

Rs1.25 hike in electricity tariff

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The electricity price has been increased by Rs1.25 per unit on account of quarterly adjustment. The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) issued a notification regarding the increase in the electricity price on Monday. The increase in the electricity price was made on account of the quarterly adjustment for months from January to March 2023.

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CTD nabs 10 terrorists

PESHAWAR (APP): The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Monday arrested 10 saboteurs who were planning to carry out terrorism activities during holy month of Muharram. According to CTD press release, the arrested terrorists belonged to banned outfit Daesh, adding that all the terrorists were arrested from different areas including Peshawar and Hangu during intelligence based operations.

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Green Pakistan Initiative to usher in agri revolution, create four mln jobs: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday said that the Green Pakistan Initiative would eventually bring about the second agriculture revolution, in addition to the creation of four million jobs in the country.

Addressing a seminar on agriculture and food security, he said agriculture was the backbone of the country and the farmers worked hard to provide food to millions of people and they would be remembered in the history as builders of Pakistan. He said the farmers had the due right to avail incentives for the agriculture sector and it was the responsibility of the government to provide them all possible assistance for overall development and progress. "Farmers work hard but it is common knowledge that they are facing lack of resources," he added. The prime minister said growth in the agriculture sector would definitely bring Pakistan at par with developed countries.

He said hard work was imperative to ensure progress of Pakistan, adding the green revolution in 1960s was due to the introduction of new varieties of seed, building of dams and canals and modern agriculture practices in the country.

He said farmers should get more profits than the cost of production of their crops including wheat. The government did increase the support price of wheat

which led to record produce of the commodity, he added. He was hopeful that due to the incentives given by the government, cotton produce would also enhance. He said it was the responsibility of the government to provide standard seeds, fertilizers and pesticides to the farmers and equip them with the latest technology. Shehbaz Sharif appreciated the new agriculture initiative for giving real-time information about any pest attacks.

He expressed concern over the adulterated drugs given to the farmers and warned of strict action against the culprits. He lauded the vision of Army Chief Syed Asim Munir for development of agriculture sector in the country. "We have to implement the vision for agriculture through collaboration among federal and provincial governments, agriculture departments and research institutes," he added. He said the government was ready to fund the agriculture research centres, adding unfortunately there had been no worthwhile work due to the culture of favouritism.

Shehbaz Sharif said state-owned enterprises were losing Rs 600 billion annually. Pakistan imported \$ 4.5 billion of palm oil which was a burden on the national economy, he noted. There was a time when Pakistan was producing more cotton than its neighbouring country but then it lost the track and was

now producing less of staple crops, he said adding Pakistan could not afford more foreign loans but was forced to save its economy from default by getting loans from friendly countries, he added. The PM said gulf countries were ready to invest in the agriculture sector and bring modern machinery to boost crops production in the country.

Pakistan needed political stability to attract investment as in an unstable environment, investors shied away, he added.

Pakistan could attract investment of \$ 40 to 50 billion in the years ahead and it could make food exports to the gulf countries which were presently importing food products worth \$ 40 billion.

He was of the view that Pakistan had to compete with the world and increase its exports and added the economy would get revived in the next two years.

"It is demand of our national security that the country's food security and economic security should be strengthened," he said.

PM reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to meet UN SDGs with enhanced cooperation: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that Pakistan was keen to expand its cooperation with partner countries to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-2030.

The prime minister virtually participated in the First

High-Level Forum on Global Development Initiative (GDI). Held under the theme of Global Development Initiative: "Echo the Development Agenda and Call for Global Action", the forum was organized by the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. PM Shehbaz, in his remarks, stressed the salience of international development cooperation to present a unified global response for socio-economic development, mitigation of climate change threats, and galvanizing new drivers of growth for humanity's enduring progress and prosperity. He also appreciated China for launching the Global Development Initiative for achieving shared goals of inclusive and sustainable global development.

Extending Pakistan's firm support to the GDI, the prime minister said that Pakistan would continue its multifaceted cooperation with China for swift implementation of the GDI projects in Pakistan.

The event was attended by Wang Yi, member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China and Director of the General Office of CPC Foreign Affairs Commission, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang and Chairman CIDCA, Luo Zhaohui. Leading experts and executives from several countries and international organizations also participated in the forum.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif inaugurates Green Pakistan Initiative, COAS General Syed Asim Munir hands over the inaugural scroll to the Prime Minister.

No power in world can stop Pakistan from progressing: COAS

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir said Pakistan has to progress and no power in the world can stop it from progressing, Inshallah (God Willing) as we have all kinds of potential that can take Pakistan to the top.

According to a private TV channel, Pak Army Chief addressed the Green Pakistan Seminar held at Jinnah Convention Centre in Islamabad on Monday. Addressing

the gathering Army Chief Gen Asim Munir said they all gathered here to make Pakistan green again as Allah has blessed Pakistan with many resources. General Asim Munir said Pakistanis are a talented nation and the only requirement is that all the nation contribute to its development together. He assured the nation that they as an organization for the economic development of Pakistan and all possible cooperation for the com-

pletion of this phase with full dedication and heart and soul.

Giving a reference to Holy Quraan, Gen Asim advised the people that they do not despair of Allah's mercy because only unbelievers despair of Allah's mercy.

There are only two situations for Muslims: when trouble comes to him, he is patient; when he gets happiness, he gives thanks to Almighty Allah, he added. The army chief also said that for a Muslim, despair is disbelief.

Erdogan links Sweden's NATO membership to Turkey's EU accession

ISTANBUL (Reuters): Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, in an unexpected move, said on Monday the European Union should open the way for Ankara's accession to the bloc before Turkey's parliament approves Sweden's bid to join the NATO military alliance.

Turkey's bid to join the EU has been frozen for years after membership talks were launched in 2005 under Erdogan's first term as prime minister. The ties between Ankara and members of the bloc soured several years ago, especially after a 2016 failed coup attempt in Turkey, but have since improved. The bloc depends on the help of NATO ally Ankara, particularly on migration.

In a surprise change of tack, Erdogan on Monday linked Ankara's approval of Sweden's NATO bid to Turkey finally joining the EU.

"I am calling from here on these countries that are making Turkey wait at the door of the European Union for more than 50 years," Erdogan said, speaking ahead of his departure for the NATO summit in Vilnius.

"First, come and open the way for

Turkey at the European Union and then we will open the way for Sweden, just as we did for Finland," he said, adding that he would repeat his call during the summit.

A European Commission spokesperson said NATO and EU enlargement were "separate processes." "The accession process for each candidate country is based on the merits of each country," the spokesperson said, adding that the two processes cannot be linked.

Asked about Erdogan's comments, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said while he backs Ankara's membership of the EU, as far as he was concerned Sweden had already met the conditions required to join NATO. "It is still possible to have a positive decision on Sweden in Vilnius," Stoltenberg told a news conference. Sweden and Finland applied for NATO membership last year, abandoning policies of military non-alignment that had lasted through the decades of the Cold War in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While Finland's NATO membership was green-lighted in

April, Turkey and Hungary have yet to clear Sweden's bid. Stockholm has been working to join the bloc at the summit in Vilnius. Erdogan said Sweden's accession hinged on the implementation of a deal reached last summer during the alliance's summit in Madrid, adding that no one should expect compromises from Ankara.

Ankara says Sweden has not done enough against people Turkey sees as terrorists, mainly members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) that is considered a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the EU and the United States. Sinan Ulgen, former diplomat and director of the Istanbul-based Centre for Economic and Foreign Policy Studies, said Erdogan's move would not strengthen Turkey's hand at the Vilnius summit.

"The positive side of this surprise move is that it showed Turkey still has an EU membership perspective. But it is hard to say it would help any progress on Turkey's EU membership bid," he said. Erdogan also said that an end to the war between Ukraine and Russia would ease Kyiv's NATO membership process.

Court acquits Suleman, others in money-laundering case

LAHORE (APP): A special court (central) on Monday acquitted Suleman Shehbaz and others in a Rs 16 billion money-laundering case, registered by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). Special Court Judge Bakht Fakhr Behzad announced the verdict while allowing acquittal applications of Suleman Shehbaz and others.

Earlier, the FIA submitted replies to 27 questions, asked by the court, during the proceedings.

To a court query, the FIA prosecutor submitted that a joint investigation team, headed by Dr Rizwan, had conducted an inquiry into the money-laundering charges. The court asked whether the FIA recorded statements of any witnesses during the probe. The investigation officer kept silence and did not reply.

The court questioned what action had been taken against those who kept changing their stance during the inquiry and investigation. The investigation officer responded that no action had been taken

against them.

The court asked whether there was any evidence in seven volumes of the FIA, submitted in the court earlier, and on what basis or of evidence, a challan was submitted in the court.

To a question about former FIA DG Sanaullah Abbasi's absence from the court, the FIA prosecutor replied that a letter was written to him, but he did not appear.

Suleman's counsel submitted that former FIA DG Bashir Memon had admitted that he also faced pressure for making the case.

The FIA prosecutor submitted that there was no direct evidence of money laundering against Suleman Shehbaz. The court then questioned whether there was any indirect evidence against the accused.

To which, the investigation officer submitted that the action was started in the light of the Sugar Inquiry Commission report.

To a court question about action taken against other sugar mills, the investigation officer submitted

that he was not aware of it, as their cases were not investigated by him. He submitted that the agency checked the details of accounts of Suleman Shehbaz but no evidence emerged. The court questioned then why the case was made against Suleman Shehbaz.

The investigation officer submitted that money was deposited in the accounts of Suleman and the same was withdrawn in cash. The court expressed anger at the investigation officer over failure to satisfy it, and questioned whether depositing and withdrawing money was a crime.

Subsequently, the court acquitted all the accused, while allowing their acquittal applications. In November 2020, the FIA had registered a money-laundering case against Hamza Shehbaz, Suleman Shehbaz, and others. Suleman Shehbaz and other accused had withdrawn their bail petitions after the agency gave clean chit to them in a challan, filed on June 21, 2023.

LHC dismisses petitions against Zaman Park JIT

LAHORE (APP): A Lahore High Court (LHC) three-member bench on Monday dismissed petitions against the formation of a joint investigation team (JIT), by the Punjab government, to probe 10 cases against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership and workers for allegedly attacking police and creating law and order situation outside party chairman Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence. The bench held that the provincial government had the authority to form the JIT for investigation of the said cases.

However, the bench observed that the petitioner could move individually to the trial court regarding the application of terrorism sections. The three-member bench, headed by Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh, released the reserved verdict on the petitions filed by political leaders, Fawad Chaudhry, Mussarat Jamshed Cheema and others. The court had reserved the verdict after hearing detailed arguments of the parties on May 5.

On March 22, the Home department had formed a six-member JIT with SSP Imran Kishwar its convener to investigate 10 cases registered at Civil Lines Police Station, Race Course Police Station and Shadman Police Station.

NAB decides to arrest Usman Buzdar

LAHORE (INP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore has reportedly decided to arrest ex-PTI leader and former Punjab chief minister Usman Buzdar.

According to media reports, the bureau has requested its chairman to issue an arrest warrant. Under the new ordinance, Usman Buzdar can be arrested during the inquiry stage. The NAB refused to receive a response from Usman Buzdar's lawyer on his client's non-appearance. The lawyer had said Buzdar cannot appear before the NAB's Lahore office. A case of assets beyond known sources of income, transfers and postings and irregularities in awarding contracts is going on against Usman Buzdar.

Imran's bail in May 9 violence, other cases extended till July 19

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan's bail in several cases related to May 9 incident and other events was extended Monday till July 19 next. The District and Sessions Court in Islamabad granted bail to the PTI chairman in two cases related to the May 9 incident. Additional District and Sessions Judge Farrukh Fareed Baloch heard the cases and extended the bail of Imran Khan in three cases. The court then adjourned the hearing at the request of the PTI chairman's lawyers. Also, Additional District and Sessions Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra extended the bail of Imran Khan in six cases related to the May 9 incident and other events till July 19 next.

The court also extended the bail of former first lady Bushra Bibi in the forgery case till July 19 next. The PTI chairman's lawyer

Salman Safdar appeared before the court.

Similarly, an anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Islamabad extended the bail of Imran Khan in three cases till July 19 next. The PTI chairman appeared before the court for the hearing of the cases. Two cases were registered against him at Khanna police station and one at Bhara Kahu police station.

Lawyer Salman Safdar told the court that cases against the PTI chairman had been registered on the charge of setting tyres on fire.

"There is a repetition of the same statements in three cases. This unusual appearance before the court is on the charge of setting tyres on fire," he said. ATC judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain heard the arguments of the PTI chairman's lawyer and empha-

sised transparent investigations into the cases.

He then extended the bail of Imran Khan in three cases till July 19 next.

No hearing at IHC: The Islamabad High Court could not take up Imran Khan's plea for protective bail due to the non-availability of Chief Justice Aamer Farooq. According to sources, IHC's Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani does not have the power to fix Imran Khan's pleas for hearing today.

Qureshi's interim bail extended:

An anti-terrorism court in Islamabad had extended PTI leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi's interim bail till July 18 in two cases.

ATC Judge Abul Hasnat conducted the hearing on Monday which was also attended by Qureshi and his lawyer Ali Bukhari.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb Monday said the May 9 incidents had only benefited the "enemy", but it was the nation who ultimately emerged victorious with the foiling of conspiracy against Pakistan. Ironically, she said, the "foreign agent", who masterminded the May 9 tragedy made a tweet the other day asking who benefited from the May 9 tragedy.

"Only the enemies of the country benefitted from the acts of vandalism and arson, but the people of Pakistan are the ultimate winners as the conspiracy against the country's integrity has been foiled," she said while addressing a press conference.

The minister was responding to a question posed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman on his Twitter handle asking who was benefited from the May 9 incidents of vandalising public and private properties, desecrating memorials of martyrs, and burning of ambulances, schools and mosques by the PTI workers. Marriyum said the PTI chairman claimed that his party was the biggest one in the country, but it exited only on Twitter as it had no credible spokesperson. In fact nobody wanted to come forward to defend the persistent lies churned out by its chairman.

The was a "habitual liar" and "mentally deranged person" and there was apparently no hope of his recovery, she added. Referring to the recent statement of Shahzad Akbar regarding Nawaz Sharif, she said those who had previously hurled accusations of thievery at others at the behest of PTI chief, were now testifying the innocence and integrity of Nawaz Sharif.



She pointed out that a group of individuals, operating from abroad, was actively orchestrating a malicious campaign against the state institutions through social media platforms. The "group of troublemakers" were not even hesitant to launch unwarranted attacks against several prominent figures and institutions, she added. They were the same people who were involved in the targeted campaigns against the martyrs of the Lasbela helicopter crash and the incumbent army chief, the minister remarked.

"All these people are proxies of this foreign agent, liar and fraudster," she said while referring to the PTI chief. Marriyum said the ongoing campaign against national institutions was being spearheaded by the PTI chairman who made systematic efforts to discredit and destabilize the state institutions through the misuse of social media platforms.

She expressed surprise over the PTI chief's contradictory claims, ranging from fears of assassination to potential murderous attacks on him.

She questioned the efficacy of using a mere bucket as a protective measure, emphasizing that such makeshift shields offered a little defence against such threats.

Furthermore, she highlighted that the Federal Investigation Agency had substantial evidence against those who were involved in social media campaigns against national institutions, which was currently undergoing further scrutiny and investigation. The minister declared that individuals who were engaged in dangerous games under the guise of freedom of speech had been effectively tracked and traced, and made it unequivocally clear that the PTI chief would be responsible if any harm or damage was caused by such actions.

She recalled that at first place, the PTI chairman had stated if he were arrested then there would be consequences, and at the time of his arrest he said there would be reaction. It all showed that he had planned the May 9 incidents and now strangely, he was asking who was the beneficiary. The minister also drew a comparison between the PTI and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaderships, saying the latter faced severe victimization during the PTI regime without making any hue and cry. She accused the PTI chief of fabricating false cases against his political opponents, including Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz, Hamza Shehbaz, Khawaja Asif, Rana Sanaullah, Faryal Talpur, and others, who endured the hardships of being confined to jail cells.



DG PHA visits city parks

LAHORE (APP): Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Director General (DG) Mohammad Tahir Wattoo visited various parks and greenbelts of the provincial capital on Monday and reviewed development work including horticulture on Zone 1 parks and greenbelts.

Director Horticulture Zone 1 Shah Nawaz Wattoo gave briefing to the PHA DG regarding the work on parks and greenbelts while Director Engineering Mohammad Asghar gave briefing on lighting and engineering works.

The PHA DG directed the officers to make functional all lights in the parks and improve rainwater drainage system.

He also gave instructions for speedy repairing of damaged motors in the city parks and immediate restoration and cleaning of washrooms.

The DG visited Karim Park, Nasser Bagh, Chishtian Park, Nehru Park, Gol Bagh, Football Ground Gulshan-e-Ravi and Moon Market.

LDA seals gym over fee non-payment

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) sealed the UFC gym on the main Defence Road on Monday over non-payment of commercialisation fee.

On the directions of LDA Director General Muhammad Ali Randhawa, a special team, led by Director Town Planning Zone-V Azhar Ali, took action after serving several notices for payment but gym's management ignored. The 88-kanal UFC gym on Defence Road owes millions of rupees to the LDA as the commercialization fee. The DG LDA said the operation against defaulters and law-violators would continue over non-payment of fee.

PSCA provides more than 20,000 video, audio evidences for investigation

LAHORE (APP): A delegation of DGPR research associates from the Chief Minister Internship program paid a study visit to Punjab Safe Cities Authority Headquarters, here on Monday.

The delegation, led by Director Film and Publication Hamid Javed Awan, was received and briefed by the Director Public Relations Tauseef Sabih Gondal.

The research associates were briefed on public awareness campaigns, media management, and women safety application features. The Director Public Relations said that the Integrated 15 system of Safe Cities Authority has significantly improved the police response time while the implementation of the Intelligent Traffic Management System has reduced the number of fatal accidents by 43 percent. The delegation was told that public awareness campaign is conducted through Safe City's official social media accounts and web TV.

Governor Sindh inaugurates Sindh I.T Gate

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori inaugurated the Sindh I.T. Gate here on Monday.

While talking to media persons after the inauguration, he said that they were giving importance to Information Technology (I.T.) for the promotion of innovation.

He said that the Governor House had received 1 million applications for I.T. course and 0.1 million candidates would be selected through test in the first phase whereas other candidates could also be transferred to other courses.

Kamran Tessori said that a list of roll numbers of the aspiring candidates would be uploaded on social media platforms. Condemning PTI chief Imran Khan, he said that Imran Khan merely wanted the government and he did not care about the people. It is pertinent to mention here that on the directives of the Sindh Governor, the Governor House was going to conduct three course including Artificial Intelligence (AI), Web 3.0 and Metaverse.

Swiss Ambassador calls on Sindh Governor: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori has said that there were ample opportunities for Pakistan and

Switzerland in various fields to further enhance their mutual cooperation.

This he said while talking to Ambassador of Switzerland Georg Steiner at Governor House here on Monday.

Bilateral relations, the need to further enhance bilateral ties, investment opportunities in Sindh and other matters of mutual interest were discussed in detail on the occasion. Governor Sindh said that Sindh offers ideal investment opportunities, especially for foreign investors and any investment from Swiss investors in the province would be welcomed. "They would be provided every help and assistance", Governor Sindh said.

Georg Steiner also visited the 'bell of hope' and rang the same.

Governor Sindh informed the Swiss Ambassador about the purpose of the 'bell of hope'. The Swiss envoy also went around Quaid's room, where he witnessed the personal belongings of the father of the nation Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He also inspected the packing process of ration bags under Taqatwar Pakistan Program.

He lauded the measures of Governor Sindh for the welfare and well-being of the common man.

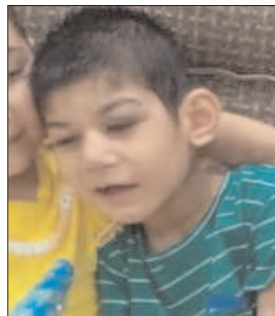
Afghan kid seeks American Ambassador help

Tooba Jan Afridi

ISLAMABAD: Reading stories of immigrant families facing great difficulties and finding themselves in dire need of aid in an alien land has become all too common.

One such case is that of Mr. Hakimi's, an Afghan family that not only suffers because they are deprived of their homeland, but also because they are forced to look after their 5-year-old son - who suffers from Cerebral Palsy - without the proper resources.

Arsham's disorder affects his ability to move and maintain balance and posture. It is caused by damage that occurs to the immature, developing brain, most often before birth; hence, he is unable to carry out daily life



activities that a healthy individual would have no problem doing. While we munch away at our favorite foods, Arsham cannot even consume bread. His sense of hearing is weak and he experiences irregular moods. Not only does he experience seizure attacks, he cannot even communicate and hence cries a lot to express his agony. The disorder that Arsham is a patient of, Cerebral Palsy

is untreatable.

Considering the situation for Mr. Hakimi's family, it's safe to say that they are going through an extremely difficult time, and the fact that they have been living in Pakistan as immigrants -- waiting on their American visa - for the last two months hasn't made things easier for them. Consider this an appeal for aid from the American Embassy on behalf of Arsham and his family. All they want is to see progress in their visa process so they can soon get better medical health facilities for Arsham in the States, and if not that then at the very least some equipment like wheelchair to facilitate Mr. Hakimi in taking care of Arsham. If you want to help out Arsham in any way, please contact his father, Mr. Hakimi on WhatsApp : 0093 78 963 0406

RWMC collects around 35 tons of garbage daily from Gujar Khan

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) lifted around 35 tons of garbage daily from the tehsil Gujar Khan area and transferred it to the Losar dump site.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of RWMC Rana Sajid Safdar on Monday said that hundreds of complaints received on the helpline and social media were addressed immediately.

The CEO informed that as many as 120 RWMC staff and a fleet of 23 vehicles including dumpers, compactors, shovels, tractor-trolleys and rickshaws were used to maintain the city's cleanliness.

He said that 120 small and eight large containers had been placed in every Union council of the tehsil for proper disposing of garbage.

The CEO said that the city had been divided into six zones while the duties of workers had also been executed in evening shifts. Rana said that besides the regular cleanliness of the city, door-to-door awareness campaigns were also conducted to

apprise the residents about the life cycle, prevalence, treatment, and prevention of dengue. The CEO said that the communication teams of RWMC carried out its campaign in the area of Union Council 15 and 20 areas, to aware the masses about the dengue virus and to motivate them to keep their surroundings clean for the elimination of such a fatal virus.

He added that the purpose of this activity was to educate the residents about the fundamental standards of cleanliness so that the citizens could apply these standards in their lives.

The teams called upon the residents to keep an eye on junkyards, schools and under-construction buildings which lead to the spread of dengue larvae and leave no place wet or stagnant water.

"We will continue such activities in the coming days as the government has issued the threat of dengue fever spread linked with public health," the CEO said.

"Keeping the surroundings clean would only help improve society, he added



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan chair an important meeting to review law and order in the province.

Nasir Shah inaugurates project for beautification of Shahrah-e-Faisal

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, on Monday, along with Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab inaugurated a project of beautification and improvement of Shahrah-e-Faisal. A series of development and beautification work would be carried out under an Rs.195.71 million project on the 18 km long major artery From Jinnah International Airport to Hotel Metropole for improving the environment, facilities for pedestrian movement, landscaping and artistic works and designs.

Syed Nasir Hussain Shah while speaking at the occasion said that the project was aimed at the beautification of Shahrah-e-Faisal so that visitors, both international and local, entering Karachi through the major artery have a better look at the metropolis.

The minister said that the Sindh government under the leadership of CM Murad Ali Shah was working day and night to materialise Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's vision of development, welfare and improvement.

He said that all the concerned departments of the Sindh government and city government as well as the cantonments and CAA were on a single page and work with coordination to complete the project and achieve desired objectives.

Nasir Shah said that the PPP Sindh government was carrying out hundreds of development projects across the province and particularly in the provincial capital to ensure better facilities for the people and to resolve their problems.

Sindh government had completed

record projects despite natural calamities and non-cooperation of the previous PTI federal government, he claimed adding that number of completed projects was higher than any other province of Pakistan.

