



PPP always supports political dialogue: Shazia Marri

Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Shazia Marri says the leadership of PPP has always supported dialogue among political forces to strengthen democratic process in the country. She said the PTI Chief Imran Khan has chosen a non-political method by opting out of the assemblies, as he knew very well that the PTI govt in Punjab was bound to collapse.



Kyrgyz envoy for exploiting trade potential with Pakistan

Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan Ulanbek Totulaev Sunday stressed the urgent need to fully exploit the existing trade and economic potentials between the two countries on priority to further bolster regional economic integration. Chairing a ceremony dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as the 95th Anniversary of the People's writer of Kyrgyzstan Chyngyz Aitmatov, he said ... (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Agri Economy

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting to review country wide wheat procurement drive on Sunday.



Photo: PID

Prioritizing Agriculture

PM expresses satisfaction over bumper wheat production

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif attributed production of 27.5 million metric tons wheat crop

Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday attributed production of 27.5 million metric tons record bumper wheat crop in the country to government's efforts at timely decisions, provision of quality seed, interrupted supply of fertilizer and Kissan package.

Expressing his satisfaction over the country's produce which surpassed production during the previous ten years, the prime

minister thanked Allah Almighty for the blessing.

The prime minister chaired a meeting to review countrywide wheat procurement drive at the official level, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was informed about the production of wheat in the current year, its available stock, carry forward stocks and the procurement targets of the federal and provincial departments.

The meeting was attended by

Minister for National Food Security Tariq Bashir Cheema, PM's Adviser Ahad Khan Cheema, Special Assistant Tariq Bajwa, Caretaker Punjab Minister for Industries SM Tanveer and other senior authorities.

The prime minister congratulated the minister for food security and other relevant authorities and appreciated their steps.

He said that despite heavy rainfalls and floods in last year, achieving bumper wheat crop was the result of the incumbent

government's timely decisions and the best governance.

Felicitating the nation on achieving the milestone, the prime minister said that the government was formulating a strategy for achieving enhanced production next year.

Due to mismanagement of the previous government, Pakistan became a wheat importing country, he said, adding the farmers were made to wait in long lines for the whole day to get fertilizers.

He said that the provincial

and federal departments should directly purchase wheat from farmers to provide them benefits. They should also increase the procurement targets of wheat, so as to ensure its uninterrupted supply throughout the year, he added.

The prime minister also directed for strict action against hoarders.

He also directed for provision of required resources through banks to get specified quantity of wheat.

Fawad flays ECP for obstructing PTI Labour Day rally

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice-President Fawad Chaudhry Sunday censured the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for obstructing his party's Labour Day rally across the country.

"The Election Commission has given notice to PTI to not hold a rally on Labour Day. The purpose of the May 1 holiday is for workers to stand up for their rights," the former information minister said while speaking in a video posted on PTI's Twitter account.

Meanwhile, the ECP has sent a written notice to PTI Chairman Imran Khan stating it found out about a rally from Liberty Chowk to Nasir Bagh under your leadership.

The electoral authority's district monitoring officer, in the notice, added that permission for rallies and processions must be sought from the district administration.

"Political parties and candidates are bound to inform the district administration before rallies and meetings. A rally without prior permission is a violation of the Election Commission's code of conduct," the notice read.

PTI govt stopped work on CPEC projects: Asif

SIALKOT: Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif said on Sunday that during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, Pakistan was deliberately pushed towards economic instability, and work on the game-changer project, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), was stopped by the government.

"Talking to the media here at his residence, he said had work on CPEC projects, launched by Mian Nawaz Sharif, been continued with the usual pace, the country would have been included in the list of developing countries today.

Kh Asif regretted that former premier Nawaz Sharif and his family were subjected to maltreatment and cruelty, and the characters involved in the process were getting exposed one by one now. He said Imran Khan and his facilitators had together committed injustice with Nawaz Sharif.

During the PTI government, Nawaz Sharif and his family were maltreated and suppressed continuously for four years and false cases were registered against the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders. He said the PTI victimised the PML-N leadership politi-

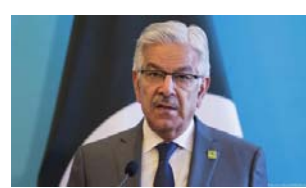


Photo: PID

cal also.

Kh Asif said that the nexus of Imran Khan and former chief justice Saqib Nisar had launched a cruel campaign against Nawaz Sharif. He said the country was pushed into political and economic instability under a well-thought-out plan.

The federal minister said Saqib Nisar's son was selling the PTI tickets for 12 million rupees each, which everyone saw and heard on television and social media sites. He said even Saqib Nisar himself admitted that the voice in the audio-leak was of his son. Kh Asif said that involvement of Saqib Nisar's son in such issues was regrettable.

He said the PTI selling its tickets was highly regrettable.

The federal minister said that there had always been a contradiction in Imran Khan's words and actions. He said the PTI chairman had dissolved the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab assemblies. but now he was talking about restoring them also. He claimed that

PTV Flix to reconnect viewers with PTV's golden era: Marriyum

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday expressed her delight at the launch #PTVflix today which would connect the viewers with a national treasure including the golden era of the PTV.

In a tweet, she said the project was initiated in July 2022, a new video streaming OTT platform on which users globally can access PTV's vast library of content, including TV shows, dramas, documentaries, sports, and other programs.

The minister said that over the years, PTV has produced content that has become a national treasure.

"Popular dramas and PTV shows like Dhoop Kangar, and Aynakwala Jin have become a part of our collective memory", she maintained.

PTV Flix has a rich library of current and old content that users can easily access, she said.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said that this initiative will reconnect youth and seniors with the PTV content that has left an indelible impact on countless lives.

International Labour Day today

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: International Labour Day will be observed across the globe on Monday to acknowledge and commend the invaluable contributions of the labour class.

The theme for the day is "Stop the pandemic: Safety

and health at work can save lives".

The fundamental objective of observing the International Labour Day is to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the working class, create awareness about their rights, and protect them from exploitation.

Govt reduces HSD price by Rs5, LDO & SKO by Rs10 each per liter

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The government on Sunday revised petroleum prices for the next fortnight effective from May 1, reducing per litre rate of High-Speed Diesel (HSD) by Rs 5, Light Diesel Oil (LDO) and Superior Kerosene Oil (KSO) by Rs10 each to provide maximum relief to the common man.

However, the price of per litre Motor Spirit Oil (MSO - Petrol) would remain unchanged and continue to be sold at Rs 282 per litre, Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar announced in a brief press talk.

He said the prices of petroleum products had been

curtailed in line with the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to provide maximum relief to the public.

Accordingly, he said after getting a working (summary) of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) regarding the revision of the petroleum prices, the Ministry of Finance made the utmost effort to 'handle it' in the favour and interest of the masses and finally decided the new prices after several rounds [of deliberations by experts at the Finance Division].

The minister said the per litre price of HSD had been decreased by Rs 5 from Rs 293 to Rs 288, LDO and KSO by Rs10 each from Rs174.68 to Rs164.68; and Rs 186.07 to Rs 176.07, respectively.

Govt extends field work of 'digital census'

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Government has extended on-going field work of digital census-2023 in 66 districts across the country till 15th May.

According to a notification issued by the PBS on Sunday, the date has been

extended for verification and coverage of the leftover houses.

These 66 districts include 33 districts of Punjab, 9 each in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh, 3 of Balochistan, 4 of Gilgit Baltistan and 7 of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Islamabad Capital territory is also included in the list.

Rs20b embezzled from PM's free flour scheme, claims PML-N leader

Punjab caretaker minister rejects allegations, demands apology



LAHORE: Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has claimed that Rs20 billion were embezzled from the federal government's free flour distribution scheme.

Addressing a ceremony in Lahore, the ruling party leader said that the country's system has become "so corrupt and outdated" that it cannot deliver.

He said corrupt government officials would be identified in the past "but today is the time when we have to look for honest officers". Abbasi asked what did poor get out of Rs84 billion subsidy allocated by the federal and provincial governments to provide free flour to the poor during the holy month of Ramadan.

"More than Rs20 billion were stolen in the government's free flour scheme," he alleged. Responding to his allegations, the Centre and the caretaker government of Punjab rejected

his claims.

Federal Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said millions of poor people in Punjab, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Islamabad were provided free flour during the holy month with "full transparency and honesty".

She said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif himself visited the flour distribution points in different cities. The minister also lauded the efforts of administrative officers and other staffers involved in the free flour distribution for making the historic scheme successful.

Punjab caretaker Information Minister Amir Mir also rejected Abbasi's allegation saying not even a single penny of corruption took place in the free flour scheme.

The free flour scheme has been the most successful scheme in the history of Punjab, he said adding that 30 million deserving people of Punjab benefited from the subsidy.

He said subjecting the flour subsidy to the party's internal politics was unfair. "Shahid Khaqan Abbasi should either apologise or provide evidence," the provincial minister demanded. Agencies

May Day

FAISALABAD: An Ironsmith is busy in his work to earn daily wages for the livelihood of his family, unaware from the International Labor Day, Which is commemorating annually on 1st May, for the rights of Labor around the World.



Photo: Online

Labour force is backbone of economy: Dr Alvi

Labour Day reminder of workers contribution towards economic dev, says President

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi said this year the nation was celebrating Labour Day on May 1 with the resolve to reaffirm commitment to the dignity of labour and pay tribute to the valiant and heroic struggle of the workers for their fundamental rights.

In a message on the occasion of Labour Day, he said, "The day is not only a reminder of the struggle of workers but also an acknowledgment of their contribution towards economic development. We

believe that workers and employers are partners in the production process and their cooperation is essential for industrial efficiency that ultimately leads to socio-economic uplift of the country.

Despite their contribution towards economic prosperity, labourers are facing many issues like the unsafe working environment, unfair labour practices, poor wages, lack of job security, harassment of women at the workplace, long working hours and arbitrary dismissal."

He said, "the labour force is the backbone of our econ-



omy and it is highly essential to take steps for the protection of their rights by strictly enforcing the labour laws to discourage unfair labour

practices. Pakistan has a huge labour force and youth bulge that need to be provided modern skill sets to put the economy on fast-track devel-

opment."

He hoped that the federal and provincial governments would continue their endeavors to work for their welfare as well as to provide them with marketable skill sets.

"On this occasion, I urge workers of the country to play their role in making Pakistan economically stronger and vibrant country. I also urge upon employers to ensure the protection of the rights of labour and work for their welfare," he said adding, "On this day, let us pledge to dedicate ourselves to the prosperity and glory of Pakistan."

Kyrgyz envoy for exploiting trade potential with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan Ulanbek Totuaev Sunday stressed the urgent need to fully exploit the existing trade and economic potentials between the two countries on priority to further bolster regional economic integration.

Chairing a ceremony dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as the 95th Anniversary of the People's writer of Kyrgyzstan Chyngyz Aitmatov, he said overall, the deep cultural heritage of four countries should also be spread among the people of Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan.

He said both countries are strongly interconnected and



with the right approach can create a significantly efficient partnership and friendship for the benefit of our people. In this regard, he called upon all of us to actively work and cooperate to grow Kyrgyz-Pakistani relations on a qualitatively new level.

He said Kyrgyzstan is a

country with a very deep and broad history and the Kyrgyz nation itself is considered to be one of the most ancient in the world. The earliest records about the ethnonym "Kyrgyz" were found in Chinese transcriptions, which were written more than 2200 years ago he added.

At different times Kyrgyzstan was becoming a massive state, ruling in Central Asia and expanding its influence to the entire East Asian region he added.

He said both countries are bounded by strong historical links, as well as the same religion and close culture. As it is known, the founder of the Mongol Empire, Zahiriddin

Babur originated from the South of Kyrgyzstan. His house is today the historical site at the top of the mountain "Sulaiman-Too".

Talking about Constitution, Ambassador Ulanbek said that this document is the fundamental legal basis of the entire state, which defines the main rules and principles of all the spheres within the country, as well as its foreign policy.

Talking about the People's writer of Kyrgyzstan Chyngyz Aitmatov he stressed that his legacy is well-known all over the world. His works are translated into 174 languages and the whole circulation constitutes more than 80 million copies. Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade

House Meher Kashif Younis said Constitution is the essence of a nation and spirit soul of any nation. He said poets are the heart of the nation. Once the father of the nation and founder of Pakistan said 'UNITY FAITH and DISCIPLINE' is also the slogan of Pakistan to ensure discipline in every sphere of life.

He said during his visit to Kyrgyzstan that the Kyrgyz love to have education knowledge and implementation of their constitution with unity and faith. He said the entire business community and people of Pakistan congratulate the people of Kyrgyzstan on their success and vision he concluded. APP

Political stability imperative for national dev: Interior Minister

Our Correspondent

FAISALABAD: Federal Interior Minister Rana Sana Ullah Khan has said that political stability was imperative for national development, progress and prosperity.

