



RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Russian offensive turns to key Donbas city, heavy shelling continues

Ukrainians digging in to defend the city, rule out ceasefire as fighting intensifies in Donbas



KYIV: Buoyed by a visit from a neighbor and ally, Ukrainians were digging in to defend the eastern city of Sievierodonetsk, which came under heavy bombardment from Russian forces trying to take the industrial area known as the Donbas.

Sievierodonetsk is the main city under Ukrainian control in Luhansk province, which together with Donetsk province make up the Donbas. Luhansk's governor, Serhii Haidai, said Sunday that the Russians were "simply intentionally trying to destroy the city ... engaging in a scorched-earth approach."

He said the Russians had occupied several towns and cities in Luhansk after indiscriminate, 24-hour shelling. Haidai said Moscow was concentrating forces and weaponry there, bringing in forces from Kharkiv to the northwest, Mariupol to the south, and from inside Russia. The sole working hospital in Sievierodonetsk has only three doctors and supplies for 10 days, he said.

The Ukrainian military said Russian forces had mounted an unsuccessful attack on Oleksandrivka, a village outside of the city. While Russian and Ukrainian forces battled along a 551-kilometer

(342-mile) wedge of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, Poland's president traveled to Kyiv on Sunday to support Ukraine's European Union aspirations, becoming the first foreign leader to address the Ukrainian parliament since the start of the war.

Ukraine ruled out a ceasefire or concessions to Moscow while Russia intensified an offensive in the eastern Donbas region and stopped providing gas to Finland, as Polish President Andrzej Duda prepared to address the Ukrainian parliament on Sunday.

After ending weeks of resistance by the last Ukrainian fighters in the strategic southeastern city of Mariupol, Russia is waging a major offensive in Luhansk, one of two provinces in Donbas.

Russian-backed separatists already controlled swathes of territory in Luhansk and the neighbouring Donetsk province before the Feb. 24 invasion, but Moscow wants to seize the last remaining Ukrainian-held territory in Donbas.

"The situation in Donbas is extremely difficult," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his nightly address. The Russian army was trying to attack the cities of Sloviansk and Sievierodonetsk, but Ukrainian forces were holding off their advance, he said. (Agencies)

PTI's long march to Islamabad on May 25: Imran Khan

PESHAWAR: PTI Chairman Imran Khan has announced that his party's long march towards Islamabad for the country's "battle for real freedom" would begin on May 25.

Addressing a press conference after his party's core committee meeting in Peshawar, the former prime minister said the main demands for the march to the capital were the immediate dissolution of the National Assembly and a date for the next general election.

He also told the military to stick to its stated stance of being "neutral".

"Today we held our core committee meeting and made [important] decisions," Imran, flanked by the who's who of the PTI leadership, said at the start of his press conference. "The biggest [question] was when to begin the long march, and we have decided.

"I want to give a little background of



how we reached here. There was a foreign conspiracy against Pakistan from the US. In this regime change, they used locals — the most corrupt people, who were ready to become part of any conspiracy to save their corruption.

"This conspiracy was hatched eight months ago and I was alerted about it in June, and after August, I fully understood what was happening. We did our best that somehow this conspiracy could be voided but unfortunately we couldn't stop it." (Agencies)

Imran wants civil war: PM Shehbaz

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has alleged that PTI chairman Imran Khan wants a civil war in the country, but warned him that the nation will hold him by the collar for his 'nefarious designs'.

"Imran Niazi wants to initiate a civil war in the country. But he is mistaken. The nation will never forgive him [for the sin] and will hold him by the collar," Prime Minister Sharif said on Sunday in reply to a question about the long march on Islamabad the opposition PTI is planning to take out on May 25. This was his third visit in a month to the Pakistan Kidney & Liver Institute.

When asked if the government would call in the army to stop the long march,

visibly upset at the query the prime minister replied that a decision would be taken when needed.

Speaking on the same issue in Bahawalpur on Sunday, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said the government and its allies would decide whether the PTI long march should be allowed to enter Islamabad.

"If the coalition goes for action, we will not allow protesters to even come out of their homes," he told media.

When told (in a TV talk in the evening) that the PTI leadership had promised to remain peaceful, Rana Sanaullah said he did not trust Imran Khan since he had a history of speaking "lies and taking U-turns". (Agencies)

France sees no EU entry for Ukraine before '15 or 20 years'

PARIS: A bid by Ukraine to join the European Union would not be finalised for "15 or 20 years", France's Europe minister said today, pouring cold water on Kyiv's hopes for quick entry in the wake of Russia's invasion.

"We have to be honest. If you say Ukraine is going to join the EU in six months, or a year or two, you're lying," Clement Beaune told Radio J. "It's probably in 15 or 20 years, it takes a long time."

"I don't want to offer Ukrainians any illusions or lies," he said, reiterating an offer by President Emmanuel Macron to create a looser "European political community" that could help integrate Ukraine with the bloc sooner. President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday denounced "such compromises" and in-

sisted on an immediate start of the process towards full EU membership. But Beaune said Macron's proposal is not "an alternative to joining the European political community. It doesn't prevent membership later on."

Under Macron's plan, "There could be free circulation in Europe, and it could benefit from the European budget for reconstruction and the revival of its country, society and economy," he said.

Some EU leaders share France's scepticism about a rapid acceptance of Ukraine's membership bid, concerned that it will take time to rebuild a war-shattered economy, reduce corruption and adopt far-reaching economic and legal reforms. (Agencies)

Global refugee population tops 100m for the first time: UN

NEW YORK: Russia's war in Ukraine has pushed the number of forcibly displaced people around the world above 100 million for the first time ever, the United Nations said Monday.

The 100 million figure amounts to more than one percent of the global population, while only 13 countries have a bigger population than the number of forcibly displaced people in the world.

The "alarming" figure must shake the world into ending the conflicts forcing record numbers to flee their own homes, the UNHCR said in a statement. UNHCR said the numbers of forcibly displaced people rose towards 90 million by the end of 2021, spurred by violence in Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Myanmar, Nigeria, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the

Congo. Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24 and since then, more than eight million people have been displaced within the country, while more than six million refugees have fled across the borders.

"One hundred million is a stark figure -- sobering and alarming in equal measure. It's a record that should never have been set," said UNHCR chief Filippo Grandi. "This must serve as a wake-up call to resolve and prevent destructive conflicts, end persecution, and address the underlying causes that force innocent people to flee their homes."

The 100 million figure amounts to more than one percent of the global population, while only 13 countries have a bigger population. (Agencies)

China 'flirting with danger', US will defend Taiwan if invaded: Biden

TOKYO: President Joe Biden said Monday the United States would defend Taiwan militarily if Beijing invaded the self-ruled island, warning China was "flirting with danger".

"That's the commitment we made," he said when asked if Washington would intervene militarily against a Chinese attempt to forcibly take control of Taiwan, which Beijing considers a renegade province to be unified with the mainland.

"We agreed with the One China policy, we signed on to it... but the idea that (Taiwan) can be taken by force is just not appropriate. "It will dislocate the entire



region and be another action similar to what happened in Ukraine."

In his strongest comments to date on the issue, Biden directly linked the outcome of Western attempts to help Ukraine repel the Russian invasion with lessons likely to be learned in Beijing regarding Taiwan. (Agencies)

China warns US not to 'underestimate resolve' on Taiwan

BEIJING: Beijing today said it was ready to defend its national interests over Taiwan, in a rebuke to US president Joe Biden's vow to protect the island from any invasion by China.

China's Communist Party has never controlled self-ruled Taiwan but it views the island as part of its territory and has

vowed to one day seize it, by force if needed.

Biden, who is in Tokyo to meet regional allies, earlier today warned that China's increasingly assertive stance over the island was "flirting with danger" and promised to defend Taiwan from any military action by its giant neighbour.

Biden, who is in Tokyo to meet regional allies, earlier today warned that China's increasingly assertive stance over the island was "flirting with danger" and promised to defend Taiwan from any military action by its giant neighbour. "The Taiwan issue is a purely internal affair for China," he said. (Agencies)

Chinese, Pakistani FMs agree to enhance security of Chinese in Pakistan



BEIJING: Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and visiting Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Sunday reached consensus on enhancing counter-terrorism cooperation, including formulating "enhanced plan" to safeguard the security of Chinese personnel and projects in Pakistan and further exploring the potential of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), during their meeting in Guangzhou, South China's Guangdong Province. Chinese observers noted the time-tested

China-Pakistan relations have shown resilience to major changes in regional and international realities, and attempts to sow discord, such as the recent terrorist attack, are doomed to fail.

Solidarity between the two countries will add certainty to an uncertain world, experts said.

Noting China and Pakistan will join hands to push for global peace and development and reinforce the open and inclusive regional cooperation structure in Asia. (Agencies)

World faces formidable challenges as monkeypox spreads: WHO

GENEVA: The world is facing "formidable" challenges, including Covid, the war in Ukraine and monkeypox, the head of the World Health Organization has warned.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was speaking in Geneva, where the UN health agency's experts were discussing the monkeypox outbreak in 15 nations outside Africa.

More than 80 cases have been confirmed in Europe, the US, Canada, Australia and Israel. However, the risk to the wider public is said to be low. Monkeypox - the virus that is most common in remote parts of Central and West Africa - does not tend

to spread easily between people and the illness is usually mild.

Most people who catch the virus recover within a few weeks, according to the UK's National Health Service.

The outbreak has taken scientists by surprise, and UK health officials have issued new advice, saying high-risk contacts of cases should self-isolate for three weeks. Belgium became the first country to announce a three-week quarantine for infected persons on Friday. More confirmed cases are expected to be announced in the UK on Monday, the Guardian newspaper reports. Speaking at Sunday's opening of his agency's. (Agencies)

About Khyber Mail The Khyber mail was first published in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1932. A newspaper in English by the eminent journalist Sheikh Sana Ullah. From 1932 to 1989 it has survived as leading English newspaper in the region by the sons of Sana Ullah i.e. Sheikh Zaka Ullah, Sheikh Inayat Ullah and Sheikh Saleem Ullah. The publication was shut down in 1989 due to various reasons. The current owner Rizwan Inayat son of Sheikh Inayat Ullah and grandson of Sheikh Sana Ullah, has restarted the family heritage but meeting with the requirement of the century, by giving the readers current happenings around the world with one touch anywhere any time and updating the reader to pace up with the world.