Nasir Shah said that all the concerned departments and civic agencies exhibited remarkable performance on Eid-ul-Azha and ensured cleanliness and sanitation in Karachi during all the days of Eid.

He appealed media to portray the positive developments taking place besides highlighting the issues and problems of the people so that a positive image of Karachi could be highlighted across the world.

Responding to a media query, Nasir Shah said that the people of Karachi had given mandate to PPP in local government elections and now all the LG bodies across the province were empowered to carry out development works and resolve the problems of the public at the grass root level. All the civic bodies including KDA, LDA, MDA, and water board were under the supervision of Mayor Karachi to ensure better service delivery to people of the metropolis, he said adding that Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has directed for empowerment of LG bodies and authority was delegated to elected representatives.

Nasir Shah said that PPP has strengthened its vote bank in Sindh through record development and welfare works and in the next general elections PPP would not only sweep the entire Sindh province but it would also get success in Punjab, Balochistan and Khaibar Pakhtunkhwa.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab, speaking at the occasion, said that a longstanding demand of people has been met by launching the project for the beautification and improvement of Shahrah-e-Faisal.

Karachi is a city of lights and enlightened people and the Sindh government was committed to highlighting its positive perspective, he said adding that the project would be completed at the earliest.

Storm drains were constructed across the Shahrah-e-Faisal, all the party flags were removed from the major artery while wall chalking and graffiti would also be removed to beautify the road, he informed.

Murtaza Wahab said that remarkable work was done on Eid-ul-Azha and during the recent spell of monsoon rains with close coordination of all the relevant departments and agencies. Over 50 storm drains of the city were cleaned before the rains and garbage was shifted to landfill sites in a coordinated manner, he said adding that some mischievous people were throwing sacks and stones in the drains to choke the sewerage system.

They must think about the people of the city and should avoid doing such acts, he stressed and urged all the stakeholders to work for the betterment of the city.

PPP was determined to resolve all the issues of Karachi and people would see development taking place in the city, he vowed and added that PPP was also working to resolve the longstanding issue of water shortage in Karachi. With 100 MGD new pipeline, desalination plants and other sources we would resolve the issue of water as well, he vowed.

Shahadat-e-Hazrat Imam Hussain and Baqa-e-Pakistan Conference held at PAC

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Arts Council (PAC) in collaboration with Panjatan Pak International Movement organized the 16th martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (A.S.) and Baqa-e-Pakistan Conference here on Monday. Iranian cultural consul Ehsan Khazaei attended the conference as a special guest while Pir Azmatullah Sarwari Qadri presided over the event.

Assistant Director of Arts Council Muhammad Suleman performed the duties of a host. Speaking on the occasion, the Iranian cultural consul said that Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) was not the Imam of any one school but the Imam of humanity. "There is no example of sacrifice like Imam Hussain in the history of humanity," Ehsan Khazaei said that

Imam was not concerned about the government and did not tolerate rebellion against the religion of Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W). The mission of Imam

Hussain (AS) will continue till the end of the world, he added. Addressing the conference, Pir Azmatullah Sultan said that the unparalleled sacrifice of Hazrat

Imam Hussain (AS) was a lesson for us that "We should sacrifice our lives, wealth, honour, dignity, family and children in the to obtain the pleasure of Allah Almighty."

Career Opportunity

A Public Sector Organization invites applications from candidates (Pakistani Nationals) for following positions on Trainee/Apprentice basis initially for 1 x year (extendable if required):-

Post & Age	Qualification & Experience	Vacancy Location
Dy. Assistant Director (Trainee) Age 30 Years	Master's Degree (2 Years) / Bachelor's Degree (4 Years) in Management, Business Administration or Information Technology from HEC recognized University + Preferably 2x Year Relevant Experience	• Karora (Tehsil: Chakisar, District: Shangla)
Junior Executive (Trainee) Age 28 Years	Intermediate or equivalent + Preferably 1x Year Relevant Experience	• Olander (Tehsil: Alpuri, District: Shangla)
Sanitary Worker (Apprentice) Age 28 Years	Preferably 1x Year Relevant Experience	
Security Guard (Apprentice) Age 40 Years	Middle (Ex-Servicemen will be preferred)	

Terms and Conditions: -

- Interested candidates are advised to send their applications at the given P.O Box number (title of post to be written on top right corner of envelope) along with CVs mentioning Full Name, Education, CNIC#, Date of Birth, Domicile, Experience, Mailing Address & Mobile / Landline Number **within 10x days of this advertisement.**
- Management reserves the right to accept/reject any application without assigning any reason.
- Only shortlisted candidates will be called for test/interview.
- Candidates from respective Tehsil will be preferred.
- Candidate shall be disqualified if false information is provided.
- 5 years' relaxation in age shall be admissible.
- Appointment is being made for a specific position and location; therefore, no request for transfer shall be made unless the Management requires it.
- TADA will not be admissible for test/interview.
- Candidate can apply for one Position only.
- Females, transgender, Minority and differently abled candidates are encouraged to apply.

ADDRESS

PO BOX No 651, GPO Peshawar

PID(I) 190/23



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly, Raja Pervaz Ashraf in a meeting with Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Parliament House.



City Mayor spends off day with people of various localities

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Haji Zubair Ali spent his weekly off of Sunday with the people of various localities and provided street-lights, solar panels and batteries to various areas.

According to the Capital Metropolitan Office on Monday, Mayor Zubair Ali went to areas of Palosai, Rasheed Garhi, Tehkal, Pir Sayyed Hassan, Lali Bagh, Kakshal and Quaid Abad.

On the occasion, former provincial minister, Aman Ullah Haqqani, chairmen of various UCs including Maulana Tariq Hussain,

Azmat Afridi, Zar Muhammad Khan, Attaullah Momin, Haji Samin, officials of the Sui gas, Wapda and Capital Metropolitan also accompanied the mayor.

Mayor Haji Zubair Ali spent time in these localities and provided solar panels to nine mosques of the areas. He also initiated the installation work on these solar panel energy systems.

In Palosai area mosques including Masjid Zaid Abne Sabit, Massali Garhi NC-108, Masjid Jannat ul Baqi, Bajiyaan NC-113, Madrassa Siraj ul Islam NC 1124,

Palosai Talarzai NC-112, Masjid Ayesha Madina Colony, Makki Masjid NC-113.8, Masjid e Kosar NC-114 and Masjid e Subhan were provided with solar energy panels. The mayor also provided an electricity transformer to Masjid Alhoo in Forest College Bazaar, besides providing a solar panel system to KV Palosai.

The mayor during his visit to Kakshal, Pir Sayyed Hassan, Rasheed Garhi and Lali Bagh inspected the pace of work on development projects. The local people told the mayor that

no uplift work was initiated in these areas for the last 10 years and people were only deceived through hollow slogans. The mayor said that he believed only in practical work and assured them that their longstanding issues will be resolved on an urgent basis.

He assured that work on installation of streetlights, pavement of streets, installations of electricity transformers and provision of solar energy panels to the mosques will be carried out without any break. Besides, he assured that beautification of various areas will also be included in these projects.

The locals highly appreciated the endeavors of the mayor and assured him all out support in carrying out the uplift works.

SACM directs to speed up activities in NMDs

PESHAWAR (APP): Special Assistant to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Chief Minister on Zakat, Usher, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment, Salma Begum has strictly instructed the concerned officers of the Directorate of Social Welfare for the merged districts to speed up the welfare activities in the new merged tribal districts to serve the deserving in the true sense.

She issued this directive while presiding over the emergency meeting of the Directorate of Social Welfare. The officers of the Directorate participated in the meeting.

The special assistant has also sought an explanation from the District Social Welfare Officer, Khyber for distribution of wheelchairs and sewing machines amongst influential and allegation of corruption in this regard.

She said that the performance of the social welfare directorate in the merged districts is not satisfactory as compare to settled districts and sought three-year performance report of the directorate of merged districts and Frontier Regions. She directed for bringing improvement in the performance of the Directorate of Social Welfare in Merged Districts and Frontier Regions.

She further said that the Social Welfare Department has been established to serve economically weak, needy, widows, disabled people of the society and directed all the officers to perform their duties efficiently.

ANP expresses concern over unrest in Kurram

PESHAWAR (APP): Awami National Party leader Aimal Wali Khan on Monday expressed concerns over unrest and armed conflict in district Kurram over land dispute.

In a statement issued here, he demanded of the provincial government and district administration to establish peace in the area and settle the matter amicably.

He said that there were reports that the local people were willing to establish peace but the administration was not agreeing, adding that such an impression should be dispelled.

He said that ANP would not tolerate negligence in the protection of the lives and properties of the people.

He appealed to all the leaders and youth of Parachinar to show patience and remain calm as no problem could be solved through the fight.

Aimal Wali said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had already paid a heavy price for the war imposed on Pakistan and could not afford any further aggression.

He said that leaders and officials of ANP District Kurram were present in the field to establish peace and urged the provincial government to urgently formulate an action plan to resolve land disputes amicably.



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to CM on Zakat, Usher, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment, Salma Begum presiding over meeting of Directorate of Social Welfare.

Muharram terror bid foiled

PESHAWAR (INP): The ATD foiled bid to conduct terrorism during Muharram ul Harram and arrested 10 Daesh-linked terrorists in various actions in different districts.

According to CTD spokesperson, to ensure fool-proof security during Muharram ul Harram, operations were conducted against militant groups in Peshawar, Hangu and other areas.

He said that during separate actions, 10 Daesh-linked terrorists who were planning to conduct terrorist acts during Muharram were detained.

The detainees included target killers and they were being interrogated, the CTD spokesman said.

Meeting held to create awareness against dengue

F.P. Report

in the discussion.

Recognizing the urgency to control the spread of dengue in the province, Secretary Health Mehood Aslam Wazir held a productive meeting on Monday with the Dengue Volunteer Task Force to collaborate with the health department in order to effectively combat dengue across the province.

The meeting focused on raising awareness, strengthening surveillance efforts, and implementing preventive measures against dengue in different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Dengue Volunteer Task Force led by Deputy Chief Atiq Ahmed and Divisional Warden Sartaj Khan, actively participated

raise awareness about dengue prevention and the necessary precautions to be taken.

Secretary of Health Mehood Aslam Wazir and Dengue Control Programme Coordinator, Dr. Qasim Arfridi, expressed their gratitude to the dengue volunteer task team for their dedication and extended their full support from the health department.

They acknowledged the vital role played by the volunteers in this crucial campaign against dengue and emphasized the significance of a collaborative approach in mitigating the risks associated with the disease.

KP witnesses significant fall in anti-polio drops refusal cases

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has recorded a significant decrease in anti-polio refusal cases as according to Emergency Operation Center, KP, a reduction of 35 percent was recorded among families refusing anti-polio drops to their children during the vaccination carried out in the month of June.

The Center said that a drop of 25 percent was recorded among children left deprived of the anti-polio drops in the province.

Last year, all the 20 polio attack cases were reported from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa however this year the number of polio cases significantly dropped to only one.

The Center further said that in 2016 for the first time the anti-polio campaign received the strong support of Ulema when several families were reluctant to administer anti-polio drops to their children owing to the negative propaganda against the vaccination.

It said that the Ulema support highly helped in the success of the anti-polio vaccination as earlier people considered these drops against the religious obligations.

It said that even in some cases the refusing parents were now administering anti-polio shots to their children.

Meanwhile, Maulana Raees Khan of Darul Uloom Hayatabad has said that earlier some people were refusing anti-polio drops to their children only

due to misperceptions however, he said when we persuaded them through the teachings of the Holy Quran, the people were now administering anti-polio drops to their children.

He further said that reservations of the refusing parents were addressed through local jirgas and the Ulema not only met with the parents but also held discussions with the health authorities to bring more material for convincing the parents.



PESHAWAR: Workers busy in cleaning and washing stones in local work-place in Namak Mandi.

Segmented Water Courses inaugurated

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Director General Directorate of Agriculture Research, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Abdul Bari and Director Agriculture Research (Merged Area) Fazli wahab visited Agricultural Research Institute Rata Kalachi Farm Dera Ismail Khan on Monday and inaugurated the newly build Segmented Water Courses with the support of On-

Farm Water Management.

They prayed for the success of the project and the development of the institution.

During the visit, the Director General also distributed certificates of appreciation among the employees of the Institute for Training Farmers of Vegetables and Fruits under the Gomal Zam Dam Project and took an interest in the work of all research officers and evaluated their work individually.

He also conducted an individual review and made a detailed inspection of all the laboratories and gave special instructions to the concerned officers to make full use of all the facilities and capabilities in the institute's laboratories for the betterment of the farmers of the area so that more and more landowners of the area can take benefit from it.

Mainly hot, humid weather likely in province

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Monday predicted that hot humid and dry weather is expected over most districts of the province.

However, it said that isolated thunderstorms associated with gusty winds is likely to occur in Abbottabad, Mansehra, Bhattagram, Torgar, Kohistan, Shangla, Upper Dir, Swat, Buner and Kurram districts.

During the last 24 hours humid & partly cloudy weather occurred over most districts of the

province. However, rain/wind-thunderstorm occurred at Swat, Mohmand, Bunner, Mardan, Nowshera, Bannu, D.I.Khan and Kurram districts.

Rain recorded (in mm): Cherat 35, Takht Bhai 26, Raisalpur 20, Saidu Sharif 13, Bannu 11, Parachinar 10, Mohmand (Mamad Gut 07 & Ghalani 03), Buner 02 and D.I.Khan (City 01, Airport Trace).

Maximum wind recorded (in km/hr): Peshawar (Airport 48 and City 41).

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 36/24, Chitral 33/18, Timergara 36/23, Dir 32/16, Mirkhani 38/20, Kalam 25/08, Drosch 35/20, Saidu Sharif 34/17, Pattan 37/24, Malam Jabba 23/15, Takht Bhai 34/20, Kakul 29/17, Balakot 33/20, Parachinar 29/13, Bannu 37/19, Cherat 29/16, D.I. Khan 38/25.

The highest temperatures recorded in the province was 38°C each in D I Khan and Mirkhani.

Excise police recover 2kg heroin

PESHAWAR (APP): Excise Police Peshawar Region on Monday foiled to smuggle two kilograms of heroin and arrested the smuggler.

On a tip off, under the supervision of the Excise and Taxation Officer Narcotics Control and the Circle Officer Peshawar Region, Excise Police Peshawar Region checked a suspected person Khalid resident of Handu and recovered 2kg heroin kept in five books labels.

Ehsanullah, the Secretary of Excise Department, Akmal Khan Khattak, DG Excise, and Aftabuddin, Director Narcotics Control, praised the recent operation and commended the efforts of the team.

Power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) on Monday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Karak Grid Station on 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 18th July from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Subsequently, it said that consumers of 11 KV S. Abad-1, 2, 3, Karak-1, 2 and Township feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, the power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Sari Naurang Grid Station on 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 18th July from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. resultantly consumer of 11 KV Tajazai-2, Tajuri-3, Ghazni Khel-2, Achu Khel-1, 2 and Lakki City-1, 2, 3 feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Sari Naurang Grid Station on 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 18th July from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Gandi feeder will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from 66 KV Tajazai Grid Station on 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 18th July from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Tajazai, Ghazni Khel-1 and Tajuri-1 feeders will face inconvenience.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali offering dua after installation of new power transfer.

Defamation plea against IK: AD&SJ disposes petition on withdrawal

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Additional District and Session (AD&SJ) Peshawar Aftab Alam has disposed-off defamation case against former Prime Minister Imran Khan on withdrawal of petition by former Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Fauzia Bibi, on Tuesday.

During hearing Fauzia Bibi counsel Syed Ghuffran Ullah Shah and Imran Khan lawyer Qazi Anwar submitted joint statement before the court, stated that 20 MPAs were nominated for

horses-trading in Senate's election including the petitioner.

However, committee member Naem-ul-Haq has passed while the other member Pervaiz Khattak has part-away with the PTI while no evidence is available against Fauzia Bibi and no action has initiated against the petitioner.

The statement that PTI neither initiated reference against Fauzia Bibi to Speaker and Election Commission of Pakistan, so, the petitioner isn't liable for the allegation and her

party membership has restored.

Former MPA Fauzia Bibi withdrew defamation plea of Rs500 Million against Imran Khan following restoration of her party's membership.

Moreover, Additional Session Judge Syed Badshah has turndown bail plea of alleged smuggler Naveed while arrested with six kilograms hashish.

Although, Additional Session Judge Liaqat Ali has convicted drug peddler for lifetime imprisonment and imposed Rs5 lakh fine.

Future of country belongs to PPP: Bacha

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial president PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Minister of State for Water Resources, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha has said that future of the country belongs to their party and in the coming elections it will once again come to power with the support of the people to accomplish the mission of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.

He added that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is carrying forward the mission of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto

and now it is the responsibility of the party workers to strengthen their hands.

He expressed these views during a meeting with various delegations of the party bearers and subsidiary wings here on Monday.

The PPP leader said that during government, the party has increased the salaries of government employees by 150 percent.

Similarly, he said that whenever the party had come into power, it has initiated mega development projects for the progress

and prosperity of the people. PPP in recognition of the services of the retired government employees had also increased their pension by 25%.

He reiterated that the People's Party is the party of workers, farmers, peasants and the middle class of the society. He said that the party has always played its full role in solving the problems of minorities.

The martyred leaders of PPP Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto along with the labourers have fought dictators. He said that Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto has nominated common men on all subsidiary wings of the party and no one of them is sardar or nawab.

The Minister of State said that the PPP during its rule has added billions of rupees to the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award to increase the shares of the small federating units.

MYL, MSL demonstrate rally against desecration of Quran

PESHAWAR (APP): Muslim Youth League (MYL) and Muslim Students League (MSL) Monday carried out a protest rally against the desecration of the holy Quran and strongly condemned the incident. Hundreds of students carrying the holy Quran in their hands participated in the protest rally and demanded the United Nations take notice of the incident. The protesters said that the desecration of the holy Quran is not acceptable as it was part of Muslims' faith.



PESHAWAR: A vendor selling lemon juice during hot weather at Qissa Khwani bazaar.



In brief

Books lovers throng book stall F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: A day long book fair was opened here in Bacha Khan Squarer, main Landi Kotal Bazaar. The stall was established under the banner of Khudai Khedmatgar movement district Khyber and large number of books lovers, students, teachers, local political elites visited the stalls and took keen interest in the books displayed there. This was the first time that a books fair was initiated at the public place where books written on the struggle of the Pakhtun leaders were exhibited. Awami National Party (ANP) Khyber President Shah Hussain Shinwari formally kicked off the books fair. In his message on the occasion the ANP leader said that the history was deliberately forged and manipulated to conceal facts and to misguide the coming generation therefore through such kind of doings they could provide opportunity to the people especially the youth community to be aware of the great efforts of their political leaders. Highlighting aims and purposes of setting up books stall district Salaar of Khudai Khedmatgar movement Haji Fazal Rehman said that they conducted the literary activity to create awareness among the young generation of the tribal society about the struggle, carried out by the leaders of the Pakhtun to win rights for them. He thanked the visitors and valued their participation in the activity that encouraged them to set up it further in the future. The academic figures in the area appreciated the efforts of the organization and said it would certainly enhance books reading habits among the youth who always engaged in social media.

Four children buried in Swat Shafi Ullah

SWAT: Four children were buried under the debris in a landslide in Mingora, two killed, two injured, rescue teams dispatched, operation started, four children were buried under the debris in Watky Gulabad area of Mingora city yesterday, locals and rescue teams took action and recovered two children from the debris and they were shifted to the Saidu Teaching hospital. Rescue sources said that Manal son of Sana ullah and Subhan son of Hazrat ali died in the debris while Rafiullah injured Asim son of Iqbal injured.

Meeting held F.P. Report

MARDAN: Under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance and Planning Mardan Samiur Rehman, a meeting was held in the DC conference room to review all the arrangements regarding Muharram-ul-haram 2023. SPSecurity Muhammad Fayaz Khan, Assistant Commissioner Mardan Ayesha Tahir, Additional Assistant Commissioner Junaid Khalid and Baraq Awan, officers of district departments and Ahle Tashe representatives participated in the meeting. Representatives present in the meeting participants were also asked about the problems and suggestions on the occasion of Muharram. The Additional Deputy Commissioner issued instructions to the concerned departments to complete all the arrangements before Muharram-ul-Haram and ensure the provision of necessary facilities in the passageways of the procession including the ImambarGah by deploying all the resources.

Pakistan became Elite Republic: Senator Mushtaq

F. P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami former provincial chief and senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan has said the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has been converted to the Elites' republic as bills are frequently passed in the parliament to increase the perks and privileges of the elite class.

JI senator was addressing the monthly congregation of his party held at Ahya ul Uloom Balambat as chief guest here on Sunday. The event was also addressed by the JI district chief Izazul Mulk, general secretary Hafiz Yaqub ur Rehman and other prominent religious scholars.

Mushtaq Ahmad said the JI was all set to launch a massive protest campaign for the release of Dr Aafia, who has been jailed in America. The JI senator had recently met with Dr Aafia in an American jail recently and had promised to get her free. He said that it was not the 'Washington' but the 'Islamabad' that created hurdles in her release. He said the key to her release from the jail was in Islamabad but the rulers were reluctant to raise their voice for her. He asked the nation to stand with the JI in its campaign for Dr Aafia release.

The JI leader said the government was forced after his motion to reverse its decision to increase the perks and privileges of the sitting and past senate chairmen and other members. He said the government had bowed before the International Monetary Fund for \$3 billion but on the other hand it was not ready to give up luxurious life. He said that Rs 200,000 were increased in the judges' salaries. He said the Supreme Court and High Courts' judges should focus on provision of speedy and easy justice.

The JI leader said that Sweden, a small state in Europe had dared to burn the Holy Quran but the Muslim world with more than 1.5 billion population could not stop it from doing so, that was a shame for us. He asked the Muslim rulers to take practical steps for stopping desecration and blasphemy in the western world.

Residents protested in favor of their demands: Residents of Walai Kandao area led by Ahmad Zeb Yousafzai held a protest demonstration against the police department for forcibly grabbing their lands for construction of the police lines.

The residents blocked the Timergara Munda road for some time and chanted slogans against the police department. Speaking on the occasion Ahmad Zeb alleged that about 200 kanals of lands owned by them had been illegally used for construction of the police lines at Walai Kandao. He said the land owners filed a petition in the court and the Supreme Court of Pakistan had decided the case in their favour.

He said that despite the court's decision, construction work on the building had not stopped. He demanded the government to take notice of the matter and implement the court orders in that regard. The residents threatened to launch a protest campaign against the local police if their demand was not accepted soon.

SST teacher to hold sit-in today (on Tuesday): The Lower Dir teachers' community announced that hundreds of teachers would participate in the proposed protest sit-in at Peshawar on July 11 if the upgradation of secondary school teachers was not notified by the caretaker government.

The announcement was made during separate meetings of the secondary school teachers' association held at Talash, Maidan and Samarbagh. The SSTs from different parts of the district attended the meetings presided over by sub divisional presidents of the association.

Speaking on the occasion the teachers' leaders including Sajid Khan, Ziaul Amin and others complained the SSTs were kept deprived of their upgradation since 1991. They said that the rest of the teaching cadres from primary school teacher to Qaris and theology teachers had been upgraded twice and thrice.

The speakers said the previous PTI government had completed the process of promoting the SSTs from BPS 16 to BPS 17 after an apex court issued its verdict. They said the caretaker government was deliberately delaying the matter. They said the community had no other option but to come on the roads. They said the SST association had planned a protest sit-in at Peshawar on July 11 and hundreds of teachers from Lower Dir would participate in that sitting if the government showed no interest by then.

Former MNA assures ending of unscheduled load shedding: Former MNA and Jamaat-i-Islami candidate for PK 13 Sahibzada Yaqub Khan has said that the problem of prolonged power outage, low voltage and power supply to upper parts of Jandol turn by turn will end within a month or two.

Talking to local journalists at Timergara here the former lawmaker said that a delegation of the JI led by him had met the superintendent engineer Pesco in Swat recently. He said the JI district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari, tehsil chairman Samarbagh Saeed Ahmad Bacha, JI Youth wing district president Ateequr Rehman, former MPA Saeed Gul and others were also part of the delegation. He said the SE on their request had promised to supply power poles and transformers for the Jandol area of Lower Dir within a month.