Addressing a public gathering at the Dera of PML-N leader Rana Aqeel Khan Advocate on Chak No.74-JB here on Sunday night, he said that PTI Chief Imran Khan had severe lack of political acumen due to which he had promoted the culture of hate and hatred.

The minister said that in 2013, the load shedding and terrorism were rampant in the country but the PML-N government under visionary leadership of then Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif overcame these menaces and put the country on road to progress and prosperity.

UN chief, envoys in key talks on Afghanistan crisis

NEW YORK: UN chief Antonio Guterres will gather international envoys at a secret location in Doha on Monday in an increasingly desperate bid to find ways to influence Afghanistan's Taliban rulers.

Considered the world's biggest humanitarian crisis by the United Nations, Guterres' quandary has been deepened by the Taliban administration's move to stop girls from going to school and most women from working, even for UN agencies.

The Taliban government, which took back power in August 2021, will be absent from the talks with representatives from about 25 countries and international organisations, according to diplomats.

Ahead of the talks, a small group of women staged a protest in Kabul on Saturday to oppose any international recognition of the Taliban government. But the UN and Western powers are adamant this will not be discussed.



"Any kind of recognition of the Taliban is completely off the table," said US State Department spokesman Vedant Patel.

But apart from confirming that the Taliban leadership is not on the list of participants, the UN has refused to say where in the Qatar capital the talks are being held, or who will join Guterres.

The UN secretary general is to give an update on a review of the world body's critical relief operation in Afghanistan, ordered in April after the authorities there stopped Afghan women working with UN agencies, diplomats said.

The UN has said it faces an "appalling choice" over whether to maintain its huge operation in the country of 38

million.

Torn apart over the Ukraine war and other global tensions, the UN Security Council powers united on Thursday to condemn the curbs on Afghan women and girls and urge all countries to seek "an urgent reversal" of the policies.

The Afghan foreign ministry rejected the call and said the ban "is an internal social matter of Afghanistan". Richard Gowan, the UN expert for the International Crisis Group, an independent NGO, said the UN is "in a trap over Afghanistan".

"Guterres has to untangle a very complicated knot. He needs to find a way to keep aid flowing into Afghanistan, but the Taliban ban on women is a huge blow to the UN's ability to operate in the country," Gowan said the international community wants the UN to maintain its critical presence.

"There are lots of differences among security council members over Afghanistan. But everyone, including Russia and China, agrees it is better to have the UN in Kabul than not."

The United Nations has given few indications of what proposals could be made at the meeting.

UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday the aim "is to reinvigorate international engagement around common objectives for a durable way forward on Afghanistan".

The global body also wants "unity or commonality of message" on women's and human rights, countering terrorism and drug trafficking. "Recognition is not an issue," Dujarric insisted. Whether the Taliban government takes up Afghanistan's UN seat is for the UN General Assembly to decide.

But the UN and other groups have been holding increasingly intense discussions on how to engage with the Taliban and possibly offer incentives for change.

Dar stresses for enhanced ties with Iran in diverse fields



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar has said that Pakistan holds its brotherly relations with Iran in very high regard.

He was talking to Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini who called on him in Islamabad on Sunday.

The Finance Minister extended compliments on successful completion of his tenure in Pakistan. The Finance Minister highlighted deep rooted cordial relations between Pakistan and Iran based on age old common religious and cultural similarities. He also highlighted economic outlook of the country and said that despite economic challenges, the country is destined to progress and development.

Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar lauded the Ambassador's contributions in enhancing and cementing the decades old brotherly ties and fostering economic and trade cooperation between the two countries. Appreciating the tenure of the Iranian Ambassador in Pakistan, the Finance Minister bid farewell to him and extended best wishes and good luck on behalf of people and government of Pakistan for his future assignments.

Ambassador Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini also stressed upon the potential held by both countries for mutual cooperation and appreciated the cooperation and support of the present government in enhancing the bilateral relations in various fields. He expressed good memories of his stay in Pakistan and support of the people and government of Pakistan in shaping his tenure successful.

Pakistan's first Monkeypox patient recovers completely: Health Minister

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination on Sunday announced that the country's first and only Monkeypox patient has fully recovered and been discharged from the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) hospital.

According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, the reports of the patient were negative, who was admitted to PIMS to get medical treatment.

"Best medical services were provided to the patient. "Now there is no Monkeypox patient in Pakistan, Minister for National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel said in a statement.

He appreciated the hospital staff for providing extraordinary care to the patient. He added the ministry was vigilantly monitoring the situation while keeping all the relevant stakeholders on board for ensuring preparedness, timely response, and contain-

ment of Mpx cases in Pakistan.

He said that the Border Health Services already issued Mpx (Monkeypox) advisory to the health authorities to enhance screening of inbound passengers at all international airports on the recent case detection in the country.

He said that a total of 22 samples from suspected cases were referred from different parts of the country, and PCR tests were carried out for the Monkeypox virus, however, no positive case was detected.

He said that the situation was completely under control as the government had chalked out a comprehensive strategy to handle the situation.

He said all concerned departments have been advised to ensure surveillance through laboratory diagnostics, contact tracing, rapid identification of suspected cases and clusters of infections as well as the source of infection in order to provide optimal clinical care. APP

Census team asked to complete operation in areas with abnormal growth by May 15: Ahsan

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Minister of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, directed provincial governments to complete the field verification/coverage of 7th Population and Housing Census till 15th May, 2023 in areas where population growth is not in line with normal demographic trends and close the field operation in all areas exhibiting natural trends.

In pursuance of the 12th meeting of the Census Monitoring Committee and meeting with Demographers and Political parties, a follow-up meeting was held on 30th April 2023, with where population growth is not in line with demographic trends till May 15, chaired by Minister of Planning to discuss the nomenclature for completion of fieldwork of the 7th Population and Housing Census by May 15, 2023, a PBS news release said.

During the meeting, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal emphasized that Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has taken strict notice on the repeated extensions of field enumeration activities of the 7th Population and Housing Census, therefore, targeted verification and enumeration operations should be carried out in areas with abnormal Population Growth, where gaps have already been highlighted using the digital systems architected by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) for the first-ever digital census.

No compromise on labourers' rights: Bilawal

Staff Reporter

KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan People's Party and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that there would be no compromise on labourers' rights because if the labourers were prosperous, then Pakistan would be prosperous. He said that the Party would give representations to the labourers in all elected bodies following its manifesto.

Bilawal said if the people gave the mandate to the PPP in the upcoming general elections, it will start schemes like Benazir Mazdoor Card for the workers across the country, as it has started in Sindh.

In his message on the eve of International Labour Day issued from Media Cell Bilawal House on Sunday, the PPP Chairman said that the backbone of the society was the toiling labourers and 1st May was a day to pay homage to the martyrs of Chicago and salute to the workers, farmers and labourers of Pakistan.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that during the regime of Imran Khan, the oppression of workers, farmers and salaried class had never happened before in the history of the country. Imran Khan's policies favoring his ATMs and rich classes have set new records of inflation, unemployment and poverty in Pakistan, the consequences of which are now being felt by the entire nation, he expressed.

Today, PPP is struggling to save the poor people from the destruction unleashed by Imran Khan regime.

FPCCI vows to sign trade accords with Ethiopian counterpart

The signing of agreements would be instrumental in promoting institutional linkages between Ethiopia and Pakistan

Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry has vowed to sign accords with its counterpart from the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in May to boost the bilateral trade by strengthening trade and commerce ties between the two countries.

FPCCI Senior Vice President Muhammad Suleman Chawla expressed the commitment during a meeting with Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the FDRE to Islamic Republic of Pakistan H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula on Sunday.

The ambassador proposed signing of trade agreements between the FPCCI and Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (ECCSA) during upcoming "Ethiopia-Pakistan



Business Forum", scheduled in Karachi during second week of May.

He informed the FPCCI representatives about arrival of high-level official and business delegations from his country during next month.

Jemal Beker said signing of agreements would be instrumental in promot-

ing institutional linkages between Ethiopia and Pakistan that had huge potential for business, trade and investment in diverse sectors of their economies.

Ethiopia and Pakistan had minimal trade despite such a huge potential, he said while expressing the hope for a significant boost in the bilateral trade

in coming months especially in backdrop of a recent visit of a big business delegation from Pakistan.

He said Pakistani business community was keen to increase bilateral trade between the two countries since the ongoing development in Ethiopia's diverse economic sectors had really impressed them during their recent visit to the capital city Addis Ababa.

FPCCI Senior Vice President Muhammad Suleman Chawla assured the ambassador of their full support in organizing the business forum in Karachi. The FPCCI would full participate in the forum to make it a success, he said.

He also lauded the efforts of H.E. Jemal Beker for playing a key role in upcoming launch of the Ethiopian Airlines which was crucial to bolster people-to-people and business-to-business tie between the two countries.

Anti-polio drive will start from 15 May: DC Multan

Asim Tanveer



MULTAN: Deputy Commissioner Umar Jahangir has said that the national polio campaign organized by the district administration will start from May 15, during which more than 1 million young children will be administered polio drops from house to house.

He said that the polio campaign A special follow-up campaign will also be conducted on the last two days of polio campaign.

Chief Executive Officer Health Dr. Faisal Qaisrani gave a briefing on the polio campaign. Deputy Commissioner Umar Jahangir said that complete facilities and security will be provided to the polio teams, while strict action will be taken against the parents who refuse to administer the polio vaccine. Umar Jahangir said that 4,000 mobile teams have been deployed for spraying, while teams will also be deployed at public places, general bus stands and railway stations.

30 May deadline for completion of civil work of Nishtar Hospital 2: Amir Khattak



Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Commissioner Multan Division Engineer Aamir Khattak also visited Nishtar 2 on Sunday. He reviewed the ongoing work. He said that the Chief Minister of Punjab has given a deadline of 30 May to complete the civil work.

The early completion of Nishtar 2 will benefit the citizens of South Punjab. With the timely completion of the project, the fruits of the government policy will reach the people.

Commissioner Aamir Khattak also ordered the completion of Nishtar 2, detailed briefing about the progress and expediting the power connection process. Officers of the concerned departments were also present in the meeting.

"Green Waziristan" campaign inaugurated

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: Security Forces conducted the Shin Waziristan Campaign in different Educational institutes of tehsil Servekai and Tiarza area of District Upper South Waziristan.

Brigadier Mohammad Abbas inaugurated Sheen Waziristan (Green Waziristan) campaign by planting saplings.

During the campaign, youth committees were engaged students of various Schools and Madaris were motivated through lectures for maximum plantation in respective educational institutes.

The Concept of "ONE CHILD ONE PLANT" is adopted to cultivate a sense of township & responsibility and to foster greater care of plants. More than 5000 saplings were planted during the campaign season of 2023.

The locals of Sarvekai and Tiarza appreciated the initiative of Security Forces for starting the Shin Waziristan campaign (Green Waziristan) and regarded it as very useful for the environment of District upper South Waziristan. On the other hand people appreciated the positive actions of the security forces and announced to support them in all possible cooperation.

Pakistan Army has always played an important role in various fields other than peace and security, which is commendable, the tribal elders expressed their commitment that they will continue their joint efforts for Green Waziristan and all will actively participate in this campaign.



Demonstration

KARACHI: A large number of Jamaat-e-Islami workers participating in the protest rally against "Census 2023" at Shahrah-e-Faisal in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

Ombudsman Punjab arbitrates to initiate compensations of 300 Kanal lands to 506 affectees

LAHORE: Thanks to the diligent oversight and effective follow-up of the Office of the Ombudsman Punjab, led by Ombudsman Maj (R) Azam Suleman Khan, the payment of a cumulative remuneration of Rs.15,22,79,522 has been started to 506 owners as the price of their 300 kanal lands acquired by District Collector Sheikhpura for the construction of the Lahore-Karachi Motorway Interchange at Mauza Faizpur Khurd, Dhudian and Sagian Par Kalan.

The spokesman of the Office of the Ombudsman

Punjab said this in a statement issued on Sunday.

This momentous development marks the resolution of the prolonged predicament faced by these landowners, who have been awaiting compensation for their acquired portions of land since 2016, the spokesman maintained.

While giving details, the spokesman added that Mian Riazuddin and Mansoor Ali of Lahore stated in their applications, submitted to the ombudsman office, that payments for their acquired lands have not been made

by the government. According to their applications, they not only sought the rightful payments based on the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) rate but also demanded additional compensation for the utilization of their acquired lands since 2016.

During the proceedings, it came out that, in addition to the issue of double registration of Khasra numbers, there were some delays in the land acquisition process. Consequently, the ombudsman office has promptly informed the Board of Revenue (BOR) that, prima facie,

there was a lack of oversight in monitoring the performance of land acquisition collectors, after their attachments with provincial government departments. As a result, substantial funds deposited in the land acquisition collectors' accounts, by the government, remain unused, causing delays in compensating the affected individuals. Therefore, an institutionalised system should be devised by the BOR for monitoring the land acquisition collectors' performance, and ensuring timely payments to the owners of acquired lands, the spokesman added.

