



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ

رسول اللہ ﷺ نے فرمایا اسلام کی بنیاد پانچ چیزوں پر قائم کی گئی ہے۔ اول کو ای دنیا کر اللہ کے سوا کوئی معبود نہیں اور سبک محمد ﷺ اللہ کے سچے رسول ہیں اور نماز قائم کرنا اور زکوٰۃ ادا کرنا اور حج کرنا اور رمضان کے روزے رکھنا (بخاری: حدیث نمبر ۸)

Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited

Govt will fully support agriculture sector: Miftah

Finance Minister Miftah Ismail says the government is committed to provide full support to agriculture sector. The Fertilizer Manufactures of Pakistan Advisory Council in facilitating the farmers and reassured about the present government's policy to provide full support to agriculture sector for its growth and development is hail worthy.



EU must appoint special envoy to Kashmir: AJK President

President Azad Jammu and Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry says appealed to the European Union to appoint a special envoy to Kashmir so that it can review the situation in Occupied Kashmir and submit its report to the European Parliament. The European Parliament should also organize an Intra-Kashmir Dialogue and play its role in initiating dialogue between India and Pakistan.

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Govt hikes petrol prices by Rs24.03

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: In another jolt to the inflation-hit masses, the government has decided to increase petrol and diesel prices by Rs24.03 per liter from today (Thursday). Federal Finance Minister Miftah Ismail on Wednesday announced that the government was not in a position to bear subsidies anymore, therefore, it has decided to increase the prices of petrol by Rs24.03. Starting from today, the price of petrol will be Rs233.89 per litre, diesel will be Rs263.31, kerosene oil will be sold for Rs211.43, and the price of light diesel oil will be Rs207.47.

At the beginning of the press briefing, Miftah — who was flanked by State Minister For Petroleum Musaddaq Malik — criticised the previous government's policies that, according to him, "deteriorated the country's economy". "Imran Khan had deliberately reduced the prices of petrol by giving subsidies," Miftah said.

The finance minister said the incumbent government was bearing the brunt of that, adding that currently, Pakistan, on every litre, was bearing a loss of Rs24.3 on petrol, Rs59.16 diesel, Rs39.49 kerosene oil, and Rs39.16 on light diesel oil. He said that in May, this loss had gone past Rs120 billion — three times greater than running the expenses of the civil government, which amounts to Rs40 million. Earlier it was reported that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has rejected a summary to increase in the prices of petroleum products. Sources privy to the finance ministry said that there was no chance of Rs23 increase in price of petrol and Rs53 increase in price of diesel.

Investment

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a review meeting at Rashakai SEZ on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

JVs

Chinese tech, Pak labour a 'win-win situation': PM

Says govt committed to establish SEZs on priority to boost industrialization

Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD/ RASHAKAI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Tuesday said that the joint venture of Chinese industry and technology with Pakistan's labour and investment would create a win-win situation for the two countries by boosting their production and exports to the world. The prime minister, in an interview with the representatives of Chinese media, said both the countries were moving toward the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which comprised

regional cooperation and industrialization through establishing the industrial zones.

He said Pakistan's skilled and semi-skilled labour was comparatively cheaper and the joint venture of Chinese technology and Pakistan's labour and investment would help the two countries make production at competitive rates and export their products to other countries. He said the first phase of the CPEC featured road and energy projects to meet Pakistan's power needs which transformed friendly relations into unique ones where people-to-

people contacts had seen a new phase.

He said when the CPEC agreement was signed between President Xi Jinping and that time Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan was faced with crippling load shedding. However, two years after the launch of CPEC projects, the country had been able to overcome the situation. He said Pakistan and China enjoyed time-tested friendship which had attained more heights under the leadership of President Xi Jinping. He said Chinese president's vision and dynamism

offered an opportunity to attain progress, peace and prosperity, not only to Pakistan but the world. He said in form of CPEC, Pakistan had been the first beneficiary of the Belt and Road Initiative of President Xi.

Coming to Gwadar Port, he said it was a gigantic project to benefit the entire region including Afghanistan, Iran and Gulf nations besides China and Pakistan. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the government was committed to completing SEZs at the earliest to ensure development and prosperity in the country.

Agreement signed

WB to provide \$85m for PHFP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the World Bank (WB) on Wednesday signed the agreement worth of US\$ 85 million for a house finance project to benefit the low- and middle-income households in Pakistan. The Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq witnessed the signing ceremony of agreements of "Pakistan Housing Finance Project" (PHFP) worth of US\$ 85 million with the World Bank at the Ministry of Economic Affairs Islamabad.

Mian Asad Hayaud Din, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs Pakistan and Gailius J. Draugelis, Acting Country Director, World Bank signed the Financing Agreement while representatives of Pakistan Mortgage Refinance Company (PMRC) signed the Project Agreement.

The Acting Country Director, Gailius, ensured the World

Bank's continuous financial and technical assistance to the Government of Pakistan to help promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Pakistan.

While witnessing the signing ceremony, the Minister for Economic Affairs, reiterated the parameters of valued partnership with the World Bank. He also stated that today's event reflects continued confidence by the World Bank on the Government's policy and programs. He particularly announced that the primary beneficiaries of this project will be low- and middle-income households in Pakistan reliant on informal incomes. The Pakistan Housing Finance Project is aimed at supporting the ongoing efforts of the Government of Pakistan in increasing access to housing finance for households and supporting capital market development in Pakistan.

Working tirelessly

Govt to provide relief to masses: Marriyum



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb says the government is working tirelessly to provide relief to the people. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Wednesday, the Information Minister said the past government of PTI was never interested in development but only looted the country, laundered money and illegally grabbed money of welfare trusts.

She said the last PTI government broke all records

of corruption and did not complete development projects started before 2018 during the tenure of PML-N government. Marriyum Aurangzeb said the present government is trying to complete the incomplete development projects to bring economic stability in the country.

She said the government is committed to clear the mess created by PTI and will steer the country on the path of progress and development. She said if there was any foreign conspiracy, PTI Chairman Imran Khan should have presented evidence before the national security committee. She said Imran Khan keeps on changing narratives and when one narrative fails, he puts forth another.

NSC was told no conspiracy 'unearthed': DG ISPR

Says no objection on formation of a probe commission

Our Correspondent

RAWALPINDI: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General (DG) Major General Babar Iftikhar said no "conspiracy" was found during a meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC) held to review the "threat letter". In his interview with a private TV, the DG ISPR said the NSC meeting, attended by all three services chiefs, DG ISI and others were briefed on the cipher issued and the participants were told no "conspiracy" was found in it. "Participants were briefed there was no conspiracy nor any of proofs were found." He said the words 'intervention' and 'conspiracy' are used by the diplomats.

DG ISPR Major General Babar Iftikhar said propaganda campaign by some quarters to malign the Pakistan Army and create division between the military and society. No one would be allowed to distort the facts. On the Pak-China ties, DG ISPR Major General Babar Iftikhar termed the recent visit of



COAS General Qamar Javed Bajwa important and said he is the first COAS who met with Chinese President Xi Jinping. He said China always supported Pakistan in difficult situations as both the countries are enjoying strategic ties. He said work on the CPEC is underway at full pace and ruled out the impression of any delay.

The Pakistan Army spokesperson said the recent visit to COAS will bring durable results in near future. The DG

ISPR said that whenever the budget is presented, the debate on the defense budget starts. The challenges and threats related to the defense budget should also be looked into, he went on to say. The spokesman of the Pak Army said that look at India's increasing defense budget which is always against Pakistan. Major General Babar Iftikhar said as compared to India's 1.3 million troops, the number of the Pakistan Army is 0.55 million.

"Because of India, our 50,000 troops are stationed on the eastern border, 40 per cent of our forces are stationed on the western border and the rest in the cantonments. There has been no increase in the defense budget since 2020," he said. DG ISPR said that everyone knows what happened to put Pakistan on the FATF's Gray List, India lobbied to get Pakistan blacklisted. He said with an aim to devise a strategy to counter terror financing and money laundering, a special cell was set up in GHQ in 2019.

Allies end differences over Punjab cabinet share

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and People's Party have ironed out their differences over share of ministries in Punjab Cabinet. Former president Asif Ali Zardari played role to decide matters between the two coalition partners. "People's Party has got three key provincial ministries including irrigation, agriculture and CWD portfolios in the understanding," sources said. The PML-N however disagreed over giving finance and revenue ministries to the PPP and instead offered to other provincial ministries of their choice, according to sources.

"The People's Party will give the names of these ministries to the PML-N after consultation," sources said. The PPP will get five provincial ministries in provincial cabinet including the senior minister. Two advisers and special assistants will also be given to the party, according to sources.

The provincial cabinet will likely to take oath soon after agreement between the coalition partners.

Earlier, PML-N and the PPP were failed to reach understanding over the distribution of portfolios as Peoples Party (PPP) expressed reservations over cabinet portfolios and demanded key ministries in the provincial set up. PPP — a key coalition partner of PML-N in Punjab — was interested in three portfolios of finance, education and law but CM Hamza wanted them for his party. PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari held a detailed meeting with Punjab CM Hamza Shehbaz in Lahore last week to end the impasse over their share in the coalition government.

Let politicians interpret political matters: Asad

Suggests better if DG ISPR doesn't interpret political affairs

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Umar on Wednesday said that it would be better for the Inter-services Public Relations (ISPR) director-general does not interpret political affairs. Addressing a press conference along with senior PTI leader and former federal minister Shireen Mazarri in Islamabad, Asad Umar said that the facts written in the cable suggested an open threat was being given to Pakistan that if the no-confidence motion fails, Pakistan would have to pay the price and if Imran Khan is shown the door, then Pakistan will be forgiven. PTI Secretary-General Asad Umar said Chairman Imran Khan will again write to Supreme Court to constitute a judicial panel and hold a transparent inquiry into the matter.

The politician said that a member of the military leadership said in an interview that facts and opinion need to be set aside. Referring to the cable that PTI government claimed to be a "written threat" to Pakistan, the politician said that the facts



written in the cable suggested an open threat was being given to Pakistan that it will be isolated if Imran Khan is not removed from power. He claimed that whatever he is saying is written in the press releases issued after both the National Security Committee's (NSC) meetings. He said that "foreign interference" has been clearly stated in the press releases.

"[The] DG ISPR is right in saying that some of the military leadership representatives actu-

ally said that they cannot see any evidence of a conspiracy. Most of the civilian leadership said there was a conspiracy," Umar said. He said that the army alone is not responsible to defend national security, but the elected government as well. Umar said that he believes that "it would be better for the army and the country if the Inter-services Public Relations (ISPR) director-general doesn't find it necessary to interpret political affairs again and again."

Punjab Budget

LAHORE: Members of Provincial Assembly of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Hina Pervaiz Butt hold budget copy outside at Aiwan-e-Iqbal Complex during to arriving attend Budget 2022-23 session in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

Amb Masood, President Biden discuss Pak-US ties

WASHINGTON: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Sardar Masood Khan, visited the White House on to meet President Joe Biden. According to a statement issued by the Pakistani embassy, during the meeting, US President Joe Biden expressed his determination to move Pak-US relations forward on a strong footing.

During the ceremony, the press release said, the US President and the Ambassador had a brief conversation on building a strong basis for moving the US-Pakistan ties forward. Ambassadors of 46 different countries also attended the meeting to have an official photograph with the US President one by one. Due to COVID restrictions, they were also unable to meet the president.

Ambassador Masood Khan arrived in Washington D.C. on March 25, 2022, and his credentials were received by the US Chief of Protocol the same day, designating him as "Appointed Ambassador".

Rs3.226 trillion

Punjab unveils pro-poor and pro-development budget

Proposes increase of 15% in salaries, 5% in salaries

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Finance Awais Leghari on Wednesday unveiled Punjab Budget 2022-23 in a session of the provincial assembly held at the Aiwan-e-Iqbal after Speaker Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi halted the budget session amid deadlock. The provincial finance minister unveiled the Rs3.226 trillion provincial budget for the fiscal year 2022-23 and termed it a "pro-poor and pro-development budget".

In its first annual budget, the present government allocated a hefty amount of Rs 685 billion under the Annual Development Programme (ADP), with special focus on pro-poor initiatives and controlling inflation. No new tax has been imposed in the budget. Moreover, Rs683.5bn has been allocated for development schemes, Rs56 billion for the education sector, Rs173 billion for the health sector and 11.95bn will be given to the 'Saaf Pani' project. The annual development budget of South Punjab has been proposed at Rs240 billion, Awais Leghari said in his budget speech.

Revenue

Giving break-up of the budget in his budget speech, the minister said that

Punjab estimated its total revenue collection at Rs 2,521.29 billion, under which Punjab would receive Rs 2020.74 billion from Federal divisible pool, while provincial receipts (own resource revenue) are estimated at Rs 500.53 billion for FY 2022-23, 24 per cent higher than Rs 405 billion of FY 2021-22.