KP govt utilizes 75pc of released uplift funds during current fiscal year

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has utilized 75 percent of the released development funds during the current fiscal year which is 51 percent more than the development expenditure made till May last year. The development process in different sectors has gradually improved over the last four years and dozens of development projects of public welfare have been completed and made functional as well whereas overall services delivery has also improved many folds across the province including newly merged areas. Significant achievements have been made in road sector of the province since 2018-19 till date as 1175 KM long new roads have been constructed, 2639 KM long existing roads were rehabilitated and 49 new bridges were constructed. In the sector of Energy & Power, Hydel generation has been increased from 120 MW in 2018 to 200 MW in 2022 with

additional revenue of Rs 2.00 billion per annum. Similarly, 6491 mosques, 53 BHUs, 8000 schools and 6650 households have been solarized. In the newly merged areas, 7 grid stations along with 200 KM transmission lines, 1500 feeders, 1050 KM 11 KV lines and over 1000 transformers have been installed. Beside, coverage of clean drinking water in the province has been increased from 61% in 2018 to 80% in 2022. Similarly, significant achievement have been made in the health sector of province and a number of development projects have been completed including Peshawar Institute of Cardiology, new OPD block at KTH, Women & Children Hospital Charsadda and Allied & Surgical Block at LRH. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has become the first province to roll out universal health coverage to every citizen whereas

1315 new beds have been added to the existing beds capacity of hospitals in the province. This was told in the meeting held here on Thursday with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan in the chair. Beside Additional Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, administrative secretaries of provincial departments and other relevant officials were in attendance. The meeting reviewed the progress so far made on the projects under annual development plan of current financial year in addition to threadbare discussion on the initial draft of ADP for the next fiscal year. Briefing about the utilization made so far under the current financial year, the forum was informed that Energy & Power department stood top of the list with 98% expenditure against the released funds whereas road and industries sectors stood second and third position with the utilization of 92 and 89 % respectively. (APP)



PESHAWAR: Vendor selling and displaying air-coolers to attract the customer at his workplace near Ring Road. APP photo

MoUs inked for promotion of research activities for female students

PESHAWAR: The Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (SBBWU) Peshawar on Thursday signed Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with various public and private sector departments to promote research activities for female students. On the occasion, Vice Chancellor SBBWU Dr Naseem Akhtar said, "These MoUs are meant to facilitate students of the university in getting internships and grants for research activities, secur-

ing scholarships under exchange programmes and other educational activities". Director ORIC Hina Karamat signed the MoUs with Ali A Bhatti, Director Alliance Francaise de Islamabad, Dr Jibrani Ali Khan, Director Socio-Engineering Technology (SET) and Asif Raza of Aryan Air Services. Registrar SBBWU Alam Zaib Khan, business Development Manager of Aryan Abbas, Executive Director SET Dr Soniya Salim and Chief Technology Officer of SET Asad Raza were also present on the occasion. (APP)

Emergency Phone Numbers

Organization	Phone No
Rescue 1122 HQrs	091-2264224-25
Rescue 1122 Mardan	0937-9230770
Fire Brigade Cantt.	091-9212534
Fire Brigade City	091-2566666
Police Emergency	091-9212222
Edhi Ambulance	091-2214575
Red Crescent Ambulance	091-2210836
Emergency Ambulance	091-2590846
Civil Defence, Peshawar	091-9212176
Lady Reading Hospital	091-9211430
HMC Peshawar	091-9217140-46
KTH Peshawar	091-9216340-8
Irnani Hospital	091-9216115
Mission Hospital	091-2212371
Al-Khidmat Hospital	091-2215945
Fauji Foundation Hospital	091-9212771-4
Frontier Foundation Blood Services	091-5703463
Hamza Foundation, Peshawar	091-5841632
Sui Gas, Peshawar	091-9213016
Wapda Complaint Peshawar	091-9212041
PIA, Peshawar	091-9213351
Airport Inquiry	114
Railway Inquiry	117

Summer vacation schedule unveiled

PESHAWAR: Elementary & Secondary Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced the schedule for summer vacation for Academic Year 2022-23 for public sector and private sector educational institutions. According to a notification issued here on Friday, primary, middle and high & higher secondary schools in the summer zone will go on vacation from June 1, 2022 to August 14, 2022 while the institutions of winter zone will observe one-month vacation period from July 1, 2022 to July 31, 2022. Consequently upon the schedule of vacation, instructions have been notified for information and strict compliance. The educational institutions will declare results of internal examination in summer and winter zones on May 31, 2022 and June 30, 2022 respectively while enrollment campaigns in summer and winter zones will commence w.e.f 20-07-2022 and 01-08-2022 respectively. The students of winter zone will attend their regular classes w.e.f 01-08-2022 and summer zone will attend their classes with effect from 15-08-2022. Heads of all educational institutions and relevant staff will regularly attend their respective institutions during enrollment campaigns in order. (APP)

SWU approves appointment of Deans, Chairpersons

PESHAWAR: The Senate meeting of Swabi Women University has approved temporary appointment of deans and chairpersons of various departments besides hiring of senior faculty from different universities for constitution of Selection board and Scrutiny and Quantification Committee. The senate meeting (An advisory body representing the general faculty, staff and students) held here at the Governor House under the chairmanship of Acting Governor Mushtaq Ghani also discussed provision of accommodation to the Vice Chan-

cellor of the varsity. The VC of the University presented proposed Names for deans and chairpersons of departments of Bio-Chemistry, Computer Sciences, Medical Sonography, Arts and Social Sciences, Culture Studies,, Allied Health Sciences, Botany, Islamic Studies, Psychology, Social Work, Physics, Political Science, urdu, Zoology, Management Sciences, Mathematics, Journalism, Law, Pak Studies, Economics English and other departments which were approved by the Senate. (APP)

VETS launches campaign against smoke emitting vehicles

PESHAWAR: Vehicle Emission Testing System (VETS) Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa concluded a three-day campaign against smoke emitting vehicles inspected the emission system of 441 vehicles. The campaign was launched on the directives of the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Shehzad Bangash, who had directed the Secretary Transport & Mass Transit to control smoke emitted by the vehicles. In the light of said directives, the Secretary Transport & Mass Communication directed VETS to accelerate operation against smoke emitting vehicles across the province and particularly in Peshawar. For the purpose, VETS has increased the number of its teams in Peshawar and constituted three separate teams. VETS, in collaboration with traffic police, is carrying out inspection of vehi-



cles on various designated spots in interior city especially on Charsadda Road, Khyber Road and Kohat Road. Out of the total 441 vehicles checked since Monday 259 vehicles were cleared, while 182 failed the inspection test, and were subsequently fined. The inspected vehicles included 390 commercial and 51 private vehicles. During the campaign, VETS teams will check environment polluting vehicles. In this connection, special public awareness sessions will also be conducted in educational institutions and other places. (APP)

Jamrud roads cleared of encroachments

PESHAWAR: District administration in a joint operation with Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) demolished encroachments from Nasir Bagh Road and Jamrud Road on Thursday. On the directives of the Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mehsud, district administration carried out an anti-encroachment operation in Karkhano Market and demolished illegal constructions outside markets and footpaths. In another similar, anti-encroachment

operation, encroachments established on sides of Nasir Bagh Road canal were also removed. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shafiqullah has said that anti-encroachment operation initiated. On the directives of Commissioner Peshawar Division will continue and directed the administrative officers for paying random visits to bazaars and stern action against those erecting encroachments. (APP)

AKF sends more relief goods to flood-hit people of Afghanistan

PESHAWAR: Al-Khidmat Foundation Pakistan on Friday sent relief goods to the flood affected people of Afghanistan. About 10 trucks laden with relief goods were handed over to the Afghan authorities at Torkham border. The relief items included tents, tarpaulins, wheat, food packages, medicines and others worth millions of rupees. The function was attended by the central vice-president of the foundation and focal person for relief activities in Afghanistan, Khalid Waqas Chamkani, provincial general secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami Abdul Wasi and others. Organisers of Pak-Afghan Cooperation Forum were also present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, Khalid Waqas said that the foundation had so far provided 167 trucks for deserving families of Afghanistan under humanitarian and



Islamic brotherhood in collaboration with Pak-Afghan Cooperation Forum. Relief goods weighing 1411 tonnes worth about Rs320 million have so far been handed over to the Afghan authorities, he informed. Senior officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan lauded the Al-Khidmat Foundation, government of Pakistan and Pak-Afghan Cooperation Forum for their generous support to the people of Afghanistan in the hours of trial. (APP)

Dialogue on social cohesion of Afghan refugees, host community held

PESHAWAR: Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (CAR-KP) with support of SSARC-GIZ organized a youth dialogue on social cohesion between Afghan Refugees and host community, said a press release issued here. The initiative was aimed at providing a platform for both refugees and host communities to exchange ideas on social cohesion in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Speaking on the occasion, the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Abbas Khan stressed on the importance of such dialogues and stated that we should develop the tolerance and patience to listen to each other so that we understand everyone's viewpoint and resolve the issues more amicably. He further said that the youth has been blessed by Allah to come up with more innovative ideas and courage to take initiatives; therefore, it is the right time that the young participants should channel their energy for constructive activities. Director Admin and Finance Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CCAR), Islamabad, Amina Amin applauded the initiative and said that such

dialogues will further bring the two communities closer and provide them with the opportunities to share their tacit knowledge and will explore and see the challenges from different perspectives and suggest innovative ideas. During the session physical, economic, societal and political challenges of co-existence and social cohesion between Afghan Refugees and Host communities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were discussed and the participants shared ideas to address these challenges for the well-being of the society. The participants from both communities appreciated organizing the event and said that they expect such events in future as well to exchange their ideas and knowledge for a shared cause. The Commissioner, Afghan Refugees, Director Admin & Finance CCAR and Project Manager SSCSWAHC Shuja ur Rehman distributed certificates among the participants. It is worthy to be mentioned here that CAR-KP in collaboration with SSARC-GIZ is implementing a Project to enhance Social Cohesion and Social Wellbeing among Afghan Refugees and members of Host Community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. (APP)

Cheques distributed among prayer leaders, minority members

PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa distributed first quarter cheques among prayer leaders and minority community leaders of Dera. The cheque distribution ceremony held in Deputy Commissioner Office Dera was also attended by Provincial Minister for Local Government, Faisal Amin Khan Gandapur, Deputy Commissioner Dera, Inayat Ullah and area elders. Addressing the ceremony, provincial minister highlighted the significance of prayer leaders in a society and said that

they act as a binding force to unite the society besides promoting mutual tolerance and interfaith harmony. He said that efforts would be made to further increase the allocation in next budget and also the number of prayer leaders. Deputy Commissioner appreciated the efforts of ulema in promoting tolerance in the society and said sense of mutual respect among different community members would also help strengthening peace in the city. (APP)

Govt expedites work on Rs30b irrigation projects

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has expedited work on Rs30 billion projects started with an assistance of the Federal Government for provision of irrigation water to the agriculture lands in the province. Under the National Agriculture Programme, the KP government is focusing on reconstruction and pavements of watercourses to provide irrigation water to the tail ends fields. An official of KP Agriculture Department told APP on Tuesday that 25,000 new watercourses would be constructed during 2018-23 in the province. He said only 25,000 watercourses were constructed during last 70 years in KP. Under National Agriculture Emergency Program, he said that 11 agriculture

and livestock projects worth Rs45 billion have been approved from Federal Government for increasing milk and meat production besides ensuring self-sufficiency in food services. He said KP's first ever food security policy was approved. He said that 1,200 livestock farms should be completed in KP by 2023. The official said 300,00 Calves would be fattened by 2023. Under, Save the Calf project, he said free fodder and milk is being provided to farmers for nourishment of male calves of buffaloes and oxen. Besides establishment of veterinary dispensaries and provision of free animal vaccines, he said a veterinary university was established and veterinary census were held in KP. (APP)

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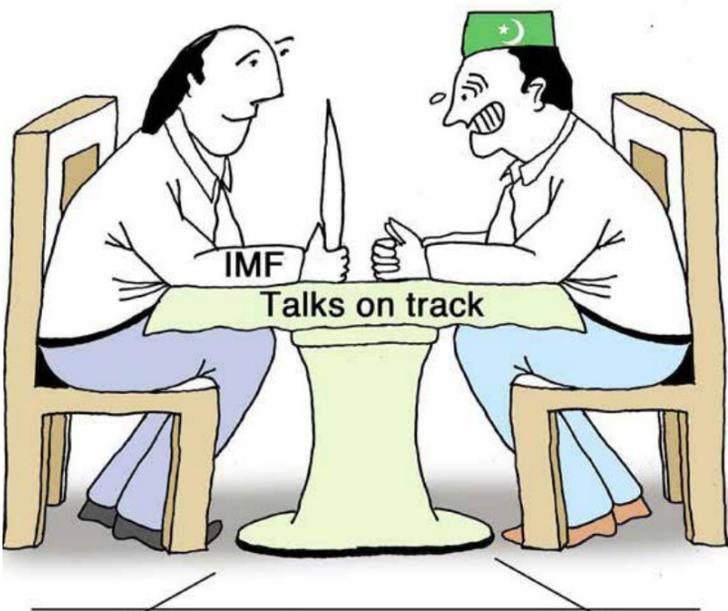
Ban on luxury imports

Extraordinary steps are certainly needed to overcome the most serious crisis in the history of the national economy. Banning the import of unnecessary and luxurious items without which there would be no major difference in life and the business. This ban is taking place with a clear mind so that to help improve national economy.