All set to mark Int'l Labour Day in KP

PESHAWAR: Like elsewhere in the country, the International Labour Day would also be observed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday with great enthusiasm.

The Day would dawn with special prayers in mosques for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

The political, religious parties, NGOs, labour and trade unions, civil society organizations and humans rights activists would take out rallies and walks to highlight the significance of the Day.

Seminars, workshops and symposiums would also be held. TV channels, radio stations would air special programs and newspapers to publish special features, columns and articles on International Labour Day.

The political leaders and the province's leadership would reaffirm their resolve to continue work for the labourers' development.

Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan said that the dream of development and prosperity cannot be realized without the protection and dignity of the working class.

In a message on the eve of Labour Day, he said the role of the working class is of vital importance in national development and prosperity. "We can achieve development goals only by ensuring the welfare of labourers and protection of their rights", he said.

The Chief Minister said that the International Labor Day highlighted the greatness of labourers and their significant role in development. The welfare and protection of workers is one of the main priorities of the caretaker government, he maintained.

He said that labourers deserved special attention not only from the government but also from all the powerful sections of the society. The stronger and more prosperous labourer class would result in a developed and prosperous nation, he added.

Balochistan govt believes to ensure legitimate rights of workers: CM Bizenjo

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo on Sunday said that the purpose of celebrating International Labour Day was to pay homage to the efforts and struggle of the Chicago martyrs of 1886.

In his message on the occasion of International Labour Day in May, he said that the aim of celebrating this day was to raise the voice of rights for the workers.

He said that the constructive role of their workers in the development of the countries which have made substantial progress in the field of industry could not be neglected.

Skilled human resources and strong manpower will also lead us on the path of development. Workers who are familiar with technical skills become an integral part of the construction and development of society, he maintained.

He has said that the present provincial government was not only trying to effectively pay the rights of the workers but will also bring those who exploit the workers to justice and shall make it possible to provide equal opportunities and needs to all workers. No discrimination shall be permitted on the basis of race and colour,

he noted.

He said that the government was also aware of the importance of technical education and polytechnic institutions across the province were being developed on modern lines.

Keeping in mind the requirements of the modern world, there is no need to improve the skills of the youth by introducing them to high technical skills because the demand for manpower equipped with technical skills is very high in the world, he added.

The chief minister said that the provincial government believed in such a

labour policy in which the legitimate rights of all workers could be ensured.

All the labour unions who believe in the rights and struggle of the workers, the provincial government has recently granted the status of workers to the fishermen of Gwadar which guarantees the provision of their rights, he underlined.

He said for the formation of an active, positive and constructive society, it was necessary that the same necessities of life are available for all human beings so that destructive thinking could not develop in the society. APP



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	3:50 am
Zohr	12:05 pm
Asr	4:52 pm
Maghrib	6:50 pm
Isha	8:21 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

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ICCI mulls to organize a mango festival in diplomatic area

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari says Fruits & Vegetable Market of Islamabad is located at an important place

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) along with a delegation visited Fruit & Vegetable Market and held a meeting with Chairman Sajid Abbasi, Vice Chairman Safdar Siddique, Member Tahir Ayub and other members of the ICT Market Committee to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the Fruits & Vegetable Market of Islamabad is located at an important place as it supplies fruits & vegetables to twin cities, KPK, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and many other areas, so by developing this market on modern lines, significant increase in exports of fruits & vegetables can be made.

Ahsan Zafar said that ICCI intends to organize a mango festival in the diplo-

matic area to showcase the export potential of Pakistan's mangoes and other agricultural products to the foreign diplomats with the aim to improve their exports.

He stressed that the Market Committee should cooperate with ICCI in this venture. He said that despite being an agricultural country, Pakistan has to import agricultural commodities worth over USD 5 billion per annum. However, by developing agriculture on modern lines, Pakistan can increase the exports of the agricultural sector by over USD 10 billion, which will improve the economy. He also invited the Chairman Market Committee to visit ICCI to discuss the important problems of traders related to his domain in order to address them.

Addressing the delegation, Sajid Abbasi, Chairman, ICT Market Committee said that he is a public representative and the Market Committee will be



used in the best interests of the people. He said that he will devise a strategy to

provide fruits and vegetables and other commodities to the citizens of Islamabad

at reasonable prices. He said that for the convenience of the citizens, he will try to arrange fruit, vegetable and meat shops in every market of the Capital on the pattern of flower shops in collaboration with ICCI. He said that he will solve the problems of the wholesale fruit market of Islamabad in consultation with ICCI.

Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that Sajid Abbasi is a public representative and hoped that he will deliver up to the expectations of the people. He said that the Market Committee should take ICCI in loop on important matters of traders.

Zafar Bakhtawari former President ICCI & Secretary General UBG, Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi, Raja Imtiaz Abbasi, Akhtar Hussain, Khalid Chaudhry, Jamshed Akhtar Sheikh, Muhammad Naveed Malik, Babar Chaudhry and others were in the ICCI delegation.

Ban on corporal punishment in all settings urged

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), in collaboration with Muslim Aid commemorated the International Day to End Corporal Punishment in presence of educationists, Ministry of Human Rights, law makers, NCHD and children of slums as well as formal school system.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child defines 'corporal' or 'physical' punishment as any punishment in which physical force is used to cause some degree of pain and discomfort however light. In geographic terms, only 65 countries have legally outlawed all forms of corporal punishment, including in homes.

The chief guest, Dr Muhammad Arif, Director, Ministry of Human Rights urged the collective role of civil society, academia, parents and government in curbing violence and shared initiative by MoHR including a help line 1099 and a database where authentic cases are filed. He also invited CSOs to provide feedback on ICT Child Protection Act.

Nazneen Tabassum of Muslim Aid shared that while U.N. in Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Child has declared it a violation of a child's rights, teachers continue to use these tactics to maintain discipline and get students to do work, even where it is banned. Pakistan is still struggling to stop the recurring cycle of violence; this is high time government takes initiative to end corporal punishment once and for all.

Khalida Ahmed, educational psychologist and member Board of Directors SPARC, shared findings of a KAP survey conducted by SPARC with children of selected school in Islamabad where majority children 93% during discussions said they felt embarrassed when parents screamed at them in home setting whereas more than half mentioned (65%) that they felt ashamed when parents made them stand outside in sun.

Labour Day

RAWALPINDI: A labor is pulling loaded hand cart at City Sadr Road to earn daily wages for the livelihood of his family, unaware from the International Labor Day, which is commemorating annually on 1st May, for the rights of Labor around the World.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

An afternoon to remember

Cecil Hotel by PC launches in Murree

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The grand launch of Cecil Hotel by Pearl-Continental took place in Murree, a beautiful hill station in the Punjab province of Pakistan. The event was attended by Mr. and Mrs. Murtaza Hashwani, CEO of PSL and Deputy Chairman, Hashoo Group, ambassadors, members of the diplomatic community and local dignitaries.

The highlight of the event was the presence of His Excellency, Mr. Andrew Dalgleish, Acting British High Commissioner, who praised the efforts of Hashoo in restoring this historic property to its former glory. Also present at the event was celebrated author, Mr. Omar Mukhtar Khan, who wrote the book "Once Upon a Time in Murree". Mr. Mukhtar spoke about the history and heritage of Murree, which has been beautifully captured in his book, and how the Cecil Hotel is a fitting tribute to this iconic hill station. Mr. Hasan Najib, Executive Director of Lakhani Group, lauded the commendable efforts of Hashoo Group in resurrecting Cecil Hotel's prominence in Murree. He expressed his optimism for future collaborations between the two entities.



The Cecil Hotel by Pearl-Continental is a 170-year-old luxurious property that offers guests a unique blend of modern amenities and traditional hospitality. The heritage wing consists of well-appointed rooms, restored to their original grandeur, two dining options that serves local and international cuisine, and a Victorian theme coffee shop that offers stunning views of the surrounding mountains.

The COO of Hashoo Group, Hospital-

ity and Education Division, Mr. Haseeb Gardezi, spoke about the group's commitment to preserving the heritage of Pakistan and promoting tourism in the country. "We are proud to launch the Cecil Hotel by Pearl-Continental in Murree, a town that has played such an important role in the history of Pakistan," said Mr. Gardezi. "Our aim is to provide guests with an authentic and unforgettable experience of this beautiful hill station."

The ceremony took place amidst the picturesque natural setting of the hotel's outdoors, boasting breathtaking views of the mountains and skies. The ambiance was further elevated by the enchanting live jazz music that resonated through the air. The guests were given a tour of the hotel and relished a delectable Hi-Tea comprising an exquisite assortment of European cuisine, accompanied by refreshing tea and coffee.

The launch of the Cecil Hotel by Pearl-Continental is a significant milestone for the hospitality industry in Pakistan and is expected to attract tourists from all over the world. The hotel is now open for bookings, and guests can enjoy a memorable stay in one of Pakistan's most beautiful destinations.

Imtiaz Wani urges countries in G-20 to boycott its event being held in IIOJK

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter Secretary Information Imtiaz Wani has urged the member countries of the G20 to boycott the proposed meeting of the forum in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir and play their role in resolving the Kashmir dispute.

Imtiaz Wani, in a statement issued in Islamabad said that the G20 member countries should realize that development and prosperity are not possible without resolving the lingering Kashmir dispute.

Describing lasting peace as the key to achieving economic stability and sustainable development, they said the dream of economic prosperity cannot be fulfilled in the absence of peace. They said peace in South Asia will be possible only if long-pending disputes like the Kashmir dispute are resolved in a fair and peaceful manner.

Imtiaz Wani said India has usurped the fundamental political and human rights of the Kashmiris and is holding the G20 meeting in an internationally recognized disputed territory to divert the world's attention from the Kashmir dispute and legitimize the illegal actions taken since 5 August 2019.

Wani said the Kashmiri people hope that the G20 member countries, which are champions of human rights and civil liberties, will boycott the proposed meeting in IIOJK, keeping in mind its disputed status and realizing India's nefarious intentions.

Imtiaz Wani said by holding a G20 meeting in Srinagar, the Modi government wants to give an impression to the international community that the situation in IIOJK is perfectly fine while the fact is that India has turned it into a killing ground where it is committing crimes against humanity.

Pakistan's 4th Miss Pakistan Crowning Ceremony held

Tahir Amin Malik

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Pageant Industry in Lahore, Pakistan is growing. Since 2020, the Miss Pakistan World pageant was brought in Lahore, Pakistan by Sonia Ahmed, President of Miss Pakistan and has continued to grow since then. In 2020, Areej Chaudhary hailing from Islamabad, was crowned Miss Pakistan World 2020 on the soil of Pakistan and since then has represented Pakistan in Miss Earth, Miss Global and Miss Eco International and is soon planning to go to Turkey to represent Pakistan in Miss Aura International.

In 2021, in another historic event, Sonia Ahmed, the President of Miss Pakistan Pageants, announced the crowning of the first trans girl on the soil of Pakistan as Miss Trans Pakistan 2021. Shyrra Roy, was crowned as Miss Trans Pakistan and the trans title was carried for 2 years and the next trans girl will be crowned in 2023.

In 2022, Lahore's city was buzzing with beauty queens as more titles were introduced by Sonia Ahmed, the founder of Pakistan's Pageant Industry. Miss Pakistan Universal, Miss Pakistan Global, Miss Pakistan Supreme and Miss Pakistan National were a few to name. Mrs. Pakistan and Mr. Pakistan titles were also awarded to the contestants in Lahore. Dr. Shafiq Akhtar the newly crowned Miss Pakistan Universal made waves in the pageant industry by participating in Miss Aura International, Miss Planet and Miss Elite. She brought back the first winning titles to Pakistan. She won Miss Rixos Sungate in Miss Aura and Miss Humanity in Miss Planet. Two winning titles were brought back to Pakistan.

In 2023, the preparations have been made for the fourth Miss, Mrs. And Ms. Pakistan ceremony organized by Sonia Ahmed. Lahore will be buzzing with more beauty queens and this time the girls are coming from Europe, and various cities of Pakistan. The crowning ceremony is on the 31st of May 2023 and hopefully a new group of winners will bring back more titles for Pakistan.

Sonia Ahmed, President and founder of pageants for Pakistan, said, "People always mistake pageantry to be a part of the modeling industry, and that is not true. We don't have designers working for us or clothes that we have to get models for! We are like the Olympics but in a subtle way where representation of one's country is a must. Miss Pakistan is an honor received, an accolade for any woman at any age, as well as it's a title that opens the doors for many women to travel and know other like-minded women from all around the world. Our mission is to talk about Pakistan and let people know of the existence of our Pakistani culture. It's a sisterhood that we enjoy and strive to achieve, and the best thing is that we are in Pakistan, the hub of the most beautiful women in the world, where women of all walks of lives can unite for one purpose and that is to keep the spirit of Pakistan alive through their valuable representation. I am honoured and pleased that the soil of Pakistan will see the 4th ceremony for the winners of Miss, Mrs. And Ms. Pakistan. Pakistan has now become accustomed to pageants due to the 20 years that I have given in keeping the pageant scene of Pakistan alive. These are the girls who are the future of pageantry for Pakistan. And I am honored to complete 21 years for Pakistan's pageantry."

