the content of legal notice issued by the lawyers, our client, the Chairman of PkMAP and was candidate for the election of President held on March 9, 2024.

"On March 3, 2024, an illegal raid was conducted on the house of our client by the addresses No. 2 along

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Hasan Ali recalled, Salman Agha, Haris Rauf back for Ireland, England T20Is

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has recalled all-rounder Hasan Ali to national duty while pace sensation Haris Rauf and all-rounder Salman Agha have made a comeback in the 18-member squad picked for the two T20I series in Ireland and England between May 10 and 30.

The three-match T20Is against Ireland will be played from 10-14 May, while the five T20Is against England are scheduled between May 22 and 30.

Hasan Ali played his last T20I in 2022 and Haris Rauf was out of action due to shoulder injury during the PSL while Salman Agha was among the non-traveling reserves for the five-match T20I home series

against New Zealand last month. Explosive wicket-keeper batter Azam Khan has also been picked after staying out of the New Zealand T20I series when he developed a hamstring injury.

Mohammad Rizwan and Irfan Khan were rested and rehabilitated after sustaining minor niggles against New Zealand last month.

During a press conference at the Gaddafi stadium here on Thursday, the Men's national selection committee announced the 18-member squad which included Hasan Ali and Salman Agha while wrist-spinner Usama Mir and Zaman Khan could not make the cut and were left out keeping in mind various cricketing aspects.

The Men's national selection committee admitted that a lot of deliberations were involved in the 18-member squad from which the 15-member squad for the ICC Men's T20I World Cup 2024 in West Indies and USA will be picked.

"Crafting this squad was a challenging task due to the outstanding talent available," Wahab Riaz said, adding that "We understand Usama and Zaman will be disappointed and they should be as they must be looking ahead to the tours of Ireland and England."

They are quality cricketers and have long careers

ahead of them. They need to continue to focus on their cricket so that they are available, if required."

The 18-member Pakistan squad (in alphabetical order): Babar Azam (Captain), Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Salman Agha, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, and Usman Khan

Pakistan team is scheduled to depart for Dublin on May 7 following a three-day training camp in Lahore from 4-6 May.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti listening problems of people



RISALPUR: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir giving away Sword of Honour for overall best performance in College of Flying Training to Aviation Cadet Squadron Under Officer Muhammad Junaid Malik during graduation Ceremony of 149th General Duty (Pilot), 95th Engineering, 105th Air Defence, 25th A&SD, Eighth Log and 131st Combat Support Courses at the PAF Academy Risalpur.

PTI calls for...

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tions followed by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

However, the PML-N with the support of the other parties including the PPP formed a coalition government in the Centre and later became the single largest party in the lower house of the parliament following the allocation of the reserved seats.

The Imran Khan-founded party lost the right to the reserved seats as its members contested elections as independent candidates.

Referring to the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to declare the party's intra-party polls as invalid, the PTI chief, in today's presser, said his party was forced to contest the general elections without its iconic 'bat' electoral symbol.

"Our victory was turned into defeat by [manipulating] election results in the Form 47," he claimed.

The PTI chief said the white paper is based on the reports of international organisations, foreign media and newspapers.

He also called for carrying out the electoral reforms to eliminate rigging in the polls once and for all.

Committee holds former PCB director responsible for Ihsanullah's aggravated injury

LAHORE (APP): An independent three-member Medical Committee has held former PCB Director, Medical and Sports Sciences Dr. Sohail Saleem responsible for delay, wrong diagnosis and hurried surgery from an inexperienced surgeon to the injured fast bowler Ihsanullah.

"Ihsanullah's surgery was planned hurriedly without any specialist review and preoperative assessment. The surgeon recommended by Director of Medical and Sports Sciences was inappropriate, lacking the academics and experience in the field," the Medical Committee wrote in its report submitted to the Chairma PCB Mohsin Naqvi here on Thursday.

The PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi had constituted an independent three-member medical panel comprising Prof. Rana Dilwaz Nadeem, Dr. Mumraiz Naqshband and Prof. Javed Akram to review handling of fast bowler Ihsanullah's right elbow injury and recommend next steps. The fast bowler is currently visiting Prof. Adam Watts (Consultant Hand, Elbow & Upper Limb Surgeon) in England for assessment on the intervention by the PCB.

The committee concluded that Ihsanullah's con-

dition of right elbow pain was not addressed, treated and operated appropriately, adding that there was a delay in reaching the clinical diagnoses and investigations. He did not receive a formal rehabilitation process as required by his condition.

The committee also noted non-compliance with the prescribed rehabilitation plan by the fast bowler Ihsanullah.

After a thorough examination of the case history, including all MRI, ultrasound, and related reports, interviews with members of the PCB Medical and Sports Sciences Department, Ihsanullah and consultations with renowned surgeons and specialists, including Prof. Adam Watts (Consultant Hand, Elbow & Upper Limb Surgeon), Mr. Javed Mughal (Director and Lead Physiotherapist, Rainham Physiotherapy Centre), and Dr. Mohammad Wasceem (Consultant Orthopedic Surgeon, Shoulder & Elbow Specialist), the committee has recommended the following:

"Ihsanullah should continue with aggressive physiotherapy and rehabilitation of right elbow and shoulder. Surgery may be the last option if he does not recover in six to 12 months."

Planning Minister directs NHA to complete infrastructure projects without any delay

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister of Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal here on Thursday directed the National Highway Authority (NHA) to expedite construction work on the existing projects related to the infrastructure while removing the bottlenecks without any delay.

He made these remarks, while chairing a meeting, in which he reviewed the progress of the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) and portfolio of NHA.

According to press statement issued by the ministry, the meeting was attended by the Secretary

Ministry of Communication, Secretary Planning Ministry, Chairman NHA and other relevant stakeholders.

During the meeting, the minister was given a detailed briefing over PSDP (2024-25) and the existing portfolio of NHA. The minister directed the relevant stakeholders to remove the obstacles in the construction work on existing projects.

Meanwhile, the minister in another meeting reviewed the Federal Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Policy.

The meeting was attended by the Minister of Petroleum & Water Resources, Musadik Malik; Minister for Maritime Af-

fairs, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh; Professor of Economics & Strategy, Dr. Nadeem Javid.; Member Social Sector, Raffi Ullah Kakar; CEO of the Public Private Partnership Authority (P3A), Malik Ahmad Khan; and consultants from the Asian Development Bank.

The meeting, aligning with the Prime Minister's directives outlined during the approval of the Federal PPP Policy 2023-2028, aimed at a strategic review of the policy's operational framework. This initiative is part of a broader effort to enhance the implementation mechanism and effectiveness of the PPP policy.

Lowest inflation rate in two...

Continued from page 1

cut in the petroleum prices which were on the downward trend in the international market.

The prime minister directed the provincial governments to ensure that impacts of fall in the petroleum prices reach the common people, besides taking special measures for the implementation of the rates of food items fixed by the Federal Government.

"With the blessings of the Almighty, the life standard of the people will further improve with further improvement in the economy," he said.

The government was trying its best to provide maximum relief to the people, the prime minister added. The Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation came down to 17.3 percent during the month of April 2023 as compared to 20.7 percent recorded during March 2023, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Thursday.

According to PBS data, the CPI based inflation during the same month of last year was recorded at 36.4%.

On month-on-month (MoM) basis, it decreased to 0.4% in April 2024 as compared to an increase of 1.7 in the previous month and an increase of 2.4% in April 2023.

According to data, CPI inflation Urban, increased to 19.4% on year-on-year (YoY) basis in April 2024 as compared to an increase of 21.9% in the previous month and 33.5% in April 2023. On month-on-month basis, it decreased to 0.1% in April 2024 as compared to an increase of 1.4% in the previous month and an

increase of 2.0% in April 2023.

CPI inflation Rural, increased to 14.5% on year-on-year basis in April 2024 as compared to an increase of 19.0% in the previous month and 40.7% in April 2023. On month-on-month basis, it decreased to 0.9% in April 2024 as compared to an increase of 2.1% in the previous month and an increase of 3.0% in April 2023.

The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) inflation on YoY increased to 21.6% in April 2024 as compared to an increase of 25.9% a month earlier and 42.1% in April 2023. On MoM basis, it decreased by 0.7% in April 2024 as compared to an increase of 2.1% a month earlier and an increase of 2.7% in April 2023.

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation on YoY basis increased to 13.9% in April 2024 as compared to an increase of 14.8% a month earlier and an increase of 33.4% in April 2023. On MoM basis, it decreased by 0.7% in April 2024 as compared to an increase of 1.3% in the previous month and an increase of 0.1% in corresponding month of last year i.e. April 2023.

The urban core inflation, measured by non-food non-energy, increased to 13.1% on (YoY) basis in April 2024 as compared to an increase of 12.8% in the previous month and 19.5% in April 2023. On (MoM) basis, it increased by 2.1% in April 2024 as compared to an increase of 0.1% in previous month, and an increase of 1.8% in corresponding month of last year i.e. April, 2023.



KARACHI: A delegation of Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) meets with Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi.

Army well aware...

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character, courage and competence. Your conduct will be extraordinary not only for your personal ethics but also for the respected institution. You will never hesitate to sacrifice for the defence, honour and dignity of the motherland."

He said the military leadership expected that the young cadets would always uphold the eternal tradition of the nation's best spirit, professionalism and bravery.

He said that the Gaza war was the latest example of the suffering that wars could bring. "Indiscriminate killing of elderly, women and children in Gaza is proof that violence is increasing in the world."

The Army Chief noted that India had illegally occupied the Jammu and Kashmir whereas the silence of the whole world on the ongoing Indian aggression in Kashmir could not suppress the voice of freedom echoing there.

"We will continue to provide moral, political and diplomatic support to our Kashmiri brothers."

The COAS advised the cadets, "Always remember that truth is power while falsehood can never be powerful. Be like Rashid Minhas, Sarfaraz Rafiqi and MM Alam who gave their services and lives to protect the dignity of the dear country. Be committed to the responsibility you are being entrusted with and remain loyal to the State of Pakistan."

Indian campaign of attacking...

Continued from page 1

weekly press briefing here.

She reiterated Pakistan's determination to continue to extending political, diplomatic, and moral support to Kashmiris for the just and peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council's resolutions.

As different parts of the IIOJK recently witnessed heavy rains, flash floods, and landslides, resulting in loss of life and property, the spokesperson expressed sympathies with the victims of these national calamities and prayed for the eternal peace of the deceased and wished speedy recovery to the injured.

Apprising the media of the ongoing visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar to The Gambia to attend the Council of Foreign Ministers and the OIC Summit, the spokesperson said that at the Summit, Pakistan would highlight the ongoing genocide in Gaza, the right to self-determination of Kashmiris people, the imperatives of solidarity

and unity of the Muslim Ummah, rising Islamophobia, issues of climate change, terrorism, and other contemporary global challenges.

On the sidelines, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister would hold bilateral meetings with leaders and foreign ministers participating in the summit.

Pakistan will also underline the need to find collective solutions to challenges confronting Muslim Ummah, she added.

Highlighting other diplomatic engagements during the previous week, she informed the media of the visit of US Under Secretary for Political Affairs John Bass and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Horst to Pakistan and their meeting with Acting Foreign Secretary Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi. Two sides discussed various aspects of bilateral cooperation and underscored the importance of sustained engagement through various dialogue processes, including areas of trade, investment, energy, health, education, agriculture, and climate change.

Civil & military leadership...

Continued from page 1

ments for the concerned sectors soon so as to execute the projects identified in the development package.

The Chief Minister said that meeting would be held with the Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif for provision of funds according to the commitment made by the federation.

The members belonging to southern Balochistan would be included in the delegation, added Chief Minister.

He expressed displeasure over absence of Secretary Irrigation from the meeting.

He was displeased with the unsatisfactory briefing of the junior non-concerned officer in the responsible decision making forum.

He directed to the Chief Secretary to take action in this regard.

He said that the nature of forum and importance of matters has not been taken seriously.

