

One dead in flash floods
F.P. Report
CHITRAL: One person was killed and seven residential properties were damaged in recent flash floods in Upper Dir and Upper Chitral areas, the PDMA said on Friday. According to the official data, 25-year Sabz Ali, son of Shamat Khan, resident of Aligasar, Upper Dir was swept away in a flash flood and his body was recovered.

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PM telephones President
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif telephoned President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday and enquired about his health. The prime minister wished an early recovery to President Alvi, who had received an injury on his right leg during jogging a few days ago. Premer Shehbaz Sharif prayed to Allah Almighty to grant the best of health to the President.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing the second meeting of Apex Committee of SIFC.

PM flays Quran’s desecration in Sweden

— urges OIC to put end to ‘abominable practice’ of desecration of holy books

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday strongly condemned the desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden and vowed to launch a campaign to seek a reversal of the decision of allowing the sacrilege of holy books.

The prime minister, in a statement, said that from the platform of the Organisations of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the government would help create a common strategy to get rid of evil. He said, "The OIC has to play a historic role in representing the sentiments of the Muslim Ummah and to do away with this evil." The prime minister said that he would campaign to reverse the decision to allow the desecration of the Torah, the Bible, and the Holy Quran.

He said the permission to desecrate the holy books, persons, and rituals was not the freedom of expression but rather a way to constantly torment the world. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the sequence of events evidenced that this was not a freedom of expression but part of a political and satanic agenda. "The whole world of Islam and Christianity must collectively stop this conspiracy. Satan's followers are blaspheming the holy book which gave human beings dignity, rights and guidance," he remarked. The prime minister said that the decision to allow the desecration of the Torah and the Gospel encouraged desecrators.

"This is the promotion of hatred which is not allowed under international law," He said such attitudes of religious incitement, provocation to terrorism, and violence were fatal to world peace. "These behaviors are highly abhorrent and condemnable both legally and morally," the prime minister remarked.

The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also called upon the

SIFC approves projects for attracting investments from friendly countries

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Apex Committee of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) on Friday approved the projects for attracting investments from friendly countries in agricultural, livestock, minerals, mining, information technology, and energy sectors.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, chairing the second meeting of the Apex Committee, directed to extend impeccable facilitation to the investors, interested in undertaking and actualising the projects. The meeting, which was attended by Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir, chief ministers, federal and provincial Ministers and high-level government officials, reviewed various projects presented by ministries for broaching with investors under the umbrella of SIFC. The Apex Committee expressed satisfaction on functioning of the SIFC and its strategy to outreach the potential investors through conduct of seminars and project inaugurations.

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the civilized world to come forward and take steps to put an end to the abominable practice of desecration of the holy books. "The attitudes that incite religious hatred, promote violence and encourage terrorism and militancy, need to be checked," he said in a tweet.

The prime minister said no civilized society would allow the desecration of holy personages, symbols and divine books in the name of freedom of expression. "The grant of permission to desecrate the Holy Quran, Torah & Bible is part of a sinister, vile and despicable agenda whose sole aim could be to threaten world peace," he said. The prime minister said: "We should not let a handful of Satanic characters undermine our shared values of peace, and tolerance, pluralism."

Pakistan has all ingredients to tap IT exports worth \$25 billion: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that Pakistan had all the ingredients to increase its Information Technology (IT) exports to the tune of \$25 billion in two to three years.

"Investment in the IT sector can fetch quick rewards and dividends

and go a long way in addressing our unemployment problem," he said on his tweet handle account. The PM, who a day earlier attended the national seminar on untapping the IT potential of Pakistan, said the event held under the banner of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was a reflection of our collective resolve to make Pakistan an IT hub.

"The seminar, attended by all stakeholders from the public & private sectors, laid the groundwork for an IT revolution that the country so desperately needs," he said. He said, "The SIFC, which represents the whole-of-the-government approach, will ensure the provision of policy continuity and predictability in the IT, agriculture, mines and minerals, and defense production sectors." "Governments may come and go but the economic revival plan will be implemented with the same energy and passion," he said. "The IT industry will have all the facilitation, and it needs to grow under a one-window arrangement." "It is now on the industry leaders to access the most of the opportunity, I have my full faith in their ability," he added.

No plans to impose new taxes on agriculture, real estate sectors: Dar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday firmly denied media reports claiming the imposition of additional taxes on agriculture and real estate sectors to meet the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) requirements.

"I am categorically announcing on the floor of the house that there will be no new taxes on agriculture and real estate. We have faced numerous hardships due to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) requirements, and we have diligently met all the prior actions," the finance minister said while speaking at the National Assembly. The minister further emphasized that the news was entirely baseless and lacked truth, clarifying that all fiscal decisions made by the government were aimed at fulfilling IMF's requirements and commitments.

Senator Ishaq Dar also offered his readiness to provide detailed information on these specific issues to anyone seeking clarification. Discussing the economic situation, the finance minister mentioned that if the government continued its present policies, the inflation rate was expected to decrease to 7 per cent, based on the working of the State Bank.

Attributing the country's economic hardships to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's backtracking from commitments, Senator Dar proudly stated that with the government's efforts, Pakistan had successfully reached an agreement of \$3 billion with the IMF. As a result, the State Bank of Pakistan received the first tranche of \$1.2 billion to stabilize the economy.

Speaking on the current foreign exchange reserves, he informed that the reserves had reached their highest position since October 2022. The total liquid foreign reserves were reported to be US\$ 14,065.3 million, with the central bank holding \$8,727.2 million, thanks to inflows from Saudi Arabia,

the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the IMF. The central bank had received \$2.0 billion from Saudi Arabia, following \$1.2 billion from the IMF, and \$1.0 billion from the UAE, contributing to the net foreign reserves held by commercial banks at US\$ 5,338.1 million.

The finance minister reassured the public that the government had made all due payments in accordance with international agreements, further demonstrating its commitment to meeting obligations on time. Highlighting the government's commitment to financial transparency, Senator Dar shared the IMF agreement and stated that it would be made available on the Ministry of Finance's website for public information. The minister also handed over a copy of the agreement to the lower House of Parliament.

Islamabad airport set for 15-year outsourcing to enhance operational activities: Minister for Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique said that Islamabad International Airport would be outsourced for a period of 15 years to improve its operational activities.

In response to a calling attention notice in National Assembly sponsored by MMA lawmaker Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali regarding the outsourcing of the airport, the minister clarified that the move does not equate to privatization. Instead, it aims to bring in proficient operators to enhance airport operations, he said. Khawaja Saad Rafique emphasized that open competitive bidding would be ensured, allowing the best bidder to be given the opportunity to operate the airport. The process, he said will be profit-oriented, ultimately benefiting the national exchequer. The International Finance Corporation will serve as the consultant, and already 12-13 companies have shown interest in participating in the bidding process, he added. The minister assured that the process would be transparent and adhere to all rules and regulations.

However, the minister clarified that

the runway and navigation operations would not be included in the outsourcing process. Highlighting the success of outsourced airports in other countries like India and Türkiye, Khawaja Saad Rafique mentioned that even Madina airport has been efficiently outsourced to deliver enhanced services.

The minister also stressed the need to restructure Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to address its substantial deficit, which has reached Rs. 80 billion this year and is projected to increase to Rs. 259 billion by 2030 if not dealt with appropriately. He asserted that no employees would be laid off, and all existing staff would retain their job security and privileges. However, he also mentioned that best practices would be implemented to ensure facilities at airports are efficiently managed.

Regarding the future plans for PIA, Khawaja Saad Rafique informed that the total liability of PIA amounts to Rs. 742 billion, with only 27-28 planes currently operational. He urged the necessity to save the institution and underscored the importance of the restructuring legislation, which has been approved by the National Assembly in the previous sitting. To address the deficit, the minister revealed plans to restore flights to the UK within three months, followed by the resumption of flights to the US and Europe.