Income

Rs470bn proposed for health, Rs485.26bn education

Out of own resource revenue, Leghari said that Punjab Revenue Authority's (PRA's) collection target had been set at Rs 190 billion with 22 per cent increase, board of Revenue (BoR) collection at Rs 95 billion, with 44 per cent raise and Excise and Taxation Department's collection at Rs 43.5 billion with two per cent increase. While, 24 per cent hike is estimated under the head of non-tax revenue, having target of Rs 163.53 billion for the next fiscal year

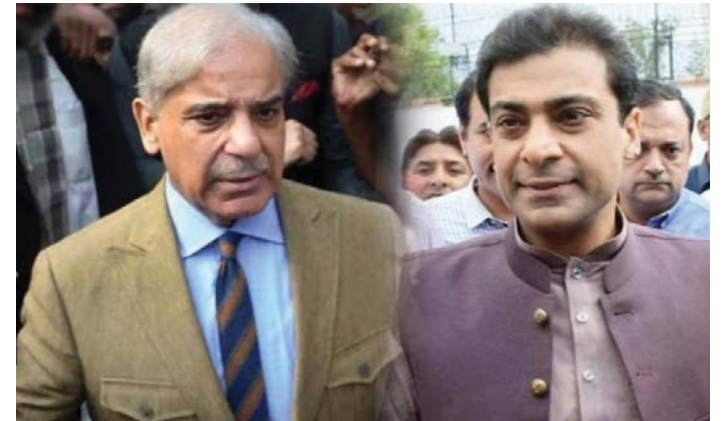
starting from July 1, 2022, he added.

Awais Leghari said that Rs435.87 billion have been earmarked for payment of salaries while Rs312 billion have been allocated for pension. He said 40% of the development budget will be spent on social sector and 24% on infrastructure. Rs35 billion has been allocated for construction and repair of roads in Punjab, while minimum wage is proposed to increase from Rs20,000 to Rs25,000. As per budget 2022-2023, the employees will get 15 percent increase in basic pay and 15 percent disparity allowance. Rs435.87 billion has been allocated for salaries while the pensioners will get a 15% hike as the pension bill has been put at Rs312 billion. However, the disparity allowance will be limited to selected departments of the provincial government.

Punjab government has allocated Rs6.2 billion for governance and IT, Rs500 million for labour and HR development, Rs6.3 billion for transport and Rs1.8 billion for emergency service (1122), according to official documents. For health, Rs125.34 billion have been proposed to allocate in the next budget and Rs.485.26 billion have been proposed for the education sector.

Money laundering case

Court exempts PM, CM Punjab from appearance



LAHORE: A court in Lahore exempted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shehbaz from attending Wednesday's hearing of a money laundering case against them. The lawyer for both Shehbaz and Hamza told Judge Naseem Ahmed Virk that the prime minister was busy in Islamabad due to the National Assembly's (NA) session, Hamza, on the other hand, could not appear because he had to attend the Punjab Assembly's budget session.

Meanwhile, the lawyers of Shehbaz and Hamza will be giving arguments in the favour of granting to

their clients permanent exemption from appearance in the court. The Court on Monday issued the written order of approval of the interim bail of PM Shehbaz Shaif and Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shehbaz in the money laundering case. Sessions Central Court's judge Ijaz Hassan Awan issued the written decision consisting of twenty-two pages.

The written decision stated that no clues have been found for the charges of unlawful use of authority and bribe against the PM and Punjab CM. Further investigation is required over the allegations of corruption, bribe and unlawful use of authority

Punjab govt slashes PA Speaker's powers

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab government has slashed powers of Speaker of provincial assembly through an ordinance. According to the ordinance issued by Governor Balighur Rehman, whenever Punjab Assembly session is prorogued, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Department shall issue notifications regarding summoning or prorogation of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab. The ordinance adds that Punjab Assembly is not in session and the governor is satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary to take immediate action.

Earlier, Governor Balighur Rehman prorogued the 40th assembly session on Tuesday, summoning 41st session at the Aiwan-e-Iqbal on Wednesday, but the Punjab Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi has refused to accept the governor's decision. Instead of going with the session at Aiwan-e-Iqbal, Elahi adjourned the assembly session and now two separate sessions of the provincial assembly could be held

Imran Khan on protective bail in many cases: Rana Sanullah

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Wednesday said that PTI chief Imran Khan was on protective bail in almost 19 cases registered in Islamabad and 16 in Punjab province.

Talking to private news channel, he said that Imran Khan's long march story has miserably failed because the citizen of Islamabad refused to support him for sit-ins and marches. He said the government has prepared a plan to stop PTI's march at Attock and Jehlum bridges.

The minister said the Imran Khan's narrative of foreign conspiracy is false and rejected by the state institutions. Responding to the question pertaining to the case against PML-Q leader, Moonis Elahi, he said that the government has reviewed the case against Moonis Elahi which was registered in PTI government. He said the government is collecting evidences against Farah Gogi's corruption and case would be registered after the recovery the looted amount.

PTI to seek Dost Mazari disqualification

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmakers have announced to approach the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for disqualification and deseating of the Punjab Assembly's deputy speaker for chairing the budget session at Aiwan-e-Iqbal. Addressing a joint press conference with PA Speaker Pervaiz Elahi, PTI lawmakers Mian Mehmoodur Rasheed, Raja Basharat and Sibtain Khan announced filing a disqualification reference against the deputy speaker Dost Muhammad Mazari for chairing the separate PA session at Aiwan-e-Iqbal in violation of the party instructions.

Mehmoodur Rasheed said that the deputy speaker Dost Muhammad Mazari has been stopped at the party level from chairing the separate PA

session at Aiwan-e-Iqbal. A notice was also sent to the deputy speaker's staff but he violated the party orders. "We will take legal action against him by approaching every platform including the judiciary. We will also move ECP to disqualify and deseate him. Just like 20 dissident PTI lawmakers had been de-seated, Mazari will also be declared disqualified."

Raja Basharat said, "All three moves of the Punjab government are illegal. The said notifications including proroguing the session, summoning the PA session at Aiwan-e-Iqbal and the ordinance should have been signed by the secretary assembly but it was issued with the signature of the law secretary." "The government affairs in Punjab are being dealt with in illegal and uncon-

stitutional ways. The government has stepped back from the legal session of the Punjab Assembly to hold it in Aiwan-e-Iqbal without any assembly staffer and secretariat. The Constitution is being mocked and we will move to the court to stop it."

Basharat added that Hamza Shahbaz had been brought to the Punjab Assembly via a production order during the PTI government which was also praised by the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) government. He criticised that Hamza is seemingly thinking differently about the requirement of a production order. Sibtain Khan said that PML-N has proved that Atta Tarar was its priority instead of the people of Punjab. The legal forum for the budget session is Punjab Assembly, he added.

Rs720 million

FIA files money laundering case against Moonis Elahi

Moonis terms case as political victimization

LAHORE: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Wednesday said it has filed a case against former federal minister and PML-Q leader Moonis Elahi. The case, according to the agency, pertains to alleged money laundering, of Rs720 million and has been registered against Moonis Elahi and others. It was registered following a report by the FIA Anti-Corruption Circle, the first information report (FIR) said.

According to the FIR, a probe against Moonis under the Money Laundering Act was started two years ago. The FIR

further said that the report by the Sugar Commission said that Moonis had allegedly engaged in money laundering. It should be noted that last year, former prime minister Imran Khan had tasked the FIA to investigate the sugar crisis throughout the country and find out who benefited from it. Subsequently, a report by the agency released last year claimed that top PTI members as well as Moonis were among those who had allegedly gained from the sugar crisis in the country.

"Rana Sanaullah said Rs720 million

money-laundering case was registered against me in Sugar Inquiry," Moonis Elahi said, adding that no doubt, cases were made for political victimization. He also denied Rana Sanaullah's claims that notices regarding the money laundering case were issued to him, saying that he has not received any such notice in this regard. "They have formed teams to arrest me. I have voluntarily appeared before FIA for interrogation," he added. Former Federal Minister Moonis Elahi has termed the Rs720 million money laundering case against him a political victimization.

Pakistan moves on Sri Lanka-like path: Imran Khan

Says there is complete political anarchy in Punjab

Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chairperson and former Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan on Wednesday said that if the country continues with the current economic policies then the country is on the path of Sri Lanka-like situation. Addressing a ceremony here, PTI chairman said today exports have fallen by 10% while Rs700 billion has gone out of the stock exchange and Moody's has also downgraded Pakistan's rating, adding that if the country continues like this then the country is on the path of Sri Lanka-like situation. The early and transparent elections is only way to save the country.

Rebuking the current government, he said rulers want the ECP aid in the upcoming by-elections in 20 constitu-

encies of Punjab, adding that there can be no clean and transparent elections through the present Election Commission. He said "you should be fully prepared when I give call for the long march", adding that during PTI's long march, people were shelled like criminals, terrorists, police and we saw such brutal scenes like occupied Kashmir in Islamabad.

"Allah does not allow being a neutral. You have to decide to stand with the righteous or with the other side," Imran Khan said. Earlier, the former PM said that Pakistan's most populous province is in the complete political chaos. In his statement on Twitter, while lashing out at Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz, Imran Khan wrote that "Ever since Hamza Shahabaz came to power illegally through a fake election in



Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province is in the throes of political turmoil."

The former PM said that people are suffering, farmers' crops are in jeopardy but everywhere Mafia is challenging the government's writ and the rulers are unable to control them. Turing his aim at the Punjab police, he said that the police and the local administration are facilitating the mafia, adding that they tortured the peaceful PTI workers, leaders and their families during the long march. "Now they [PM Shehbaz, CM Hamza] think that they are not accountable before the people but we cannot allow this chaos and criminal rule to prevail," Imran Khan added.

Imran Khan has lashed out at Punjab government led by Chief Minister Hamza Shehbaz, saying that there is complete political anarchy in

"Pakistan's most populous province". Taking to Twitter, the former premier wrote: "Ever since Imported Crime Minister's corrupt son [Hamza Shehbaz] illegally grabbed power in Punjab [through] a farcical election there is complete political anarchy in Pakistan's most populous province."

"People suffering, farmers crops under threat, no governance in sight just a criminal mafia running riot," Imran Khan said, while referring to Punjab. In another tweet, the PTI chief said: "Police [and] local administration have become complicit with this mafia [and] had unleashed a reign of terror on peaceful PTI workers, leaders and their families." "Now they feel they [are] not answerable before the people's elected [leadership]. We cannot allow such anarchy [and] criminal rule to prevail," the former premier added.

President for adopting IT tools by youth for accelerated development

Dr Arif Alvi underlined the need to financially empower women

Our Correspondent

GILGIT: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday urged the need to accelerate the pace of adopting emerging Information Technology tools for rapid socio-economic development of the country.

Addressing the 10th convocation ceremony of the Karakoram International University (KIU), the president said by focusing on the human resource development of youth and equipping them with marketable skills, Pakistan could achieve fast-paced socio-economic growth within a short span of time.

The president underlined the need to financially empower women by including them in the mainstream economy and providing them jobs in different professions.

He also urged the female graduates to remain part of the workforce as the State and society had made a huge investments in their education.

Dr Alvi said the latest information technology tools had enabled women to undertake part-time jobs and offer their services online from their homes.

He said business loans on easy terms and conditions had made finances available for women entrepreneurs, however, he stressed the need to increase the number of such loans.

The president highlighted that during the 80s and 90s, Pakistan exported its best human resource abroad which depleted the country of qualified and highly skilled human resources.

He said that conducive conditions



GILGIT: President Dr Arif Alvi addressing the 10th Convocation ceremony of the Karakoram International University (KIU) on Wednesday. Photo: PID

to retain skilled human resources in the country must be created to ensure fast-track progress and development.

The president urged the youth to combine their knowledge and skills with high moral values and ethical standards for a productive professional life.

He said it was the added responsibility of educated sections of society to

bring the uneducated and unskilled population into the mainstream by providing them with knowledge and skills.

Earlier, the Vice-Chancellor of Karakoram International University (KIU), Dr Ataullah Shah in his welcome address said that KIU was playing an active role in promoting high-quality education in remote areas

of Gilgit-Baltistan.

He stated that KIU had provided scholarships to a large number of male and female students through the Ehsaas programme to extend higher education opportunities to the underprivileged sections of society.

The president also distributed medals among the best performing students on the occasion.

Training of Journalists in Islamabad and Lahore



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: The Virtual University of Pakistan with the collaboration of the Press Information Department Islamabad and the Pakistan Information Center organized a series of Mojo (Mobile Journalism) training sessions for the working journalist of Pakistan.

In the first phase, these training sessions were conducted in Islamabad and Lahore.

The first two-day training session was conducted at Information Services Academy Islamabad for the journalists of National Press Club Islamabad and their nominees.

The journalists from leading media groups including PTV, APP, and private channels participated in the training session.

The training session got massive applause from the participants and heads of allied departments. The session was also attended by Project Director PID Ms. Nighat and Incharge Pakistan Information Center Ms. Laila Kazmi.

Federal Minister of Information and Broadcasting Ms. Marriyum Aurangzeb attended the session as chief guest on the second day of the training session. Principal Information officer/ DG PID Mr. Mobashir Hasan also joined the session along with the DG Information Services Academy, Mr. Saeed Javed.

The Federal Minister applauded the Virtual University and especially the role of the Rector Virtual University Prof. Dr. Arshad Saleem Bhatti for arranging valuable training sessions. She urged DG ISA to collaborate with the Virtual University of Pakistan for the training of CSS officers as well.

DG PID Mr. Mobashir Hasan appreciated General Manager Marketing Virtual University Ms. Rubina Ali for organizing professional and engaging training sessions.

The second training session was conducted for the journalists of the Lahore division at Lahore Press Club. The Director-General Press Information Department Lahore Ms. Sajeela Naveed was the chief guest for the inaugural session.

Beaconhouse School shortlisted in T4 World's Best School Prizes



Staff Reporter

KARACHI: Beaconhouse, the country's largest network of private educational institutions, has added another feather to its cap with Beaconhouse Gulshan Middle 1 Karachi campus being shortlisted among the top 10 schools across the world for the UK-based T4 World's Best School Prizes. This nomination is for the category of 'Community Collaboration' and Beaconhouse is the only school in Pakistan to receive this nomination.