The meeting was attended by the provincial ministers Mir Zahoore Buledi, Mir Saleem Khosa, members of provincial assembly Maulana Hidayatur Rehman, Rehmat Saleh Baloch, Mir Barkat Rind, Mir Asghar Rind, Khair Jan Baloch, spokesman of government, Shahid Rind, Chief Secretary, Shaheel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary, planning and development, Abdul Saboor Kakar, besides other senior officers.

Mahmood Achakzai sends...

Continued from page 1

with other officials of district administration and when the same illegal act was condemned both nationally and internationally, you addressed No. 2 through your gunman illegally and unlawfully lodged FIR No. 40/2024, wherein issued defamatory statement to the extent of our client and his family members by marking the following defamatory statement against our client and his family members by alleging that "they went to the alleged government plot located beside the house of our client in order to restore the illegal possession, which was illegally occupied by our client and his family members."

As per the content of legal notice, the statements issued by the concerned officials were defamatory in nature, as our client has no concern or connection with the subject plot/land.

Therefore, making false and defamatory statements against our client and his family members has highly injures the reputation of our client and his family members nationally and internationally and the addressees through the defamatory statements have shown our client as land grabber, land mafia and a criminal person and tried to disgrace and defame him in the whole society particularly in the eye of general public in the country including party members of the PkMAP and also tried to falsely establish our client as land grabber, land mafia and a criminal person in the international community in order to defame him especially in the time when the international media was also covering the Presidential election and presidential candidature of our client and the defamatory statements were widely circulated in print, electronic and social media nationally and internationally.

The legal notice further mentioned "the wrongful act of issuing defamatory statements by the addressees against our client in tribal society tendered our client lower in the estimation of the whole society, family members, and other political parties and also tend to reduce him to ridicule, dislike and his family, which also effected the presidential candidature of our client and played even a role in his defeat."

According to the content of legal notice, the addressees were called upon to make a press conference within seven days of receipt of the legal notice by taking back all the above mentioned defamatory allegations made against Chairman PkMAP and publicly make an apology through press conference and in case of failure, they were called upon to pay Rs. 20 billion within clear 14 days from receipt of the legal notice, otherwise our client has clear intention to initiate legal action against them.

TENDER NOTICE

TSE-232404402833 Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The Executive Engineer Buildings Loralai invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2024 based on Composite schedule rates 2018 on Percentage Rates.

Tender Fee Rs.1500/- and Bid Security 3%

S.No	Name of Works	E/Cost
1	ADDITIONAL WORK FOR STRENG. OF M&E WING P&DD H/Q & DIV. OFFICES PROV. LOGISTIC & CONSTRUCTION OF OFFICES & RES. FOR THE DIRECTOR DIV. AT DISTRICT LORALAI	31,885,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. The bidder must have completed 3 Assignment of similar nature of work. Turn over of at least 22,319,500 PKR Amount in 3 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm. Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 3% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed 1,500 PKR Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 16 May, 2024 during office hours on working days Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 16 May, 2024 till 10:00 AM. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 11:00 AM Address: C&W office Loralai

Phone no: 0824660394 Email: dawoodtareen@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER BUILDINGS
CWPP&H DEPARTMENT
LORALAI

PRQ No.2075/2-5-2024

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KARACHI: Lady Officers of Pakistan Navy and US Navy in an interactive session during Exercise Inspired Union 2024, in Karachi.

TENDER NOTICE

TSE-232404403083 Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The Executive Engineer Buildings C&WPP&H Department District Duki invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2024 based on Composite schedule rates 2018 on Percentage Rates.

Tender Fee Rs.1000/- and Bid Security 2%

S.No	Name of Works	E/Cost
1	Rehabilitation of DHQ Hospital	20,000,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed 1,000 PKR Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 17 May, 2024 during office hours on working days Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 17 May, 2024 till 12:30 PM. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 01:30 PM Address: Executive Engineer Buildings C&WPP&H Department District Duki

Phone no: 0334232545

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER BUILDINGS
C&WPP&H DEPARTMENT DISTRICT
DUKI

PRQ No.2074/02-05-2024

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Bilawal extends solidarity to journalists, media professionals on World Press Freedom Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has extended sincere solidarity to journalists and media professionals worldwide on World Press Freedom Day.

Emphasizing the paramount importance of press freedom, he reaffirmed his party's staunch support for the invaluable role of a free and independent press in fostering democracy.

According to a press release by the Media Cell Bilawal House, he underscored that press freedom is not merely a cornerstone of democracy, but also vital for nurturing transparency, accountability, and the proliferation of diverse ideas within society. He urged that safeguarding and upholding this fundamental right should be the responsibility of every democratic government and party.

Bilawal Bhutto said that historically, the press in Pakistan has served as a watchdog, uncovering injustices, exposing corruption, and amplifying the

voices of the marginalized. Expressing concern over challenges such as censorship, fake news, and violence faced by journalists, he urged media organizations to uphold journalistic integrity, impartiality, and professionalism in their reporting. He reiterated the party's unwavering support for press freedom, grounded in democracy and liberty principles.

He underscored the 1973 Constitution's guarantee of freedom of expression, including press freedom, a legacy of Quaid-e-Azam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. "Under his leadership, reforms liberalized media policies, fostering greater independence," he noted.

He highlighted Prime Minister Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's efforts to promote press freedom, including abolishing censorship laws and supporting independent media growth, adding that she also championed press freedom and human rights globally, un-

derlining their significance in democratic governance and seeking international support during dictatorial regimes.

Bilawal Bhutto noted that President Asif Ali Zardari honoured the vision and guiding principles of Shaheed Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto by enshrining the "Right to Know" into the Constitution through the 18th Constitutional Amendment.

He expressed PPP's solidarity with journalists in conflict zones like Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and Gaza, Palestine, praising their courage in reporting on human rights abuses despite grave risks.

"Let us carry forward the torch of press freedom, illuminating pathways of accountability and fostering dialogue. Through our unwavering support, let's empower journalists to fearlessly navigate the realms of truth, shaping a brighter future for all," he concluded.

During the press conference here at a local hotel, Ashrafi emphasized the importance of booking Hajj journeys only through authorized organizers, cautioning against fraudulent activities perpetrated by unauthorized groups through social media platforms.

He urged intending



ISLAMABAD: Delegation of Abacus Consulting calls on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

PPF meeting convened for promoting legislative, policy reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Punjab Public Prosecution Department on Thursday convened the 17th meeting of the Pakistan Prosecution Forum (PPF) which was a crucial step toward promoting legislative and policy reforms in Pakistan's criminal justice system.

This high-level meeting was funded by the U.S. Embassy's Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) and facilitated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Senior officials from prosecution and criminal justice stakeholders from Punjab and other provinces across Pakistan deliberated to advance critical rule of law reforms by sharing of experiences and discussing solutions for the common challenges they face.

The forum was graced by Justice (ret'd) Khalil Ur Rehman Ramday, as the Chief Guest, who in his inaugural speech applauded this established platform, stating, "I am honoured to preside over the Pakistan Prosecution Forum, which plays a crucial role in shaping our nation's legal landscape. Together, we will continue our journey towards a fairer and more equitable justice system inclusive of the gender-specific needs of our communities."

He further apprised that the Government of Punjab is committed to reforming the current Criminal Justice System for our posterity while ensuring "Rule of Law" in the province. The PPF is a prominent national forum consisting of each provincial prosecution department's leadership.

On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon urged the residents to be vigilant and inform the administration if the polio teams did not reach their area. He also encouraged community leaders and educators to support the campaign and spread the word about the benefits of vaccination.

He also urged the migrant workers, to cooperate with the vaccination teams to ensure the safety of all children and the eradication of polio from the region.



ISLAMABAD: A view of damage bus stop alongside Islamabad Highway near Kachnar Park in the Federal Capital, as needs to attention for concern authority.

CDA accelerates efforts to address water shortage ahead of summer

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Water Management Wing of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has intensified its efforts on several projects to mitigate water shortages in the federal capital before the onset of the summer season.

"The authority has instructed the relevant departments to expedite all repair and maintenance work, addressing issues such as leakages and replacing old and rotted pipes at the Simly Water Filtration Plant and Main Distribution Line," an official told APP.

He said that timely repairs and maintenance by the Water Supply Wing had not only saved eight lakh gallons of water per day but also improved water pressure in the pipelines.

Similarly, addressing complaints related to leakages from old and deteriorated pipes in water supply lines across different sectors of the federal capital would enhance water

availability for the residents, he said.

The official said that water levels in dams like Khanpur Dam had decreased over time due to insufficient rainfall in the federal capital. Consequently, the Water Supply Department was working tirelessly around the clock to bridge the water shortage gap before the summer season, ensuring adequate water supply to citizens, he added.

To a question, the official said the authority was going to install four new tube wells in Sector F-10, F-11, G-10, and G-11 to further facilitate the residents.

The initiative aimed to address potential water shortages reserves in Khanpur Dam decline, he added.

He said the tender had already been published in various newspapers to expedite measures aimed at controlling water shortages before the arrival of the summer season.

Renowned poet and writer Muhammad Ishaq Haq spoke about the importance of Urdu, Persian and Arabic languages.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, Australian High Commissioner in Pakistan Neil Hawkins and his wife cutting the cake on Australia Day in Spring during a vibrant reception, to mark the enduring ties between Australia and Pakistan at Australian High Commission in Federal Capital.

PUC, HOAP unveils code of conduct for hassle-free Hajj pilgrimage

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) and Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Patron-in-Chief, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Thursday unveiled a comprehensive code of conduct in a bid to ensure a smooth and hassle-free pilgrimage experience for private Hajj pilgrims.

During the press conference here at a local hotel, Ashrafi emphasized the importance of booking Hajj journeys only through authorized organizers, cautioning against fraudulent activities perpetrated by unauthorized groups through social media platforms.

He urged intending

fraudulent activities, said a news release issued here.

During the raid, 470 suspicious active SIM cards, nine BVS devices, one BISP device, a laptop containing approximately 4000 fingerprints that were being used to activate the SIMs illegally, were seized.

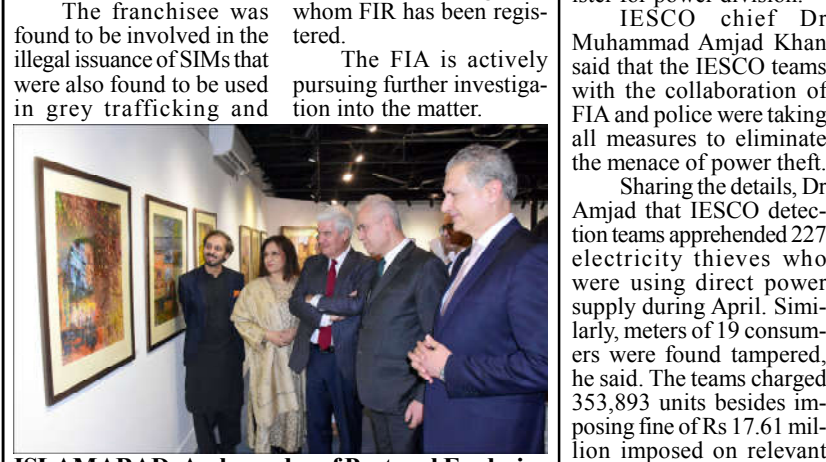
Additionally, one individual was apprehended by the FIA team, against whom FIR has been registered.

The FIA is actively pursuing further investigation into the matter.

PTA conducts successful raid in Khairpur against illegal SIM issuance

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office Lahore, in collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle, Thursday conducted a successful raid against franchisee of a mobile phone company in Khairpur Tame Wali, Dist Bahawalpur against illegal SIM issuance.

The franchisee was found to be involved in the illegal issuance of SIMs that were also found to be used in grey trafficking and



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal Frederico Silva visiting an Exhibition of Fine Art and Exquisite Crafts organized jointly by Lok Virsa and Nomad at Art Gallery of Lok Virsa in the Federal Capital.

IHC reserves verdict in plea seeking Bushra Bibi's shifting to Adiala Jail

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday reserved its verdict in a petition seeking the shifting of former first lady Bushra Bibi from Banigala to Adiala Jail Rawalpindi.

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb reserved the verdict after hearing arguments from the respondents.