The crowning ceremony will take place at the Grand Palm Hotel in Lahore on the 31st of May 2023. New queens and new faces will be introduced to represent Pakistan internationally.

Shaping Minds and Bodies

83% of Pakistanis do not have access to any library

And 60% of Pakistanis have no playground access: PIDE Latest Research

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: If people are rarely engaged socially, how are they keeping themselves mentally and physically alive? Are there enough libraries and playgrounds available to do so? Not that other ages do not need these, but with the number of youth present in the country, the importance of having facilities where the young can shape and nourish their minds and bodies become all the more important.

At PIDE, Dr. Durre Nayab, Pro Vice-chancellor of National Think Tank, in her latest research, showed a very low level of social and civic engagement among the people of Pakistan.

The libraries provide not just information but also contribute to building communities. Public libraries can be

a great equalizer by providing information and education to those who otherwise cannot afford it. The PIDE's research titled "Shaping Minds and Bodies: Do We Have the Facilities?" which is the fifth BASICS Now of the Series, shows that a vast majority of Pakistanis (83%) do not have access to any library, with only a tiny proportion (4.5%) being very happy with the one they can access. Access remains low for both sexes, but females have more inadequate access than their male counterparts for all age groups.

Dr. Nayab further elaborated in the report that it is worth mentioning here that this is reported access. A facility might exist but still remain inaccessible for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons can be the awareness about its presence, distance to the facility, open-

ing timings, and it being gender-inclusive/exclusive. Factors like these can explain the lower reported accessibility by females than males in the study.

While the research shows that education improves a person's reported accessibility to a library, it may be mentioned here that education can bring awareness and information, which a person without it can lack. The presence of a facility can remain unknown to a person who is not interested in it or lacks knowledge about its existence. Additionally, Accessibility to a library increases with increasing educational levels, while increasing income levels do not improve accessibility to a library by any significant margin.

How many Pakistanis have access to playgrounds? It may be clarified here that this question asks if the respond-

ent can access a playground, not if they actually do it. The research shows that 60% of Pakistanis have no playground access. While one-third urban population lacks access to a playground, the proportion is three-fourths for their rural counterparts. Along with low accessibility, satisfaction too is much lower in the rural areas, expressed in the unhappy/very unhappy responses.

Punjab fares the best among the four provinces, followed by Balochistan and Sindh. KP shows the highest proportion of those not having access to a playground (67.8%). GB continues to show better trends than other territories, having the lowest proportion of those not having access to a playground (46.3%). AJK lags behind other territories, with 62.3% needing more access to a playground.

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Labour Day and bitter realities

In developed and welfare countries, the poor and low-income people are not considered inferior to the rich in any way. The laws and their application are equal for all. Merit prevails and the rights of people, whether rich or poor are equal to the people. The collected tax money is spent on providing facilities to the public. Inflation and commodity prices are not increased unjustifiably and suddenly. The minimum wage rate is also increased according to the inflation rate. They have made such a system in which there is no significant difference in the lifestyle, food and other daily matters and facilities of the poor and the rich.

On the contrary, in our country, the poor are getting poorer day by day, while the rich are getting richer. The gap between the poor and the rich is increasing. The poor are grinding into the mill of poverty. All the resources are in the hands of the elite and the wealthy. The tax collected from the people, instead of providing facilities to the people, wasted in corruption and is used to facilitate the rich and elite. The violation of merit is on the rise and the poor struggle to get their rights. Inflation and the prices of commodities are often unjustifiably increased, which directly affects the poor. There is a severe lack of health, education, employment, water and other basic necessities of life for the poor. The situation of poor remains same in any government.

But how sad it is that the reality in our country is quite the opposite than that of in developed countries. In our society of capitalists, landlords, princes and estates,

the insult of hard work and labor is at its peak. When we come to the houses, we see that the employees and home maids are not allowed to sit and eat with the owner. He is not given the owner's food. The owner drinks mineral or filtered water, but the employee uses ordinary tap water. The employee also has separate utensils that cannot even touch the owner's utensils. The servant quarter is also built away from the house. Verbal abuse and beatings are also common with the employees. Separate articles and columns can be written on harassment and child labor.

This was the plight of the domestic workers, on the other hand, the situation of ordinary workers is not quite different as well. They sit on the side of the roads for days looking for work. Even if they get a chance to work. The young and healthy are taken away by sorting out while thin, weak old ones are rejected. Industrial workers also have a different story. In the real sense, there is no insurance, pension, education and medical treatment facilities for the poor and workers.

Now look at another miserable picture which is child labour. From homes to hotels, workshops, public transport, little children are seen working everywhere. Children are forced to work at their ages of playing and studying.

Readers, even hard-hearted parents can't send their lives to work happily. Behind every child labor there is a bitter

story and compulsion. Need is to understand these bitter realities of the society and solve them.

The main cause of child labor is social inequalities and poverty. Unfortunately in our country the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. The resources are only with the wealthy and the common man has only problems. The law is not the same for the rich and the poor. To tell the truth, sometimes it seems that the law and its implementation are only for the poor. If the poor do not pay the electricity bill for a month, the connection is cut off. While rich continues to benefit from all the facilities despite being insolvent of millions. Sales tax is imposed on food and drink and consumption items. As soon as you step out of your home, tax collection starts in one form or another, but you don't know where these billions of rupees go.

In developed and welfare states, the tax is levied on the people, but in our country, the situation is opposite where the tax obtained by squeezing the blood of the people goes into the pockets of the wealthy. To eliminate economic inequality, it is necessary to increase the tax on the rich. The collected money should be spent on the poor. Education, health and all basic facilities should be provided to them equally. Transparency in the tax system is also necessary. Children should be admitted to school by giving child allowance to the poor and unem-

ployed in the style of welfare states. These children should be provided with free books and uniforms. It is also important to look at each case separately and find a workable solution. NGOs are doing a great job in public awareness. Data can be obtained by taking help from local community and NGOs.

The labour class in our beloved country is considered to be the most helpless, powerless and miserable. Inflation has made the life of our laborers worst. We have no concept of a minimum wage that is compatible with the conditions and inflation. Exploitation of workers is on the rise. First of all, there is no work and even if it is found, the wages are very low. Complaints about not getting wages on time are also common. Immediate and equal justice is also not available. There is a lack of education, Health & safety and insurance facilities. There is no functional and adequate pension system for private worker. The journey of labor starts from childhood to the grave. Our system expects the same quality and quantity of work from a ten-year and an eighty-year old laborer.

Readers, it is very important to pay attention to this helpless class in order to achieve the goals of the country's development. Labourers and Workers are the backbone of the construction and development of any country. From the construction of roads and infrastructure to the running of the industrial wheel the role of a labor cannot be denied. Without paying attention to this important component of the society, the goal of development and prosperity is impossible to achieve.



Abdul Basit Alvi

CPEC: A decade long saga of undeterred cooperation

As China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project matures to decade-long affable cooperation between Pakistan and China, both nations are celebrating this initiative as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. It was almost ten years back when China signed a multibillion-dollar CPEC Framework Agreement with Pakistan under its remarkable Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that remained central to Pakistan's economic growth and greater regional connectivity.

The meeting reaffirmed the firm resolve of the present government for the successful implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Minister during his Beijing visit conveyed this resolve to Chinese authorities. "The year 2023 marks the Decade of CPEC and the strong partnership between the Planning Division and China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC)," he said recalling the CPEC Framework Agreement signed in Beijing on July 5, 2013, in the presence of the leadership of the two countries.

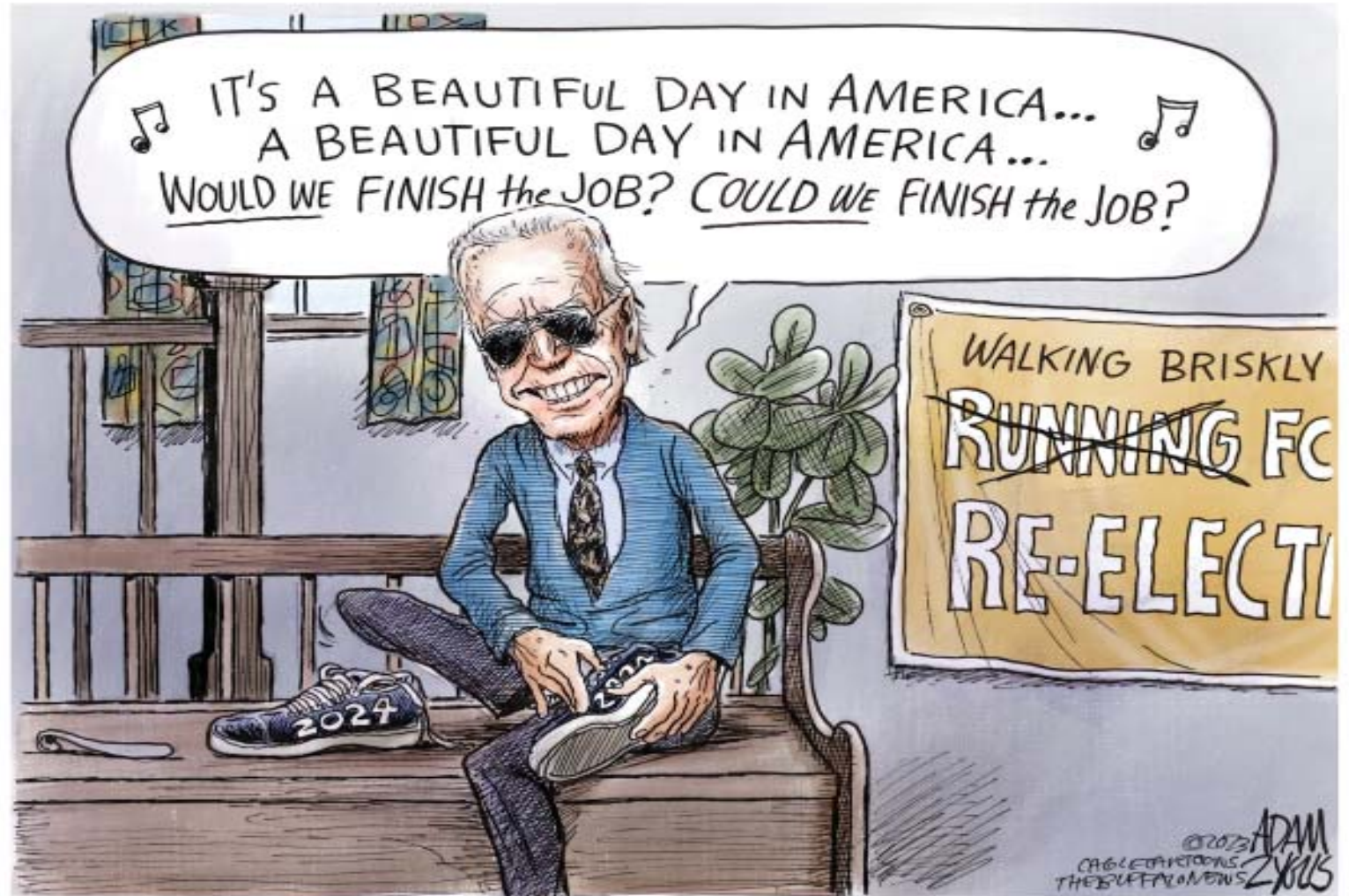
"The government of Pakistan is planning to hold special events to mark this milestone," he said and invited Chinese leadership to attend the events. During meeting with the Minister for the International Department of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC) Liu Jianchao, Ahsan Iqbal admired role of CPEC in the peaceful rise and economic development in China.

The IDCPC Minister, in response appreciated Planning Minister's role in furthering the CPEC projects during current and earlier tenures. Senior Chinese leadership including Assistant Foreign Minister Nong Rong, Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong and Vice Chairman of China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Li Chunlin spoke highly of Ahsan Iqbal terming him "Mr CPEC" and 'key role player' in making CPEC a success. After an unpleasant era of Pak-China bilateral ties during the PTI government, both China and Pakistan are once again on way to maintain momentum of overall economic cooperation.

The CPEC's next phase envisages industrial cooperation and Business to Business links. As 2023 is year of CPEC's decade, a delegation of Chinese scholars will be invited to Pakistan to observe progress on CPEC. Recently, almost 11 sessions of CPEC's top forum, Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) have been held including the April 10 most important and latest 'progress review' during Ahsan Iqbal's meeting with Vice Chairman NDRC, Li Chunlin.