The former lawmaker said the installation of new transformers and conversion of the transmission line to upper parts of Jandol would help resolve the problem faced by the consumers of Kambat, Darangal and Miskini Darra. He said that at present the people of those union councils were being supplied with electricity on alternate days.

Former MNA said that standing crops and vegetables had dried up due to closure of the Balambat Irrigation channel on the name of improvement and extension in it for the last two years. He said the JI delegation had also met with the executive engineer irrigation and he had promised to expedite the construction work on the channel that would help resolve a major issue faced by local farmers.

Clashes continue over in Kurram

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: Defying a ceasefire agreement, a dispute between two tribes in various areas of Kurram tribal district entered its fourth day on Monday.

According to local administration and police, the clashes initially erupted in Boshehra Dandar locality of Parachinar, the district headquarters, and subsequently spread to Khar Kallay, Balishkhel, Pekar and Teri Mengal over a disputed piece of Shamilat (common land).

In the past three days, the clashes have resulted in at least six fatalities and over 38 people sustaining injuries. However, the latest reports indicated no casualties in the recent clashes. Initially, five people

were killed during the first two days of the clashes.

On Sunday, one person lost his life in Teri Mengal area, while three others sustained injuries in the Pekar area. Additionally, one person was killed, and two others were injured in the clashes in Balishkhel and Khar Kallay areas.

The injured have been taken to the District Headquarters Hospital in Parachinar and Sadda Hospital, with the condition of three of the injured individuals reported as critical.

Tribal leaders, along with Federal Minister Sajid Turi, security forces, and the police, have been diligently working towards restoring peace in the region. Yesterday, they held a meeting with the

elders of both tribes, which led to a ceasefire agreement. However, despite the promises of a ceasefire, firing resumed last night, undermining the agreement.

Kurram's police chief, Muhammad Imran, stated that joint efforts involving the security forces and tribal leaders were underway for the past few days, and steps were being taken to bring the conflict under control promptly.

Meanwhile, leaders of the social organizations have emphasized the need for the government to take decisive action as the land disputes had a detrimental impact on employment opportunities and caused road blockages, resulting in numerous challenges for the local population.

Timergara police lines to be built according to court orders

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: District police officer Ziaud Din has said the administration would implement the court decision regarding the construction of the Timergara police lines. Briefing local journalists about the matter at his office here on Monday the DPO said that no one would be allowed to take the law into their hands.

The DSP legal Rashid Khan, DSP headquarters Fakhr e Alam and other officials were also in attendance. The DPO clarified that the 200 kanals land allocated for construction of the Timergara police lines at Walai Kandao area in Lower Dir was purchased in 2010. He said the land owners in 2015 moved the court against the sale

dead on which the apex court ordered to construct the police lines on 130 kanals while the owners were given 70 kanals of the disputed land. He said that a team of senior lawyers worked on the demarcation of the court orders.

He said the police department totally agreed to the court decision and the commission's demarcation. The DPO said the land owners were present during the process of demarcation and they had also agreed to it and had signed the papers. The DPO said that some of the owners were now protesting that was beyond understanding. He said that neither a rest house nor a bungalow were being built but only a policelined was being built on the purchased land. He made it clear that the police

lines would be built at any cost and the department would not bow before the land owners in this regard.

Protest: The Christian community in Lower Dir on Monday staged a protest demonstration against the desecration of the Holy Quran. The Church of Pakistan Timergara priest Saleem Umar, former minority district councilor Shehzad Khokar, Salman Tanveer and Kamran Razaq while speaking on the occasion said the Christians were equally hurt by the burning of Quran in Sweden. Condemning the desecration of the Holy Quran, they said that all religions should respect each other. They said the Swedish government should immediately arrest the accused and make him an example for others.



QUETTA: Activists of PML-Q burning Sweden flag during a protest against desecration of Holy Quran.

Bannu Bachao Tehreek hold protest F.P. Report

BANNU: Bannu Bachao Tehreek, a right body held a protest demonstration in Bannu city to denounce desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden. People from different walks of life including traders, religious scholars and activists of religious and political parties and members of Wazir Qaumi Ittehad participated.

Earlier, a rally led by Pir Syed Qaisar Abbas Shah was taken out from Allah Chowk and it converged near Parate Gate after passing through different bazaars. The participants carried banners and national flags and they raised slogans against the Swedish government.

They also burnt the Swedish flag and demanded a boycott of their products. Speaking at the gathering, Pir Abbas, JUI(S) central general secretary Maulana Syed Muhammad Yousaf Shah, Mufti Islam Noor, Maulana Ahmadullah Haqqani, Maulana Fida Ahmad Shah, Dr Abdul Rauf Quraishi, Farmanullah Meerakhel, Maulana Tayyab Shah Bukhari, Farhat Ali Shah, Haji Jahanzeb and Maulana Tahir Mir said that the act of burning the Holy Book of Muslims by evil minds was offensive and intolerable.

"The desecration of Quran and other blasphemous acts are repeatedly taking place in the West but instead of taking effective measures Muslims are confined to hold only protest demonstrations", they regretted.

They condemned the Pakistan government for its lukewarm response to the issue and asked the rulers to sever diplomatic ties with the Swedish government by closing the embassy and expelling the ambassador. They also asked the people to boycott Swedish products to show their anger and resentment against the desecration of the Holy Quran.

Police arrests gang F.P. Report

TANK: South Waziristan Upper Police claimed to have nabbed a gang involved in robbing tourists on the eve of Eid ul Adha. DPO South Waziristan Upper Niaz Muhammad Khan informed that the tourists from Karak were robbed in night during their stay in a Mosque in the Medan during the Eid ul Adha.

Taking advantage of darkness, the accused had escaped after robbing the tourists and taking away five mobile phones, 66,000 rupees, service cards and ATM cards with them.

On the special directives of Inspector General of Police Kyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Gandapur and Regional Police Officer Dera Abdul Ghafoor Afridi, South Waziristan Police carried out surprised raids under the command of circle DSP Sherullah and apprehended three suspects and recovered from their possession 5 snatched cell phones, fifty thousand cash, ATM and the service cards of the looted persons, the DPO maintained. The arrested persons are being interrogated and more arrests are expected.

Admn finalizes pre-flood arrangement

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: District Administration have finalized all arrangements to combat likely flood situation in the River Chenab and established 6 flood relief camps and 12 boating points for this purpose.

Officers of district administration visited flood relief camps established at Qadirabad Colony, Vanike Tarar, Khanpur, Jalalpur Bhattian, Tahl Goraya and Thathi Baholpur on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad.

According to handout, duties of Rescue 1122, Health Department, Livestock, Civil Defence and other concerned departments have been made at flood relief centres, already.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner told this scribe that water flow in the river Chenab is normal still, however, all departments are ready to ensure rescue and relief work for the protection of life and property of the people in case of flood. He said that vaccination of livestock was also underway to save animals from water borne diseases.

Interfaith harmony stressed: Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warriach urged upon Members District Peace and Interfaith Harmony Committee, Ulama belong of different thought of school and civil society to cooperate with district administration and law informant agencies for keeping peace in the district during holy month of Muharram to promote brotherhood, tolerance, interfaith harmony among people.

He was addressing the meeting of District Peace and Interfaith Harmony Committee held at district complex. SP Investigation and officers of different departments, Ulama, representatives of Christian Community, traders and civil society attended the meeting.

DC said that in view of present situation in the county, foolproof security arrangements would improve to ensure protection of mourners and participants of procession and Majalis of Muharram as well as to foil any conspiracy hatched by anti-Pakistan and anti-Islam elements. He said that 139 processions would be taken out while 603 Majalis arranged in the district including 15 sensitive processions and 45 Majalis in the district.

He said that CCTV cameras would be installed on the routes of processions and places for monitoring purpose while walk through gates would also be erected at entry points and no one would be allowed without proper search to join processions and Majlis. He said that offices and officials of district administration police, health, Rescue 1122, Municipal Committees, civil defense and other departments would perform duties for security and provision of basic facilities to

participants of procession and Majalis.

DC warned that new procession and Majalis would not be allowed. Ulama and other participants of the meeting assured the Deputy Commissioner to cooperate with administration and law enforcement agencies for maintaining traditional atmosphere of peace, unity, tolerance and interfaith harmony in the district. Special prayer was offered for progress and prosperity of the county in the meeting.

DPO inspects routes of processions: District Police Officer Hafizabad Dr. Fahad Ahmad inspected routes of mourners processions and place of Majalis in connection with finalizing security arrangements ahead to the Holy Month of Muharram in the district.

DSP Rana Qaisar Jameel, SHO City Sardar Naem, incharge security branch Muzammal Abbas were also accompanied by him. DPO passed necessary instruction to ensure foolproof security arrangements and to maintain law and order situation in the holy month of Muharram in the district.

Meanwhile, addressing the meeting of District Peace Committee Hafizabad, DPO said Hazarat Imam Hussain (RA) rendered unmatched and supreme sacrifice for exaltation of Islam and the holy month of Muharram of give us lesson of brotherhood, unity, mutual integrity and tolerance among society. He said that district Hafizabad is peaceful district and ideal atmosphere of unity, brotherhood, tolerance and interfaith harmony was existed due to positive role of member's peace committee, ulama belong to different sects and civil society.

He expressed his hope that member's peace committee, Ulama and representatives of civil society and traders would continue their vital role for maintaining peace in the district in future. He also said that implementation on code of conduct issued by the government would be ensured and no one would be allowed to hearts sentiments of people and in case of violation of code of conduct, punitive action would be taken without any discrimination. He further said that management of processions and Majalis would have to adhere time table and routes of processions.

Meanwhile, Population department Hafizabad arranged baby show and healthy baby competition at Welfare Markaz sChak Chatha and girls badminton competition at sports gymnasium.

District Population Welfare Officer Sajida Mushtaq, DO Sports Nabila Cheema, doctors and mothers attended the events. Prizes were distributed among children on the occasion. Students of different school and colleges participated the badminton competition while prizes were also given away to players.

Dacoits looted Rs32m from money exchanger

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Four unknown alleged armed dacoits looted a money-exchanger in Sangawoo area of tehsil Katlang and took away Rs. 32 million rupees with themselves. The officials of Katlang Police Station quoted the currency dealer identified as Sarfaraz Khan hailing from district Buner as saying that he collected Rs. 6 million from Chowk Yadgar Peshawar and Rs. 26 million from Yousafzai market Hayatabad Phase-3 in shape of different Pakistani currency notes.

The complainant told police that he along with his driver named Sher Ali Khan got in his motor-car bearing number LEA-2993 and started journey to their native district Buner. He claimed that a Honda-civic motor stopped on road side on some distance after crossing them in Sangawoo area of tehsil Katlang.

He alleged that four persons got out from that Honda-civic motor car and intercepted them after giving indication to their car. He

told police that the alleged robbers equipped, two of them, with pistols and one with butcher big-knife.

The robbers took them away from road side to deserted place located on some meters and fastened their hands and feet with rope. The alleged robbers then fled spot with the Rs. 32 million after snatching from them. The Katlang Police had lodged FIR on the complaint of affected person Sarfaraz Khan against unknown robbers and began further investigations into the robbery incident. Police told that they had accelerated their efforts to not only trace out the alleged unknown robbers but also to assure early arrest of them.

DSP injured ambush: Sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) katlang tehsil Farooq Zaman Khan sustained series bullet injuries when unknown miscreants opened indiscriminate over his motor car near Ghundo police post.

The FIR registered by the officials of counter terrorism department (CTD) quoted

constable Shayan Hasan, gunner of the insured SDPO Katlang as saying that they were on their way to Baizai police station when unidentified terrorists opened indiscriminate firing over their motorcar near Ghundo police post. He told that he himself narrowly escaped the firing while the SDPO Farooq Zaman Khan sustained series bullet injuries as.

He told that he also started retaliatory firing over the miscreants who fled and disappeared in the area while taking advantage of the darkness of night. The injured SDPO Katlang was rushed to MMC hospital by rescue-1122 personnel soon after getting information about the incident.

The doctors in MMC hospital, however, stated that the SDPO was now out of danger as he was shifted to hospital in precarious condition. The police officials claimed that a big contingent of police personnel had rushed and cordoned off the said area soon after occurrence the incident.



Tunisia rejects accusations of mistreatment of Black refugees

TUNIS (Agencies): Tunisia's president has rejected criticism of his government's treatment of Black African refugees after hundreds were rounded up by authorities and left on the border with Libya. President Kais Saied said the refugees were receiving humane treatment stemming from what he called "our values". Refugees, however, say they have been left to tackle the desert heat with little food or water.

Tunisia, which is a major migration route to Europe, has come under criticism from rights groups after authorities rounded up refugees and asylum seekers and expelled them to a remote buffer zone at Tunisia's border with Libya. "These migrants are receiving humane treatment emanating from our values and traits, contrary to what colonial circles and their agents are circulating," the Tunisian presidency said in a statement. It accused unnamed foreign powers of seeking a "new type of settlement" for refugees and spreading lies about Tunisia.

The remarks came after a meeting between Saied and Prime Minister Nabil Bouden that the president's office said addressed "irregular migration". The statement cited Saied as saying Tunisian security

forces had protected the foreigners who wanted to settle in the country. "Tunisia is not a furnished apartment for sale or rent," he was quoted as saying. Libya, meanwhile, told Tunisia it wants the refugees moved from the border area. "We informed the Tunisian authorities these people are supposed to be removed from the border points because they have infiltrated illegally," said Major-General Abd al-Salam al-Amrani, director of security at the Ras Ajdir border crossing.

"We hope the Tunisian authorities can protect them and contact the Red Crescent and other humanitarian organisations to give them help," he told Al Jazeera. Earlier this week, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Tunisian security forces had collectively expelled several hundred African refugees and asylum seekers. The group urged Tunisia to halt forced removals of sub-Saharan Africans and urgently enable access to humanitarian services for those sent to the dangerous border area. "Not only is it unconscionable to abuse people and abandon them in the desert, but collective expulsions violate international law," said Lauren Seibert, refugee and migrant rights researcher at HRW. Bugata Gambe, a 21-year-old refugee from

the Gambia, told Al Jazeera he was expelled to the desolate area in Libya for the past six days.

He said Tunisian authorities have not provided him or others with food or water.s "It's really difficult here. We are really suffering. We want to get out of here," said Gambe. Earlier this month, a Tunisian man was stabbed to death in clashes between refugees and residents of the Tunisian coastal city of Sfax, a key launchpad for asylum seekers heading to Italy. Meanwhile, at least 10 Tunisians were reported missing and one dead after their boat sank off Tunisia as they tried to cross the Mediterranean to Italy. Authorities said the coast guard rescued 11 people from the boat, which set off from the coastal town of Zarzis, said Faouzi Masmoudi, a judge in Sfax. Earlier this year, Saied announced a tougher crackdown on refugees in Tunisia. Since then, attacks on foreigners in the country have increased. Tunisia has seen a rise in racially motivated violence after a speech by Saied last February in which he spoke of the "hordes of irregular migrants from sub-Saharan Africa" who come bringing "violence, crime, and unacceptable practices".

Italy agrees to lift ban on flights from Libya

CAIRO (AP): Commercial flights between Italy and conflict-torn Libya will resume in September after the Italian government agreed to lift a 10-year-long ban on civil aviation in the North African nation, one of Libya's rival governments said. Abdul-Hamid Dbeibah, prime minister of the Tripoli-based government, said on Twitter that the Italian government of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni informed his government of the decision.

He called the removal of the ban a "breakthrough." The decision came after Libyan and Italian aviation officials met in the Libyan capital of Tripoli to discuss "the upcoming restoration of direct flights and the strengthening of cooperation" between the two countries, according to a statement from the Italian Embassy in Libya. Oil-rich Libya plunged into chaos after a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. In the disarray that followed, the country split into rival administrations in the east and west, each backed by rogue militias and foreign governments. Italy and other European countries banned Libyan flights from their airspace as the country descended into chaos. Over the past decade, Libya has had direct flights to limited destinations, including cities in neighboring Egypt and Tunisia, and other Middle Eastern countries, such as Jordan.

A Libyan government statement said the two countries have agreed that one airliner from each country would operate flights starting in September. They did not name the destination cities.

North Korea denounces US move

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea denounced on Monday what it called a move by the United States to introduce a nuclear missile submarine to waters near the Korean peninsula, saying it creates a situation that brings a nuclear conflict closer to reality. North Korea also claimed US reconnaissance planes recently violated its air space near the east coast, quoting an unnamed spokesperson of its Ministry of National Defence in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.

"There is no guarantee that a shocking incident where a US air force strategic reconnaissance plane is shot down over the East Sea will not happen," the spokesperson said. The statement cited past incidents of the North shooting down or intercepting US aircraft at the border with South Korea and off the coast. North Korea has often complained about US surveillance flights near the peninsula. The moves by the United States to introduce strategic nuclear assets to the Korean peninsula is a blatant nuclear blackmail against North Korea and regional countries and presents a grave threat to peace, KCNA said. "It is up to future US actions whether an extreme situation arises in the Korean peninsula region that nobody wants, and the United States will be held fully responsible if any unexpected situation occurs," it said. A US nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine arrived at the port of Busan in South Korea last month.

In April, the leaders of South Korea and the United States agreed a US Navy nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarine will visit South Korea for the first time since the 1980s but no timetable has been given for such a visit. It was part of a plan to boost the deployment of American strategic assets aimed at a more effective response to North Korea's threats and weapons tests in defence of its ally South Korea, as agreed by the two leaders. The move to sail nuclear submarines has created a "very dangerous situation that makes it impossible for us not to realistically accept the worst-case scenario of a nuclear confrontation," the North Korean statement said.

Sudan is on the brink of a 'full-scale civil war'

CAIRO (AP): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Sudan is on the brink of a "full-scale civil war" as fierce clashes between rival generals continued unabated in the capital of Khartoum. Guterres warned that the war between the Sudanese military and a powerful paramilitary force is likely to destabilize the entire region, according to Farhan Haq, deputy spokesperson for the UN chief.

Sudan descended into chaos after months of tension between military chief Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan and his rival, Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, commander of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, exploded into open fighting in mid-April. Health Minister Haitham Mohammed Ibrahim said last month that the clashes have killed over 3,000 people and wounded over 6,000 others. The death tally, however, is highly likely to be much higher, he said. More than 2.9 million people have fled their homes to safer areas inside Sudan or crossed into neighboring countries, according to UN figures.

The fighting began 18 months after the two generals led a military coup in October 2021 that toppled a Western-backed civilian transition government. The coup and ensuing conflict dashed Sudanese hopes of a peaceful shift to democracy after a popular uprising forced the military removal of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir in April 2019. The war has turned the capital Khartoum and other urban areas across the country into battlefields.

Residents in Khartoum said fierce fighting was underway south of the capital. The warring factions were using heavy weapons in battles in the Kalaka neighborhood and the military's aircraft were seen hovering over the area, said resident Abdalla al-Fatih. In his statement, Guterres also condemned an airstrike that



health authorities said killed at least 22 people in Omdurman, a city just across the Nile from the Khartoum. The assault was one of the deadliest in the conflict so far. The RSF blamed the military for the attack in Omdurman. The military denied the accusation, saying in a statement that its air force didn't carry out any airstrikes in the city.

The secretary-general also decried the large-scale violence and casualties in the western region of Darfur, which has experienced some of the worst fighting in the ongoing conflict, Haq said in a statement. "There is an utter disregard for humanitarian and human rights law that is dangerous and disturbing," Guterres said. UN officials have said the violence in the region has recently taken on an ethnic dimension, with the RSF and Arab militias reportedly targeting non-Arab tribes in Darfur, a sprawling region consisting of five provinces. Last month, the governor of Darfur, Mini Arko Minawi, said the region was sliding back to its past genocide, referring to the conflict that engulfed the region in the early

2000s.

Entire towns and villages in West Darfur province were overrun by the RSF and their allied militias, forcing tens of thousands of residents to flee to neighboring Chad. Activists have reported many residents killed, women and girls raped, and properties looted and burned to the ground. There were clashes between the military and the RSF elsewhere in Sudan, including the province of North Kordofan, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Egypt, meanwhile, said it will host a meeting for Sudan's neighboring countries. The gathering aims at establishing "effective mechanisms" to help find a peaceful settlement to the conflict in coordination with other international and regional efforts, Ahmed Fahmy, spokesman for Egypt's presidency, said in a statement. Fahmy provided no further details on the gathering. The efforts come as talks between warring factions in the Saudi Arabian coastal city of Jeddah repeatedly failed to stop the fighting. The Jeddah talks were brokered by Saudi Arabia and the United States.

'I wanted vengeance': Tibet's last resistance fighter

NEW YORK (Agencies): More than 70 years after China invaded Tibet, Tenzin Tsaltrim can still recall events as if they were yesterday. A teenager at the time, Tsaltrim was in training as a novice monk in eastern Tibet and remembers bombs from the planes of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) air force falling on the monastery. He was too young to fight but the older monks all took up arms.

Now 87, Tsaltrim casts his mind back to those days long ago and clutches his prayer beads.His eyes narrow. "That was when I first got the idea that I needed to fight back once I could," Tsaltrim told Al Jazeera from New York where he has lived since 1997. Eventually, Tsaltrim and tens of thousands of other Khamapas, from Tibet's eastern Kham region, fled to Lhasa in central Tibet, which remained relatively calm. There, the Dalai Lama entered into an agreement with the Chinese communist government in a bid to retain his authority. But the appeasement did not last and, after a 1959 uprising was brutally suppressed, Tibetans mounted a years-long resistance

against communist rule. Tsaltrim eventually joined the rebellion and is now known as the last survivor among what was a legion of resistance fighters. "It is extremely sad as most of them have been forgotten by the Tibetans today; there's no remembrance," he said. "But I keep them in my prayers every day."

The story of Tibetan resistance against Chinese rule, backed by covert military aid from the United States, is a little-discussed early chapter of the Cold War in Asia. The operation, which lasted from 1957 until 1973, was enabled - but ultimately undone - by the ever-shifting alliance between the powers that surround Tibet - namely China, India and Nepal. Tibet was communist China's first conquest. Beijing now has its sights set on Taiwan, seeing the self-governing island as the last piece of territory to be brought into Beijing's embrace. The forgotten history of how Tibetans fought against China's incursion is more relevant now than ever, and it is a history being resurrected by the Tibetans themselves. Tsaltrim was from a well-to-do merchant family that

was friendly with Andrugsang Gampo Tashi, a widely-respected Khamapa trader who began to pour his fortune into fighting the Chinese. By 1957, Gampo Tashi was assembling a militia - called "Chushi Gangdrug" in Tibetan - and Tsaltrim was old enough to answer the call to arms. "I decided then I had to do something," he told Al Jazeera in Tibetan. The newly formed militia set up a base in a part of southern Tibet bordering India where there were few Chinese troops. In July 1958, it received its first airdrop of ammunition and automatic rifles from the US and in eight months, the resistance's presence proved crucial to carving out a safe route for the Dalai Lama to flee Tibet for India. Not long after that, however, after one too many ambushes by the PLA, the resistance fighters were forced to decamp, ultimately regrouping in an isolated mountainous Tibetan enclave in Nepal called Mustang, which juts into Tibet. In addition to airdrops, agents from the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were training the Tibetans in guerrilla tactics. By 1962, Tsaltrim,

then 26, had been selected for boot camps in the mountainous US state of Colorado where the altitude approximates Tibet's.

Every trainee was given an English name and Tsaltrim became known as Clyde. In two years at the camps, he was schooled in skills such as pyrotechnics, Morse Code, map reading and parachuting. He said because of his performance in wilderness survival, he was also plucked for leadership training for his unit. Once their training was complete, he and 15 other armed rebels were flown back to India and exfiltrated into Tibet overland - the last unit to parachute in had all perished. Tsaltrim recalls dressing in rags to disguise himself as a beggar on his frequent clandestine trips to his homeland. "I wanted to kill the Chinese. I wanted vengeance," Tsaltrim said. "I was prepared to be killed." Much as the Tibetans were spoiling for combat, the Americans were singularly focused on gathering intelligence. A major success came in 1961 in a blood-stained, bullet-battered pouch from a PLA commander holding a cache of 1,600 classified Chinese documents.