At the outset of the hearing, petitioner's lawyer Usman Riaz Gul informed the court that his client was sentenced in toshakhana reference and irregular 'nikah' case. The chief commissioner Islamabad declared the Banigala residence of Bushra Bibi as sub-jail under the Prison Act and she was shifted there.

The lawyer said that the chief commissioner's notification was not issued on the recommendations of Superintendent Adiala Jail.

Neither the provincial government nor the Inspector General Prisons issued such instructions, he said.

He adopted the stance that the notification of the chief commissioner regarding declaring Banigala house as sub-jail was illegal and prayed the court to set it aside. He also argued that it was the provision of the trial court to decide the place for an accused's sentence.

Justice Miangul Hassan remarked that 141 women arrived in Adiala Jail after Bushra Bibi and whether they were also shifted to their homes.

The court said that how the residence of a prisoner could be declared as sub-jail without his/her consent.

The state counsel adopted the stance that there was a threat to the life of Bushra Bibi due to which she was shifted to Banigala.



ISLAMABAD: Students participating in Arts & Painting Competition under the theme "Keeping Humanity Alive" in connection with World Red Cross and Red Crescent Week Celebration at Citizen's Club, F-9 Park.

Developing Asia, Pacific unprepared for challenges of aging population: ADB

ISLAMABAD (APP): Developing Asia and the Pacific are unprepared to secure the well-being of its rapidly aging population as the growing share of older people in the region faces challenges from low pension coverage to health problems, social isolation, and limited access to essential services.

While longer lifespans reflect the region's development success, comprehensive policy reforms are urgently needed to support the welfare of older people, according to Aging Well in Asia: Asian Development Policy Report, released today by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) at its 57th Annual Meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The number of people aged 60 and older in developing Asia and the Pacific is set to nearly double by 2050 to 1.2 billion—or about a quarter of the total population—significantly increasing the need for pension and welfare programs

as well as health care services.

At the same time, economies have an opportunity to reap a "silver dividend" in the form of additional productivity from older people, which could boost gross domestic product in the region by 0.9% on average.

"Asia and the Pacific's rapid development is a success story, but it's also fueling a huge demographic shift, and the pressure is rising," said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park.

"Governments need to prepare now if they're going to be able to help hundreds of millions of people in the region age well. Policies should support lifetime investment in health, education, skills, and financial preparedness for retirement. Family and social ties are also important to foster healthy and productive populations of older people and maximize their contribution to society," Park added.

He underscored that such actions are not only contrary to Islamic teachings and Shariah but also reflect poorly on Pakistan in the international community.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Ulema Council Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi addresses press conference.

DG Passport visits regional passport office

ISLAMABAD (Online): On the instructions of Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, DG Immigration and Passports Mustafa Jamal Qazi made a surprise visit to the Regional Passport Office Doke Mongtial, Rawalpindi on Thursday. He directed the installation of screens in the veranda of the passport office for the convenience of applicants and fans for those standing in line to deposit fees.

DG Passport expressed satisfaction over the cleanliness arrangements and the activation of all counters, said a press release. Director North Punjab, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Zone Zainullah Mahsud briefed DG Passport on the operational matters of the Regional Passport Office Rawalpindi. DG Passport visited the six counters and interview room. He declared the cleaning arrangements satisfactory and directed that there would be no tolerance for any shortcomings in cleanliness and public delivery.

Turkmenistan to expand science and education cooperation with CUI

ISLAMABAD (Online): Ambassador of Turkmenistan and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps to Pakistan, Atadjan Movlamov in a meeting with the Rector, COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) Prof. Dr. Sajid Qamar held here called for expanding cooperation in science and education sector.

The ambassador was accompanied by the Third Secretary, Mr. Eldar Peranov.

Prof. Qamar warmly received the envoy, with the



ISLAMABAD: SPO Nabila Yasmin briefs the students of Pakistan Sweet Home during seminar on "Road Safety Awareness" organized by National Highways and Motorway Police.

NH&MP starts weekly road safety awareness campaign

ISLAMABAD (INP): National Highways and Motorway Police (NH&MP) on Thursday started a special weekly road safety awareness campaign on the directions of Inspector General (NH&MP) Salman Chaudhry.

The campaign has been carried out in all operational zones of Motorway Police to create awareness about traffic rules and road safety among the general public for safe travel on National Highways, said a press release issued here.

Additional IsG and DisG are monitoring the road safety campaign. In the first phase of this campaign, the officers briefed 350,000 commuters travelling without fastening the seat belts and backlights.

The commuters were thoroughly sensitized about the importance and benefits of seat belts and backlights. Legal action was taken against 127,000 vehicles violating these traffic rules.

During the weekly campaign, a fine of over 111 million rupees was imposed on violating these traffic rules of seat belts and backlights. During the weekly road safety campaign, more than 8,00,000 social media users were benefited by the campaign carried out by the National Highways and Motorway Police social media platforms.

Speaking on the occasion, IG Salman Chaudhry said that the top priority of the Motorway Police was to save precious lives by creating awareness among the youth about traffic rules.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Friday May 03, 2024

Punishing evaders

The FBR's decision to block mobile phone connections of more than half a million individuals who did not file federal tax returns for the tax year 2022-2023 indicates that the agency is stepping up its campaign against evaders. The FBR has issued a legally binding Income Tax General Order to mobile companies to disable the SIMs of 450,000 individuals who had earlier filed tax statements but did not do so last year. It has identified the remaining more than 50,000 tax delinquents through third-party data on their expenditures and consumption patterns. The punitive action comes after the tax evaders' failure to respond to notices and repeated reminders. But is this enough to ensure tax compliance? The FBR's action appears to be largely limited to those whose names are already in its database. Many will justifiably ask what is being done to expand the tax base itself. Under the law, any person earning an annual income of Rs600,000 or more, or owning a 1000cc car or a house is liable to file tax statements. However, less than 2pc of the population (4.5m persons) had filed their returns last year, down from 5.9m a year earlier. Besides, a very large number of filers do not show taxable income in their statements.

That the FBR has initiated action against non-filers amid reports that only 75 traders have registered themselves under the recently announced Tajir Dost Scheme, a voluntary tax compliance arrangement for retailers, underscores the difficulty in expanding a very narrow tax base. And yet, despite the tax agency's past failure to execute multiple effective initiatives to increase direct taxation to boost the nation's present tax-to-GDP ratio of below 9pc — one of the lowest in South Asia — we must keep our fingers crossed. Indeed, Pakistan's current political leadership is committed to implementing FBR reforms, digitising the tax system to plug leakages and eradicating corruption and massive tax exemptions to powerful business lobbies. The intentions are sound. But the government would need to go much beyond automation and an anti-corruption drive; a paradigm shift is needed to make the tax system equitable to attract private investment and spur economic growth.

In addition to bringing untaxed and undertaxed sectors such as real estate, agriculture, retail, and overseas remittances into the net, the government will have to curtail the number of indirect taxes and significantly reduce high tax rates if it wants to improve compliance. The abysmally low tax revenue as a ratio of the size of the economy is at the heart of one of the worst financial crises being faced by the country for the last two years. This problem cannot be tackled without broadening the tax net, and making the tax administration and regime conducive to investment and growth.

By Maria Mansab

India, which was designated as an "electoral autocracy" in 2018, has experienced further deterioration across various indicators. India positioning itself as one of the most regressive autocratic nations globally, according to the Democracy Report 2024, published by Sweden-based V-Dem Institute. The V-Dem Institute released a comprehensive report revealing that India did not get a favorable ranking across all dimensions of democracy and autocracy. As transitional stages between democracy and autocracy, this institute categorizes nations as follows: closed autocracy, electoral democracy, electoral autocracy, and liberal democracy. According to the report, India emerged as one of the most regressive authoritarian regimes globally in recent times. With a population accounting for 18% of the global population, it exhibits the lowest rankings in terms of freedom of expression and the conduct of free and fair elections. India's assertion of

being a democratic nation has faced global rejection, as evidenced by its ranking of 104 out of 179 countries in the Liberal Democracy Index 2023.

Earlier this year, in its annual report on global political rights and liberties, US-based non-profit Freedom House downgraded India's classification from a free democracy to a "partially free democracy." The Modi government has employed sedition, defamation, and anti-terrorism legislation to suppress dissenting voices. In 2019, the BJP government made amendments to the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, thereby compromising the Constitution's dedication to secularism. The amendment enacted in 2019 granted the federal government the authority to classify persons as "terrorists" without trial.

The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index ranked India as a "flawed democracy," dropping two places to 53rd as the Indian government proceeded to stifle religious freedom by enforcing a ban on hijab and Islamic education by the Allahabad

**India's democratic dilemma:
The path to autocracy**

High Court in Uttar Pradesh. Moreover, it spearheaded efforts to suppress dissent within academic institutions and intimidation of individuals who opposed political ideologies or opposed government policies. The V-Dem Institute has observed in its 2023 'Academic Freedom Index' that in India institutions and scholars currently see a notable decrease in freedom. In 2013, there was a significant decrease in all aspects of academic freedom, which was further intensified by Modi's election as prime minister in 2014. The subsequent years witnessed a more pronounced decline in campus integrity, institutional autonomy, and the freedom of academic and cultural expression. The absence of legislation safeguarding academic freedom renders it more susceptible to infringement under Modi's Hindu nationalist administration. India exemplifies the detrimental correlation between populist governments, autocratization, and limitations on academic freedom. Over the years, the BJP government has substantially and gradually eroded freedom of expression in India, jeopardizing media freedom, cracking down on social media, and harassing and assaulting government-critical journalists. The Indian government's intensified efforts to regulate the media is one of the worst violations in recent times. India slipped two places to 142 on Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index. It's an unflattering reflection on a country that frequently prides in its dynamic and competitive media. Before the elections, the Modi government enacted a contentious citizenship law, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which is biased against Muslims and has already incited widespread protests across the country in 2019. Furthermore, rulings from Indian courts disclosed that Modi's party received hundreds of millions of dollars in anonymous political donations from private corporations and was the primary beneficiary of a now-banned financial scheme. During a campaign rally in northwest India, Modi

made derogatory remarks against Muslims, labeling them as "infiltrators" and endorsing hate speech. While traveling internationally, he proudly promotes India's diverse principles and asserts his ownership of Gandhi's legacy. However, at home, he expresses a strong, anti-Muslim sentiment. Modi's ambition to make a Hindu state has been evident in his recent speech and the last decade of his tenure. In January, Modi demonstrated his commitment to promoting his Hindu nationalist party and values by inaugurating an incomplete grand Hindu temple at the location where an ancient mosque was demolished by a Hindu mob. The Modi government poses a threat to civil society and opposition parties. Modi has intensified his efforts to suppress the opposition parties, resulting in 95% of political leaders being investigated by the CBI and ED. The nation, with a population of 1.4 billion individuals has nearly 970 million registered voters. The ongoing elections are the costliest globally, as political parties have allocated

twice the amount of money compared to the \$7 billion spent in the previous election in 2019. On 19 April 2024, during the polling in Manipur, Arambai Tenggol a BJP's private Militia cadres were spotted with guns. They are behind much of the recent violence there and now they tried to rig the election for BJP and in response angry voters destroyed the EVMs. There are significant uncertainties regarding the integrity and impartiality of these elections, therefore, the integrity of democracy will be challenged. If India is unable to conduct free and fair elections, then there's a risk of India transitioning into a Hindu and autocratic state under the rule of Modi. The essential inquiry emerging from these global reports prompts us to ponder: What democratic model does India aspire to embrace? Recent analyses suggest India's political landscape leans towards either an ethnic autocracy or an electoral autocracy. The transition of India into a Hindu autocratic state is evident from both global reports and the ongoing developments within India.

Lessons from the past

Abdul Sattar

Rising Russian casualties and heavy financial losses caused by Ukraine indicate that Putin's Russia has not learnt anything from the history of the Soviet Union. According to some conservative estimates, more than 50,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in the conflict. This is believed to be in addition to over 22,000 mercenaries that Russia sent to the killing fields of Ukraine to boost its military position. There are conflicting claims about the number of Russians that may have died in the conflict, with Ukrainian sources asserting that as of April 26, more than 463,930 personnel of the Russian army have died while over 1,391,790 are injured. The assessment of Ukrainian forces also asserts that Russia lost 13,972 armoured combat, 7,269 tanks, 11,898 artillery, 348 aircraft, 325 helicopters and 26 ships and boats.