Khawaja Saad Rafique issued a warning that immediate reforms were crucial to prevent further escalation of the deficit in the coming days. He acknowledged that a statement from a former federal minister for Aviation had created problems for PIA. However, he assured that all audits and tests have been successfully cleared, demonstrating the government's commitment to transparency and accountability. Furthermore, as the minister overseeing the Railway portfolio, he recommended engaging industrialists to invest in the railway sector instead of opting for privatization.

PPP always introduce pro-poor projects: FM

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has distributed Title Deeds to five thousand families in Larkana in the first phase of the project to give ownership rights to residential plots to flood victims of Sindh.

PPP Chairman has also vowed that he will complete the mission of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohatma Benazir Bhutto and bring the country out of hardships.

According to the statement issued by media cell Bilawal House, PPP Chairman attended the distribution of ownership rights ceremony held in the flood-affected village of Larkana District, Vikio Sangi, and also inspected the houses built by the Sindh People's Housing for Flood Affecteds (SPHF) for the homeless flood victims. He, while addressing the event, said that his Party's government in Sindh is providing financial assistance to the flood victims to rebuild their houses, adding that now such houses are being constructed, which will be safe to a large extent in case of floods.

He furthered that home ownership right is an asset, which is being given to every woman of all the displaced flood-affected family. "We have learned from Shaheed Mohatma Benazir Bhutto and President Asif Ali Zardari that when women are economically empowered, it strengthens the entire family," he added.

Chairman PPP said that the government of Sindh has turned the natural calamity into an opportuni-



ty, now flood victims houses are built across the province, adding that 2 million houses are to be built in the entire province, although, it will take time to build these houses, but this is the beginning of a revolution. He said that the people sitting in Islamabad have no idea of the sufferings of the flood victims of Larkana. He said that inflation, unemployment and poverty are increasing in the country, adding: "Problems will be solved only by helping the common person, and the day is not far when we will make Pakistan economically strong."

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that whenever PPP comes to power, it has been introducing pro-poor and pro-public projects.

He said that the election is not far away, and after winning the next general election, similar pro-people projects will be taken to the whole country, including Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. He said that there is an ideological difference between PPP and other parties. "Other parties believe that making the rich richer benefits the country,

but our party believes that investing money in poor citizens strengthens the economy. As rich people put the money in their bank accounts and forget about it, but poor citizens will spend such money on their children and family, and so the money spreads to strengthen the economy", he added.

Foreign Minister said that Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and his team will complete the project of giving ownership rights to the flood victims across the province before the end of their government term. Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, President PPP Sindh chapter Senator Nisar Ahmad Khuhro, Sindh Minister for Information & Transport Sharjeel Inam Memon, minister for Local Governments Nasir Hussain Shah, MPA Suhail Anwar Siyal and assembly members, party leaders and local notables were also present on this occasion. Meanwhile, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was briefed on the construction of houses for the flood victims in village Vikio Sangi and he appreciated the efforts of SPHF and SRSO for the flood victims.

Fazl asks PM to recall Pak envoy from Sweden

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) chairman Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Friday demanded Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif to recall Pakistan ambassador from Sweden in protest against the desecration of Holy Quran.

The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) president made this demand during a telephonic conversation with PM Shehbaz Sharif. During the conversation, Maulana Fazl noted that all Muslim nations, including Pakistan, should recall their ambassadors from Sweden.

The prime minister and JUI-F chairman agreed on 'strict action' from Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), saying that the body should take notice of the 'heinous and impure act of hurting Muslims' by continuous planning. He demanded PM Shehbaz Sharif to issue directives to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to recall its ambassador to Sweden.

It is pertinent to mention here that Iraq – day earlier – expelled the Swedish ambassador in protest at a planned desecration of Holy Quran in Stockholm that had prompted hundreds of protesters to storm and set alight the Swedish embassy. An Iraqi government statement added that Baghdad was also recalling its charge d'affaires in Sweden, and Iraq's state news agency reported that Iraq had suspended the working permit of Sweden's Ericsson on Iraqi soil.

Protesters in Sweden had applied for and received permission from Swedish police to desecrate the Quran outside the Iraqi embassy on Thursday. Earlier, a man desecrated the Holy Quran in Sweden's capital Stockholm last week, resulting in strong condemnation from several states, including Pakistan, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Iraq and Iran.

Sweden's government also condemned burning of Quran outside Stockholm's main mosque, calling it an "Islamophobic" act. "The Swedish Government fully understands that the Islamophobic acts committed by individuals at demonstrations in Sweden can be offensive to Muslims," the foreign ministry said in a statement. "We strongly condemn these acts, which in no way reflect the views of the Swedish government," it added.

The condemnation came in response to a call for collective measures to avoid future Quran burnings from the Saudi-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Dealers defer petrol pumps shutdown for two days

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) has deferred strike to shut fuel pumps across the country for two days.

The development came after the association members held negotiations with State Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik, who arrived in Karachi earlier today (Friday) in a bid to convince the PPDA to call off the nationwide strike.

In a statement, the PPDA said they might hold another round of negotiations with the government after two

days. A day earlier, the PPDA announced shutting down fuel pumps across the country from July 22, demanding an increase in profit margins amid an inflation crisis.

"We will shut down all petrol pumps across Pakistan on July 22, 6pm," said the association, which further says it has more than 10,000 members. In a statement, the association said the petroleum minister was informed about their concerns but to no avail.

The official community said interest rates and inflation have hit operators' businesses and called for

the dealership margin to be increased. It said sales have slumped by 30% due to Iranian fuel being smuggled into the country. "Around 8,000-9,000 (operators) ... represented by us, will be shut on July 22," Abdul Sami Khan, chairman of the association, told Reuters.

The association said the supply of petrol will remain suspended until the demands are met. Pakistan is dealing with a weakening currency and a prolonged period of inflation with the national rate hitting 29.4% in June, down from a record high of 38% in May.

KP CM inaugurates Phase-I of Rashakai Special Economic Zone

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Azam Khan inaugurated Phase-I of the Rashakai Special Economic Zone, marking a significant milestone in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) here on Friday.

The Rashakai Special Economic Zone, strategically located at the nexus of economic growth, stands as a testament to the strong partnership between Pakistan and China. CPEC has become a symbol of friendship

between the countries and a model for cooperation between developing countries.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister appreciated the exceptional efforts and unwavering commitment of China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KPEZDMC) for successfully completing Phase -I of the project six months before the completion date.

The chief minister thanked the government of China, the companies



involved and public sector entities for their unflinching support to the project and all those who contributed to the completion Phase -I Rashakai SEZ. Encompassing 247 acres of

modern facilities designed to attract domestic and foreign investors, Phase I of the Rashakai SEZ promises to spur economic growth and job creation, further strengthening Pakistan-

China cooperation and bilateral relations under the umbrella of CPEC. Presently, Phase-I houses 18 zone enterprises, with 07 under construction; mobilizing an estimated investment of Rs. 85 billion.

As the Rashakai SEZ takes its place on the path to becoming a catalyst for regional prosperity, creating employment opportunities for the local population, and attracting foreign direct investment, plans are already underway for the subsequent phase.

These forthcoming endeavors will focus on expanding infrastruc-

ture, streamlining business processes, and attracting key industries, unlocking the SEZ's full potential, as part of the ongoing decade of CPEC. The commemorative ceremony attended by the Secretary Federal Board of Investment, Chief Secretary KP, GM CRBC, CEO KPEZDMC and other dignitaries culminated with a resounding commitment from both Pakistan and China to maintain close collaboration, ensuring the successful realization of the Rashakai SEZ's goals and objectives in the continued decade of CPEC.



Six dead, 1053 injured in 1027 crashes in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least six persons were dead and 1,053 injured in 1,027 road traffic crashes (RTCs) in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours.

Out of these, 557 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 496 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by Rescue Medical Teams thus reducing the burden of hospitals, said a spokesperson for Rescue-1122.

Around 536 drivers, 38 underage drivers, 141 pedestrians, and 382 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes, he said and added that 272 RTCs were reported in Lahore which affected 286 persons placing the provincial capital at top of the list followed by 63 in Faisalabad with 59 victims and at third Multan with 62 RTCs and 51 victims.

