

Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



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 رکھنا پانچویں خانہ کعبہ کا حج کرنا
 (صحیح مسلم، صفحہ نمبر 114)

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PTI adds 79% debt, liabilities in last 71 years: Miftah

Minister for Finance and Revenue Miftah Ismail says Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government added 79 percent in 45 months highest debt and liabilities during last 71 years of the country's history. For the record: The total public debt under PTI went from Rs 24,953 billion to Rs 44,366 billion, an increase of 78%. The total debt plus liabilities went from Rs 29,879 billion to Rs 53,544 billion with an increase of 79 percent.



Imran Khan used institutions to run government: Azma Bokhari

Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) spokesperson Azma Bokhari says Imran Khan created drama in the name of accountability for four years and used institutions to run his government. The former PM wanted to file cases against the opposition leaders under Article 6, adding that PML-N does not interfere in anyone's private life but Imran Khan used the woman's video against NAB Chairman for personal interest.

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Shared future

COAS Gen Qamar Bajwa with Vice Chairperson Central Military Commission General Zhang Youxia in China.



Photo: ISPR

Pak, China discuss defence coop: ISPR

COAS Bajwa leads tri-service military delegation to China

RAWALPINDI: Top military leaders from Pakistan and China have met each other in Beijing and discussed the international and regional security situation and defence cooperation between the two sides, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) reported. According to the ISPR, a senior-level tri-service military delegation of Pakistan visited China from 9 to 12 June and held wide-ranging discussions with senior officials of the Chinese military and other government departments.

It shared that an apex Meeting was held on 12 June where the Pakistani side headed by Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa

met the Chinese side led by Vice Chairman Central Military Commission of China General Zhang Youxia. "Both sides discussed their perspectives on the international and regional security situation and expressed satisfaction on defence cooperation between the two countries," the military's media wing said.

It further said that Pakistan and China reaffirmed their strategic partnership in challenging times and agreed to continue regular exchange of perspectives on issues of mutual interest. "Both sides also vowed to enhance their training, technology and counterterrorism cooperation at the tri-service level. Agencies

Targeted subsidies

Budget represents significant progress in several ways: PM

Shehbaz for precautionary measures ahead of above-normal rainfall

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says that the federal budget for next fiscal year 2022-23 represents a significant improvement in several ways. In a tweet Sunday, he said it has provided more educational opportunities for our youth, particularly from Balochistan and targeted subsidies for financially weaker people. The PM said that more importantly, it has taxed non-productive assets of the rich.

In view of prediction about an above

normal monsoon rainfall during the last week of this month, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday directed the ministries and departments concerned to alert the provinces and district administrations. The prime minister directed for formulation of a comprehensive strategy in collaboration with the provinces considering the forecast for heavy monsoon downpours.

The prime minister directed that all

precautionary measures should be taken in accordance with the forecast of the meteorological department, besides ensuring arrangements in the low laying areas and in those regions which could be affected during the rainy period. He also asked for timely supply of necessary equipment and other necessary steps for the protection of crops and animals in the agrarian areas.

The prime minister further observed that residents in the affected areas should

be forewarned and shifted to safer areas. Other steps like proper drainage, dredging of nullahs and water channels and fumigation should also be taken, he added. The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), in a statement, has predicted that country was expected to receive "above average rainfall" during the upcoming monsoon season. It further said that pre-monsoon rains are likely to start in the second week of June. Agencies

PTI wants immediate elections: Imran

Says imported govt cuts tribal districts development budget

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan on Sunday said that his party wants immediate elections in the country. "I will not sit quietly until the announcement of the election date," the former prime minister said while talking to a delegation of lawyers hailing from Bar Association Mian Channu. PTI chairman Imran Khan said elections are the only way forward and the solution to political and economic problems being faced by the country lies in them.

Lauding the participation of the lawyers from South Punjab in the Azadi Long March, Imran Khan said he will soon announce the date for a 'huge' long march towards Islamabad against the 'imported govt'. Mudasir Raza, president of Mian Channu bar association said

PTI chairman Imran Khan will soon announce the date for his address to the bar.

Yesterday, former prime minister Imran Khan had vowed to continue the struggle till the announcement of fresh election date. Talking to media persons at Bani Gala, Imran Khan said that the only solution to the present political turmoil is the announcement of immediate elections in the country. "Seems like 'powerful circles are also worried due to ongoing political and economic turmoil in Pakistan," he was quoted as saying. Imran Khan predicted that the government would be sent packing in 30 or 45 days.

PTI supremo and former Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday said the 'imported government' has reduced the development budget by keeping only Rs110 billion for the tribal areas. Agencies

Pakistan, OIC discuss persecution of Muslims in India

FM Bilawal, SG Taha discuss Islamophobic actions in India

Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the Chair of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, had a telephonic conversation with the OIC Secretary General, Mr. Houssein Ibrahim Taha, on Sunday. The conversation focused on the series of Islamophobic actions by the ruling dispensation in India, in particular the derogatory remarks against Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) made by two senior officials of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP).

The Foreign Minister observed that the derogatory remarks made by the high-ranking BJP officials had deeply hurt the sentiments of the Muslims around the globe. He noted that the BJP's attempted clarification, and the belated and perfunctory 'disciplinary' action against the responsible individuals, could not assuage the pain and anguish they had caused to the Muslim world. He strongly condemned the



high-handed treatment by the Indian authorities of the peaceful protests after Friday

Islamophobia in India needs to be addressed: Bilawal

prayers over the derogatory remarks, which was the latest manifestation of the Indian government's ongoing persecution of Muslims.

The Foreign Minister urged the OIC and its Member States to step up their efforts for protecting the life, dignity, property, culture, heritage and religious freedoms of the Indi-

an Muslims. He further urged the Organization to take immediate cognizance of the aggravating situation of Islamophobia in India. The OIC Secretary General expressed deep concern over the insulting remarks, as well as the unending plight of Indian Muslims. OIC was sensitive to the growing trend of Islamophobia and the need to take collective action to combat it. Both sides recalled the resolutions and pronouncements of the UN and OIC on Islamophobia, and decided to remain in contact to explore avenues of combatting Islamophobia in India, and mitigating the sufferings of Indian Muslims.

Foreign funding

PTI objects ECP's unequal treatment in new petition

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has filed a miscellaneous petition to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for allegedly facing unequal treatment from the institution as compared to the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the foreign funding case. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, in its new petition, requested the ECP to equally treat all political parties including PTI, PML-N and PPP. The PTI sought ECP to hear foreign funding cases against PTI, PML-N and PPP at the same time.

The petition stated that the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had ordered ECP for equal treatment to all political parties. It further elaborated that the scrutiny process of all three respondent political parties had been started in 2018 but the ECP conducted the 19 hearings of PTI's foreign funding case but held only two hearings of PPP and PML-N. Agencies

Pakistan to seek deferred payments for Qatari LNG

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Miftah Ismail has asserted that Pakistan will seek a deferred payment plan for liquefied natural gas bought under long-term deals with Qatar as Islamabad faces a balance of payments crisis and falling foreign exchange reserves. Miftah Ismail unveiled Budget 2022-23 on Friday aimed at fiscal consolidation as it tries to convince the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to restart much-needed financial support. However, the Fund has expressed concerns over the numbers, including its current account deficit. "We've talked about a deferred payment plan or at least I've requested this and the petroleum minister is doing negotiations and is going to do the talks," Ismail said.

As it awaits IMF funds, cash-strapped Pakistan is faced with falling foreign exchange reserves, enough for less than 45 days of imports, and a huge current account deficit - with energy purchases dominating its record import bill. Global energy prices have risen to record levels in recent months amid reduced Russian supply and resurgent demand in Asia. Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik, who was in Doha this week for talks with Qatari Minister of State for Energy Affairs and Qatar Energy chief executive Saad al-Kaabi, confirmed talks but said his government was exploring different "innovative" pricing and supply strategies in



broad-based talks.

"Deferred payment obviously would be enormously beneficial for Pakistan in the way of cash flows, but that is not the only discussion that we are having," Malik said in an audio message, describing the discussions as "preliminary". In recent years Pakistan has increased reliance on LNG for electricity generation, but is facing widespread power outages as procurement of the chilled fuel remains unreliable and expensive.

Ismail said his government was also speaking to Qatar about a new five- or 10-year LNG supply deal for three monthly cargoes, as well as an additional

supply under an existing deal. Pakistan already has two long term supply deals with Qatar - the first signed in 2016 for five cargoes a month, and the second in 2021, under which Pakistan currently gets three monthly shipments. Malik said Qatar was among multiple suppliers Pakistan was talking to for term contracts as it tries to navigate a "hot" and "pricy" market. Pakistan has unsuccessfully tapped the spot market for an extra July cargo, with two tenders over the last week not returning valid bids. Ismail said two other long-term suppliers had been unable to fulfil contractual supply obligations to Pakistan.

Energy crisis

Federal Minister for Water Resources, Syed Khurshid Ahmad Shah is being briefed regarding ongoing developments on Dasu Hydropower Project on Sunday.



Photo: PID

Punjab budget today

No burden will be put on the poor people: Hamza

Awais Leghari to unveil Punjab budget FY 2022-23

ISLAMABAD: Punjab government will present the provincial budget for next fiscal year today (Monday). The provincial Finance Department spokesperson told media in Lahore that the next fiscal year's budget would focus on pro-poor initiatives and controlling inflation. He said no new tax will be imposed in the budget while special concessions and incentives given in the past would continue. Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shehbaz says no burden will be put on the poor people in the coming budget and steps will be taken to address difficulties of the common man. In a statement in Lahore, he said the focus of provincial budget for next fiscal year will be on providing maximum relief to the masses in the present difficult circumstances.

Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz issued the order of presenting Punjab's budget for the next financial year 2022-23 to Awais Leghari. According to sources, the speech has also been delivered to the provincial minister by the Punjab Finance



Department. Meanwhile, the Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz Sharif said that the budget for the next financial year 2022-23 will be people friendly. The provincial budget for the fiscal year 2022-23 will be in federal format. The budget will introduce a special aid package to control inflation. The prices of food items will be controlled to increase the purchasing power of the people. The provincial budget will ensure efficient use of energy to reduce load shedding, he added. Punjab CM further said that special discounts will be given to low-income people in paying their electricity bills. No new tax will be levied

in the budget of Punjab for the next financial year, adding that the concession given in provincial revenue during the budget will be maintained. Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz's facility package of availability of flour in low price will be continued in the next financial year as well, he said.

Hamza Shahbaz said big part of the budget will be spent on achieving development goals. In the Punjab's next financial year's budget the first priority of the government will be to develop the social sector and revive the economy. In Budget 2022-23, many important initiatives will be introduced in the field of education, health, agriculture and communication. Carrying on with it the Punjab CM added the next budget will ensure the solution of public problems at the district level to achieve the sustainable development goals. Punjab's budget for the next financial year will be a balanced and people-friendly budget. It will bring good news for both government employees and the working class, said Hamza Shahbaz.

PTI took 76 pc highest loan of history: Marriyum

Questions why Pakistan was on verge of bankruptcy

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Sunday that the Finance Minister of "Tabdeeli Sarkar" had admitted that the PTI had borrowed 80 percent, rather it had taken 76 percent of the entire loan taken by Pakistan since its creation. In a tweet, she said they should be asked why the country was on the brink of bankruptcy despite the then rulers had taken record loan. She said they should tell the nation if the loan was taken to improve the national economy or run the kitchen of Bani Gala residence of Imran Khan. Marriyum Aurangzeb said that finally the former finance minister Shaukat Tarin has admitted that PTI government got twenty thousand billion rupees loans during four years which is 76 percent of total



loans in the history of Pakistan. In a tweet today (Sunday), the Information Minister said similar admissions will be made by the former prime minister in coming days. Marriyum Aurangzeb said confession of agreement with IMF on tough terms, increase in value of dollar up to 189 rupees, inflation, unemployment, economic disaster and corruption will also be made soon. Agencies

AJK Cabinet asks centre to reverse its budget cut

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) Cabinet on Sunday asked the Federal government its decision of slashing the state's development budget cut, otherwise, it would not announce the next fiscal year's budget. The AJK cabinet took this decision to the effect in a meeting chaired by the AJK Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas, an official press release said. The meeting was specially attended by acting President / Speaker AJK Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq.

Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan said the federal government was imposing cuts on budgets of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. "Azad Kashmir is the base camp of Kashmir's liberation struggle and in view of its great importance especially in terms of defence the region cannot afford budgetary cuts", he said. The PM maintained that the central government would be informed about the region's sensitive nature and situation arising out of budget cuts.