It is not only Ukrainian sources that have come up with a higher death toll, but some other Western sources have also claimed higher fatalities. For instance, a declassified US intelligence document reportedly claimed last year in December that the Ukraine war cost Russia 315,000 dead and injured troops, or nearly 90 per cent of the personnel. The document asserted that Russia began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 with 360,000 personnel, claiming about 87 per cent of the total with which it started the war were either killed or wounded. Some Western sources estimate the death toll to be even higher. Last month, the UK's Ministry of Defence revealed that more than 355,000 Russian personnel were killed and wounded in the Ukraine war. The ministry estimated that the average daily number of Russian casualties throughout February was the highest since the start of the invasion. It put the figure at 983 casualties per day. Russia dismisses these numbers as highly exaggerated. Moscow believes that Western sources underestimate Ukrainian losses, but speculations will continue to fuel unless the Russian defence ministry itself comes up with the exact figure. The recent figure of over 50,000 deaths was revealed by the BBC, which claims that the death

toll of the second year of the war was nearly 25 per cent higher than the first year of the war. The British broadcaster says that BBC Russian, independent media group Mediazona, and volunteers have been counting deaths since February 2022. The report claims that new graves in cemeteries have helped provide the names of many soldiers. "Our teams also combed through open-source information from official reports, newspapers and social media. More than 27,300 Russian soldiers died in the second year of combat — according to our findings — a reflection of how territorial gains have come at a huge human cost." The Russian government, however, keeps evading questions regarding the exact death toll. It is not clear what the exact death toll is but what is clear is the imprudence of the Russian ruling elite, which has not learnt anything from the history of Soviet military interventions and their burden on the country's economy. The plan to teach a lesson to Ukraine seems to have boomeranged on Russian policymakers. Their dream

of quick victory had evaporated within a few weeks of the invasion, but they were unable to discern it. Now, they are bogged down in the quagmire of this bloody conflict that has already decimated more than 31,000 Ukrainians, besides forcing more than 6.5 million to flee the country and rendering 3.7 million internally displaced. The war-torn country now has 14.6 million people who need humanitarian assistance. It is difficult to understand why the Russian elite did not anticipate strong support from the West for Ukraine. The West has extended generous financial and moral assistance to Ukraine, diluting the chance of Russian victory. Since January 2022, Ukraine has received about \$278 billion in aid, including \$75 billion from the US. It is perhaps because of this generous assistance that Ukraine can put up stiff resistance. Despite all human and financial losses, the people of the war-torn country have managed to recapture 54 per cent of the occupied territory, leaving Moscow in control of only 18 per cent of those territories. While the suffering of

Ukrainians is quite visible, in the long run Russians will not be immune to hardships and difficulties. The signs of such difficulties are already quite visible. According to a report by Rand Corporation, as of September 2022, the direct Russian military costs of the war might have reached \$40 billion, or 84 per cent of the 2021 national defence spending. "Of this \$40 billion, operations and compensation amounted to \$29 billion. Material amounted to \$11 billion. Direct costs through 2024 are expected to amount to almost \$132 billion. For all of 2022, gross domestic product losses amounted to between \$81 billion and \$104 billion. Russia experienced \$322 billion in financial capital destruction in 2022, as measured by the market value of companies on the Moscow Stock Exchange." Despite this, the country is forced to spend a significant portion of its budget on military spending and internal security. Last November, Putin gave his official approval to a significant increase in military spending that will see around 30 per cent of

fiscal expenditure directed towards the armed forces during the current year. This is not the first year where military spending is high, but it has been going on for some years now. For instance, an analysis of the 2022 public budget of Russia shows that the country spent 50 per cent more on 'security' (which includes military activity), while Moscow slashed spending on matters related to the welfare of ordinary Russians. For instance, health spending was cut by 9.0 per cent, education 2.0 per cent and infrastructure 24.0 per cent. Despite being part of the Soviet ruling elite, Putin does not seem to have learnt much from the demise of the socialist state. From Khrushchev to Mikhail Gorbachev, many Soviet leaders had this realization that the USSR was wasting massive resources on this non-productive sector of the economy besides believing that it was a blunder on the part of Soviet leadership to carry out interventions in various parts of the world and jump into conflicts. -- Courtesy TheNews

Peace pipe and war

F.S. Aijazuddin

The tripartite Iran-Pakistan-India Pipeline project (IPI) should have had a normal maturity, had it not suffered from a genetic defect. Physicians term it a complex disorder, which has mutations in two or more genes inherited from parents. The IPI project could not have had a simpler geopolitical justification. Iran has proven natural gas reserves of about 1,200 trillion cubic feet, enough to last 162 years. Its needy neighbour Pakistan has natural gas reserves of only 18 tcf, enough for the next 12-15 years. India's offshore reserves of natural gas are to its east (40.6 per cent) and to its west (23.7pc). It made sense for India to look westwards, even if it involved Pakistan as an undependable intermediary. Economics cried out for such a project. International politics, however, proved the malevolent spirit determined to curse its future. Initially, in 1995, Iran, Pakistan and India signed an agreement which made Iran responsible for 1,180 kilometres of the IPI pipeline, Pakistan 705 km and India 850 km. The pricing of the product had been agreed at \$4.937 per MBTU, linked to an average Japanese Crude Oil price. The logical solution to ensure continuity of supply was for all three countries to have jointly owned the IPI project, through one corporate entity registered outside the three countries, with legal safeguards in place to prevent any of its members from renegeing on their obligations. In 2008, however, India signed two major agreements with the US on nuclear energy and military cooperation. As a consequence, the following year,

India withdrew from the IPI project. Since then, the Iranians undeterred have completed their 1,172 km of the truncated pipeline from the South Pars gas field to the Iran-Pakistan border. Pakistan has yet to begin its section. The cost in 2012 was estimated at \$1.8 billion. Its new cost is open to the heavens. A few years later, Pakistan pleaded a weak force majeure when it formally informed Iran that, as long as Tehran is subject to US sanctions, it could not start work on its end of the pipeline. This year, Pakistan's interim government approved the construction of a token 80 km to Gwadar — a lame attempt to forestall Iran's threat to invoke up to \$18bn of penalties for the delay. Iran has granted Pakistan until September 2024 to complete the remaining 625 km. At the conclusion of the recent visit by the Iranian president Dr E. Raisi, a joint statement by both governments "reiterated the importance of cooperation in the energy domain, including trade in electricity, power transmission lines and [almost as an afterthought] the IP Gas Pipeline". Pakistan, meanwhile, is searching for ways to wriggle under the forbidding door of US sanctions. At best, it can hope for a US waiver, which is rare but not impossible. The Pakistan Foreign Office maintains that Pakistan does not need a waiver. The petroleum minister contradicted this by admitting that it is "considering formally contacting the US government to request a waiver of sanctions". The US has countered Pakistan's Janus stance through Donald Lu, the US assistant secretary of state named in the Imran Khan cipher case. He has testified that Pakistan has not yet applied for a

waiver. He added that, even if granted, Pakistan would find it difficult to secure funding from international donors. Pakistan is trapped between two options: crippling sanctions or prohibitive penalties, between an American devil and the deep Caspian Sea. What was once touted as a pipeline of peace has been re-engineered into an instrument of war. The Pakistani public stands confused by the government's unconvincing reticence. No meaningful information is available in the public domain about the present status of the IP project — important, because it promised to provide enough gas to generate up to 5,000 MW (one-fifth of our present thermal capacity). What will be the final cost of the IP project, and the sources of its funding? (Iran initially had offered a loan of \$500 million.) Also opaque are the IP's achievable completion date, the price at which Iranian gas is to be supplied, safeguards and penalties for non-supply and non-off-take. A gas sales and purchase agreement was signed between Iran and Pakistan in June 2009, and an operations agreement in March 2010. Are they still operative? Factor in the downstream losses in defective transmission and dishonest distribution. In FY2022-23, 10 Discos averaged losses of 16.38pc. In the mid-1970s, Iranian PM Amir-Abbas Hoveyda visited Islamabad. Passing some flowering roses in the Secretariat garden, his Pakistani hosts invited him to admire them. He gave them a glance, and dismissed them with the aside: "Yes, it is all a matter of priorities." Had the President Raisi come to Islamabad last week to task us to determine our priorities? -- Courtesy Dawn

**Pakistan's climate quagmire:
Confronting the devastating impacts and exploring sustainable solutions**

By Czechangez Khan Jadoon

Pakistan, a country already grappling with numerous socio-economic challenges, is facing an unprecedented threat from climate change. Rising temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, and increased frequency of extreme weather events are wreaking havoc on the country's ecosystems, economy, and human well-being. It is imperative to understand the far-reaching consequences of climate change on Pakistan and explore viable solutions to mitigate its impacts. Impacts of Climate Change on Pakistan: 1. Temperature Increase: Pakistan has experienced a 0.7°C rise in average temperature over the past century, leading to more frequent heatwaves, melting of glaciers, and altered agricultural cycles. 2. Water Scarcity: Changes in precipitation patterns have resulted in droughts and floods, affecting agriculture, industry, and domestic water supply. 3. Extreme Weather Events: Pakistan is vulnerable to natural disasters like cyclones, landslides, and floods, causing loss of life, infrastructure damage, and displacement. 4. Agricultural Decline: Climate change

has impacted crop yields, reduced water availability, and increased pest and disease prevalence, threatening food security. 5. Health Consequences: Warmer temperatures have increased the spread of waterborne and vector-borne diseases, heat stress, and other health issues. Solutions to Tackle Climate Change in Pakistan: 1. Renewable Energy Transition: Shift from fossil fuels to solar, wind, and hydroelectric power to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. 2. Water Management: Implement efficient irrigation systems, water harvesting, and conservation measures to address water scarcity. 3. Climate-Resilient Agriculture: Promote climate-tolerant crops, precision agriculture, and agroforestry practices to enhance agricultural productivity. 4. Disaster Risk Reduction: Enhance early warning systems, emergency preparedness, and infrastructure resilience to minimize the impact of extreme weather events. 5. Ecosystem Restoration: Protect and restore natural ecosystems like forests, wetlands, and mangroves, which absorb carbon dioxide and mitigate climate change effects. 6. Climate Education and Awareness: Integrate climate change

education into school curricula and launch public awareness campaigns to foster individual actions and community engagement. 7. Policy and Governance: Strengthen climate change policies, establish a national climate change authority, and encourage international cooperation to address global climate challenges. 8. Research and Development: Encourage scientific research, technology transfer, and innovation to develop climate-resilient infrastructure, agriculture, and water management solutions. 9. Community-Based Adaptation: Empower local communities to develop and implement climate adaptation plans, ensuring inclusive and sustainable development. 10. International Cooperation: Collaborate with global partners to access climate finance, share knowledge, and leverage technology to combat climate change. In conclusion, Pakistan's climate change crisis demands immediate attention, collective action, and sustainable solutions. By transitioning to renewable energy, managing water resources, promoting climate-resilient agriculture, and enhancing disaster preparedness, Pakistan can mitigate the impacts of climate change and ensure a resilient future for its people.

Sindh CM orders crackdown on illegal foreigners, drug mafia after KPO attack investigation

KARACHI (APP): The investigations in the Karachi Police Office (KPO) attack case, presented in the 31st Apex Committee meeting held under the chair of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah revealed that a Madarsa teacher was found involved in the terrorist attack and was killed there during the operation.

The meeting was held at CM House on Thursday and was attended by Senior Minister Sharjeel Memon, Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar,

Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Corps Commander Karachi Lt Gen. Babar Iftikhar, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, Secretary Home Iqbal Memon, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, DG Rangers Maj Gen Azhar Waqas, IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon, Adl IG Karachi Imran Yakoob and Chief Collector Customs Yakoob Mako, Director FIA Zaeem Iqbal and others.

The Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) presented an

investigation report to the Apex Committee which revealed that a Madarsa teacher was found involved in the KPO attack dated February 17, 2023. The teacher was a terrorist and had attacked the KPO along with his accomplices.