A reduction in the import means a reduction in the country's expenditure, which in turn improves the balance of payments and saves foreign exchange. That is why leading economists have been advising the previous government to do the same in order to overcome the growing economic woes over the years. However that time government failed in doing so. However, the new government decided to take this step and Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif immediately imposed a complete ban on the import of more than 80 luxury items. The decision to impose a complete ban on imports of unnecessary and luxurious items has been taken to deal with the foreign exchange crisis in the country.

The PM, while approving the FBR's proposals to reduce the import bill by Rs1 billion per month, doubled the regulatory duty on vehicles over 1000 cc, importing more than 80 products including cosmetics, mobile phones, dog and cat food. A worrying economic situation was reviewed in a high-level meeting, where the participants agreed to take tough decisions to tackle the economic crisis and decided to impose a complete ban on the import of non-essential and luxury items without delay in order to overcome the foreign exchange reserves crisis in the country.

The ban on import of non-essential items will not further devalue the rupee. Due to lack of effective measures to stop this trend, the dollar which was around Rs. 188 a month ago crossed Rs. 200 recently. This situation has led to a sharp decline in foreign exchange reserves and a sharp rise in inflation. It is hoped that after a complete ban on non-essential imports, the savings of one billion dollars per month will immediately help in raising the value of the rupee and improving the foreign exchange situation, while negotiations with the IMF have also begun and the finance minister has expressed good prospects for its success.



Teaching Arabic

By Elf Habib

Questions like how much Arabic is imperative for a person to become a perfect Muslim or how much it has to be taught to our school kids to mould them into ideal Muslims, despite being immensely crucial for the learners and planners, still remain quite cantankerous and unsettled in Pakistan.

The problem rather than being solved on realistic or actual needs and relevance for the kids in the twenty first century class rooms, unfortunately has been mostly viewed with mere passions, love and reverence for the Arabic language as a medium of revelation and repository of the sources of the Islamic scriptures and traditions. The thrust on Arabic to be taught in public schools, to a large extent, is also mostly influenced by its swell and supremacy long established in the Islamic madrasas meant to groom the scholars sworn to a life-long learning, exposition and teaching of the sources, scriptures and the related theological nuances and problems.

Our multilingual culture, despite its mesmerising beauty, bounty and blessings also creates some further constraints and compulsions for these younger learners. They inevitably have to cope with their mother tongues together with the lan-

guages of the region where their institutions are located. A student from Punjab studying at an institution in KP, for instance, must also manage some smattering Pushto skill and it applies to every student learning in a locale with a different language.

In view of these constraints and compliance of Quranic commandments to comprehend religion in one's mother tongues, the Arabic contents for kids must be kept to the minimum.

The Islamic message must be mediated mostly in their mother tongue or the prescribed languages. Arabic contents up to the primary stage, for instance, may be the first three Kalimas. The secondary stage can cover the prayer texts plus 3-5 small Quranic surahs sine-qua-non to supplement the Fataha in some parts of the prayers.

The style of teaching religion in the selected native or official languages, however, must be quite eclectic to inspire the learner's curiosity to sift and search further information from the libraries, digital sources and discussion with their teachers and mates.

- The writer is an academic and freelance columnist.

Nato's Nordic expansion: Strategic impact ?

By Syed Qamar Afzal Rizvi

A surprise move—Finland and Sweden are fervently desiring to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (an alliance of 30 member states) — a historic paradigm shift “for two traditionally non-aligned countries and a major expansion of the Western alliance as war wages in Europe”.

But the Swedish-Finnish desire indicates the fact that they are divorcing their traditional bonds to maintain a neutral legacy vis-à-vis the western military alliance while orchestrating a strategic impact. Finland and Sweden quest for applying the membership in NATO, the countries said Sunday, in a historic move for the Nordic countries, formerly known for their policies—fostering a military neutrality.

In a press conference alongside Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin, the country's President Sauli Niinisto said: “Today, we, the president and the government's foreign policy committee, have together decided that Finland ... will apply for NATO membership.”

“NATO membership would strengthen Finland's security,” they said in a joint statement. Deborah Solomon, from the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society, argues that Nato's nuclear deterrence increases tensions and risks and arms race with Russia.

This complicates peace efforts, she says, and makes Sweden a less safe place. According to the Times.com, “Support in Finland for NATO membership has hovered around 20-30% for years.

It now stands at over 70%. The two are NATO's closest partners but maintaining good ties with Russia has been an important part of their foreign policy, particularly for Finland”.

In a future scenario, If Finland joins, it would likely double the length of the NATO alliance's border with Russia, adding a further 1,300 kilometres (830 miles) for Moscow to defend.

While President Putin has already promised a “military, technical response if it joins. But many troops from Russia's western district near Finland were sent to Ukraine, and those units suffered heavy casualties, Western military officers say”.

Yet, by joining the alliance, Sweden would certainly lose its leading role in global nuclear disarmament efforts.

Former Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom recalls how some NATO's Foreign Ministers were heavily pressured by the US not to take part in UN disarmament negotiations in 2019.

According to the Economist, “Two countries proud of their long history of military non-alignment have come to

judge that the risk of antagonising their neighbour is outweighed by the extra security they will gain from joining an alliance dedicated to resisting Russian aggression.

It is the direct result of the invasion of Ukraine, which Mr Putin ordered ostensibly to forestall NATO's expansion”.

Nordic NATO's member, Denmark, Iceland and Norway support this expansion. From the western policy angle, though for years, Finnish and Swedish forces have been working in tandem with NATO, they have been unable to count on NATO's Article 5 defence guarantee and NATO has not been able to count on their availability in a crisis.

They could now be integrated in NATO plans for defending the Baltic region, while they might benefit from the alliance's deterrent posture.

Both countries switched from formal neutrality to military non-alignment in 1995 when they joined the EU.

They are already NATO partners, taking part in exercises and exchanging intelligence with the alliance. Finland already meets NATO's defence spending target of 2% of GDP, while Sweden is on course to do so. Given the past legacy, the fact remains that during the Cold War, Finland would occasionally come under Soviet pressure as the Kremlin sought to expand its room for manoeuvre.

By and large, the Finnish Government remained firm in its commitment to defend its Nordic and Western identity.

In the same vein, Sweden has had always abstained from joining NATO, owing to its longstanding geopolitical neutrality, and out of solidarity with the Finns.

And notwithstanding the fact that Denmark and Norway did join the alliance, both Sweden and Finland long opted out of hosting foreign forces during peacetime. Though their joining could empower NATO's with F35 jets and the Patriot missile batteries, it might pave the way for pondering the European security doctrine vis-à-vis Russian security postures.

Meanwhile, the NATO's Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, has said they would be welcomed “with open arms” if they do apply and that the accession process would be quick, although formal ratification by all the alliance's members could take several months.

From the military perspective, the addition of Finland's and Sweden's defence forces would represent a major boost to Nato's assets in northern Europe, filling a hole in the Alliance's defences by doubling the length of its border with Russia and improving security and stability in

the Baltic region. In response, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova threatened with “military and political consequences” if the two countries joined the bloc.

Stefan Ring, a former member of Swedish Armed Forces and a military expert, said that Russian President Vladimir Putin's behaviour in Ukraine was “regarded as very irrational and created a sense of insecurity, especially in Finland.

“When the Swedish government realized that Finland probably would come to a decision to join NATO, it understood that a scenario where Sweden would be the only country outside NATO could create a negative situation, he argued”.

The most pertinent fact is that in some ways, Putin's war in Ukraine has resurrected the dream of European unity.

The hovering apprehensions—that now surround the NATO club—reflect the reckoning that in order to revitalize its defence posture, Moscow could deploy more nuclear weapons or hypersonic missiles to “the Kaliningrad exclave, across the Baltic Sea wedged between allies Poland and Lithuania”.

Yet, another impression that is being drawn out of this Nordic states to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is that they may be losing the pivot of their nuclear disarmament advocacy, which remained a glaring legacy of these states for the last many decades.

And yet, the western strategists argue that while Russian President Vladimir Putin has strongly pointed to NATO's encroachment on his country's borders via its eastward expansion—a major casus belli for invading Ukraine—he has spectacularly failed to deter this western trajectory endorsed by the fact: “not only have NATO countries moved tens of thousands of troops closer to Russia's border in response to his invasion and agreed to send tens of billions worth of arms to Ukraine, they are also now about to welcome Finland and Sweden as new members, bringing NATO that much closer to Russia”.

For both the Europeans and their transatlantic partners, the idea of an American dominated European security via NATO's platform—is getting a new life under the Biden Administration whereas under Trump's administration—had lost its moorings. In 1997, Clinton's Administration had pragmatically jettisoned its support for NATO's expansion.

—The writer, an independent ‘IR’ researcher-cum-international law analyst based in Pakistan, is member of European Consortium for Political Research Standing Group on IR.

The Clock Is Ticking

By Muhammad Akhter

The genocide of innocent Kashmiris by the oppressive and murderous Indian occupational forces continues. On May 07, 2022, the Indian army martyred four more youths, a house was extensively fired upon under the guise of a so-called search operation in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

As India continues its atrocities and the genocide of Muslims in the occupied valley on a daily basis, its extremist face has been exposed to the world once again. The Kashmir issue is one of the two issues on the UN agenda that have been unresolved for the last fifty years. Unfortunately, the second issue is also related to the Muslim-populated area, in Palestine.

It should be noted here that, India's illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir is a recognised as an international dispute and the UN and Security Council resolutions bear witness to the fact that India has illegally placed its impure claws on this paradise valley. The resolutions also call on India to give the oppressed Kashmiris the right to self-determination so

that they can freely decide their fate and destiny, but these resolutions have not been implemented yet. And despite the demands of the United Nations, India has continued to show stubbornness in this regard.

In the above context, it is also a sad fact that international bodies and the international community resort to mere verbal statements and denunciations and they have never hinted at taking any concrete action against India on the Kashmir issue. India trampled all international norms on August 5, 2019 by annulling Articles 370 and 35A of its Constitution, unilaterally declaring the Occupied Territories' special status as its own.

In the aftermath, Pakistan reacted strongly to this move and in this regard, the political and military leadership together expressed solidarity with the Kashmiris and expressed their determination to raise this issue in every international forum. On the basis of this incident, Pakistan banned all trade with India, which is still in force.

It is pertinent to note here that at every

moment, Kashmiris have expressed their disgust with India and reiterated their commitment not to recognise India's illegal occupation.

In June 2010, the then Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh visited the occupied valley. On that occasion, the Kashmiris went on a full-scale strike and sent a clear message to India that they considered him a usurper who had illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Now, after twelve years, for the first time after the cruel act of August 5, 2019, Narendra Modi visited Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK); a similar situation was witnessed which shows that Kashmiris have not backed down an inch from their position and they will remain steadfast till independence. In this regard, the world community and the international bodies need to consider these incidents and learn from them—their criminal silence cannot dampen the spirit of Kashmiris for their birth right to choose their fate and destiny.

- The writer is a freelance columnist.

Letters to the Editor

Recycling

Recycling has become the need of time in this era. We can observe the flood of inflation in the world and the developing countries are suffering a lot because of it. They can't afford the pressure of imports. The best way to reduce the pressure is to recycle. Products should be

used again and again in different forms for distinct purposes.

The typical things that can be recycled include iron, steel scrap, aluminium cans, glass bottles, paper, wood and plastics.

The use of non-renewable resources has been increasing for the last few years.

They will deplete soon because of continuous consumption. So, recycling will provide the raw materials that prove as substitutes for natural products like coal, petrology and natural gas.