Govt cuts GB's budget by 50pc: GB CM

ISLAMABAD: Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid on Sunday said that Gilgit-Baltistan is the gateway to CPEC but the incumbent government had reduced budget by 50pc. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad alongside PTI's Murad Saeed and Ali Amin Gandapur, CM said this year our development budget was to be increased by 45pc but the incumbent government has stalled the journey of development. CM Khalid Khurshid further said that GB's allocations had reached billions of rupees for the first time when the Imran Khan-led government took charge. Previously, the PSDP's portfolio was Rs2bn which Imran raised to Rs10bn, he added.

"In last year's budget 'our local ADP [annual development programme] stood at Rs18 billion and the PSDP also amounted to Rs18bn, totalling Rs36bn," he said. He said the PTI government made an announcement of a development package which was set at Rs18bn in the first stage and our average was to be Rs55bn annually. Rebutting the current government, he said the budget "deliberately" curtailed the development portfolio of GB by 50 per cent. Agencies

TTP Talks

PPP forms body talk with other parties

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party has constituted a three-member committee to reach out other political parties over recent developments in Pakistan's talks with the TTP. In a statement the People's Party has stated that it will raise the issue, jointly with other parties, in the Parliament. The PPP special committee has been constituted on party leaders Qamar Zaman Kaira, Senator Sherry Rehman and Farhatullah Babar, according to statement. The People's Party on Saturday decided to reach out to its allied parties to build a consensus on the way forward amid talks with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

A high-level meeting was held at Zardari House in Islamabad under the chairmanship of the party's co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto. Senior party leaders — Yousaf Raza Gillani, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Murad Ali Shah, Sherry Rehman, Khurshid Shah, Faryal Talpur, Nayyer Bukhari, Qamar Zaman Kaira, Chaudhry Manzoor, Nadeem Afzal Chan, Akhunnzada Chhattan, Nisar Khuhro and others — attended the meeting. In a statement issued after the meeting, the PPP said that the party had reiterated that all decisions must be taken by the parliament, and thus, the parliament must be taken on board. Taking to Twitter, Bilawal Bhutto said that PPP held a high-level meeting to discuss the issue of terrorism, particularly in light of recent developments in Afghanistan, with the TTA (Tehreek-i-Taliban Afghanistan) and TTP. Agencies

Blasphemous remarks

Indian use of force against protesting Muslims condemned

FO says Hindutva inspired policy aimed at persecuting minorities, especially Muslims

Staff Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has strongly condemned the heavy-handed treatment by the Indian authorities of Muslims who were registering a peaceful protest over the blasphemous remarks of the two members of the ruling political party BJP against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In a statement, Foreign Office Spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said this is a new low in the Indian government's repressive 'Hindutva' inspired majoritarian policy aimed at demonizing and persecuting minorities, especially Muslims.

It said Pakistan denounces this shameful treatment of Indian Muslim citizens by the Indian government and expresses its solidarity with the Muslims of India in these testing times. The statement further said it is alarming that despite the global condemnation of the BJP officials' sacrilegious remarks, the Indian government's reaction has been muted, while on the other hand the BJP-RSS regime has persisted in its Islamophobic actions and has shamefully chosen to handle



public protest with brutal and indiscriminate use of force. Pakistan once again strongly urges India to ensure that demonstrable action is taken against those responsible for making derogatory remarks and attacking the dignity of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Spokesperson urged the international community to also take immediate cognizance of the grievously aggravating situation of Islamophobia in India. India must be held accountable for stifling the rights of the minorities, especially Muslims, and ensure that Muslims living in India are not victimized for practicing their faith and religious beliefs.

PTI paid back \$38b loans taken by PML-N: Fawad

Asks why beggar gov goes to IMF if it doesn't like deals with Fund.

Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Senior PTI leader and former federal minister for information Fawad Chaudhry on Sunday called out Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb for making "stupid remarks" regarding the loans taken by the PTI-led government. "You will do have [such] stupid conversations if you keep playing Candy Crush [popular mobile phone game]," Fawad wrote on Twitter, addressing the information minister. The statement came in response to Aurangzeb's remarks about former finance minister Shaukat Tarin's statement admitting that the PTI government took 76% of the loans taken in the entire history of Pakistan.

Fawad criticised her, saying that the PTI government took loans worth \$52 billion, of which \$38 billion was spent on returning the loans taken by the PML-N government during their previous tenure. "If the beggar government doesn't like [the] deal with IMF, why does it go to attend [the] IMF Board's



meetings?" he asked.

The former information minister has taken a jibe at Aurangzeb for playing a video game earlier as well. Referring to the post-budget press conference of Finance Minister Miftah Ismail, Fawad said that one can understand the "non-seriousness" of the incumbent government by seeing the infor-

mation minister busy in playing games on her mobile phone. "On can judge how non-serious people in this government are by seeing that the finance minister is addressing the post-budget press conference and the information minister is continuously playing a video game on her phone sitting next to him," Fawad wrote on Twitter.

Budget session

PTI, PML-Q finalise strategy

Both parties decide to stage protest in Punjab Assembly; PML-N doesn't enjoy majority: Elahi

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) on Sunday decided to stage a full scale protest in the budget session of the Punjab Assembly. A joint meeting of PTI Punjab and PML-Q parliamentary party was held in the Punjab Assembly. The meeting was chaired by Punjab Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, former Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar and Parliamentary Leader PTI Sibtain Khan. In the joint-meeting the leadership condemned the arrests and cases of PTI members of the Provin-

cial Assembly. An action plan was also worked out regarding the budget of Punjab.

The participants in the meeting expressed their determination to tackle the government tactics in the by-elections. Later talking to media, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi while criticizing the incumbent government said that the government is going to further increase the prices of petrol and gas.

He added that police is running the government not Hamza Shahbaz. Punjab has turned into a police state. The Punjab Assembly Speaker said that "the government has lost its mind. What will happen if those who have to

prepare the budget in the assembly will get arrested?"

"We firmly stand with Imran Khan," he said.

Speaker Punjab Assembly Parvez Elahi on Sunday said that the PML-N does not enjoy a majority in the assembly to pass the budget to be presented today (Monday). In a statement issued today, the Punjab Assembly's speaker said that a lot will depend on PML-N to ensure that the budget session is held or not. "There is a big question mark on if there will be hoologanism in tomorrow's session or not," he said and blamed that it was the police who are running the affairs in the province, not Chief Minis-

ter Punjab Hamza Shahbaz.

He asked how the PML-N could present a budget when it does not enjoy a majority in the House.

Speaking over differences within the PML-Q, Parvez Elahi said that they have no differences with the party chief Chaudhry Shujaat. "PML-Q remains intact and all is well in the party," he said. On the opposition leader's slot in the House, he said that the decision would be made in today's parliamentary meeting and there could be two opposition leaders. It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan will decide on the name of the opposi-

tion leader in Punjab Assembly today ahead of the budget session on June 13.

Former Punjab law minister Raja Basharat confirmed that Imran Khan will decide the name of the opposition leader. "The name will be finalized in today's meeting of the parliamentary party," he said. The Punjab government has summoned a meeting of the provincial assembly on June 13 for the presentation of the budget, however, it seems difficult in the presence of the Speaker Parvez Elahi that it would sail through easily from the assembly amid no obvious majority for both sides of the aisle after de-seating of 25 PTI lawmakers by the ECP.

Importance of census with role of provinces highlighted

Sensitization Workshop for 7th Digital Population & Housing Census held in Gilgit

Spokesman Report

GILGIT: A sensitization workshop on 7th Digital Population and Housing Census, 2022, was hosted by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) at Serena Hotel, Gilgit. PBS has already hosted similar sensitization workshops at Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and AJK. These workshops covered the tools, techniques, methodology and actions to be taken by provinces for smooth execution of the upcoming census. Keeping in view the purpose of the workshops Chief Secretaries, relevant secretaries, Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners and other provincial functionaries were invited to these workshops. Therefore, the workshops not only brought clarity in role of provinces in census process but were useful for confidence building of provinces. As, the provin-



cial functionaries will join hands with PBS in field enumeration and census monitoring.

Iqbal Hussain, Secretary Home and Prison / Census Commissioner, Gilgit Baltistan, was chief guest on the

occasion. The workshop was attended by Secretary Local Government/RD, S.M.B.R., Special Secretaries, Add Secretaries, Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners from the province. In his welcoming address, Chief Stat-

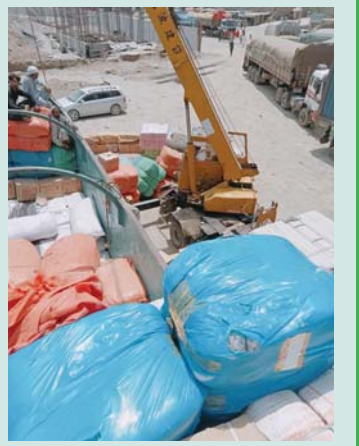
istician PBS, Dr. Naeem uz Zafar, gave the background and introduction of Census. He highlighted importance of census with the role of provinces in its success. He informed the participants that the provinces are significant stakeholders having key role of planning, training, implementation, and monitoring in the census, whereas, PBS will coordinate and facilitate the smooth and transparent conduct of census.

Member (Support Services/Resource Management) PBS, Mr. Muhammad Sarwar Gondal gave a detailed presentation on forthcoming census, especially in terms of digital conduct of census. He told the audience about the function of several levels of provincial administration throughout the census process. He underlined that the provincial government must provide computer literate trainers and enumerators for the digital census.

Pakistan Customs foils attempt to smuggle fertilizer, sugar

Our Correspondent

TORKHAM: Building further on its incessant operations against smuggling, Customs team foiled yet another attempt of smuggling at Torkham. In a successful operation, Pakistan Customs (FBR) seized Fertilizer (140 bags) and Sugar (120 bags) systematically concealed in an export consignment for Afghanistan. The vehicle and recovered items were seized after registering the case under the relevant provisions of law. The driver is under arrest and investigations are underway.



Chairman FBR/Secretary Revenue Division, Asim Ahmad has commended the successful operation by the Customs team at Torkham and reiterated his unflinching resolve to fight the menace of smuggling across Pakistan.

It is also pertinent to mention that Chairman FBR has already issued special instructions to Customs Field Formations for stepping up vigilance at airports and land border stations to frustrate any attempts made for smuggling.

Seminar on Project Risk Management held at IUB



Staff Reporter

BAHAWALPUR: As per vision of the Vice Chancellor, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Engr. Prof. Dr. Athar Mahboob, the Department of Operations and Project Management is one of the 84 new departments to be established in the University. The department has special importance for large scale construction projects in South Punjab especially for motorways, airports and energy and irrigation projects.

A seminar on Project Risk Management was organized under this department. Chairman Department Dr. Muhammad Shafiq, Additional Director Planning DHA Bahawalpur, Muhammad Umair and Chief Executive Standards, Ahmad Raza Qureshi spoke on the occasion.

Meanwhile, a training workshop on safety standards of Aviation Quality Assurance ISO was organized by the Department of Operations and Project Management. On this occasion, Quality Insurance Manager Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore Rizwan Mahmood gave a special lecture. Dean Faculty of Management Sciences and Commerce Prof. Dr. Jawad Iqbal and Head of Operations and Project Management Department Dr. Shafiq thanked the guest speakers for their special presence for the workshop.

Doctors, nursing playing important role, says Sadia Javed

Staff Reporter

KARACHI: On the occasion of World Nursing Day, an award ceremony was held at JPMC to pay tribute to frontline soldiers. Dr. Rozina of Aga Khan University participated. Besides, the organising controller was Secretary Sindh Nursing Examination Board Dr. Khair Nisa Khan, Aslam Khan.

Dr. Khairul Nisa Khan said that this is the first programme to pay tribute to nursing. Students from all over Sindh, staff nurses and doctors, HODs, and health department officials are participating. Nursing has played an important role in the Corona virus. In Sindh, the health department has taken timely action to set up a task force to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Due to this measure, deaths from the coronavirus have been reduced in Sindh.

During the Corona virus, 8,000 nursing students were trained. During the Corona campaign, staff nurse duties were imposed and new nurses were recruited. This award is for their encouragement. MPA Saadia Javed said that nursing is a sacred profession and parents are afraid to send their children for nursing. Doctors and nursing staff played an important role in the Corona virus in front line soldiers.