According to the data 873 motorbikes, 67 autorickshaws, 105 motorcars, 23 vans, 13 passenger buses, 29 trucks and 82 other types of auto vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in these road traffic accidents, he added.

Greenbelts to be kept low than roads in city: PHA, WASA

LAHORE (APP): A meeting of the Parks and Horticulture Authority and Water and Sanitation Agency was held here at the PHA headquarters on Friday, which decided after discussions that the level of greenbelts should be kept low than the roads in the metropolis.

The meeting was presided over by PHA Director General (DG) Muhammad Tahir Wattoo. WASA Managing Director (MD) Ghaffar Ahmed Khan and WASA deputy managing director also participated in the meeting.

PHA Additional Director Safiullah Gondal, Director Headquarters PHA, Deputy Director PHA Headquarters, Director Horticulture, Director Engineering and other officers were also present.

The meeting reviewed the findings of a survey, conducted jointly by the PHA, WASA and Traffic Engineering & Transport Planning Agency (TEPA) about the greenbelts in the city.

The meeting identified the areas where the level of greenbelts should be lowered that the roads. The meeting also discussed evolving a comprehensive strategy for drainage from greenbelts, constructing medians at highways. It was decided at the meeting that the arrangements for rainwater drainage from the greenbelts would be entrusted to WASA.

Arrangements for fixing the level of greenbelts on Main Boulevard Gulberg, Gulshan-e-Ravi, The Mall road, Jail Road, Eden U-turn, Madar-e-Millat Road to Chandi Chowk were entrusted to the PHA.

DG Muhammad Tahir Wattoo said the PHA would begin work in the next few days to lower the level of designated greenbelts.

CM approves online platform creation for shrines donations

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has given in principle approval for the creation of an online platform named Nazrana Online aimed at facilitating online donations at major shrines throughout the province.

Dedicated websites will be established for places like Darbar Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh, Hazrat Baba Bullay Shah, Hazrat Baba Farid Ganj Shakar, and other important shrines.

The responsibility of developing this website has been entrusted to the Punjab Information Technology Board. Through this user-friendly platform, people will have the convenience of making donations and contributions online whereas individuals residing abroad will also be able to actively participate in the alms-giving

process and witness the live distribution of alms. To ensure seamless and secure transactions, various payment options will be available, including mobile banking, credit cards, and ATMs. Additionally, there are plans for enhancing the physical infrastructure of the shrines. Specifically, the shrine of Hazrat Baba Bullay Shah will undergo a redesign, while the shrine complex of Baba Farid Ganj Shakar will be expanded. Measures will be taken to address traffic concerns and suitable parking facilities and anchorage will be provided in the basement area.

Meanwhile, Mohsin Naqvi, the caretaker CM, has stressed the urgency of accelerating the renovation and improvement work at the shrines of Hazrat Pir Makki and Waris Shah.

Sindh Bureau of Statistics to expand its internship program: Dr. Ansari

KARACHI (APP): Director General Sindh Bureau of Statistics Dr. Ishaque Ahmed Ansari, on Friday, said that SBoS will further expand the facility of internship for fresh graduates while steps would be taken to provide an honorarium to the interns.

He was addressing the certificate distribution ceremony held here on the completion of SBoS's first-ever Summer Internship Program for graduate students of Statistics departments from all the Universities of Sindh.

The program that started on July 03, 2023, was aimed at providing students of statistics departments an opportunity of learning new and practical skills and gain work-related experience in their field.

Dr. Ishaque Ansari said that the internship program would prove very beneficial for the students of statistics departments of various public universities and open up new avenues of career development in the

field. Vowing to make the internship program compatible with global standards he sought cooperation from all the educational institutions. He noted that internship programs help the young blood in professional networking and exploring career paths when they step into practical life after leaving their Alma mater.

Senior Statistician, Nisar Akhtar, graced the event as chief guest and distributed the certificates among successful candidates.

He lauded the efforts of SBoS regarding the Internship program and informed the audience that Dr. Ansari always remained innovative as he witnessed him during his service at the State Bank of Pakistan. Sindh Bureau of Statistics is a prime official agency of Sindh Province working for the last five decades with the mandate of collection, compilation, and dissemination of statistical data on socio-economic indicators for planners, policymakers, researchers, and academia.

Dr. Qibla praises China's model of religious freedom, inclusivity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) Chairman Dr. Qibla Ayaz on Friday lauded China's commitment to religious freedom and inclusivity, dispelling any negative impressions of interfaith disharmony in the country.

He, in an exclusive interview with APP, highlighted that China ensures the protection of legal rights for minority communities, including Muslims, without any discrimination or bias.

Sharing his recent personal experience, Dr. Qibla Ayaz revealed that he had visited various regions of China alongside a delegation of prominent religious scholars and leaders. They were invited by the Chinese foreign affairs ministry to assess the state of religious pluralism in the nation.

The chairman expressed that he was impressed to witness a country where people from all segments of society enjoy equal rights and have the freedom to practice their religious rituals without hindrance. During this trip, Dr. Qibla observed that minority communities in China joyously celebrated their religious festivals and other social and cultural events, alongside the majority population.

The Chinese government played an active role in supporting and promoting these religious and cultural activities, extending all possible assistance, he maintained. Dr. Qibla also had the opportunity to meet with key religious figures during his visit. He met Muhamad Ismail, Imam of a Masjid in Guilin, Khawaja Abbas, another Imam in Kashghar, and Abdul Raqeeb Al-Sini, head of the Islamic Academy in Aksu, Xinjiang.

These religious leaders disclosed that

the religious seminaries in China received full official financial sponsorship for various purposes, including salaries, construction, repair, maintenance, and preservation of buildings.

One of the highlights of the visit was the observation of the Islamic Academy, which offered a congenial environment to its students. The academy provided a comfortable hostel and hygienic food to the students free of charge.

The facility spanned 25 canals and included gardens and playing grounds to keep the students physically fit. Additionally, the academy boasted a state-of-the-art library with a wide array of informative materials for students of all levels. Dr. Qibla also praised China for its efforts to make religious texts accessible to all, including the translation of the Holy Quran into Chinese and Uyghur languages. These translations are widely available throughout the country, demonstrating China's commitment to making religious knowledge easily accessible to its diverse population, he added.

Overall, Dr. Qibla's visit to China left a positive impression, showcasing the country's model of religious freedom and inclusivity. The religious leaders' insights shed light on China's efforts to promote harmony among different faiths and provide equal opportunities for all religious communities, including Muslims.

The delegation was comprised of Dr. Qibla Ayaz, Israr Madani, Tehmeed Jan Azhari, Muhammad Tayyab Tahiri, Maulana Fazl-e-Aali Haqqani, Rashid ul Haq, Maulana Atta ur Rehman, Asif Luqman Qazi, Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Ali, and Maulana Yousuf Shah.



LAHORE: PHA staff placing bouquets of yellow flowers on the beauty wall of Kalma Chowk underpass.

Mayor Karachi calls for ample arrangements for monsoon rains

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Friday directed elected representatives of the local government that during the monsoon rains, arrangements should be made for sanitation, drainage and disinfectant spray in all districts of Karachi. He said this while presiding over a meeting with the chairman and elected representatives of Malir, Gadap and Lyari towns in his office here.

He said that mud and garbage should be cleaned from the National Highway and availability of sanitary workers and better working relationship with the town administration should be ensured. Machinery required for municipal services should be transferred without delay and staff posted in different areas to monitor roads, streets and other places and respond immediately in case of any complaint, he added.