T4 is a global digital platform that celebrates, recognizes, and shares the stories of schools that are leading with innovative practices aimed at transforming the lives of students and making a real difference to their communities. Beaconhouse Gulshan Middle 1 Karachi campus was shortlisted for the initiatives it has taken to foster successful community engagement programmes based on effective communication, community programmes, skills development, social inclusion, diversity, and much more. The announcement for the top 10 nominees for T4 World's Best School Prizes came from Vikas Pota, Chief Executive Officer and Founder of T4 Education, acknowledging and appreciating the efforts the thousands of hours schools put in for their applications. The top 10 shortlisted schools for each category will be featured in World Education Week, the biggest global online celebration of schools, hosted by T4 Education in October.

Freedom for oppressed must be beyond prejudices: Experts



Spokesman Report

LAHORE: A global policy beyond prejudice to deal with the issues being faced by the oppressed people is the need of the hour, stated international affairs experts during a panel discussion.

The panel discussion 'Freedom of the Oppressed Classes' was hosted by Pathfinder Group of Companies in collaboration with Martin Dow Group at Pakistan Pavilion on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

The session was presided over and moderated by Dr. Huma Baqai, Pakistan's eminent educationist and senior vice chairman of the Karachi Council on Foreign Relations (KCFR) while Dr. Marc H. Siegel, President & CEO Siegel Associates, and Mr. John DeBlasio, Chairman Continuity Global Solutions shared their views on this occasion. Prominent Pakistani lawyer Anwar Mansoor Khan could not attend the discussion due to some unavoidable reasons, however, his speech was read out to the audience by Dr. Samia Khan Babar.

Initiating the discussion, Dr. Huma elaborated on the term oppressed saying that victims of each crisis around the globe were considered oppressed and undoubtedly, aggression was one of the major reasons behind a majority of these crises. She also described poverty not only as a major source of oppression but also as a crisis itself.

On this occasion, Dr. Samia Khan Babar read out the speech of Anwar Mansoor Khan titled 'Oppression Leads to Breach of Peace and Security' in which he shed light on the legal status of global humanitarian crises including Kashmir and Ukraine.

"To save a succeeding generation from the wars was the main motivation for the creation of United Nations but in the recent past we witnessed one of the permanent members having veto power launch aggression against Ukraine," Mansoor said.

He added, "The war of Yemen where Saudi Arabia with the blessings of powerful caused miseries and the destruction in

Libya, Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan were some examples of the aggression causing a breach of the world peace while it seemed that the members of the UN subscribed to such wars."

Referring to the Kashmir dispute, Anwar Mansoor Khan slammed the United Nations and its members, saying that the main purpose of the United Nations was to give the oppressed nations access to their rights but it turned out to be a distant dream.

Mansoor said that the UN Security Council in 1948 passed a resolution 47/1948 declaring Jammu & Kashmir as a disputed territory between Pakistan and India and the responsibility was given to India to arrange the plebiscite under a representative of the UN Secretary-General with full authority enabling the people of Jammu & Kashmir to decide their fate.

Anwar Mansoor questioned the silence of the United Nations on the flagrant violation of the resolution by India, saying that the UN Security Council had been reminded of the implementation of the resolution several times since 1948, but it could not be implemented due to Indian bigotry.

Anwar Mansoor said that the UN was directly responsible for the ongoing atrocities against the people of Jammu & Kashmir. Referring to the UN Charter, Anwar Mansoor said that Chapter VII of the Charter indicates strict action against the invading countries but it has been observed that the permanent members of the UN Security Council blackmail the world body through their veto power.

He said that the United Nations should immediately find a solution to the Kashmir issue, otherwise the escalating tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbors could lead not only to a breach of peace but also to a major crisis in the wake of the war.

While shedding the light on the situation in Kashmir, Dr. Huma Baqai said that Kashmir was a key dispute between the two nuclear states and its resolution was crucial given severe tensions in the region.

آزاد حکومت ریاست جموں و کشمیر
آزاد جموں و کشمیر ٹیکسٹ بک بورڈ
 14/06/2022: مخره / P-203 ایڈمن نمبر: ٹیکسٹ بک بورڈ / 16571

اشتمار بابت تیاری درسی کتب گریڈ ششم تا ہشتم

آزاد جموں و کشمیر ٹیکسٹ بک بورڈ ایکٹ جرمیر 2014ء کی سیکشن a(i-iii) کے تحت حاصل شدہ اختیارات کو برائے کار لاتے ہوئے ٹیکسٹ بک اینڈ لرننگ میٹریل پالیسی و پلان آف ایکشن 07-2006 کے تحت تعلیمی سیشن 24-2023 کے لیے درسی کتب رجسٹرڈ ناشرین سے تیار کروانا مطلوب ہے۔ یہ درسی کتب بمطابق یکساں قومی نصاب 2022ء (SNC) و لوکل نصاب آزاد جموں و کشمیر 2019ء گریڈ ششم تا ہشتم تیار ہوں گی۔ متذکرہ درسی کتب معہ وابستہ مواد Hybrid Technology پر ہوں گی، جس میں ویڈیو لیسن اور آئی ٹیم بینک بھی شامل ہوں گے۔ جو درسی کتاب میں (Value addition) ہوگا۔ اس سے طلبہ میں Blended Learning متوقع ہے۔ کتب کی لسٹ بمطابق نصاب بذیل ہے:

نمبر شمار	مضمون	جماعت
01	اسلامیات، اُردو، انگریزی، ریاضی، جزل سائنس، تاریخ، جغرافیہ، کمپیوٹر	ششم
02	اسلامیات، اُردو، انگریزی، ریاضی، جزل سائنس، تاریخ، جغرافیہ، کمپیوٹر	ہفتم
03	اسلامیات، اُردو، انگریزی، ریاضی، جزل سائنس، تاریخ، جغرافیہ، کمپیوٹر	ہشتم

مقررہ معیار پر پورا اترنے والے ناشرین کے درمیان مسابقت کے بعد کتب منتخب ہوں گی۔ کتب کی مسابقت میں حصہ لینے کے لیے درج ذیل شرائط ہوں گی:

شرائط:

- 1۔ ناشر کے پاس اپنا پبلشنگ ہاؤس، سیل پوائنٹ / گودام کا مکمل سیٹ اپ اور پرنٹنگ پریس ہونا لازمی ہوگا۔ پرنٹنگ پریس کی سہولت نہ ہونے کی صورت میں کسی پرنٹنگ پریس کے ساتھ معاہدہ کا ہونا لازمی ہوگا۔
- 2۔ ناشر کو کم از کم دو (02) سال کے ٹیکس ریٹرنز کی مصدقہ نقول دفتر ذمہ میں جمع کروانا ہوں گی۔
- 3۔ ناشر کے پاس ویڈیو لیسن (سبق) تیار کرنے کا تجربہ اور مکمل سیٹ اپ ہونا ضروری ہے۔
- 4۔ ناشر کو اشتمار کی روشنی میں مسودات کی رضامندی اندر پندرہ (15) ایام معہ مبلغ پینتیس ہزار (35000) روپے سیکورٹی (قابل واپسی) کی مسودہ جمع کروانا ہوگی۔ مسودات مقررہ وقت پر جمع نہ کروانے کی صورت میں سیکورٹی ضبط ہوگی۔
- 5۔ مسودہ جات جمع کروانے کے لیے تحت پالیسی 45 ایام کا وقت دیا جائے گا۔ یہ ٹائم اشتمار کی تاریخ مشتمل سے شروع ہوگا۔ 45 ایام کے بعد توسیع نہ کی جائے گی۔
- 6۔ دلچسپی رکھنے والے رجسٹرڈ ناشرین اور نئے رجسٹرڈ ہونے والے ناشرین کی استعداد کار اور پبلشنگ ہاؤس کے جائزہ کے لیے دفتر ہذا کی ٹیم فریڈیکل ویریفیکیشن کے لیے متعلقہ پبلشنگ ہاؤس کا وزٹ کرے گی۔ معیار پر پورا اترنے والے ناشرین ہی ان ٹیکسٹ بک کی تیاری و مقابلہ میں موزوں تصور ہوں گے اور بورڈ کی جانب سے جاری شدہ Hybrid درسی کتب کے متعلق SOPs پر عمل درآمد کے پابند ہوں گے۔
- 7۔ نئے رجسٹرڈ ہونے والے ناشرین مبلغ ایک لاکھ روپے ناقابل واپسی رجسٹریشن فیس جمع کروانے کے پابند ہوں گے۔
- 8۔ اگر کسی ناشر کی کوئی کتاب اس مقابلہ میں کامیاب ہوتی ہے تو کامیاب ہونے والے ناشر کو ایگریمنٹ کرنے سے قبل بورڈ کو کتاب کی رائٹنگ کے برابر سیکورٹی چیک جمع کروانا ہوگی۔ بدوں سیکورٹی چیک ایگریمنٹ نہ کیا جائے گا۔
- 9۔ اگر کسی پبلشر کے مصنفین کو اس ضمن میں (Training/Orientation) کی ضرورت ہو تو ادارہ ہذا پبلشر کی استدعا پر تربیت کا اہتمام کرے گا۔ اس ضمن میں اگر مزید کوئی معلومات درکار ہو تو دفتری اوقات کار میں زبردستی کے آفس نمبر پر رابطہ کیا جاسکتا ہے۔

(حادث میر)
 سیکرٹری
 آزاد جموں و کشمیر ٹیکسٹ بک بورڈ مظفر آباد
 05822-924181 نمبر / رابلہ
 AJK No. Ak 393N/6/22

2 arrested for 'setting fire' to Marghuzar forest in Swat

SWAT: Two people have been arrested for allegedly setting fire to a forest in Marghuzar valley of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Swat district, authorities said on Wednesday.

According to Deputy Commissioner Junaid Khan, the suspects had intentionally set fire to the forest in Marghuzar three days ago, an inferno that went on to threaten nearby settlements.

Although unprecedented heat and negligence are the likely causes behind most of the fires, it is now evident a criminal element cannot be sidelined. According to Anadolu Agency, 14,000 acres of forest cover have been lost during the last three weeks. In some cases, "fires were set intentionally by the locals in order to benefit from a centuries-old law that permits them to share the ownership of forests with the government", the publication said.

The law allows them to harvest empty land or use it to graze their livestock. The massive fires, whether set intentionally or having erupted due to natural causes, have broken out in multiple locations over the past month, some of which continued for range days later.

The latest inferno was reported by rescue teams in Kokarai on Sunday morning. The day prior, a fire broke out in the Kala Kot forest area of Swat's Matta town. Efforts to put out the blaze were underway throughout the day, according to rescue teams. Several teams of the Levies forces,

rescue services and civil defence officials took part in fire dousing operations.

Last week, four people were killed after a fire erupted in Shangla district. The fire broke out in the houses located on the hills of Shangla and spread rapidly due to the dry weather.

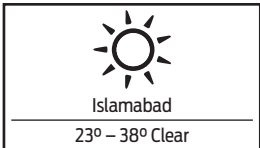
Furthermore, fires broke out earlier this month in Kabal, lower Dir, Barikot, and Charbagh. Climate change declared as major reason behind unprecedented forest fires

The Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Department has declared climate change as the major contributor behind unprecedented fire incidents in different forests of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a detailed report prepared by the department on 210 incidents of forest fires occurring during period from May 23 to June 9, it is observed that rising temperatures, a key indicator of climate change, have caused more evaporation of moisture from the ground, drying out the soil and making vegetation more flammable.

At the same, winter snow peaks are melting about a month earlier, meaning that the forests are drier for longer periods of time.

"Natural causes include climate change, lightning, temperature transmission through rocks, drought and heat with rising greenhouse gas emissions. We expect more wildfires in the years ahead, especially with the fire seasons getting longer," warns the report.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	3:13 am
Zohr	12:08 pm
Asr	5:08 pm
Maghrib	7:19 pm
Isha	9:03 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance	115
PIA Flight Info	114
PIA Cargo	9280979
Railway Inquiry	117
Railway Exchange	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi	5555489
CAA	9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH	561111
MH	561116
MH	561116
Cantt Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09

Crisis impacts mobile industry badly: Tax Muhtasib

Mirza Abdul Rehman says Pakistan marching towards a cellular service crisis

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Coordination FPCCI Capital Office & Chairman FPCCI on Tax Muhtasib Mirza Abdul Rehman on Wednesday said that Pakistan is marching towards a cellular service crisis which will badly hit the masses and the economy. He said that the government should immediately intervene to hammer out problems faced by the telecom industry. In an exclusive interview with The Spokesman, the business leader said that the telecom industry is feeling the pinch of political uncertainty, taxes and load-shedding translating into losses worth billions of rupees.

Mirza Abdul Rehman said that all the mobile service providers are considering keeping their services offline for a few hours to reduce losses, which will be a catastrophe for the limping economy.

The authorities should immediately take note of the situation, sit with the operators and resolve the issue lest it make the life of people and the business community a living hell, he said.

Almost all the cell phone networks are not performing well for months, but shutting down a network for hours is something not acceptable, he said, adding that we have received many complaints regarding the quality of services.

Cell phone networks are already almost crippled in some areas resulting in problems and lost business opportunities for which technical issues and capacity constraints are to be blamed, he added. He said that nowadays networks are overloaded as cellular networks are designed to handle a certain amount of call volume, but if the network is oversubscribed and it isn't able to handle all the phone calls. Mobile phones cannot be considered

luxury items anymore. Phones with more advanced technology may be a necessity for certain jobs and taxing them further is akin to discouraging citizens from adopting more advanced technology that can aid their professional growth, he said.