Since Lady Health Workers was founded by Benazir Bhutto, no one in Pakistan can even think about it. The role of nurses is valued by the Sindh government and the people.

Recognition

KARACHI: Group photo of High achievers and gold medalists of Higher secondary section at the Annual Award ceremony and Career counseling session with the Chief guest Chairman Board of Intermediate Education Karachi Dr prof Saeed-ud-Din along with other guests of honour Major Uzair (Pak Army), Lieutenant Agha Ali, Ms. Lariab Ali Associate consultant AF Ferguson with School Director Ms. Tubinaz and School Advisor Muhammad Saleem and other staff members.



Photo: Online

AIOU expands its educational network

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open (AIOU) has extended its educational network to the entire world through enrolling a number of students from different countries.

Students from 27 countries including United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Australia, Italy, China, and Saudi Arabia have enrolled in 35 different programs offered in Spring Semester 2022.

The ratio of male to female students is 53 percent for males and 47 percent for females.

Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum said that AIOU is targeting to increase enrollment of the international students up to ten thousand within the upcoming three years.

'Old city Lahore being restored for posterity', says Kamran Lashari

LAHORE: Walled City Lahore Authority (WCLA) Director General Kamran Lashari has said that he wishes to resurrect the old Lahore city in all its true grandeur to leave it as a prized piece of civilization for posterity.

In an interview with APP here on Sunday, the renowned civil servant said about 2000 properties had been renovated and restored to their original form while 55 streets had been re-laid from Delhi Gate to Kotwali Chowk within the Walled City by the WCLA and these present a magical form of the centuries old Lahore.

Lashari counts rehabilitation the 'Shahi Hamam' (Royal Bath) as one of the epitome of achievements and the fact had been acknowledged by the modern historian and writer William Dalrymple who termed it the best architectural restoration work in the South Asia.

He believes the Shahi Hamam has been an oasis in the desert for the tourists and students of archaeology.

The WCLA DG said that he was committed to bring people closer by opening enchanted casements of the Walled City to the tourists, adding that connecting people was a science and the WCLA must serve a tool to the cause.

The conversation also shed light on the events which shaped his aesthetics and made him the man he is. As a man tied to his roots, Lashari takes pride in being

a descendant of Baloch clan with a tablet engraved with his family tree stands on a side-table in his somewhat cramped but artistically embellished office.

It might have been a moment for umpteenth satisfaction for him to undertake renovation and restoration of the tomb of Mir Chakar Khan Rind Baloch as the DG WCLA.

To a query, Kamran Lashari termed the patronage of Agha Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) as vital in the restoration work, adding that restoration of Wazir Khan Mosque and other areas had been result of this collaboration. The AKTC funded Picture Wall of the Lahore Fort was the largest mosaic wall of the world to be restored, he added.

About his stint as DG PHA, he said this was a period of self discovery and he worked with his heart and soul to make the idea of PHA a success. "I worked so hard in those days that I started to have tremors", he shared, adding that PHA helped the city regain its identity", he said.

Talking about the making of PHA, he said PHA was a new authority and it faced quite an opposition from the bureaucracy as they deemed it a white elephant, adding that the then Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif was resolute and wanted to restore green face of Lahore.

About Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Lashari said "Whenever I came across Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, though

I have not met him recently, he would remind me of the stern opposition in the face of PHA.

He agreed to the fact that the creation of PHA was ahead of times project, adding that it was like the then Chief Minister Punjab Shehbaz Sharif was cognizant of the climate challenges about quarter of a century ago.

About his creativity and knack of doing things with aplomb, Kamran Lashari said travelling has been his teacher, adding that he was keen observer and absorbed whatever he came across. "Camera used to be my best companion during my visits abroad", he remarked.

He attributed his aesthetics to the influence of his late father, Majeed Lashari, whose poetry left lasting imprints on his upbringing, adding that he earned a degree in law but his father was a formative influence which gave him flight of imagination.

About criticism on a public event at the Lahore Fort, he said the WCLA had brought to life

the Lahore Fort and it should be opened to the public to witness the grandeur of the by-gone years, adding that British ambassador Christian Turner, on hearing of the criticism on a wedding celebration at the Fort, had remarked that one could book a birthday at Hampton Court Palace - one of the oldest 16th century architectural heritage - in England. APP

United Muslims can take America out: Jawad Naqvi



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Allama Syed Jawad Naqvi has said that unity among the Muslims is imperative, enemy exploiting segregation and using this divide as a tool to make Muslims weak.

Attacks on the dignity of Holy Prophet (PBUH) and prestigious places of Muslims cannot be tolerated.

While addressing a huge gathering of Tehreek e Baidari Ummat e Mustafa (SAWW) on Saturday to observe the 33rd demise anniversary of founder of Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini R.A, under the title "When Imam Khomeini R.A said U.S the great Satan" at F-9 Park Islamabad, he said, Imam Khomeini fought against the biggest devil of world and under his visionary leadership Iranian Muslims had not only taken out Americans but also topple down the regime of their stooges.

America is the ringleader of all terrorism and corruption, he said, and they have huge influence on Muslim countries where rulers are weak and are their (U.S) stooges.

This is America who is supporting Israel to oppress Muslims in Palestine.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas, M/s (1) Ahsan Ejaz (2) Warisha Ejaz (3) Aneela Ejaz (4) Raheela Ejaz sons/daughters of Ejaz Hussain (5) Zreen Akhtar wd/o Ejaz Hussain transferee of plot No. 116-D Area Development Scheme Talagang have appointed General Power Attorney to Mr. Aamir Ejaz son of Ejaz Hussain vide registered deed No. 63/4 dated 21/08/2021 from Sub Registrar Talagang.

Note: Abdullah Ejaz minor with court order Mr. Muhammad Zia Khan Civil Judge dated 12/01/2022 i.e. Mst Zreen Akhtar wd/o Ejaz Hussain declared guardian of minor.

Now, Mr. Aamir Ejaz son of Ejaz Hussain General Power of Attorney alongwith own share and Guardian Mst Zreen Akhtar wd/o Ejaz Hussain wish to transfer share of minor the plot to Mr. Muhammad Sufan son of Abdul Khalid.

If anyone have objection of above advertisement submit their objection within fifteen days of this advertisement otherwise objection will not be entertained.

Deputy Director Punjab Housing & Town Planning Agency District Housing Committee Chakwal Ph: 051-5191753

DIRECTORATE OF PROCUREMENT (NAVY)

OPEN TENDER

DP (NAVY) NEAR SNID CENTER, CDA MARKET, AT NAVAL RESIDENTIAL COMPLEX, E-8, ISLAMABAD

SEALED TENDERS ARE INVITED BY DP (NAVY) FOR PURCHASE OF FOLLOWING ITEMS:

Sr.#	IT.NO	DESCRIPTION	CLOSING DATE & TIME	OPENING DATE & TIME
1	210088/R-2206/310717	03 X SCPC LINKS FOR INTERCONNECTIVITY OF DATA CENTERS AT NORTH SOUTH AND WEST (QTY : VARIOUS)	23-06-2022 10:30 AM	23-06-2022 11:00 AM
2	Cicp/B/Ind/2205010/R-2204/320654	Procurement Of Sheet Aluminum Alloy Anneled	28-06-2022 10:30 AM	28-06-2022 11:00 AM
3	Cicp/H01/Ind/2205016/R-2204/320660	Procurement Of Steel T-Section Carbon (Finish Black)	28-06-2022 10:30 AM	28-06-2022 11:00 AM
4	2190424/R-2205/340710	Conipur HG Eco (8+2=10mm) - Polyurethane Gymnasium flooring in blue color and line marking of Badminton, Basketball and volleyball on Area 36m x 25m alongwith installation and removal charges of current flooring. Qty (01)	29-06-2022 10:30 AM	29-06-2022 11:00 AM

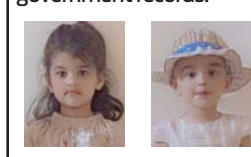
ERMS & CONDITIONS

- Complete details and specifications of the tender can be downloaded from PPRA website.
- Firm / Supplier on Active Taxpayers List (ATL) of FBR are eligible to participate in the Tender and submit quote.

PID (I) No. 8725/21

PUBLIC NOTICE

I Adeel Shezad resident of house # 851, Street 86 I-8/4 Islamabad CNIC # 61101-3630245-5 want to change names of my two daughters: Minsa Adeel and Maeeda Adeel to Fatima Adeel. Kindly call them accordingly and update their names in all government records.





Islamabad
23° - 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr3:14 am
Zohr12:07 pm
Asr5:07 pm
Maghrib7:18 pm
Isha9:01 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 &
& Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police 9266044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
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WASA Rawalpindi5555489
CAA 9281092

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MH561116
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Holy Family9290322-7
PIMS9261170-79
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TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan
Corporation 9209224
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Rawal Town 5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service
E-7, F-10 & F-11 9204654
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G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 9266316
Wapda Islamabad9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint 119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank
Rawalpindi0331-5022125

Police arrests notorious gang

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police arrested the notorious Qasim Gang leader and accomplices involved in motorcycle theft in the city.

According to the Police spokesperson, in a major police operation Qasim gang leader, was arrested with two of his accomplices involved in motorcycle theft.

The SHO Police Station Pirwadi informed that the arrested included Qasim, Sohail and Saud, whereas other accomplices of the gang would also be arrested.

SP Rawal Babar Javed Joya congratulated the police team for their successful operation.

He said that the arrested would be challaned with solid evidence and those who robbed the nation of their valuable assets could not evade from the grip of law. Agencies

President concerned over wildfire incidents

Dr Arif Alvi advised the authorities concerned to refocus on the prevention of wildfire strategies

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Sunday expressed his serious concerns over increasing incidents of forest fires in different parts of the country.

The president said that such fire incidents were causing huge financial loss to the nation as it deprived the effectees of their livelihood, put the life and properties of the inhabitants at high risk, destroyed local fauna and flora, besides worsened the negative effects of the climate change.

The president advised the authorities concerned to refocus on the prevention of wildfire strategies by strengthening coordination among themselves.

He also called upon making



of investments in fire suppression and prevention mechanisms, implementing of the existing fire management techniques by improving wildfire data collection and analysis and strengthening of stakeholders' coordination and preparedness.

The president observed that most of the forest fire incidents

were preventable as 85 percent were caused when the campfires and burning debris had been left unattended.

The use of the equipment and its malfunctions, carelessly discarded cigarettes while intentional acts of arson were some of the other causes, he added. He said these incidents could

be prevented by taking simple precautions including reporting of unattended fires to the authorities, and extinguishing fire pits and campfires when done.

Moreover, the ignited cigarettes should not be thrown out of the moving vehicles whereas caution be taken when using flammable liquids or fireworks, he advised.

The president further said that regrettably, the wildfire disturbed flora and fauna, eliminated wild animals, destroyed the habitats of birds and harmed the fertility of the soil which hampered the growth and composition of vegetation, besides increasing the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, resulting in the emission of greenhouse gases.

Pak-Philippine ties

ISLAMABAD: Director General Ministry of Foreign Affairs Amir Ahmed Atozai, Chargé d Affaires of Philippine Ms. Maria Agnes M. Cervantes', Chairman Pakistan ASEAN Friendship Association Zafar Bakhtawari', Honorary Consul General Dr Imran Yousaf, Fahdel Sheikh and Khalid Ch. cutting the ribbon to inaugurate the 124th Anniversary of Independence Day of Philippine in Islamabad.



Photo: Daily The Spokesman

Serena Hotels always played key role for adventure sport: Aziz Boolani

Expedition Indus Closing Ceremony held

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Expedition Indus, Pakistan's first ever river-rafting voyage along the entire course of the Indus River in Pakistan, has culminated in the Arabian Sea.

As a part of Serena Hotels' Adventure Diplomacy initiative - the memorable journey along the entire length of the Indus River comes to an end. The Expedition Indus was a 45-day river-rafting journey that commenced from Hamzigond in the Kharmang district of Gilgit-Baltistan and ended at the Karachi Port.

Rafting over a distance of



2,300 kilometres in Pakistan out of the 3,180 kilometres of the entire Indus, the team led by Wajahat Malik consisted of ABM Faisal, Farman Ahmed, Sanif Jamal, Atif Amin, Sultan Karim, Afia Salam and Lt Commander Babar Nisar

Khan. The team studied the ecological, environmental and socioeconomic impact of urban life on the water body that sustains all the life in Pakistan. Wajahat Malik, an adventure travel filmmaker and leader of the expedition, document-

ed the harsh realities about the river's health, life around it and the climate-induced damages to the environment.