South Korean lawmakers berate IAEA chief

SEOUL (AP): South Korean opposition lawmakers sharply criticized the head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog for its approval of Japanese plans to release treated wastewater from the damaged Fukushima nuclear power plant. They met with Rafael Grossi in a tense meeting in Seoul that took place while protesters screamed outside the door.

Grossi, the International Atomic Energy Agency's director general, arrived in South Korea over the weekend to engage with government officials and critics and help reduce public concerns about food safety. The IAEA last week approved the Japanese discharge plans, saying the process would meet international safety standards and pose negligible environmental and health impacts. South Korea's government has also endorsed the safety of the Japanese plans. In his meeting with members of the liberal Democratic Party, which controls a majority in South Korea's parliament, Grossi said the IAEA's review of the Japanese plans was based on "transparent" and "scientific" research. He acknowledged concerns over how the Japanese plans would play out in reality and said

the IAEA would establish a permanent office in Fukushima to closely monitor how the discharge process is implemented over the next three decades. "Our conclusion has been that this plan, if it is carried out in the way it has been presented, would be in line, would be in conformity with the international safety standards," Grossi said. The lawmakers responded by harshly criticizing IAEA's review, which they say neglected long-term environmental and health impacts of the wastewater release and threatens to set a bad precedent that may encourage other countries to dispose nuclear waste into sea. They called for Japan to scrap the discharge plans and work with neighboring countries to find safer ways to handle the wastewater, including a possible pursuit of long-term storage on land. The party has also criticized the government of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol for putting people's health at risk while trying to improve relations with Japan. "If you think (the treated wastewater) is safe, I wonder whether you would be willing to suggest the Japanese government use that water for drinking or for industrial and agricultural purposes, rather than dump-

ing it in the sea," Woo Won-shik, a Democratic Party lawmaker who attended the meeting, told Grossi. The party said Woo has been on a hunger strike for the past 14 days to protest the Japanese discharge plans. Further details from the meeting weren't immediately available after reporters were asked to leave following opening statements. Closely watched by parliamentary security staff, dozens of protesters shouted near the lobby of the National Assembly's main hall where the meeting was taking place, holding signs denouncing the IAEA and Japan.

Grossi was to fly to New Zealand and would then travel to the Cook Islands as he further tries to reassure countries in the region about the Japanese plans. Hundreds of demonstrators had also marched in downtown Seoul demanding that Japan scrap its plans. A massive earthquake and tsunami in 2011 destroyed the Fukushima plant's cooling systems, causing three reactors to melt and release large amounts of radiation. Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, which operates the facility, has been storing the treated water in hundreds of tanks that now cover most of the plant and are nearly full.

Yoon pushes for strong resolve against North's nuclear ambitions

SEOUL (AP): South Korea's president says it's time to clearly demonstrate strong international resolve to deter North Korea's nuclear ambitions, and he plans to discuss how to cope with the North's expanding weapons arsenal with NATO leaders this week. Yoon Suk Yeol will attend the annual NATO summit being held this year in Vilnius, Lithuania, as part of a two-nation trip that includes a stop in Poland.

"Now is the time to clearly demonstrate that the international community's determination to deter North Korea's nuclear weapons program is stronger than North Korea's desire to develop nuclear weapons," he said. It's the second consecutive year that Yoon will take part in the summit, underscoring his push to deepen ties with the world's biggest military alliance. South Korea faces a mix of security challenges, including North Korea's nuclear program and the US-China strategic rivalry. Last year, he became the first South Korean leader to attend a NATO summit when he took part in Spain. In written responses to questions from The Associated Press

ahead of his departure, Yoon said South Korea will stress at the NATO meeting the importance of international cooperation against "North Korea's illegal acts." He also said a new NATO-South Korean document will take effect at the summit to institutionalize cooperation in 11 areas, including non-proliferation and cybersecurity.

North Korea's headlong pursuit of reliable nuclear weapons has taken on new urgency after it test flew more than 100 missiles and openly threatened to use nuclear weapons in potential conflicts with South Korea and the United States since the start of last year. Whether North Korea possesses functioning nuclear missiles is still a source of debate. But according to a South Korean government estimate in 2018, North Korea already had up to 60 nuclear warheads. Experts say North Korea is able to add six to 18 new warheads every year. In response to North Korea's missile tests, Yoon, a conservative who took office in 2022, took steps to beef up his country's own missile capability and expand military drills with the United States. Yoon and President Joe

Biden in April announced plans to reinforce their countries' deterrence capabilities, such as the periodic docking of a US nuclear-armed submarine in South Korea and the establishment of a new bilateral nuclear consultative group, whose inaugural meeting is slated for next week in Seoul. In its typical, fiery rhetoric, North Korea's Defense Ministry warned Monday the deployment of the US submarine may incite "the worst crisis of nuclear conflict in practice." It also threatened to shoot down US spy planes. South Korea's military countered it maintains a readiness to repel potential North Korean provocations.

Yoon's discussion of North Korea with NATO leaders could trigger a backlash from North Korea, which has called increasing cooperation between NATO and US allies in Asia a process to create an "Asian version of NATO" that it said will raise regional animosities. North Korea argues its weapons testing spree was meant to issue a warning over the expanded South Korean-US military drills that it views as invasion rehearsals. Yoon says he wants to opt for peace

through strength, though he remains open to dialogue with North Korea. "Peace is never as certain and reliable as when it is backed by powerful force and deterrence," Yoon added. "Strong international sanctions against North Korea have the effect of preventing the advancement of its nuclear and missile capabilities."

In Vilnius, Yoon said that there will be "several opportunities" for him to speak with Biden over a range of topics, such as the strengthening of the US security commitment and the expansion of trilateral security cooperation between Seoul, Washington and Tokyo. Yoon said he and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also plan to hold a bilateral meeting there. He said he and Kishida will be able to discuss the advancement of bilateral relations but also ways to expand mutual solidarity and international cooperation. Relations between South Korea and Japan have improved significantly in recent months, with Yoon taking a major step toward resolving a thorny dispute over Japan's colonial-era mobilization of forced Korean laborers.

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Election season merits responsible conduct from all stakeholders

DEFENCE Minister and senior leader of the ruling PML-N, Khawaja Asif has said that assemblies will dissolve in August after the completion of their constitutional term. While addressing a worker's convention in Sialkot, Khawaja Asif told the audience that the preparation for the elections has begun and the country was heading to a fresh poll. He claimed that the PDM-led government had the choice to dissolve assemblies immediately after taking office but it would have the worst effect on the economy and Pakistan could defaulted 14 months ago.

Pakistan endured an acute political haphazard and chaos over the past more than one year after the PDM coalition moved a no-confidence motion against the former Prime Minister Imran Khan in early 2022. Whilst, the ouster of the PTI government kicked out an unceasing dog-fight between the succeeding PDM-led coalition government and the PTI over the issue of an early election, which further worsened the situation, incited violence in politics, and prompted the dissolution of provincial assemblies in Punjab and the KP. The heightened political unrest slid the already fragile economy into a deep economic crisis. The nation witnessed severe economic challenges such as low foreign reserves, high cost of living, and persistent energy scarcity, which pushed a bed-sick economy to the brink of collapse but all that issues could not bring calm to the ongoing tussle between warring political groups. Historically, the past year's political battle was primarily about the election controversy as the PTI and its allies demanded early elections while the PDM coalition had been pushing for the completion of the parliamentary term to announce all-out polls in the country including National and provincial assemblies in all federating units. Interestingly, doubts and confusion still exist regarding the holding of the general election amid assemblies have completed their term and are due for dissolution in the next month.

Defense Minister has announced good news, the nation hopes it would come true, however, various PML-N leaders are sending mixed signals regarding the next general elections and forecasting a delay due to the updation of the voters' lists and fresh delimitation of electoral constituencies in accordance with the current census in the country, which disappoints the voters and blaze the political groups about the conduct of the ruling coalition government. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), which is the competent authority regarding the arrangement and the announcement of the election date is silent amid heightened debate in the political circles and media. Although the ECP's role begins after the incumbent government dissolves the assemblies, unnecessary silence creates doubts and spoils goodwill among the contesting parties. It is high time that the ruling coalition government and the election commission must move forward to bring forth a comprehensive electoral plan before the nation which must include the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), online voting by overseas Pakistanis, and a consensus electoral strategy that essentially has support from all political parties in the country so no one point finger on the electoral process after losing the poll.

Realistically, the Pakistani nation has suffered the most from persistent political rivalry, whereas the May 9, events shattered the public belief in politics, which did not spare the memorials of the national heroes/ martyrs who laid their lives in service to the nation. The ruling coalition government, and contesting political groups must exercise patience and avoid pushing the nation into a fresh political or constitutional crisis by delaying or disrupting a normal electoral process. At the same time, the ECP must work proactively to ensure a free, fair, and transparent election while keeping in mind the prevailing political scenarios, hence timely completion of the delimitation process, completion of the voters' list, and other procedural and administrative arrangements of utmost importance to avoid further setbacks and embarrassment. It is encouraging that an election environment has largely emerged in the country and a majority of the political parties have kicked off their election campaign which is like fresh air to the hopeless and desperate Pakistanis. Hopefully, the nation will move toward political stability and economic revival after a successful and transparent general election in the country.

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World will be forced to grapple with coming Palestinian storm

Baria Alamuddin

AS always, the punitive methods Israel's armed forces deployed against Palestinian civilians serve only to create the conditions they pretend to address. This is how you create new generations of angry young men with nothing to lose, drive armed groups into the arms of Iran, and cultivate children whose overriding desire is to avenge mothers, uncles or sisters.

Sadeel Naghniyeh, 15, was shot dead by an Israeli sniper in Jenin last month. Her father said: "My son is 9 years old and he sees his sister killed. He sees death and destruction around him. What will that teach him? To resist." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his generals know this. But how else do you appease your extreme-right base, or take the wind out of the sails of Israel's massive anti-Netanyahu protest movement? Netanyahu is Israel's arsonist-in-chief - deliberately igniting inferno after inferno in the exalted cause of his personal political survival.

Western politicians also know this, but lamely issue anger-inducing statements about supporting "Israel's security and right to defend its people," aware that Israel is shooting itself in the foot by fueling out-of-control vicious circles of reciprocal provocation. Britain's Foreign Office feebly muttered that Israel's invasion of Jenin "must respect the principle of proportionality." Would such a ludicrously out-of-touch statement have seemed appropriate as Putin obliterated Bakmut? And what is Britain planning to do after Israel so spectacularly failed to observe any such "proportionality"?

Palestinians are scarcely accorded the right to exist, let alone defend themselves. Life was already nearly impossible in Palestinian cities where expanding populations live

on top of each other, as Israel inexorably gobbles up new swaths of land. In Jenin's densely populated refugee camp, 15,000 people are crammed into a square half-kilometer. Outsiders fail to recognize how apocalyptically destructive Israel's incursions are. The Jenin attack was the largest Israeli military operation in the occupied West Bank since September 2000, during the Second Intifada. They deployed a heavily armed brigade-sized force of up to 2,000 troops, with armed drones, tanks and armored bulldozers. Tarmac roads were ripped to shreds by those bulldozers in the search for roadside bombs, streets were strewn with burnt-out family cars, multi-story buildings were smoking wrecks, thousands of people were displaced, hundreds injured, and 12 dead. Nablus suffered a comparable fate. This is collective punishment in its purest form. In a vicious practice which has become horrifically normalized, hundreds of armed vigilante settlers - the radicalized, illegal occupiers of Arab land - went on the rampage through Palestinian towns, terrorizing families and attacking citizens. Burnt and destroyed buildings included a school and mosque, and 310 settler attacks on Palestinians were monitored in just 24 hours. At least 155 Palestinians have been killed so far in 2023. There has also been a spike in Israeli deaths - giving the lie to Netanyahu's assertions that Israelis can enjoy a calm and secure environment when all efforts toward peace have been thwarted. Is it any surprise that many Israeli dual nationals are already departing?

Even Netanyahu acknowledged that this was just "the beginning of regular incursions." The epidemic of violence is again

spreading to Gaza, where there was a tit-for-tat exchange of fire, including Israel hitting a weapons manufacturing facility. Hostilities across the Israel-Lebanon border in recent days are a further wake-up call that the region is unraveling into anarchy. These territories that Netanyahu attacks with impunity are not his to pacify. Palestinians have repeatedly demonstrated willingness to share their historic homeland, but Netanyahu's farthest-of-far-right fascist allies are hellbent on stealing it all: expediting construction of thousands of additional illegal West Bank homes, annexing huge chunks of territory, and seeking to entrench fully fledged apartheid as an irreversible reality.

After a recent fact-finding mission, representatives of the Elders, an international NGO of senior statesmen and peace advocates formed by Nelson Mandela in 2007, bluntly stated that Netanyahu's government had demonstrated "an intent to pursue permanent annexation rather than temporary occupation, based on Jewish supremacy," damningly adding that they had heard "no detailed rebuttal of the evidence of apartheid." On how many occasions during 1990s and 2000s peace processes have Western leaders complacently lectured audiences that regional peace was impossible until the Palestinian issue was resolved? But under Donald Trump and now Biden, the attitude prevailed that Israel could be allowed to throttle Palestinians out of existence - as long as they did it quietly.

The war crimes of Jenin demonstrate how wrong-headed this was, even though we are only witnessing the tip of the iceberg of the forthcoming cycle of violence, which will suck in all those

nations which that are affected by Middle East security whether they like it or not. We can celebrate the vigorous manner in which the Western world has mobilized support for Ukraine, while also asking: why only Ukraine? Are Ukrainians the only nation who deserve support in resisting brutal occupation, relentless bombing of their cities, and imperialist oppression? Why are Ukrainian soldiers daily championed in the Western media as heroic freedom fighters, while any Palestinian youth who picks up a rock is a "terrorist" who deserves to die? Are human rights, self-determination, and democratic freedoms not supposedly universal values? Palestine is not an "Arab" or "Muslim" issue, but a global cause that strikes at the core of our humanity. If we desire a world in which wars of aggression against the people of Ukraine and Taiwan are unthinkable, we must start by unambiguously regarding the occupation of any nation's land as illegal, carrying an obligation of action to redress these historic crimes.

But all those global governments who genuinely don't give two hoots for justice are once again going to be compelled to grasp the Palestinian conundrum with both hands, if they have any desire at all to stem the oncoming tsunami of violence. Hopes and expectations for our futures - to be doctors, lawyers, artists or musicians - are what provide our lives with purpose and structure. After being brutalized from birth, enduring a thousand humiliations, indignations and tragedies, is it any shock that Palestine's younger generation, having had all other possibilities closed to them, seek out the single avenue that Netanyahu has left open - as freedom fighters and liberators of their lands?

Arab News

Critical items added to NATO Summit agenda

Yasar Yakis

THE regular summer summit of NATO is going to be held on Tuesday and Wednesday in Vilnius, the capital of the Baltic state of Lithuania. NATO summits have always been important, but the 2023 edition has become all the more important because of the Ukraine war and NATO's enlargement.

The agenda of this summit is full of important items. Increasing NATO support for Ukraine is one of them. There is a visible difference between the support extended to NATO by the Baltic and Eastern European countries and the remainder of the European NATO countries in general. Some 3,000 government representatives from 50 countries are expected to participate in the summit. Another group of 2,000 media and nongovernmental organization representatives are expected to arrive in Vilnius. For a city of just half a million inhabitants, it will definitely cause some congestion, but the Lithuanian government is taking measures to accommodate all of the delegates. This summit will be the biggest meeting that Lithuania has ever hosted. Schengen practices were suspended on the borders of Lithuania one week ahead of the summit. And air traffic will be suspended on the days the meeting takes place.

Last month's failed march to Moscow by the Russian mercenaries of Wagner, led by Yevgeny Prigozhin, demonstrated that there are intriguing aspects to this affair. Prigozhin last week resurfaced with the release of a voice message. Prigozhin's whereabouts remain a mystery. As the Ukraine war unfolds, we may face other surprises in this crisis. The NATO leaders will assess all aspects of the war, including Prigozhin's last move. Military measures to strengthen the eastern borders of the alliance will be one of the most important subjects of the summit. When I worked at NATO headquarters in the mid-1970s, the question of increasing the target share of national gross domestic product to be spent on the military to a figure above 2 percent was a permanent item on the NATO agenda. The chairman of the military committee used to say that the figure he proposed was an "irreducible minimum," but many countries ignored it and continued to keep the proportion of their military budget below 2 percent. I do not think this attitude is likely to change any time soon.

In 2023, only 11 out of 31 member states will fulfill their promise to keep their defense budget above 2 percent of GDP. They are the US, the UK, the three Baltic countries (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia), Finland, Poland, Greece, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. They are largely the countries that are exposed to the Russian threat. Turkey's military budget share of GDP is below 2 percent. According to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, there is a declining trend in Turkey's defense spending. We will see whether the European members of NATO will agree to increase their defense

spending in light of the Ukraine war.

Meanwhile, deliberate acts of inciting religious sensitivities continue unabated in Sweden, hampering the country's efforts to win over Türkiye and gain accession to the alliance. In addition to the act of burning pages of the Holy Qur'an in front of the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm last month, a new similar act was committed in front of a mosque, again in the Swedish capital. In the first act, Türkiye was at the forefront because the pages of the Qur'an were burned near the Turkish Embassy. This time, the fanatic chose a holy day and did it in front of a mosque. The Swedish courts may find such acts of offending the feelings of the adherents of other religions to be legitimate. However, they do not serve any useful purpose; on the contrary, they incite enmity between nations.

The Turkish-Swedish feud has become one of the most important questions on the NATO agenda. Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström referred to the law that the Swedish parliament passed recently, which recognizes the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which is known as the PKK, as a terrorist organization. The Swedish courts have made efforts to soften Türkiye's stance. They extradited a Turkish citizen who had been convicted of drug smuggling. Another law related to the fight against terror entered into force on June 1 this year. But the biggest surprise came from former Foreign Minister Ann Linde. She made a statement that changed the parameters of the Turkish-Swedish divide. Contrary to what the Swedish authorities used to claim, Linde said on a TV program that Sweden heavily supported the activities of the PKK in the country, adding that she understood Türkiye's concerns over terrorism and acknowledged that Stockholm was involved in financing the PKK. She said the Swedish government made available to the PKK a sum of \$376 million.

This confession changes entirely the parameters of the Turkish-Swedish feud on whether the PKK benefited from the tolerance of the Swedish authorities. Linde continued by saying: "I think that Türkiye is seriously exposed to terrorist attacks and we are not taking it seriously. Sweden needs to do more to address Türkiye's security concerns before gaining membership, including its failure to take a stand against terror groups threatening Türkiye and tolerating or even supporting such groups on its soil. (President Recep Tayyip) Erdogan is rightly criticizing Sweden for not taking the threats by the terrorist organization PKK seriously." These confessions must have relieved the Turkish delegation to the NATO Summit to a very large extent. Erdogan plans to meet Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in Vilnius. He will no longer need to persuade Kristersson that the Swedish government financially helped the PKK in Sweden. We do not know whether, after Linde's confession, Sweden will be able to continue to extend financial assistance to the terrorist organizations operating on Swedish soil.

There are no optimistic scenarios for the Kremlin

Gulnaz Sharafudinova

SOME political crises are hard to predict. The one that erupted in Russia in late June was in the making for a few months, but despite the public visibility of the conflict between mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin and the Russian Ministry of Defence, it was hard to know how it would play out.

Prigozhin's militarised "march of justice" to Moscow, which Russians and the world watched in real time on June 24, was as shocking, unexpected and frightening as the mob attack on the US Capitol that took place on January 6, 2020. In other words, Russia is not unique in experiencing an attempted armed assault on its institutions of power. But the way the Kremlin chose to handle the crisis was very different from how the US government approached its own back in 2020. In the US, we saw a full-scale public investigation of the January 6 events which was led by the House Select Committee and

involved broadcasting public hearings and publishing an 800-page final report. Some 1,000 people were charged with federal crimes in relation to the attack.

In Russia, President Vladimir Putin decided to strike a deal with Prigozhin and send him into exile in Belarus, reportedly along with some of his mercenaries. Any further action that will be taken will likely happen behind the scenes, so observers will have to wait and see what the immediate repercussions will be at the political level. However, there are some long-term consequences that are already apparent. Russia will continue to fight the war in Ukraine but its forces will be under a single command. It is clear that the Kremlin sees the political spillovers from parallel structures running amok as too costly.

It will make sure to avoid the rise of another Prigozhin - an autonomous military operator who can act with entitle-

ment and control military forces outside the command of the defence ministry. Implementing Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu's June 11 directive to bring all private formations under his ministry will be the first step. Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov's Akhmat forces have already signed contracts with the MOD. Does this mean the Kremlin has firmly established control over them? If Putin's authority is perceived to be secure, Kadyrov will likely behave. When that is no longer the case, he may become unpredictable. The Kremlin is aware of this and of the fact that the Caucasus is Russia's most volatile region. It is no coincidence then that Putin chose to visit Dagestan right after the mutiny and demonstrate his own popularity by appearing in public and engaging a crowd of supporters - a PR exercise that was rather unusual for him. This

was meant to counter any perception of his political weakness and confirm his control over the Caucasus.

The Kremlin will continue to take various other measures - outside the public eye - to stabilise the military command-and-control and dismantle Wagner's structures and operations outside Russia. It will succeed in re-establishing centralised control over all armed forces, but that does not mean it has survived Prigozhin's failed mutiny unscathed. Significant systemic challenges - some highlighted by the overly candid Prigozhin - remain and they can further erode the authority of the Russian president and destabilise the Russian state.

The main one concerns the Russian army itself. Doubts about its ability to win the war in Ukraine are inevitably growing in Russian society and among the elites. It is becoming increasingly evident that Russian forces are

not going to become more effective at the front and the only options left - to launch a nuclear strike or to cause damage to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant - do not represent an acceptable way out of the war. Over the past year, Prigozhin repeatedly emphasised the incompetence of defence officials and the inefficiency of the military rank and file. This message resonated widely with the Russian public. In the aftermath of the "march of justice" nearly a third of Russians wanted Shoigu removed from his position as minister of defence.

On top of ever-decreasing support and faith in the military, the Kremlin is facing significant economic challenges. It has had to reorient the economy towards military production and state procurement, with the private sector left to its own devices, operating under increasingly harsh conditions. The collapsing ruble, the growing list of Western sanctions, and the

narrowing space for entrepreneurship are taking a toll. The impoverishment of the Russian people is an unavoidable outcome that has so far been temporarily mitigated by the increase in social payments to the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society. But the ability of the Russian state to keep these financial flows going will waver as the war drags on and it faces a growing budget deficit and diminishing export revenues due to stricter Western sanctions.

From the present vantage point, there is no optimistic scenario for the Kremlin. Absent a drastic change of course, the different pressures - sociopolitical, military, and economic - will only accumulate, causing ruptures and eruptions of various sorts. Russia has not yet reached the proverbial "bottom", but it is certainly experiencing the boomerang effect of the aggressive war the Kremlin recklessly decided to launch.

NATO's 30 years of conflict and provocations

Jan Oberg, Benyamin Poghosyan & Xiang Haoyu

NATO's summit will be held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on July 11-12. Exactly 26 years ago - on July 8-9, 1997- NATO at its summit in Madrid approved the "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation", in other words, a permanent NATO-Russia forum was signed by then Russian president Boris Yeltsin and then United States president Bill Clinton in Paris on May 27, 1997.

M.E. Sarotte's brilliant 550-page analysis, Not One Inch. America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate, can be read as an illustration of how the US, and thereby NATO, has been acting as the big-brother and manipulating against Russia. The fact is, for the US, Russia was never meant to become an equal partner, as irrespective of the Russian concerns taken into account, the US and NATO always intended to promote their own interests in what was, and remains, a very asymmetrical relationship.