Mirza Abdul Rehman said that people save for months and years to purchase a good quality mobile phone, but they seem to be the target population for revenue collection; not the billionaire agriculturalists and the wealthy real estate tycoons who live in extreme luxury. The importance of connectivity cannot be undermined for the millions of workers who rely on their phones to stay connected to their loved ones, or for those seeking access to entertainment that technology enables when mobility and access to entertainment venues are limited because of geography, curfews, lockdowns and poverty, he said.

Health Corner

Vitamin D Deficiency can lead to Dementia



ISLAMABAD: Dementia is one of the major causes of disability and dependency among older people worldwide, affecting thinking and behaviours as you age. But what if you could stop this degenerative disease in its tracks?

A world-first study from the University of South Australia could make this a reality as new genetic research shows a direct link between dementia and a lack of vitamin D.

Investigating the association between vitamin D, neuroimaging features, and the risk of dementia and stroke, the study found:

low levels of vitamin D were associated with lower brain volumes and an increased risk of dementia and stroke genetic analyses supported a causal effect of vitamin D deficiency and dementia.

in some populations as much as 17 per cent of dementia cases might be prevented by increasing everyone to normal levels of vitamin D (50 nmol/L).

Dementia is a chronic or progressive syndrome that leads to deterioration in cognitive function. About 487,500 Australians live with dementia and it is the country's second leading cause of death. Globally, more than 55 million people have dementia with 10 million new cases diagnosed every year.

Supported by the National Health and Medical Research Council, the genetic study analysed data from 294,514 participants from the UK Biobank, examining the impact of low levels of vitamin D (25 nmol/L) and the risk of dementia and stroke. Nonlinear Mendelian randomisation (MR) — a method of using measured variation in genes to examine the causal effect of a modifiable exposure on disease — were used to test for underlying causality for neuroimaging outcomes, dementia, and stroke.

Senior investigator and Director of UniSA's Australian Centre for Precision Health, Professor Elina Hyppönen, says the findings are important for the prevention of dementia and appreciating the need to abolish vitamin D deficiency.

"Vitamin D is a hormone precursor that is increasingly recognised for widespread effects, including on brain health, but until now it has been very difficult to examine what would happen if we were able to prevent vitamin D deficiency," Prof Hyppönen says.

"Our study is the first to examine the effect of very low levels of vitamin D on the risks of dementia and stroke, using robust genetic analyses among a large population.

"In some contexts, where vitamin D deficiency is relatively common, our findings have important implications for dementia risks. Indeed, in this UK population we observed that up to 17 per cent of dementia cases might have been avoided by boosting vitamin D levels to be within a normal range."

The findings are incredibly significant given the high prevalence of dementia around the world.

"Dementia is a progressive and debilitating disease that can devastate individuals and families alike," Prof Hyppönen says.

"If we're able to change this reality through ensuring that none of us is severely vitamin D deficient, it would also have further benefits and we could change the health and wellbeing for thousands."

"Most of us are likely to be ok, but for anyone who for whatever reason may not receive enough vitamin D from the sun, modifications to diet may not be enough, and supplementation may well be needed." (Courtesy: Science Daily)

Demonstration

ISLAMABAD: Victims Pakistani Students of Ukraine holds protest in the favor of their demands outside National Press Club, in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Improving Food Standards

UNIDO under PAFAID strengthens capacity of public partners

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) organized a Seven-day Training of Trainers on Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) and Good Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP) for three public partners in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KP) under the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) funded Project for Agri-food and Agro-industry Development (PAFAID) in Islamabad from 06-14 June 2022.

The objective of the training was to reinforce food safety compliance by building the capacity of the local regulatory authorities in GHP and GAHP and halal food standards. The training is designed and delivered by the international experts, Ms. Madeleine Smith-UNIDO's Senior Expert in Food Safe-



ty and Inspection Practices, and Mr. Michele Gallo-UNIDO's Senior Expert in Food Safety and Inspection Practices, from the University of Birmingham United Kingdom. Senior officials and experts from the KP Food Safety and Halal Food Authority (KPF&S&HFA), the

Livestock and Dairy Development Department (L&DD), and the Local Council Board (LCB) attended the training. These participants were earlier received training on specialized courses on food safety through the PAFAID e-learning platform and in-person training conducted

by the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS) Lahore trainers in KP followed by a practical in a local slaughterhouse for hands-on learning regarding the best practices and inspection for slaughterhouse operations.

This training enabled the participants to make informed decisions using the case studies of the local scene for inspection and then filling out the inspection checklists.

Addressing the trainees, Dr. Abdul Sattar Shah (Director Technical KPFS&HFA) encouraged active participation in learning the food safety best practices and called for rolling out these training in their districts. He added that by adopting these SOPs we will be able to produce quality meat for the domestic market and exports. He appreciated the inspection checklists developed and provided by international experts.

Govt duty-bound to ensure journalists' protection: NA Speaker



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Wednesday observed that the government was duty bound to ensure protection of journalists so that they could perform their professional duties without any fear.

He made this observation after journalists walked out of the press gallery of National Assembly in protesting of different incidents including target killing of brother of a journalist in Layyah and the purse snatching incident in Chak Shahzad locality in which a female reporter had been deprived of her belongings.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi, who approached the protesting journalists and brought them back to the press gallery, informed the House about the incidents the journalist community recently faced.

The speaker referred the matter to the committee concerned for further deliberation and taking necessary measures so that occurrence of such incidents in future could be prevented.

He directed the police officials to look into the snatching incidents and submit a report with the House accordingly at the earliest. Agencies

Health Issues

ICRC organizes capacity building training for media

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Considering media as the fourth pillar of a state due to its important role towards transferring information and opinion making, experts at a consultative workshop have called for capacity building of media persons especially on health issues including provision of emergency healthcare services.

Healthcare professionals, representatives from media regulators, media experts and academicians attended the consultative workshop which was organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), APPNA Institute of Public Health-Jinnah Sindh Medical University and

Khyber Medical University. Objective of the workshop, which was part of the ICRC's Health Care in Danger (HCID) initiative, was to develop training for journalists to promote ethical and responsible reporting on the issues related to healthcare in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Lubna Ansari-Baig, Chairperson AIPH-JSMU, said, "Various research studies have identified that irresponsible media reporting always hinders the provision of emergency healthcare services. There is a need to improve the standards of media reporting on health issues to counter misperceptions, promote factual reporting, and stop the gradual erosion of trust

between healthcare providers and the public."

The experts in the workshop deliberated in depth upon the problems pertaining to reporting on health matters in national media and provided their feedback to strengthen the content of the training. They also stressed upon the need for following up this exercise with hands-on trainings for journalists on ethical standards of reporting on health.

Participating in the discussion, Secretary General of Pakistan Medical Association, Dr Qaisar Sajjad, said, "Healthcare workers are working in challenging circumstances, especially in emergency departments, to provide life-saving services. They need the

support of media personnel to promote attitudes and behaviours among the general public that facilitate the provision of healthcare services."

The representatives of media at the workshop voiced the needs of journalists and reporters specific to reporting on health care. They called for media persons' capacity building and trainings to objectively report on the issues facing the healthcare sector.

At the same time, they were also of the view that it's important for healthcare workers to also enhance their communication skills to enable a clearer flow of information between the media and healthcare professionals, especially during disasters or emergencies.

Two marts sealed for overcharging



RAWALPINDI: Assistant Commissioner Rawalpindi City Tuesday sealed two marts and imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on violation of overcharging.

According to the Deputy Commissioner's office spokesman, the AC city, while checking the prices of essential commodities and display list in the Khayban-e-Sir Syed area, sealed and imposed a fine on two marts for violating the government notified rates.

She warned that stern action would be taken against those overcharging and not displaying approved rate lists in their shops. Agencies

Federal Ombudsman starts proceedings through IRD System

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Under the directions of Federal Ombudsman Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, proceedings through IRD system have started.

The residents of Al-Safa Heights, Islamabad filed a complaint under IRD against the management of Al-Safa Heights for resolution of their grievances. They stated that 150 families are residing in Al-Safa Heights, its management regularly charge Rs.7000/- as service charges but they have not provided the facility of water, cleaning and lift services, due to which the residents are suffering great hardship.

Muhammad Saqib Khan, Registrar WMS and Ms. Zariab Mussarat, Dy. Director (complaints) summoned the management of Al-Safa Heights. During hearing proceedings the management of Al-Safa Heights promised to resolve the issues of residents on immediate basis.

Later on, the management informed that one lift has been operationalized, whereas the second lift would be operationalized at the end of June this year, damaged pipes have been replaced and better measures have been taken for cleanliness. The residents of Al-Safa Heights have thanked the Federal Ombudsman through a letter that due to his intervention, their problems have been resolved.

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Pakistan towards the Journey of Digital Revolution

Dr. Shahbaz Nasir

The digital transformation of economies across the globe is accelerating with ever increasing pace. Disruptive technologies and emerging customer expectations are pushing the telecom industry for advanced solutions of high speed connectivity and access. A key aspect of Pakistan's digital policy and PTA's regulatory approach has been to ensure wide-spread broadband access across Pakistan. Pakistan started its journey towards high speed mobile broadband services in 2014 with the auction of spectrum by PTA for Next Generation Mobile Services and deployment of 3G/4G infrastructure in Pakistan. With the move to 3G/4G services in 2014, Pakistan entered into mobile broadband era. Though a bit late for 3G services, it was a wise move to introduce 4G services along with 3G. PTA further strengthened the uptake of 4G services with additional spectrum auctions of 1800 MHz and 850 MHz in the years 2016, 2017 and 2021. The benefits of simultaneously launching 3G and 4G—creating a competitive environment and continuous supply of required spectrum for advanced technologies—are evident in terms of achieving 116

million broadband mark in just eight years from the launch of mobile broadband in Pakistan. This is a remarkable achievement by any yardstick.

Today wide-spread competitive telecom services are available to the people of Pakistan. We have mobile coverage for over 89% of the population with 193 million biometrically verified SIMs / subscribers and more than 116 million broadband subscribers (52.6% BB penetration) compared to meager 2 million subscriptions in 2012 before the launch of 3G/4G mobile services. Currently, 77% of Pakistan's population is covered by 3G mobile signals and 75% by 4G signals, catering to the needs of majority of populace all over the country. With prudent policies and introduction of innovative services by telecom operators, the people of Pakistan are getting internet / broadband services at one of the most affordable prices in the region. It is pertinent to mention that mobile 1GB data prices further declined to only 0.58% of the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita which is well below the UN Broadband Commission's recommendation of less than 2%. Moreover, as per Speed test Global Index April 2022, Pakistan's average mobile broadband download speed of 17.2 Mbps is also above the speed levels in other region-

al countries.

Widespread telecom infrastructure with over 50,632 telecom towers / sites and distribution network across Pakistan with over 220,000 retailers and franchises are not only serving the need of telecom services but also helping the spread of many other digital services for example: with active participation of mobile operators, their distribution network has enabled opening of 79 million mobile banking (m-Wallets) accounts and 587,547 m-wallet agents. Wide spread broadband services and digital payments have also enabled e-commerce upsurge in Pakistan. E-commerce market in FY20is estimated to have expanded to Rs. 234.6 billion, up 55.5 percent on Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, according to State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) special section on 'Covid-19 and the Need to Boost Digital Connectivity in Pakistan' in its report. Using broadband services, the e-banking has seen remarkable increase i.e. quarterly mobile banking transactions (app-based / internet only) increased by 8 times from 11.9 million in 1Q2019 to 94 million in 4Q2021 and quarterly internet banking transactions almost quadrupled from 8.6 million in 1Q2019 to 33.8 million in 4Q2021. Similarly, the uptake of myriad digital solutions and services in the country were only

made possible through broadband.

Despite widespread availability of broadband services, there is a gap vis-à-vis broadband adoption. PTA is, therefore, strategizing on enhancement of current infrastructure for the promotion of digital inclusion in the country. In 2021-2022, PTA had extensive engagements with the industry for the uplift of 4G/LTE services in Pakistan as well as AJ&K and GB: made available additional spectrum (1800 MHz and 2100 MHz bands); renewed existing spectrum assignments; reformed spectrum assignments, facilitated Optic Fibre deployment and mitigated Right of Way issues, and enhanced Quality of Service and coverage obligations to ensure high quality 4G services to the people of Pakistan as well as AJ&K and GB. These measures along with the approval of Rolling Spectrum Strategy 2020-2023 will enable operators to manage their network planning and investments. This will ensure accessibility and availability of telecom services to meet the local demand for broadband.

Along with GoP's policy for the availability of 5G services in the country, MoIT and PTA are also planning for spectrum auction for the enhanced proliferation of LTE, VoLTE and 5G services in near future. Success-

ful 5G tests have already been carried out in the country. Large contiguous bandwidth availability will be worked out and roll-out for 5G will be prioritized and facilitated. For a healthy mobile device eco-system, the implementation of PTA's Device Identification, Registration and Blocking System (DIRBS) in 2019 and Mobile Device Manufacturing Regulations, 2021 has also resulted in establishment of over 31 local assembly/manufacturing plants of affordable mobile devices in Pakistan. Over 64 million mobile devices have been locally assembled/ manufactured in Pakistan since 2018 till date with 16 million 3G/4G smart phones.