On this occasion, Deputy Mayor

Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad, General Secretary of PPP South District Karamullah Waqasi, Managing Director Sindh Solid Waste Management Board Syed Imtiaz Ali Shah, Chairman Malir Town Jan Muhammad Baloch, Chairman Gadap Town Tariq Baloch, Vice Chairman Malir Town Syed Muzmmil Shah, Chairman Lyari Town and other elected representatives were also present. During the meeting, the sanitation situation in the areas located within the boundaries of different towns was reviewed in detail and various suggestions were made to improve it.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that steps will be taken to supply machinery required for sanitation and disinfectant spray according to the needs of the town administration. He said that the solid waste management board is responsible for picking up the waste and transporting it to the land-

fill sites, so the town administration should make a strategy in collaboration with the solid waste management board to keep all the areas within the town's boundaries clean. In places where there is a complaint of unavailability of dust bin, the relevant organization should be informed immediately, he added.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that the local bodies provide basic services to the citizens at the grassroots level and the citizens of Karachi have trusted the local representatives belonging to the Pakistan People's Party and we will fulfill their expectations. He said that his doors and the doors of Deputy Mayor of Karachi are always open to the chairmen and other elected representatives of all the towns, so wherever there is any obstacle, they should be informed immediately so that relief can be provided to the people by taking steps as soon as possible.

Bibi Pakdaman shrine opened to public

LAHORE (APP): Under the guidance of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, the shrine of Hazrat Bibi Pakdaman (RA) has been opened to the public, following the CM's inspection of the ongoing renovation and expansion work.

During his visit, he interacted with the workers, secretary C&W, architect Nayyar Ali Dada, and their teams, offering heartfelt congratulations for their dedicated efforts in the construction work.

Mohsin Naqvi expressed genuine admiration for the exceptional quality

of the renovation, highlighting that the upper part of the shrine was scheduled for completion by the 12th of Muharram. He emphasized the significance of widening the road leading to the shrine, as it will significantly enhance public accessibility. He said that due to concerted efforts of the authorities, the shrine has now been made accessible to the devoted public, and he offered prayers for the well-being of the nation.

During the briefing, the CM was briefed about the extensive scope of the work carried out, which includes

marble flooring, intricate marble work on the walls, ceiling, and dome, along with the upgraded passage and premises of the cemetery. Notably, an aesthetically pleasing arched structure has been erected at the main entrance to further enhance the shrine's overall beauty. Maulana Muhammad Akbar Hussain, Agha Muhammad Shah Qizalbash, Provincial Auqaf Minister Azfar Ali Nasir, secretaries of C&W & Auqaf departments, CCPO, divisional commissioner and deputy commissioner Lahore, and others were also present.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA COMMUNICATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

SINGLE STAGE TWO ENVELOPE & SINGLE STAGE SINGLE ENVELOPE

The C&W Building Division D.I.Khan Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites electronic bids from the eligible Firms/Contractors in accordance with KAPPR Procurement Rules 2014, amended upto 15.09.2021 on SINGLE STAGE TWO ENVELOPE & STAGE SINGLE ENVELOPE procedure for the following works:-

| S# | Name of Work | Required Category of PEC / Code | Bid Security i/c Stamp Duty Rs. | Tender Fee @ 0.03% | Period of Completion | Last date and time of submission of Financial Bids | Date & Time of Opening of Financial Bid |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--|---|
| SINGLE STAGE TWO ENVELOPE | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Establishment of 20 Colleges across the province (GD/GGD/GCMS/GGCMs Colleges) ADP No. 664/210495 (2023-24) S/H: Establishment of Govt. Girls Degree College at Parova District D.I.Khan | C-3 CE-10 (i & vii) EE-04 | Rs.9270400/- | Rs.138500/- | As per work order | 10-08-2023 At 12:00 PM | 10-08-2023 At 12:30 PM |
| SINGLE STAGE SINGLE ENVELOPE | | | | | | | |
| 2. | Provision of Additional infrastructure and repair of existing colleges ADP No. 663/200138 (2023-24) | | | | | | |
| i. | Govt. Degree College Paroa District D.I.Khan | C-6 | Rs.0.067 (M) | Rs. 900/- | As per work order | 10-08-2023 at 12:00 PM | 10-08-2023 at 12:30 PM |
| ii. | Govt. Degree College Panaila District D.I.Khan | C-6 | Rs.0.279 (M) | Rs. 3900/- | As per work order | 10-08-2023 At 12:00 PM | 10-08-2023 At 12:30 PM |
| iii. | Govt. Degree College No.1 District D.I.Khan | C-6 | Rs.0.279 (M) | Rs. 3900/- | As per work order | 10-08-2023 At 12:00 PM | 10-08-2023 At 12:30 PM |
| iv. | Govt. Degree College No. 3 District D.I.Khan | C-6 | Rs.0.087 (M) | Rs. 1200/- | As per work order | 10-08-2023 At 12:00 PM | 10-08-2023 At 12:30 PM |
| v. | Govt. Girls Degree College No. 3 District D.I.Khan | C-6 | Rs.0.087 (M) | Rs. 1200/- | As per work order | 10-08-2023 At 12:00 PM | 10-08-2023 At 12:30 PM |

- Bid solicitation documents and instructions to Bidders can be obtained from the office on any working day or downloaded from C&W web site (www.cwd.gkp.pk) before the submission date / time.
- The bidders should submit their E-bids as per KAPPR Notification No. S.R.O (14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22/6058-71 dated 10.05.2022 with following conditions.
 - The contractors quoting their bids upto a limit of 10% below Engineers Estimate shall submit bid security @ 2% only of Engineer Estimate.
 - The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below upto 20% below on Engineers Estimate shall submit alongwith their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer's Estimated Cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
 - [Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's Estimated Cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineers' Estimate alongwith detailed rate analysis]. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted alongwith such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
 - In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof.
 - The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh.
 - After commencement of work by the successful bidder, the procuring entity may replace the Additional Security with a bank guarantee of the same amount from the scheduled bank; if the already deposited security is not in the form of bank guarantee.
 - The Additional Security shall be released to the contractor in four installments i.e. 1st installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 25% of the project, 2nd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 50% of the project, 3rd installment of 25% to be released upon completion of 75% of the project and the 4th installment of 25% to be released after 100% completion of the project.
- Complete Detail of Bid Security in shape of CDR i.e. Bank Name, CDR Number(s) and Date(s) must be submitted electronically alongwith E-bid on the E-bidding System.
- All bidders are required to be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority under Finance Act, 2013 No. XXI of 2013.
- For the bidders participating in Single Stage Two Envelope are required to provide Affidavit on Stamp Paper wherein mentioned that CDR for 2% Earnest Money & 0.03% Tender Fee accompanied with other relevant documents.
- Venue of Bids opening is office of the Executive Engineer C&W Building Division D.I.Khan.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER | C&W Building Division D.I.KHAN

Phone # 0966-920236

INF(P) 1713/23



LAHORE: People drinking Sabeel (special drink) offer by volunteers along the roadside in connection of Ashura at Sher Kathi Bazar.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali inspecting the processions routes during his visit to Kohati gate area.

SCCI terms frequent hike in power tariff detrimental to economy

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry acting President Ijaz Khan Afridi termed frequent increase in power tariff as detrimental for economy, businesses and industrial growth and warned business community will compel in protest if prices will continue to rise.

Ijaz Afridi said in a statement here on Friday that traders have caught up in issues of a mire owing to implementation of 'flawed' economic policies and a highly strained situation. He continued to say that the government had added miseries to the traders' community by additional taxation measures in the financial budget 2023-24. He asked the government to revise power tariffs immediately.

KP is producing electricity low-cost wherein electricity is unavailable to domestic, commercial and industrial consumers despite payment of power bills with heavy taxes, Mr

Afridi remarked. He said after the consistent electricity tariff hike, the cost of industrial production has massively increased which had brought inflation and hit poor people of the country. Also, he added it had been made hard to run businesses and industries after collecting heavy tariffs in power bills.

Afridi severely criticized the government for failure in economic revival and alleviating miseries of traders' community. He said additional taxes worth Rs438billion in FY 2023-24 had been imposed, which was clear evidence of government flopped economic policies.

He said if the government desired to put the national economy on the right track, it should take proactive steps for resolving issues which were being faced by the business community. The SCCI's acting chief said the strike call given by the petroleum association was manifestation of weak economic policies and asked

the government to accept all genuine demands of the association because the business and industrial activities would be affected by suspension of supply of petroleum products and will also bring negative impacts on the economy.