During the KPO clearance operation carried out by the agencies, the terrorists were killed and through their fingerprints and other investigations, it was revealed that one of them was a teacher in Madarsa.

It was pointed out that illegal foreigners were



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over a cabinet meeting, held at CM House in Karachi.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister, Ali Amin Gandapur administers oath of newly elected Cabinet and Governing Body of Peshawar Press Club (PPC) during oath taking ceremony held at PPC in Peshawar.

Minister assures addressing local govt's demands

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Minister for Local Government, Arshad Ayub Khan, met with members of the Village Council, Neighborhood Council and Tehsil Mayors on Thursday to discuss their demands and issues.

On the assurance of the provincial minister to resolve their issues, the Village Council, Neighborhood Council and Tehsil chairmen have postponed their protest for a conditional two weeks. During the meeting, the presented their demands, urging for amendments in business rules and the revival of their funds to manage office and daily affairs.

The minister stated that Chief Minister Ali Amin Ghadapuri wanted their issues resolved, hence they were in negotiations. He mentioned that the government would ask the Finance Department to ensure equal distribution of

funds among village and neighborhood councils in all districts.

He assured that operational and developmental funds would be provided in the budget this time. The minister mentioned that executive summaries had been sent to the Cabinet regarding development grants, and amendments would be made in the Rules of Business in consultation with local government members. He reiterated the provincial government's support for the devolution of powers to the grassroots level, adding that they will revive the local government system and address all issues, with amendments to the Local Government Act to be presented in the cabinet.

He said that he would meet with the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to devise a framework for the solution of all problems.



LAHORE: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Leader, Malik Ahmad Khan Bhachar talking to media persons outside Punjab Assembly in Lahore.

Chief Engineer pledges to resolve worker issues at Tarbela 5 Extension Project

TARBELA (APP): Chief Engineer and Project Director of the Tarbela 5th Extension Project Waseem Raza Thursday assured that the concerns of the workers at Tarbela 5 would be addressed as soon as possible. He emphasized the commitment to overcome any obstacles and ensure timely

completion of the project. Raza conveyed these sentiments during a ceremony organized by the Pakistan China Construction Company Limited (PCCCL) on the eve of International Labour Day at the project site. On the occasion Project Manager Consultant Mark Gill, General Secretary of

the Tarbela 5 Public Labor Union Aslam Adil, and company representative Hamid Khan also expressed their views. Later, PCCCL also arranged a special lunch for the workers as part of the event. Chief Engineer and Project Director Waseem Raza underscored the importance of China's role.

BINP-A golden window of opportunity for unemployed graduates

PESHAWAR (APP): The Prime Minister's Bakhshair Naujawan Internship Programme (BINP) 2024 offers a monthly stipend of up to Rs.40,000 along with professional training lasting from six months to one year in a public sector entity to 60,000 unemployed graduates and postgraduate students.

This initiative has brought immense joy to the deserving recipients, who view it as a great blessing. "Rs30,000 to Rs40,000 per month stipend plus technical training for six months to one year to an unemployed graduate or diploma-holder means a lot for internees

besides providing them launching pad to excel in practical life", Ehtisham Qaiser, 24, who clinched BS 4 years degree in Urdu Literature told APP while filing the BINP form in the University of Peshawar campus.

"Why should I miss such a great opportunity when the federal government is showering its blessing on me", said the motivated graduate with a smile on his face when asked.

"I think it is a great opportunity for fresh graduate and postgraduate students of Pakistan including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who will not only get first-hand

experience by remaining among the top professionals in various public sector organizations but will also financially support their families in the wake of price hike," said the Nowshera born citizen who clinched BS Urdu literature degree with distinction from Govt College Peshawar.

"Most of my classmates have applied for availing the great opportunity and he came to the university campus to submit my online application today," he said.

Like Ehtisham, a large number of eligible students qualified recently from universities and colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

including UET Peshawar, Agriculture University, Govt Colleges, Islamia College Peshawar and the University of Peshawar have welcomed the Prime Minister Internship program and started filling applications forms online. The unique paid internship program would help 60,000 graduates of Pakistan in the transformation of their professional careers.

People from every walk of life have appreciated the landmark program and termed it a milestone of injecting fresh blood as internees that would certainly create positive effects on the overall performance of the

organization and polish the talent of selected internees.

"I welcome the PM BINP as it would boost up the careers of hundreds of thousands of educated youth," said Professor Dr Naveed Farooq of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan.

He stressed that the students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including merged areas take full advantage of the golden opportunity and apply it online. He said the paid internship would not only groom the graduate and postgraduate students in shaping their careers but would also help him to move into a knowledge-driven society.



KARACHI: Sindh Police Inspector General (IG), Ghulam Nabi Memon presides over a high-level meeting with National Institute of Management (NIM) 35th Senior Management Course (SM C) 38 officers of the Chief Instructional Institute of Management headed by Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, at CPO Headquarters in Karachi.

Directs Secretary to take early action CM GB takes notice of rising cases of flu, pneumonia, fever

GILGIT (APP): Chief Minister (CM) Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan has taken notice of the rising cases of flu, pneumonia, and fever in the region and directed the Provincial Secretary Health to take immediate action to contain the spread of these seasonal diseases.

The CM has been informed that a large number of cases of flu, pneumonia, and fever have been reported in various parts of the region, particularly in Gilgit and Diamir districts. The CM has directed the Health Secretary to take all necessary measures to control the spread of these

diseases and ensure that affected patients receive proper medical treatment.

The health secretary, in a briefing to the chief minister, informed that a total of 1321 patients have been treated for flu, pneumonia, and fever so far, while 2100 patients have been fully treated for pneumonia in various hospitals across the region. The secretary further informed that the department has taken necessary measures to control the spread of these diseases, including vaccination drives and awareness campaigns.

However, the CM has expressed concern over

reports of measles cases in some areas, particularly among children who have not been vaccinated. The CM has directed the health secretary to ensure that all children between the ages of six months and five years are vaccinated against measles and to launch an awareness campaign to educate parents about the importance of vaccination.

The CM has also directed the health secretary to ensure that all necessary medicines and injections are available in hospitals to treat patients suffering from pneumonia and other seasonal diseases.

Maryam inaugurates First virtual women police station in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): A new virtual women's police station was inaugurated in Punjab, aiming to assist women without them needing to physically visit a police station. According to a private news channel, the in-charge of the Virtual Women Police station, Aqsa Fayaz, said, "Women can report problems anonymously, and trained IT graduates are there to assist." It's connected to the Punjab Safe Cities Authority and offers various ways for women to seek help, including through a dedicated

hotline, a safety app, and a video call feature.

Moreover, emergency panic buttons had been installed across Lahore for immediate help.

Complaint mechanisms were also in place, allowing anonymous reporting. The Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif inaugurated the service and also launched free Wi-Fi at over 50 locations in Lahore.

This initiative aimed to make services more accessible and efficient for the public.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Haji Gulbar Khan giving away cheque of Entry Fees community share of the Khunjab National Park to the community representative.

Chairman HEC calls for guiding youth towards national development

KARACHI (APP): Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Prof Dr Mukhtar Ahmed said Pakistan has a 65 per cent youth population, hence they must be given the right direction to contribute to the country's development.

He said this at the opening ceremony of the Prime Minister's Talent Hunt Youth Sports League Handball (Men) on Thursday at the Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto Auditorium of SMU.

The HEC Chairman said that presently there are 262 universities in the country, therefore all

universities must encourage their students by regularly organizing sports events. "In our times there were playgrounds in almost all universities, colleges and even in schools, but now they have remained no more. Ironically, many universities are housed in small buildings, which fail to provide regular sports facilities to their students," the HEC chairman said.

He said that in addition to producing the best scientists, engineers, IT experts, researchers, economists, and academics, they also want to cultivate talented athletes, to serve and represent the nation on a larger scale.

Punjab's efforts against polio lauded

LAHORE (APP): An 18-member delegation of the Polio Oversight Board called on Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman at the Civil Secretariat on Thursday. The delegates led by Polio Oversight Board head Christopher Elias appreciated the Punjab government's measures against the polio and reiterated to continue collective efforts until the complete eradication of the virus.

The Chief Secretary said that eradication of

Two more villagers kidnapped

SHIKARPUR: Two villagers were kidnapped Chak Link road in the jurisdiction of Rustam police station on Thursday.

According to initial reports two villagers identified as Moulia Bux Brohi and Meer Jagirani were kidnapped by some group of armed men on gun point and took them away forcibly towards katcha area when they were sleeping on Paddy Crops Agricultural Field situated near Chak.

Workshop held to create master plan for beautification of Ghotki and Mirpur Mathelo cities

By Tanveer Ahmed
MIRPUR MATHELO: Sindh Government's decision to create a master plan for the beautification of Ghotki and Mirpur Mathelo, a one-day workshop was organized by the Planning and Development Department at District Council Hall Mirpur Mathelo. Deputy Commissioner Ghotki Dr. Syed Muhammad Ali, Additional Deputy Commissioner Liaquat Ali Kalhoro and Assistant Commissioner Mirpur Mathelo Babar Ali

along with the participation of relevant officers from the Department of Public Health, Works and Services, Public Health Engineering, as per the details of the Department of Planning and Development, Government of Sindh, participated in the seminar. A one-day workshop was held at District Council Hall Mirpur Mathelo to create a master plan for the beautification of Ghotki and Mirpur Mathelo cities, in which Deputy Director of Urban Regional Policy and Strategic Planning.

WWF-Pakistan rolls out regenerative agriculture practices initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): WWF-Pakistan, with catalytic funding from Laudes Foundation, launched the Regenerative Production Landscape Collaborative (RPLC) Pakistan to drive new business models and farming practices that holistically tackle current challenges faced by smallholder farmers and address the environmental issues resulting from unsustainable practices.

Supported by textile and food brands, RPLC Pakistan will be implemented in the Jhang and Sahiwal districts of Punjab and Barkhan and Lasbela districts of Balochistan. The initiative offers a demonstrable approach to landscapes that has already seen success in India, Brazil and Tanzania.

Speaking at the launch event, Director General, WWF-Pakistan, Hammad Naqi Khan shared that the initiative addresses the long-term challenges of unsustainable agricultural practices in Pakistan.

Highlighting that agriculture faced major issues of excessive use of water, chemicals and pesticides impacting the crop and soil productivity, which was further aggravated by climate change, he noted that this has led to increasing vulnerabilities of local communities and smallholder farmers.

"To address these challenges, this initiative will enhance collaborative actions and develop innovative strategies which help farmers to develop climate resilience and improve the agricultural yield", he added.

Addressing the workshop virtually, Head of the Fashion Programme at Laudes Foundation, Anita Chester said, "Laudes Foundation is incredibly pleased to see the RPLC launch in Pakistan supporting the local ecosystem towards sustainable and regenerative practices.

We are confident in the leadership of WWF-Pakistan in driving the collaborative forward, fostering collaborations with regional players, supporting local farmers and communities to becoming self-sufficient and financially independent and galvanising communities towards better practices enabling businesses to source responsibly.

Today, the RPLC is planned to cover globally, over 1 million hectares, and over 300,000 farmers. In Pakistan specifically, this will cover over a 100,000 hectares and benefit over 50,000 farmers.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Musadik Masood Malik, along with Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister for Energy, Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Laghari, Federal Minister for Industry and Food Security, Rana Tanveer Hussain and Federal Minister for Privatisation and Board of Investment (BOI), Abdul Aleem Khan, convened a crucial Steering Committee meeting to assess preparations for the upcoming visit of Saudi Business Delegates.



ISLAMABAD: Google team calls on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

Linulf says: Carbon markets new opportunity for Pakistan to improve economic situation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Denmark, Jakob Linulf on Thursday said carbon markets are a new opportunity for Pakistan to improve its economic situation and reduce carbon emissions for a green development through sustainable and environment friendly practices.

He was addressing the one-day capacity building workshop for journalists on Climate-Smart Reporting: Carbon Market and Equitable Development jointly organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and the Embassy of Denmark.