With high broadband penetration, enabling regulations and majority of the population being under the age of 45 years, Pakistan has all the key ingredients to cater for the digital revolution. PTA is supporting and creating a favourable and enabling environment for innovation while strengthening consumer protection, data privacy and cyber security. Being acknowledged as the only 4th Generation Regulator in South Asia due to its collaborative and conducive regulatory environment, PTA should continue its resolve for enabling regulatory framework for the promotion of broadband and digital services in the country.

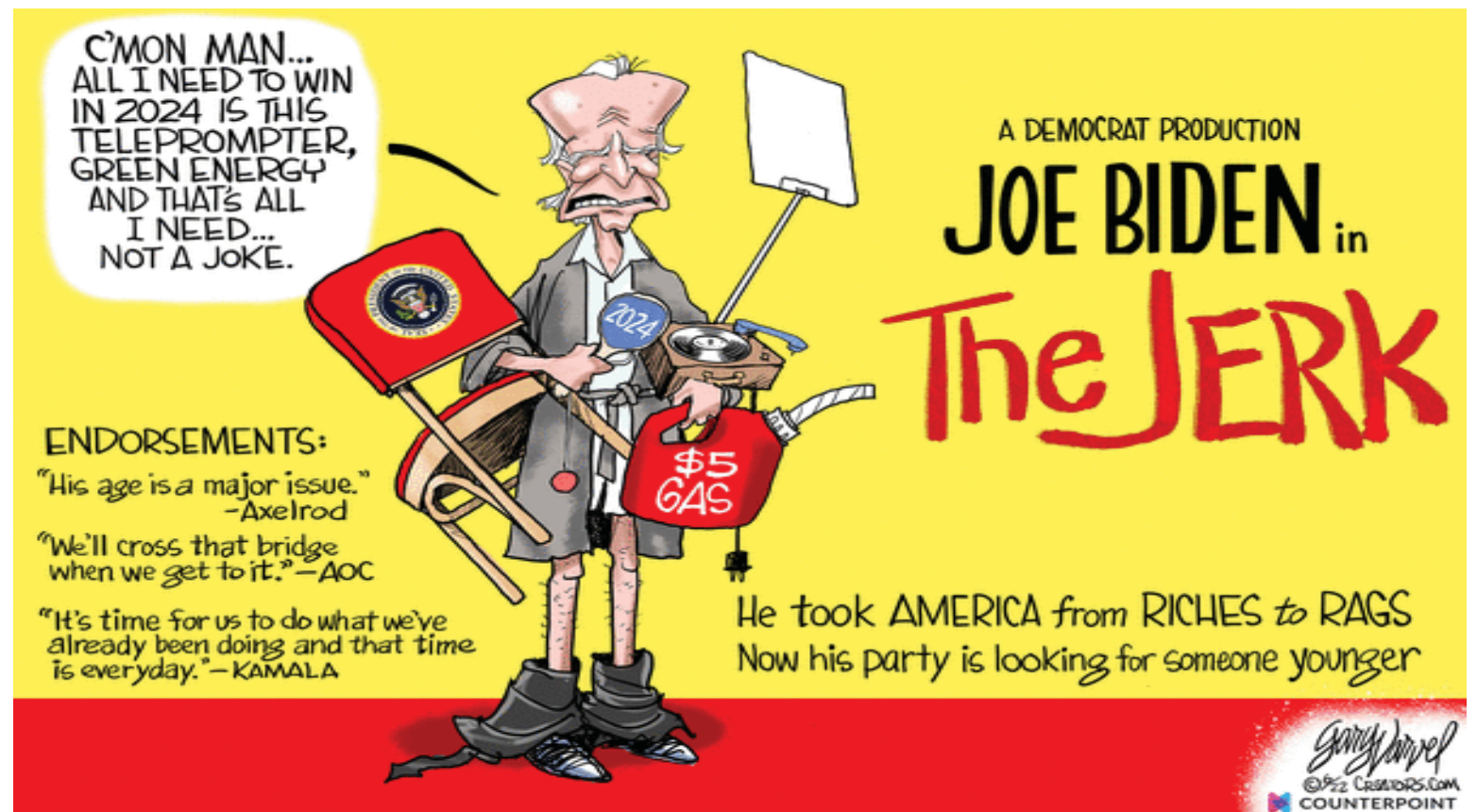
Impending genocide in IIOJK

In the wake of the dire situation in the occupied territory international experts have already warned of impending genocide of Muslims in Kashmir. In the aftermath of 5th August 2109, the apartheid regime launched a massive and multifront political, social and cultural onslaught on Kashmiris.

The possible patterns and typology of genocide in the restive region is erasing Kashmiris political identity, disempowering Muslim majority community to reduce them to 2nd class citizens, turning them into a political minority, minimizing their role in political decision-making process are the most vivid signs and processes of genocide that serve as eye opener for the world community". After unleashing a reign of terror in the region, the racist regime was now shamelessly playing the religious card to get its communal agenda implemented in Kashmir. The BJP seems to be on the verge of repeating history. A certain section of the Kashmiri Pandit community under a vested agenda was ready to become pawns in the BJP's chessboard of power and politics in India. A silent majority of Pandits within and outside the valley knew well how the right-wing forces had been using them as pawns.

The extremist Hindutva ideology being propagated by the Indian government poses a grave threat to regional peace. Kashmiris have been killed, maimed, blinded, tortured, and forcibly disappeared by Indian forces over the past 74 years. The Indian government has held Kashmiris hostage by the dint of force. Indian governments have always used colonial-era tactics to suppress the Kashmiris legitimate struggle.

The Indian troops deployed in the territory, they said, have been operating under black laws such as Armed Forces Special Powers Act, the Public Safety Act and other martial laws that have given Indian troops complete impunity. Soon after the abrogation of article 370 & 35A the Indian occupation forces started the anti-Muslim pogrom in the occupied territory. The systematic killings of innocent Kashmiris is genocide, so the international community and human rights bodies to take effective notice of the impending genocide of Muslims in the region. Indian courts verdict against JKLF chairman Muhammad Yasin Malik and termed it as political motivated to silence the dissent in occupied territory. Human Rights Council must appoint a special rapporteur on the human rights situation of IIOJK.



Climate change the greatest challenges for humanity

Marlyn

Climate Change is a critical issue of our time, and we are at a defining moment. But what exactly is climate change, you may ask? 'Climate change' means a significant change in the measures of climate, such as temperature, rainfall, or wind, lasting for an extended period. Earth's climate is always changing. There have been times when the Earth's climate was much warmer than it is now and there have been times where it has been much cooler. The earth was once as hot as 3,600° Fahrenheit, but that was before there was life on Earth. Now, temperatures are much more habitable. Earth's temperature has gone up about 1° Fahrenheit in the last 100 years. This may not seem like much, but these seemingly insignificant small changes in the Earth's temperature can have devastatingly drastic effects.

We are already undergoing the effects of climate change. Warming of Earth's climate has caused snow and ice to melt and oceans to rise. By observing and studying past climate change patterns, these changes threaten food production, the rising sea levels increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, resulting directly in the loss of

life and property. The impacts of climate change are global and unprecedented. Polar bears are the ideal example for the impacts of climate change on species. They rely deeply on the sea ice environment for traveling, hunting, mating, resting, and in some areas, maternal dens. Moreover, their extensive generation time and low reproductive rate may limit their ability to adapt to changes in the environment.

Their dependency on sea ice makes them highly vulnerable to a changing climate. To date, global warming has been most noticeable in the Arctic, and this trend is expected to continue. There are predictions that before mid-century we could have a nearly ice-free Arctic in the summer. There are two factors that contribute to speeding up climate change: natural and anthropogenic (human-induced). Many things can cause our climate to change on its own without any interference from us. The Earth's distance from the sun could change.

The sun could send out energy. Ocean levels can change. Volcanoes can erupt, adding to harmful gasses in our climate. However, what's different about this period of Earth's history is that human activities are speeding up natural climate change. The biggest contributor is our emissions of greenhouse gases. Greenhouse

gases occur naturally and are essential to the survival of living things (humans, animals, plants, and other organisms). The greenhouse effect helps to maintain a certain temperature level on Earth's surface, by keeping some of the sun's warmth from reflecting into space, making Earth livable.

We drive cars. We heat and cool our houses. We cook food. All those things take energy which we get by burning coal, oil, and gas. Burning these things puts harmful gases into the air. The gases cause the air to heat up. This can indirectly change Earth's climate. As populations, economies and standards of living continue to grow, so does the cumulative level of greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions. After a century of industrialization, deforestation, and large-scale agriculture, the quantities of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have risen extraordinarily. The concentration of GHGs has been rising steadily since the Industrial Revolution and it has been increasing global temperatures along with it.

Given the existing concentrations and ongoing emissions of greenhouse gases, it is probable that by the end of this century, the global mean temperature will continue to rise above the pre-industrial level. The world's oceans will warm, and ice melting will continue. It may be possible that important

tipping points may already have been reached or passed, leading to irreversible changes in major ecosystems and the planetary climate system. Ecosystems such as the Amazon rainforest and the Arctic tundra may be approaching thresholds of variation through warming and drying. Mountain glaciers are in dismaying retreat and the downstream effects of reduced water supply in the driest months will have effects that transcend generations. Most aspects of climate change will continue to persist for many centuries, even if emissions are stopped.

In the light of preceding discussion, it can be safely concluded that climate change is undeniably a real existential threat to the world. It threatens the survival of humanity thus, increasing the urgency with which we must act to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to delay or avoid some of the worst consequences of climate change. If immediate action is not taken to combat it, its consequences would be quite catastrophic. This global geological mayhem is not only a matter of our survival but also of our posterity. Without drastic action today, adapting to these impacts in the future will be even more difficult and costly. Hence, we must act together to meet this forthcoming challenge effectively.

The writer is a student

Sugar Sweetened Beverages; A Sweet Poison, Minimize its Consumption

Sana Ullah Ghumman

Added Sugar is the single worst ingredient in the modern diet and can be a health hazard to all. This is simply because it contains no nutrients and has harmful effects on your overall health. Let us understand the reasons that make added sugar a sweet poison. Sugar occurs naturally in all kind of foods that contains carbohydrates such as vegetables, fruits, grains and dairy. Consuming natural sugar is fine to health because these foods also contain other nutrients like high amount of fiber, essential minerals and antioxidants, Calcium and Protein. These foods digest slowly and give continuous energy supply for body benefiting overall health. On the other hand added sugar in foods like canned and energy drinks is a key contributor to many of our diet - related diseases and conditions, including obesity, type II diabetes, heart diseases, high blood pressure, and cancer. Excess consumption of sugar, especially in sugary beverages, also contributes to weight gain because compared to calories from solid foods; liquid calories in SSBs are less satisfying and will not make you feel as full when eating solid food.

Over the course of a 15-years study, people who got 17% to 20% of their calories from added sugar had a 38% higher risk of dying from cardiovascular diseases compared with those who consumed 8% of their calories as added sugar. According to American Heart Association's recommendation, the daily allowance of sugar for women is 100 calories per day (6 teaspoons) and men are 150 calories per day (9 teaspoons). The amount of sugar in 1 serving of many SSBs is close to the daily limit of sugar that a person should consume in 1 day, according to the WHO.

A study found that two or more Sugary Drinks a day could raise the risk to heart failure by 23%. Another study that followed 40,000 men for two decades found that those who averaged one can of a Sugary Drinks per day had a 20% higher risk of having heart attack or dying from a heart attack than men who rarely consumed Sugary Drinks. A study in the journal "General Dentistry" found that

cola is 10 times as corrosive as fruit juice in the first three minutes of drinking. Another study found that drinking 4 cans of Sugary Drinks a day increased the risk of tooth erosion by 252%. In Pakistan situation is even worse than rest of the world. Report of National Nutrition Survey reveals that prevalence of overweight among children under five has almost doubled from 2011 to 2018. STEP survey (2014 - 2015) confirmed that 41.3% are obese or overweight. Every 4th adult has type II diabetes in Pakistan. We have the 3rd highest burden of diabetes worldwide with 33 million people living with diabetes, according to International Diabetic Federation Report 2021. Additional 10 million cases on impaired glucose tolerance. Nearly 400,000 deaths are attributed to diabetes or its related complications annually. That means approximately 1100 deaths per day. The health expenditures to manage diabetes was estimated USD 2640 million in Pakistan in 2021, says IDF. Higher intake of SSBs is associated with 30% higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

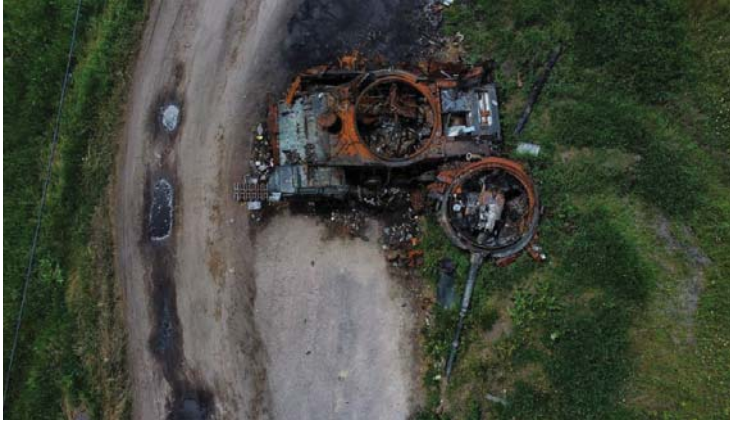
It is Public health emergency in Pakistan with alarmingly high number of people living with diabetes. These figures must awake us to take profound action to decrease the consumption of this sweet poison. An evidence based tested policy to reduce consumption of SSBs is increase taxes on Sugary Drinks. We have example of more than 50 countries in the world that have decreased the consumption of SSBs by increasing taxes. Saudi Arabia has received marvelous results of reduction in consumption of sugary drinks when imposed 100% tax on Energy Drinks and 50% tax on Sodas. In the result consumption of energy drinks reduced to 58% and Sodas to 41% as compared to previous year. Government must increase taxes on SSBs to protect public health rather than protecting the interests of beverage industry. This will not only improve public health but also will increase the revenue of the government and that will be a win - win situation for government.