FATIMA JAMIL
Islamabad

WHO donates ambulances to strengthen referral system in capital



ISLAMABAD: World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director EMRO, Dr Ahmed Salim Al-Mandhari and WHO Pakistan Representative Dr Palitha Mahipala has donated four ambulances to District Health Office (DHO) Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) to facilitate timely referral of patients from primary healthcare to specialized care. WHO Regional Director EMRO along with WHO Pakistan Representative Dr Palitha Mahipala also inaugurated Barakahu refurbished Primary Healthcare Facility. The Barakahu Rural Health Centre is one of the 16 primary healthcare

facilities in ICT using a WHO supported electronic data management system, enabling the availability of real-time data for planning and decision making. Meanwhile, a refurbished telemedicine clinic for integrated Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Services at PHC Level in RHC Barakahu was also inaugurated. The clinic will be providing mental health, psychosocial support and referral services for GBV.

Both WHO representatives also inaugurated a Nutrition Stabilization Centre at Federal Government Polyclinic Maternal and Child Health Centre. (APP)

Balochistan govt promotes 835 teachers

QUETTA: The Balochistan government has promoted as many as 835 Junior Vernacular (JV) Teachers and Muallim-ul-Quran, both male and female, from scale 9 to 14.

The Junior Vernacular Teachers (BPS-09) were promoted to the rank of Junior English Teachers (BPS-14) and Muallim-ul-Qurans (BPS-09) to the rank of Junior Arabic Teachers (BPS-14), said a notification issued here. The Balochistan government was all set to uplift the standards of urdu medium schools, by providing them quality education at par with the English medium schools.

According to official source, a comprehensive policy would be formulated in this regard for improvement of public sector Urdu medium Primary schools. Balochistan government has also given

approval to recruit teachers on stop-gap arrangement basis to tackle the challenges and overcome the workforce shortage in the education sector.

The government has created multiple posts for teachers to fill the vacant positions and ensure availability of teachers in every school of the province, said an official, adding that it (government) would be appointing teachers and other staff at district level on ad-hoc basis at far-flung areas of the province.

The source stated that the initiative was aimed to address the shortage of teachers and staff in schools and Education Department of the province. He said the government has also taken notice of teachers and staff posted in the schools in far-flung areas of the province who were not performing their duties. (APP)

Govt expedites construction work on winder dam

ISLAMABAD: The Winder Dam would bring over 10,000 acres of barren land under cultivation in water scarce areas of Lasbela which would help to ensure food security by increasing agricultural production in the region.

The government has expedited the construction work on Winder dam project to complete it within its stipulated time period in Lasbela district of Balochistan, said an official while talking to APP.

The Winder Dam has the capacity of 36,167 acre feet live storage to conserve flood water of Winder River to ensure annual availability of water for developing agriculture sector.

The project would also produce 300 KW of energy while controlling the flow of Winder River would help save the loss of life and property in the area during heavy

floods season.

“The Dam will also provide water supply to the agricultural lands through canals. Some 919 square miles catchment area of Winder Dam will irrigate the area through 21 kilometers (km)’s main canal along with its four branches of 16 km each,” he said.

The water supply will be also used for drinking and other domestic purpose after proper purification and treatment for human use. The water storage and seepage from the dam will also recharge the ground water reservoirs and increase the ground water level. The project will bring socio-economic uplift of the people in the area by creating employment and business opportunities as it would greatly increase the development of fisheries in the area. (APP)

Workshop held on public legal education

NAWABSHAH: A one-day workshop on “Public Legal education” was jointly organized by Women Development Department and Police Department Shaheed Benazirabad Range.

DIG Shaheed Benazirabad Khadim Hussain Rind was chief guest on the occasion. Addressing the workshop, speakers said that it is pleasing that the workshop was organized on such an important topic, which aims at highlighting information about legal issues between the general public and police.

Speakers said that such workshops specially extend help and assistance to women those require legal help.

Addressing the workshop DIG Khadim Hussain Rind said that a Women Pro-

tection Cell has been established at DIG office keeping in view the difficulties of women requiring legal assistance.

He said that all out efforts would be taken to provide legal help to needy women.

Office Superintendent Mushtaq Ahmed Memon, Madam Naseem Mastoi and other officials were present on the occasion.

Later Head of Women Development Department Naseem Mastoi presented honorary shield to guest of honour DIG Khadim Hussain Rind. Performance certificates were also awarded at the concluding of the workshop.

The work shop largely attended by political and social workers, lawyers and police officials. (APP)

KP CS inaugurates DRCC in Abbottabad

ABBOTTABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary Dr. Shehzad Bangash visited Divisional Headquarters Abbottabad and formally inaugurated the District Resource and Communication Center (DRCC) at the Deputy Commissioner’s Office, Abbottabad.

Deputy Commissioner Abbottabad Tariq Salam Marwat, while giving a detailed briefing regarding the resource center, informed the chief secretary that the DRCC will keep in touch with the citizens 24/7 through telephone lines,

wireless communication and social media. On the occasion, Dr. Shehzad Bangash also met with the staff and inspected the resource center in detail.

In addition, surveillance work will be done with the help of Geographic Information System (GIS), and Mini Safe City IPTV cameras, along with the national holidays, live monitoring of public places through CCTV cameras will also continue during Muharram, Rabi-ul-Awal and other important events. (APP)

Gwadar Int’l Airport to be operational by 2023

GWADAR: The new \$246m greenfield Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) being built at an area of 4,300 acres would be made operational by September 2023.

According to the official source, the passenger terminal building of the project would be completed by June 2023; work related to air traffic control by March 2023, while the overall construction of the airport would be finished before September 2023.

The New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) was being managed and operated by Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). To be owned by a joint venture between Pakistan, Oman, and China, the airport would handle domestic and international operations. The airport development is a part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) development, which was



a cornerstone of China’s One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative.

The biggest in Pakistan and would also become the nation’s second airport capable of handling A380 aircraft upon its commissioning in 2022.

It will stimulate the development in Gwadar peninsula and boost trade between Pakistan and China. The airport would be operated under open sky policy and developed under the guidance of the

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

The New Gwadar International Airport project was initiated as an early harvest high-priority project of the CPEC programme in 2014.

It was approved by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) in January 2015. The project is being funded through a grant agreement signed between China and Pakistan. (APP)

AJK PM seeks master plan for city upgradation

MIRPUR: Azad Jammu Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan while chairing a meeting of Muzaffarabad Development Authority on Tuesday issued directives to the concerned authorities to prepare a detailed master plan for the capital city keeping in view the modern-day requirements and challenges in the future. Cabinet Ministers including Khawaja Farooq Ahmed, Dewan Ali Khan Chughtai, Chaudhry Muhammad Rashid, Abdul Majid Khan, Secretary Physical Planning and Housing Ghulam Bashir Mughal, Chaudhry Muhammad Tayyab and Chairman Dam Syed Azhar Gilani and others were present in the meeting.

During the meeting it was decided that powers of Development Authority Muzaffarabad and Municipal Corporation would be determined separately after the segre-



gation of both the entities.

The meeting decided to conduct a grand operation in the city against encroachment. The meeting also decided to take strict measures to ensure organized construction of the city in view of its growing population.

Museums, libraries and feature walls of historical figures would be constructed to highlight the city’s ancient civilizations.

The meeting decided to build food streets,

coffee shops and beautiful spots along the Jhelum and Neelum rivers.

On the occasion, the PM AJK, while expressing serious concern over the low-income generation from the assets of the Muzaffarabad development Authority (MDA), said that the MDA came into existence in 1988 and despite the passage of nearly four decades it was yet to be seen that what powers they enjoy.

He said that it was quite difficult to manage old cities but for new cities it was imperative to prepare a master plan to ensure safety and survival of future generations. Citing the ever-growing population growth in and around the capital city, the PM said, “Master plan of Muzaffarabad city should be prepared keeping in view the modern demands and requirements of the next hundred years”. (APP)

Sindh revises teachers recruitment policy, reduces passing marks from 50 to 40pc

KARACHI: To make functional the remaining 4,250 dysfunctional schools in the province, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday announced to revise the Teacher Recruitment Policy 2021 and reduce the criteria for passing marks from 55 percent for male Muslim and 50 percent for female and minority candidates to 40 percent for all candidates in order to meet the shortage of teachers.

Earlier, the recruitment policy was based on Union Council level and now it has been made on taluka level, therefore all the candidates who had obtained at least 40 percent marks will be recruited, subject to the availability of the posts in the concerned taluka.

The Chief Minister made this announce-

ment while addressing a press conference here at CM House, said a statement. Sindh Minister for Education Syed Sardar Shah, Minister Irrigation Jam Khan Shoro, Advisor Law Murtaza Wahab and concerned secretaries were also present on the occasion.

The Chief Minister said that the main purpose of the recruitment of teachers, PSTs and JESTs was to provide teachers to the schools and prevent the education system from decay as thousands viable schools have become dysfunctional due to acute shortage of teachers.

“Presently 54,000 posts of teachers, including 36,000 Primary school teachers and 18,000 Junior Elementary School Teachers are lying vacant throughout the province of Sindh,” he said and added

“looking into the dire need of teachers and their urgent induction and training certain, the provisions of Teachers Recruitment Policy- 2021 need to be relaxed/ amended.” Syed Murad Ali Shah said that there were 6,783 viable schools which remained closed due to non availability of teachers.

“Through the current recruitment process, 2,533 schools have been reopened but still 4,250 are without teachers,” he said and added therefore it has become exigent to revise the Teacher Recruitment Policy 2021 and reduce the criteria for passing marks from 55 percent for male Muslim and 50 percent for female and minority candidates to ‘40 percent for all candidates’ in order to meet the shortage of teachers.”. (APP)

Three robbers caught

KASUR: Saddle police arrested three members of a dacoit gang and recovered stolen valuables and illegal weapons from their possession.

Police said here on Saturday that the team raided the hideout of the criminals and arrested three accused--ring leader Babar aka Babari, Abdul Hafeez and Pervaiz and recovered valuables worth Rs 60,000, illegal weapons from them.

The criminals confessed to have committed more than 30 dacoities. Police started investigation in case (APP)

UAF opens portal for entrance test of under-graduate programs

FAISALABAD: University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) has opened its portal to facilitate the students for online apply for the entrance test of under-graduate programmes.

According to the Convener Admission Committee Dr. Rana Nadeem Abass, May 27 was fixed as last date for submission of registration fee for entry test whereas the documents for registration could be uploaded up to May 28.

He said that entry test would be held on June 5, 2022 and in this connection,

test centers were established in Faisalabad, Lahore, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Layyah, Multan, Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalpur, Toba Tek Singh, Burewala and Depalpur.

The candidate who are appearing in the intermediate (part-2) equivalent examination or pass the intermediate exams can apply for admission to undergraduate degrees programme offered the UAF at its main campus as well as at its sub-campus of Toba Tek Singh, Burewala-Vehari and Depalpur-Okara. (APP)

Freelancing – a source of earning for Pakistani youth

Pakistani youth is turning smarter with a variety of skills and geared up to peddling the national economy to new highs and helping themselves in making the mark on the world Gig economy as freelancers.

Thanks to their ongoing romance with the web government job space, they no more resemble the likes of Baboos of yesterday years but more talented and practical with guts and wits to take on the inflation onslaught and joblessness does not worry them.

Baboo had been a popular term over the decades, denoting a character able to be a bread winner for a family through the government job. But it had worn a sarcastic tinge with the passage of time after limited jobs left many educated individuals wandering around in vain with job applications in pocket.

But, time has changed. Now they are no



more jobless and turning out to be charismatic individuals on world wide web and information communications technologies gifted by the 21st century. All they need is a computer and a work station to find their way to a successful career path. “Not long ago, youngsters’ dream career idea revolved around a chair, a desk, some documents to sign, some letters to draft and draw salary,” said Dr. Irfan Jafar, Dean Computer Science, Superior University Lahore. “However, things have changed for good. Youngsters are

now powerful enough to leave that orbit to master their destiny.”

Jafar said Pakistan has witnessed an exponential surge in freelancing during last few years, mostly during the COVID-19 epidemic. “Freelancing was making inroads fast among the Pakistani youth.”