While Yeltsin promoted the "founding act" as a boost for Russia, Clinton saw it as a sugar-coated pill for Russia to swallow NATO's expansion. What we know about the upcoming Vilnius Summit so far offers no indication that NATO has learned any lessons or would rethink its policy in light of Russia's heightened concerns over the past more than a quarter of a century, not to speak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Sarotte takes the reader through all the documentation to show that then Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was indeed given promises that NATO would not expand even "one inch" if it acknowledged a unified Germany as a full NATO member. It was not written into a treaty, but the "cascading" documentation, especially in the National Security Archive at George Washington University, is overwhelming nonetheless. Sarotte explains the entire process of NATO's expansion policy at the time and concludes on page 261: "Although the US President did not say so explicitly, 'not once inch' was gaining a new meaning: not one inch was off-limits to the alliance."

Consider these statements on NATO's 2023 Vilnius Summit page: "NATO currently faces the most dangerous and unpredictable security environment since the Cold War. How will the Alliance continue to protect its one billion citizens and every inch of Allied territory?... NATO Leaders will meet to address the most pressing challenges for the Alliance, further strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence and bring Ukraine closer to the Alliance." Yet NATO does not have the moral or intellectual integrity to ask itself the most important question: Why?

The statement, "bring Ukraine closer to the Alliance", that is, making Ukraine a full NATO member, and the three decades of NATO in Ukraine ignore the fact that in all opinion polls before the Russia-Ukraine conflict broke out, only a tiny minority of Ukrainians was in favor of NATO membership. On the other hand, almost 70 percent of Ukrainians were in favor of holding a referendum to decide Ukraine's future relations with Russia, NATO and the European Union. But neither NATO nor Ukrainian leaders showed any respect for the Ukrainian people's opinions. One is reminded of a former NATO secretary-general's reckless answer to a recent question about how he thought Russia would react to his proposal to deploy some NATO troops on Ukrainian territory: "I don't care!"

Or, take for instance, the US secretary of defense's statement that the aim of the US and NATO is to weaken Russia militarily and economically so it never becomes "a problem" again - or NATO's desperate attempts to contain China, which the transatlantic alliance sees as a challenge only because Chinese values and interests are different from those of NATO. This brings us to another trend, which is never highlighted in Western main-

stream media: NATO's daily violation of its own 1949 treaty provisions and its global expansion.

As for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which few bother to read, it is, for all practical purposes, a copy of the UN Charter to which Article 5 on mutual defense among its European members has been added. It is distinctly defensive in nature. But the aggressive and provocative, not at all "defensive", alliance has been violating the very treaty it is based on since 1999 when it committed the first violation by conducting out-of-area operations in what was then Yugoslavia. Those actions were incidentally based on lies that a genocide was taking place in Kosovo and former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic was, in Clinton's words, Europe's new Hitler. But what will happen when NATO has no more European states to add to its members' list - the only raison d'etre of NATO today? Then it will invent a new category - partners - that is not in the NATO treaty, something which it has already done. NATO today has 31 members, as Sweden is not mentioned in NATO's Vilnius Summit page, but 39 partner states. NATO also plans to open an office in Tokyo which, along with AUKUS, it intends to use to continue meddling in cross-Taiwan Strait relations and contain China.

What we are seeing is rampant militarism that "doesn't care" about the other side or about the consequences of its own provocative policies which are devoid of empathy, prudence and statesmanship. There are enough reasons to see militarism as the glue that binds NATO and EU countries, although that may not last long.

Making oneself strong in one aspect while losing out on all other power dimensions - diplomacy, economy, legality, creativity, vision and culture - is a recipe for disaster. NATO no longer argues or analyses; it postulates and judges everybody except itself. It's highly disturbing that NATO's increasing militarism is not opposed but largely tacitly accepted as the "new normal" by the media and in research, with the latter basically financed by NATO governments. Apart from a tiny group of critical NATO scholars, the vitally important discourse on war and peace - in an attempt to promote democracy - has been silenced and peace studies scrapped, mainstreamed or turned into "security" studies. If NATO "wins" this game after being largely responsible for "the most dangerous and unpredictable security environment since the Cold War", the rest of the world will likely be pushed toward an eschatological moment.

Peace workers and researchers ought to have more to say than it has hitherto. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was established at the dawn of the Cold War in 1949. The transatlantic military alliance was formed "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down", as NATO's first secretary-general Hastings Lionel Ismay said. NATO was established to perpetuate the US' military hegemony over Western Europe, provide a US security umbrella for the Europeans and make them dependent on the US for security-related issues. Initially, NATO comprised 12 countries, but soon Greece and Türkiye (in 1952), and West Germany (in 1955) joined the alliance.

France, incidentally, was always cautious about too much US influence in Europe. In March 1966, France even announced its intention to withdraw from NATO's integrated military command structure and requested the removal of all Allied headquarters from French territory. A new Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe was established in Casteau, Belgium, in 1967, and the NATO headquarters was moved to Brussels in October of the same year. After the end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, NATO lost its primary goal, with many saying that the transatlantic alliance, too,

should be dismantled. But under then US president Bill Clinton, Washington pushed forward the idea of NATO's expansion by including former socialist states into the organization and extending not only NATO's reach but also US influence over Eastern and Central Europe, even though verbal guarantees were given to the Soviet Union in the late 1980s that after the reunification of Germany, NATO will not expand eastward.

The NATO's expansion, particularly the April 2008 Bucharest summit decision on the future accession of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO, triggered a new confrontation between Moscow and the West (especially Washington) and is one of the primary reasons for the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which broke out in February 2022. Since NATO's establishment, many leaders of member states have questioned the necessity of the organization. In November 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron made his famous remark about Europe seeing the "brain death of NATO", saying Europe should start thinking of itself strategically as a geopolitical power in control of its own destiny.

However, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the complete rupture of Russia-West relations seem to have injected a new lease of life into NATO. Declaring Russia a strategic threat to the alliance, NATO seeks to give a new meaning to itself, with the US pushing NATO to take a more anti-China approach, inserting into the alliance's strategic documents anti-China rhetoric and seeking to extend NATO to the Asia-Pacific. NATO plans to open a liaison office in Japan in 2024 to coordinate strategic moves with close partners across the "Indo-Pacific region", including Australia, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand, while the alliance and Japan plan to strengthen cooperation to tackle cyber threats, disinformation, and emerging and disruptive technologies.

The US seeks to use the Russia-Ukraine conflict to consolidate its hegemonic hold over Europe, sending a clear message to its European members that Europe faces a serious threat from Russia, and China, without a US security umbrella. But despite the US' efforts to present its policies as fair and necessary, below-the-surface issues continue to define the organization. One such contentious area is the candidate for the next NATO secretary-general's position. After months of struggle, the NATO states decided to continue with Jens Stoltenberg as secretary-general for another year, which temporarily halts the jockeying between candidates and countries that compete for the White House's support.

The struggle shows the lack of unanimity in the alliance and, at the same time, proves the role of the US as the ultimate decision-maker of NATO. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's decision to attend the NATO Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, on July 11-12 is another proof of Japan's attempt to establish closer ties with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. To be sure, Japan has been playing an important role in NATO's eastward expansion and strengthening its military. But since the transatlantic military alliance is a Cold War legacy, Japan-NATO military cooperation will create more turmoil and trigger new confrontations in the region, threatening the security of not only other countries but also Japan.

The Japanese government and NATO have been exchanging high-level visits in recent years and their cooperation has become almost normal and institutionalized. In fact, Japan has been cooperating with NATO for a long time. It became one of NATO's nine "partners across the globe" in 2008, and the two sides signed the Partnership Interoperability Initiative in 2014. Four years later, in 2018, Japan established a permanent mission and designated an ambassador to NATO. And with the two sides' cooperation expanding from non-traditional security to traditional security, Japan has been flexing its

military muscle.

For example, Japan Maritime Self Defense Force and NATO conducted a joint anti-piracy drill as early as 2014. They also conducted a joint exercise in the Baltic Sea in 2018, and Japan became a contributing participant in NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence in 2019. Besides, last month, Japan attended a large-scale NATO air exercise called "Air Defender 23", reflecting its military ambitions. NATO may open a liaison office in Japan, the first of its kind in Asia, although opposed by French President Emmanuel Macron. If established, the office will not only put the two sides' stamp on a "quasi-alliance" but also signal NATO's further expansion to the east and push forward the "Indo-Pacific" strategy of the United States, the real driver of NATO.

NATO will use the liaison office as a tool to intensify its interventions in the Asia-Pacific region, and strengthen its security cooperation and alliances with the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Also, the NATO office in Tokyo will link the US' transatlantic and Asia-Pacific alliance system, making it easier for NATO to intervene in Asia-Pacific affairs, as well as lead or participate in multilateral security activities, including cyber attack and defense drills.

Worse, the liaison office could prompt NATO to interfere and intervene in more issues in the Asia-Pacific, triggering camp confrontation and intensifying competition among major countries, which could lead to conflict. It is clear that Japan is deepening ties with NATO to build a more powerful military, become a global military power again and broaden its international influence. Last year, the Kishida government approved the revision of three national security documents, authorizing the country to launch (preemptive)"counterstrikes" on enemy bases. This means Japan is slowly abandoning its pacifist Constitution.

The Japanese government has approved a record defense budget for the 2023 fiscal year and plans to raise the amount to 2 percent of GDP within five years to meet NATO's 2 percent minimum defense spending requirement. As such, this year's hefty defense budget is the first step in its five-year, 43-trillion-yen (\$315-billion) military spending plan. Needless to say this will disturb the region's strategic balance and spark a new arms race. Unfortunately, Japan has also been claiming that "today's Ukraine is tomorrow's Taiwan" in order to justify NATO's eastward expansion, while NATO continues to hype up the so-called security threats the Russia-Ukraine conflict has created in East Asia. Also, major European powers, along with Japan and Australia, have been taking part in frequent US-led military drills in the Western Pacific, reflecting their aim to trigger a new Cold War or bloc confrontation so the US could maintain its hegemony.

The Asia-Pacific enjoys stability and economic growth. As a matter of fact, the Asia-Pacific has been driving globalization since the end of the Cold War by, among other things, introducing regional cooperative frameworks such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. But NATO's eastward expansion and the US-led West's move to draw in Japan as a military alliance partner have ruined the cooperative atmosphere in the Asia-Pacific. And the provocative moves of NATO and Japan pose a serious risk to the hard-won peace and stability in the region. As a major regional economy, Japan's development and prosperity after the end of World War II are inseparable from the peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. By aiding NATO to expand eastward, Japan is deviating from the path of peaceful development, raising the international community's concerns about history repeating itself.

China Daily

Books are losing value in Kabul - this scares me

Hujjatullah Zia

IT has been almost two years since the Taliban took over Kabul. I, like many Afghans who worked hard to attain a good education, am struggling. Knowledge seems to be losing its value and books are no longer considered a precious possession.

When Taliban fighters arrived in the Afghan capital in August 2021, many of my friends rushed to the airport to try to leave, seeing no prospect for themselves in their home country anymore. The brain drain was immense. People with masters' degrees, PhDs, with multiple published books, professors, educators, medical doctors, engineers, scientists, writers, poets, painters - many learned people fled. A colleague of mine - Alireza Ahmadi, who worked as a reporter - also joined the crowd at the airport.

Before he left, he wrote on his Facebook page that he had sold 60 of his books on a variety of subjects for 50 Afghanis (less than \$1). He never made it out of the country; he was killed in the bombing of the airport by the Islamic State in Khorasan Province. I, too, decided to give away all my books - all 300 hundred of them, covering topics like international law, human rights, women's rights and the English language. I donated them to public libraries, thinking that in a country ruled by the Taliban, they would be of no value to me.

I started searching for ways to leave the country. Evacuation was not an option for me so I decided to go to Iran, hoping I could find safe haven there like millions of other Afghans. But like my fellow countrymen and women, I faced contempt and hostility there. I soon lost all hope that I would be able to make a living in Iran. But I did find something that kept me going - my old love for books. One day, as I walked along Enqelab Square in Tehran, I could not hold back from entering its bookstores. I ended up spending most of the little money I had on books about human rights and women's rights that I had never seen in Afghanistan. Armed with these volumes, I decided to go back home and try to get back

into my old way of life - surrounded by books and engaged in intellectual pursuits.

Upon returning, I started working on a book about the political rights of women within the international legal system and within Islam, which I managed to complete in about a year. I sent my manuscript to different publishers, but was repeatedly turned down because they found the subject too sensitive and thought that getting permission to publish it would be impossible. Finally, Ali Kohistani of Mother Press agreed to take the book. He prepared the needed documentation and submitted the manuscript to the Taliban Ministry of Information and Culture to request formal permission to publish. Soon after, the committee tasked with book review sent me a long list of questions and critiques that I had to address.

I revised the book along the feedback they sent, but that was not enough to get permission. It has been five months now that we have waited for a final response and my despair is growing by the day. Kohistani has gone to the ministry many times to inquire about the manuscript, with no results. He has told me that he has five other books he wants to publish this year but none of them have been cleared by the ministry. Other publishers are also suffering from the arbitrariness of the commission's decisions and long delays. They say books that the Taliban want to publish and that fall within their ideology do not face the same challenges. They see in this fraught process an attempt to suppress any thought that disagrees with the Taliban's thinking.

Publishing permission delays and censorship are by far not the only problems Afghanistan's book industry is suffering from. Scores of bookstores and publishing houses have shut down in the past two years. In the book compound in the Pul-e-Surkh area of Kabul, which I use to frequent before the Taliban takeover, the majority of bookstores have now shut down.

The Taliban's decision to ban girls and women from attending high school and

university means they are no longer buying books as much. Boys and young men have also dropped out of school and universities, being demotivated to pursue an education that cannot guarantee them a job. This has severely shrunken the customer base of booksellers. On top of that, the Taliban government has imposed high taxes on book sales, which have dwindled even further the declining income of bookstore owners and publishers. Libraries throughout the country have also lost their readers, as fewer people go there to study or borrow books. Various book clubs, literary associations and reading initiatives have also stopped their activities. It is no longer seen as a value to own, read, or write books.

Overnight, Afghan book publishing has gone from being a flourishing sector - perhaps the most successful homegrown industry - to a struggling and risky business venture. Afghans have gone from being avid readers to not being able to afford books. I have gone from being a proud author and book owner to a despairing man who has tried and failed to hold on to an intellectual life in Afghanistan. It is extremely painful to see this state of affairs in Afghanistan - a country with a long literary history and tradition. This land gave the world the likes of Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Balkhi (also known as Rumi), Ibn Sina Balkhi (also known as Avicenna), and Hakim Sanai Ghaznavi (also known as Sanai).

Reading, writing and disseminating knowledge were always highly regarded in my country. Afghan rulers of different dynasties have respected the freedom of thought and supported learning and knowledge production. Censorship, restricting education and devaluing books were never part of the Afghan tradition or culture. No country in world history has ever prospered when its rulers had suppressed knowledge, education and free thought. Afghanistan is moving towards darkness and ignorance and that scares me. Killing books and killing knowledge will have horrible consequences for the future of this country.

Aljazeera

Future of EU leadership hangs in balance

Mick O'Reilly

WHEN explorers of the New World returned across the Atlantic to Europe, the snow-capped mountains that shape much of the landscape of northern Spain was often the first glimpse of land for the seafarers. They christened these "los Picos de Europa" - the peaks of Europe.

For centuries, those mountains were mostly impenetrable to foreign invaders. The Romans gave up, so too the Moors, and that mostly explains why the area retains its historical charms.

As this correspondent toured the area last week, there was little if any sign too that come July 23, the voters here and all across Spain will be heading to the polls in a general election to form a new government in Madrid. A single sign in a second-floor window in the town of Potes urged voters to vote for the PSOE candidate to send a social voice back to Madrid. As things stand now the PSOE, led by Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez are narrowly trailing the conservative People's Party (PP). Polls show the PP would have enough support to fill about 140 seats in the 350-member national parliament, slightly down on the 141 seats estimated in the previous round of opinion polling. Sanchez' PSOE would get 102.

What is certain is that a period of horse trading and coalition talks would follow the election while the parties seek enough support to form a government. Following municipal elections in May - the results were poor for Podemos, the junior coalition partner of PSOE in government, hence Sanchez' decision to call a snap general election - the PP allied with the far-right Vox party to take control of the regional parliaments in the provinces of Valencia and Extremadura. Now, opinions polls show a PP-Vox coalition at 175 seats, one short of an overall majority in the new parliament.

Podemos and smaller par-

ties on the left have since united under a single banner, Sumar, and they, with the PSOE, would expect to get 35 seats. The prospect then is that pressure will be on representatives from the Basque region and Catalanian separatists to join with PSOE in a grand coalition to keep Vox out of office. The right-wing party does include the phrase "Make Spain Great Again" in some of its advertising, is staunchly anti-immigrant and wants stronger powers for the Madrid government. Its followers closely associate with the regime of long-time Spanish autocrat General Francisco Franco.

If there is any relief for Sanchez, it's that opinion polls seem to suggest support for a PP-Vox coalition is softening as voters ponder the prospect of the nation of 48 million taking a hard right turn. That's a prospect too that is unsettling for much of the rest of Europe - ever more so given that on July 1, Spain assumed the rotating presidency of the European Council made up by the prime ministers and leaders of all 27 EU member-states.

For Eurocrats, the situation is rather unique, with no one quite sure whether Sanchez will be setting the political agenda for the bloc until the end of the year, or whether things will suddenly change if a PP-Vox coalition assumes power in Madrid. For his part, Sanchez has been playing down the prospect of a sudden change in leadership and agenda for Europe. "Democracy is never a problem," he said in June. "It's not the first time in Europe that elections have taken place during a presidency."

While Sanchez is technically correct - President Emmanuel of France were re-elected in May 2022 while chairing the Council of Europe, and the Czech government fell in 2009 while it held the rotating presidency - it does mark the first time there might be a change of government and leader right at the start of the six-month

term. Sanchez has postponed his appearance in the European Parliament while he campaigns for re-election. That has been postponed until September - and the invite is open to the Prime Minister of Spain, whomever that might be.

Spanish Eurocrats in Brussels insist that the work of the presidency will continue smoothly as planned, elections or not, stressing that the topics for Spain's rotating presidency have been prepared months in advance. Sanchez and his foreign minister, Jose Manuel Albares Bueno are keen to promote fast-tracking the expansion of the EU, with the memberships of Ukraine and Moldova high on their agenda.

Indeed, the economic and inflationary bumps caused by the conflict in Ukraine have pressed Spanish officials to push for a wide-ranging reform of the electricity marker in the bloc under its presidency. Madrid also wants a reform of the strict deficit rules for the 19 EU nations that use the euro as their common currency. Sanchez is pressing too for the EU to be more protectionist of its industries, making it more robust in seeing off investment bids from China.

More than anything, Sanchez was hoping that the trappings of being the president of the EU would allow the government to project a more positive and diplomatic charm offensive. Sweden, which held the presidency for the first six months of 2023, kept a low profile, with meetings of ministers relegated to an airport exhibition centre.

Sanchez has plans for a far more elaborate presidency, with EU meetings set for 22 different locations across Spain, including the resort islands of Mallorca and Gran Canaria. Until voters have their say on July 23, no one is quite sure who will be doing the formal meeting and greeting - or indeed what they will want to push onto Brussels' agenda.

Gulf News

I'm not known for being tough on immigration - but we must give the Rwanda plan a chance

Ken Clarke

I AM a liberal Conservative. I have not always agreed with my party in recent years. Indeed, I even lost the whip at one point in 2019. So, I don't speak from a position of slavish loyalty to the party leadership. I also don't have a reputation for being particularly tough on immigration. I have often advocated the benefits migrants bring to our country.

But there is no doubt that doing nothing about illegal immigration is not an option. Everyone knows that it is a huge problem, and that, if we cannot find a solution, people will die in the Channel in considerable numbers by taking risks as they come here. In the Mediterranean, 2,000 people have died trying to cross it this year alone. We must not allow a similar situation to develop in the Channel. We all admit that illegal immigration is a global problem, so if we suddenly become an easier country than others, we are likely to face significant pressures as more and more people try and reach our shores.

The numbers crossing the

Channel have more than quadrupled in the past two years. If nothing is done, these numbers will carry on increasing at a dramatic rate, putting pressure on coastal communities. We all want to retain our excellent reputation - it is not unblemished, but better than those of most other European countries - for good race relations and an integrated community. During my lifetime, Britain has become a multi-cultural, multiracial society, and I am glad to say that I think the majority of my fellow citizens feel that the contribution that has been made and the improvements to our society are quite substantial as a result. But concern about the dinghies and old fishing boats bobbing on the ocean will, if we are not careful, stir up all the bad feelings that we used to know, which we remember only too well from a generation or two ago. That is why more than 60 per cent of our population wish to stop illegal immigration. I am a lawyer and have a huge respect for the law - abiding by the

rule of law is one of the most important underlying principles of our constitution - but we cannot simply produce a lot of legalisms to shoot down the Rwanda scheme without making any suggestion whatever of a practical kind that is likely to have an impact on a great national problem, which we share as part of a global issue.

We do need a solution to this problem and the only one on offer is the extraordinary one put forward by the Government - that we simply cease to entertain illegal immigration and deport to safe places. Importantly, in all the debate about the Government's Illegal Migration Bill, no one has advanced an alternative. I have listened keenly for an idea of how else we might deal with the mounting issue of irregular migration, but answer has come there none. People can make objections to the Rwanda scheme, they can point out legal complications with it, but they don't have a plan of their own. So, the choice is between doing

nothing and Rwanda.

I am not always an admirer of the Government. But I must give credit to it for the protection that we have offered to those fleeing persecution. We have done well with Ukrainian refugees, with thousands of families opening their homes to them. We have lived up to our obligations to the people of Hong Kong, creating a route for more of them to come here. We have also admitted a lot of people from Afghanistan, although we could have made a better job of that. We are making our contribution to the global problem and taking a huge net increase to our population each year; we are getting some benefit, as it is helping our workforce. We are not becoming a walled-in, closed country. That is a good British contribution to the tremendous problem for the whole of the Western world. I cannot be certain that this policy will succeed, it is - after all - the first time this has been tried. But we can no longer simply do nothing. We must give the Rwanda scheme a chance to work.



Fitch upgrades Pakistan to ‘CCC’, Ishaq Dar congratulates nation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Fitch Ratings has upgraded Pakistan's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to 'CCC' from 'CCC', indicating a positive development towards the betterment of the country's economy.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar in a tweet said it was another positive development towards current economic revival journey.

He congratulated Prime Minister, nation, government allies and economic team for this achievement.

"Global Rating Agency 'Fitch' upgrades Pakistan's Long Term Foreign-Currency rating to CCC from IDR (Issuer Default Rating)...Another positive news towards current economic revival journey, AlhamdoLilah...Congratulations to PM @CMShehbaz, the Nation, Govt Allies &

Economic Team," the minister tweeted.

The rating agency has identified key indicators that contributed to the positive development rating for the country which include improvement in easing external financing risks.

It says the upgrade reflects Pakistan's improved external liquidity and funding conditions following its Staff-Level Agreement (SLA) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on a nine-month Stand-by Arrangement (SBA) in June. "We expect the SLA to be approved by the IMF board in July, catalysing other funding and anchoring policies around parliamentary elections due by October," it adds.

According to the report, Pakistan has recently taken measures to address shortfalls in government revenue collection, energy subsidies

and policies inconsistent with a market-determined exchange rate, including import financing restrictions. These issues held up the last three reviews of Pakistan's previous IMF programme, before its expiry in June.

Most recently, the government amended its proposed budget for the fiscal year ending June 2024 (FY24) to introduce new revenue measures and cut spending, following additional tax measures and subsidy reforms in February. The authorities appeared to abandon exchange-rate management in January 2023, although guidelines on prioritising imports were only removed in June.

It says IMF board approval of the SBA will unlock an immediate disbursement of USD1.2 billion, with the remaining USD 1.8 billion scheduled

after reviews in November and February 2024.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have committed another USD3 billion in deposits, and the authorities expect USD3-5 billion in other new multi-lateral funding after the IMF agreement. The SBA should also facilitate the disbursement of some of the USD10 billion in aid pledges made at the January 2023 flood relief conference, mostly in the form of project loans (USD2 billion in the budget).

It says Pakistan's current account deficit (CAD) has narrowed sharply and forecasted at about USD4 billion (1% of GDP) in FY24, after USD3 billion in FY23 and over USD17 billion in FY22.

The report also identified that the country's reserves were still low and the fiscal deficit was wide.