Ambassador Jakob Linulf said climate change was casting adverse impacts on the globe and it was equally important for Pakistan and Denmark to develop strategies for averting its risks to humanity and biodiversity.

He said Denmark had completed its green transition and transformed its energy sector from a fossil fuel-dependent energy mix to a greener one based on solar, wind, and biomass.

"Denmark has faced a lot of challenges in the way and that's why it wants to share its lessons learned with Pakistan so that it does not repeat the same mistakes," he said.

Danish Ambassador highlighted that the Embassy was collaborating with the SDPI for experience and knowledge sharing. He noted that the Danish companies had adequate technologies to address climate change impacts which can collaborate with their Pakistani counterparts.

Enhancing digital payment ratio urged as 90% retail trade undocumented

ISLAMABAD (INP): The retailers expressing concern over the slow progress in documenting the retail trade due to stagnation of both the FBR-POS integration of tier-1 businesses and Tajir Dost drive to register small traders, have said that this slow progress is primarily due to lack of sustained consultation with the private sector, inconsistent policies and increasingly complex procedures. So, a clear five-year roadmap is the need of the hour instead of ad-hoc measures, they added. They said that the share of digital payments can be gradually brought up to 50% of the retail trade's contribution to the annual GDP, estimated to be upwards of Rs12 trillion. Currently, an estimated 90% of the retail trade is undocumented and undertaxed. Whereas, based on a reduced GST rate of 5% on only Rs2 trillion, Rs100 billion can be generated in indirect taxes and an additional sum in direct taxes, which is more than is currently collected.

In a bid to expedite tax reforms whilst ensuring a more conducive environment for compliant businesses, the Chainstore Association of Pakistan (CAP) has urged the authorities to prioritize an accelerated adoption of digital payments in the retail sector to improve documentation and tax generation. It highlighted the potential benefits of embracing digital payments, including enhanced transparency, reduced cash handling costs/risks, and simplified tax compliance.

Chairman CAP, Rana Tariq Mehboob and Co-founder Asfandyar Farrukh, in a press release issued here, pointed to successful models in parts of the country, such as those observed in the restaurant industry in Punjab and ICT. The reduced sales tax rate of 5 percent, instead of 16 and 18 percent respectively, has incentivized customers to pay digitally due to the noticeable incentive.



HYDERABAD: Worker busy in preparing the design on the fabric with help by machine at local textile factory.

Rana Tanveer says: Govt to equip agri-sector with modern technology

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for National Food Security, Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain Thursday expressed the firm commitment of the government for providing all-possible resources to local farmers in order to boost per-care yield of all major and minor crops.

During his visit to National Agriculture Research Center (NARC), the minister said that agriculture is the backbone of the national economy, adding that the welfare of farmers and agricultural development were on the top priority of the current government.

The improving crop yield without quality seed supply is difficult, he said adding that the research field holds importance in every aspect of life. He said that agriculture sector will be equipped with research and modern technology and government will provide farmers with all-possible resources. Ensuring healthy, non-toxic fertilizers for the agricultural revolution through modern technology is a priority, he said adding that the federal and provincial governments, along with all institutions including research centers, must play their role in development of agriculture sector.

Utilizing modern technology to make the country self-sufficient in food was the need of the hour.



GUJRANWALA: Farmers are busy in their works at a Wheat Field to earn their livelihood for support their families, in Gujranwala.

Efforts being made to transform southern Punjab into cotton valley

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani has said that revival of cotton is top priority of the incumbent government and efforts are being made to transform the south Punjab region into a cotton valley again.

He said this while presiding over the third review meeting on cotton crop at Muhammad Nawaz Sharif Agricultural University Multan, said a press release issued here.

In the meeting, progress regarding the target of cotton crop cultivation was reviewed. Only the cotton crop could support the country's economy, he said and added that the target of cotton cultivation in Punjab province had been set at 4 million acres, with which the target of 6.5 million bales of cotton would be achieved. He further said that all possible resources were being utilised to achieve the target of cotton cultivation and production.

The minister said that several projects had been started to bring green revolution in the province as per the vision of Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz. He further said that zero tolerance policy should be implemented against the elements involved in business of fake fertilizers and agricultural pesticides.

He said that strict monitoring should be done to ensure the availability of quality agricultural inputs in the market at fixed prices. He said that the field staff of the Agriculture (Extension) and pest warning should prepare and send a monthly.



LAHORE: Workers sorting out corn cobs at Vegetable Market.

Zong 4G prioritizes users' well being with new SehatYab Partnership

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zong 4G Pakistan's leading mobile network operator, announced a groundbreaking partnership with SehatYab, a leading telehealth platform.

This collaboration prioritizes user well-being by offering a comprehensive suite of mental health services accessible through the Zong 4G network said news release.

SehatYab offers comprehensive online mental health services in Pakistan for individuals and corporates, providing confidential consultations with qualified and the best psychologists, and trainers.

The Zong 4G and SehatYab partnership provides Zong 4G users with several valuable resources to support their mental health such as Free Online Self-Assessment Tests, helping you gain valuable insights into your mental wellbeing with free tests for adults and children.

These tests cover various areas, including mental health, relationships, and work stress. This partnership offers discounted personalized consultations with licensed clinical psychologists and psychiatrists.

Government accelerating its transformation target towards digital economy: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja Thursday said that the government is trying to realize the opportunities presented by digital technologies by creating new jobs, expanding to new markets, driving innovation, and developing new economic sectors.

Talking to a Private news channel, she said that the present government is accelerating its transformation targets to the digital economy by focusing on empowering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and tech startups.

The government is committed to digital transformation and steps are underway in this regard, she added.

She stressed that a digital future will only be key to redefining societies, enabling growth and development, enhancing education and industry, and building new capacity for accelerating the economy.

"Digital technologies have great potential for achieving the political, economic, and social empowerment of young women and men", she added.

Asian Development Bank delegation visits FBR

ISLAMABAD (APP): Asian Development Bank (ADB) mission on Thursday visited Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and met the senior officials of the board who have been assisting in the implementation of the Domestic Resource Mobilization Program (DRM).

The mission was led by Senior Director ADB Tariq Niazi and included Senior Public Sector Management Specialist Laisiasa Tora, Sana Masood and Farzana Noshab economist were also presented in the meeting, said a press release issued by FBR.

The mission's objectives included discussion on structural and policy reforms under the DRM Program funded by the bank and showed satisfaction on the successful rolling down of the DRM Program and noted that significant achievements were made in the Sub-Program I of the DRM program.



LAHORE: Members of Kissan Board are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, at Lahore press club.

Rupee gains 01 paise against US dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Thursday gained 01 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.30 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.31.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market, however, stood at Rs 277.25 and Rs 280 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 15 paise and closed at Rs 298.11 against the last-day closing of Rs 297.96, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.78, whereas an increase of 48 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound.

Gold rates decrease by Rs 900

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 900 and was sold at Rs 241,000 on Thursday compared to its sale at Rs 241,900 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs 771 to Rs 206,619 from Rs 207,390 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold.

Analysts had expected a figure of \$69.0 billion, according to Briefing.com.

While consumption has helped to support US trade, economists see trade flows easing ahead with cooler global demand and growth. Elevated interest rates in the United States could also weigh on demand in the country.

On Wednesday, the US central bank held rates at a 23-year high to stamp out stubborn inflation.

US trade gap wider than anticipated in March

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): The US trade deficit was wider than analysts anticipated in March—hovering close to the biggest in nearly a year—with exports and imports both declining, according to government data published Thursday.

The trade gap came in at \$69.4 billion, narrowing slightly from February's \$69.5 billion figure—which had been revised larger, said the Commerce Department.

US can't support Rafah assault, Blinken tells Israel

Monitoring Desk
ASHDOD: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he has still not seen a plan for Israel's planned offensive on the southern Gaza city of Rafah that would protect civilians, repeating that Washington could not support such an assault.

Blinken and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met in Jerusalem for two-and-a-half hours, after which Israel repeated that the Rafah operation would go ahead despite the US position and a stark UN warning that it would lead to "tragedy".

"We cannot, will not support a major military operation in Rafah absent an effective plan to make sure that civilians are not harmed and no, we've not seen such a plan," Blinken told reporters.

"There are other ways, and in our judgment better ways, of deal-

ing with the ... ongoing challenge of Hamas that does not require a major military operation in Rafah," he said, adding that it was the subject of ongoing talks with Israeli officials.

US Democrats press Biden to prevent Israeli assault on Rafah

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's administration faced renewed pressure from his fellow Democrats to influence Israel not to launch a full-scale invasion of Rafah, the city where almost half of the Gaza Strip's 2.3 million people have taken refuge.

Fifty-seven of the 212 Democrats in the House of Representatives signed a letter calling on the administration to take every possible measure to dissuade Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government from an all-out assault on the city near the Egyptian border. "We urge you to invoke existing law and policy to immediately withhold certain offensive military aid to the Israeli government, including aid sourced from legislation already signed into law, in order to preempt a full-scale assault on Rafah," said the letter, dated Wednesday.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the letter, which was led by Representatives Pramila Jayapal and Madeleine Dean.

Biden's support for Israel in its war against Hamas has emerged as a significant political liability for the president, particularly among young Democrats.



A Palestinian woman walks past the ruins of a house destroyed during Israel's military offensive in Gaza City.

US official urges China, Russia to declare only humans, not AI, control nuclear weapons

Monitoring Desk
HONG KONG: A senior U.S. official on Thursday urged China and Russia to match declarations by the United States and others that only humans, and never artificial intelligence, would make decisions on deploying nuclear weapons.

State Department arms control official Paul Dean told an online briefing that Washington had made a "clear and strong commitment" that humans had total control over nuclear weapons, adding that France and Britain had done the same.

"We would welcome a similar statement by China and the Russian Federation," said Dean, principal deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Arms Control, Deterring and Stability.

"We think it is an ex-

tremely important norm of responsible behaviour and we think it is something that would be very welcome in a P5 context," he said, referring to the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Dean's remarks come as the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden tries to deepen separate discussions with China over both nuclear weapons policy and the growth of artificial intelligence.

The Chinese defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The spread of artificial intelligence technology surfaced during sweeping talks between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing on April 26.

Residents of northern Israel brace for possible all-out war with Hezbollah

Monitoring Desk
HAIFA: Eli Harel was an Israeli soldier in his early thirties when he was sent into Lebanon in 2006 to battle fighters from the Iranian-backed group Hezbollah in a bloody, largely inconclusive month-long war.

Now 50, Harel is ready to rejoin the army to fight the same group if shelling along Israel's northern border turns into a full-blown war with Iran's most powerful regional proxy. This time Israeli forces would face some of the most challenging fighting conditions imaginable, he said.

"There are booby traps everywhere," he told Reuters. "People are popping up from tunnels. You have to be constantly on alert otherwise you will be dead."

Harel lives in Haifa,

Israel's third biggest city, well within range of Hezbollah's weapons. Haifa's mayor recently urged residents to stockpile food and medicine because of the growing risk of all-out war.

Israel and Hezbollah have been engaged in escalating daily cross-border strikes over the past six months - in parallel with the war in Gaza - and their increasing range and sophistication has spurred fears of a wider regional conflict.

Hezbollah has amassed a formidable arsenal since 2006.

Like Hamas, the militant Palestinian group battling Israel in Gaza, Hezbollah has a network of tunnels to move fighters and weapons around.

Its fighters have also been training for more than a decade with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces.

Death toll from south China road collapse rises to 48

Monitoring Desk
GUANGDONG: The death toll from a highway collapse in southern China's Guangdong province has risen to 48 as rescue work continues, state media said on Thursday.

Heavy rains caused a stretch of road from Meizhou city towards Dabu county to cave in at around 2:10am local time on Wednesday, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Vehicles careened into the nearly 18-metre-long gash in the tarmac and plummeted down the steep slope below. Guangdong, a densely populated industrial powerhouse, has been hit by a string of disasters attributed to extreme weather events in recent weeks. The storms have been much heavier than expected this time of year and have been linked to climate change.

China is the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases contributing to climate change but has pledged to reduce emissions to net zero by 2060.