According to different data sources, freelance earnings in Pakistan had grown substantially during last few years with freelancers earning millions of dollars during Covid-19 wave. And this journey continues with more and more freelancers joining the squad in an effort to earn money for themselves and the country.

“The best thing about freelancers was the platforms where their work speaks for themselves and they no more need any reference or backing to become an earning hand,” remarked Prof. Dr. Irfan Ahmad Baig from Muhammad Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture. (APP)

Pakistan Army set up 27 heatstroke relief centres in heatwave-hit areas

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Army has established 27 heatstroke relief centres in areas across the country facing searing heatwave particularly the desert belt of Thar and Cholistan.

The heatstroke relief centres were established on the special direction of the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) in Thar, Cholistan, and areas of Sindh namely across Karachi, Hyderabad, Gadra, MirpurKhas, Badin, Dadu and Balochistan, said an Inter Services Public Relations

(ISPR) news release received here on Saturday.

The heatstroke relief centres have also been established in other urban centres in Punjab where necessary medical care was being provided by Pakistan Army doctors and paramedics to ease lives of common people. All necessary medical facilities and medicines have been provided at these centers where patients suffering from dehydration and gastroenteritis were being treated, it said. (APP)

Govt taking steps to enhance security for Chinese nationals: FO

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan government was taking steps at the national and provincial levels to enhance the security arrangements for Chinese nationals and companies, said the Foreign Office Spokesperson.

During the weekly press briefing, he said, "There is a clear, continuing and strong commitment from the leadership that the Chinese nationals and companies working in Pakistan, specifically on China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, and in the context of protection of CPEC itself, is very important and we are taking all necessary steps to provide foolproof security to them." "We also remain in touch with our Chinese friends on any possible moves that we may need to take at other fora to advance our shared objectives with regard to countering terrorism and protecting CPEC and related personnel and infrastructure. There is continuing discussion with the Chinese side. One thing is clear both sides are cognizant of the threats, and



ill-designs of some, but we are confident that we will together take steps to effectively deal with the challenge and to take forward the All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership." The Spokesperson said there were news reports about the closure of Confucius Institutes in Pakistan and return of Chinese staff. "However, this matter has been adequately clarified by the Chinese Embassy already. I want to add and clarify this matter further that all Confucius Institutes in Pakistan remain operational. Online and physical classes are being held by both Chinese and Pakistani teachers,"

he added.

He said there was hope for stability in Afghanistan after all those years of conflict, and there was the imminent humanitarian crisis about which Pakistan took the lead in doing a lot of advocacy in terms of assisting Afghanistan.

"Also there were some things that emerged in terms of common expectations of the international community, and in fact the Afghan interim authorities also responded positively to those common expectations initially and I am talking about the question of inclusivity, human rights, including women and girls' rights to education, and the Afghan territory not being allowed to be used for terrorism against other countries. There were clear commitments from the interim Afghan authorities." With regard to these expectations, particularly on human rights and women and girls' issues, there were lingering concerns that those expectations had not been met, he added. (APP)

ECP sets up 20,159 display centres to verify provisional voter lists



ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has set up 20,159 display centers across the country for the publication of preliminary electoral rolls for the general election.

Of these, 12,037 display centres were in Punjab, 3,609 in Sindh, 3,040 in Khair Pakhtunkhwa and 1,473 in Balochistan. The display centers would remain open from May 21 to June 19, 2022.

The display centres have been set up across the district in government buildings, especially government-run educational institutions.

Display centres would help enabling voters to check their Names in the preliminary lists.

The basic aim of displaying these lists was to provide an opportunity to people to get theirs and their family's votes registered in their respective areas in case they were not enlisted in preliminary lists. They can verify their names and see

if their Computerised National Identity Cards were registered correctly, and in case of any mistake they can correct it within the specified time frame.

If an eligible person's vote was not registered, he can register his vote according to the permanent or temporary address of the Computerised National Identity Cards.

The name of irrelevant person or deceased person could be removed from preliminary voter lists, besides address written in CNIC could also be corrected in voter lists.

Government employees and their families can register and transfer their votes to a temporary address.

In addition to display centers, the forms were available with offices of District Election Commissioners, Assistant Registration Officers and on the Election Commission's website at www.ecp.gov.pk.

If anyone wanted to raise an objection over inclusion or exclusion of a name than he or she would have to submit an application through form-16 of the ECP. For correction of address as per CNIC, the voters would have to submit the application through form-17 available at the display centre.

It was the duty of every citizen to get his or her vote registered in the lists. The Election Commission was committed towards providing an opportunity to each and every citizen to vote. (APP)

Turkey to continue supporting Pakistan's stance on regional issues: Hulusi Akar

RAWALPINDI: Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Turkey General (R) Hulusi Akar Saturday called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa and reaffirmed Turkey's full support to Pakistan's stance on regional and international issues.

During the meeting, matters of mutual interest including defence and security cooperation between both the countries and overall regional security situation were discussed, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release. Both the dignitaries reiterated the desire



to further enhance bilateral relations including efforts for bringing peace and stability in the region.

The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan's contribution for regional security and connectivity. (APP)

GB to introduce teachers award

GILGIT BALTISTAN: The Government of Gilgit-Baltistan has decided to introduce "Gilgit-Baltistan Teachers Award" so that teachers are encouraged to play their respective roles.

For that matter, teachers will be assessed on the basis of steps taken by them to increase student's enrollment, Education of Women and Girls, disabled children and in introducing technical and vocational skills amongst students, a press release on Friday said.

The innovations will further include need-based and student-specific curriculum covering essentials like out-of-box methods for promotion of education and critical thinking, employment of technology, promotion of local/endangered languages and highlighting of challenges faced by society.

Government of Gilgit-Baltistan will honour three such teachers who have demonstrated outstanding and unwavering resolve and commitment to their profession. The selection will be monitored by Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners in the respective divisions and districts.

A committee consisting of representation from the Government, Education Sector and civil society will then scrutinize the nominations and finalize the subject award.

The GB government seeks to radically alter the paradigm of education. This involves redefining curriculum, promoting regional and International languages and inculcating critical/logical thinking skills as well as fostering culture of employees' welfare and social security. (APP)

11 outlaws held

SARGODHA: Police arrested eleven outlaws including six proclaimed offenders and recovered liquor, illegal weapons from their possession.

Police said on Saturday during a drive against drug pushers and criminals, the police teams of different police stations conducted raids within their jurisdictions and arrested five criminals including six proclaimed offenders.

They were identified as--Asif, Razaqat, Ahmed, Mohsin, Kashif, Ghulam Murtaza, Imtiaz, Asfand, Sher, Hashim, Amir and Hafeez.

Police confiscated 30 liters liquor, three pistols 30-bore and a rifle 223 bore from them. Police registered separate cases against the suspects and started investigation. (APP)

PR initiates special master level classes for engineering staff

LAHORE: Pakistan Railways has started special master level classes in railway engineering department in collaboration with Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute of Applied Sciences (PAFIST) to enhance the capacity of its engineers and technical staff.

The special master level classes have been organized through the Pakistan Railways Training academy Walton, Lahore, an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

The special cell for foreign training has also been set up at the Ministry of Railways, the official added. "A policy for transfer of technology and indigenization of railway rolling stock manufacture

in Pakistan Railways facilities is being pursued in closer collaboration with the People's Republic of China," he added.

To a question, the official said Pakistan Railways was trying to improve the punctuality of the trains. He said, to facilitate passengers, a mobile application 'Pakrail live' has also been launched for real time tracking of trains, and due to close monitoring of trains at divisional, headquarters and ministry level, the punctuality of trains has improved.

The official said outsourcing of freight trains has also been initiated under Pakistan Railways Freight Transportation Company (PRFTC) to earn more revenue for the department. (APP)

IHC bans import, export of animals

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has imposed a ban on import & export of rare species of falcons and other animals and sought a report from Ministry of Climate Change regarding total number of their sell abroad. Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the case regarding the above matter. During hearing, the petitioner's lawyer adopted the stance that foreign office used to grant temporarily permission to import the animals and they were then re-exported.

He said they used to export a young falcon after importing an old one. The chief justice remarked that apparently an illegal practice of animals' import and export was continued.

The representative of Ministry of Cli-

mate Change said a breeding process is done after the import of animals and provinces had its record.

He said that there was also a practice of animals' smuggling.

Deputy Attorney General Syed Tayyab Shah said that on the request of UAE a falcon was gifted with the approval of chief executive of the country. This gift didn't fall in trade activities, he said.

The court asked how even the chief executive could commit an illegal act. The court asked the ministry to provide a list of rare species animal. The court asked whether a giraffe could be smuggled. He questioned how many animals or giraffe died in Peshawar Zoo. The court adjourned further hearing of the case till May 23, with above instructions. (APP)

NDMA provides fire fighting equipment to Balochistan govt

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Saturday provided critical fire fighting equipment to Balochistan government to handle massive bushfire erupted in the Sherani district's forests.

On the direction of the prime minister, the Federal government has given full support to the Balochistan government to control the bushfire, said the NDMA spokesman in a statement released here. The NDMA official said that all possible assistance from Pakistan Army and Frontier Constabulary (FC) was continued to

put out the fire.

A wing of Pakistan Rangers under Article 245 has been participating in relief operations under the Balochistan government.

The NDMA official said that a helicopter was also used for firefighting efforts being continued.

He said that the federal government and the NDMA was assuring all possible assistance to Balochistan. However, extremely difficult mountainous terrain was making it difficult to control forest fire, he said. (APP)

Rs1575m released for 17 aviation projects

ISLAMABAD: The government has so far released funds amounting to Rs1,575.06 million, under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2021-22) against total allocation of Rs3,558.20 million to advance 17 different projects and schemes to ensure improved services in the aviation sector.

Out of the total disbursement of Rs1,575.06 million, around Rs733.7 million have been spent on the aviation sector projects during a 10-month period (July-April) of the current fiscal year,

according to official data available with APP.

As per the PSDP document, an amount of Rs11.077 million had been allocated for construction of double story Ladies Hostel/Barrack with provision of third storey along with Mess, Recreation Hall and allied facilities at Allama Iqbal International Airport, Rs37.581 million for construction 2X double storey Barrack with provision of third storey for Corporal to Inspectors and Assistant Director along with separate Mess and allied facilities (APP)

Supply of 10kgs wheat flour bags starts in Multan division

MULTAN: DC Multan on Friday began supply of 10-kilograms wheat flour (Atta) bags at a highly discounted price of Rs 490 to the people as per orders of Chief Minister Mian Hamza Shahbaz.

The process has been initiated in all the districts of the division including Multan, Khanewal, Vehari and Lodhran.

Deputy commissioner Rana Akhlaq Ahmad inaugurated supply at a flour mills in Multan and said that a big discount of Rs160 per bag was being given to the people relieving them of an overall burden worth Rs 200

billion, says an official release issued here. Senator Rana Mahmood ul Hassan, and PML-N leaders Sheikh Tariq Rasheed, Chaudhry Abdul Waheed Arain and Rana Tahir Shabbir were also present.

Rana Mahmood ul Hassan said the big relief was laudable step by PML-N government to save people from inflation impact. DC Rana Akhlaq said "Supply of subsidized wheat was being ensured to flour mills and it would continue unaffected particularly after subsidized wheat quota for mills is allocated." (APP)

EPA team visits brick kilns at Bandhi town

HYDERABAD: On the directives of Director General Department of Environment Protection Sindh Naeem Ahmed Mughal, the Regional office Shaheed Benazirabad is taking action against violators of Environment Law 2014 in the region.

In this regard, Assistant Director and Regional In-charge SBA Sindh Environmental Protection Agency Gul Ameer Sumbal and his team visited Madni Bricks Kiln near Mehran Highway in Bandhi town where eco-unfriendly stuff including old shoes, clothes, garbage of poultry farms and hospital waste was being used as burning material.