ISLAMABAD: Senior Partner A.F. Ferguson & Co (PWC) Salman Hussain presenting latest publication titled "Navigating the future of Opportunities and Challenges" on country's banking sector to Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): M.T Southern Anoa carrying 32,915 tonnes of Palm oil, berthed at Liquid Cargo Terminal on Sunday.

Meanwhile three more ships, GC-Argon, Chem-rhod Queen and Santa Ace with Palm oil and Coal also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim on same day.

PQA berths were engaged by 08 ships during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Maeratus Jayakarta, Perth-I and Al-Daayen sailed out to sea on Monday morning and three more ships, Kition-M, Calypso and Asian Lilac are expected to sail on afternoon day.

A cargo volume of 134,608 tonnes, comprising 105,283 tones imports Cargo and 29,325 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,191 Containers (466 TEUs Imports and 1,725 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are five ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two ships, Santa Ace and Karimata & two more ships, Conti-Courage and Lisa carrying Coal, Mogas and Container are expected to take berths at Bulk Terminal, Oil Terminal and Container Terminal on Monday, while two more container ships, Maersk Seletar and MSC Alma-VII are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Tuesday.

Chinese keen on joint ventures in ceramics industry

LAHORE (APP): A Chinese delegation from City of Zibo has expressed keen interest to have joint ventures in ceramics sector of Pakistan.

The delegation visited PCJCCI and held a meeting with local industrialists of ceramics sector here on Monday. Head of the delegation said that Zibo, being a key transportation hub of China, was also playing an important role in the country's economy through its rapidly growing manufacturing industries, especially in ceramics sector. He was impressed by the growth potential of ceramics industry of Pakistan. He agreed to relocate ceramic industries from Zibo into Pakistan for sharing the global demand of ceramics products by exploiting inherent advantages of Pakistan and China.

PCJCCI President Moazzam Ghurki said that 70 per cent work of Chinese ceramic industry was being done under the expertise of Zibo industries and the products produced in Zibo were being exported to the US, the EU and other sophisticated markets. Zibo was ranked as the 34th most competitive city in China according to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 2016, he said, adding that Zibo had a significantly large industry sector that accounted for 47pc of the GDP in China.

PCJCCI Vice President Hamza Khalid apprised the Chinese delegation about the strong support to be extended by the PCJCCI for economic development of the two countries. He said that the joint ventures of Pakistani and Chinese businessmen under CPEC had attained a highest level of mutual confidence that was giving birth to new venues of collaboration in trade and investment areas.

NA body recommends release of funds for SMEs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly Standing Committee on Industries and Production on Monday asked the Ministry of Finance to release all pending funds of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) at the earliest.

The committee met here under the chairmanship of Member National Assembly (MNA) Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, and discussed in detail the financial issues of SMEDA, said a press release.

The representative of the Small and Medium

Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) informed the Committee regarding the Small Medium Enterprises (SME) policy 2021 and also measures taken for industrial growth in detail.

The NA body deferred the starred question No 183 regarding (a) details of the total worth of machinery and other material alleged to be stolen from Pakistan Steel Mills, Karachi as per government record.

The committee also deferred the number of persons arrested along with the number of those to whom

punishment have been awarded in connection with the said thefts moved by Moulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali, MNA; due to the non-presence of the Mover.

The NA body deferred The Export Processing Zone Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023" moved by MNA Ms. Shahida Rehmani due to non-presence of the Mover.

The meeting was attended by MNAs Rana Muhammad Ishaq Khan, Syed Imran Ahmad Shah, Nasir Khan Musa Zai, Ms. Kiran Imran Dar, Syed Mobein Ahmed.

IT sector playing crucial role in economic growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Experts from the Central Bank's Economic Policy Review Department (EPRD) in the latest episode of the SBP Podcast discussed Pakistan's thriving IT sector, which is playing a crucial role in driving economic growth, fostering fintech advancements, and witnessing significant start-up expansion.

The podcast sheds light on strategies employed by developing nations to boost their IT industries, highlights challenges faced, and emphasizes the sector's contribution to economic development.

The podcast begins by showcasing the remarkable growth of Pakistan's IT exports, with figures soaring from \$290 million in 2013 to \$2.1 billion in 2022, signifying a substantial expansion. It further highlights the noteworthy progress of Pakistani startups, attracting significant investments annually.

Recognizing the importance of domestic investments, the podcast emphasizes the need to raise awareness and knowledge of startups within the local market.

It also underscores the

significance of addressing the skills gap in the IT and startup sectors, particularly through short-term solutions like establishing boot camps to bridge the skill shortage and provide market-oriented training.

Moreover, the podcast emphasizes the transformative impact of fintech on Pakistan's economy and the challenges encountered during the journey towards digital transformation. Fintech companies are recognized as vital drivers of digitization, financial inclusion, and overall economic growth.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is acknowledged for playing a pivotal role in fostering fintech development through initiatives such as the EMI policy and the introduction of the Raast payment system. Furthermore, the issuance of digital banking licenses by the SBP strengthens the fintech ecosystem.

In order to fully harness the potential of the IT sector, the podcast highlights the critical need for quality internet connectivity. While Pakistan has witnessed significant growth in internet users, there is still a gap to bridge in terms of access

and usage. Accessible and reliable internet connectivity is essential to facilitate digital transformation, support fintech growth, and foster other digital businesses.

Additionally, the podcast emphasizes the necessity of improving digital literacy among the population, encompassing skills such as cybersecurity and content creation.

The podcast underscores the vital role of the government in promoting the IT sector and advancing e-governance initiatives. Government contracts are highlighted as instrumental in stimulating the growth and efficiency of IT firms.

The integration of digitization into economic development policies, including cloud computing adoption, enhanced cybersecurity measures, promotion of interoperability between government departments, and digitization of civil registries and taxation systems, is also emphasized.

Through the insights shared in the SBP Podcast, Pakistan's growing IT sector emerges as a catalyst for economic growth, fintech advancements, and the flourishing of startups.

ICCI urges for promoting tourism sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce (ICCI) Ahsan Bakhtawari Monday urged the need to develop the tourism sector in order to attract foreign as well as local tourists to attain sustainable economic growth as well as to promote a soft image of the country around the world.

He said ICCI had organized the first event of its kind in the northern areas to highlight the unexplored tourism potential of these areas. He said the event was attended by a large number of foreigners and diplomats from different

countries including Türkiye, Malaysia and Syria.

He said the chamber of commerce would further organize such events to promote tourism, which creates livelihood opportunities for the people of these areas, said a press release.

He urged the government for learning from the experiences of brotherly countries like Türkiye and Malaysia to frame tourism development policy and called for working together for the promotion of tourism in the northern areas in the country.

Ambassador of Malaysia

to Pakistan Azhar bin Mazlan said that tourism is the most important sector of the Malaysian economy, adding that Pakistan has many places that can attract not only Malaysian tourists but also a large number of tourists from other countries of the world.

Ambassador of Türkiye Dr Mehmet Pachi said that Pakistan has great potential for tourism, adding that Türkiye is one of the most famous tourist destinations in the world where millions of tourists visit every year and it would enhance bilateral cooperation to promote tourism in Pakistan as well.

China's PPI down 5.4%

BEIJING (APP): China's producer price index (PPI), which measures costs for goods at the factory gate, went down 5.4 percent year on year in June, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said Monday.

The decrease expanded by 0.8 percentage points from that in May. On a monthly basis, the producer price index (PPI) edged

down 0.8 percent, narrowing from the 0.9 percent drop a month earlier.

NBS statistician Dong Lijuan attributed the declines to falling prices in commodities, including oil and coal, and a high comparison base during the same period last year.

In May, 25 of all the 40 surveyed industrial sectors reported price declines, down from 26 in the previ-

ous month.

The producer price index (PPI) for industries related to oil and gas extraction, chemicals production, coal mining and washing registered wider declines ranging from 14.9 percent to 25.6 percent last month. The ferrous and non-ferrous metal industries saw their price levels down by 16 percent and 7.2 percent, respectively.

Pakistan Stock Exchange stays bullish, gains 377 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 377.82 points, a positive change of 0.85 percent, closing at 44,585.13 points against 44,207.31 points the previous trading day.

A total of 440,221,059 shares were traded during the day as compared to 247,993,312 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs.12.086 billion against Rs.8.512 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 342 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 238 of them recorded gains and 82 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 22 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 28,194,334

shares at Rs.1.26 per share; JS Bank (R) with 27,939,500 shares at Rs.0.22 per share and Unity Foods Ltd with 20,659,220 shares at Rs.20.18 per share.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.220.00 per share price, closing at Rs.6,675.00, whereas the runner-up was Raffhan Maize with an Rs.65.00 rise in its per share price to Rs.8,355.00.

Shield Corporation witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.24.37 per share closing at Rs.300.53; followed by Siemens Pakistan with Rs.22.80 decline to close at Rs.716.00.

Rupee sheds Rs1.91 against US Dollar
Pakistani Rupee on Monday witnessed Rs1.91 devaluation against the US Dollar (USD) in the inter-bank trading and closed at

Rs 279.80 against the previous working day's value of Rs 277.89.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market stood at Rs 281 and Rs 284 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs 4.34 to close at Rs 306.58 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.24, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen gained 03 paise to close at Rs1.96, whereas an increase of Rs 4.59 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 358.51 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 353.92.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 52 paise and 51 paise to

close at Rs76.17 and Rs74.58, respectively.

Gold rates up by Rs.800 to Rs209,000 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 800 and was sold at Rs.209,000 on Monday against its sale at Rs.208,200 the previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.686 to Rs.179,184 from Rs. 178,498 whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs.164,252 from Rs. 163,623, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained constant at Rs 2480 and Rs 2,126.20 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market witnessed no change and was sold at \$1925, the association reported.

Unveiling R&D Tea Lab at LIPTON Teas & Infusions

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Innovation holds the key to unlocking the full potential of Pakistan's tea-drinking nation. With its rich tradition of tea consumption and diverse tastes, Pakistan presents a unique opportunity for LIPTON's R&D Tea Lab to revolutionize the tea industry. By bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary mindsets, the lab's innovative approach creates better blends appealing to Pakistan's tea-loving population. Moreover, the lab's exploration of new flavors has resulted in remarkable green tea blends that cater to evolving preferences, preserving the essence of Pakistani tea culture.

Pakistan has long embraced tea as an integral part of its cultural fabric, with tea consumption deeply rooted in traditions like chai gatherings and the iconic dhaba culture. LIPTON's R&D Tea Lab respects these traditional

preferences while infusing creativity and innovation into the art of tea blending. The lab aims to create blends that capture the essence of Pakistan's tea culture while offering enhanced taste experiences.

Starting a tea business requires consideration of several important factors. Entrepreneur.com highlights understanding the target market, conducting thorough market research, developing a unique selling proposition, identifying the right suppliers, and creating a solid marketing strategy. LIPTON's R&D Tea Lab demonstrates a commitment to meet these requirements, positioning itself ahead in Pakistan's tea industry.

Tea experts worldwide highlight key industry issues such as sustainability, quality control, and the need for innovation. LIPTON's R&D Tea Lab addresses these concerns by focusing on sustainable tea cultivation, ensuring quality control, and driving innovation in tea blending.

Collaborating with experts and leveraging scientific research, LIPTON pioneers new approaches to tea production and consumption.

Green tea has emerged as a significant trend driven by perceived health benefits. LIPTON's R&D Tea Lab actively explores innovative green tea blends, drawing inspiration from scientific research. The lab introduces exciting combinations of herbs, spices, and fruits, catering to the growing demand for green tea in Pakistan.

In conclusion, LIPTON's R&D Tea Lab represents a new era of innovation in Pakistan's tea industry. By combining traditions with cutting-edge research, the lab creates blends appealing to both traditional and contemporary preferences. As tea enthusiasts seek new taste experiences, LIPTON's R&D Tea Lab provides diverse blends embodying innovation while preserving the essence of Pakistan's tea culture.

Tokyo shares end lower on Fed rate hike concerns

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo shares fell Monday after Wall Street dipped on lingering worries about the impact of future rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index gave up 0.61 percent, or 198.69 points, to end at 32,189.73, marking five straight sessions of losses, while the broader Topix index fell 0.51 percent, or 11.57 points, to 2,243.33.

Investors renewed their caution over a potentially prolonged cycle of rate hikes by the United States Fed after seeing higher-than-expected growth in average hourly earnings in the United States, IwaiCosmo Securities said

in a note. "There were moments of natural rebounds in Tokyo after the Nikkei index had lost more than 1,300 points in the last four sessions," the brokerage house said.

But the market came under pressure from broad worries about a slowdown and rate hikes in Europe and the United States, it said.

The Japanese government's monthly "Economic Watchers Survey" also eased for five straight months to weigh on the market, IwaiCosmo added.

The dollar stood at 142.43 yen in Tokyo on Monday afternoon against 142.08 yen in New York

and 143.49 yen in Tokyo on Friday.

Among major shares, Toyota fell 1.72 percent to 2,260 yen.

Nintendo lost 0.72 percent to 6,305 yen. Sony Group dropped 1.35 percent to 12,830 yen.

Heavily weighted Tokyo Electron, which makes tools to build semiconductors, dropped 1.51 percent to 19,900 yen.

Advantest, which produces tests for semiconductors, lost 2.50 percent to 19,470 yen.

Meanwhile, SoftBank Group rose 0.64 percent to 6,767 yen.

Fast Retailing, which operates the Uniqlo brand, added 0.26 percent to 34,650 yen.

Court Notice

In the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal No. 44/13. Institution 23/7/2021. Date of hearing 30/8/2023. Ezat Khan VS Bakhti Bena etc. Notice to No. 113/1. Mst Zaron widow. 113/5. Zakir son of Zardad Khan late resident of Jangdara Torwarsak tehsel Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8. am dated 30/8/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



In brief

Pakistan women's tour to Singapore

K A R A C H I (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has refused to provide a no-objection certificate (NOC) to Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) for the women's team's tour to Singapore. Pakistan women's team was scheduled to play two friendly matches against Singapore on July 15 and 18; they were scheduled to depart on the evening of July 13 for these games. The PFF had sought NOC from PSB for touring Singapore, but their request was denied. PSB's letter to PFF mentions that federations are required to submit all relevant documents for government clearance at least six weeks before the departure date. "In view of aforesaid instructions, PSB is not in a position to process the case at this belated stage," the PSB letter states. It is worth mentioning that the Football Association of Singapore sent official confirmation of the tour to PFF on June 26. PFF wrote the letter for NOC on June 27, which was delivered to PSB soon after Eid Holidays. A source in PFF wondered how PSB could expect a federation to send documents for NOC even before the tour is confirmed. The denial of NOC means the Pakistan women's football team is set to miss the opportunity of playing international games during the FIFA window. Last month, the PFF had to wait until the last minute for NOCs to tour Mauritius and India.

Thomas runs sixth fastest 200m in history

OREGON (Agencies): Gabby Thomas ran the sixth fastest time in history as she won the women's 200m at the US championships in Oregon. The 26-year-old clocked 21.60 seconds - the quickest time of the year - pipping Sha'Carri Richardson to the title. The win prevented Richardson, 23, winning a sprint double after she secured the 100m title on Friday.. "I was really ready this year. I was hungry. I wanted it more than, I think, anyone," said Thomas. Thomas set the fastest time of the year of 21.86 in the semi-finals, before 200m world champion Sherricka Jackson ran 21.71 at the Jamaican championships. But Thomas responded again in the final, securing her spot at next month's World Championships in Budapest where she will continue her rivalry with Richardson and Jackson. "Every time we step on the track, we have to expect that our competitors are going to just bring it," said Thomas. "Every time we do step on the track, it's just going to be a really fast time because it has to be - or else you're not going to survive this event."

India confirm teams will compete in Asian Games

NEW DELHI (Reuters): India confirmed they will send both their men's and women's teams to the Asian Games in Hangzhou in September-October, the country's cricket board (BCCI) said. Cricket featured twice in the Asian Games but India did not participate either when the country hosted the Games in 2010 or in 2014. With India gearing up for the 50-overs home World Cup later this year, they would field a second-string men's team in the Asian Games with opener Shikhar Dhawan as the likely captain. "BCCI will send both men's and women's teams to the Asian Games..." board secretary Jay Shah said in a statement.



LONDON: Novak Djokovic of Serbia plays a backhand against Hubert Hurkacz of Poland in the Men's Singles fourth round match during day eight of The Championships Wimbledon 2023.

Pakistan among China, Spain to host FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Hockey Federation (FIH) has confirmed Pakistan, China and Spain as hosts for the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers to take place from January 13 to 21, 2024.

Women Qualifiers would be held at Changzhou, China (one tournament) and Valencia, Spain (one tournament) while Men will take place at Lahore, Pakistan (one tournament) and Valencia, Spain (one tournament), said a press release.

Each tournament would

consist of 8 teams (16 teams per gender in total). The continental quotas include- Women's FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers: Africa: 0, Asia: 4, Europe: 8, Oceania: 1, Pan America: 3.

The Men's FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers-Africa: 1, Asia: 5, Europe: 7, Oceania: 1, Pan America: 2.

The teams filling each quota, and therefore invited to participate, would be based on their performance at the Continental Championships taking place in 2023.

The top 3 teams in each of these FIH Hockey Olympic Qualification Tournaments would qualify for Paris 2024. They would join hosts France as well as the winners of each Continental Championship (African Hockey Road to Paris, Pan American Games, Asian Games, EuroHockey Championship and Oceania Cup).

As has been the case since Beijing 2008, 12 teams per gender would play at the Paris 2024 Olympic hockey tournaments, with each squad consisting of 16 athletes.

Pakistan becomes Gamers8 Tekken 7 Nations Cup champion

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): A three-member team from Pakistan on Sunday defeated South

Korea 3-2 in the grand final of the Gamers8 Tekken 7 Nations Cup, becoming the champions in the tournament, much to fans' delight.

The team, comprising Arslan Ash, Atif Butt and Khan Imran, won two rounds of the match to bag an impressive half-million dollar prize.

The Saudi Esports Federation organised the tournament and featured 16 national teams worldwide.

Pakistan had also defeated South Korea in the upper-bracket final, winning all three sets after Pakistan's Atif Butt won the boss match 3-2 against Korea's star player, Knee, and made a spot in the finals.

Korea then processed to play against Japan, which it defeated, to make it to the finals to face off against Pakistan once more.

Pakistan defeated the UK team 2-1 in the semi-final on Saturday (Jul 8). Even though Arslan lost the middle encounter, Atif won the boss match to seal the deal for Pakistan.

After defeating Korea today, Pakistan registered their sixth successive win at the event after South Africa, Japan and Saudia Arabia in the group stages.

Pakistan also ended their group-stage matches by topping the group.

Arslan is one of the best Tekken players in the world, having won three EVO titles in Tekken 7.

He won the EVO Japan 2019 Championship and Evo Championship Series 2019, becoming the only player to have won both then.

Moreover, he was awarded the best E-Player of 2019 by EPSN, is a CEO 2021 Champion, and is the 2022 Combo Breaker Tekken 7 tournament winner.

In 2022 Combo Breaker Tekken 7, he grabbed the title after defeating all of his 10 opponents.

Atif is the current Tekken World Tour Finals champion after winning the title in 2022 while remaining undefeated in the tournament.

Meanwhile, Khan was the runner-up at Evo 2022.

Wimbledon 2023 Djokovic beats Hurkacz, Medvedev through

LONDON (Agencies): Novak Djokovic reached the Wimbledon quarter-finals by completing victory over Poland's Hubert Hurkacz when the pair returned to finish on Monday.

Djokovic was leading by two sets when they were forced off court on Sunday night because of the 11pm curfew. The Serb, going for a record-equalling eighth men's title, dropped the third but won 7-6 (8-6) 7-6 (8-6) 4-6 6-4.

Third seed Daniil Medvedev reached the last eight for the first time as Czech opponent Jiri Lehecka retired.

Medvedev will face Greek fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas - a player with who he has developed a spicy rivalry - or unseeded American Christopher Eubanks in the last eight.

Djokovic, 36, has been unbeatable at the All England Club in recent years, winning the men's title at the past four Championships and not losing a completed match here since retiring injured in 2016.

The 23-time Grand Slam champion's progress this year had been smooth until facing Hurkacz, not dropping a set in his opening three matches.

A below-par start from the Serb on Monday changed that.

Both players had again dominated serve in a third

set which looked likely to go to another tie-break - until 17th seed Hurkacz, who famously beat Roger Federer in the Swiss great's final match at Wimbledon in 2021, broke to reduce the deficit.

Djokovic looked slightly rattled at the end of the set, gesturing to his team as he searched for answers.

Like he has done so many times in his glittering career, Djokovic found them in the fourth.

When the huge-serving Hurkacz began misfiring in the seventh game, Djokovic swarmed over his second serve and converted a third break point.

Now back in the groove, he twice held to love to seal victory and will face Russian seventh seed Andrey Rublev in his 14th quarter-final at Wimbledon.

"I don't recall the last time I felt this miserable in returning games thanks to Hubert's powerful and accurate serves," said Djokovic, who has not been beaten on Centre Court since the 2013 final against Andy Murray.

"It is one of the best serves in the word and is hard to read.

"It was not really an enjoyable match for me, this match could have gone either way."

Medvedev loving life on Court One

Russia's Medvedev was already in command, having won the opening two

sets 6-4 6-2, when Lehecka decided to quit after struggling with blisters on his feet.

Medvedev said he "honestly did not know" how badly 21-year-old Lehecka was hampered.

"I saw his movement was a little bit restricted, but the way he struck the ball, I thought it was not going to cause him too much trouble," he said.

"Of course I feel sorry for Jiri because, in the fourth round of Wimbledon, to get hurt is not easy."

Most of the 27-year-old former world number one's success has come on hard courts, notably when he won his first major title at the 2021 US Open.

Grass courts have been his least successful surface in recent years, leading to Medvedev saying before the tournament he was hoping to change his fortunes.

Playing on Court One at the All England Club has helped - this victory means he continues to have never lost there.

"The thing is it's my fifth Wimbledon and I was not very successful but I've never lost on Court One," he said.

"So I feel sorry that probably for the quarters I'm going to play on Centre Court. I'm like, can I just continue here? I love it.

"I'm really happy and looking forward to my next match. Hopefully I can give 100%."

Shaheens all set for ACC Men's Emerging Teams Asia Cup challenge

LAHORE (APP): Mohammad Harris-led Pakistan Shaheens will depart in the wee hours of Tuesday from Lahore for Sri Lanka via Dubai to feature in the eight-team ACC Men's Emerging Teams Asia Cup. The 50-over tournament will be played from 13 to 23 July in Colombo.

Shaheens are slotted in Group B with India A, Nepal and UAE A. Shaheens will open their campaign on 14 July with the match against Nepal, after which they play UAE A and India A on 17 and 19 July, respectively. Top two teams from each group will qualify for the semi-finals which will be played on 21 July. The final of the tournament will be held on 23 July.

Before the team's departure, the 15-member squad along with four non-traveling reserves players took part in the six-day camp, which was held at the National Cricket Academy in Lahore. The players under the supervision of coaching staff led by head coach Mohammad Masroor worked on different aspects related to 50-over cricket including net sessions.

Apart from 22-year-old

Harris (five ODIs and nine T20Is), defending champions Shaheens will have the services of seven cricketers that have represented the Pakistan Men's team before. The international players in the squad are: Arshad Iqbal (1 T20I), Kamran Gulam (1 ODI), Mohammad Wasim Jnr (2 Tests, 14 ODIs, 27 T20Is), Sahibzada Farhan (3 T20Is), Saim

Ayub (8 T20Is), Shah Nawaz Dahani (2 ODIs, 11 T20Is) and Tayyab Tahir (3 T20Is).

Mohammad Harris said: "We are ready for the ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup. We won't let the pressure of being defending champions affect us. Instead, we will keep things simple, remain composed, and strive for consistent performances."

"The players have shown great commitment and dedication during the camp, and we have prepared ourselves according to the conditions in Sri Lanka. Having been to Sri Lanka before, we are familiar with the challenges we may face."

"Our team's combination is excellent, with a talented group of all-round players. Each member brings something unique to the table, and I have complete confidence in their abilities."