Afridi also expressed concern over the government's decision to collect Radio fees in power bills. He said only taxes were imposed while consumers were faced with hour-long electricity loadshedding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"How the national economy will flourish and how the business community will be prosperous and give a boost to their business and industries in the prevailing circumstances"? The SCCI's acting chief asked the government to implement business-friendly policies to lead the country toward sustainable economic growth and development and proactive steps should be taken to resolve business community issues.

Police thwart late-night ambush of terrorists on Peshawar checkpoint

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police thwarted a late-night terrorist ambush on a police checkpoint situated on the outskirts of Peshawar, an official said on Friday.

Superintendent Police (SP) Cantt Waqas Rafiq informed that armed men tried to approach the Sarband police checkpoint under the cover of darkness late at night on Thursday. However, the quick response from the vigilant officers foiled their attempt.

The officers, whom he said were equipped with modern weapons, promptly retaliated, driving the terrorists away. "The police's timely action foiled the terrorists' plan," the officer stated. As per the KP police statement, a group of six to seven terrorists made an attempt to reach the checkpoint.

Pakistan has seen an uptick in terror activities, especially in KP and

Balochistan, after the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government in November last year. On Wednesday night, two policemen were martyred while as many were injured in a late-night attack on a police check post in Peshawar's Regi Model Town area.

A day later, three policemen embraced martyrdom and 12 people — nine personnel and three civilians — suffered injuries when terrorists attacked an official compound in Bara and a police post near Peshawar within a few hours. Officials said two suicide bombers were intercepted by policemen at the entrance of the tehsil headquarters complex and police station adjacent to Bara bazaar around 11am on Thursday.

They said police engaged the bombers in a gun battle, which left one of the attackers dead, while the

other blew himself up. A portion of the building collapsed owing to the impact of the explosion. A report released earlier this month by think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies said the first half of the current year witnessed a steady and alarming rise in terror and suicide attacks, claiming the lives of 389 people across the country.

More than a week ago, 12 soldiers of the Pakistan Army were martyred in two attacks on the military in the Zhob and Sui areas of Balochistan, the military's highest single-day death toll from terrorist attacks reported this year. Following the attacks, the military deplored the convenience and freedom with which militants have been launching attacks in Pakistan from Afghanistan and said it expected Afghan rulers to take action.

KMU issues clarification regarding Examinations 2022

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a clarification statement issued by Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar Examinations section, it has been said that there is no reality in the reports published and broadcasted in the media about the results of MBBS Third Professional Session 2022 Annual and Supplementary

Examinations and that injustice has been done to the students by failing them in large numbers in these examinations.

In the statement, it is said that a total of 2118 students appeared in both the annual and supplementary examinations of MBBS Third Professional Session 2022, in which 2037 students passed and 81 students failed in one or more papers, while

the overall success rate of these two examinations was 96.20%.

It is worth mentioning that most of the 3.80 percent of students who failed in the above two examinations i.e. 34 students belong to a private medical college. Actually, these students were adjusted by transferring to this college from another private college on the orders of the Peshawar High Court.

KP Planning and Development Dept aims to finance ideas of students

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Economist Planning and Development Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Aghar aimed to finance ideas of the university students to enable youth to contribute into the development of Pakistan. He was addressing as a guest of honor at the conclusion of a three-day conference on "Promoting Peaceful and Tolerant University Campuses" organized by the Community Resilience Activity - North (CRA-North) here on Friday. The conference witnessed the presence of esteemed Vice Chancellors and representatives from more than 30 renowned public and private universities and institutions from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) including the Newly Merged Districts of KP, Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh and Islamabad for three days.

Syed Ali Musa Gillani, Member of National Assembly and President of Young Parliamentarian Forum at National Assembly attended the concluding ceremony and said that "theme of the conference to promote peaceful and tolerant university campuses is the dire need of the day and

being a member of national assembly we can present a bill on the subject to counter violent extremism in university campuses", he also strongly suggested to have inter province students exchange programs to provide a different culture to the youth of Pakistan.

The three days conference Under the theme of "Unity through Diversity: Embracing Differences," addressed critical issues pertaining to campus environments and student interactions. The event emphasized the significance of peaceful coexistence, understanding, and mutual respect among students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.

Distinguished speakers, including renowned educationists and experts, delivered thought-provoking keynote addresses, and participated in the panel discussions. They highlighted the importance of creating safe and friendly spaces and promoting dialogue to bridge gaps among individuals with varying perspectives, capacity development of the faculty, update curriculum on peace building and tolerance, investment on science and technology to produce skilled youth,

strengthen the link between the administration and students, development of peace societies, use of campus radios and social media of the universities for community awareness, and promote academic exchange between the students from newly merged district and rest of the country.

Panel discussions during the conference provided a platform for Vice Chancellors and participants to share successful strategies, policies, and best practices in their respective institutes. Topics ranged from fostering intercultural competence to addressing bias and discrimination within university settings. Vice Chancellors from more than 30 participating universities and institutions shared their respective initiatives that have successfully contributed to building peaceful and tolerant campus environments. The exchange of ideas served as an inspiration for all attendees to implement positive changes within their own institutions.

Professor Safia Ahmad Vice Chancellor Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Peshawar stressed upon revisiting the curriculum. She said

CTO visits mourning procession routes of City

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Traffic Officer Qamar Hayat Khan visited the mourning procession routes of the city sector in connection with 2 Muharram Al Haram. SP City Muhammad Saeed and DSP Zakaullah were also with him during the visit.

Chief Traffic Officer Qamar Hayat Khan held meetings with the personnel deployed on alternative routes to maintain traffic flow throughout the city during Muharram. Chief Traffic Officer Qamar Hayat Khan reviewed the arrangements related to the implementation of the traffic plan and expressed his satisfaction.

The Chief Traffic Officer said that the traffic authorities and officials should ensure proper implementation of the traffic plan so that the citizens do not face any kind of difficulties. He said that traffic officials and officials including forklifts and chip riders should be present all the time to keep the roads flowing, traffic officials and officials should be vigilant during Muharram and not allow rush in any area of the city.

Security for Muharram reviewed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali Friday visited the control room established to monitor the overall security situation well before 9th and 10 of Muharram.

This he said during his visit to the control room established during the Holy month of Muharram-ul-Haram. He said it is the responsibility of all the schools of thought to maintain the atmosphere more conducive during Muharram-ul-Haram.

A comprehensive security plan has been created for the 9th and 10th of Muharram and control rooms have also been established wherein installation of the CCTV cameras, street lights and other

arrangements have been made in time.

Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali has said that it is the responsibility of all schools of thought to maintain an atmosphere of national unity, religious harmony and brotherhood during Muharram.

Director East Rehman Khattak, Director West, Riaz Awan, Focal Person Engineer Muhammad Riaz Khan, Chairman Imran Naveed and others reviewed the Muharram arrangements in different areas of Peshawar such as Koti Gate, Muhammad Ali Johar Road, Sarki Gate, Qissa Khawani Bazar, Ko Cha Risaldar and other areas inside the city.

On this occasion, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali reviewed the

CCTV cameras, street lights and other arrangements in detail, during which he directed the officers to remain in the Supreme Command Post and issued instructions for immediate action in case of any problem.

A comprehensive security plan has been created for Muharram and control rooms have also been established to monitor various locations.

The meetings and processions are being continuously monitored from these control rooms, he was told. Mayor Peshawar advised all the policemen and officers on duty to further improve the security and implement the safety and security plan in view of the current situation.

Fous on to provide best treatment facilities: Riaz

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tourism, Culture and Archaeology, Zafar Mehmood, met with Advisor to Chief Minister on Health Dr. Riaz Anwar in Peshawar and discussed the ongoing projects related to public welfare, especially hospitals and welfare of Hazara Division.