Assistant Director warned kiln owners against the use of prohibited burning material and directed them to appear at the office for personal hearing.



He said that use of prohibited material creates problems in sinus besides causing other disastrous diseases.

The Assistant Director appealed the general public to inform SEPA office in writing about the use of prohibited material in kilns at Phone No 0244360299 so that immediate action could be initiated against violators under Environment Law 2014. (APP)

Azerbaijan mulls comprehensive co-op with UAE in energy sector

BAKU: Azerbaijan is in very intensive discussions about broader and comprehensive participation of the UAE in the country's energy sector, Azerbaijani Minister of Energy Parviz Shahbazov told the Emirates News Agency (WAM) on the sidelines of the World Utilities Congress in Abu Dhabi last week.

"We have very ambitious plans to realize together with the UAE. Given the excellent relations between the leaderships of both countries, we want to cooperate even closer, and I am sure that we will have very comprehensive cooperation in the energy sector in the coming years," he said. The Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD), the UAE's development financing institution driving sustainable development at home and abroad, is a key finance partner for the construction project of a 230-megawatt Garadagh Solar photovoltaic power plant and is keen to sup-



port Azerbaijan further over its efforts to achieve renewable-energy goals. "We are going to continue this successful cooperation with the UAE in the future," Shahbazov said. "We are going to increase the share of renewables in energy mix up to 30 percent by 2030. However, this is also not the ultimate goal. I am sure that we will, in the coming years, review this target. Maybe we will enhance the target." Azerbaijan has an estimated solar energy potential of 23,040 megawatt (MW), according to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). (Agencies)

Canada bans Huawei, ZTE from 5G networks

OTTAWA: Canada will ban Chinese telecommunications giants Huawei and ZTE from its 5G wireless networks due to national security concerns, officials said yesterday.

The long-awaited move follows the US and other key allies, and comes on the heels of a diplomatic row between Ottawa and Beijing over the detention of a senior Huawei executive on a US warrant, which has now been resolved.

The US has warned of the security implications of giving Chinese tech companies access to telecommunications infrastructure that could be used for state espionage.

Both Huawei and Beijing have rejected the allegations, while Beijing warned of repercussions for nations placing restrictions on the telecoms equipment provider.

The company did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment on Canada's ban. Canadian industry minister Francois-Philippe Champagne and public safety minister Marco Mendicino

made the announcement at a news conference.

"Today, we're announcing our intention to prohibit the inclusion of Huawei and ZTE products and services in Canada's telecommunication systems," Champagne said.

"This follows a full review by our security agencies and in consultation with our closest allies."

Canada had been reviewing the 5G technology and network access for several years, repeatedly delaying a decision that was first expected in 2019.

It remained silent on the telecoms issue after China jailed two Canadians – diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor – in what observers believed was in retaliation for the arrest of Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wangzhou in Vancouver in December 2018 at the request of the US.

All three were released in September 2021 after Meng reached a deal with US prosecutors on the fraud charges, ending her extradition fight. (Agencies)

Britain's new nuclear plant faces more delays and costs

LONDON/PARIS: A new nuclear plant in southwest England has been delayed by another year and will cost an extra 3 billion pounds (\$3.7 billion), its developer warned, in a setback to the British government's drive for energy independence.

The Hinkley Point C plant is now expected to start in June 2027, a decade later than originally envisaged, with the project spend estimated between 25 billion and 26 billion pounds, France's EDF said late Thursday.

EDF said the pandemic had severely constrained staffing, resources and supply chains, and it could not rule out further delays.

"The risk of further delay of the two units is assessed at 15 months, assuming the absence of a new pandemic wave and no additional effects of the war in Ukraine," it said.

"The quantities of materials and engi-



neering as well as the cost of such activities, including, in particular, marine works have risen."

Jefferies analysts said the cost increase would impact the value of EDF shares, while noting the risk was flagged in the company's first-quarter results earlier this month. The shares were up 2.3% at 1111 GMT in a rallying European market.

A government spokesperson said on Friday the delays would not affect Britons, who have seen their energy bills soar along with a wider increase in prices due in part to the war in Ukraine. (Agencies)

Mercedes sells world's most expensive car at Sotheby's auction

TOKYO: A Mercedes-Benz car has been auctioned off for a whopping \$143 million, making it the world's most expensive car ever sold, auctioneer Sotheby's has said.

"A 1955 Mercedes-Benz 300 SLR Uhlenhaut Coupé from 1955 has been sold at auction for a record price of €135,000,000 to a private collector," the auction house said in a statement.

The car is one of two prototypes manufactured by the Mercedes-Benz racing department and named after its engineer Rudolf Uhlenhaut.

The 1955 model of the vehicle is considered by automotive experts and enthusiasts as "the most beautiful car in the world" in its engineering and design.

"The remarkable 300 SLR was based on the hugely successful W 196 R Grand Prix car which won two World Championships in the hands of Juan Manuel Fangio, but with its engine enlarged to 3.0 litres for sports car racing," the statement said.

"The car was capable of 180 mph, making it one of the fastest road legal cars to



have ever been created at the time." Peter Wallman, spokesperson for RM Sotheby's said words can't tell the importance and significance of this sale.

"It's reasonable to say that nobody ever imagined that this car would ever be offered for sale, so for Mercedes-Benz to ask RM Sotheby's to conduct the auction was an absolute honour."

Mercedes-Benz's Heritage chief, Marcus Breitschwerdt, noted the car will remain accessible for public display on special occasions and the second prototype will be shown in Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart.

The \$143 million car bid passed the existing record of \$95 million belonging to 1962 Ferrari 250 GTO sold by RM Sotheby's in 2018. (Agencies)

Global economy on the brink of recession, IIF says

WASHINGTON: The global economy is "teetering on the brink of recession" as the war in Ukraine, Covid-19 lockdowns in China and a hawkish US Federal Reserve weigh on activity worldwide, the Institute of International Finance said in a report.

In its latest forecast, the IIF estimates global gross domestic product to grow 2.2 per cent this year, with activities slowing to 0.5 per cent in the fourth quarter. The Euro area as well as emerging markets, excluding China, are anticipated to go into a recession by the end of the year.

"Since the statistical carryover from 2021 is 2.3 per cent, this is a de facto flatlining of global GDP," the report said. The IIF's estimates are below the latest prediction from the International Monetary Fund, which has also lowered its

growth forecast this year, due to the Ukraine war and inflation stoked by soaring commodity prices.

The IMF projects global growth at 3.6 per cent this year and next, down 0.8 and 0.2 percentage points from its January forecast, respectively.

With the possibility of a recession, market regulators must approach policy normalisation more cautiously, the IIF said. "In the past, rising uncertainty and mounting recession risk have had important effects on investor psychology, making markets less tolerant of monetary policy tightening that is seen as no longer warranted," the institute said.

It cited the Fed's last rate hiking cycle in December 2018, which it was forced to end abruptly after the S&P 500 index fell sharply. Markets judged that hike to be "unwarranted", given the escalating



trade war between the US and China at the time, the report said.

"The risk of a similar market tantrum is rising again now as markets fret about a global recession.

The Fed has locked in a steady pace of balance sheet run-off to start in June, amid a very sharp tightening in US financial conditions that looks on the verge of becoming disorderly," it said. (Agencies)

Pak's pavilions to be setup in Beijing, on TikTok to promote trade

BEIJING: Pakistan's national pavilions (offline and online) will be established in Beijing and on the famous Chinese social media platform TikTok to promote Pakistan's high-quality products in Chinese offline and online markets.

Pakistan Ambassador to China, Moin ul Haque held a meeting with Lu Hongjun, president of the China Asian Economic Development Association Urban Cooperation Committee (CAEDA-UCC) and greatly appreciated CAEDA's proactive role in strengthening bilateral trade ties and promoting Pakistan's high-quality products in Chinese offline and online markets.

He also expressed his confidence that

proposed Pakistan's national pavilions in Beijing and on TikTok will serve as promising platforms for the promotion of trade linkages, business expansion, cultural promotion and people-to-people exchanges between two iron-brothers.

Lu Hongjun thanked the Ambassador for his continuous support for establishment of Pakistan's national pavilions and for promoting trade ties between two brotherly countries.

He also assured CAEDA's full commitment to complete these proposed pavilions at the earliest. Ambassador Haque said, "We have signed a letter of cooperation with the business association of China to establish Pakistan's online

pavilion on the very popular Chinese social media platform TikTok which is now promoting trade relationships with a number of countries."

He said the online pavilion; the first national pavilion of any country to be established on TikTok will help in promoting Pakistani products in China. Ambassador Haque observed that the trade between our two countries will be expanding very fast in the coming years.

"China is already Pakistan's largest trading partner. Last year, we had a record increase of Pakistan's exports to China and the agro products, food products, leather and textile are now becoming very popular in China," he added. (Agencies)

Uzbek envoy hinted at possibility of Pak-Uzbekistan FTA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Aybek Arif Usmanov on Friday said that the possibility of signing a free trade agreement between Pakistan and Uzbekistan cannot be ruled out.

A Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) has been signed for the promotion of bilateral liberal trade between the two countries, which has a great potential to increase bilateral trade in the future, Ambassador Aybek Arif Usmanov told APP here.

The Ambassador said that a bilateral PTA and Transit Trade Agreement had been signed between Pakistan and Uzbekistan which also facilitated the movement of land trade between the two countries in-

cluding trucks.

He said that the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in Pakistan and Uzbekistan could play a better role in promoting bilateral trade if there was a similar trilateral agreement in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

He said that after signing such an agreement, economic integration in Central Asia and South Asian countries would increase and regional trade also would increase.

He said that regional trade is needed at this time and in regional trade we have the best examples of the European Union (EU) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) where regional



trade and economic connectivity is the best example.

Replying to a question he said that the promotion of trade and trade connectivity between Pakistan and Uzbekistan and other Central Asian States is essential for regional trade. (APP)

IT exports increased by 29pc

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin Ul Haque here on Friday said the Information Technology (IT) exports have surged at the growth rate of 29.29 percent in ten months of the current financial year.

In a statement, he said, "ICT export remittances, including telecommunication, computer and information services for the period July 2021 to April 2022 during FY2021-22 have surged to US \$2.198 billion at a growth rate of 29.29 percent in comparison to US \$1.7 billion during the same period in FY 2020-21." He said in April 2022, the ICT export remittances are US \$249 million at a growth rate of 29. (APP)

Japan's imports record high in April

TOKYO: Japan's import costs hit a record high in April owing to rising energy costs and the yen's depreciation, the government said in a report on Thursday. According to the finance ministry, the record high import costs led to Japan booking a goods trade deficit of 839.2 billion Yen (6.52 billion U.S. Dollars) in the recording period.

From a year earlier, the country's imports climbed 28.2 percent to 8.92 trillion yen (69.34 billion U.S. dollars), which marked the highest since January 1979 when comparable data became available.

The ministry's data also showed that Japan booked a trade deficit for a ninth straight month in April, which was the longest run of red ink since February 2015 when Japan's deficit ran for 32 consecutive months. (APP)

Qatar ready to supply LNG to Germany from 2024

DOHA: Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said, on Friday, that the Qatar Energy oil and gas company could start shipping liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Germany from its terminal in the US state of Texas in 2024. In an interview for German newspaper Handelsblatt, Al Thani said, "Extractions at our North Dome gas field will be expanded no sooner than in 2026, possibly in 2025. But we expect that our Golden Pass LNG plant in Texas, in which Qatar Energy has a share of 70%, will reach enough capacity as early as in 2024 for us to be able to supply [gas] to Germany."

Since Moscow launched its special mil-

itary operation on February 24 in response to the breakaway Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics' request for assistance in fending off Ukrainian provocations, the European Union has been attempting to cut off Russian gas from its markets. European leaders have repeatedly stated that the EU will seek alternative energy sources from around the world, as well as increase the share of renewables.