Serena Hotels Pakistan is committed to protecting the environment, through its numerous efforts towards conserving water, recycling and achieving energy efficiency including ISO certification. We believe in addressing climate change and highlighting the need for better practices to save the planet. This Expedition is yet another declaration of commitment to raising awareness for those hardest hit by climate change and global warming.

Roots Future World College Graduates gain Global University acceptances

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: "Your life is your story, and the adventure ahead of you is the journey to fulfill your own purpose and potential." - Kerry Washington.

Being the pioneer of introducing innovation Roots Millennium Education group, under the leadership of Chief Executive Dr. Faisal Mushtaq Tamgha-e-Intiaz organized a magnificent Cambridge CAIE High Achievers' & College Graduation Ceremony of Future World School & College, H-11/4 Islamabad and Future World School & College Bahria Town Phase 8, Rawalpindi. The Ceremony was officially conducted at The Marquee Hall of Marriott Hotel, Islamabad here last day, says a press release. It marked the celebration of High Achievers' & all the Millennials who successfully graduated from both the campuses of Future World College from the Class of 2022. Proud parents of 400 graduates and high achievers and their jubilant faculty augmented the Ceremony with their vibrance,



grace and pride.

This glorious High Achievers' & Graduation Ceremony was led by Chief Guests His Excellency Mr. Andreas Ferrarese, the Ambassador of Republic of Italy, and his charming spouse Madame Albana, and Mir Jan Muhammad Khan Jamaali, Acting Governor of Balochistan & Speaker of Balochistan Assembly. Amongst the guests of honour were the esteemed Ms. Monica Davis, Regional Public Engagement Specialist at the US Embassy in Islamabad, Ms. Uzma Yousaf, Country Director of Cambridge Assessment Interna-

tional Education CAIE and Founder and CEO The Roots Millennium Education group, Dr. Chaudhry Faisal Mushtaq, Executive Director The Millennium Education, Mrs. Anna Faisal, Director Education Mrs. Erum Atif and Director Community & Outreach Mrs. Sabina Zakir.

The ceremony officially began with the recitation of the Holy Quran followed by a national anthem of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Italy; and a formal procession of students representing The Millennium Education & Future World Schools & Colleges that was led by a faculty of expert

teachers and lecturers.

The second half of the event was hosted by the respective A-Level campuses of Future World Schools & Colleges and was hosted by their respective Guidance Counselors, Academic Coordinators, Principals, and Headmistresses. The ceremony generated a wave of gratitude and happiness among the students and parental community of FWS. There were a lot of testimonials from the stakeholders who appreciated the system's efforts in providing life-changing experiences to millennials. Another special feature of the Ceremony was the segment in which learners of the graduating batch shared their success stories with their peers and expressed gratitude to their teachers and college.

Principal of Future World School & College H-11/4 Campus, Ms. Muneze Muzaffar; in her introductory speech expressed her delight in the flawless culmination of the most challenging academic term that had witnessed the unfolding of a global pandemic.

Health Corner

Human skin can be damaged by third-hand smoke

ISLAMABAD: A University of California, Riverside, study has found that dermal exposure to nicotine concentrations found in thirdhand smoke, or THS, and electronic cigarette spills may damage the skin.

THS, of which nicotine is a major component, is created when exhaled smoke and smoke emanating from the tip of burning cigarettes settles on surfaces such as clothing, hair, furniture, and cars. Not strictly smoke, THS refers to the residues left behind by smoking. Electronic cigarette spills" are e-liquid spills that may occur by leaky electronic cigarette products or when consumers and vendors mix e-liquids for refillable electronic cigarettes.

Study results appear in Atmosphere, a journal.

"We found dermal contact with nicotine may impair wound healing, increase susceptibility to skin infections due to a decrease in immune response, and cause oxidative stress in skin cells," said Giovanna Pozuelos, who graduated earlier this year from UC Riverside with a doctoral degree in cell, molecular, and developmental biology.

The study was performed using EpiDermTM, a 3D model of the human epidermis, and cultured human keratinocytes. Keratinocytes are epidermal cells that produce keratin, the protein found in hair and fingernails. The researchers exposed EpiDermTM for 24 hours to different nicotine concentrations typically found in THS environments and electronic cigarette spills. The researchers then proceeded to identify processes and pathways altered by the exposure. They investigated nicotine's effect on cellular organelles, mitochondria, and peroxisomes - organelles containing enzymes involved in many metabolic reactions.

According to Pozuelos, the most susceptible individuals include those with skin conditions such as diabetic-related ulcers or arterial ulcers.

"Dermal contact with nicotine residue may impair wound healing of such skin lesions and increase susceptibility to pathogenic skin infections," she said. "Toddlers and infants, who tend to crawl on contaminated surfaces or have frequent contact with indoor surfaces, are particularly susceptible to high dermal exposure. Employers who work in heavily THS-contaminated environments, such as casinos where indoor smoking is permitted, can be exposed for months or even years."

Fortunately, the changes in the mitochondria of human keratinocytes exposed to nicotine for 24 hours are reversible.

"Skin may recover by avoiding continual dermal exposure to THS-contaminated environments and properly handling electronic cigarettes e-liquid," said coauthor Prue Talbot, a professor of cell biology who advised Pozuelos on the study. "It's important to note that a relatively short exposure - 24 hours in our study - is sufficient to cause skin damage."

Pozuelos stressed that the severity of skin damage depends on both exposure duration and nicotine concentration.

"Both THS and electronic cigarette spills and leaks can be damaging," she said. "THS exposure may be chronic for someone living in a THS-contaminated household, which can lead to persistent dermal exposure. Vendors and consumers who handle or use electronic cigarettes that contain high nicotine concentrations could also become highly exposed."

Pozuelos advises consumers and vendors dealing with electronic cigarettes to minimize dermal contact by wearing adequate protective gear and properly cleaning contaminated areas.

"Restrictions on indoor smoking and vaping, and policies for remediating contaminated environments need to be implemented," she said. (Courtesy: Science Daily)



ISLAMABAD: Chairman The Diabetes' Centre (TDC), Dr Asjad Hameed, Senior Manager Administration, Dr Khizzer Pervaiz, HOD Marketing Shahzad Lodhi in a group photo with guests at The Hospital in Islamabad.

Pak Army soldier embraces martyrdom in N Waziristan

RAWALPINDI: A soldier of Pakistan Army on Sunday embraced martyrdom while valiantly fighting terrorists amid fire exchange that took place between terrorists and the Army troops in general area Datta Khel of North Waziristan District.

The Army troops fought bravely and effectively engaged the terrorists' location, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release here received Sunday.

The martyred soldier was identified as Sepoy Shahzaib Imtiaz (age 25 years, resident of Kotli Sattian) who having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat (martyrdom). The area clearance was being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area. APP

Pindi police tightens noose against professional beggars



RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police in its special operations tightened the noose against professional beggars and fireworks' sellers.

The Ganjmandi Police Station team arrested an accused carrying fireworks and registered a case against him after confiscating the prohibited material, said the Rawalpindi Police spokesperson.

In another incident, the Ganjmandi Police arrested accused Asif Iqbal carrying fireworks.

SP Rawal Babar Javed Joya while praising Ganjmandi police, said that crackdown against firecrackers and sellers of fireworks should continue to ensure public safety.

Meanwhile, in the crackdown by the Rawalpindi police against professional beggars, 35 beggars were arrested. The Rawalpindi Police spokesperson added that the professional beggars were affecting the flow of traffic thereby causing accidents. Agencies

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Trans-Caspian gas pipeline & EU's energy crisis

Luke Coffey

Last week, the foreign ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan gathered in Ankara for a trilateral meeting. Top of the agenda was energy. In the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, global energy markets are in disarray. Nowhere is this being felt more acutely than in Europe. Over the years, the continent has failed to diversify its sources of oil and gas, while putting too much faith in renewable energy sources that remain costly and less productive. This has led to an unhealthy dependency on Russian oil and gas, which gives Moscow the geopolitical upper hand. Now is the time for Europe to start looking for better options for its energy imports. Thankfully, there are quite a few possibilities, including North Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, and even liquefied natural gas exports from as far away as the US and the Gulf. However, one area that Europe should pay special attention to is the region around the Caspian Sea. This is why the meeting of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan's foreign ministers was

so important. The Caspian region has an estimated 292 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in proven and probable reserves. It also has extensive and reliable pipeline infrastructure connecting it to markets in Europe. However, one important piece of the Caspian energy puzzle remains missing: A trans-Caspian gas pipeline linking Turkmenistan on the east coast with Azerbaijan on the west.

Turkmenistan is thought to have the fourth-largest reserves of natural gas in the world. A pipeline is the only economically viable way to move natural gas across the Caspian Sea because the alternative, turning it into LNG, is too costly for transport over such a short distance.

Without a pipeline across the sea, therefore, there is no profitable way to transport gas from Central Asia to Europe without first going through Russia. The idea of constructing a natural gas pipeline across the Caspian Sea has been debated for decades. However, there are four reasons why now is the right time to finally build one. Firstly, Turkmenistan is out of money. Ashgabat has relied too heavily on natural gas exports to too few customers, mainly Russia and China. The country is embroiled in an

economic crisis. Those international investors that could enter the country are reluctant to do so because little has been done to improve the business climate, privatize state-owned industries, or combat rampant corruption. The greatest potential for Turkmenistan to turn around its dire economic situation lies with its energy resources.

Former President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov recently handed power to his son, Serdar. It remains to be seen whether he will adopt a more open-minded approach to foreign investment than his father but one thing is certain: Turkmenistan needs new revenue streams and a trans-Caspian gas pipeline could help. Secondly, Russia and Iran are distracted. Neither country, both of which are Caspian littoral states, supported the idea of a gas pipeline under the sea in the past. They both knew that it would cut them out of any gas deals with Europe. However, neither of them is currently in much of a position to do much about a trans-Caspian pipeline project. In the face of economic sanctions, Russia's economy remains fragile. While popular support for the war in Ukraine remains high for now, it is likely domestic unrest will increase as

sanctions begin to bite and the war drags on.

Iran is facing similar economic problems at home, too. President Ebrahim Raisi is dealing with mounting public protests across the country. Meanwhile, a new nuclear deal with the US seems unlikely. Therefore it is likely that both Moscow and Tehran have bigger issues to worry about than a trans-Caspian gas pipeline. Thirdly, most of the infrastructure is already in place to deliver gas from Turkmenistan to Europe. On the western side of the Caspian Sea, the Southern Gas Corridor started operations in 2020. This network of pipelines, running for 3,340 km across seven countries, has the potential to supply 60 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually to Europe.

On the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, Ashgabat has already constructed its so-called East-West pipeline, a 780 km natural gas pipeline connecting Mary province in the east with the country's Caspian coast. It has the potential to transport 30 billion cubic meters annually.

Finally, most of the legal obstacles to building a pipeline no longer exist. The Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, signed by all five Caspi-

an littoral states in 2018, allows pipelines to be established with the consent of only the countries involved in the project.

As mentioned above, Iran and Russia oppose the idea of a pipeline and so argued that any such project must first have the agreement of all five littoral states. The new convention could finally give the green light to a trans-Caspian pipeline once the interested parties, in this case Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, reach an agreement. The Caspian region has come a long way since its first pipeline was constructed in 1906. Today, there is a vast network of pipelines moving oil and gas.

A trans-Caspian gas pipeline, coupled with the Southern Gas Corridor, would alter the geopolitical landscape in the region and beyond. With Nord Stream 2, a previously planned natural gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, now dead as a result of the invasion of Ukraine, Europe looking for energy alternatives, Russia and Iran distracted, and Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan willing, now is the time to finally make this project a reality.

The writer is the director of the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy at the Heritage Foundation. Courtesy Arab News

IIOJK: Chotta Bazaar massacre

Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir in the throes of the worst bloodbath and miseries since 1947. More than 237,000 Muslims were exterminated in the months of Oct-Nov 1947, which reduced the muslim population in Jammu region from 61% to 33%. This was the first genocide after World War II on such a massive scale. In the past 73 years more than 500,000 people have lost lives to Indian tyranny and state sponsored terrorism. The massacres against Muslims include: Jammu Massacre, Gawakadal Massacre, Kishtwar Massacre, Sopore Massacre, Handwara Massacre, Hawl Massacre, Zakoora and Tengpora Massacre, while this list includes dozens of entries, it is by no means complete.