The writer is General Secretary & Director Operations Pakistan National Heart Association (PANAH).

Russia targets depot in Ukraine, advances in east

Ukraine keeps up its pressure on West to deliver more arms

KYIV: The Russian military said it used long-range missiles Wednesday to destroy a depot in the western Lviv region of Ukraine where ammunition for NATO-supplied weapons was being stored, and the governor of a key eastern city acknowledged that Russian forces are advancing amid heavy fighting.



Those strikes came as fighting raged for the city of Sievierodonetsk in Ukraine's eastern Donbas area, the focus of Russia's offensive in recent weeks.

Russia-backed separatists accused Ukrainian forces of sabotaging an evacuation of civilians from the city's besieged Azot chemical plant, where about 500 civilians and an unknown number of Ukrainian fighters are believed to be sheltering from missile attacks. It wasn't possible to verify that claim.

A humanitarian corridor from the Azot plant had been announced a day earlier by Russian officials, who said they would take civilians to areas controlled by Russian forces, not Ukrainian ones.

Many previously announced planned evacuations from other areas

of fighting in Ukraine have failed, with each side blaming the other. Some Ukrainians have been reluctant to evacuate to Russian-held territory.

The Ukrainian governor of Luhansk, Serhiy Haidai, told The Associated Press that "heavy fighting in Sievierodonetsk continues today as well." The situation in the city is getting worse, Haidai admitted, because Russian forces have more manpower and weapons.

"But our military is holding back the enemy from three sides at once," Haidai said. "The enemy is advancing because

of significant advantage in artillery and people, but the Ukrainian army is holding on to its positions in the city."

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said Russian forces used high-precision Kalibr missiles to destroy the depot near the town of Zolochiv in the Lviv region near the border with NATO member Poland.

Konashenkov said shells for M777 howitzers, a type supplied by the United States, were being stored there. He said four howitzers were destroyed

elsewhere in fighting and that Russian airstrikes also destroyed Ukrainian "aviation equipment" at a military aerodrome in the southern Mykolaiv region.

There was no immediate comment on the Zolochiv strike from the Ukrainians.

While focusing most of their attacks on eastern Ukraine, where they are trying to capture large swaths of territory, Russian forces have also been hitting more specific targets elsewhere in the country, using high-precision missiles to disrupt the international supply of weapons and destroy military infrastructure.

Civilian infrastructure has been bombarded as well, even though Russian officials have claimed they're only targeting military facilities.

The latest attacks came as Ukraine keeps up its pressure on Western countries to deliver more arms and as NATO countries pledge more heavy weapons for Ukraine.

In recent days, Ukrainian officials have spoken of the heavy human cost of the war, with the fierce fighting in the east becoming an artillery battle that has seen Kyiv's forces outgunned and outnumbered.

Palestine urges world to end Israel's illegal occupation

Spokesman Report

RAMALLAH: The State of Palestine is dismayed by the ongoing efforts of selected actors to undermine the Human Rights Council and its independent Commission of Inquiry on the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and on Israel. Such efforts undermine the Palestinian people's fundamental right to justice and undercut the Council's own values.

There are only one set of rules that apply to all, without exception. Our multilateral system cannot and must not tolerate the kind of arrogance, double standards, hypocrisy, or exceptionalism that some actors are displaying. States cannot call themselves champions of human rights and celebrate their return into multilateralism if they are actively seeking to exclude the Palestinian people from that system and the avenues to justice it provides. The multilateral system is not the property of one or two actors; it is by all of us and for all of us.

The Palestinian people are not the exception to the rules-based order. On the contrary, the Palestinian people and their struggle for freedom and justice remain a pivotal test of the efficacy of the multilateral system and its principles.

Israel's politicization maneuvers obstruct the work of the Human Rights Council as an independent human rights body. Unlike inimical statements peddled by few actors, the Commission of Inquiry is the product of multilateral consultation and the consolidation of years and thorough investigations into and reporting on Israel's grave violations by United Nations experts, Human Rights Treaty bodies, and international organizations, whose work remain at the core of the Human Rights Council.

The Commission was clear: Israel's illegal occupation is the underlying root cause of the ongoing violence. Rather than entertain attempts at shielding the occupier and rewarding it with more impunity, the State of Palestine urges the international community to immediately end Israel's illegal occupation and dismantle its apartheid regime.

Gaza children suffer distress after 15 years of blockade

GAZA CITY: Four out of five children in Gaza suffer from emotional distress, Save the Children said Wednesday, 15 years after Israel slapped a strict blockade on the Palestinian territory.

Israel imposed the measure in June 2007, as fighters of the Islamist Hamas movement took control of the densely populated enclave. Israel, and Egypt, continue to severely restrict the flow of people and materials in and out. In a report called "Trapped", Britain-based Save the Children said the mental health of Gazan children has continued to deteriorate.

Since 2018, the number reporting symptoms of "depression, grief and fear," had risen from 55 percent to 80 percent, the report said. Save the Children's director for the occupied Palestinian territories, Jason Lee said: "The children we spoke to for this report described living in a perpetual state of fear, worry, sadness and grief, waiting for the next round of violence to erupt, and feeling unable to sleep or concentrate. "The physical evidence of their distress -- bedwetting, loss of ability to speak or to complete basic tasks -- is shocking and should serve as a wakeup call to the international community," he added.

Children make up nearly half of Gaza's population of 2.1 million. Around 800,000 young people in the territory who have "never known life without the blockade," Save the Children said. "Open-air prison" Israel insists the blockade is necessary to protect its citizens from Hamas, a group blacklisted as a terrorist organization by much of the West. Israel has fought four wars with Hamas since 2007, most recently in May 2021. Over the past 12 months, Israel has granted more work permits for Gazans seeking better paid jobs inside the Jewish state. It has also relaxed some restrictions on the flow of goods in and out of the territory.

But the blockade remains broadly unchanged, with Palestinians generally barred from leaving Gaza through the Erez crossing to Israel. Gazans also face huge obstacles exiting through the Rafah crossing to Egypt. In a statement marking the anniversary of the blockade, Human Rights Watch said that "Israel, with Egypt's help, has turned Gaza into an open-air prison."

HRW's director for Israel and Palestine, Omar Shakir, told AFP: "Young people face the brunt of (the blockade) because they don't know of a Gaza before the closure. "Their horizons are forcibly narrowed to a 40 by 11 kilometre (25 by seven mile) strip of land and that prevents them from the chance to interact and engage with the world," Shakir said.

UK confident it can overturn legal ban on Rwanda plan

LONDON: Britain pressed on with its plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda on Wednesday despite a last-minute intervention by European judges that grounded the first flight minutes before it was due to depart.

The government had been forced to fight a series of legal challenges in London courts, and believed it was ready to deport a handful of migrants on a charter plane to Rwanda on Tuesday night before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) stepped in. Charities, political opponents and religious leaders have accused the government of waging an "inhuman" battle against asylum seekers.

The government argues the policy will smash the business model of people-smuggling networks. Therese Coffey, work and pensions minister, told BBC TV the government had been surprised by the intervention but was already preparing for the next flight. "We still need to obviously go through that ruling, decide the next legal steps but also prepare the next flight," she said.

"The only people who really benefit from this are the traffickers who, frankly as they push the boats out, don't really care if people live or die." Britain struck a deal with Rwanda in April to send tens of thousands of asylum seekers to the East African country in what it said was a bid to stem the flow of migrants who make dangerous trips across the English Channel from France.

The United Nations' refugee chief has called the policy "catastrophic", the entire leadership of the Church of England denounced it as immoral, and media reports have said Prince Charles, the heir to the throne, had privately described the plan as "appalling".

Indian troops martyr two Kashmiri youth in IIOJK

SRINAGAR: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Indian troops in their fresh act of state terrorism martyred two more Kashmiri youth in Shopian district, on Wednesday.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the troops martyred the youth during a cordon and search operation in Kanjikkullar area of the district. The troops sealed all entry and exit points of the area, restricting the movement of the residents. They also did not allow the media persons to enter the area.

The occupation authorities have suspended the internet service in Kanjikkullar and its surrounding

areas to prevent people from sharing information about the prevailing situation.

The operation was going on when last reports came in.

Meanwhile, Indian troops continued their violent cordon and search operation on the second consecutive day, on Wednesday, in South Kashmir's Kulgam district. The troops along with paramilitary and police personnel launched a cordon and search operation on Tuesday in Mishipora area of the district. The troops once again fired several gun shots after night long lull in the area.

On the other hand, as per relatives of Kashmiri political prisoners, languishing in

New Delhi's infamous Tihar jail, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference vice Chairman, Shabbir Ahmad Shah is seriously ill in the Indian jail.

APHC leaders and organizations including

Abdul Ahad Parra, Zamruda Habib, Yasmeen Raja, Dr Musaib, Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party and Jammu and Kashmir Peoples League in their separate statements in Srinagar called upon the UN Human Rights Council, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and International Committee of Red Cross to urgently intervene to save the life of the jailed Kashmiri leader. The leaders and organizations deplored that Indi-

an jails have been converted into death cells where besides being subjected to physical and mental torture, the Kashmiri detainees are deprived of basic amenities including medical care.

The ailing APHC leader, Abdul Samad Inqilabi has started hunger strike against the inhuman treatment at the hands of Indian authorities at Varanasi jail in Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

On the other hand, India's dreaded National Investigation Agency conducted house raids at multiple locations in the Kashmir Valley including on the residences of many illegally detained Kashmiri leaders and activists.

Germany to provide troops for EU military mission

BERLIN: The German government on Wednesday approved the deployment of up to 50 soldiers to join a European Union military mission in Bosnia.

The deployment, which still has to be signed off on by Parliament, would be authorized until June 30, 2023.

Defense Ministry spokesman David Helmbold said the troops would be deployed to the headquarters in Sarajevo and in two mobile observation and liaison teams that would act as the "eyes and ears" of the mission.

Germany last contributed troops to the mission, known as Operation Althea, about a decade ago.

The European Union and the United States have expressed concern about the possible breakup of the ethnically divided Balkan country if the peace agreement brokered over 25 years ago unravels.

Russia eyes vast area from Warsaw to Sofia: Zelensky

PRAGUE: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged the European Union on Wednesday to let his country start on the road to membership of the bloc, warning that Russia's territorial ambitions stretched from Warsaw to Sofia.

In a speech to both chambers of the Czech parliament via a video link, Zelensky also called for more EU sanctions against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.

"Russia is not interested only in our (cities of) Mariupol, Sievierodonetsk, Kharkiv and Kyiv. No, its ambitions are directed on a vast area from Warsaw to Sofia," he said, without citing evidence for his assertion.

"As in the past, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is the first step that the Russian leadership needs to open the way to other countries, to the conquest of other peoples."

The EU has adopted six rounds of sanctions against Russia, and Ukraine is



seeking a seventh round to increase pressure on Russia to end the war.

The European Commission is expected to announce a decision on Ukraine's request for candidate status this week ahead of an EU summit next week. Having candidate status would be a preliminary step in a long process to accession.

"To grant Ukraine candidate status now is to prove that European unification is real and that European

values really work and are not just indicated in certain documents," Zelensky said.

He said the Czech people — following Nazi German occupation during World War Two and decades of Soviet domination after the war — knew how compromise ends and what comes of concessions to tyranny.

"The person who wants to seize everything will never stop at taking only part of what they want," Zelensky said.

Thousands protest 'bulldozer justice' against Indian Muslims

LUCKNOW: Protests have been erupting in many Indian cities to condemn the demolition of homes and businesses belonging to Muslims, in what critics call a growing pattern of "bulldozer justice" aimed at punishing activists from the minority group.

On Sunday, authorities in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh rode on a bulldozer to raze the home of Javed Ahmad, who they said was connected to Muslim religious protests that turned violent last Friday. Police arrested Ahmad on Saturday.

The protests were sparked by

derogatory remarks about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad made recently by two spokespeople of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. The party suspended one of them and expelled the other, issuing a rare statement saying it "strongly denounces insults of any religious personalities."

Bulldozers also crushed the properties of protesters in two other cities in Uttar Pradesh last week. In April, authorities in New Delhi used bulldozers to destroy Muslim-owned shops days after communal violence in which

dozens were arrested. Similar incidents have been reported in other states. "The demolitions are a gross violation of constitutional norms and ethics," Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, a specialist on Hindu nationalist politics and biographer of Modi, told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, 12 prominent people, including former Supreme Court and High Court judges and lawyers, sent a letter to India's chief justice urging him to hold a hearing on the demolitions, calling them illegal and "a form of collective extrajudicial punishment." They



accused the Uttar Pradesh government of suppressing dissent by using violence against protesters.

Two people who were protesting the remarks by the governing party spokespeople died of gunshot injuries in clashes with police on Friday in Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand state.

Several Muslim-majority countries have also criticized the remarks, and protesters in Bangladesh called for a boycott of Indian products, leaving India's government scrambling to contain the diplomatic backlash.