"This tournament serves as a crucial opportunity for everyone to showcase their skills and stake their claim for a spot in the national team. With a great deal of white-ball matches scheduled for the men's team in the future, there are plenty of chances for players to make a mark and secure their place."

Head Coach Mohammad Masroor said: "The players have trained really hard and responded well in the training sessions here at the National Cricket Academy. They have shown dedication and determination, which is commendable. This is an excellent platform for these young cricketers to demonstrate their abilities and aptitude."

"It is truly remarkable to

see that most of the players in the squad have shared experiences playing together at the age-group level. This familiarity and camaraderie amongst them are valuable assets for our team. I have high hopes that this unity will translate into good results for the team. Together, they can achieve great things and leave a lasting impact in this tournament."

Squad: Mohammad Harris (captain, wicketkeeper) (Peshawar), Omair Bin Yousuf (vice-captain) (Karachi), Amad Butt (Sialkot), Arshad Iqbal (Swabi), Haseebullah (Quetta), Kamran Gulam (Peshawar), Mehran Mumtaz (Rawalpindi), Mubasir Khan (Islamabad), Mohammad Wasim Jnr (North Waziristan), Qasim Akram (Lahore), Sahibzada Farhan (Charsadda), Saim Ayub (Karachi), Shah Nawaz Dahani (Larkana), Sufiyan Mugeem (AJK) and Tayyab Tahir (Gujrat)

Non-traveling reserves – Abdul Wahid Bangalzai, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Junaid and Rohail Nazir

Player support personnel: Shahid Aslam (manager), Mohammad Masroor (head coach), Hanif Malik (batting/fielding coach), Umar Rashid (bowling coach) and Intiaz Ahmed (physiotherapist)

Pakistan's fixtures in ACC Men's Emerging Teams Asia Cup

Group B:

v Nepal, 14 July
v UAE A, 17 July
v India A, 19 July.

Pakistani mountaineer races rivals, hunts funds to chase summit record

LAHORE (APP): Pakistani mountaineer Shehroze Kashif faces sub-zero temperatures and biting winds in his race to scale the world's highest peaks, but his biggest challenge is finding the money.

Kashif, 21, aims this year to become the youngest person to climb every peak above 8,000 metres (26,247 feet), all of which are in Asia, with five in Pakistan.

Summitting Everest set him back around \$60,000, and climbing all 14 "super peaks" can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars — funds that are especially difficult to raise in a country gripped by an economic crisis.

"My father sold my car and a piece of land... that's how I did Everest," Kashif told AFP from his home in Lahore, the sub-tropical, low-altitude city where he was born.

Only around 50 people are believed to have climbed all 14 super peaks, the

youngest being Mingma Gyabu "David" Sherpa of Nepal, who summited them all by age 30.

To break this record, Kashif still has three mountains to conquer: China's Shishapangma, and Cho Oyu and Manaslu in Nepal, having to re-climb the latter after a new, higher summit was officially recognised in 2021.

Hot on Kashif's heels is Adriana Brownlee, a 22-year-old British-Spanish mountaineer who is also racing to be the youngest to scale all the eight-thousanders. Kashif describes Brownlee — the youngest woman to climb the world's second-highest peak, K2 — as "sharing the same stage".

But unlike Brownlee, who has climbed 10 eight-thousanders, Kashif does not have international sponsorship and said he even struggles to get backers in Pakistan. Brownlee will also need



to re-summit Manaslu, in what would be her third attempt to scale the peak since first climbing it.

"I think she's waiting for me (to do it) actually," Kashif said with a laugh.

— Racking up records —

Kashif first became interested in climbing aged 11, when most Pakistani boys his age are building up their cricket skills. Instead, he climbed the 3,885-metre Himalayan

peak Makra in northern Pakistan. He has racked up a string of records since then, with scarcely enough space in his Twitter bio to list them all.

Kashif is the youngest person to climb K2 and the youngest to climb both of the world's two highest mountains. He is also the youngest to climb Pakistan's Broad Peak, the world's 12th highest mountain and his first eight-thouser — a feat that earned him the moniker "Broad Boy".

"It's not about only climbing the mountains. It's about the energy that you absorb from the mountains," Kashif said. "Every mountain has its own charm. It's own aura of... danger and adventure and happiness."

— Skirting death —

With memorial plaques dotting the hills of the eight-thousanders, Kashif is aware of his pursuit's risks.

"These guys were here with the same potential, same passion, same enthusiasm, same determination and same tolerance (as me)," he said.

Kashif's most dangerous climb was up the world's ninth-highest peak, Nanga Parbat, in July 2022.

He and his climbing partner Fazal Ali got lost in bad weather after summiting, and soon ran out of oxygen, food and water. "I started hallucinating," Kashif said. "My head was working (but the) rest of my body was just totally numb."

When Kashif woke from a rest, he was surprised to be alive, and determined to survive. After six hours of trekking, the pair made it to one of the mountain's base camps. "The thing that I was most afraid of (is) that I don't want to die without knowing what my body is capable of."



In brief

IRSA releases 388,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 388,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 424,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1517.21 feet and was 119.21 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 153,400 cusecs and 164,200 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1195.85 feet, which was 145.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 56,900 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 202,700, 201,100, 150,200 and 90,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 56,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 141,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Four drug peddlers netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers conducted raids in different areas and rounded up four accused on recovery of over five kg charras. According to a police spokesman, Airport, Rattaamral, Pirwadhai and Sadiqabad police conducted raids in their respective jurisdiction and rounded up Sajid Hussain with 2400 grams charras, Imran for having 1050 grams charras, Hamid Iqbal for carrying 1220 grams charras and Hassan Ahmed on recovery of 1013 grams charras. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.

Sajid review Safe City project

RAWALPINDI (APP): Secretary, Housing and Urban Development Punjab, Sajid Zafar Dali along with Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaqat Ali Chatta and Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khurram Ali here on Monday visited different areas of Rawalpindi city and reviewed Safe City project. They visited various areas including Kutichery Chowk, Peshawar Road, IGP Road, Pirwadhai and Liaquat Bagh. The secretary in a briefing was informed that the security situation of Rawalpindi city would be improved further through Safe City project. The Safe City project would prove to be highly effective in combating crime, he said adding, the project would increase the sense of security among the citizens. The use of technology to improve security had become indispensable, the Commissioner said adding, the Safe City project was being launched in Rawalpindi and Murree. The project would improve the law and order situation, he added. The Safe City was a project to ensure public safety. The Commissioner said. The administration was fully mobilized regarding the Safe City project and all available resources would be utilized for the safety and protection of the citizens, he added.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi administering the oath of office to Dr. Syed Muhammad Anwar as the Alim Judge of the Federal Shariat Court at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

‘Tourism promotion to help in making country’s development roadmap’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State, Chairman Prime Minister’s Task Force on Gandhara Tourism Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani Monday said the promotion of religious tourism would play a key role in making a roadmap of prosperity and development of the country.

He was flanked by a delegation of Buddhist monks from Vietnam here, the minister said the incumbent government was serious about promoting and projecting the country’s tourism to highlight the soft image of the country.

He said that Pakistan was fully safe for tourists, and offered the rich cultural heritage of the ancient Gandhara Civilization. He said the promotion of religious tourism would lead to enhance commercial activities and attract foreign exchange. Dr. Ramesh Kumar said the symposium

would also help to promote the soft image of the country and provide connectivity with the world.

A three-day international Gandhara symposium will commence in Islamabad on July 11 to showcase the treasure trove Gandhara Civilization and Buddhist Heritage in Pakistan, he added. Speaking on the occasion, the Buddhist Monks from Vietnam lauded Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and his government for facilitating Buddhist people and followers of other faiths to explore Gandhara Civilization and sites of Buddhism in Pakistan.

They said there will be more travelers in the future to visit the cultural heritage of Pakistan. They urged the media to play its due role in promoting Gandhara civilization and Pakistan’s potential for religious

tourism. The delegation also took a round of the Islamabad Museum and showed keen interest in Pakistan’s Buddhist heritage.

It is pertinent to mention that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will address the inaugural session of the symposium. The sole objective of the symposium was to raise global awareness about the historical and cultural significance of the Gandhara Civilization and Buddhist heritage in the country.

A number of Buddhist Monks from Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Nepal, South Korea and Sri Lanka would attend the symposium. The title of the event is "Cultural Diplomacy: Reviving Gandhara Civilization and Buddhist Heritage in Pakistan".

Anti-social elements involve in social media propaganda to be brought to justice soon: SAPM

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Malik Ahmed Khan Monday said that the whole nation stood with the army chief and that anti-social elements involved in the social media propaganda drive would be brought to justice soon as the investigation of this matter reached its final stages.

"Elements behind the social media propaganda campaign need to be exposed," he said while

talking to a Private news channel. "This negative social media drive was being hatched against national insinuations to harm the country and it was pre-planned", he added.

"Anti-state elements are only active to destabilize the country politically and economically," he mentioned. Replying to a question, he said hate statements through social media platforms and freedom of expression should not be confused. "There is a dire

need to restrict these hate speech platforms," he added. He said, "His party is not believing in media regulation as free media defines the progress of any nation but such elements are crossing limits and exploiting the situation through their false statements and negative propaganda drives."

"It is a clear violation of fundamental rights of any citizen of the country which will be protected at any cost," he added.

Police implement new measures to ensure investigation adherence

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have appointed law officers to oversee investigation standards and bolster transparency and uphold the rule of law.

During a meeting presided over by the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, law officers were entrusted with the meticulous task of thoroughly reviewing case files to ensure adherence

to investigation standards and the pursuit of justice based on merit. The meeting also focused on reviewing ongoing cases and assessing the performance of investigation officers. These appointments signify the first-ever collaboration between law officers and police officers in Pakistan, highlighting a concerted effort to promote transparency and justice in law enforcement.

The meeting, which witnessed the presence of influential figures including SSP Operations Malik Jamil Zafar, AIG Operations Saud Khan, all District Police Officers (DPOs), Sub-District Police Officers (SDPOs), law officers, and unit in-charges, emphasized the imperative of cooperation between law officers and investigation officers in legal matters.

ANF recovers over 36 kg drugs in nine operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 36 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He informed that in an operation near Khana Road, Rawalpindi, an accused were arrested with 1000 grams charras.

In second operation conducted in a deserted area of Turbat, 18 kg Ice drug concealed in bushes was recovered.

In third operation near Bilawal Chowranghi, Clifton Karachi, 10 kg charras was recovered from a rickshaw while an accused resident of Karachi was also rounded up.

In fourth operation near Godap Town Karachi, 1.7 kg Ice drug and two kg heroin were recovered from a vehicle while an accused resident of Quetta was also netted.

In fifth operation near Shakarpur road Sukkur, two kg charras was recovered

from the possession of a drug smuggler, resident of Khairpur.

In sixth operation at Bacha Khan International Airport, ANF recovered 101 heroin and Ice-filled capsules from the possession of a Bahrain-bound passenger, going on flight no GF-787.

In seventh operation on Gujranwala Road, 1.8 kg charras was recovered from the possession of a biker, resident of Sheikhupura. The spokesman informed that in eighth operation conducted at a courier office in Kot Lakhpat Lahore area, 33 grams heroin concealed in gents suits was recovered. The parcel was booked for Greece. In ninth operation conducted at Multan International Airport, a Sharjah-bound passenger, resident of Bannu, going on flight no PA-812 was rounded up on recovery of a charras-filled capsule.

Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process, he added.

Search and combing operation conducted for enhanced security

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police, in collaboration with the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), carried out a comprehensive search and combing operation within the jurisdiction of Secretariat police stations.

This operation comes as a result of special directives from Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO), to ensure the safety and security of the citizens of Islamabad. The operation involved thorough checks of houses, suspects, vehicles, and motorcycles, emphasizing the commitment to heighten security measures in the federal capital.

In response to the directives issued by ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, search and combing operations have been initiated in various areas of Islamabad. The primary objective is to enhance the safety and security of the city’s residents. The recent operation took place in different areas within the jurisdiction of Secretariat police stations, conducted jointly by teams from the CTD and FC. During the operation, a total of 125 houses, 50 suspects, five vehicles, and 20 motorcycles were thoroughly checked. ICCPO Islamabad emphasized that the search and combing operations aim to strengthen security measures in the federal capital. Zonal officers have been instructed to continue these operations in their respective areas.

Gul claimed that during the Covid-19 pandemic, many critical things happened in the occupied territory of Kashmir as Indian occupant forces badly crushed the freedom struggle of the innocent Kashmiris with impunity under the garb of the pandemic lockdown.

He said the Indian government had rolled out 4G internet services in the IIOJK which were previ-

Sheikh Rashid sees law of jungle, fascism in country

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Awami Muslim League chief and former federal interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed has lamented that fascism, lawlessness and barbarism are the order of the day in Pakistan. The former minister wrote on his Twitter handle on Monday that after midnight two houses of "my friend Syed Qasim Shah were raided to arrest me. They ransacked the house on failing to find me there, and took his only 11-year-old son Syed Aoun Muhammad along with them." Rashid said his houses were raided five times and even the house of his mother, who died 30 years ago, was not spared. The personnel took away his three telephones, laptops, watches and cars. His belongings have not been handed him back despite court orders.

The former federal minister said there was law of jungle, tyranny, fascism, bru-

tal and lawlessness in the country. He said he contested elections for one seat, but "my tweets don't ensure me the right to live freely."

Rashid said his houses were razed to the ground, his employees beaten and their arms broken as a result of which they had left their jobs.

He said no one condemned the May 9 violence as vehemently as he did. "But I am not the one who will hold a press conference under pressure. I belong to a noble ancestry."

I will honour my commitments till my last breath." Rashid said he did not fear death. "And I repeat my old maxim; death is my beloved, prison is like house of my in-laws and chains are my jewellery. A loser is he who gives up. By the grace of God, we will snatch victory from the jaws of defeat."

Pakistan’s long-term policy on Kashmir imperative to counter Indian onslaught: Gul

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Tehreek-e-Jawanan Pakistan (TJP) Mohammad Abdullah Hamid Gul on Monday said India was heavily investing in social media and disinformation campaigns to damage Kashmir Movement world over that demanded Pakistan to come up with an active diplomacy and long-term unanimous policy on Kashmir to counter Indian onslaught.

After the August 5, 2019 revocation of Article 25-A and 370 of Indian Constitution, the Hindutva regime of Modi not only stripped off the special status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) but rather secured a huge victory for themselves on the diplomatic and political level, said the TJP Chairman in an exclusive chat with APP on Kashmir Movement in the aftermath of G-20 Summit.

Gul claimed that during the Covid-19 pandemic, many critical things happened in the occupied territory of Kashmir as Indian occupant forces badly crushed the freedom struggle of the innocent Kashmiris with impunity under the garb of the pandemic lockdown.

He said the Indian government had rolled out 4G internet services in the IIOJK which were previ-

ously banned in the occupied valley that indicated the confidence of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leadership in the fact that no major resistance could be offered by the innocent Kashmiris.

He mentioned that undoubtedly India had identified the US weakness as other than India no one in the region was contesting China but rather they had congenial ties with its arch-rival. US-India trade volume, he said had exceeded US\$80 billion whereas India on the other hand had border skirmishes and territorial disputes with China creating a troubling situation for the latter.

He alleged that diplomatically India had neutralised Pakistan as it had trampled the US sanctions against Iran by promoting an oil trade with it, supporting it in its thick and thin, managing good business with Russia and at the same time was a member of BRICS (the powerful grouping of the world's leading emerging market economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa aimed to promote peace, security, development and cooperation), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the number one ally of the US. Abdullah Gul suggested that since

India had excelled in diplomacy over the years, Pakistan also needs to set its house in order and have clear priority goals to achieve success for the Kashmir cause.

He demanded that Pakistan should have a separate Kashmir House not the one functioning in Islamabad but rather a separate centre based on the idea of exploring Kashmir's historic and cultural relations and developing video evidence archives to provide a proper platform for the youth to study and promote its separate identity for the understanding of the world. Kashmir, he said had its own unique food, culture, history, customs and traditions that existed for centuries.

The TJP chairman regretted that the Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir Affairs founded to contest Kashmiris right to freedom at global forums was headed by a non-Kashmiri.

"The government of Pakistan appoints that individual as Chairman of Kashmir Committee who is not a Kashmiri, neither speaks nor understands Kashmiri language and also has no idea about its history. How can he be able to initiate active movement for Kashmir Cause?"

Pakistan has vast investment opportunities in various sectors including IT: Amin

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin-ul-Haque has emphasized the abundant investment opportunities available in the country across multiple sectors, particularly in Information Technology (IT).

In a statement, he said that the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MOITT) is committed to extending comprehensive support and facilities to businesses and investors in various domains, including Incubation Centers, Software Technology Parks, Mobile Manufacturing, and the Telecom sector.

The minister's remarks highlight the government's recognition of the potential for growth and development in Pakistan's IT industry. With a skilled workforce, a growing digital infrastructure, and a conducive environment for technological innova-

tion, Pakistan has become an attractive destination for investment in IT-related ventures.

The MOITT, under Syed Amin Ul Haque's leadership, aimed to foster a favourable ecosystem for businesses and investors by providing necessary resources, infrastructure, and assistance. This includes establishing Incubation Centers that offer support, mentoring, and resources to startups, facilitating the growth of emerging technology companies.

Additionally, Software Technology Parks will be established to create specialized zones equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, encouraging the growth of software development and IT-enabled services.

Furthermore, the government is keen on promoting mobile manufacturing in Pakistan, aiming to attract investment in this sector. By providing incentives and facilities, the MOITT aims to establish a robust

mobile manufacturing industry that contributes to local employment, reduces imports, and strengthens the country's self-sufficiency in technology. The Telecom sector, a vital component of Pakistan's digital transformation, also receives significant attention from the MOITT. The government aims to support and facilitate telecom companies, ensuring an enabling environment for their operations and promoting further investment in expanding and improving the country's telecom infrastructure.

Syed Amin Ul Haque's announcement reinforces the government's commitment to promoting investment and fostering growth across multiple sectors, particularly in the realm of IT. By offering comprehensive support and facilities, the MOITT aims to attract local and international investors, paving the way for technological advancement and economic progress in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) Raja Ali Raza Anwar giving away shield to participant during inaugural ceremony of 48th International Nathiagali Summer College (INSC) on Physics and Contemporary Needs at National Center for Physics (NCP) Quaid-e-Azam University.

Police arrest criminals

KABUL (Agencies): Police arrested twenty-five people on charges of robbery, smuggling, and use of alcoholic beverages from six provinces. 25 people were arrested by police on charges of robbery, smuggling, and use of alcoholic beverages from Nangarhar, Helmand, Kandahar, Herat, Logar and Ghazni provinces. The police of Nangarhar arrested one person on charges smuggling of 128 weapons and five others on charges of use of alcoholic beverages.

23 Afghans rescued

KABUL (Agencies): Peruvian authorities rescued 23 Afghans from migrant traffickers along the border with Brazil, the attorney general's office said. The migrants, who were trying to get to Ecuador, paid money to people smugglers to transport them across the nation and to the northern border, prosecutors said. But they were cheated out of their money and crowded into a house without food in the village of Inapari in the Madre de Dios department along the Peru -Brazil border.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

11,000 criminal cases registered in past year

KABUL (Khaama Press): Taliban's Ministry of Interior announced that criminal cases have sharply declined compared to that of previous years, adding 12, 800 cases were registered over the past year.

Abdul Matin Qaneh, the spokesperson of the interior ministry on Saturday said that 16,600 people were arrested who were convicted of criminal cases in the past year, according to Bakhtar news agency.

Referring to the statistics, Mr. Qaneh stressed

that, "overall criminal incidents have dropped throughout the country compared to the previous years."

According to the ministry, recording 12,000 criminal cases in the past year is way lower than what it used to be prior to the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021.

Taliban officials have added that corruption, evading the law, coercion and turning the law to personal interests had led to a sharp rise in the crime level during the former govern-

ment.

According to the Taliban's ministry of interior, the detention of 11,800 criminals accused of committing different crimes led to a major decline in crime levels across the country.

Previously, the interior ministry had reported of recording nearly 12,000 criminal cases in the country. This comes as armed killings and theft in different parts of the country have unprecedentedly increased, causing serious concerns among civilians.

Minister asks for rapid aid to needy people

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Refugees and Repatriation Minister, Alhaji Qari Mohammad Ajmal Wiyar in a meeting with an official of the International Rescue Committee, called for acceleration of aid delivery to vulnerable people in affected areas.

Acting Refugees Minister Alhaji Qari Mohammad Ajmal Wiyar met with Knifan Moriti, the head of the International Rescue Committee's Immunity Department in Afghanistan, the Ministry said in a statement.

Mr. Moriti shared details about vulnerable and needy families in four provinces of the country, and assured the continued cooperation of that organization, according to the Ministry statement.

Acting Minister while appreciating the work of the said organization in providing assistance, requested to speed up the assistance to the vulnerable people in the remote areas of the country where humanitarian assistance was not possible in the years before the effects of insecurity.

‘Forceful displacement leads to human trafficking’

KABUL (Agencies): Mohibullah Taib, Counsellor of Human Rights at the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan in Geneva has said that the Taliban continue to forcefully displace ordinary people in different parts of Afghanistan.

The envoy of the Afghan Mission in Geneva warned that forceful displacement by the de facto authorities of Afghanistan can lead to human trafficking in the country.

While speaking at the United Nations Human Rights Council, Mohibullah Taib, the permanent representative of Afghanistan in Geneva said forceful and systematic displacements in north and west of Afghanistan have left ordinary people with no option but to flee their home country.

Mohibullah Taib has warned that the victims of the forceful displacements will remain without any help or protection of any kind.

Since Taliban officials have closed shelters and protection services for victims of human trafficking, Mr. Taib stated that extra measures should be taken to protect the displaced



people in different parts of the country.

Over the past two years, several reports emerged that the Taliban have forcefully displaced people in Daikundi, Takhar, Baghlan, Faryab, Panjshir and Sar-e Pul provinces of Afghanistan.

Worst of all, the Taliban have reached a settlement with the Pakistani government to relocate Tehreek-e-Taliban members to northern parts of the country. The move has already prompted widespread condemnations by the people of Afghanistan and former

government politicians. Some anti-Taliban groups and movements describe relocating Tehreek-e-Taliban members to northern parts of Afghanistan as extremely dangerous, which may even lead to a civil war and partition of the country.

‘Harry to be ashamed and brought to justice’

KABUL (Agencies): Suhail Shaheen, head of the political office of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) in Qatar, has said that Prince Harry should be brought to justice over his claim that he killed 25 Afghans while serving in Afghanistan in 2012-2013.

In his recently released memoir "Spare", Prince Harry wrote that he had eliminated 25 IEA members, and said he felt neither satisfaction nor shame about his actions. However, Suhail Shaheen, told Arab News Prince Harry ought to feel ashamed of what he did.

"They claim they are a democracy, that they are the advocates and champions of human rights. And then they do this," he said, condemning the prince for not only killing Afghans but also boasting about it.

Shaheen said the men Harry killed were not "enemy combatants," as described by the prince, but innocent villagers.



He demanded that the prince be brought to justice, saying: "If their laws are meant for the protection of human rights, then he should be tried (before a court of law). By his own admission he has acknowledged that he killed 25 people. It is a crime."

Harry said the killings took place near the end of his tour of Afghanistan in 2013. "If there's people trying to do bad stuff to our guys, then we'll take them out of the game," he wrote in the memoir.

Describing the victims

as "pieces being removed from a chessboard," the prince wrote: "Baddies eliminated before they could kill Goodies."

Shaheen said Harry was not the only one who killed innocent Afghans. "Many other soldiers have done the same. There are many cases. A lot of families lost their breadwinners. There are thousands of videos of innocent people, villagers, farmers being killed in their fields." He said that if the killings had taken place in other countries, there would be calls for justice.

MoEW approved five-year operational plan to develop energy sector

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Energy and Water set a five-year operational plan for the development of the energy sector, which includes the expansion of energy production from domestic sources and the increase of national income.

Today, Monday in a

meeting chaired by Mullah Abdul Latif Mansoor, Acting Energy and Water Minister with the participation of other officials of the Ministry and experts in the sector of energy, approved a five-year operational plan for the development of the

energy sector, the Ministry said in a statement.