The murderous campaigns against Muslims by the Indian government continue to this day. On June 11, 1991, at least 28 people were killed by the CRPF's indiscriminate firing at shopkeepers, passersby, not even sparing women and children. By the time their guns ceased to boom in the adjacent Chota Bazar locality, dozens of innocent civilians were killed in what remains one of the forgotten massacres in Kashmir's 30-year turmoil- Chotta Bazar Massacre. The history of IIOJK is littered with many Chotta Bazaar like carnages as Indian troops have carried out dozens of massacres in IIOJK since 1990. The aim of committing Chotta Bazaar like carnages is to instill fear among the Kashmiris. Massacres in IIOJK are ugly blots on the face of so-called Indian democracy and the international community must take notice of Kashmiris' genocide by India. Bold and resilient Kashmiris are determined to carry on the freedom struggle against all odds and the unparalleled sacrifices of the Kashmiri people will never go waste. Thirty-one years ago on June 11, 1991 the Indian occupation forces opened indiscriminate fire and killed 32 innocent Kashmiris including women and children during the Chotta Bazaar massacre in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The gory incident is one of the bloodiest massacres in the territory. Despite repeated demands of judicial inquiry, the victims and their families are still awaiting justice. The Indian paramilitary CRPF troops on a false pretext of clash with unknown attackers at Zainakadal in Srinagar went berserk, and opened indiscriminate firing with their automatic weapons all the way from their camp at Syed Mansoor to the densely populated downtown area of Chotta Bazaar.

The Indian troops barged into the shops, gathered people outside on the streets and killed them randomly. Four people were shot in a motor mechanics' workshop and four others were shot outside a medical college. Some rickshaw drivers and bystanders were also shot by the troops. The indiscriminate firing by the forces' personnel took a massive toll of 32 lives of innocent civilians. Around 22 persons were also critically injured in the incident. The bullets hit shopkeepers, passerby, a 75-year old woman and a child of ten years age.

India continues to brutalize the defenseless Kashmiris in IIOJK through extra-judicial killings in fake "encounters" and staged "cordon-and-search" operations, custodial torture and imposition of collective punishment. However, these atrocities cannot break the will of the Kashmiri people in their just struggle for the inalienable right to self-determination as enshrined in the relevant UNSC Resolutions. Pakistan had urged the international community to hold India accountable for its grave human rights violations in the occupied territory, which warrant investigations under international scrutiny to bring the perpetrators of these serious crimes to justice.



Kazakhstan votes & political space

Zaki Shaikh

People in the Central Asian country of Kazakhstan have voted for far-reaching changes in the country's constitution in the referendum conducted. According to Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, all the amendments are aimed at strengthening the system of checks and balances, and supporting them, will mean "a resolute no to corruption, nepotism, the monopoly in politics and the economy." The government sought nod to 55 amendments in 33 articles of the constitution, which included a transition from a super-powerful presidential rule to a one where parliament has relatively more space to influence the country's polity.

According to the Central Election Commission, 77.18% of voters favored the amendments, aimed at decentralizing decision-making. As many as 68% of registered voters had turned out to vote in the referendum. The change will entail more autonomy for local authorities to make them more effective. Henceforth, the president will no longer have a decisive say in determining the composition of the senate while the lower house will be filled through a mix of nominations and party-based elections. After casting his vote, Tokayev declared that the referendum was also intended to signify a vote of confidence in the present leadership, to serve "as a guarantee that there will be no repeat of the chaos and rioting witnessed in January 2022."

The amendments will enable the government to incorporate considerable changes in the country's social dynamics, which will change the paradigm of relations between the

state and society, stressed Tokayev. Reminding that the country was undergoing an important turning point, he described it as "a crucial moment that determines the future of the state and society as a whole." He said that the outcome of the nationwide referendum will impact the fate of the country leaving no one untouched. "The country will embark on a path of reform which proposes a comprehensive program of political changes. Its main goal is expanding the opportunities for the participation of the people in governing the country," he said.

Tokayev said the uneven concentration of power among competing state apparatus was a source of dissatisfaction among the public. Soon after restoring order in January, he had proposed measures for reforming Kazakhstan's political setup. Kazakh political scientist Talgat Kaliev believes that these amendments in the constitution will chart a new political course. He said one of the outcomes of the January crisis in Kazakhstan was the need to step up measures for advancing political reforms in the country. It was believed that the crisis of confidence in the authorities and the existing political institutions had led to a series of protests. As the amendments are approved, Kazakhstan will move to a presidential setup that is reformed and will work with a more viable parliament. Following the amendments, the powers of the head of state are reduced, the role of the parliament and local representative bodies have been relatively expanded, and the exclusive exemptions to Nursultan Nazarbayev as the first president of the country, are withdrawn.

"The constitutional reform will allow safeguarding the citizens' rights and freedoms. It will also allow space for political competition in the country. Tokayev believes that

extending more political space to the political parties and improving the electoral legislation would strengthen the role of society in decision making and make political representatives more competitive. He anticipates that new parties will appear, and the existing ones will review and restructure their activities in line with current trends and the demands of the people. The referendum can improve Tokayev's electoral prospects when he seeks a second four-year presidential term in 2023.

Kazakh political commentator Dosym Satpayev, says that through this referendum Tokayev aspires to be seen as a person striving to bring the desired changes in the country's polity.

However, it is worth remembering that the people are waiting not only for political reforms but also for socio-economic changes. Some experts see the referendum as the means to help the current government legitimize its rule. According to Kazakh economist Pyotr Svoik, amendments in the constitution will allow the president to exercise his prerogatives in full capacity.

The results of the referendum will reflect that the authorities and society work together for the sake country's future political course. On the other hand, political observers are reminded that without sufficient outreach at the grassroots level all the changes promised to the people and most of the reforms will be seen only as "changes from the above." Hence, the success of the referendum will be determined not by the turnout but by the fact that how meaningfully the reforms will benefit the people.

The writer is a UK-based analyst and has worked with universities in three Central Asian countries. Courtesy AA

Ukraine crisis & regional political dynamics

Sami Moubayed

In November 2021, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was planning for a new military operation in Syria, aimed at taking the town of Tel Rifaat, north of Aleppo. This, he claimed, is where Kurdish separatists had fled back in 2018, after Turkish proxies overran and occupied the city of Afrin. Given its proximity to the Turkish border, Erdogan wanted it free from any Kurdish military influence. That operation never materialised, however, because neither the Americans approved it, nor did the Russians. He has now announced that he will be reviving the project, feeling that due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, both countries would be more willing to accommodate him, although for very different reasons.

When raising the idea seven months ago, Erdogan suggested a territorial swap with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. In exchange for a green light to march on Tel Rifaat, he would relinquish claims to approximately 40 villages south of the M4 Highway, south of the city of Idlib. Territorial swaps were common between Erdogan and Putin, ever since the Russian army entered the Syrian battlefield in September 2015. In mid-2016, he looked away from East Aleppo in exchange for sending his troops to capture the border towns of Jarablus, Azaz, and al-Bab. Two years later, he did it again in East Ghouta, in exchange for getting the city of Afrin, lying within Russia's sphere of influence. The two leaders had gotten along well in Syria, despite brief tension in January-February 2020, which led to the Russians unilaterally snatching territory from Turkey, like Khan Sheikhoun.

This time, however, Putin was not interested in any new territorial swap, arguing that Erdogan needed to first fulfil his part of a 2018 pledge, made at the Sochi resort, to clean Idlib from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). Additionally, Putin wanted him to revive the Adana Agreement with Syria, signed back in 1998. Adana gave the Turks the right to temporarily enter

Syrian territory, not set up permanent base.

Putin had suggested amendments to the original text, calling for the deployment of Russian soldiers along the Syrian-Turkish border, to give Erdogan an additional layer of security, while expanding the territory into which the Turks could venture. Although Erdogan expressed support for Putin's initiative, no serious efforts were made at reviving the Adana Agreement. Along came the Ukraine crisis in February. Despite having originally taken somewhat of a neutral stance on the conflict, Erdogan has started to shift into the American orbit, providing Ukraine with drones and welcoming Ukrainian refugees.

That changed when Sweden and Finland applied to join Nato President Joe Biden seconded, promising them a speedy membership, putting both Putin and Erdogan on the offensive, and back in the same boat. The Russian president would move heaven and earth to obstruct an enhanced Nato, while Erdogan would never allow it because the two Nordic states were traditional supporters of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which he considered "terrorist organisations." The president also has an eye on Turkey's upcoming presidential elections next June.

What Erdogan is now trying to do is pull of a swap deal, very different from before. If Putin signs off the Syria operation in Tel Rifaat, Turkey will continue to veto Nato's expansion. If the US approves his Tel Rifaat adventure, then he could drop objection to Sweden and Finland's membership applications. If Putin strikes a deal with Erdogan, he would expect the Turks to pay him back, not in Syria this time, but in Ukraine.

Unlike previous deals in 2016-2018, Erdogan won't be asked to relinquish Syrian territory in exchange for Tel Rifaat, given that in today's world, that's the last of Putin's worries. The Russian President would require a strategic shift on Turkey's attitude towards the Ukraine War, a shift felt through Turkey's through territorial waters, airspace, and solidarity with Russia at the United Nations.

The writer is a Syrian historian and former Carnegie scholar. Courtesy Gulf News

Depot containing Western weapons destroyed in Ukraine: Russia

Ukraine urges West to deliver more heavy arms swiftly

KYIV/MOSCOW: Russian forces fired cruise missiles to destroy a large depot containing U.S. and European weapons in western Ukraine's Ternopil region, Interfax reported on Sunday, as street fighting raged in the eastern city of Sievierodonetsk.

The governor of the Ternopil region said a rocket attack on the city of Chortkiv fired from the Black Sea had partly destroyed a military facility, injuring 22 people. A local official said there were no weapons stored there.

Moscow has repeatedly slammed the United States and other nations for supplying Ukraine with weapons. President Vladimir Putin said earlier this month that Russia would strike new targets if the West supplied longer-range missiles to Ukraine for use in high-precision mobile rocket systems.

Ukrainian leaders have renewed pleas to Western countries in recent days to speed up deliveries of heavy weapons as Russian forces pound the east of the country with artillery.

Sievierodonetsk has become epicentre of the battle for control over



the industrialised Donbas region in the east, made up of Luhansk and Donetsk provinces. Parts of the city have been pulverised in some of the bloodiest fighting since Moscow began its invasion on Feb. 24.

Luhansk Governor Serhiy Gaidai said on Sunday that Ukrainian and Russian forces were still fighting street by street in Sievierodonetsk.

He said that while Russian forces have taken most of the city, Ukrainian

troops remain in control of an industrial area and chemical plant where hundreds of civilians are sheltering.

After being forced to scale back its initial campaign goals Moscow has turned to expanding control in the Donbas, where pro-Russian separatists have held a swath of territory since 2014.

Ukraine has said some 800 people were hiding in bomb shelters under the Azot plant, including employees

and city residents.

"No one can say whether and how many victims there have been in the last 24 hours in Sievierodonetsk, where intense fighting continues," Gaidai said on the Telegram messaging app on Sunday.

"Everyone wants to evacuate now, probably, but so far there is no such possibility,"

In Lysychansk – Sievierodonetsk's twin city across the Donets River – a woman was killed in Russian shelling while four houses and a shopping centre were destroyed, Gaidai said.

To the south and southwest of Sievierodonetsk, Russian forces were firing mortars and artillery around a number of settlements, according to a daily update from Ukraine's general staff. But it said Ukrainian forces had repulsed Russian attempts to advance towards some communities.

Ukrainian forces have proven more resilient than expected, but the U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War said that as they use the last of their stocks of Soviet-era weapons and munitions, they will require consistent Western support.

NATO says Turkey's security concerns are legitimate

HELSINKI: Security concerns raised by Turkey in its opposition to Finland's and Sweden's NATO membership applications are legitimate, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on Sunday during a visit to Finland.

"These are legitimate concerns. This is about terrorism, it's about weapons exports," Stoltenberg told a joint news conference with Finnish President Sauli Niinisto while visiting him at his summer residence in Naantali, Finland.

Sweden and Finland applied to join the Western defence alliance last month, in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But they have faced opposition from Turkey, which has accused them of supporting and harbouring Kurdish militants and other groups it deems terrorists.