The meeting resolved, "As year 2023 marks the Decade of CPEC and the strong partnership between Pakistan and China, both Pakistan and China are celebrating 10 Years of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and CPEC on July 5, 2023 whereby high-level Chinese delegations are scheduled to visit Pakistan to witness achievements made since the inception of CPEC." Both sides expressed a desire to sign minutes of the 11th Joint Cooperation Council (JCC) meeting before end of April 2023 to pave way for relevant Technical Joint Working Groups (JWGs) to hold meetings by mid-May 2023 and work out tangible outcomes for 12th JCC Meeting planned for July 2023.

Total planned investment under CPEC is US\$ 62 billion between FY2015 and FY2030 out of which projects worth \$27.4 billion have been realized mostly in energy sector like power generation, coal mining and transmission lines. During last 10 years, over 30 projects directly or indirectly generated 200,000 jobs, more than 6,000 MW of electricity added to national grid, 809 kilometers highway built and 886 kilometers of transmission lines installed for the first time in country's history.



Gulf nations can play a key role in restoring stability in Sudan

Hafed Al-Ghwel

The outbreak of hostilities and subsequent rapid developments in Sudan over the past two weeks appear to have blindsided external observers. Many, including impatient diplomats, had initially enthusiastically touted a declaration by Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan of the military to withdraw from politics altogether, hopefully in favor of a civilian-only interim authority.

Among most Sudanese, however, the writing had been on the wall since late last year that the marriage of convenience between the Sudanese Armed Forces, under Al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, led by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, was on its last legs.

Having seized power in 2021, two years after former President Omar Bashir was overthrown in a military coup, the two military leaders busied themselves with manipulating the political transition process to safeguard their own interests, which had nothing whatsoever to do with staying out of politics.

Prior to tensions building early this year that this month spilled over and led to sporadic clashes in Khartoum, the two military factions had shared power in a loose coalition that was responsible for the "soft" coup in late 2021, during which civilians were ejected from the temporary transitional government.

Despite the subsequent public protests against the military junta, it was clear to most Sudanese that there would be no miracle — in a country on the brink, suffering from soaring inflation, crumbling infrastructure and now a crippled democratic transition

— to resuscitate the hard-fought revolution that had ousted Bashir.

GCC countries also hold significant investments in Sudan, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure and energy. A stable Sudan would help protect those investments and ensure the continuing flow of economic benefits, while also underwriting the influence of the GCC on the other side of the Red Sea.

Additionally, Sudan's strategic location on the Red Sea coast and its proximity to the Arabian Peninsula mean it is a vital area of interest for Gulf states in terms of regional security, including efforts to counter militancy, extremism, and safeguarding the high volume of maritime traffic that traverses the waters between the Suez Canal and Bab El-Mandeb Strait.

Regional insecurity is a primary concern, given the reported presence in Sudan of destabilizing elements such as the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, which has entrenched itself in Libya and parts of the Sahel.

Gulf states have previously expressed concerns about the growing influence of Russia in the region and might perceive Wagner Group's support for the Rapid Support Forces as a progressive threat to the GCC's interests that could metastasize further into an already fragile Horn of Africa.

Of course, given the nature of contemporary geopolitics, most countries would rather avoid messy external interventions, especially when a potential hotspot attracts the attention of malign or mercenary actors.

However, the GCC can still rely on the convening power it possesses to at least initiate a deescalation process. Although this convening power is not on par with that of the UN Security Council's five permanent

members (the US, Russia, the UK, France and China), the GCC has nonetheless demonstrated its ability to influence affairs in its near-neighborhood, and farther afield, through, for instance, diplomatic pressure, economic assistance, and outright military intervention. The effective utilization of this convening power will largely depend on the unity and shared interests of GCC member states. They possess significant leverage individually, particularly in the cases of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, due to their economic and military resources.

Besides, if collective action fails and unilateral interventions are inadvisable, the GCC could also cooperate with the UN, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (an eight-country African trade bloc), and the wider international community in an effort to prevent hostilities escalating in Sudan.

The GCC, and others, can more effectively push for and support a ceasefire agreement between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, to buy time for an intensive mediation process that includes security sector reforms in Sudan based on a more manageable timetable than previously proposed.

This will also create an opportunity for the international community to support Sudan's recovery by targeting the country's underlying fragilities. This might involve states and organizations leveraging their diplomatic and economic influence to put pressure on the rival factions to halt hostilities and engage in constructive dialogue.

The GCC could also help facilitate the involvement of regional and international powers in these talks, ensuring a more inclusive and comprehensive process. This collaborative approach could include joint

efforts to promote dialogue between the warring factions, the provision of humanitarian assistance, and support for peace-keeping operations.

Such cooperation would not only enhance the credibility of the GCC and its efforts, but also ensure a more coordinated and effective response to the crisis.

In addition, if after concerted cross-regional and international efforts to establish a ceasefire an all-out war becomes inevitable, Gulf states could still intervene, indirectly, by lending generous support to Egypt. Given Egypt's strong ties with Sudan and its interest in maintaining stability along its southern border, the GCC could provide Cairo with financial, diplomatic and military assistance, enabling it to play a more assertive role in resolving the crisis.

In conclusion, Gulf states have a vested interest in the efforts to prevent a civil war in Sudan and can play a crucial role in helping to achieve this objective. While direct intervention might be risky, the GCC has several options at its disposal, including indirect intervention through Egypt and cooperation with international organizations.

By promoting the merits of a ceasefire and dialogue between the rival Sudanese factions, the GCC can help create the conditions required for a peaceful resolution to the crisis, and contribute to the long-term stability and development of Sudan. (Courtesy: Arab News)

Hafed Al-Ghwel is a senior fellow and executive director of the Ibn Khaldun Strategic Initiative at the Foreign Policy Institute of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, and the former adviser to the dean of the board of executive directors of the World Bank Group.

Two neglected major issues

Munir M Hasan

After listening to a number of commentators and the legal experts in TV programs, I am surprised to note that all of them are neglecting two major Constitutional matters which are quite obvious.

These are: (1) Holding of general elections, whether national or provincial, are matters which are elaborated in the Constitution of Pakistan quite clearly. So, holding elections is a Constitutional matter which has to be performed with primary importance and without hindrance of any person or authority. The simultaneous holding of national and provincial elections is not a Constitutional requirement as this matter is NOT provided in the Constitution.

However, it is seen that the present government, their law experts and many others, are giving more importance to holding of all elections simultaneously as if no provincial elections can be held if the national elections are not held simultaneously. Giving more importance to a non-Constitutional matter and neglecting a Constitutional matter is like distorting the Constitution. However, nobody seems serious over

this matter.

(2) As stated above, holding of provincial elections is a Constitutional requirement. So, providing money for the provincial elections is a Constitutional requirement, and nobody, or even no authority can stop this amount. This amount has to be provided without any hindrance and without any approval of any authority because it is not a routine government expenditure. Not providing this amount is a violation of the constitution. The person(s) and the authority refusing to provide money are guilty of violating the Constitution.

However, this matter is being taken lightly, and the persons violating this Constitutional provision are not being punished. Looking this matter in a broader way, if this principle is once accepted that any person, authority, or even the Parliament, can stop the money required for holding elections, a Constitutional requirement, it will amount to saying that holding of general elections is not a Constitutional matter, but a matter under the control of the Parliament, and Parliament can postpone any future general elections indefinitely by refusing to provide the money. Will the Supreme Court Pakistan take action on these points, or will it accept and legalize the violation of the Constitution?

Sudan sides trade blame as fighting undermines ceasefire

The RSF said a formal ceasefire agreement which was due to expire at midnight would be extended for a further 72 hours

KHARTOUM: Sudan's rival military forces accused each other of fresh violations of a ceasefire on Sunday as their deadly conflict rumbled on for a third week despite warnings of a slide towards catastrophic civil war.

Hundreds of people have been killed and thousands wounded since a long-simmering power struggle between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) erupted into conflict on April 15.

The RSF said a formal ceasefire agreement which was due to expire at midnight would be extended for a further 72 hours "in response to international, regional and local calls". There was no immediate comment from the army.

The parties have fought on despite a series of ceasefires secured by mediators including the United States.

The situation in Khartoum, where the army has been battling RSF forces entrenched in residential areas, was relatively calm on Sunday morning, a Reuters journalist said, after heavy clashes were heard on Saturday evening near the city centre.

The army said on Sunday it had destroyed RSF convoys moving towards Khartoum from the west. The RSF said the army had used artillery and warplanes to attack its positions in a number of areas in Khartoum province.

Reuters could not independently verify the reports.

In an apparent bid to boost its forces, the army said on Saturday that the Central Reserve Police had begun to deploy in southern Khartoum and would be deployed gradually in other areas of the capital.

Sudan's police said that the force had been deployed to protect markets and



property that had been subjected to looting. The RSF on Saturday warned it against becoming involved in fighting.

The force is a large and heavily-armed division of Sudan's police force that has fighting experience from conflicts in the western region of Darfur and in the Nuba Mountains in southern Sudan.

In March 2022, the United States imposed sanctions on the force, accusing it of using excessive force against protesters who were demonstrating against a 2021 military coup.

The fighting in Khartoum has so far seen RSF forces fan out across the city as the army tries to target them largely by using air strikes from drones and fighter jets.

The conflict has sent tens of thousands of people fleeing across Sudan's borders and prompted warnings the country could disintegrate, destabilising a volatile region and prompting foreign

governments to scramble to evacuate their nationals.

The United States has sent a navy ship to take its citizens, two U.S. officials said, as Britain announced it had arranged an extra evacuation flight from Port Sudan on the eastern Red Sea coast.

The prospects for negotiations have appeared bleak.

"There are no direct negotiations, there are preparations for talks," U.N. special representative in Sudan, Volker Perthes, told journalists in Port Sudan, adding that regional and international countries were working with the two sides.

Perthes, who told Reuters on Saturday the sides were more open to negotiations than before, said he hoped a direct meeting between representatives of the sides would be held as soon as possible aimed at "achieving an organised ceasefire with a monitoring mechanism".

Army leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has said he would never sit down with General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti. The RSF chief in turn said he would talk only after the army ceased hostilities.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, whose government has played a part in mediating ceasefires, met Burhan envoy Daffalla Al-Haj Ali in Riyadh, the Saudi foreign ministry said. "The foreign minister affirmed the Kingdom's call for calm, prioritising national interest and stopping all forms of military escalation," the ministry said.

With the United Nations reporting only 16% of health facilities in Khartoum operating as normal, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delivered 8 tonnes of medical aid.

"Health-care workers in Sudan have been doing the impossible, caring for the wounded without water, electricity, and basic medical supplies," said Patrick Youssef, the ICRC's regional director for Africa.

But while approval had been given for the supplies to go to Khartoum, negotiations were ongoing with the sides to facilitate delivery within the city, where hospitals, convoys and ambulances have been attacked, he said.

At least five aid workers have been killed in the fighting.

A third of Sudan's 46 million people needed humanitarian aid before fighting began.

The fighting has derailed an internationally-backed political transition aimed at establishing democratic government in Sudan, where former autocratic President Omar Hassan al-Bashir was toppled in 2019 after three decades in power.

Philippines' president to forge stronger relations with US during visit



MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Sunday that his upcoming meeting with US President Joe Biden was essential to advance his country's national interest and strengthen the "very important alliance" between Manila and Washington.

Marcos departed Manila on Sunday for the first state visit of a Philippine leader to Washington in almost a decade, following a series of high-level engagements in the past year, including his meeting with Biden on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in September and the visit of US Vice President Kamala Harris to the Philippines in November.

Marcos said: "My visit to the United States and more especially my meeting with President Joe Biden is essential to advancing our national interests and strengthening that very important alliance."

His trip comes at a time of growing geopolitical tension over self-ruled Taiwan and concerns over China's conduct in the disputed South China Sea. It also takes place amid stronger Philippine-US defense ties marked by their largest-ever joint military drills in April and a recent expansion of US access to Philippine bases.

Marcos highlighted his determination to strengthen Philippine-US ties "in a wide range of areas that not only address concerns of our times, but also those that are critical to advancing our core interests," citing areas such as food security, climate change, cybersecurity, and economic resilience.

The Philippines would reaffirm its "commitment to fostering our long-standing alliances as an instrument of peace and as a catalyst of development in the Asia Pacific region," Marcos added, while also pushing "for greater economic engagement" with the US.

Although the Filipino leader has been seeking good relations with both China and the US, the Philippines' ties with the latter are only returning after years under former President Rodrigo Duterte, who distanced Manila from Washington in favor of Beijing.

"He's taking time out and I think ... the optics of that are just massive, especially considering the last administration," Stephen Cutler, former FBI legal attaché to Manila, told Arab News. "So, I think this is going to be good."

Marcos' trip also gives room to discuss other issues in Philippine-US relations besides their defense ties, Cutler said.

"The relationship with the United States and the issues that the Philippines faces go far beyond only or mere military security."