On Wednesday, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen unveiled the REPowerEU initiative, which aims to phase out Russian energy resources. Its tools will be foreign gas imports and an increase in the EU's share of renewable energy. (Agencies)

British Airways owner orders 50 boeing 737 MAX Jets

LONDON: British Airways owner IAG said Thursday it has ordered 50 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft worth \$6.25 billion at list prices in a boost for the crisis-hit jet after two deadly crashes.

The news comes amid recovery in the global aviation sector, which was ravaged by the deadly Covid pandemic, but analysts expressed doubt over whether it was a vote of confidence for Boeing or the industry.

"International Airlines Group has reached agreement with Boeing to order 25 737-8200 and 25 737-10 aircraft, plus 100 options," IAG said in a statement, adding it had been given a "substantial" discount. "The aircraft will be delivered between 2023 and 2027 and can be used by any airline in the group for fleet re-



placement." IAG, which owns also Spanish carriers Iberia and Vueling, said the order was subject to approval by its shareholders.

The European airlines giant had announced a letter of intent to buy 200 MAX jets three years ago at the Paris Air Show, despite deadly crashes involving the aircraft in 2018 and 2019. "The addition of new Boeing 737s is an important part of IAG's short-haul fleet renewal," IAG chief executive Luis Gallego said in the statement. (APP)

McIlroy seizes PGA lead as Tiger, Spieth struggle



TULSA: Rory McIlroy has fired his best opening round at a major in 11 years to seize the lead at the PGA Championship, while Tiger Woods struggled in his second comeback event after severe leg injuries. Sparked by four consecutive birdies, matching his longest such run in a major, McIlroy delivered his best opening round in a major on Thursday, since a 65 at the 2011 US Open which he won for his first major title. "It was a great start to the tournament," McIlroy said. "It was nice to get off to that good start and sort of keep it going." Four-time major winner McIlroy started on the back nine with 15-time major winner Woods and Jordan Spieth before

a huge crowd. Woods, who returned last month at the Masters 14 months after a car crash left him unable to walk for months, birdied the 10th and par-3 14th but made bogeys on six of his last 10 holes to shoot 74 while Spieth, chasing a win for a career Grand Slam, stumbled to a 72. "Off to a good start," Woods said. "Hit a lot of bad iron shots late. I just never got the ball close to have any good birdie putts. I kept putting it into bad spots. It was a frustrating day." McIlroy, who has not led or shared a lead after any major round since the 2014 PGA, battled poor major starts but the Masters runner-up reeled off four consecutive birdies from the 12th through 15th holes. The 33-year-old from Northern Ireland dropped his approach inches from the cup and birdied the par-4 12th, blasted out of a bunker at the par-5 13th to two feet and sank the birdie putt and curled in a spectacular 26-foot birdie putt at the par-3 14th. (Agencies)

Qatar World Cup to feature female referees in first for tournament

DOHA: Women referees will officiate matches at the men's World Cup for the first time in Qatar this year, the sport's governing body FIFA announced on Thursday. Three women referees and three women assistant referees will be part of the global showpiece event in Qatar, which will be held from Nov. 21 to Dec. 18. Referees Stephanie Frappart from France, Salima Mukansanga from Rwanda and Japan's Yoshimi Yamashita, as well as assistant referees Neuza Back from Brazil, Karen Diaz Medina from Mexico and American Kathryn Nesbitt have all been called up. A total of 36 referees, 69 assistant referees and 24 video match officials have been chosen by FIFA for the tournament.

"This concludes a long process that began several years ago with the deployment of female referees at FIFA men's junior and senior tournaments," said Pierluigi Collina, FIFA Referees Committee chairman. "They deserve to be at the FIFA World Cup because they constantly perform at a really high level, and that's the important factor for us. "As always, the criteria we have used is 'quality first' and the selected match officials represent the highest level of refereeing worldwide." Frappart became the first female official to be involved in European Championship matches after UEFA included her in the list of referees for the tournament last year. (Agencies)

India's Nikhat Zareen wins gold at Women's World Boxing C'ships

ANKARA: India's Nikhat Zareen won the gold medal in the 52kg category at the Women's World Boxing Championship with a win over Thailand's Jitpong Jutamas in the fly-weight final in Istanbul, Turkey. Nikhat thus becomes only the fifth Indian women's boxer after Mary Kom, Sarita Devi, Jenny RL and Lekha KC to win a gold at the World Championships. The 25-year-old Zareen is a former junior youth world champion. Against her Thai opponent in the final, Nikhat fought with brilliance and brought home the gold medal. The judges scored the bout 30-27, 29-28, 29-28, 30-27, 29-28 in the Indian's favour. Zareen was in top form as she used her technical acumen and covered to court well to outwit her nimble-footed opponent. Nikhat managed to impress all the



judges in the first round as she landed far more punches than the Thai boxer. The second round was tighter and Jitpong clinched it 3-2. Needing to get just one judge on her side in the final round, Nikhat went all in and slammed the door on her opponent to eventually record a 5-0 unanimous decision in her favour. The Nizamabad (Telangana)-born boxer became the only fifth Indian woman to secure gold medal at the World Boxing Championships after record six-time champion Mary Kom (2002, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2018). (Agencies)

WWE announces injuries to Riddle and Randy Orton after smack down

NEW YORK: WWE has announced that Riddle and Randy Orton, RK-Bro, are undergoing medical evaluation after they suffered a beat down at the hands of The Bloodline on Friday's SmackDown. WWE tweeted that Riddle has suffered a bruised hip and lower back, and both he and Orton are undergoing medical evaluation. We noted earlier how SmackDown ended with Roman Reigns & The Usos destroying RK-Bro with steel steps. Jey Uso then put Riddle through the announcer's table with an Uso splash off the top rope, and Reigns locked in the guillotine



on both Orton and Riddle, eliciting loud boos from fans at Van Andel Arena in Grand Rapids, Michigan. WWE also cut to shots of kids crying and several displeased fans. The beat down occurred after The Usos beat RK-Bro to

become the Undisputed WWE Tag Team Champions. It is possible the injuries are a part of a storyline to keep RK-Bro off WWE TV for a while. Riddle is reportedly set to wrestle Reigns at the Money in the Bank Premium Live Event on July 2. Furthermore, Orton is rumored to wrestle Reigns at SummerSlam scheduled for July 30. With Roman Reigns not advertised for next month's Hell in a Cell event, it's likely that The Bloodline vs. RK-Bro feud resumes when Randy Orton and Riddle return from their storyline injuries. (APP)

Balochistan plans mega sports gala

QUETTA: The Balochistan government has been planning to organize a mega sports event for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the first week of June this year to provide an opportunity to exhibit their hidden talent and engage them in healthy activities. Sports and Youth Affairs department would also provide training to the PWDs to bring forward their talent and provide them healthy environment, said an official of Balochistan government. The official said, sports department would also organized national and international level sports competitions in Quetta for its players to boost sports activities in the province. He added that they were providing full support to the youth of Balochistan to exhibit their abilities to the world. The official said that in order to bring the country level games in Quetta the government had established an international level sports complex and stadium to provide world class sports facilities to the youth. (APP)

Osaka returns to French Open with questions over form, fitness

PARIS - Naomi Osaka returns to Roland Garros looking to banish the memories of her withdrawal 12 months ago, but hampered by concerns over her clay-court form and fitness. The former world number one pulled out of last year's French Open ahead of the second round, citing mental health issues. She had been threatened with expulsion and fined by organisers over her refusal to attend press conferences. Osaka then spent large parts of the remainder of the 2021 season off the court and has struggled this campaign with injury. The Japanese star withdrew from last week's Italian Open to rest an Achilles problem and try to regain full fitness for the Grand Slam tournament in Paris, where she will be unseeded at a major for the first time since the 2018 Australian Open. The 24-year-old has slipped



to 38th in the WTA rankings going into Sunday's start of the French Open, but was as low as number 78 in March. Osaka showed she could still compete for the biggest titles the following week, reaching the Miami Open final -- her first on the WTA Tour since the 2021 Australian Open -- before losing to world number one Iga Swiatek. "Only a couple days ago I was celebrating getting back into the top 50 but I don't take things like that for granted," the four-time Grand Slam champion said after that defeat. (Agencies)

Prince club beat Khyber club in COAS inter-club Hockey championship

SWABI: Two timely goals scored by center forward Aamir Khan guided Prince Club a thumping victory against Khyber Club in the ongoing Chief of the Army Staff Inter-Club Hockey Championship being played here at Yar Hussain Hockey ground on Friday. The match started on a fast note and both Prince Club and Khyber Club raided each other's defence with some fine inroads and attacking strategies. Khyber Club took three penalty corners in the first quarter but failed to score any goal due to poor handling of the ball. It was the second quarter when Khyber Club got a penalty stroke but the attempt of Imtiaz was nicely saved by Yousaf Ali, the goal-keeper of the Prince Club. It was a spectacular attempt but was nicely intercepted by Yousaf Ali while diving to his left. On the other hand after goal-less two quarters, Prince Hockey Club staged a strong comeback and took the lead in the third quarter when Aamir netted a fine goal and six minute later scored another goal through field attempt to make the tally 2-0 at the end of the third quarter.



It was the fourth and last quarter when Ibrahim dribbled past three defenders and zoomed into the danger zone where he slammed in a beautiful goal through field attempt. Thus taking 3-0 lead, Prince Club dominated the proceedings and did not allow Khyber Club to strike back. In the second match played on a hot note Shahbaz Club defeated Golden Club by solitary goal scored by left winger Waqas Khan on the penalty corner. The match started on a fast tempo and both Shahbaz club and Golden Club forwards raided on each other's defence with some fine moves were also witnessed. Surprisingly none of the team despite having some goal-fetching chances failed to score any goal. (APP)

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE: MAY 23 - 29, 2022

- It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.

ARIES: Things on the home and family front are looking good, Aries. You're in the company of those who bring joy and uplift your Spirit, so there's a lot to be grateful for right now. Those who've been struggling to find a space of their own or a suitable housemate to share an existing apartment with, could get lucky in the days to come. Remember to have an open mindset and say 'yes' more than you say 'no'. Somebody in your circle could be instrumental in opening new doors for you.

TAURUS: The tighter you hold onto your reins and the more you resist change, the more you will find yourself stuck in cycles of self-sabotage. On the other hand, by letting go of your false sense of control, you will allow Spirit to come through. Trust that everything you are attracting right now is supporting your growth. Trust that whatever is being taken away from you is not in alignment with your highest good. Surrender takes practice, beautiful. Something tells us you're getting better at it by the day.

GEMINI: But, it all happens for a reason, Gemini! It all happens for a reason. You understand that the Universe wasn't keep your share of blessings away

from you. It was merely preparing you to receive what you have asked for. Today, you're grateful for it all: the love, support and abundance that is pouring into to pour into your life from every corner. Just remember to pay the kindness forward. Your generosity will be highly rewarded at this time.

CANCER: We've got a case of analysis-paralysis on the cards. But, overthinking your problems is never the solution. So, put your headphones on and listen to your favourite self-help podcast. Even better, turn to a meditative playlist for much-needed solace. By focusing your breath and returning to the present moment, you will be able to move into a space of receptivity, which in turn will make you a magnet for the answers "and" creative solutions you seek.

LEO: You're trying to do right by others, Leo. You're doing your best to offer them the support they need at this time, whether it's emotional or financial. But, could this need to 'fix' everybody around you be taking a toll on your mental health? Something to think about as you sip on your morning tea, beautiful. Remember, we're not propagating selfishness. We're not telling to shut all doors, either. We're simply reminding you of the power of healthy boundaries, which is something you are being called to work on right now.



VIRGO: What if we said the Universe has a plan in place for you? What if we said that you are being guided towards your best future now? Overhead at the cosmic conference: the doors that are being opened for you are portals of abundance, beautiful. Things on the love and romance front are also looking good for you. Single Virgos may find themselves flooded with proposals that are coming in through the family. We understand that you've had certain reservations about the process, and they're all valid. Convince yourself to assess the offers at hand with an open mind nonetheless. Something tells us you will be pleasantly surprised.