Stoltenberg said Turkey was a key ally for the alliance due to its strategic location on the Black Sea between Europe and the Middle East, and cited the support it has provided to Ukraine since Russia sent troops into its neighbour on Feb. 24. Moscow calls its actions a "special military operation".

"We have to remember and understand that no NATO ally has suffered more terrorist attacks than Türkiye," Stoltenberg said, using the Turkish pronunciation of the country's name, as preferred by Turkey and its President Tayyip Erdogan.

SRICEC vows to deepen coop with Pakistan



Spokesman Report

BEIJING: Pakistani ambassador to China Moin ul Haque and General Manager Hu of Silk Road International Cultural Exchange Center, China agreed to deepen cooperation in art & culture, movie, and other areas.

According to China Economics Net (CEN) Moin ul Haque along with officers of the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing visited Silk Road International Cultural Exchange Center (SRICEC) in Langfang, Hebei, where they toured various sections of the Center and reviewed its state-of-the-art facilities.

General Manager Hu and Ms. Claudia Yang, Director of International Arts briefed the Ambassador and his team on the role of the Center in popularizing performing arts of China and different countries.

They also expressed a keen desire to showcase Pakistani cuisine, music and films in China to deepen cultural exchanges between the two countries.

Appreciating the role of Silk Road International Cultural Exchange Center, Ambassador Moin ul Haque highlighted the affinity between the culture and artistic styles of Pakistan and China and their role in solidifying bilateral relations between the two countries.

He hoped that the Center would continue its endeavors for acting as a bridge between diverse cultures and civilizations of the world and for fostering a spirit of friendly sentiments among them.

Both sides also discussed plans for organizing events this year to promote Pakistani culture and history in China.

S.Korea says DPRK fires multiple projectiles

SEOUL: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) fired multiple projectiles, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said Sunday.

The projectiles were presumed to be fired from multiple rocket launchers. The South Korean military detected the multiple trajectories from 8:07 a.m. to 11:03 a.m. local time, the JCS said in a statement.

It noted that the South Korean military has strengthened surveillance and vigilance while maintaining a full readiness posture in close cooperation with the United States.

A week earlier, the DPRK fired eight short-range ballistic missiles eastward from four different areas.

The DPRK has conducted projectile launches four times since the new government of South Korea was inaugurated on May 10.

Indian police launch crackdown on protests

NEW DELHI: Indian police launched brutal crackdown on protests on Sunday that erupted across India over derogatory remarks against Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by top leaders of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Muslims have taken to the streets to protest against anti-Islamic comments made by two leaders of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Nupur Sharma and Naveen Kumar Jindal, in the recent week. Countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, and Iran, which are key trade partners for India, lodged protests through diplomatic channels and used social media to demand an apology from the government.

Clashes over the remarks simmered across India, as some in the minority Muslim community see them as the latest instance of pressure and humiliation under BJP rule on issues ranging from freedom of worship to the wearing of hijab head scarves.

Two teenagers were killed when police opened fire on protesters in the eastern city of Ranchi. Sporadic riots in northern Uttar Pradesh state led to the arrests of over 300 people.

France holds parliamentary election

PARIS: French voters are choosing lawmakers in a parliamentary election Sunday as President Emmanuel Macron seeks to secure his majority while under growing threat from a leftist coalition.

More than 6,000 candidates, ranging in age from 18 to 92, are running for 577 seats in the National Assembly in the first round of the election. Those who receive the most votes will advance to the decisive second round on June 19.

Following Macron's reelection in May, his centrist coalition is seeking an absolute majority that would enable it to implement his campaign promises, which include tax cuts and raising the retirement age from 62 to 65.

But the latest opinion polls suggest Macron and his allies may have trouble winning over half of the parliamentary seats. A government with a large, but not absolute



majority would still be able to rule, but only by bargaining with legislators. The main opposition force appears to be a newly-created coalition made up of leftists, greens and communists led by hard-left figure Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

Mélenchon urged voters to give his coalition a majority and thereby force Macron to name him as prime minister, which would prompt a situation called "cohabitation."

The leftists' platform

includes a significant minimum wage increase, lowering the retirement age to 60 and locking in energy prices.

Though Mélenchon's coalition could win more than 200 seats, current projections give the left little chance of winning a majority. Macron and his allies are expected to win between 260 and 320 seats, according to the latest polls.

The two-round voting system is complex and not

proportionate to the nationwide support for a party. Lawmakers are elected by district.

The parliamentary election is traditionally a difficult race for the French far-right's candidates, as rivals tend to step aside in the second round to improve the chances of another contender.

Led by Marine Le Pen, who lost to Macron in the presidential election, the National Rally hopes to do better than five years ago, when it won eight seats. With at least 15 seats, the far-right would be allowed to form a parliamentary group and gain greater powers at the assembly.

Le Pen herself is candidate for reelection in her stronghold of Henin-Beaumont, in northern France.

Results may also be impacted by an expected record-low voter turnout. Pollsters say less than half of France's 48.7 million electorate is expected to cast ballots.

Indian troops martyr four Kashmiri youth in IIOJK

SRINAGAR: Indian troops in their fresh acts of state terrorism martyred four Kashmiri youth in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The troops martyred three youth during a cordon and search operation (CASO) in Drabgam area of Pulwama district. Another youth Adil Parray was martyred by the troops in Kreesbal Palpora area of Srinagar district on Sunday.

The authorities suspended internet service in the two areas.

Meanwhile, Indian police during house raids arrested three youth in Srinagar and Islamabad areas.

On the other hand, two Indian army soldiers were injured in a landmine explosion in Poonch district of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday afternoon.

The explosion occurred while an Indian army's patrolling party was clearing grass of the surrounding area in Balakote Sector of Mendhar. The injured duo was airlifted taken to a Base Hospital via a chopper.

The condition of the injured soldiers could not be immediately ascertained.

China rebuts U.S. defense secretary's remarks

SINGAPORE: China strongly objected to remarks made by U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin at the ongoing 19th Shangri-La Dialogue regarding the South China Sea and Taiwan, calling them unfounded declarations and false accusations against China.

Austin's accusation that China's "unprofessional and frequent interceptions" of other countries' airplanes in the air space of the South China Sea does not accord with the fact, said Lieutenant General Zhang Zhenzhong, deputy chief of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission, at a press briefing.

"We have to point out that the place or the air space where this event happened were in the air space near China's Xisha and Nansha Islands, not the air space of American allies. And China has to take necessary counter measures to safeguard its sovereignty and security interests. The counter measures we have taken are conducted in a professional and safe way," Zhang

said. Zhang said that the title of militarization of the South China Sea is more suited for the United States as it frequently sends warships and planes to intrude into the adjacent waters and air space of China's islands and reefs in the South China Sea and frequently carries out closing reconnaissance and targeted military exercises in the area.

"We have deployed necessary defense facilities in our own territory. It is a natural right of a sovereign country to do so. It is also a necessary response to the provocative actions of other parties. It is fair to say that the United States is the biggest force driving the militarization of the South China Sea," he said.

Zhang stressed that there was never any trouble in the South China Sea until the United States created troubles.

Calling Austin's remarks on Taiwan interference in China's internal affairs, Zhang urged Washington to stop

playing the "Taiwan card."

By sending officials to visit Taiwan, claiming support for Taiwan's "self-defense" capacity, revising its so-called fact sheet of "U.S.-Taiwan" relations and arms sales, the United States has sent wrong signals to the "Taiwan independence" separatist forces and escalated tensions across the strait, Zhang said, noting that "This is extremely dangerous."

"The Taiwan question is the one question that could most easily lead the China-U.S. relations into conflict. Mishandling of the Taiwan question will have a destructive impact on bilateral ties. The People's Liberation Army always stands ready to resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity at any cost," he said.

While commenting on the United States' so-called "Indo-Pacific strategy," Zhang said it is a strategy that causes division, instigates confrontation and undermines peace in the Asia-Pacif-

ic region.

"The U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy is a strategy that goes against historical trends and prevailing will of regional countries. It only serves the U.S. own interests and therefore is doomed to failure," he said.

Zhang said that the United States often talks about the rule-based international order, but it actually treats international rules and norms as a toy. Withdrawing from treaties, breaking away from agreements at its own will, waving the stick of unilateral sanctions against other countries, and interfering in other countries' internal affairs, the United States, in reality, tries to rule the world with its own domestic laws and gangster rules, said Zhang.

"The United States is the biggest source of instability in international order, the backstage manipulator for global turmoil and a dangerous threat to regional peace and stability," Zhang added.

Largest Palestinian displacement looms after Israeli court ruling

OCCUPIED WEST BANK: Some 1,200 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank region of Masafer Yatta face the risk of forced removal to make way for an army firing zone after a decades-long legal battle that ended last month in Israel's highest court.

The ruling opened the way for one of the largest displacements since Israel captured the territory in the 1967 Middle East war. But residents are refusing to leave, hoping their resilience and international pressure will keep Israel from carrying out the evictions.

"We want to take this land from us to build settlements," said Wadha Ayoub Abu Sabha, a resident of Al-Fakheit, one of a group of hamlets where Palestinian shepherds and farmers claim a historic connection to the land. "We're not leaving," she said.

In the 1980s, Israel declared the area a closed military zone known as "Firing Zone 918." It argued in court that these 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres) along the Israel-West Bank boundary were "highly crucial" for training purposes and that the Palestinians living there were only seasonal dwellers.

"It has been a year of immense grief," said Abu Sabha, her voice breaking as she sat in one of the few tents left standing, lit by a single light bulb.

The communities in this part of the South Hebron Hills traditionally lived in underground caves. Over the past two decades, they have also started building tin shacks and small rooms above ground.

Israeli forces have been demolishing these new constructions for

years, Abu Sabha said, but now that they have the court's backing, the evictions are likely to pick up.

Steps away, her family's belongings were reduced to a pile of rubble after soldiers arrived with bulldozers to raze some of the structures. She lamented the significant losses — the dwindling livestock even more than the destroyed furniture.

Much of the argument during the protracted case centered on whether the Palestinians who live across the area are permanent residents or seasonal occupants.

The Supreme Court concluded that the residents "failed to prove their claim of permanent habitation" before the area was declared a firing zone. It relied on aerial photos and excerpts from a 1985 book that both sides cited as evidence.

The book, titled "Life in the Caves of Mount Hebron," was authored by Israeli anthropologist Yaacov Havakook, who spent three years studying the lives of Palestinian farmers and shepherds in Masafer Yatta.

Havakook declined to comment and instead referred Reuters to his book. But he said he had tried to submit an expert opinion on behalf of the residents following a request from one of their lawyers, and was prevented from doing so by the Israeli defense ministry, where he was employed at the time.

The United Nations and European Union condemned the court ruling and urged Israel to stop the demolitions and evictions.

"The establishment of a firing zone cannot be considered an 'imperative military reason' to



transfer the population under occupation," the EU spokesperson said in a statement.

In a transcript of a 1981 ministerial meeting on settlements uncovered by Israeli researchers, then-Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon, who later became prime minister, suggested the Israeli

military expand training zones in the South Hebron Hills to dispossess the Palestinian residents of their land.

"We want to offer you more training zones," Sharon said, given "the spread of Arab villagers from the hills toward the desert."

The Israeli military told

Reuters the area was declared a firing zone for "a variety of relevant operational considerations" and that Palestinians violated the closure order by building without permits over the years.

According to the United Nations, the Israeli authorities reject most Palestinian applications for building permits in "Area C," a swathe of land making up two-thirds of the West Bank where Israel has full control and where most Jewish settlements are located. In other areas of the West Bank, Palestinians exercise limited self-rule.

UN data also showed that Israel has marked nearly 30 percent of Area C as military firing zones. The designations have put 38 of the most vulnerable Palestinian communities at increased risk of forced displacement.

KP govt allocates hefty amount in budget 2022-23: Umar



Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Forests, Environment and Wildlife, Mohammad Ishtiaq Umar has said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has allocated hefty amount in upcoming budget for next fiscal year 2022-23 to achieve the objectives of prosperous society.

Talking with two different delegations of Chamkani and Mian Gujjar village here Sunday, the minister said that the PTI government believed in practical politics and all the developmental projects would be completed by implementing a comprehensive strategy.

He said that the network of uplift schemes would usher in a new era of development and prosperity in the region.

On the occasion, the provincial minister listened to the problems being faced by the delegations and issued directives to concerned authorities to resolve them on priority basis.

He urged the people to cooperate with the provincial government for the development of the country so that more people-friendly projects can be completed as per their aspirations.