Advisor to the Chief Minister Zafar Mahmood appreciated the efforts made for the improvement of hospitals in the province and the welfare of the people. During the meeting

Advisor to caretaker Chief Minister for health Dr Riaz Anwar said that the provinces will standardize the requirements of hospitals in remote and backward districts because providing the best treatment facilities to the people is our first responsibility. The caretaker government will provide quality medical facilities to the people at their doorsteps.

Meanwhile, Advisor to Chief Minister Zafar Mehmood also met Special Assistant to Chief Minister for Prison Hidayatullah Khan Afridi in Peshawar. During the meeting, he discussed

cleanliness of prisoners in Hazara Division jails, proper counselling of prisoners, provision of medical facilities, quality food, medicine and better treatment, social issues and security of prisoners.

Special Assistant Prisons said that improvement in the prison system across the province is needed. The caretaker government is bringing reforms in prisons.

The Prison Department is taking effective measures to meet the challenges of the present day and to improve the prison system by reforming the prisoners as good citizens of the society.

JUI-S chief advocates for peaceful observance of Muharram

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chairman of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (S) Maulana Hamidul Haq Haqqani, on Friday urged the scholars and leaders nationwide to maintain a peaceful atmosphere throughout Muharram-ul-Haram.

Addressing a gathering at Jamia Darul Uloom Haqqania, he emphasized the essence of Islam as a religion of peace and harmony, advocating for moderation and tolerance.

He drew inspiration from the historical martyrdom of Imam Hussain (RA), highlighting its profound message of standing against injustice. The events of Karbala, Maulana Haqqani stressed, offer invaluable lessons of patience and resilience.

With these principles in mind, he passionately appealed to all religious scholars and leaders to ensure that congregations and processions during Muharram remain free from discussions on controversial issues and disrespectful dialogues about Islamic sacred figures. He firmly advised against engaging in any activities that could disrupt the peace and harmony of the holy month.

"Let us, as Muslims, come together and wholeheartedly cooperate with the government and authorities to maintain peace and security during Muharram," he urged, addressing the faithful. Given Maulana Haqqani's immense respect and influence, his heartfelt appeal is expected to resonate widely across the country, encouraging a peaceful and respectful observance of Muharram as it reinforces the importance of unity and mutual understanding among all Muslims during this significant period. As the faithful prepare to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (RA), Maulana Haqqani's message serves as a powerful reminder of the timeless principles of Islam — love, peace, and harmony — that hold immense relevance in the contemporary world.

Muharram-ul-Haram, being the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar, holds great significance for Muslims worldwide, and its observance should be a time of reflection, compassion, and reverence.



PESHAWAR: Adviser to KP Chief Minister Dr. Riaz Anwar called on Adviser to Tourism Zafar Mehmood.



In brief

Two brothers killed in mishap

GHOTKI (INP): Two brothers were killed on the spot when a speeding Mazda vehicle collided with a trailer near Motorway Ubauro, a town in Ghotki District of Sindh on Friday. The deceased brothers have been identified as Muhammad Rashid, 35, and Muhammad Aslam, 30, both residents of Sukkur. The accident occurred when the Mazda was speeding and lost control while overtaking another vehicle. The Mazda then collided with a trailer, killing the two brothers instantly. The driver of the trailer has been arrested by the police. The bodies of the deceased have been handed over to their family for burial. The police have registered a case and are investigating the matter. The accident has once again highlighted the need for increased vigilance and safety measures on the motorways.

Four wounded in vehicle blast

F.P. Report

KHAR: At least four people were wounded in a blast involving a vehicle in the Geelay area in the Mamund Tehsil of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district, police said. The vehicle was targeted as the bomb was detonated via remote control. The injured were shifted to the Khar district headquarters (DHQ) hospital. The blast comes a day after five policemen were martyred in two separate attacks in KP while 12 people, including nine policemen, were injured.

Many politicians join PPP

F.P. Report

BUNER: Several political leaders from Buner district joined the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on Friday. The development comes after a delegation of the political leaders called on Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari. Yousuf Ali Khan, Sher Zaman Khan, Inam Khan, Haji Sher Zaman Khan, Anwar Jahan Khan, Zahir Shah, Sultan Khan, Ameer Zeb Khan, Fazl Akbar, Mohibullah Khan, Iqbal Khan and Noor Khan are among the leaders who joined the PPP.

Three killed in Chiniot incidents

CHINIOT (INP): At least three people were killed and 20 others injured in firing, road mishap and rain related incidents in different localities of Chiniot on Friday. Police said that unidentified armed men shot injured a youth Muhammad Awaiz in Chak No 198 of tehsil Bhawana. The injured youth was shifted to THQ hospital where he was referred to Allied Hospital Faisalabad due to critical condition but succumbed to his wounds. A man identified as Sabah died after an over speeding passenger bus ran over a motorcycle. Heavy rain inundated several areas of Chiniot. A man identified as Naveed died of electrocution while 20 others were reported injured in various other rain related incidents. The injured were shifted to different hospitals of respective areas for treatment.

Robber gang busted

FAISALABAD (INP): The police busted a four-member notorious robber gang, recovered arms, looted cash and bikes from their possession on Friday. On a tip-off, the Thekriwala police launched a crackdown against the wanted Adeel 'robber gang' in its jurisdiction. During operation, four-member gang including Waseem, Sakhawat, Umer and Farooq was arrested.



HYDERABAD: Rangers personnel standing alert during Muharram.

Trying times are the best test

Sumeta A Syed

TRYING times are the best test of how great an institution actually is. The catastrophic floods that took the entire country by storm last year has, to date, given replete examples of the commitment of the Sindh government to its people and their welfare.

In a bid to continue working on its people-centric agenda, Sindh People's Housing for Flood Affected (SPHF) has now emerged as a unique flagship project wherein the government of Sindh, under the visionary leadership of Foreign Minister Pakistan and Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, aims to not just help the downtrodden victims of their province stand up but take a confidence stride towards prosperity.

With energetic manifestoes like #ApniZameenApnaMakaan, the Sindh Government is going to build as many as 20 lakh houses, which would be made stronger and resilient given in mind the upcoming climatic challenges. The new structure has come from extensive research into the topography and the materials that could withstand climatic disasters in the future. As the first wave of five thousand beneficiaries will get land titles in a ceremony planned for today in Larkana, the Sindh Government aims to speed up the process and award just as many every month.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari would oversee the ceremony and hand over the title deeds.

That the catastrophic floods of 2022 uprooted thousands of families; causing irrevocable damage to around two million houses has been echoed far too many times. But as aid from the international community trickled mealy and fires raging on the institutional front obstructed the governance mechanisms, the Government of Sindh worked day in and day out to prioritise the well-being of their brethren. In order to provide them with a roof that they can truly call their own, the government undertook an extraordinary mission: sustainable rehabilitation through resilient housing. Thus, the initiative Sindh People's Housing for Flood Affected came into being.

Under this, the Sindh Government collaborates with the beneficiaries as they set out to create their own houses and turn them into homes. The provision of funds would ensure the beneficiaries receive Rs 300,000 directly in their bank accounts so that they may procure construction materials. This support to the construction process is being done through direct transfers in a highly transparent and accountable manner. Moreover, the beneficiaries would be free to choose their own preferences when it comes to design and housing needs. Never before have public endeavours, especially when it comes to relief, empowered the masses and taken them on as just as honourable partners.

As promised by Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari a large number of women beneficiaries

will be given land titles which is irrefutable evidence of the commitment to women's empowerment. Through the financial inclusion of women as a crucial cornerstone of SPHF, the Sindh Government is staying true to its championship of financial and social empowerment of women. This stems from deep-seated thinking that only a secure woman can play her due responsibilities towards her children, her family and her country in an effective manner. By including the first transgender Goori in the list of recipients, the Government of Sindh has once again proved how it sees all its citizens as Pakistanis first, without any societal prejudices.

The most historic aspect of the program is the willingness of the state to go the extra mile in ensuring the flood victims are not forced to look towards anyone when it comes to sustenance. The provision of land titles to the beneficiaries would secure their foothold in the land they would construct their houses. This legal cover would go a long way in their favour if and when any dispute arises or some nefarious elements try to arm-twist them. The formal ownership, in addition to giving them legal standing, offers a sense of stability.