Doubts grow over Gaza truce plan

Monitoring Desk
PALESTINIAN: Doubts grew on Thursday over the fate of a Gaza truce plan that, as the week began, had raised hopes of an end to nearly seven months of war between Israel and Palestinian Hamas militants.

Israel was still waiting for Hamas's response to the latest proposal, said an Israeli official not authorised to speak publicly.

Mediators have proposed a deal that would halt fighting for 40 days and exchange Israeli hostages for potentially thousands of Palestinian prisoners, according to details released earlier by Britain.

Any such deal would be the first since a one-week truce in November saw 80 Israeli hostages exchanged for 240 Palestinian prisoners.



Colombia's President Gustavo Petro delivers a speech during a rally in Bogota.

Khamenei opposes Arab-Israel ties

Monitoring Desk
TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday efforts underway to forge a normalisation of ties between Israel and Arab countries will not resolve the crisis in the Middle East.

"Some people think that by forcing neighbouring countries to normalise their ties (with Israel) the problem will be solved," said Khamenei.

"They are wrong," Khamenei's remarks came after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington is nearly ready with a security package to offer Saudi Arabia if it normalises relations with Israel.

Saudi Arabia had been in talks over a potential normalisation with Israel but they were paused when the Gaza crisis broke out. Regional tensions have soared since the start of the Israeli aggression, drawing in Iran-backed groups in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen.

The Islamic republic backs Hamas, but has denied any direct involvement in the group's attack on arch-foe Israel.

Iran does not recognise Israel and has made support for the Palestinian cause a centrepiece of its foreign policy since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Biden blames China, Japan and India's economic woes on 'xenophobia'

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that "xenophobia" from China to Japan and India was hobbling their growth, as he argued that migration has been good for the US economy.

"One of the reasons why our economy's growing is because of you and many others. Why? Because we welcome immigrants," Biden said at a Washington fundraising event for his 2024 re-election campaign and marking the start of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

"Why is China stalling so badly economically, why is Japan having trouble, why is Russia, why is India, because they're xenophobic. They don't want immigrants. Immigrants are what makes us strong."

The International Monetary Fund forecast last month that each country would see its growth decelerate in 2024 from 0.9 per cent in highly developed Japan to 6.8pc in emerging India.

They forecast that the United States would grow at 2.7pc, slightly brisker than its 2.5pc rate last year.

UK to vote in local elections as Tories brace for big losses

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: Millions of voters in England and Wales will cast their ballots on Thursday in an array of local elections that will be the last big test before a UK general election that all indicators show will see the Conservative Party ousted from power after 14 years.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will hope he can point to successes, notably in a couple of key mayoral races, to douse talk that the Conservative Party will change leader again before the United Kingdom's main election, which could take place as soon as next month.

More than 120,000 take part in May Day protests across France, dozens arrested

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: French police said they arrested 45 people in Paris and that 12 officers had been injured during traditional May Day protests, though the demonstrations were far more subdued than last year.

Riot police used tear gas and batons to disperse some of the demonstrators.

Police put the number of protesters in the French capital at about 18,000, though the hardest hit CGT union put the figure at around 50,000.



Law enforcement officers detain a demonstrator, as they clear out the protest encampment in support of Palestinians at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in Los Angeles, California.

Volcano eruption shuts more airports, ash reaches Malaysia

Monitoring Desk
JAKARTA: Eruptions at a remote Indonesian volcano forced more than half a dozen airports to close with ash spreading as far as Malaysia, officials said on Wednesday, while authorities rushed to evacuate thousands due to tsunami fears.

Mount Ruang erupted three times on Tuesday, spewing lava and ash more than five kilometres (three miles) into the sky and forcing authorities to issue evacuation orders for 12,000 locals.

A rescue ship and a warship were dispatched to

help move thousands from neighbouring Tagulandang island north to Siau island because of a warning about parts of the volcano falling into the sea potentially causing a tsunami. Rosalin Salindeho, a 95-year-old resident of Tagulandang in Indonesia's outermost region of North Sulawesi province, spoke of her fears when Ruang erupted after arriving in Siau.

"The mountain exploded. Wow, it was horrible. There were rains of rocks. Twice. The second one was really heavy, even the houses far away were also hit," she said.

Polish synagogue struck by bottle containing flammable substance

Monitoring Desk
WARSAW: An unknown assailant hurled a bottle containing a flammable substance at a synagogue in Warsaw early, police said, prompting condemnation from Polish political leaders.

Poland's chief rabbi Michael Schudrich told Reuters that nobody was hurt in the incident, which took place around 1 am (2300 GMT on Tuesday). Police said they had not yet established a motive for the attack. Attacks against Jews and Jewish targets have risen worldwide since war erupted in Gaza last October following an attack on Israel by Hamas-led militants and Israel's subsequent military offensive.

Forest fires raze parts of India amid heat, dry weather

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: Frequent fires are razing forests in India's Uttarakhand state in the north and Odisha in the east amid high temperatures and long dry spells, and the blazes have been worsened by people burning the forest to collect a flower used to brew alcohol.

Data from the state-run Forest Survey of India shows that as of 2021, 54.4% of forests in India experienced occasional fires, most of them due to man-made factors.

Colombia cuts diplomatic ties with Israel

Monitoring Desk
BOGOTA: Colombian President Gustavo Petro said his country will sever diplomatic ties with Israel, whose leader he described as "genocidal" over its aggression in Gaza.

"Tomorrow (Thursday) diplomatic relations with the state of Israel will be severed... for having a genocidal president," Petro told a May Day rally in Bogota, referring to Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Petro has taken a critical stance on the Gaza assault. In October, just days after the start of the crisis, Israel said it was "halting security exports" to Colombia after Petro accused Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant of using language about the people of Gaza similar to what the "Nazis said of the Jews."

Israel, one of the main providers of arms to

Colombia's military, then said it was "halting security exports" to the South American country as the diplomatic feud escalated.

Bogota subsequently demanded Israel's envoy leave the South American country.

Petro, Colombia's first leftist president, has also asserted that "democratic peoples cannot allow Nazism to reestablish itself in international politics." In February, he suspended Israeli weapons purchases after dozens of people died in a scramble for food aid in the war-torn Palestinian territory — an event he said was "called genocide and recalls the Holocaust."

Colombia's armed forces, engaged in a decades-long conflict with leftist guerrillas, rightwing paramilitaries and drug cartels, use Israeli-made weapons and aircraft.

More debris in Gaza than Ukraine, says UN

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: Gaza stands filled with more debris and rubble than Ukraine, the UN stated on Wednesday. The mammoth task of clearing it has been made all the more costly and dangerous in the face of the sheer amount of asbestos and unexploded ordnance.

Six months into the Israeli aggression, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) has estimated the amount of debris in the Gaza Strip, at 37 million tonnes in mid-April, or 300 kilogrammes per square metre.

"Gaza has more rubble than Ukraine, and to put that in perspective, the Ukrainian front line is 600 miles (nearly 1,000 kilometres) long, and Gaza is 25 miles (40 km) long," said the head of the UNMAS programme in the Palestinian territories, Mungo Birch.

However, the UNMAS says the volume

of rubble is not the only problem.

"This rubble is likely heavily contaminated with UXO (unexploded ordnance) but its clearance will be further complicated by other hazards in the rubble" Birch told journalists in Geneva.

"There's estimated to be over 800,000 tonnes of asbestos, for instance, alone in the Gaza rubble." The carcinogenic mineral used in construction requires special precautions when handling.

It is generally estimated that 10 to 15 per cent of the munitions fired do not explode on impact and therefore manifest a lasting danger for civilian populations.

Birch stated he is optimistic that the UNMAS, which works to mitigate the threats posed by all types of explosive ordnance, will become the coordinating body for mine action in Gaza.

South Korea raises diplomatic alert levels citing North Korea threats

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: South Korea's foreign ministry on Thursday raised the terrorism alert level for five diplomatic offices in the region citing intelligence that North Korea may attempt to harm its officials. The five locations include Seoul's embassies in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, as well as consulates in Vladivostok, Russia, and Shenyang, China, the ministry said in a statement.

The terrorism alert level was raised from Attention to Alert, the second highest among South Korea's four classifications, which indicates the chances of an attack are strong, the foreign ministry said.

Separately, South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS) said it had a "number of indications that North Korea is preparing to carry out terrorist attacks against our diplomatic officers and citizens," but did not elaborate on the nature of the threats.

Pyongyang has dis-

patched agents to those countries to tighten surveillance of the South Korean missions, the NIS said.

The North Korean embassy in London did not respond to repeated phone calls for requests for comment. The North's government-controlled media has criticized allegations of terrorism against it as U.S.-led efforts to discredit opponents of Washington.

The foreign ministry statement also said South Korea's National Counter Terrorism Center held a meeting on Thursday to discuss measures to protect the diplomatic offices and officials who work there.

During the Cold War, North Korea was accused of carrying out several attacks on civilian targets, including bombings at a Seoul airport and a South Korean airliner in the 1980s.

The United States placed North Korea back on the list of state sponsors of terrorism in 2017.

Russia breached global chemical weapons ban in Ukraine war, US says

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The United States on Wednesday accused Russia of violating the international chemical weapons ban by deploying the choking agent chloropicrin against Ukrainian troops and using riot control agents "as a method of warfare" in Ukraine. "The use of such chemicals is not an isolated incident and is probably driven by Russian forces' desire to dislodge Ukrainian forces from fortified positions and achieve tactical gains on the battlefield," the State Department said in a statement. The Russian embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Chloropicrin is listed as a banned choking agent by the Hague-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which was created to implement and monitor compliance with the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

German forces fired the gas against Allied troops during World War I in one of the first uses of a

chemical weapon.

Earlier this month, Reuters reported the Ukrainian military as saying Russia has stepped up its illegal use of riot control agents as it presses its biggest advances in eastern Ukraine in more than two years. In addition to chloropicrin, Russian forces have used grenades loaded with CS and CN gases, the Ukrainian military says. It says at least 500 Ukrainian soldiers have been treated for exposure to toxic substances and one was killed by suffocating on tear gas.

While civilians usually can escape riot control gases during protests, soldiers stuck in trenches without gas masks must either flee under enemy fire or risk suffocating. The State Department said it was delivering to Congress its determination that Russia's use of chloropicrin against Ukrainian troops violated the CWC. Moscow's use of the gas "comes from the same playbook as its operations to poison" the late opposition leader Alexei Navalny in 2020 and Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in 2018 with the Novichok nerve agent.



A woman carrying her child stands on the deck of a warship as people are being evacuated following the eruptions of Mount Ruang volcano in Indonesia's North Sulawesi province.

Our education system not assuance with modern needs: Chief Minister vows to wipe out corruption from education system first of all

Mir Sarfraz Bugti says corruption devastated our society; announces to terminate around 800 habitual absentee teachers; no compromise to be made on merit

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has regrettably pointed out that our education system is not assuance with the modern requirements, and reiterated his government's resolve to wipe out corruption from education system first of all.

He stated that absentee teachers are our big issue, and therefore, we are going to terminate around 800 habitual absentee teachers in the education department.

He said that no compromise would be made on merit at all.

The Chief Minister expressed these views while addressing the ceremony of tablets distribution among the students at Chief Minister's secretariat on Thursday.

The Provincial Minister for Education, Ms. Rahila Hameed Khan Durrani and other concerned high ups were present on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister said that the new generation of Balochistan is blessed with excellent talent and capabilities.

However, our education system is not fitting to the modern day requirements, he regrettably pointed out.

He stressed the need to resolve the issues after pinning point them.

He pointed out that around 1.3 million children of the province are still out of schools in the province.

He expressed the hope that there would be positive changes in education department under leadership of the Provincial

Minister for Education, Ms. Rahila Hameed Khan Durrani.

He said that the corruption has shattered our society, and therefore, we are committed to wipe out corruption from the education system.

The Chief Minister sought cooperation of general public in this regard.

He said that action would be taken against cabinet members if found involved in selling of the jobs.

He asserted that either the minister selling jobs would remain in the cabinet or him.

He asked the people to send him the video if anyone demands bribe for jobs.

He also exhorted the students to work hard to excel in studies. He also urged the teachers to motivate students towards acquiring different skills.