During the meeting, the officials of the energy department shared details about the operational plan of that ministry for the next five years.

Improving the security

of energy production resources, increasing the use of these resources, attracting investment in energy production resources in the country, using domestic resources for energy production, increasing national income, and gaining mar-

ket share are the main components of this operational plan, said Ghulam Jilani Haqparast, a senior official of the Ministry.

Approving the five-year operational plan, the Acting Energy and Water Minister stressed its complete implementation.

Professional training centers opened for drug addicts in Kabul



KABUL (TOLONews): A center for professional and craft courses was opened for 530 drug addicts in the capital city of Kabul, the Ministry of Public Works said.

An official of the MoMP, Abdul Wahid Faiz, said that the training will include tailoring, electric engineering, and home construction, and will last for a period of three months.

"We have provided training for

530 drug addicts in tailoring, electricity, shoemaking and repair of home appliances," he said.

This comes as the deputy minister of Counter-Narcotics of the Ministry of Interior said that two million drug addicts need rehabilitation treatment, and called on the international community to aid in this regard.

A senior official of the deputy Minister of Counter-Narcotics of the

Ministry of Interior, Abdul Rahman Qassimi, said that 20,000 drug addicts are currently under treatment in 11 rehabilitation centers.

"The drug addicts should be provided with technical and professional training and then they should be provided with a job so they do not become addicted to drugs again," Qassimi said.

Meanwhile, some of the trainees urged the interim government to provide them with job opportunities after their graduation.

"The Islamic Emirate should also try to provide jobs for the rehabilitated drug addicts who graduated from this center," said Suheel, a trainee.

"The electricity work in construction is the best career, thus I am learning technical and professional training in this field here and to prevent myself from being addicted to drugs," said Mohammad Nasir, a trainee.

Based on the statistics of the MoMP, there are a total of 52 centers of craft training centers across the country. The ministry said women trainees contribute 20,000 participants at these centers.

Crimean Congo hemorrhagic fever patients need blood: Officials

KABUL (TOLONews): The Central Blood Bank said that they donate nearly two hundred fresh blood packets to Crimean Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF) patients every day.

"Crimean Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF) disease is a major concern for the blood bank, as are thalassemia and hemophilia, because blood is required for treatment. With the disease, patients also receive the same elements for their final treatment, which is thrombocytes. The blood bank prepares the same elements for them," said Mohammad Nasir Sadiq, head of the Central Blood Bank.

Some of the families of patients are asking the officials of the Ministries of



Public Health and Agriculture to take steps to eradicate this disease.

They said that daily they prepare three packets of blood for their patients.

"To donate blood, we brought more than 70 to 80 of our friends to donate blood to someone who

needed blood," said Wahidullah, a relative of a patient.

"We asked the Ministry of Public Health to publicly advise the people to follow health rules, and the government should help them to spray disinfectant in every public place with lots

of traffic," said Jawed, a relative of a patient.

Meanwhile, the doctors of the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Kabul said that recently nearly 15 people suspected of Crimean Congo hemorrhagic fever disease are admitted to this hospital every day.

Ghazni youth provides fund for school building construction

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): A young man in the Deh Yak district of southern Ghazni province made commitment to build a primary school building in his locality with his own budget.

Quadratullah Malang, 33, said: "I succeeded to establish this primary school in 2019 with my personnel efforts, but now I want to build a building for this school on my own land.

Malang while talking to Pajhwok Afghan News said: "While I was travelling from my village to Ghazni city four years ago, I saw no school in these villages for the children to study."

He said: "When I watched children in areas from our village till Ghazni City, they were all in terrible condition, they were playing in dust, held gray faces, some were engaged in dog fighting and wasteful activities."

So I decided to work for establishing a primary school and get the approval of the provincial Education

Department, although we faced many problems but we remain committed to build the school, we succeeded to get the approval for establishing of the school, he said.

After this successful move, the students of this school were able to study under the open sky or tents. "In order to resolve the problem, I decided to build building for the school.

Malang said: "Our school was inaugurated but it had no building, there was no shelter for the students we continue our efforts to solve the remaining problems as well."

He said: "I granted my own land for the building of the school, the school's one story building will be made of mud, there will be 7 classrooms and a room for administration, currently 220 girls and 420 boys study in this school, the total cost of the building is still unknown."

He added, we sought the assistance of the govern-

ment, individuals and other humanitarian organizations, no one gave us any assistance while the humanitarian assistance organizations are also declining day by day.

"Despite financial burden of the school on my shoulders, I had no option but to provide land for the school building as well," he said.

He further added, the shortages of water, lack of surrounding wall for the school, educational materials and shortage of teachers are other problems that the school had been facing. People asked the Education Department to provide support in this regard.

Bakht Mohammad is another youth of the same district, told Pajhwok Afghan News the commitment Quadratullah Malang encouraged us to support him and stand with him side by side and work.

Bakht Mohammad called on other youth of this area to unite their hands

with them for building the school.

The provincial officials thanked the youth for their efforts for building the school for their children.

Mir Sayed Nasir Ahmad Agha, the acting director of provincial Education Department, while expressing his views on the volunteer school building construction asked other residents of this district to follow the footsteps of Janabad area youth and facilitate their children get education.

He added majority of schools in Deh Yak district sans standard buildings and their students are facing different problems.

Agha said he will do everything possible in the limits of available resources with him to support education sector.

Despite deteriorating economic situation in the country, reports regarding the construction of school building at private expenses had surged.

Work on gas pipeline project begins

KABUL (Pajhwok): A gas transmission pipeline is being constructed in northern Afghanistan, says the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MoMP).

The ministry announced on Sunday the pipeline would carry gas from Shiberghan, the capital of Jawzjan, to Mazar-i-Sharif in Balkh.

Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum Shahabuddin Dilawar and several other officials attended the inaugural ceremony in Shiberghan.

The 94.5-kilometre pipeline is being built at a cost of 609 million afghanis. It will supply gas to fertiliser, power producers and glass makers.

The pipeline would start supplying gas to residential houses in the near future, local officials said.

Delawar said the government-funded pipeline project would be completed in three years. About 52 years ago, he added, a pipeline had been constructed but that had become old.

It would transfer 170,000 cubic metres of gas daily from Jawzjan to Balkh.

China opens new cargo route to Afghanistan

KABUL (Agencies): A freight train departed from Lanzhou, capital of northwest China's Gansu Province and headed for Hairatan in Afghanistan, marking the launch of a new cargo route.

The freight train is loaded with 39 containers of goods, worth \$1.5 million, which include auto parts, furniture, office supplies, and mechanical equipment, Xinhua reported.

Commencing its journey

from the Dongchuan logistics center in Lanzhou, the train headed towards Kashgar in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Once in Kashgar, the goods will be transferred to trucks for onward transportation to Kyrgyzstan. From there, these goods will be shipped by railway again before finally arriving in Afghanistan's Hairatan.

The successful opening of this freight route will

further strengthen the economic and trade cooperation and exchanges among China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and other countries along the Belt and Road, according to one of the companies that operated the transport service.

Lanzhou is a transportation hub in northwest China. At present, it has opened international train services reaching over 30 cities in more than 20 countries.



Flood threat in Punjab rises due to rains, Indian water flow

LAHORE (PPI): Due to torrential rains in the country and India's water aggression, rivers in Punjab are facing a potent flood threat as water level is rising in Ravi, Chenab and Sutlej, according to a report on Monday.

Water level is constantly rising in River Ravi. The 150,000 cusecs water is likely to pass through the Ravi in the evening. The local administration has deployed rescue officials, civil and defence divers near the river beds. On the direction of Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, the encroachments are being removed along the river bank and evacuation is being made where it is necessary. Floodwater entered fields in Narowal where rescue officials evacuated 300 stranded people and shifted them to a safer place. The water level at River Sutlej has risen to 16 feet. After the release of water by India, the water level in River Sutlej has gone up by 4 feet.

According to District Emergency Operation Centre, the water flow was recorded 18,000 cusecs at

PM orders arrangements for possible flood situation in Ravi, Sutlej, Chenab

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the relevant authorities to make fool-proof arrangements to handle the possible flood situation in Ravi, Chenab and Sutlej rivers. He also directed them to get prepared for timely and safe evacuation and create awareness among the people in the potentially affected areas. The prime minister

appreciated the Rangers and Rescue 1122 personnel for the timely evacuation and assistance of the people trapped in flood water in Shakargarh.

He said the timely relief actions by the Rangers and Rescue helped save dozens of people including women and children.

"I along with the whole nation pay tributes to the country's dutiful personnel", he remarked.

Ganda Singh Wala. Assistant Commissioner Rizwanul Haq Puri informed that rescue camps are being pitched to deal with any untoward situation. He said that the administration is also giving motor boats to people of Bhaki Wind living near the river. Continuous monitoring of water in Ravi and Chenab rivers is going on at Shakargarh and Hafizabad.

The PDMA has issued an alert, saying there will be low flood situation in River Ravi at Jasar. Moderate flood situation has been recorded in River Chenab at Khanki Barrage in Wazirabad where flood water has risen to 100,000 cusecs during last 7 hours. The water inflow at Head Marala in River Chenab was recorded at 184,550 cusecs.

Maulana Fazl calls on PM to discuss political situation

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Amir of Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI-F) Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Monday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to hold consultations over the current political situation of the country.

During the meeting, Minister for Communications Maulana Asad Mahmood was also present, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. Both leaders of JUI-F appreciated the firm reaction and steps of the

government and prime minister with regard to the highly condemnable act of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden.

JUI-F Amir Maulana Fazl calls on PM to discuss political situation Maulana Fazlur Rehman termed the incident in Sweden as highly regretful and lauded the prime minister and the government of Pakistan for a narrative in this regard.

He also lauded the efforts of the coalition government under the leadership of the prime minister

to steer the country out of the economic difficulties and put it on the path of prosperity.

The prime minister also appreciated the role of the coalition partners in the government and said that without their cooperation, taking the country out of its economic woes and reaching an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), were not possible. He praised JUI-F amir for standing with the government in taking the difficult decisions.

Court issues Pervaiz Elahi's release order

LAHORE (NNI): An anti-corruption court in Lahore on Monday issued release order of former Punjab chief minister and PTI President Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi in the Punjab Assembly illegal appointments case. Elahi's guarantor Rana Farrukh Ameen submitted Rs1 million surety bonds on behalf of the PTI president after which the court issued his release order.

Last month, the anti-corruption court accepted the past-arrest bail application of the former chief minister. Special Judge Anti-Corruption Ali Raza Awan heard the case. Elahi was accused of making illegal recruitments in the Punjab Assembly during his tenure as chief minister of the province.

According to the prosecutor, the former chief minister and others appointed 12 candidate who had failed the written examination to BS 17.

Separately, in another case related to money laundering and suspicious transaction against Pervaiz Elahi, the Lahore Banking Court adjourned the hearing on former chief minister's bail application till Tuesday. Banking Court Judge Aslam Gondal conducted the proceedings.

The court sought the record of the case from the FIA. The court also directed Elahi's lawyer to present his arguments.

The Federal Investigation Agency registered a case against Elahi and others for laundering money illegally.

No mention of Pakistan in IMF scheduled meeting on July 12

ISLAMABAD (NNI): For the release of \$3 billion loan by the International Monetary Fund through the Stand-By Arrangement (SBA), Pakistan is awaiting for the IMF Executive Board meeting going to be held in a couple of days but there is no mention of Pakistan in the scheduled meeting of the Fund on its website. According to the IMF officials, the Executive Board meeting will be held on July 12. The Ministry of Finance has already sent the \$8 billion financing plan

from the friendly countries to the IMF as per the Fund's requirement. Sources in the Finance Ministry said that the government is expected to get \$3.5 billion from China. It is likely to get \$2 billion loan from Saudi Arabia, \$1 billion from the UAE, \$500 million each from the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

Besides this, Pakistan will also receive \$350 million pledged during the Geneva Conference.

The IMF will hold three

reviews in nine months for the release of \$3 billion Stand-By-Arrangement.

According to the agreement, the IMF will give \$1 billion to the PDM government and \$1 billion to the interim government, sources said adding that the remaining \$1 billion would be given to the next government formed after the elections. After the approval of the SBA by the IMF Executive Board, the first instalment of \$1 billion will be received by the government in next 3-4 days.

Sindh govt approves 17.5% increase in pension

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh government has sanctioned an increase of 17.5 percent on net pension with effect from July 01, 2023 until further orders to all civil pensioners of the Sindh government.

The increase in the pension as mentioned at Para-01 will also be admissible to the pensioners, who would retire on or after July 01, 2023, according to a communiqué here on Monday. The term "Net Pension" means "Pension being drawn" minus "Medical Allowance".

The increase will also be admissible to family pension granted under the Pension-cum-Gratuity Scheme 1954 Liberalized Pension Rules 1977 on pension sanctioned under the Central Civil Services (Extra Ordinary Pension) Rules as well as on the Compassionate Allowance under CSR-353.

If the gross pension sanctioned by the Sindh government is shared with any government in accordance with the rules laid down in Part-IV of Appendix III to the Accounts Code, Volume-1, the amount of the increase in pension will be apportioned between the federal government and the other government concerned on proportionate basis.

The increase in pension sanctioned will not be admissible to Special Additional Pension allowed in lieu of pre-retirement Orderly Allowance.

The benefit of increase in pension sanctioned will also be admissible to those Civil Pensioners of the Sindh government, who are residing abroad (other than those residing in India and Bangladesh), who retired on or after 15.08.1947 and are not entitled to or are not in receipt of pension increase under the British Government's Pension (increase) Acts. The payment will be made at the applicable rate of exchange.

Fawad challenges indictment proceedings in ECP contempt case

LAHORE (INP): Ex-Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry on Monday moved the Lahore High Court (LHC) Rawalpindi bench against indictment proceedings in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for contempt against the commission.

It is pertinent to mention that the electrical watchdog had initiated contempt proceedings against the three for issuing statements against the electoral body and the chief election commissioner. A four-member commission headed by ECP Sindh member Nisar Durrani heard the contempt case and announced the to indict Fawad on July 11. Fawad Chaudhry, in his plea, has named the federal government and other relevant parties as respondents.

He argued that the Election Commission's notice dated August 19 had already been challenged in court, and the court had explicitly ordered not to make any decision without a proper hearing. Hence, he urged the court to restrain the ECP from proceeding with the indictment process. In response to Fawad's plea, Justice Waqas Rauf has referred the petition to the Chief Justice for consideration by a larger bench.



ISLAMABAD: Attorney General for Pakistan, Mansoor Usman Awan called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Privatization Commission allowed to proceed HIS transaction

ISLAMABAD (APP): Cabinet Committee on Privatization (CCoP) Monday allowed Privatization Commission to proceed towards a successful conclusion of Services International Hotel (SIH) transaction with the completion of transfer/mutation process in the name of the purchaser. The CCoP met here with Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar in chair, Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir Khan, Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar, Minister for Privatization and Chairman Privatization Commission Abid Hussain Bhayo, SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Chairman RRMC Ashfaq Yousuf Tola, federal secretaries and senior officials attended the meeting.

The Privatization Commission submitted a summary regarding the privatization of SIH and updated the

committee on its privatization process. The CCoP after a detailed discussion allowed Privatization Commission to proceed towards a successful conclusion of SIH transaction with the completion of transfer/mutation process in the name of the purchaser.

The Privatization Commission also presented a summary on the privatization of House Building Finance Company Ltd (HBFC) with one single (pre-qualified) bidder.

After detailed deliberations, CCoP decided to allow Privatization Commission to proceed with single source/negotiated transaction for Privatization of HBFC with sole pre-qualified investor namely Pakistan Mortgage Refinance Company Ltd (PMRCL).

The Privatisation Commission tabled a summary related to Budget Estimates of the Privatization Commission for Fiscal Year 2023-24

to the tune of Rs. 1248.8 million.

The CCoP after detailed deliberation approved the summary. The Privatisation Commission also presented summaries on privatisation of Pakistan Engineering Company (PECO) and privatization of Sindh engineering Limited (SEL) and briefed the meeting on their status.

The CCoP after discussion deferred both the summaries with directions that Secretary Privatization Commission, Secretary Law and Justice and Secretary Industries & Production may hold mutual consultations and come up with future course of action in both cases.

The Privatization Commission also updated the CCoP on the status of privatization process of Roosevelt Hotel. The CCoP after discussion deferred the summary with direction to submit an update on the privation of Roosevelt Hotel after consultation with Aviation Ministry.

Kremlin says Putin held post-mutiny talks with Wagner leader as top general resurfaces

MOSCOW (Reuters): President Vladimir Putin held Kremlin talks with Wagner mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin days after denouncing an armed mutiny he had led as treasonous, Putin's spokesman said on Monday, as Russia's top general resurfaced for the first time.

The meeting with Prigozhin, according to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, was held on June 29, five days after the aborted mutiny, which is widely regarded to have posed the most serious challenge to Putin since he assumed the presidency on the last day of 1999. Much of what happened on June 24, the day of the mutiny, and how the authorities are handling its aftermath remains unclear.

One of the biggest mysteries is why Prigozhin does not yet appear to have fulfilled the terms of the deal which ended the stand-off, what his future plans and those of his fighters are, and why he does not appear to have been punished by the Kremlin.

The fact that Prigozhin and his top field commanders sat down with Putin in the Kremlin days after the Russian leader called their actions a treasonous "stab in the back" which could have pushed Russia into a chaotic civil war is certain to raise

more questions about what is going on behind the scenes.

Peskov, Putin's spokesman, told reporters that Putin had invited 35 people to the three-hour meeting, including Prigozhin and Wagner unit field commanders. "The only thing we can say is that the president gave his assessment of the company's (Wagner's) actions at the front during the Special Military Operation (in Ukraine) and also gave his assessment of the events of 24 June (the day of the mutiny)," Peskov told reporters.

He said Putin had listened to the commanders' own explanations of what had happened and had offered them further options for employment and combat. The brief mutiny saw Wagner fighters seize control of the southern city of Rostov-on-Don along with its military headquarters building and shoot down an unspecified number of military helicopters, killing their pilots. Peskov said Wagner commanders had reaffirmed their loyalty to Putin at the Kremlin meeting.

"They (the commanders) emphasised that they are staunch supporters and soldiers of the head of state and the supreme commander-in-chief. They also said that they are ready to continue fighting for the Motherland," said Peskov.

The mutiny, which Putin had compared to the turmoil in the run-up to the 1917 Russian Revolution, was defused in a deal brokered by Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko. Putin and the Kremlin have since sought to project a business-as-usual image, with the president chairing a range of meetings, visiting crowds in Dagestan and even hosting a young girl for a guided tour of the Kremlin. In another twist, Russia's top general, Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, made his first appearance in public since the failed mutiny.

Footage released by the defence ministry on Monday but apparently shot a day earlier showed Gerasimov ordering subordinates to destroy Ukrainian missile sites. The footage indicates that Putin has for now kept his two most powerful military men, Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Gerasimov, in their posts despite demands from Prigozhin to sack them over alleged incompetence. Sitting in a military command centre on a white leather seat chairing a meeting with top generals, Gerasimov, 67, was shown asking for and then listening to a report by Viktor Afzalov, deputy in the aerospace forces to General Sergei Surovikin.

Contempt plea against Justice Faez Isa, Justice Sardar Tariq lands in SC

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A contempt petition was filed on Monday in the Supreme Court (SC) against Justice Qazi Faez Isa and Justice Sardar Tariq Masood.

The petition demanded legal action against both the SC judges. "An answer should be sought from the two judges on the violation of the court order," it added. The petition further stated that the two judges had violated the stay order on the Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Act. "The two judges refused to sit in the bench formed to hear the military courts case in violation of the SC order," the petition stated.

SC Registrar Office returns petition seeking ban on PTI

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Supreme Court's Registrar Office has returned a petition seeking a ban on PTI, after raising objections to it. Isteqam-i-Pakistan Party leader Awn Chaudhry had filed the petition in the Supreme Court the other day seeking ban on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. The Registrar Office on Monday ruled that Awn Chaudhry's plea was not in accordance with the Article 184. The petition does also not explain how seeking a ban on PTI fall under Article 184-3, the Registrar Office said.

Hurdle to Ukraine NATO membership dropped as leaders gather

VILNIUS (AFP/APP): A key hurdle to Ukraine's membership of NATO was lifted Monday as leaders of the bloc, gathered for a summit in Lithuania and Kyiv, claimed it had made advances near Bakhmut.

A Western official told AFP that the allies "are set" to drop the Membership Action Plan required for Ukraine's application to join the alliance.

The breakthrough comes amid rare glimmers of disunity over Washington's controversial decision to supply cluster bombs to Kyiv.

Ukraine's foreign minister said the diplomatic move -- which Moscow said would have serious consequences for European security -- would shorten Kyiv's path to NATO membership, even though Ukraine must still undertake reforms before joining.

"NATO allies have reached consensus on removing MAP from Ukraine's path to membership," Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba wrote on Twitter. It came as Kyiv said its troops captured key heights around the eastern city of Bakhmut.

Deputy Defence Minister Ganna Malyar said they had established fire control over the "entrances, exits and movement of the enemy around the city".

Its military had earlier claimed to have recaptured 14 square kilometres from the Russians in the past week amid "heavy fighting" near Bakhmut. But Russian shelling Sunday of a humanitarian aid hub in the frontline Zaporizhzhia region killed four people, the local governor announced Monday.

President Volodymyr Zelensky had voiced hope that

Tuesday's NATO summit in Vilnius would provide a "clear signal" that Kyiv could join the alliance once its war with Russia is over.

Ahead of the meeting, the Western official who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP that "MAP is just one of the steps in the NATO accession process... so even with its removal, Ukraine will still need to complete further reforms before joining NATO".

Ahead of the summit, US President Joe Biden met with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak during a stopover in London on Monday, with British concern over the cluster munitions deal a key subject for discussion.

Britain is one of more than 120 countries that have signed an agreement banning the production, storage, sale and use of

cluster bombs, which rights groups say pose a danger to civilian populations long after they are deployed. Biden said the decision to send the weapons was "very difficult" but Ukrainian forces were "running out of ammunition".

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan on Sunday played down any rift between the two leaders and in NATO, saying that Biden and Sunak were "on the same page strategically on Ukraine".

China on Monday denounced the move as "irresponsible" and said it could lead to "humanitarian problems".

"We should fairly manage humanitarian concerns and legitimate military and security needs, and maintain a prudent and restrained attitude towards the transfer of cluster munitions," Chinese foreign ministry

spokeswoman Mao Ning said.

Another key goal of the NATO summit is to pressure Turkey to drop its opposition to Sweden's membership bid.

Sweden's prime minister will meet Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday afternoon in a last-gasp effort to bridge the diplomatic impasse.

Erdogan has voiced repeated frustrations with what he calls Sweden's failure to keep its promises to deal with suspected Kurdish militants allegedly "roaming the streets" of Stockholm.

He told Biden on a call Sunday that though Sweden had taken "some steps in the right direction" over Turkey's concerns, it had "nullified those steps" by allowing pro-Kurdish groups to hold demonstrations "freely praising terrorism", Erdogan's office said.

And Erdogan dramatically upped the ante just hours before his meeting with Sweden's Ulf Kristersson, saying he would relent on Stockholm's candidacy if the European Union reopened long-stalled membership talks with Ankara.

"First, open the way to Turkey's membership of the European Union, and then we will open it for Sweden, just as we had opened it for Finland," Erdogan told Turkish television before leaving for Vilnius.

Turkey formally launched membership negotiations with the bloc in 2005, but the talks stalled in 2016 over European concerns about Turkish human rights. "Almost all the NATO members are EU members. I am now addressing these countries, which are making Turkey wait for more than 50 years, and I will

address them again in Vilnius." Turkey and Hungary remain the only NATO members still standing in the way of the unanimous ratification needed for Sweden to become the bloc's 32nd member.

Hungary has strongly signalled it will follow Erdogan's lead and approve Sweden's membership should Ankara give it the green light.

Meanwhile an aid hub in the town of Orikhiv in southern Ukraine was hit by Russian shelling, which killed three women and a man, regional governor Yuriy Malashko said on social media.

"They hit a humanitarian aid delivery spot in a residential area... Four people died on the spot: women aged 43, 45 and 47 and a 47-year-old man," Malashko said, calling the attack "a war crime".