"One of the things that the president's visit will allow him to do is to establish some really good, I hope, relationships with the US businesses that have the ability to add jobs in that field here in the Philippines," he added.

Job creation, according to national surveys, is among the top concerns among Filipinos. Marcelino Libanan, minority leader at the Philippine House of Representatives, said: "We are all counting on the president's trip to pave the way for additional American direct investment inflows that we need to support our economic recovery and generate new employment." Arab News

Gas leak kills 11 in India

AMRITSAR: A gas leak killed 11 people in India, an official said Sunday, in the latest deadly industrial accident in the vast developing economy of 1.4 billion people.

The gas leak happened in Giaspura, an industrial area of Ludhiana in the northern state of Punjab.

The official, who asked not to be named, said they had yet to ascertain what kind of gas leaked or the source of the leak.

"Eleven dead and four in hospital. Rescue operation is on," the official told AFP after the incident.

Industrial gas leaks blamed on poor safety standards and insufficient checks are common in India.

Last August, at least 112 women were hospitalized after a gas leak at an apparel manufacturing plant in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

That followed a similar accident in June when around 200 women fell unconscious after a gas leak in the same area, broadcaster NDTV reported.

In 2020, at least 15 people were killed and hundreds hospitalized after a gas leak at a chemical plant in Visakhapatnam, an industrial port city in the same state.

Nearly 1,000 people were exposed to the gas and over 500 were hospitalized with symptoms of severe respiratory distress and skin and eye irritation.

Residents were found slumped in the streets after being exposed to the gas, forcing a large-scale evacuation around the plant.

That pre-dawn accident took place at a chemical plant owned by LG Polymers, a subsidiary of South Korea's LG Chem.

Two senior South Korean executives and 10 other local employees of LG Polymers were later arrested and charged with offenses, including the Indian legal equivalent of manslaughter.

A 4,000-page government report accused the firm of negligence and said the disaster was due to a lack of safety protocols and poor emergency response.

The styrene gas leaked from tanks at the polystyrene manufacturing unit that had been lying idle for weeks due to the nationwide coronavirus lockdown.

That incident sparked memories of when India witnessed one of its worst industrial disasters in 1984.

Gas leaked from a pesticide plant in Bhopal, a city in central India. At least 3,500 people living around the plant operated by Union Carbide died in the days that followed the leak. People continue to suffer the effects to this day.

Children are still born disfigured, with webbed feet and hands, and experience stunted growth because of the gas that affected their mothers. AFP

Australian faces over 1 year in jail for spitting at Indonesian imam

LONDON: An Australian man captured on CCTV allegedly spitting in the face of an imam in Indonesia could spend more than one year in jail.

Footage purportedly of Brenton Craig Abbas Abdullah McArthur has gone viral on social media in the country. It shows him walking up to Basri Anwar, an imam at a mosque in Bandung, and engaging him in conversation before appearing to spit at him.

Anwar is then seen to run away while McArthur, wearing a baseball cap, leaves the mosque.

Police said McArthur, originally from Perth, Western Australia, and whose visa had expired, was tracked to Soekarno-Hatta Airport, where he was arrested attempting to board a flight home.

Budi Sartono, chief of Bandung's local police, said: "We immediately asked immigration to stop him and cancel him from leaving the country. We immediately picked him up at the airport and took him to Bandung police station for interrogation." Arab News

Int'l Workers' Day

Guo Songnan feeds cattles at a barn in Ningjiang District of Songyuan, northeast China's Jilin Province. International Workers' Day is observed annually on May 1 in China. The sight of every worker's back prompts images related to effort, progress, practicality, as well as faith in the future. Every worker, no matter how ordinary, deserves a big applause for their every bit of hard work in making themselves a better person and the world a better place.



Photo: Xinhua

Pope, meeting refugees, says better future possible



BUDAPEST: Pope Francis on Saturday met Ukrainians who fled the war on Hungary's eastern border, telling the refugees that a different future is possible.

Francis met with about 600 refugees, poor and homeless people in a visit to St. Elizabeth's church in Budapest on the second day of his visit, which began on Friday when he pointedly warned of the dangers of rising nationalism in Europe.

Pope Francis thanked Hungarians for welcoming Ukrainian refugees and urged them to help anyone in need, as he begged for a culture of charity.

Francis was serenaded by a singing band of Hungarian Roma wearing flower-patterned clothing and seemed to enjoy the music as they hovered around him as he sat in his wheelchair.

But what Francis heard earlier was much more sober. Oleg Yakovlev told of he and his wife Lyudmila and their five children had to leave Dnipro a year ago after Russian bombings.

"We were welcomed here and we have found a new home (but) many have suffered and suffer still because of the war," Yakovlev told the pope.

Sitting in the first row of the church with his family, the youngest of the Yakovlev children, a boy of about four, was amused by the attention he was getting, making faces at reporters as his father spoke of missiles, crumbled buildings and a 1,500 km trip to safety.

Since Feb. 24, 2022, millions of refugees have fled through Central Europe, including Hungary, and moved to other countries. About 35,000 have applied for temporary protection status in Hungary.

Francis said expressing compassion for those suffering from poverty and tragedy is an integral part of being a Christian, even if those in need are non-believers.

"Even amid pain and suffering, once we have received the balm of love, we find the courage needed to keep moving forward: We find the strength to believe that all is not lost, and that a different future is possible," he said.

Later the pontiff met with Metropolitan (bishop) Hilarion, representative of the Russian Orthodox Church in Budapest.

Hilarion was effectively ousted from the number two post at the ROC headquarters in Moscow last year, a decision seen as indicating discord at the top of the Russian

Ukrainian drones strike Crimea oil depot: Russian official

KYIV: A massive fire erupted at an oil depot in Crimea after it was hit by two of Ukraine's drones, a Russia-appointed official there reported Saturday, the latest in a series of attacks on the annexed peninsula as Russia braces for an expected Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Moscow-installed governor of Sevastopol, a port city in Crimea, posted videos and photos of the blaze on his Telegram channel.

Razvozhayev said the fire at the city's harbor was assigned the highest ranking in terms of how complicated it will be to extinguish. However, he reported that the open blaze had been contained.

Razvozhayev said the oil depot was attacked by "two enemy drones," and four oil tanks burned down. A third drone was shot down from the sky over Crimea, and one more was deactivated through radio-electronic means, according to Crimea's Moscow-appointed Gov. Sergei Aksyonov.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, a move that most of the world considered illegal. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in an interview this week that his country will seek to reclaim the peninsula in the upcoming counteroffensive.

Sevastopol governor says the fire at the city's harbor was assigned the highest ranking in terms of how complicated it will be to extinguish. However, he reported that the open blaze had been contained.



The incident comes a day after Russia fired more than 20 cruise missiles and two drones at Ukraine, killing at least 23 people. Almost all of the victims died when two missiles slammed into an apartment building in the city of Uman, located in central Ukraine.

Five children were among the dead, Ukrainian Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said Saturday, adding 22 out of 23 bodies have been identified. One woman remained missing, Klymenko said.

Russian forces launched more drones at Ukraine overnight. Ukraine's Air Force Command said two Iranian-made self-exploding Shahed drones were intercepted, and a reconnaissance drone was shot down on Saturday morning.

Razvozhayev said the oil depot fire did not cause any casualties and would not hinder fuel supplies in Sevastopol. The city has been subject to regular attack attempts with drones, especially in recent weeks.

Earlier this week, Razvozhayev reported that the Russian military destroyed a Ukrainian sea drone that attempted

to attack the harbor and another one blew up, shattering windows in several apartment buildings, but not inflicting any other damage.

Ukraine's military intelligence spokesperson, Andriy Yusov, told the RBC Ukraine news site on Saturday that the oil depot fire was "God's punishment" for "the murdered civilians in Uman, including five children."

He said that more than 10 tanks containing oil products for Russia's Black Sea Fleet were destroyed in Sevastopol, but stopped short of acknowledging Ukraine's responsibility for a drone attack. The difference between the number of tanks Yusov and Razvozhayev gave could not be immediately reconciled.

After previous attacks on Crimea, Kyiv also wouldn't openly claim responsibility, emphasizing, however, that the country had the right to strike any target in response to Russian aggression.

Elsewhere, Ukrainian forces shelled the city of Nova Kakhovka, according to Moscow-installed authorities in the Russian-occupied part of southern Ukraine's Kherson province. "Severe artillery fire" cut off power in the city, the officials said.

The Ukrainian-controlled part of the province also came under fire on Saturday. Russian shelling in the area of the village of Bilozerka killed one person and wounded another, according to the Kherson prosecutor's office. AFP

BankIslami Announced 262% Growth in Profit Before Tax in 1st Quarter of 2023

KARACHI, APRIL 30, 2023: BankIslami Pakistan Limited (‘the Bank’ or ‘Bank-Islami’) announced its financial results for the quarter ended March 31, 2023 registering a notable increase of 262% in profit before tax i.e. Rs. 3.16 billion as compared to Rs. 0.87 billion for corresponding period of last year.

Profit after tax closed at Rs. 1.79 billion as compared to Rs. 0.52 billion during same period last year i.e. growth of 244%. From beginning of the year 2023, BankIslami focused on deployment of its surplus liquidity in profitable Shariah compliant avenues due to which its financing book increased by 19.6% in first three months of 2023, improving the Advance to Deposit ratio (gross) from 53% in Dec 2022 to 63% at the end of Mar 2023.

Likewise, investment portfolio also grew by 11.9% during first quarter of 2023. Owing to growth in credit book and persistent recovery efforts against delinquent exposures, infection ratio reduced from 9.0% to 8.0% during first quarter of 2023. With the increase in general provision, the overall coverage ratio has been maintained at a desirable level of 95.6%. With the improvement in earnings of the Bank, the cost to income ratio has improved from 49.8% for the year 2022 to 47.9% for the quarter ended Mar 2023.

The deposit book of the Bank observed contraction by 1.2%, however, the Bank is poised to grow its deposit book during remaining part of the year on the back of improved CASA mix. With rise in profitability and improved credit risk profile of the Bank, Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of the Bank recorded at 17.9%, well above the regulatory threshold of 11.50%.

In order to reinforce its capital base and fortify its asset base, the Bank is in process of listing of its Additional Tier-1 Sukuk (Ehad Sukuk 2) to the tune of Rs. 1 billion, out of which Rs. 850 million worth of Pre-IPO phase has already been completed. Going forward, in order to continue its growth trajectory, the Bank will focus on increasing its branch network, grow its deposit book and improving the overall customer experience through leveraging technology and expanding its digital footprint.

Bank Alfalah continues its growth momentum

Our Correspondent

LAHORE: The Board of Directors of Bank Alfalah Limited (BAFL), in its meeting held on April 27, 2023, approved the Bank's financial results for the quarter ended March 31, 2023.

The beginning of 2023 has been challenging due to the economic slowdown in the country, high inflation, and currency devaluation. Despite the challenging landscape, the Bank posted a profit after tax of Rs. 10,743 billion for the period ended March 31, 2023. The Earning Per Share (EPS) stood at Rs. 6.81. The results reflect strong momentum in line with the Bank's strategy. The Bank's market share increased for several of its products while it continues to invest in people, technology and physical infrastructure.

Bank Alfalah's deposit base increased by 31.9% year-on-year (YoY), closing at Rs. 1,554 trillion as at March 31, 2023. CA and CASA ratios stood at 43.7% and 68.0%, respectively.

The Bank's loan book closed at Rs. 731.863 billion. The Bank has sufficient coverage of over 103% of its non-performing loans. In view of the normalising flood situation in the country, the provision held against the flood-impacted portfolio was reversed.

The disciplined execution of the strategy has enabled the Bank to support its customers through a highly challenging time, proving resilience with strong credit discipline and sound capital management. The bank remains focused on its business and core strengths. Staying optimistic about a return to economic stability in the medium term, the bank anticipates delivering sustainable growth in the years ahead while managing costs prudently.

Economic decline, skilled workers leaving country: Atif Ikram

Former Vice President of FPCCI says Businesses facing shortage of skilled workers, professionals

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Former Vice President of FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh on Sunday said skilled workers and professionals are leaving the country in record numbers for better opportunities which is a great threat to the economy.

Industry and other sectors are finding it difficult to find skilled workers and professionals adding to the economic downturn, he said.

Atif Ikram Sheikh who has also served as President ICCI and Chairman PVMA said in a statement issued here today that the country is going through uncertainty, people are worried about the economic situation, the political environment is tense and due to lack of purposeful politics, the situation is getting worse with time.

The country is facing several economic and political crises and the whole situation has further weakened the already weak economy, and has made it difficult for people to feed themselves and their children, forcing them to seek a better life elsewhere, he added.

The business leader said that almost a million Pakistanis left the country in just one year for better opportunities and a better life.

The number of Pakistanis going abroad increased by 300 percent in one year which



is a perfect recipe for disaster, he said, adding that on average few hundred thousand Pakistanis use to go abroad but now this number has increased to one million, he added.