Violence has been increasing

against Muslims by Hindu nationalists emboldened by Modi's regular silence on such attacks since he was elected prime minister in 2014.

Muslims have been targeted for their food or clothing, or over inter-religious marriages. The rights groups Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have accused Modi's party of looking the other way and sometimes enabling hate speech against Muslims, who comprise 14 percent of India's 1.4 billion people, but are the second-largest Muslim population of any nation. Modi's party denies the accusations.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index

Current	Prev. Close
41,054.68	40,879.93
Day's High	Day's Low:
41,115.72	40,657.88
Index Value	Change
2,604,055,730	+174.75
Percentage	Time
+0.43%	14 Jun, 2022 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
7,187.46	-18.35
Percentage	Time
-0.25%	14 Jun, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
30,402.49	-114.25
Percentage	Time
-0.37%	14 Jun, 11:56 am GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
26,629.86	-357.58
Percentage	Time
-1.32%	14 Jun, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	141.7	142.95
Bahrain Dinar	542.79	547.29
Canadian Dollar	158.75	160.1
China Yuan	29.5	29.75
Danish Krone	28.62	28.97
Euro	214	216
Hong Kong Dollar	27	27.35
Indian Rupee	2.61	2.69
Japanese Yen	1.47	1.51
Kuwaiti Dinar	663.29	668.29
Malaysian Ringgit	46.33	46.78
New Zealand \$	128.02	129.22
Norwegians Krone	20.63	20.93
Omani Riyal	530.79	535.29
Qatari Riyal	56.07	56.57
Saudi Riyal	54	54.7
Singapore Dollar	146.41	147.71
Swedish Korona	20.06	20.36
Swiss Franc	204.74	206.49
Thai Bhat	5.84	5.94
U.A.E Dirham	56	56.7
UK Pound Sterling	252	254.5
US Dollar	204.5	206.5

Country on brink shouldn't violate agreement with IMF

Delay in budget adjustments dangerous, says Mian Zahid Hussain

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Wednesday said it does not benefit the country with a sinking economy to violate the agreement with IMF in the budget.

Continued violation of the agreement with the lender is irresponsibility which should be ended as soon as possible, he said.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the ambiguities and contradictions in the budget should be removed immediately so that it can become a workable document.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the country was on the brink of disaster but important economic decisions were still being taken on political grounds which was astonishing.

Many issues, including revenues and expenditures, are unclear in the budget, while the IMF has reservations about oil subsidies, current account deficits and direct taxes. He added.

It is impossible to get a loan from the IMF unless our government respond to the reservations of the lender.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that Finance Minister Miftah Ismail has admitted that IMF is not happy with some budget



proposals but still no adjustment is being made which is worrisome as it is affecting the economy and the value of rupee. Delays in important decisions are fuelling inflation which could rise from the current 13 percent to 23 percent, he warned. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that Pakistan needs 41 billion dollars in the current financial year while presently foreign exchange reserves are barely enough for 45 days of imports and it is impossible to stabilize them in the presence of existing policies.

So far the government has failed to convince IMG to provide 900 million dollars and the friendly countries are in no mood to finance our deficits.

Regarding the budget conflicts, he said that the government has claimed to keep inflation at 11 percent but at the same time it will be raising the price of oil and gas. It has also hinted at imposing heavy taxes on oil, gas and other commodities which will increase inflation.

It has been claimed that the growth rate will be kept at 5% but at the same time reduction of imports has also been announced. If imports are low, the growth rate will also be affected as most of the revenue comes from imports.

An increase in tax revenue has also been claimed but if imports are less than tax collection will also be reduced.

The government has allocated Rs800 billion for PSDP in which a lot of deductions will have to be made to balance the budget.

Housing Finance Agreement

Signing Ceremony of Agreements of "Pakistan Housing Finance Project" worth US \$85 million with the World Bank, in Islamabad on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

Karandaaz supporting Green Financing for sustainable development

Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Karandaaz Pakistan is strengthening renewable energy sector by helping more businesses find access to capital through green financing schemes. Karandaaz, as part of its Green Investments portfolio, recently entered into a partnership with Reon Energy Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Dawood Lawrencepur Limited. Under this partnership, Karandaaz has extended a financing facility of PKR 500M to bridge finance the working capital requirements of REON Energy and enhance its capacity to undertake large-scale capital projects in C&I sector.

Reon Energy, established in 2015, is Pakistan's leading solar and storage solutions specialist with deep domain

expertise in project development, financial advisory, engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC), and asset performance management. The PKR 500M facility from Karandaaz will be utilized by Reon to make payments for purchase and installation of imported and local solar equipment including panels, inverters, batteries and other related products for onward installation at specific projects. This Karandaaz financing facility will enable the execution of about 25 MW of solar projects per annum.

Talking about the significance of a shift to a greener energy mix, Mr. Waqas ul Hasan, CEO Karandaaz said, "Climate change induced shocks can be disastrous for any efforts geared towards Pakistan's sustainable econom-

ic growth. Similarly, it is imperative that Pakistan's demand and supply gap for energy is bridged to have a sustained and resilient progress. Pakistan has the potential to save up to 10-15% of primary energy supply through energy efficiency and conservation. Businesses must adopt resource efficiency and rely on green-energy sources because such steps will not only help Pakistan have a greener mix of energy but will also reduce financial and environmental costs for the country. To achieve all this, it is imperative that green energy solutions are easily and competitively available for businesses and the financial system is geared up to aid such adoption. Karandaaz is promoting access to the right mix of financial and physical resources for

businesses offering renewable energy solutions and incentivizing businesses that have the foresight to want to adopt green energy solutions. Partnerships such as the one between Karandaaz and Reon will demonstrate to the formal financial sector that there are commercial and environmental dividends to be reaped by investing in green businesses."

Talking about Karandaaz's partnership with Reon Energy, Mr. Navid Goraya, Chief Investment Officer Karandaaz said, "Our partnership with Reon is part of the efforts we are making to bridge financing gap and liquidity shortfalls common to EPC businesses in the green energy segment. Financing from formal channels for businesses offering green solutions remains diminutive in Pakistan.

Pakistani Teams gear up for 6th Huawei ICT Competition

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: This marks the sixth iteration of the Huawei ICT Middle East Global Competition in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. The competition is a Huawei annual ICT initiative, designed to nurture global ICT talent. On 23rd, December 2021, winners of the Middle East regional finals were announced and Pakistan's team one won first prize of 20,000 USD. Not only so, the second prize was also grabbed by Pakistan's team two. 150,000 students from 2000 universities located in 85 countries/regions have participated in the 6th iteration of the competition.

The competition, set to be hosted in Shenzhen and conducted online, consists of the opening ceremony, launch conference, closing ceremony, practice competition and the innovation competition. The practice competition focuses on the participants' knowledge and skills. It adopts the written exam and the lab exam, and the ranking is based on the exam score. It is divided into two tracks: network and cloud.

The innovation competition focuses on the participants' comprehensive capabilities. The competition

adopts the network evaluation mechanism. Participants are required to design works or solutions with commercial and social benefits by using new ICT such as AI, IoT, big data, and Cloud.

2021-2022 Regional finals winners, Pakistan's team; Sateesh Kumar, Iqra Fatima, and Bhagchand Meghwar along with their instructor Dr. Faheem Yar Khuahar and team two; Hafiz Rizwan, Adnan Ali, and Mukhtar Memon along with their instructor will be participating in the practice competition.

These students hail from Mehran University of Engineering & Technology, Islamia University Bahawalpur and, UET Lahore and Virtual University.

In the Innovation Competition, two further teams from Pakistan will be competing have been nominated this year. Osman Ahsan Sheikh, Muhammad Abdullah Ahsan Sheikh, Aqsa Amir and their instructor Merai Syed represent team 'Homevism', comprised of students from National Incubation Center, NUST. The second team from LUMS consist of Umer Farooq, Tabish Rafiq, Areej Ahmed and their instructor Muhammad Saeed from National Incubation Center, LUMS.

Asif for urea provision to farmers

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence Khawaj Muhammad Asif on Wednesday suggested the Ministry of Industries and Production to ensure provision of adequate fertilizer to the farming community at the earliest as the monsoon seasons was about to set in around next 10 days.

Speaking on floor of the

National Assembly, he said some urea stocks were available in different cities including Lodhran and Okara that could be provided to farmers without any delay. He said timely supply of fertilizer to farmers would help get better production of different crops, which would help ensure food security of the country.

Schneider Electric evolves mySchneider IT Partner Program Enabling collaboration to improve End Markets Experience

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Schneider Electric™, the global leader in the digital transformation of energy management and automation, Wednesday, announced its new mySchneider IT Partner Program, which will provide a simplified, innovative and collaborative approach to enabling partner growth. This re-vamped program focuses on enabling diverse and evolving business models and allows partners to differentiate their business by becoming a strategic advisor and expert in their market across multiple IT competencies.

The IT channel landscape is constantly evolving. Building on the company's award-winning channel history, Schneider Electric's updated IT partner program accommodates this dynamic ecosystem by enabling partners to grow and

differentiate their business for the long-term. The program focuses on unique specializations, giving partners the flexibility to certify in one or more based on their current capabilities and future aspirations. This further differentiates partners and highlights the true value of a channel ecosystem by: Enabling the development of diverse business models. Simplifying and increasing transparency for requirements & benefits. Capturing new business through market recognition and competitive differentiation and strengthening channel-centric practice. "The mission of our partner program has become clear," said Paul Tyrer, Global IT Channels VP at Schneider Electric. "For more than ten years, members of our IT channel program have reaped strong benefits including discounts, tools and innovative offers from Schneider Electric and its flagship APC brand. Partners partic-



icipating in the evolved program will stay agile amid today's evolving market trends, and in turn, produce approximately eight times higher revenue," he continued.

Availability of specializations will roll out over the next 12-18 months, through a phased approach including IT Solution Providers, Data Center Solution Providers and Software & Services Providers. The first specialization, IT Solution Provider, which is ideal for IT providers who are experts in IT infrastructure solutions within distributed IT environments, is available now.

Key features of the IT Solutions Provider

Specialization include: Data Driven Program Dashboard: To support new value-based and data-centric requirements, the digital experience has been completely innovated so partners can see real-time business updates and data. This new program dashboard not only provides partners with transparency, but also identifies core focus areas, should partners choose to level-up in the program for greater competency or benefits. Business-Specific Tools: Certified partners gain access to the tools needed in today's environment, including the Local Edge Configurator, which has configured tens of thousands of solutions within the distributed IT space across the world.

Increased Profitability: IT solution providers will gain access to unique deal registration discounts that exceed normal discounts provided through Schneider Electric's Edge Opportu-

nity Registration (ORP) Program. mySchneider Rewards: With the return of one of Schneider Electric's most popular rewards program, mySchneider Rewards, members of the partner account – including sales, engineers, services, and other functions – can earn points from various activities that can be redeemed for over 60,000 items, experiences, merchandise and more. Dedicated support and account coverage: Ongoing sales account coverage provides support to business building activities and pre-and post-sales support.

"Rapid digitization has transformed the way we are serving our customers. Now, more than ever before, we look to our partners for programs and platforms to reflect this transformation," said Andreas Luckfiel, Manager, Business Development at Buyitdirect, who participated in the new program pilot.

Imam, Rizwan join Babar at top of ODI, T20I Rankings

Fakhar Zaman joins Shikhar Dawan at 13th position

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: For the first time since the ICC ODI and T20I Player rankings were introduced, Pakistan batters have occupied the top two positions in the latest rankings, which the ICC released on Wednesday.

Pakistan's all-format captain Babar Azam is joined by Imam-ul-Haq as the second-ranked ODI batter, while Mohammad Rizwan has moved up one place to second in the T20I rankings.

Imam's 199 runs in the ODI series against the West Indies in Pakistan's 3-0 series win has helped him to move ahead of India's Virat Kohli. Imam now leads Kohli (811 points) by four points, while Babar continues to sit on top of the tree with 892 points.

Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman has joined India's Shikhar Dawan at 13th position.



Amongst the ODI bowlers, Shaheen Afridi has broken into the top-five for the first time in his career. The left-arm fast bowler, who is ranked fourth in Tests with 827 points, is now in fourth position

(up by two places). The list is headed by New Zealand's Trent Boult (726 points), followed by Josh Hazlewood (691 points) and Matt Henry (683 points).

Shadab Khan has also made good

progress, rising eight places to 30th, while Mohammad Nawaz has vaulted 53 places to enter the top-50 in 47th position.

In the T20I player rankings, Babar Azam is ranked number-one with 818 points, while Mohammad Rizwan is second (794 points). South Africa's Aiden Markram has slipped to third on 772 points. Fakhar Zaman is the next highest-ranked Pakistan batter in 46th position (490 points).

Amongst the T20I bowlers, Shaheen Afridi is in 12th position, followed by Shadab Khan (16th), Haris Rauf (29th), Mohammad Nawaz (60th) and Hasan Ali (63rd).

In the latest Test rankings, Babar Azam has retained his fourth position, while Azhar Ali and Mohammad Rizwan are 18th and 19th, respectively. Abid Ali is 23rd, Abdullah Shafique is 35th and Fawad Alam is 42nd.

All set for finals of CA Divisional U19 tournaments

Our Correspondent

LAHORE: Five teams will be crowned champions today when the finals of the inaugural Cricket Associations Divisional U19 tournament will be played in Balochistan, Central Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Northern and Sindh.

The final of the Southern Punjab will be staged at the Multan Cricket Stadium on Friday, 17 June.