KARACHI: Pakistan Navy and US Navy Officers and Troops in a group photo on board PN Ship during Exercise Inspired Union 2024.

PM for enhancing bilateral cooperation with Azerbaijan in various areas

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday stressed the need to work together with Azerbaijan to enhance trade and investment, energy cooperation, defence, connectivity, education and cultural exchanges, and people-to-people contacts.

The prime minister said that he intended to send a high level ministerial delegation to Baku for enhancing bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

Pakistan, he said, was also prepared to convene the Pakistan-Azerbaijan Joint Commission meeting at an early date where both sides could discuss matters related to cooperation in various fields.

The prime minister was talking to Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov who

called on him.

The ambassador briefed the prime minister on the current state of bilateral relations, highlighting the recent inauguration of flights between Baku and Karachi, in addition to the flights already operating between Baku and Islamabad as well as Baku and Lahore. He said that the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan was also expected to visit Pakistan later this month. He also briefed the prime minister on various institutional mechanisms and their upcoming meetings later this year.

While admiring the beauty of the city of Baku, Prime Minister Shehbaz said that he wanted to replicate the beautification of Baku in Islamabad and suggested that both cities could explore enhanced cooperation through sister

city agreement among them.

He emphasized that Pakistan attached great importance to Azerbaijan as the two countries enjoyed excellent brotherly relations. He conveyed his greetings for President Ilham Aliyev and fondly recalled their telephonic conversation on Eidul Fitr.

He also recalled his interactions with the leadership of Azerbaijan during his visit to Baku in June 2023 and reiterated his invitation to President Aliyev to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at his earliest convenience. The prime minister congratulated Azerbaijan on being selected as the host city for the COP 29 Summit meeting that would be held in November 2024 and said he looked forward to receiving the Minister of Ecology of Azerbaijan next week.



QUETTA: QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti along with Education Minister Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani giving away tablet to girl students at a ceremony of distribution of tablets to schools students

Mustafa Shah urges global action for cultural heritage protection

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah has said that legislative bodies have critical role in safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage.

"Legislatures enact robust legal frameworks that not only preserve cultural heritage but also address critical aspects such as conservation methodologies, adequate funding mechanisms, and stringent penalties for any acts of damage or destruction," he made these remarks in his

address at the Sixth World Forum On Intercultural Dialogue in Baku, Azerbaijan, centered on the theme "The Role and Best Practices of the Legislature in the Protection of Cultural Heritage", said a news release received here on Thursday.

Opening his speech with heartfelt accolades to the organizers and the government of Azerbaijan for organizing successful event, he emphasized the profound significance of fostering mutual understanding among diverse cultures as a

cornerstone in preserving our collective cultural heritage.

The Speaker while highlighting the intrinsic value of cultural heritage, noted that the myriad threats faced by cultural heritage in today's interconnected world require urgent need for proactive and concerted measures to ensure its protection and longevity.

Ghulam Mustafa emphasized the imperative of fostering collaborative partnerships with stakeholders from governmental agencies, cultural institutions, local communities, and international organizations.

President condoles demise of UAE's Sheikh Tahnoun bin Mohamed Al Nahyan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday expressed condolences over demise of Sheikh Tahnoun bin Mohamed Al Nahyan, the Representative of the United Arab Emirates' Ruler in Al Ain.

"Deeply saddened at the demise of the Representative of the UAE's Ruler in Al Ain Sheikh Tahnoun bin Mohamed Al Nahyan. I express my condolences to the UAE's leadership," the president said in a message issued by the President House.

He said Sheikh Tahnoun bin Mohamed Al Nahyan played important role in shaping the legacy of the UAE.

Dubai Consulate honours Pak volunteers for rescue work during rains

DUBAI (APP): A team of Pakistani volunteers, who helped and rescued hundreds of people and dozens of vehicles during the recent rains in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, were honoured by the Consulate General of Pakistan. They were warmly welcomed by Consul General Hussain Muhammad, who later awarded certificates of appreciation to them in recognition of their unmatched services. Officers and officials of the Consulate were also present on the occasion.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Livestock and Dairy Development Bakht Muhammad Kakar visiting Govt. Primary School Killi Haji Khan

Pak-US Navies conduct bilateral exercise 'Inspired Union 2024'

KARACHI (INP): The bilateral exercise of Pakistan and US Navies 'Inspired Union 2024' was held at Karachi with an aim to enhance relations and interoperability between PN and USN through mutual exchange of professional experience and expertise in maritime domain.

The three-day exercise was participate by officers and personnel of United States Marine Corps, Coast Guards, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Diving, Legal, Naval Construction Force, Civil Affairs and Medical teams.

Multiple discussions and practical evolutions on

professional topics of mutual interest were conducted during the exercise. Commander CTF-52, also called on Commander Pakistan Fleet and Commander Coast.

During these interactions, matters of mutual interest in maritime domain were discussed.

Conduct of Exercise Inspired Union was a regular feature between Pakistan Navy and US Navy. The exercise was manifestation of strong bilateral military relations between PN and USN aimed at promoting safe and sustainable maritime environment in the region.



QUETTA: A group photo of officers and staff on eve of farewell ceremony hosted by Secretary Information Imran Khan in honour of Additional Secretary Amjad Sohail who transferred from department

Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak Girls Cadet College Turbat hosts first passing out parade

Independent Report
QUETTA: The first passing-out parade ceremony of Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak Girls Cadet College Turbat was held at Turbat on Thursday.

The Commandant of the Girls Cadets College, Brigadier Humayun Ajmal was chief guest at the passing out parade and underscored significance of the momentous event.

In all 67 girl cadets belonging to different parts of the province, who suc-

cessfully passed out from the College, participated in the ceremony that marked a historic milestone in Balochistan's educational landscape.

The successful passing-out cadets represent Makran, Kalat, Naseerabad, Sibi, Zhob, Quetta, and Rakshan, divisions and stand as a testament to the dedication and perseverance of the province's girls.

Various prizes and awards were presented to

high achiever cadets, recognizing their outstanding performance and commitment to excellence during their academic sessions.

In a heartening display of support, the passing-out parade ceremony was attended by the cadets' parents and a large number of representatives from civil society, reaffirming the collective commitment to the empowerment and advancement of Balochistan's youth.

Ahsan spearheads strategic review of Federal PPP Policy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday chaired a meeting at the Planning Commission to review the Federal Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Policy.

The meeting was attended among others by Minister for Petroleum and Water Resources Musadik Malik, Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Professor of Economics & Strategy Dr Nadeem Javaid, Member Social Sector Rafiq Ullah Kakar and CEO of the PPP Authority (P3A) Malik Ahmad Khan besides consultants from the Asian Development Bank, a news release said.

The meeting, aligning with the Prime Minister's directives outlined during the approval of the Federal

PPP Policy 2023-2028, was aimed at a strategic review of the policy's operational framework.

This initiative is part of a broader effort to enhance the implementation mechanism and effectiveness of the PPP policy.

The agenda of the committee meeting focused on identifying areas for improvement within the Federal PPP Policy 2023-2028 and formulating strategies to enhance its implementation mechanism.

The meeting underscored the government's dedication to updating the PPP policy to reflect contemporary economic needs and demands, it said adding "The collective insights from this consultation are set to guide policy going forward, with an aim at enhancing the effectiveness in future PPP projects."



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal in a meeting with key stakeholders to review Federal Public-Private Partnership Policy.

Reforms in FBR govt's top priority for economic revival: Law Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar Thursday said that as per the vision of the Prime Minister, it was the top priority of the incumbent government to introduce reforms in Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to address economic crisis.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is leading the entire reform process in this regard, he said while addressing a press conference here.

The minister highlighted that currently, tax cases pertaining to the recovery of more than Rs2700 billions were pending in courts, which should be concluded early. The parliament, he said, for the first time has legislated on tax tribunals in order to not only expedite the process but also make it efficient. Under the law, cases of Rs 20 million will go to the

Commissioner while the cases above this will go to the Tribunal, he added.

Azam Nazeer Tarar said that some postings and transfers have been made in the FBR and more are expected in the coming days with strict adherence to merit. Competent officers with good reputation were being brought in front so the policies would be implemented efficiently, he said, adding that changes were not being made to declare anyone corrupt. He said that transfers would also be made in customs office to streamline the system and its effects would also go to the lower level.

He said that steps were also being taken to expand tax net, recoveries, income tax collection and stop electricity theft in the country so that this money could be used for the welfare of the public.



QUETTA: Provincial President PML-N Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail and newly elected MPA Nawabzada Zareen Magsi meeting with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti

Commissioner Quetta chairs meeting to solve issues of farmers

QUETTA (APP): Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafaqat on Thursday chaired a meeting regarding the problems of the Zamindar Action Committee (ZAC) and their solutions. The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Political Quetta Division Syed Kaleemullah, Assistant Commissioner Revenue Quetta Division Hanif Kabzai, Chairman of Zamindar Action Committee Malik Naseer Shahwani and Secretary General Abdul Rahman Bazai.

In the meeting, Chairman of ZAC Malik Naseer Shahwani apprised the Commissioner Quetta Division about farmers' problems being faced by them in the areas.

On which it was decided in the meeting that money would not be de-

manded from the landlords and farmers at any check post during the transfer of solar panels and fertilizers.

If any official asks for money, immediate action would be taken against him, he could be suspended and legal action to be taken against him.

Therefore, security checking of vehicles should be done at all checkpoints, while vehicles carrying solar panels and fertilizers should be checked only for non-prohibited items, the zamindars and farmers should not be harassed unnecessarily in this regard, said in the meeting.

Commissioner Quetta Division directed the Assistant Commissioner Quetta Division to immediately send a letter to inform all Deputy Commissioners in this regard.

99,830 students taking part in Intermediate's annual exams: Chairman BISE

Independent Report
QUETTA: The annual examinations of Intermediate (F.A and F.Sc.) commenced in the province.

According to the Chairman, Balochistan Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Quetta, Ejaz Ahmed Baloch, in all 99,830 candidates are taking part in the annual examinations of Intermediate all over the province.

For the examinations, 256 examination centers have been established in the province where 888 supervisory staff has been deployed.

The Chairman BISE told that vigilance teams have also been formed for prevention of cheating in the examinations. He said that the shops of Photostate would remain closed during the hours of papers.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister for PHE Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran in a meeting with public representatives in his office

PTI also demands full court bench for all-important letter case

ISLAMABAD (INP): Calls for formation of the full court to take up the Islamabad High Court judges' letter case grow as the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) also has put forward the demand.

At a press conference, PTI central information secretary Raouf Hasan said the party demand formation of a full court to hear the all-important letter issue on a daily basis.

Going a step further, Hasan said Chief Justice of

Pakistan Justice Qazi Faez Isa should dissociate himself from the bench.

He said the meddling allegation was a serious matter and the full court should hear it. The CJP claimed there was no meddling in judiciary despite the fact that even a common man was aware of this, he said.

He also hit out at the Punjab government for torturing and arresting wheat farmers and denying them their due right.

Pak calls for sweeping reform of 'unequal' int'l financial system

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan Wednesday called for sweeping reform of the international financial system to allow for low-income countries vulnerable to climate impacts to receive adequate help from richer nations.

"The highest priority for us must be to promote more rapid and equitable development, by seeking urgent support for the developing countries and the reform of the partial and unequal international financial, trade and technology regime to respond to the needs of developing countries," Ambassador Munir Akram told the Ninth Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development.

The Expert Mechanism provides the Geneva-based Human Rights Council with thematic expertise on the right to development in searching for, identifying

and sharing best practices with Member States and promotes the implementation of the right to development worldwide.

"We believe that while states have the primary responsibility to promote human rights, the UN system and International Financial Institutions have a collective responsibility to align the international economic and development policies in ways that helps in the realization of the right to development," the Pakistani envoy said. In this context, he underscored the importance of balanced promotion of all human rights, while stressing the need for a conducive environment to realize the fundamental right to development. Ambassador Akram said that developing countries were unable to make requisite resources for health and education available because of high indebtedness.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafaqat presiding over a meeting regarding solution of problems of Zamindar Action Committee