LIBRA: You've been loved many times, Libra, but never with this much depth, passion, and intensity. What is being poured into your chalice today is truly a gift. A gift from the mysterious forces above and below. Allow yourself to savour every drop without the fear that it will be taken away from you any moment now. It is safe for you open your heart again. It is safe for you to come as you are.

SCORPIO: But, who told you prioritising your needs is an act of selfishness? Who told you need to save the world at the cost of your own mental health? Today, you're being asked to become aware of the stories you've been telling yourself. To understand where they stem from and how they keep you away from your own power. Breaking old patterns isn't easy, Scorpio. The good thing is, you're being supported to make that paradigm shift.

SAGITTARIUS: Your love knows no bounds, Sagittarius. You're the kind of person who gives without any calculations when you truly care about the other, and that's what makes you a pleasure to be around. Just make sure you allow yourself to receive as much as you give; to be nourished by those in your circle. By giving yourself the permission to melt and merge, you will experience alchemy of the highest order.

CAPRICORN: The start of the week has you feeling aesthetic AF, Capricorn. You're in the mood to upgrade your car, your studio "and" your wardrobe. You're in the mood to bring more beauty and refinement into the world around you. Just make sure you keep your budget in mind before you 'add to cart' or make a trip to your favourite boutiques today.

ACQUARIUS: You're likely to face opposition today, from members of your clan and strangers alike. But, they know nothing about your story, Aquarius. They know nothing about the battles you have fought before you got to this point in your existence. Beware of making their stories your story. Beware of letting them influence the decisions you make at this time. You are "this" close to the breakthrough moment you've been working towards. Trust your inner compass and keep putting in the work.

PISCES: They say fortune favours the brave— a Universal truth you resonate with on a deep level. You understand that you are at a turning point right now and that the only way to align yourself with your Destiny is to take a great risk. So, let go of your seat-belt, beautiful. Get ready to make wild, passionate love to the unknown. Something tells us your life will never again be the same!

Indonesia summons UK envoy over LGBT flag

JAKARTA: Indonesia summoned Britain's ambassador today to explain the raising of a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) flag at its embassy, and urged foreign missions to respect local "sensitivities" following a backlash among conservatives.

Barring the sharia-ruled province of Aceh, homosexuality is not illegal in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country, although it is generally considered taboo.

The rainbow LGBT flag was flown alongside the British flag at the country's embassy in Jakarta on May 17 to mark the

International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, according an Instagram post by the embassy. Alumni 212 Brotherhood, an influential conservative Islamic movement, in a statement said the flag sullied the "sacred values of Indonesia". Teuku Faizasyah, foreign ministry spokesman, confirmed British ambassador Owen Jenkins had been summoned.

"The foreign ministry reminds foreign representatives to be respectful of the sensitivities among Indonesians on matters relevant with their culture, religion and belief," he said. (Agencies)

Canada storms kill 8, leave half a million without power

TORONTO: The death toll from powerful thunderstorms in Canada's two most populous provinces this weekend rose to at least eight, authorities said on Sunday, as emergency crews continued a massive clean-up to restore power to half a million people.

The storms, which lasted more than two hours Saturday afternoon and packed the power of a tornado, left a trail of destruction in parts of Ontario and Quebec. Wind gusts as strong as 132km per hour felled trees, uprooted electric poles and toppled many metal transmission towers, utility companies said.

Electricity companies were scrambling on Sunday to restore transmission lines. Most of the deaths from the storms occurred when people were hit by falling trees, authorities said.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the federal government was ready to help those in need. "We're thinking of everyone affected, and thanking the crews who are working to restore power," Trudeau tweeted on Sunday.

Hydro One, Ontario's biggest electricity distribution company, said in a tweet on Sunday that crews are responding to significant damage. Environment Canada had issued mobile alerts warning of the severe thunderstorms. (Agencies)

Iran will 'avenge' death of Guards colonel, says President Raisi

TEHRAN: Iran will avenge the killing of a Revolutionary Guards colonel who was shot dead in Tehran, president Ebrahim Raisi warned today.

Colonel Sayyad Khodai was shot dead yesterday outside his home by assailants on motorcycles, in a killing Iran blamed on "elements linked to the global arrogance", its term for the US and its allies including Israel.

It was the most high profile killing inside Iran since the November 2020 murder of top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh. Raisi said: "I insist on the serious pursuit (of the killers) by security officials, and I have no doubt that the blood of this great martyr will be avenged."

"There is no doubt that the hand of global arrogance can be seen in this crime," he added, echoing what the Guards said the

previous day. He was speaking just ahead of visiting Oman, where he will meet with Sultan Haitham.

Khodai's funeral was due to take place in Tehran at 5pm local time.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps - the ideological arm of Iran's military - described Khodai as a "defender of the sanctuary", a term used for those who work on behalf of the Islamic republic in Syria or Iraq.

Iran maintains significant political influence in both countries, notably having backed president Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria's grinding civil war.

State television noted that Khodai was "known" in Syria, where Iran has acknowledged deploying "military advisers". (Agencies)

Hundreds protest return of Spain's exiled ex-king Juan Carlos

MADRID: Holding signs reading "Justice" and "The Borbón in prison", the demonstrators gathered near the Spanish capital's royal palace. A government spokesman put their number at 300.

Juan Carlos this week returned to Spain for the first time since August 2020 to attend a regatta, after investigations into alleged corruption and money laundering were shelved in March.

The 84-year-old was admired for his role in Spain's democratic transition following the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, but revelations about the opaque origins of his fortune have tarnished his reputation among many Spaniards.

The former monarch is due to visit his son King Felipe VI in Madrid on Monday before returning to the Emirati capital Abu Dhabi, his new permanent residence.

Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's government still expects "explanations" from Juan Carlos, who abdicated in favour of Felipe in 2014. Media reports say the government opposes his staying at the Zarzuela Palace, Felipe's official residence.

But in the northwestern port of Sanxenxo, where Juan Carlos competed in the regatta this weekend, dozens of onlookers welcomed him, shouting "Long live the king, long live Spain!". (Agencies)

Two French Rafale jets collide during airshow, land safely

PARIS: Two Rafale fighters of the French Air Force were involved in a minor collision on Sunday, but managed to land safely.

The incident happened during the Cognac airshow in the commune of Chateaubernard. Colonel Nicholas Liot, commander of the Cognac-Chateaubernard base, was quoted by AFP as saying that two Rafale fighters of the 30th Fighter Squadron of the French Air Force were involved in the accident.

One of the aircraft lost part of its tailfin in the collision and the debris fell and damaged a house in the town of Gensac-la-Pallue. AFP reported the two aircraft landed without difficulty and no injuries were reported in the incident on the ground.



The French Air Force and local administration have launched investigations into the incident.

The Cognac airshow is a major event organised at the airbase of Cognac-Chateaubernard. The two-day event includes both static displays of aircraft on the ground and flight displays, including by the Patrouille de France aerobatics team. (Agencies)

Sri Lankan medicine shortage a death sentence for some, doctors say

COLOMBO: A shortage of medicine caused by an economic crisis in Sri Lanka could soon cause deaths, doctors said, as hospitals are forced to postpone life-saving procedures for their patients because they do not have the necessary drugs.

Sri Lanka imports more than 80 percent of its medical supplies but with foreign currency reserves running out because of the crisis, essential medications are disappearing from shelves and the healthcare system is close to collapse.

At the 950-bed Apeksha cancer hospital on the outskirts of the commercial capital, Colombo, patients, their loved ones and doctors feel increasingly helpless in

the face of the shortages which are forcing the suspension of tests and postponement of procedures including critical surgery.

"It is very bad for cancer patients," said Dr Roshan Amarantunga.

"Sometimes, in the morning we plan for some surgeries (but) we may not be able to do on that particular day ... as (supplies) are not there."

If the situation does not improve quickly, several patients would be facing a virtual death sentence, he said.

Sri Lanka is grappling with its most devastating economic crisis since independence in 1948, brought about by COVID-19 battering. (Agencies)

'Israeli troops' fighting Russia in Ukraine



MOSCOW: Israeli Special Forces are said to be fighting against Russian troops in Ukraine, Sama news agency reported on Sunday. An Israeli TV channel aired footage of the soldiers, confirming earlier reports that Israel is involved in the fight against Russia.

The Israeli soldiers in the footage aired on 12 May apparently not only train the Ukrainians, but also fight alongside with them. The soldiers in the video speak He-

brew in a "defiant" manner as they prepare to launch an attack using Israeli tactics against the Russians. The video has gone viral on social media, said Sama.

A video on social media in April showed a fighter speaking in Hebrew saying: "We want to give thanks to the people of Israel and the government of Israel for the help they give us. We are here fighting against the Russians in this very difficult war." (Agencies)

Armenia-Azerbaijan joint commission to meet at border 'soon,' EU says

BRUSSELS: The first meeting of a joint commission on the demarcation and security of the borders between Armenia and Azerbaijan will be soon held on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, European Council President Charles Michel said in Brussels after talks with the leaders of the two South Caucasus countries.

Michel held bilateral meetings with both Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev before a trilateral meeting in which a peace plan for Nagorno-Karabakh was discussed.

"We discussed humanitarian issues in detail, including demining, the release

of detainees, and the fate of the missing. The first meeting of the joint commission on the border will be held in the coming days at the interstate border, where all issues related to demarcation and ensuring the best security of the border will be discussed," Michel said, without giving a precise date.

Armenia lost control over parts of the breakaway region in a 2020 war that ended with a Russian-brokered ceasefire that an estimated 2,000 Russian troops have been deployed to monitor. Nagorno-Karabakh, which had been under ethnic Armenian control for nearly three decades, is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan. (Agencies)

UK PM's father gets French citizenship



LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's father has officially become a French national. Stanley Johnson announced on Friday that he acquired French citizenship because he wanted to keep "a link" with the European Union (EU) after Brexit.

The French Ministry of Justice has confirmed that Stanley Johnson, a former member of the European Parliament, was granted French nationality on Wednes-

day. He had applied in November 2021. The 81-year-old said he was "absolutely delighted" to have secured French nationality. Asked about his son's reaction to the news, Stanley Johnson said he got a one-word response from Boris: "Magnifique" (wonderful in French).

Stanley Johnson and his son were on opposite ends of the political spectrum when it came to Brexit. While Boris Johnson had spearheaded the campaign to leave the EU, his father had voted to remain in the bloc during the 2016 referendum.

The most significant reason for getting a French citizenship was "really sentimental", admitted Stanley Johnson, as his mother was French; she was born in Versailles, according to a Guardian report. (Agencies)

Ex-Malaysian cop turned dolphin trainer elected as Australian MP

KUALA LUMPUR: A former Malaysian policeman who later turned to training dolphins has been elected as an Australian member of Parliament after winning the Perth seat of Tangey today.

Mr Sam Lim, who was born in Malaysia and is the eldest of eight children, dethroned Liberal Ben Morton with a 9.5 per cent margin in what many called an unlikely result in the Western Australian state.

According to reports from 9News, Mr Lim was a former police officer in Malaysia serving for two years before he said that he had to quit due to the low pay. He then became a dolphin trainer at a safari park in Malaysia. Mr Lim said the park went into liquidation, so all the animals were released into the ocean.

"That was the worst part of my career at that time, but we got to say goodbye to them.

"But yet, we feel very happy they are



back to their home," Mr Lim was quoted as saying by the Australian news agency. Growing up in a poor family with no power or water, Mr Lim said he had to struggle the first 15 years of his life, but credits those hard times for building his character and preparing him for hardships. After losing his job as a dolphin trainer, Mr Lim turned to business and attributes this success to being able to migrate his family to Australia in 2002 with his wife and three children and joined Western Australia's Police Academy in 2006. (Agencies)

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