Atif Ikram Sheikh said that the desire to leave the country is highest among the youth aged 15 to 24 years and those leaving the country are professionals, including doctors, engineers, IT specialists, accountants, associate engineers, teachers and nurses, who are in search of better

jobs and a better standard of living.

This is a trend that is becoming common and it is causing a lot of problems for the country. This situation is having a further negative and detrimental impact on Pakistan's economy, with such large numbers of people leaving the country and shrinking the labour force, resulting in a decline in the country's productivity, the business leader observed.

Lack of skilled professionals is making it difficult for the economy to grow. Loss of human capital is leading to brain drain, as our country is losing its best and brightest to other countries. According to a Gallup Pakistan survey, the rate of dissatisfied Pakistanis with the country's economic situation reached 73 percent.

According to a report issued by the Ministry of Finance on debt and inflation, the volume of debt has increased due to the increase in interest rates, and the increase in the exchange rate of the dollar has also increased inflation and debt.

Our debt is expected to be more than 70 percent of the economy by the year 2026, and the inflation rate may be 6.5 percent in the year 2026. The Economist Intelligence Unit has also expressed the fear that the unemployment rate will increase further in Pakistan next year. This year unemployment has increased to 9.6

percent and will increase to 9.9 percent next year. According to the report, interest rates are also likely to rise by another 2 percent to 23 percent and the rupee will remain weak till 2027.

The report states that Pakistan has to repay 77.5 billion dollars of foreign debt in 4 years, to avoid default, a new IMF program will have to be taken. Apart from this, political instability, security, and economic weaknesses have been described as major problems in the report.

The reasons for many Pakistanis leaving the country in this political and economic situation can be varied, but the most common reason is the lack of job opportunities in the country.

With the rising rate of unemployment, it is becoming difficult for people to find jobs that provide them with a decent living. On the other hand, the wages offered in most jobs are too low to maintain a decent standard of living.

Another factor that is contributing to the exodus of Pakistanis is the deteriorating security situation in the country. Street crimes and robberies are on the rise in Rawalpindi, Lahore Karachi and other major cities while the threat of terrorism and violence has left many people insecure which should be noticed, he demanded.

Record inflation, high cost of doing business hurting economic growth: APBF

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has warned the record inflation and high cost of doing business has been continuing to hurt economic growth, demanding of the authorities concerned to take serious measures to keep it in control.

APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the most serious threat to the economy in the current fiscal year is hyperinflation, as the government plan of approaching the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for financial assistance has brought a fresh wave of price-hike, because inflation is already hitting due to continuous rise in oil prices and depreciation of local currency.

He said that high inflation is just one of the issues currently putting Pakistan's economy in distress as it also faces a balance of payments crisis. Pakistan is reeling from one of its worst economic crises in history. The



country has been faced with a barrage of woes with a perceived default risk and a downgrade by international rating agencies reflecting the state of the economy that has also had to bear major political turmoil and frequent change in key leadership.

APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi predicted that inflation would remain high and may even increase further due to market frictions caused by relative demand and supply gap of essential items, exchange rate depreciation and recent upward adjustment of administered prices of petrol and diesel.

Ibrahim Qureshi said that due to the lagged effect of floods, production losses, especially of major agriculture crops, has not yet been fully recovered. Consequently, the shortage of essential items has emerged and persisted. Inflation may further jack up as a result of second round effect. He said the IMF loan would have devastating effects on the economy, as with more taxes and increased rates of utilities, cost of production would further increase. This will render Pakistani exports uncompetitive in the global market.

The APBF President said that there is a consensus that a low inflation rate helps economic activities, while high inflation hurts economic growth. The high inflation environment affects decision making of all economic agents in economy, like investors, savers, consumers and producers through uncertainty about the expected payoffs from their decisions. Moreover, a persistently high inflation also

causes erosion of the value of the local currency in terms of foreign currencies. Such uncertainties, in turn, have adverse implications for economic activities.

Maaz Mahmood said low inflation helps economic agents to predict outcome of their economic decisions with fair level of certainty. Especially, producers follow their plans for business expansion with more confidence; and new investment is undertaken in the expectation of predictable returns. As per PBS data, the food group, which commands a significant weight of 34.58 percent in the inflation reading, remained the major driver behind the increase. It increased from 170.06 in March 2022 to 250.25 in March 2023, a jump of over 47 percent while the transport group witnessed an increase of 55 percent YoY. He warned that inflation is expected to stay in this range at least for the next two months. He said that the transportation index was driven by a significant hike in

IMF's delay part of plan, actual target is CPEC

Pakistan better get away from the IMF, says Brig. (retd) Aslam Khan

Staff Reporter



ISLAMABAD: Brig. (retd) Aslam Khan, Chairman of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Sunday said the conditions of the IMF are not coming to an end which is a conspiracy.

He said that the real target of the international institution is CPEC therefore, it wants to delay the loan to weaken Pakistan so that it is made to obey orders that are against its national interests.

The lender will not give a loan to Pakistan until we step back from CPEC. "That is why, despite fulfilling dozens of conditions, the IMF continues to make lame excuses," he added.

Aslam Khan said that the lame justifications of the IMF have made its intentions clear to all, so Pakistan should part ways with it as soon as possible.

He said that Pakistan will have to learn to live without the IMF, for which elitism will have to be abandoned.

Due to the delay in the agreement between Pakistan and the IMF, the country's economy has been greatly affected, and the public has also had to pay a heavy price for it.

According to many economists, due to the current economic conditions in Pakistan, the country has no option other than the IMF, as other international financial institutions and many countries have linked the loan to Pakistan with the revival of the IMF programme.

ZONERGY Corporation displayed its smart products

At South Africa's Largest Solar Energy Exhibition

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: With its Global vision, Zonergy Corporation presented its Smart Energy Storage Products for the South African market by participating in Largest Solar Energy Exhibition in Johannesburg. The two-day South African Solar Energy Exhibition 2023 was grandly opened at the Sandton Convention Center in Johannesburg, South Africa. The exhibition is the largest solar energy exhibition in Africa. ZONERGY made a wonderful appearance, exhibiting a variety of solar storage products with core competitiveness, which attracted the attention of many exhibitors.

The shortage of electricity supply in South Africa continues. Since 2018, large-scale



power outages and power cuts have occurred successively. In 2022, the number of days of power cuts will even exceed 200 days. In recent years, South Africa has actively promoted low-carbon energy transformation and proposed emission reduction commitments to achieve carbon peaking in 2025 and carbon neutrality in 2050.

In response to the needs of

the local market, the company focused on exhibiting household storage-related products. The Panda series of household energy storage products can well meet the needs of local families. The Panda series adopts a 5kWh modular design and can be flexibly expanded from 5-30kWh; it has stronger stability, and the faulty battery module is automatically isolated to ensure

stable operation of the system. ; Built-in smart grid management system to meet the power grid dispatching function. Portable power supply with a complete range of models, including large, medium and small models, multiple functions, complete certification, standard lithium iron phosphate battery, safe and reliable; stylish and beautiful appearance, suitable for outdoor use by local residents and emergency use during power outages.

A number of potential customers expressed interest in ZONERGY products and signed an agency agreement with the company; portable power supplies and Panda series household energy storage products have attracted much attention, and the company sold the exhibits on site.

Mortein donates a year's worth of mosquito repellent products to Ziauddin Hospital

Staff Reporter



ISLAMABAD: In the wake of the devastating Dengue outbreak that hit Pakistan in 2022, Mortein, a leading pest control brand of Reckitt, has been taking several measures to help in preventing dengue and other vector-borne diseases by partnering up with various hospitals, NGOs, and federal agencies around the country over the past few years to reduce the spread and effect of dengue outbreaks.

Mortein has announced the donation of one year's worth of their mosquito repellent products to Ziauddin Hospital to protect against dengue and other vector-borne diseases. The donation includes LED Complete with Refills, and Aerosol Sprays for each functional room at the

hospital. This initiative brings us one step closer to achieving a dengue-free Pakistan.

As part of the initiative, an interactive storytelling session was held in the children's ward to spread awareness about dengue protection and prevention. Additionally, product samples and informational booklets were provided to the public at an experience booth/kiosk set up on the hospital premises, to raise public awareness on the detrimental effects of Dengue and how to combat them effectively.

ATM 2023 opens at Dubai World Trade Centre today

Milestone edition will take place at Dubai World Trade Centre from 1-4 May 2023

Spokesman Report

DUBAI: Government officials and industry leaders from the Middle East and beyond will gather at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from tomorrow for the 30th edition of Arabian Travel Market (ATM). The milestone event, which will run from Monday, 1 to Thursday, 4 May, will see global travel, tourism, and hospitality experts come together to explore how their industry is 'Working Towards Net Zero'.

For ATM 2023's opening session, a selection of regional policymakers will take to the ATM Global Stage at 11.30am to explore the sector's role in address-

ing climate change. 'Ministerial Debate: How Should Travel Tackle the Climate Crisis?' will feature insights from Sujit Mohanty, Chief of the UNDRR Regional Office for Arab States; HE Abdullah bin Touq Al Marri, UAE Minister of Economy; Dr Abed Al Razaq Arabiyat, Managing Director, Jordan Tourism Board; and HE Walid Nassar, Lebanon's Minister of Tourism.

At 1.00pm, Claire Bennett, Global Chief Customer Officer at IHG Hotels & Resorts, will participate in an in-depth interview on the ATM Travel Tech Stage. At 4.30pm, ATM's brand-new Sustainability Hub will host the 'Sustainability in the Air - Live

Podcast Session', which will see Shashank Nigam, Founder & CEO of SimpliFly, engage in conversation with Shaenaz Voss, CCO of Fiji Airways and CEO of Fiji Link.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market, said: "My colleagues and I cannot wait to welcome participants to the 30th edition of ATM, which will see our industry come together in Dubai to explore this year's theme, 'Working Towards Net Zero'. Tomorrow's programme features a diverse selection of interviews and panel discussions, which will provide valuable insights to attendees as we work to build a sustainable travel industry for future generations."

Other day-one highlights will include 'Hospitality Debate: What More Can Big Data Unlock', which will see representatives from the Global Hotel Alliance, General Hotel Management Pte Ltd, Marriott, and Hotelbeds take to the ATM Travel Tech Stage to discuss how technological advances are facilitating a better understanding of guest behaviours. Meanwhile, at the Sustainability Hub, senior figures from Weeva, the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (SHA), My Green Butler, Tourism Seychelles, Radisson RED and RHG will explore sustainable transformation as part of the session. 'Responsible Hospitality for a Better World. Exhibitor participation in ATM



2023 has risen by 27% compared to last year's event, with growth registered across all show sectors.

To mark its 30th edition, ATM will be unveiling a dedicated sustainability pledge designed

to reinforce RX's commitment to delivering sustainable events through the use of environmentally friendly materials, the elimination of single-use plastics and other forward-thinking initiatives. This year's show will also feature the inaugural ATM Sustainable Stand Award, the results of which will be announced as part of the ATM 2023 Best Stand Awards.

In addition to the ATM Global Stage, the ATM Travel Tech Stage and the brand-new Sustainability Hub, this year's show will see the return of the International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM) Arabia, which will explore trends and opportunities within the burgeoning field of high-end tourism.

Pak vs NZ

Fakhar Zaman sets five records

During the second ODI, the 33-year-old opener hit an undefeated 180 off 144 balls for his tenth ODI hundred

Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan opening batter Fakhar Zaman — who smashed a third consecutive century to guide Pakistan to a seven-wicket victory over New Zealand in the second one-day international on Saturday — set five unique records during the match.

During the second ODI, the 33-year-old opener hit an undefeated 180 off 144 balls for his tenth ODI hundred.

His most recent century was preceded by 117 in the first match and 101 against the same opponents in January as Pakistan chased a stiff 337-run target in 48.2 overs.

The win gave Pakistan a 2-0 lead in the five-match series with the last three matches in Karachi on May 3, 5 and 7.

"It was my lucky day to score again against New Zealand as I got chances," said Zaman. "I try to take my time at the start and then with five players in the circle it becomes easier to score."

Visiting skipper Latham described



Zaman as "outstanding".

"We were very happy at the halfway mark," said Latham. "Fakhar played an outstanding knock. They were able to build partnerships and that was a big tick in the batting department."

All the records set by Zaman:

1. Fastest Asian batter to 3,000 runs in ODI history

Zaman became the fastest Asian batter to 3,000 runs in ODI history after achieving the feat in 67 innings. The record was previously held by Babar Azam, who took 68 innings.

2. Fastest Asian to 10 ODI hundreds

Zaman became the fastest Asian batter to 10 centuries in ODI history after achieving the feat in 67 innings. The record was previously held by Babar Azam, who took 68 innings.

3. Fourth Pakistani to hit three consecutive ODI hundreds

He became only the 12th batter ever and the fourth Pakistani, after Saeed Anwar, Zaheer Abbas and Babar Azam (twice), to hit three consecutive ODI tons.