The provincial minister said that the establishment of a corruption free society, provision of generous services and green Pakistan were the targets of the incumbent government.

SCCI conducts a course on 'Conflict Management'

SIALKOT: The Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) conducted a session on 'Conflict Management', under the business Executive Course.

The session was chaired by SCCI Senior Vice President (SVP) Sheikh Zohaib Rafique Sethi. Member Pakistan Incubation Network Sohaib Saleem presented different types and stages of conflict.

He also briefed the participants about the major strategies effective in managing a conflict. Agencies

PK 3.5m

Potential taxpayers should be brought into tax net

Staff Report



ISLAMABAD: The business community Sunday called for bringing all identified 3.5 millions tax evaders and millions of other non tax filers immediately into tax net for broadening base to provide relief to existing tax payers. Commenting on federal budget, Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman and former Senior Vice President Lahore Chamber Meher Kashif Younis, members executive committee of chamber of commerce Shahid Nazir and Mufti Yousaf Shah said that draconian action must be taken against tax evaders and non filers after a high level impartial scrutiny preferably conducted by a third party.

He lamented that 9.5 % tax to GDP ratio in Pakistan is even less than other countries of South Asia whereas its 46.2 % in France, 46.0 % in Denmark and 44.6% in Belgium. He stressed the urgent need of broadening the tax base exclusively with new tax payers which he added is oxygen to strengthening of national economy. He said world over judicious taxation plays a key role in economic growth of the nations and especially it matters a lot in developing countries.

Meher Kashif said that although good steps have been taken to accelerate the pace of growth but undue taxation on construction industry will directly affect the 40 allied industries and urged the government to withdraw new tax to help flourish inter connected industries which are providing job to millions of workers. He said tax on construction industry has been proposed without taking stakeholders into confidence. He hoped that government will withdraw it in larger interests to help boost construction industry which plays key role in national development.

Budgetary relief measures in hard times draw positive feedback

Almost all major segments of the society have got their fair share of benefits in the new budget

ISLAMABAD: The announcement of several relief measures by the coalition government in the 2022-23 budget, despite severe financial constraints and external challenges, has drawn a positive feedback from experts and the masses alike.

Almost all major segments of the society have got their fair share of benefits in the new budget, including slashing of duties on solar panels (17% to zero) to help the people generate their own power, withdrawing sales tax on tractors (5% to zero) and seeds (17% to zero) to boost agriculture, and expanding the reach of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) to Rs 364 billion.

All these measure have come at a time when, according to a recent World Bank report, the global economy is heading towards a recession, with prices of fuel and food hitting an all time high, amidst the war in Ukraine, supply chain disruptions and recent Covid-related issues.

The government, despite the odds, introduced a number of budgetary measures aimed at correcting economy in tandem with providing relief to all segments of the society, including industrialists, businessmen, farmers and most importantly the downtrodden.

Targeted subsidies have been announced to protect them with the increase in BISP's allocation

from Rs 250 billion to Rs 364 billion this year that will benefit nine (09) million families.

Despite several financial constraints and the fact that higher education is a devolved subject, the government allocated Rs 65 billion for the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in the current budget to promote higher education, which is currently 9% in the country.

To boost agriculture production, the government proposed to withdraw sales tax on the supply of tractors, agricultural implements, and various seeds, including wheat, maize, sunflowers, canola, and rice. The initiative was widely welcomed by the farming community.

Custom duty on import of agriculture machinery related to irrigation, drainage, harvesting, post-harvesting handling and processing, besides plant protection equipment, machinery and other capital goods, has also been withdrawn.

Chairman of the Pakistan Hi-Tech Hybrid Seed Association Shahzad Ali Malik, while hailing the government decisions, said the initia-

tives would help boost agriculture production to ensure food security. He lauded the decision to withdraw 17 per cent Sales Tax in the budget on all kinds of seeds.

Considering agriculture the backbone of the country's economy, the government along with other measures, allocated Rs 21 billion to increase crops yield and uplift of the livestock sector.



A progressive farmer, Pir Saddam Hussain Shah told APP that the measures would help increase output and make agri products more competitive in the international market.

The 15 percent raise in the salaries of federal government employees and five percent increase in the pensions of retired employees, besides raising minimum limit of tax from Rs 0.6 million to Rs 1.2 million will increase the take home cash.

All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) Chairman Haider Ali Khan Asthanizai hailed the increase and said the inflation-hit employees got a big relief.

The government has also specially incentivized the exports and industrial sectors to

promote growth and investment by proposing tax relief measures in the exports sector and has provided sales tax exemptions on value-added exports, local manufacturing and potential industrial inputs.

The tariff structure has been rationalized for synthetic filament yarn to meet the long-standing demand of the sector.

Plants and machinery imported by power generation projects that entered into implementation agreements with the Government of Pakistan have also been exempted from sales tax.

President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Muhamamd Shakeel Munir said the budget 2022-23 provided relief to the industrial sector.

To boost the industrial output, the government has announced provision of uninterrupted power supply to industries under which specific electricity feeders will be exempted from load-shedding.

Hailing the decision, Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Nadeem Rauf said the country's industrial sector required more energy to enhance its growth. Experts believe that the measures announced in the budget will help put the ailing economy back on rails. APP

Pak's exports to Italy exceed imports level: Mian Kashif

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Mian Kashif Ashfaq Sunday disclosed that for first time in Pakistan's history, the country's exports to Italy exceeds the imports from Italy depicting upward trends in promotion of bilateral trade between the two countries.

Talking to a delegation of exporters and importers led by honorary Investment Consular and Tourism Ambassador for Italy Muhammad Sheheryar Khan, he said bilateral trade volume between Italy and Pakistan has exponentially grown from € 1.42 billion in 2019 to €1.52 billion in 2021.

He said Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan, Andreas Ferrarese, is a key driving force behind the further cementing trade relations with both countries.

He said although global trade shrank during the Covid-19 pandemic, Pakistan's exports to Italy in 2021 grew by 22.1%, with a total value of €763.51 million. In the same period, Italian exports to Paki-



stan saw an increase of 48.6%, with a total value of €754.06 million. The trade volume in Jan-Feb 2022 stood at €289.37 million compared to €203.41 million during the same year in 2021 he added.

With its unique geo-strategic location and improved security conditions, Mian Kashif Ashfaq further said that Pakistan offers excellent investment opportunities for Italian companies. With a population of around 220 million and a constantly growing demand for high-end products, Pakistan remains an attractive market for Italian manufacturers and businesspeople. He said It is worth mentioning that

remittances from Pakistani workers in Italy hit an all-time high. With the figures of \$711.7 million in FY22, Italy has become the seventh-largest center of worker remittances to Pakistan globally and the top one in the EU countries.

Moreover, Italy is home to more than 150,000 Pakistanis, the largest Pakistani diaspora in Europe (after Brexit). Engaged in various production sectors in Italy, they continue to contribute to both countries' economies.

Mian Kashif further stated that Italy is among the top ten exporting countries for Pakistan globally and the third largest trade partner in European Union. Apart from business and trade, Italy has carried out significant projects in archaeology, agriculture, health, culture, and tourism.

Italy's Archaeological Mission is one of the oldest present missions in Pakistan and has made significant contributions to Pakistan's already rich archaeological sphere. APP

Budget is for IMF, not the people: PEW

Growth rate, revenue target based on assumptions, says Dr. Murtaza Mughal

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Sunday said the budget is for the IMF, not for the people. The growth rate and revenue targets are based on aspirations rather than facts while giving tax relief to the agricultural sector is a good decision.

No effort has been made in the budget to address the economic problems or initiate the reforms but its entire focus is on appeasing the IMF, it said. Growth rate and tax collections are based on desires rather than facts, manipulation of facts and rhetoric has been given priority over facts in the budget, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of PEW.

The issue of petroleum levy, sales tax and Gas Infrastructure Development Cess which will be imposed on the behest of IMF have been downplayed in the budget, he added.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal

said that the budget estimates inflation at 11 percent, which contradicts the facts, while the prices of various commodities, including oil, gas and grain are rising in the global market.

No plans have been put forward to counter the increasing price of oil, gas, food and other commodities which is surprising.

Dr. Mughal said that the budget claims to improve the tax system which is unlikely, while taxing the real estate market, tax relief for the solar sector and tax cuts for the agricultural sector are better measures.

The property market has become a mafia whose job is to rob the people and launder black money which has not been regulated for years.

The budget may help to improve the condition of the devastated agriculture and the government has planned to collect taxes from the affluent class which is unlikely to succeed.

Malaysia sets RM56b target for halal food exports: Envoy

ISLAMABAD: Acting High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Deddy Faisal Ahmad Salleh on Sunday said that Malaysia has set a target of RM 56 Billion for export revenue in the halal food industry by 2025 to get benefit the global halal food market.

Malaysia's current exports in the halal food industry are 35.8 billion RM, which is a huge growth potential according to the size of the global halal market, Malaysian envoy, Deddy Faisal Ahmad Salleh told APP here.

The Malaysian envoy said that the current size of the global halal market in terms of revenue is \$2 trillion was expected to increase to \$3 trillion by the year 2027.

He said that there were huge opportunities for cooperation in 'Halal Food Market' between Pakistan and Malaysia and this sector in Malaysia had an extensive network of value added industry and multinational companies that could help Pakistan to connect with the global supply chain.

Deddy Faisal said that traditionally, halal food includes meat, poultry, seafood, fruits and vegetables, dairy products, grains, oil, fats, waxes and confectioneries but it could be sold at competitive price in the global market by bringing value added products.

Replying to a question, he said the Malaysian halal standard is now being



widely used by several renowned global multinational companies (MNCs) including Nestle and Unilever.

Malaysia's halal portfolio has also expanded beyond food and beverage, venturing into various other sectors such as cosmetics, logistics, pharmaceutical and most recently, tourism, he said.

He said that the country provided the world's first halal in-flight catering on board its national carrier, Malaysia Airlines.

Replying to another question, he said that there was a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Pakistan and Malaysia, which had to bring the business commu-

nities of both the countries closer to make it more effective.

He said that currently, Malaysia had seven bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the following countries: Australia, Chile, India, Japan, New Zealand, Pakistan and Turkey.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members have established the ASEAN Free Trade (FTA) area also. "I call upon the business community of Pakistan to be the partner and catalyst for reform, to drive sustainability and to contribute to our collective goal of shared prosperity," he said. APP

New Gwadar Airport: test flight in December

QUETTA: The test flight from new Gwadar International Airport would be started from December this year as the construction work on site has been expedited, an official of Gwadar Development Authority said.

The new \$246m greenfield Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) being built at an area of 4,300 acres would be made operational before the deadline which was September 2023, the official said.

The government has expanded the 50-bed Pak-China Friendship Hospital Gwadar to 150 beds state-of-the-art medical centre in order to ensure best health care facilities for the people of Gwadar.

The authority would ensure state-of-the-art free medical facility to the inhabitants of port city of Gwadar from January next year, he said.

The quarters concerned were making all out efforts to expedite the infrastructure and development projects for its timely completion.

The GDA said the authority has expedited the implementation of old town rehabilitation plan of Gwadar to provide best infrastructure and provide every facility to masses of port city.

With the support of federal government, the project worth Rs 3.3 billion for old town rehabilitation of Gwadar was in full swing to set city on modern lines to end the sense of deprivation among the people of area, he added.

The federal government would be funded 67 shares of the total cost while Balochistan government would bear the remaining cost for the development of old town rehabilitation

under the Gwadar development plan.

Under the plan, water drainage, supply and distribution of utility projects would be completed soon, besides ensuring the supply of clean drinking water to the port dwellers.

The official said the water supply to Gwadar would be resolved in the short period of three months as desalination plant is also in progress to curtail the need of whole city.

He said the authorities asked to strictly adhere to Gwadar Master Plan while carrying out development and other public welfare projects in the city.

The departments concerned were making all out efforts to expedite the infrastructure and development projects for its timely completion in Gwadar.

He said there were vast invest-



ment opportunities in every sector and comprehensive strategy would be adopted to attract investors in this regard.

Balochistan government was striving hard to develop Gwadar to end the sense of deprivation among the people of port city. APP

Shadab propels Pakistan to 269 against West Indies

Cricket World Cup Super League series mark return of int'l cricket in Multan

MULTAN: West Indies captain Nicholas Pooran delivered a magical display with the ball, before Shadab Khan's batting master-class, as Pakistan set a 270-run target in a 48-over-a-side game on Sunday.