This two-pronged approach of according land titles in addition to a transparent distribution of funds would be remembered in times to come as an exemplary initiative that rebuilds houses and restores a sense of pride in the affected region.

Seminar on Thalassaemia prevention arranged

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: In an effort to address the prevalence of thalassaemia, an awareness seminar was held in Abbottabad, shedding light on the urgent need for disease prevention.

As per details, the event was organized at the Abbottabad Press Club which was chaired by Yasir Tanoli, Assistant Director of Bait ul Mal. Zainab Tariq, the Ambassador of Thalassaemia Pakistan, graced the occasion as the chief guest, traveling from Karachi to attend the seminar. In her speech, she praised the efforts of Pakistan Bait ul Mal in their fight against thalassaemia and its impact on the nation's health.

The seminar underscored the significance of implementing pre-marital testing to prevent thalassaemia transmission. Zainab Tariq said Thalassaemia has become a widespread genetic disorder in Pakistan, with over 6,000 affected children being born each year with 'thalassaemia major.' This translates to approximately 17 affected babies being born in the country every day.

She added that in a developing nation like Pakistan, the burden of

healthcare services, including blood transfusions with effective iron chelation and bone marrow transplantation, often exceeds the local capacity. Thus, prevention remains the most viable approach. "Population screening, genetic counseling, prenatal diagnosis, and the option of terminating affected pregnancies are the favored strategies to establish a control program". She suggested.

She further said that Thalassaemia is a preventable disease, and the hope lies in adopting a preventive program similar to the successful approaches implemented by countries like Italy and Cyprus, which have either eradicated the disease or significantly reduced the number of children born with thalassaemia.

Dr. Aftab Rabbani and Wing Commander R Ayaz Jadon, both members of the Board of Governors at Ayub Medical Complex, emphasized the crucial role of pre-marital screening in reducing the disease's prevalence.

Notable participants at the seminar included Dr. Naema Afzal, former Head of the Pathology Department from Ayub Medical Complex, Dr. Wasil, District Coordinator DHQ Abbottabad along with Tariq Tanoli, and

Haroon Tanoli from Save Life Thalassaemia Children Pakistan. They addressed the audience, highlighting the urgency of curbing thalassaemia, which they described as a pandemic affecting a significant portion of the population. Yasir Tanoli, in his capacity as Assistant Director of Bait ul Mal, assured the audience that Ayub Medical Complex would provide free care and support to thalassaemia patients in the region, extending assistance to those in need. In recognition of her dedicated efforts to raise awareness about thalassaemia and advocate for its prevention, Zainab Tariq was presented with a commemorative shield at the end of the seminar.

Youth killed

ATTOCK (INP): A young man was killed by the firing of some unknown persons on the main Kamra Road near Railway Ground in Attock city on Friday.

According to details, a youth namely Gulfam was shot at by some unknown assailants on Kamra Road. He received critical injuries. The Rescue 1122 officials took him to the District Hospital where he succumbed to his wounds and breathed his last.

Crackdown on illegal fake number plates in Dir Lower

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Excise Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along with the officials of the district administration cracked down on illegal fake number plates, tinted glasses and driving without a license.

Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower Iftikhar Ahmad on different reports received directed Additional Assistant Commissioner Adinzai and Traffic Magistrate Nasir Ali Khan with local traffic police and Dir Levies, took action under the Provincial Vehicle Motor Ordinance 1965 and Pakistan Motor Vehicle Rules 1969 against illegal black glasses and driving without a license.

AAC Adinzai on this occasion also warned all those with tinted classes installed in your vehicle, to voluntarily remove otherwise legal action will be taken against them. It should be noted that crackdowns are ongoing under the supervision of the concerned Assistant Commissioner wherein dozens of vehicles were either impounded, challaned or imposed penalties under traffic rules Act.

Civil Defense courses continued: The Civil Defense Training and Coaching Courses under the aegis of District Administration with the collaboration of Civil Defense Dir Lower continued across Dir Lower here on Friday.

Talking to media, Civil Defense Officer Dir Lower Shahzad Durrani said that the series of Civil Defense training sessions are continuing throughout the district.

Habib-ul-Haq Instructor Grade-II and Noor Alam Syed, Instructor Grade-III are running such like training sessions in Tehsil Khal, the volunteers were trained in dealing with emergency situations, first aid, emergency evacuation, and special public awareness campaign regarding prevention of Dengue.

Three killed, over 20 injured

JAMSHORO (INP): Three passengers died and over 20 got injured in an accident on M9 Motorway on Friday. According to police, a passenger bus en route to Hyderabad from Karachi met an accident with a truck on the motorway.

As a result, three passengers died on the spot while over 20 were injured. The injured and bodies were moved to nearby hospital by the rescue sources. Earlier in Feb 2023, at least 14 members of a wedding party, including women and children, were killed and 64 people were injured after a bus fell into a ravine and overturned near Kallar Kahar.

Rescue and police officials said that 12 passengers passed away at the spot while two others expired at the hospital. The driver of the bus was also killed in the fatal accident. Reportedly all the victims were travelling back to Lahore from Islamabad after attending a marriage ceremony.

Jailed PTI activists freed on bail in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Dozens of the Pakistan Tareek Insaf activists arrested in the Chakdara Fort vandalism case were freed from the Timergara jail. The ATC granted bail issued release order after accepting their bail request. The Insaf Lawyers Forum leader Imtiaz Khan Advocate, PUT tehsil general secretary Javed Khayal and Bilal Swati warmly received the released party workers outside the jail.

Prominent among the released workers were Nazir Muhammad Wardag, Zahid Khan, Muhammad Saleem, Bakht Zada, Osama Ijaz, Sohail Khan, Muhammad Latif, Aminul Haq, Zeeshan Khan,

Mehran Azam, Ehsanullah, Abbas Ahmed, Gohar Ali, Wasim Akram, Muhammad Tariq, Riaz Ahmed, Uzair Ali, Abdul Aziz, Umar Rehman, Hamza Khan, Muhammad Farooq, Jafar Khan, Tahir Shah, Iqbal Hussain, Rafiullah, Muhammad Hanif and Azizullah.

Girl killed: A 20-year old girl hailing from the Chamar Talai village of Jandol was allegedly killed when an unknown attacker opened fire on her at Timergara, residents and police said. The Rescue 1122 medical team shifted the body to the Timergara DHQ hospital for autopsy. Local police registered a case and started a search for the killer. An official of the Timergara police station

told this reporter on contact that the incident apparently seemed to be an honour related case.

Meanwhile a 60-year old man Khaista Rehman, a resident of Matakka was injured when his car plunged into a ravine at Tarai area in the limits of Timergara police station. The Rescue 1122 emergency team rushed to the site and recovered the vehicle and shifted the injured to the hospital.

Tinted glasses: The administration cracked down against the tinted glasses and unlicensed driving in Samarbagh, Lal Qila Maidan and Adenzai tehsils. The ACs and AACs supervised the operation and took legal actions against the violators.

‘Ties with Sweden should be severed immediately’

F.P. Report

QUETTA: In Stockholm, the desecration of the Holy Qur'an with the permission of the police once again is an intolerable act. The frequent incidents of Islamophobia in Sweden are tragic. In this regard, emergency measures will have to be taken all over the world, including Islamic countries. Public desecration of the Holy Quran with government support is highly condemnable and intolerable and these events should be strongly opposed by the whole world.

These views were expressed by Central Vice President of Balochistan Awami Party, Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri in her condemning statement. She said that even thinking about the events that happened in Sweden makes heart tremble. "Na'azobillah", kicking and desecrating the Holy Quran cannot be tolerated by any Muslim. The way this senseless and highly condemnable act was reacted to in Iraq and the Swedish embassy was set on fire, it can spread all over the world.

She has expressed her deep anger over recent incident of burning the Holy Quran in Sweden and said that no matter how much this heartbreaking incident is condemned, it is less. We demand Swedish government that the people

involved in the incident and those who support them should be severely punished.