4. Only batter with multiple scores of 175-plus in ODI chases

Zaman is also the only batter in the world with multiple scores of 175-plus in ODI chases, bearing in mind his 193 against South Africa in 2021 in Johannesburg.

5. Most runs in ODI cricket after 67 innings by an Asian

Zaman also has the most runs by an Asian batter after 67 innings in ODI history after scoring 3,082 runs. The record was previously held by Babar Azam, who scored 2,971 runs.

Pakistan Shaheens departs for Zimbabwe

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Imran Butt-led Pakistan Shaheens departed for Zimbabwe in the wee hours of Sunday to feature in a series consisting of two four-dayers and six 50-over matches. The series will be played from 3 to 27 May in Harare, Kwekwe and Mutare.

Pakistan Shaheens had gone through an 11-day camp at the Hanif Muhammad High Performance Centre in Karachi and later took part in an additional two-day camp at the National Cricket Academy in Lahore on 28 and 29 April prior to their departure to Zimbabwe.

The squad includes 16 players and four reserve players. Six players apart from the captain and Test cricketer Imran Butt have

already represented Pakistan in international cricket. These include Hussain Talat (1 ODI, 18 T20Is), Kamran Ghulam (1 ODI), Mir Hamza (3 Tests), Mohammad Ali (2 Tests), Shahnawaz Dahani (2 ODIs, 11 T20Is) and Saim Ayub (8 T20Is).

Captain Imran Butt said: "We have had a rigorous training camp for the Pakistan Shaheens team ahead of our tour to Zimbabwe. The players have put in a lot of hard work and effort to prepare for this important series."

"The side consists of experienced and young players. We have some very talented individuals in the side who are eager to showcase their skills on the international stage."

"The team is in good spirits and looking forward to the challenge of playing in

Zimbabwe. We are confident that we have the right mix of players to put up a strong performance."

Pakistan Shaheens: Imran Butt (captain) (Lahore), Hussain Talat (vice-captain) (Lahore), Aamir Jamal (Islamabad), Abdul Wahid Bangalzai (Quetta), Haseebullah (Quetta), Kamran Ghulam (Peshawar), Mehran Mumtaz (Rawalpindi), Mir Hamza (Karachi), Mohammad Ali (Sialkot), Mohammad Huraira (Sialkot), Mubasir Khan (Islamabad), Omair Bin Yousuf (Karachi), Qasim Akram (Lahore), Rohail Nazir (wicket-keeper) (Islamabad) and Shahnawaz Dahani (Larkana). Saim Ayub (Karachi, 50-over matches only), Asif Mehmood (Hyderabad), Athar Mehmood (Gujranwala), Saad Khan (Hyder-

abad) and Waqar Ahmad (Peshawar) (all reserves)

Player Support Personnel – Aizaz Cheema (coach), Imran Abbas (manager), Saboor Ahmed (trainer), Muhammad Asad (physiotherapist) and Faisal Rai (team analyst). Abdul Rehman (Team Consultant, for 50-over matches only)

Tour schedule:

3-6 May – 1st Four-day match; KSC, Kwekwe
10-13 May – 2nd Four-day match; MSC, Mutare
17 May – 1st 50-over match; TSC, Harare
19 May – 2nd 50-over match; HSC, Harare
21 May – 3rd 50-over match; HSC, Harare
23 May – 4th 50-over match; OH, Harare
25 May – 5th 50-over match; HSC, Harare
27 May – 6th 50-over match; HSC, Harare

ISSF Shotgun World Cup

Italy wins both gold, silver in men's skeet shooting



CAIRO: Italian shooters dominated the men's skeet final at the 2023 International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) Shotgun World Cup, winning both the gold and silver medals.

Gabriele Rossetti hardly missed a flying target with his shotgun. The skeet shooting Olympic champion scored 39 hits out of 40 in the medal match. He also won the men's skeet title in last month's ISSF Shotgun World Cup in Doha, Qatar.

"It's simply amazing to achieve two gold medals in two competitions separated by a few weeks. This one in Cairo wasn't an easy competition. It was very hard but target by target and day after day, I managed to win," Rossetti told Xinhua after descending the winners' podium.

"I worked very hard for this," he added. His fellow Italian Elia Sdrucchioli was almost as good, recording 38 hits out of 40 targets and earning silver.

"This is a very important achievement for me, for my federation and for my country. It's not the first time for Italy to achieve gold and silver in the same event. We did in the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in a women's competition," said Andrea Benelli, head coach of the Italian team.

"I work with very strong shooters, but it is still a challenge because shooters from other countries are very strong too. But we managed to win," Benelli told Xinhua. "Like all other sports, shooting is training. Our shooters had to train a lot every day," the Italian coach added.

The bronze medal was won by Denmark's Jesper Hansen, who scored 26 hits.

The ISSF Shotgun World Cup in Cairo is held from April 25 to May 5 at Egypt International Olympic City, gathering more than 450 shooters from around the world. Xinhua

IUB, Old Sadiqians play friendly cricket match

Our Correspondent

BAHAWALPUR: A friendly cricket match between the Islamia University of Bahawalpur and Old Sadiqians played at Sadiq Public School, Bahawalpur.

The Islamia University of Bahawalpur won the match by 65 runs. The Islamia University of Bahawalpur won the toss and scored 165 runs in ten overs. Dr. Zahid Ihsan scored 65, Dr. Aftab Hussain Gillani scored not out 22 and Arif Ramooz scored 20. While Ayaz Imran and Ali Zameer played very well for Old Sadiqian but the aggressive batting of both players did not work for the team and Old Sadiqian could only score 100 runs.

The chief guest of this match was David Dowdles, Principal of Sadiq Public School. He thanked the Vice Chancellor of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur Engr. Prof. Dr. Athar Mahboob for sending the university's team and welcomed the guest team. Islamia University Bahawalpur also hosted a similar friendly match and



are happy to be here today.

He said that it is the vision of Vice Chancellor Islamia University Bahawalpur that such friendly matches should be organized with other institutions and very soon a friendly match will be organized between IUB Sports Promotion Society and the cricket team of Sadiq Public School. He also thanked Ali Zameer, the captain of the Old Sadiqian team for making

this match possible. In the squad of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur; Prof. Dr. Aftab Hussain Gillani, Prof. Dr. Moazzam Jamil, Prof. Dr. Naveed Aslam Malghani, Dr. Azhar Hussain, Dr. Muhammad Latif, Dr. Zahid Ihsan, Dr. Muhammad Umair Riaz, Arif Ramooz, Shaji-ur-Rehman, Muhammad Gohar Ali, Hafiz Marjan Haidar, Adnan Haider and Muneeb Ashraf were included.

Toulouse demolish Nantes to win French Cup

Costa, Dallinga score twice to help team claim 5-1 victory over holders in final

PARIS: Logan Costa and Thijs Dallinga both scored twice as Toulouse crushed holders Nantes 5-1 on Saturday to win the French Cup for the first time since 1957.

Costa headed Toulouse in front inside four minutes, adding a second in similar fashion before Dallinga bagged a brace with barely half an hour played at the Stade de France.

Zakaria Aboukhallal rounded off a memorable triumph for Toulouse late in the second half after Ludovic Blas struck a consolation from the spot for Nantes.

"It's an iconic competition in this country and we're proud. We've done it, we've gone down in club history," said Costa.

However, Toulouse risk being

unable to play in Europe next season if AC Milan qualify for the Champions League or Europa League as both clubs are owned by US investment firm RedBird Capital Partners.

President Emmanuel Macron shook hands with players in the tunnel before the game, sidestepping fears of a hostile reception following his hugely unpopular pension reform, which has sparked three months of protests and strikes.

Toulouse are enjoying a fine season on their return to Ligue 1, sitting comfortably in mid-table while reaching the final for the first time in 66 years.

Their 6-3 win over Angers in 1957 remains the competition's highest scoring showpiece, but the club disappeared a decade

later in a merger and a new version was founded in 1970.

Facing a Nantes side locked in a battle for their top-flight survival, Toulouse immediately seized control through an unlikely hero as Costa scored his first two goals of the season within 10 minutes.

The Cape Verde centre-back, who has featured almost exclusively in the cup this season, outmuscled Andrei Giroto to power in the opening goal from Branco van den Boomen's corner.

Van den Boomen was again at the origin of Toulouse's second, the Dutch midfielder's free-kick hooked back across goal by Stijn Spierings for Costa to nod emphatically past Alban Lafont.

Nantes striker Mostafa Mohamed had an effort hacked

off the line by Gabriel Suazo after Toulouse goalkeeper Kjetil Haug flapped at a corner.

Toulouse soon increased their advantage as Suazo curled a superb ball through for Dallinga to lift over the advancing Lafont.

Dallinga then pounced on a rebound after Fares Chaibi's shot was parried tamely towards the Dutch striker by Lafont, all but killing off any suspense with just 31 minutes gone.

Nantes pulled one back in the second half after Rasmus Nicolaisen fouled Fabien Centonze in the area.

Blas, who smashed home the winner from the spot in last year's final against Nice, did so again, but this time it was scant consolation for the Canaries. AFP



Sports Diplomacy

Serena Hotels hosts its annual polo cup 2023

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels believes in supporting sports activities through sponsorships and by providing platform to players and teams under its Sports Diplomacy initiative. The most awaited match of the prestigious Serena Hotels Polo Cup 2023 was held at the Islamabad Club Polo Ground on 30th April, the final match was attended by diplomats, government officials, the corporate community and Polo enthusiasts from all walks of life to laud the Game of Kings.

The final match was played between Bretta Asean and Sante Polo Team, who made it to the finals after putting up a great performance in the preliminary matches. The match was intense, with both teams showcasing their skills and teamwork. Sante Polo Team emerged as the champion, winning the Serena Hotels Polo Cup 2023.

During the prize distribution ceremony, Mr. Aziz Boolani CEO Serena Hotels, South and Central Asia congratulated both teams on their excellent performance, sportsmanship and comradery. Mrs. Samina Arif Alvi graced the occasion with her presence and presented the winning trophy along with 'Best Pony' award to Venom and 'Best Player' award to Ahmed Ali Tiwana. The 'Best Emerging Player' award was received by Maisam Baloch. Sante Polo Team held the trophy in the air for Serena Hotels Polo Cup 2023, amidst cheers and applause from the audience.

The Serena Hotels Polo Cup is an annual event organised by the Serena Hotels under the Hotel's very active Sports Diplomacy initiative, which aims to promote sports and sportsmanship in Pakistan.

Saelemaekers earns draw for Milan



ROME: Alexis Saelemaekers snatched an incredible 1-1 draw for AC Milan at Roma on Saturday with a stoppage-time leveler moments after Tammy Abraham thought he had won the game for the hosts.

Belgium midfielder Saelemaekers poked home in the seventh minute of added time to silence the Stadio Olimpico and make sure that Milan would stay in the Champions League positions. Milan are fourth, ahead of Roma on goal difference thanks to Saelemaekers' strike which cancelled out a fabulous low finish from Abraham in the 94th minute.

Both teams are three points ahead of Inter Milan. The two goals were each side's only shot on target in what was otherwise an uninspiring encounter in the Italian capital which came alive in the final seconds.

Roma thought they had won the match despite an injury crisis which meant defenders Chris Smalling, Diego Lorente, Rick Karsdorp were all out and midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum was also sidelined, while star man Paulo Dybala was only fit for the bench. Jose Mourinho's team then lost Albania defender Marash Kumbulla after just 15 minutes and just before the start of the second half had to bring on Stephan El Shaarawy for Andrea Belotti, who hurt his ribs in a clash with Fikayo Tomori.

Mourinho said he was proud of the performance but sad to lose two precious points.

"We are not a rich team, we don't have a big squad, every time we lose a player it is a big problem," said Mourinho.

"I am sad, obviously, as we had three points in our hands, but I am more proud than I am sad."

Roma will also have to do without Nemanja Matic at Monza midweek after the Serbian's late tackle on Ismael Bennacer earned him a booking midway through the first half.

None of that mattered however when Abraham, whose other major contribution was to stop his own teammate Lorenzo Pellegrini from shooting into an open goal in the first half, sent the home fans wild with a great spin and finish.

However with the match looking all over poor defender from Gianluca Mancini allowed Rafael Leao to float a perfect cross over to Saelemaekers, who saved his team at the last. AFP

Sports, speech competitions held in districts of Balochistan

ISLAMABAD: A number of speech and sports competitions were organized in different districts of Balochistan on Sunday.

Two speech competitions were organized in districts Lasbela and Kech in which over 220 individuals participated.

Two football matches were played in districts Panjgur and Sibi. Over 350 spectators enjoyed the matches.

Two cricket matches were played in districts Musakhel and Chaghi. Over 380 spectators enjoyed the events.

A rally was organized to spread awareness about malaria in district Washuk. Over 25 individuals participated in the rally.