The 50-over tournament comprises best teenage cricketers from the recent City Cricket Association U19 tournament.

In Balochistan, Loralai-Zhob Division will take on Quetta-Rakshan Division in

the final at the Bugti Stadium tomorrow. Both teams topped the four-team table, winning two matches apiece. Naserbad-Sibi Division and Makran-Kalat Division ended up on third and fourth position.

In Central Punjab, Faisalabad Division will take on Lahore Division at Pak Lions Cricket Academy Ground in Jubilee Town. Both finalists finished with four points each along with Sargodha Division, but Sargodha Division failed to qualify on lesser net run-rate. Gujranwala-Sialkot Division finished on last spot with no wins.

Hazara-Mardan Division will take on Peshawar-Kohat Division in the final of

the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa divisional tournament at the KMC Ground University in Peshawar. Hazara-Mardan topped the table with three wins in as many matches, while Peshawar-Kohat Division won their two matches from three outings in the tournament. D.I.Khan-Bannu Division ended up with third spot in the tournament with one win, while Malakand Division finished at the bottom of the table with no wins.

In Northern, AJK Division will take on Gilgit Baltistan Division in the final at the House of Northern, Islamabad. Both teams qualified for the final after ending up winning two matches

each. Rawalpindi Division and Islamabad Division finished on third and fourth position, respectively, after winning one match each.

In Sindh, the final will be played between Karachi Division and Benazirabad-MirpurKhas Division at the Academy Oval of the Hanif Mohammad High Performance Centre in Karachi. Both teams along with Sukkar-Larkana Division finished their round matches with six points each. On better net run-rate Karachi Division and Benazirabad-MirpurKhas qualified for the final. Winless Hyderabad Division remained at the bottom of the table.

Costa Rica claim last World Cup place



DOHA: Costa Rica became the last team to qualify for this year's World Cup as Joel Campbell's early goal gave the Central Americans a nervy 1-0 win over New Zealand in a play-off on Tuesday.

Former Arsenal forward Campbell netted in the third minute in Doha and New Zealand, who were reduced to 10 men in the second half, could not find an equaliser despite dominating for long periods. Costa Rica will face Germany, Spain and Japan in a tough Group E at the tournament which starts in Qatar in November. Victory put Costa Rica into their third straight World Cup and sixth in total. Their best effort so far was a surprise run to the quarter-finals in 2014. New Zealand striker Chris Wood had what he thought was a leveller ruled out by VAR shortly before half-time at the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium due to a foul earlier in the move.

The Kiwis also saw Kosta Barbarouses sent off, barely eight minutes after coming on as a substitute, for a challenge on Costa Rica's Francisco Calvo. That decision was also changed by VAR after he had initially been shown a yellow card. "We are incredibly disappointed, we are hurting," said New Zealand coach Danny Hay. "I thought we were by far the better team."

There was one team that dominated. He called the decision for the disallowed goal "atrocious" and said the referee should not have been in charge of the game. Both sides had suffered badly from the pandemic upheaval.

The whole Oceania qualifying group, that New Zealand won to reach this play-off, was held behind closed doors in Qatar this year because of the coronavirus. Costa Rica star Bryan Ruiz went down with Covid-19 two weeks before Tuesday's game and the team had to deny accusations that they played two infected players against Jamaica in January.

New Zealand's neighbours Australia took the 31st qualifying spot in the same stadium on Monday when they beat Peru 5-4 on penalties. The first World Cup in an Arab nation starts in Qatar on November 21, with the final on December 18.

England loss heaps pressure on Southgate

MANCHESTER: Gareth Southgate was a national hero less than a year ago as he led England to a first major tournament final for 55 years but is now in the firing line after a humiliating 4-0 defeat to Hungary.

England's worst home loss since 1928 leaves the Three Lions facing the ignominy of relegation from the top tier of the Nations League. But it is the impact such an embarrassment will have on Southgate's preparations for the World Cup in five months' time that is the most pressing concern. England have only two more matches, away to Italy and home to Germany in September, before starting their World Cup campaign against Iran on November 21.

The switch to a winter World Cup due to the climate in Qatar created a quirk in the calendar that forced international sides to play four matches this month after a physically exhausting campaign for many players at club level. World champions France are also bottom of their Nations League group without a win in four games, while Belgium's Kevin De Bruyne and Dutch manager Louis van Gaal have



criticised the punishing schedule.

Southgate pointed to that as a major factor in England's failure to win in four consecutive games for the first time in his six-year tenure. "This has been a really unique set of fixtures," he said. "I was concerned about it before because I knew we were going to have to make changes and we couldn't field a full team for every game. I tried to give some young players experience and rest some of the players I think have had long seasons. We are going to need them in the World Cup and we didn't want to break them."

Captain Harry Kane and

Raheem Sterling were quick to shut down any questions over Southgate's future given the credit he has in the bank for not only reaching the final of Euro 2020 but also the semi-finals of the 2018 World Cup. However, it was the manager who was the target for abuse from a frustrated crowd as Hungary ran riot in Wolverhampton.

The 51-year-old was derided with chants of "sacked in the morning" and "you don't know what you're doing." Southgate admitted earlier this week that he will not "outstay his welcome" as national team boss as criticism of his conservative

approach persists. Critics of the former Middlesbrough boss, who favours two defensive midfielders in his line-up, believe he has been too slow to embrace the array of attacking talent at his disposal.

Manchester City pair Phil Foden and Jack Grealish are just two of the creative options whose chances to shine on the international stage have been limited under Southgate. However, he appeared to double down on his idea of how England can be successful in Qatar after such a disastrous Nations League campaign so far, which has featured just a single goal, from the penalty spot.

Rahm, McIlroy face tension and drama at US Open

BOSTON: A hotly anticipated US Open starts Thursday that will test the world's top golfers over a formidable layout at a historic setting with a splash of controversy as well.

Defending champion Jon Rahm, four-time major winner Rory McIlroy, top-ranked Masters champion Scottie Scheffler and two-time major winners Justin Thomas and Collin Morikawa lead fan and oddsmakers favorites at The Country Club. "You've got to have all aspects of your game ready to play some good golf," reigning British Open champion Morikawa said. In addition to creating dense rough and lightning-fast greens, the US Golf Association ensured drama by allowing players from the upstart Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series to compete rather than them as the US PGA Tour did.

As a result, US stars Dustin Johnson, Phil Mickelson, Patrick Reed and Bryson DeChambeau are among the LIV Golf rebels teeing off in a unique

sub-plot to the quest for a major title – the first LIV-PGA showdown.

"Who knew we loved all this drama?" Morikawa said. "It becomes a distraction and you don't want to be focused on this or that. We're here to win the US Open." Mickelson, who turns 52 on Thursday, would complete a career Grand Slam with a victory after a record six runner-up efforts, and break his own mark as the oldest major winner. "I'm excited to be back in this incredible championship that has eluded me," Mickelson said. Boston fans famously heckled Europe in a 1999 US Ryder Cup fightback victory and could offer more barbs. "Whether it's positive or negative towards me directly, I think it's going to provide an incredible atmosphere," Mickelson said.

Tiger Woods, making a comeback after severe leg injuries suffered in a car crash 16 months ago, skipped the US Open to better prepare for next month's British Open at St Andrews.

A field of 156 will compete at the same club where 20-year-old hometown hero Francis Ouimet became the first amateur to win the US Open back in 1913. "What's so good about golf is the history and tradition and these stories," McIlroy said. "The fact he grew up just off the 17th hole and we're still talking about it to this day over 100 years on, that's so cool." Third-ranked McIlroy won his 21st US PGA title on Sunday at the Canadian Open. "It certainly puts a pep in your step," McIlroy said. "It gives you a lot of confidence."

"Everything is certainly trending in the right direction and I'm happy with where the game is at," McIlroy, 33, is the most recent player to win a tour event and a major title in back-to-back weeks, taking a WGC title at Akron before his 2014 PGA Championship victory at Valhalla, his most recent major triumph. "I'm feeling a lot more comfortable with my game and at the biggest and toughest tests



in the world," said McIlroy.

"I feel confident going to these golf courses that are set up more difficult knowing I have the game and mentality to succeed on them." Second-ranked

Rahm will try to repeat as Brooks Koepka did in 2017-2018. The 27-year-old Spaniard won his first major title last year at Torrey Pines. "A lot of the pressure I used to put on myself is not

really there," Rahm said.

"I can enjoy it a little bit more and know you don't need to do anything special to get it done." Rahm won his first title since last year's US Open last month at the US PGA Mexico Open and practiced Tuesday with Mickelson. "Second shots into the green are going to be important," Rahm said. "Rough around the greens is about as healthy as I've seen in a while." Scheffler, assured of topping next week's rankings, will try to match Woods – the only reigning world number one to win a US Open. "I like the challenge," Scheffler said.

"This style of golf really suits how I play." Thomas, who won May's PGA Championship, likes the difficult test on offer. "US Open is a grind. That's why I love it," Thomas said. "Driving the ball is going to be very important. Scrambling and salvaging and making those putts for par can be the momentum builders."

Matic joins old boss Mourinho at Roma

MILAN: Nemanja Matic was reunited with his old boss Jose Mourinho at Roma on Tuesday after the Serie A club announced the Serbian's arrival as a free agent.

In a statement, Roma said that former Serbia midfielder Matic has signed a one-year deal with an option for a second season, with Italian media reporting that he will earn 3.5 million euros the coming campaign. "I am pleased and honoured to be joining this club and I cannot wait to start the new season with my teammates," Matic said. "Roma is a big club, with amazing fans and a coach, Jose Mourinho, who is well known to everyone – making the decision to come here very straightforward. I hope that by working together we are able to achieve some great things." The 33-year-old was released by Manchester United after five seasons at the Premier League giants in which he failed to win a single trophy. He had been taken to United by Mourinho in 2017 after having been signed for Chelsea while the Portuguese was in his second spell in charge at the London club.

He won the Premier League title twice at Chelsea, under Mourinho and Antonio Conte and was reportedly requested explicitly by the Roma coach. Mourinho took over at Roma last summer and has rehabilitated his reputation as a coach after difficult spells at United and then Tottenham Hotspur.

Seen by many as yesterday's man, Mourinho won Roma the inaugural Conference League last month, their first ever major European honour and first trophy of any type since 2008.

Nunez targets trophies after sealing Liverpool move

LIVERPOOL: Darwin Nunez vowed to write himself into Liverpool's history after securing a move from Benfica on Tuesday for a fee that could rise to a club record 100 million euros (£85 million, \$105 million). The Champions League finalists have splashed an initial 75 million euros on the 22-year-old, with an extra 25 million in performance-related add-ons according to figures released by Benfica. That could take Nunez's move beyond the £75 million Liverpool paid for Virgil Van Dijk in January 2018 and make him the fifth most expensive transfer in Premier League history. The Uruguayan scored 34 goals in 41 appearances last season, including twice against Liverpool in the Champions League quarter-finals. "I'm really happy and delighted to be here at Liverpool. It's a massive club," Nunez told the Liverpool website. "When I arrived at the training ground, I was really surprised to see the set-up and the structure and all the trophies here. You can then imagine yourself winning more trophies and then later on when you come here again and see the trophies on display, you can say, 'Look, I was a part of that, I was there at that time, winning trophies.' That's one of the reasons why I came here to Liverpool – to win trophies and titles." His arrival continues Jurgen Klopp's overhaul of Liverpool's attacking options. Luis Diaz made a huge impact in the second half of last season after a January move from Porto, while Diogo Jota has scored 34 goals in the past two seasons. Sadio Mane, Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino, who have fired the club back to winning major honours under Klopp, are all out of contract in 2023. Mane has expressed his intention to leave the Reds during the summer transfer window. Liverpool have reportedly rejected two bids from Bayern Munich as they hold out for a fee above £40 million for the Senegal forward. Egypt star Salah has stated his intention to stay next season without committing to a future deal as talks over an extension have stalled. Firmino is keen to stay beyond his current deal, but the Brazilian fell down the pecking order at Anfield last season due to a lack of form and fitness. Liverpool narrowly missed out on an unprecedented quadruple of trophies last season. Klopp's men lifted the League Cup and FA Cup, but lost out on the Premier League title to Manchester City by one point and were beaten 1-0 by Real Madrid in the Champions League final. City have already signalled their intent to maintain their dominance of the Premier League under Pep Guardiola by beating Europe's top clubs to the signature of prolific Norwegian striker Erling Haaland from Borussia Dortmund. Liverpool will hope Nunez can match Haaland's impact as they aim to take the title off City next season.

UEFA considers new four-team tournament

PARIS: UEFA are considering introducing a four-team mini-tournament at the start of each season, just before the Champions League group phase begins, European football's governing body confirmed on Tuesday. French sports daily L'Equipe reported that UEFA were weighing up the idea of a competition involving the winners of the previous season's Champions League along with three other leading clubs. L'Equipe reported that the idea was included in the invitation to tender for the broadcast rights for the new, expanded Champions League from 2024 to 2027. When contacted by AFP, UEFA said "it is an idea mentioned in the call for bids, but nothing is decided". A source with knowledge of the proposal said the mini-tournament would not necessarily mean more games. The Champions League group stage is being expanded from the 2024/25 season to feature 36 clubs, up from the current 32. They will all be together in one pool with each team playing eight matches, all against different opponents, compared to eight groups of four teams playing six matches each at present. Last month UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin told AFP that talks had taken place about transforming the UEFA Super Cup to make it a four-team competition rather than the current one-off match between the Champions League winners and Europa League winners.