Pooran registered his career-best bowling figures at the Multan Cricket Stadium, during the third and final ODI of the series, as he bagged figures of four for 48 from his 10 overs.

The hosts went off to a decent start after winning the toss courtesy of Fakhar Zaman and Imam-ul-Haq. The pair provided an 85-run stand before Pooran brought himself on to spoil the Pakistan show.

He removed Fakhar Zaman for his maiden ODI wicket. The left-hander departed after scoring 35. Just after adding three runs to the total, Pakistan lost a huge wicket in the shape of captain Babar Azam, who scored only a single run.

It was initially given not out by the on-field umpire, but the decision was reviewed by West Indies which resulted in a wicket for Hayden Walsh.

Imam-ul-Haq, who scored his seventh



consecutive 50-plus score, was sent packing by Pooran in the 23rd over. He then dismissed Mohammad Haris, in the same over, who went to the hut without troubling the scorers.

Mohammad Rizwan, who was initially given not out on the caught behind appeal, had to talk a long walk back to the dugout as the decision was successfully reviewed by the West Indies skipper. This

was Pooran's fourth wicket in the game. At that stage, Pakistan were reduced to 117 for five in 25 overs. Shadab Khan and Khushdil Shah made a much-needed 84-run stand for Pakistan as they brought the home side back in the game.

Shah was dismissed after scoring 34, however, Shadab went on to score 86 off 78. He struck four boundaries and three maximums.

For West Indies, Keemo Paul claimed two wickets for 57 runs from his nine-over spell.

The match was reduced to 48 overs due to a dust storm, which stopped play for an hour during the Pakistan innings.

The ICC Cricket World Cup Super League series between these two sides marked the return of international cricket in Multan.

The series was rescheduled from December 2021, due to a Covid-19 outbreak in the West Indies team, to June this year.

The last time the two teams locked horns in a bilateral affair for 50-over internationals was in September 2016 when Pakistan hosted West Indies in the UAE for a three-match series. Pakistan were dominant as they put up big targets in excess of 300 twice and 285 in the first ODI.

Babar emerged as the breakout star and was adjudged Player of the Series for registering sensational scores of 120 (his first ODI century), 123 and 117 in three matches. He became the third Pakistan batter to score three consecutive centuries in men's ODIs and eighth overall.



State Minister for Interior Abdur Rehman Kanju addressing during launching ceremony of De-concepts T-10 Celebrity Cricket League (DCL). As Federal Minister for Narcotics Control Shahzain Bugti, Kamran Akmal, Sohail Tanveer, Moammar Rana, Saleem Sheikh and others seen in the picture on the occasion at local hotel in Federal Capital.

Semi-automated offside on the cards

DOHA: A semi-automated offside system could be used at this year's World Cup with the International Football Association Board, the guardian of the laws of the game, set to discuss the introduction of the technology in Doha on Monday.

The optical tracking system was trialled at the FIFA Club World Cup in Abu Dhabi earlier this year and had also been tested at the Arab Cup in Qatar last December.

The IFAB will not itself decide whether the technology should be in place at the World Cup but if it offers approval then world football's governing body could go ahead with its introduction.

"The semi-automated offside system still needs to be evaluated before a final decision is taken," FIFA told AFP, adding that it was simply "an additional tool to help the VAR".

Pierluigi Collina, chairman of FIFA's referees committee, said earlier this year that the introduction of Video Assistant Referees – first used at the World Cup in 2018 – had been "very successful" but that making offside decisions semi-automated would mean greater accuracy and greater speed. "It's important the video officials get an accurate decision, but we are aware we need to reduce the time, particularly with offside," Collina said in February during the trials at the Club World Cup.

Federer targets return to top-level tennis in 2023

LONDON: Roger Federer said he is "definitely" intending to return to top-level tennis in 2023, but added that he had not made any concrete plans beyond his scheduled appearances at the Laver Cup and his home tournament in Basel later this year.

The former world number one, who will be 41 in August, has not played since July last year, when he was knocked out of Wimbledon in the quarter-finals against Hubert Hurkacz. Earlier this year, Federer confirmed his plans to team up with Spaniard Rafa Nadal at the Laver Cup in London, before competing at the Swiss Indoors tournament. "Yes, definitely," Federer told newspaper Tages-Anzeiger when asked if he wanted to return to the ATP tour in 2023.

"How and where, I don't know yet. But that would be the idea. I haven't planned more than the Laver Cup and Basel yet. After Basel, the season is over anyway. It's important for me to get fit again so that I can train fully. Once I've done that, I can choose how many tournaments I play and where. "The Laver Cup is a good start, I don't have to play five matches in six days. I will have to be able to do that in Basel. But I'm hopeful, I've come a long way. I'm not far away..." Federer's Laver Cup teammate Nadal demolished Norway's Casper Ruud to claim a record-extending 14th Roland Garros crown earlier this month, and Federer was full of praise for the Spaniard's accomplishments. "In general, it's just unbelievable what Rafa has achieved," Federer said.

Ecuador keep their place in World Cup

SANTIAGO: Ecuador kept their place in the Qatar World Cup after football governing body FIFA on Friday closed an inquiry sought by non-qualifying Chile into the eligibility of a key player.

The FIFA disciplinary committee said in a statement it had decided to "close the proceedings" against the Ecuador Football Federation (FEF) after Chile disputed the nationality of full-back Byron Castillo. If Chile had been successful, they would have leapfrogged Ecuador into direct World Cup qualification. The Chilean football federation (FFCh) said it would appeal the decision all the way to the Court of Arbitration for Sport if need be.

Netherlands comes from behind to draw with Poland

ROTTERDAM: The Netherlands and Poland drew 2-2 in a hectic UEFA Nations League encounter here on Saturday, with the home team coming back strongly from 2-0 down.

After a 2-1 win against Wales in Cardiff with a totally different squad, the Netherlands' coach Louis van Gaal returned to the line-up that beat Belgium 4-1 in Brussels on June 3. There were only two exceptions: captain Virgil van Dijk was replaced by Stefan de Vrij, while goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen was not fit enough to start, meaning Mark Flekken earned his second consecutive cap.

Axelsen wins Indonesia Masters title

JAKARTA: Danish badminton ace Viktor Axelsen clinched the men's singles title at the Indonesia Masters on Sunday, beating Taiwan's Chou Tien-chen in straight sets.

The world number one beat Chou 21-10, 21-12 in a 41-minute match held at the Istora sporting arena in Jakarta.

"I love playing here in Istora and I always dreamt of winning a tournament at Istora. It's a legendary venue, so to have done that is something that is really special to me," 28-year-old Axelsen told reporters.

Axelsen's victory came after he downed home favourite Anthony Sinisuka Ginting in the semi-finals.

In the women's singles, China's Chen Yufei overcame Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon to win her first title since her gold medal at the



2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

She defeated Ratchanok, who won the Indonesia Masters women's title in 2020, in a 74-minute three-set match 21-16, 18-21, 21-15.

"I am very pleased to get the gold medal today. I faced some difficulties during the

game but I'm very pleased to overcome them and secure the win," world number four Chen said.

Chen secured a place in the final after defeating compatriot He Bingjiao 21-17, 21-14 in the semis.

After the Indonesia Masters, the Indone-

sia Open is set to begin on June 14 and will last until June 19.

The back-to-back tournaments were highly anticipated by badminton fans after almost three years without live audiences in the Indonesian capital due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Kyrgios claims he was racially abused

STUTTGART: Australian firebrand Nick Kyrgios claimed he was racially abused by sections of the crowd as he slipped to a bad-tempered defeat against Andy Murray in the Stuttgart semi-finals on Saturday.

Kyrgios was penalised a point and then a game for unsportsmanlike conduct early in the second set, smashing a racquet before an angry exchange with a group in the crowd.

The 27-year-old, who is of Greek origin, said he had been the victim of racism.

"When is this going to stop? Dealing with racist slurs from the crowd?" Kyrgios wrote on Instagram.

"I understand that my behaviour isn't the best all the time, but you little black sheep 'shut up and play' - little comments like this are



not acceptable.

"When I retaliate to the crowd I get penalised. This is messed up."

After the tournament supervisor was called, Kyrgios merely went through the motions on court as Murray took complete command to secure a 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 victory in 93 minutes.

Murray will play in his 70th career final and bid for his first title since Antwerp in 2019 when he plays Matteo

Berrettini.

"You expect things to happen against him, so I'm not surprised when they do," said Murray on Kyrgios.

"It was a very frustrating set for him to lose and he broke a racquet. He also had a back and forth with the umpire and something seemed to happen in the crowd.

"But I didn't really hear anything after the first set."

The British star added:

"The second set was not much fun to play, it was not very competitive.

"It wasn't really a match. He started well but closer to the end he got frustrated. The first set was tough and the end of the first set was the crucial part of the match."

Berrettini reached his fourth career final on grass as he overcame German Oscar Otto 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/5).

The runner-up at Wimbledon last year is competing for the first time since March after undergoing hand surgery.

Berrettini will be seeking his first title since winning Queen's in London last June.

The world number 10 improved to 27-6 on grass and maintained a perfect 8-0 record in Stuttgart after winning the 2019 edition at the Weissenhof Club.

PGA, LIV Golf stars battle for major title at US Open

BROOKLYN: Expect some uncomfortable moments for Phil Mickelson and Dustin Johnson at this week's US Open, where LIV Golf rebels and US PGA loyalists chase a major title in formidable conditions.

Players who departed for the rich new Saudi-funded series that debuted in England last week were suspended from US PGA Tour events, but the US Golf Association is allowing them to play in the 122nd US Open.

That's going to add to the intensity when the showdown starts Thursday on The Country Club's 7,254-yard, par-70 layout in suburban Boston.

"I'm sure it will be awkward," said Justin Thomas, who won his second PGA Championship last month. "When I saw DJ last week, I didn't know what to say, if it was a congrats or a bye or whatever it was.

"I think we're all grown-ups

and we understand there's going to be some guys you can make some jokes to and some guys you have to leave it alone, but in the end, we're all there to win a major."

Sixth-ranked Thomas knows there won't be much time for small talk.

"I would say a lot of guys, myself included, aren't at a US Open to socialize," the 29-year-old American said. "I'm not there to have a conversation and catch up."

Former world number one Johnson and six-time major champion Mickelson were among several stars who jumped to LIV Golf, which had a record \$25 million purse for its inaugural three-day event.

Other major winners on the PGA banned list include Sergio Garcia, Graeme McDowell, Louis Oosthuizen, Martin Kaymer – who withdrew from the Open on Saturday due to injury – and Charl Schwartzel, who won the

\$4 million LIV Golf debut event. Bryson DeChambeau and Patrick Reed, also major champions, joined LIV Golf over the weekend.

The US PGA Tour banished those who played the LIV tournament from any PGA Tour events. But the USGA stuck with its Open qualifying standards and rewarded all who had made the field of 156.

"We simply asked ourselves this question – should a player who had earned his way into the 2022 US Open, via our published field criteria, be pulled out of the field as a result of his decision to play in another event? And we ultimately decided that they should not," the USGA said in a statement.

American Kevin Na, who opted for LIV Golf, was happy to hear it. "Majors are very important to me," Na said. "That's one thing that's missing in my career and that has been a dream of mine, to

win a major championship, since I can remember."

Tiger Woods, a 15-time major winner making a comeback from severe leg injuries suffered in a February 2021 car crash, will skip the US Open to better prepare for the British Open, which starts July 14 at St Andrews.

"My body needs more time to get stronger for major championship golf," Woods tweeted. "I'm excited to get back out there soon."

Woods, 46, made the cut at the Masters in April and last month's PGA Championship, but withdrew from the last day at Southern Hills after limping to the third-worst major round of his career.

He has also supported the PGA Tour, citing its legacy to such legends as Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus.

Shotmaking accuracy will be at a premium with the US Open's usual lightning-fast greens and thick rough.



American Billy Horschel, who won the Memorial earlier this month, took his only top-15 finish at a major by sharing fourth at the 2013 US Open.

"I've always felt like US Open venues and the way they set them

up favors me very well," Horschel said.

"Obviously my major record is pretty abysmal, but I feel very confident."

American Will Zalatoris, who lost a PGA playoff to Thomas at

the PGA Championship, expects a difficult test at Brookline.

"I played the US Am there in 2013. It was the hardest golf course I ever played," he said. "It was a big-boy golf course. US Open. Expect nothing different."