She said that such frequent incidents have hurt the feelings of Muslims and this is a very disgusting, reprehensible and intolerable act that should be condemned by every intelligent person. Such incidents are an attempt to inflame the sentiments of Muslims. Such incidents cannot be ignored. With the permission and patronage of the Swedish government, such an event is a matter of concern for the whole world.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri further said that countries around the world, including the Islamic world, should raise their voices to prevent such incidents. Muslim countries should urgently call a conference of Islamic countries by adopting an effective strategy and an effective action plan should be decided in this regard and relations should be immediately severed from all countries, including Sweden, where incidents like Islamophobia and hurting the feelings of Muslims are taking place, and a complete boycott of all Swedish products should be done.

She said that we will record our protest on every forum. All Muslims demand that those guilty of hurting the sentiments of Muslims and desecrating the Holy Quran should be

punished and steps should be taken at the government level to prevent such incidents in the future. She said that the religion of Islam gives a message of peace and love to the whole world and Allah Almighty sent Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (SAW) to the world as a mercy, whose teachings give a message of peace and teach peace and love not only to Muslims but to the whole world.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that the whole world, especially in the western world, needs to take measures to raise awareness and remedy against Islamophobia because it will help in controlling the atmosphere of violence and hatred against Muslims. She said that hatred against Islam and Muslims must be stopped, while the promotion of religious tolerance is the need of the hour to end Islamophobia and the United Nations and other organizations have a duty to play a role to change their effective trend of violence and hate against Islam around the world. She said that hatred against Islam and Muslims must be stopped, while the promotion of religious tolerance is the need of the hour to end Islamophobia. She also demanded the government of Pakistan to immediately sever all ties with Sweden and record a strong protest against such incidents.



QUETTA: A view of accumulated sewerage water near girls college needs attention of authorities concerned.

DC visits District Public School

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warraich visited District Public School Hafizabad, on Thursday. Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad Sohail Azhar Khan was also accompanied by DC.

Principal DPS Muhammad Zaman Cheema gave briefing to the DC regarding strength of students, provision of academic and other facilities to students in the school.

On the occasion, DC said that DPS was an ideal school while due hardworking of experienced teaching staff, student's grabbed good positions in middle and metric examinations. He said that more facilities would be provided to equip students with modern sciences so that students of DPS could compatible with co-curriculum activities.

DC directed the Principal of the school to upgrade G-section, upgrade boys and girls computer labs, science labs, playground etc. Meanwhile, on the directions of DC Hafizabad, Municipal Officers Madam Farwa, Municipal Officer Nadeem Ahmad and Sub-Engineer Saifullah sealed three offices of illegal housing societies in the city Hafizabad.

According to Municipal Officers Madina City, Iqbal Gardne and Kareempura Town are illegal and established without prior approval of the Municipal Committee. The other hand, District Health Officer Hafizabad Dr. Zaher Ahmad sealed an illegal medical store in Vaniki Tarar town and legal action started against owner of the store.

Man kills wife over her naked video on social

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Man kills wife over her naked video on social

media: A man shot dead his wife whose naked video was released on social media by an influential lout in Sukheki area of Hafizabad on Friday.

Reportedly, a son of a Chaudhry of Sukheki made a video call to a woman and forced her to show him her naked body. The beguiled woman was led astray and did his bidding while the pervert son of the Chaudhry switched on his other mobile phone and recorded the whole video call in which she appeared naked.

While blackmailing the woman, the accused uploaded her obscene video on social media which went viral. When the husband of the woman saw the video, he flew into a rage, and with the help of his relatives, he shot her dead. Sukheki police have not taken any action against the influential son of the area landlord so far.



Strong winds reignite fire near Athens as heatwave sears Greece

ATHENS (Agencies): Firefighters in Greece are battling a reignited wild-fire that has triggered a series of new evacuations, as authorities braced for more of the extreme weather that has brought searing temperatures across southern Europe. Authorities had declared the wildfire contained overnight but firefighters lost control when the winds gathered strength.

"It's day four of these wildfires; they had contained the flames and then as the afternoon progressed, the wind picked up again and that's when the reigniting of fires happened," Al Jazeera's Stefanie Dekker, reporting from near the smouldering ruins of a chemical plant in Voiotia, said. The huge fire has already burned 35 square kilometres (13.5 square miles) of forest and scrubland. In his latest news briefing, Fire Service spokesman Yiannis Artopoulos said there had been 62 forest fires across Greece over the previous 24 hours. He added the extreme weather conditions were creating "dynamic fire fronts", noting that authorities had issued evacuation orders for several areas across West Attica.

Some residents ignored latest the orders to try and save their homes. Chrysoula Renieri, 72, said relatives had helped her try to save the family home near Loutraki, a resort town 81km (50 miles) west of Athens, but the wildfire cut off water in the area. "It's all gone. We have suffered too much damage," Renieri said, standing under a blackened and buckled ceiling in the gutted home. Elsewhere in Greece, a state of emergency was declared on the island of Rhodes, where firefighters were trying to contain a major blaze that also prompted authorities to also evacuation orders for several mountain areas. A major fire was also burning in Laconia, on the southeastern part of the Peloponnese Peninsula. "So far there have been no fatalities, but people are extremely worried," said Dekker. "There has been international help from the EU sending firefighters and aircrafts to help with dumping water on those areas," she added. "But because the land is so arid and the area affected is so vast, it is extremely easy to reignite [the fires]." Stifling heat across Europe's Mediterranean south created a high or very high risk of fires in Greece, Italy and Spain. Weather forecasts said temperatures could reach 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit).

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said the Fire Service and civil protection authority would remain on alert as a new heatwave moved east across the country. "The hard times are clearly not over yet," Mitsotakis said. "We are facing another heat wave and a possible strengthening of the winds. So, absolute vigi-



lance and absolute readiness are required over the next few days," Greek authorities also said that archaeological sites, including the Acropolis in Athens, will be closed during the hottest hours of the day due to a new heatwave. Meanwhile, the World Meteorological Organization said this month that July began with the hottest week on record. The extreme temperatures came after climate change and El Nino - a cyclical weather phenomenon that warms the Pacific Ocean - combined to create the hottest June on record. Europe this week also experienced some of its hottest temperatures so far this summer thanks to a so-called heat dome stretching over its south. A high-pressure anticyclone named Cerberus, a reference to the monstrous watchdog of the underworld in Greek mythology, began moving in from the south on July 10. It was followed by Charon, named for the mythological ferryman who transported souls from the world of the living to that of the dead. That weather system saw parts of Greece, Spain and Italy record temperatures above 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit).

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts said that an Atlantic Ocean heatwave reported in early July might have also influenced Europe's current hot weather. The Atlantic has seen a rise in temperature across most of its basins, especially in North America and Europe. Ocean heatwaves can affect atmospheric circulation patterns and warm the air masses above them. Scientists say climate change, primarily triggered by greenhouse gas emissions

mainly from burning fossil fuels, will result in more frequent, severe and dangerous heatwaves. "Climate change across the globe is increasing the frequency, intensity and duration of heatwaves," Akshay Deoras, a research scientist at the National Centre for Atmospheric Science at the University of Reading, told Al Jazeera.

Cyclones bring stormy weather, and anticyclones are the opposite. They are high-pressure zones in which winds move slower. As a result, they are typically associated with clear, warm weather, but they also have the potential to turn into heat traps. "If a high pressure comes in our region, and if it just moves away in a couple of days, then you don't get that much heating because that's just a transient phenomenon. But if it stays longer, then the temperatures go up," Deoras said.

"That's what happened last week. There was this high-pressure region that came from North Africa and anchored itself over Southern Europe. Then it went away, and we got another [one] this week, which they called the Charon new heatwave," he added. Hannah Cloke, a climate scientist also at the University of Reading, described what the phenomenon feels like. "The bubble of hot air that has inflated over Southern Europe has turned Italy and surrounding countries into a giant pizza oven," she said in a statement. "The hot air, which pushed in from Africa, is now staying put with settled high-pressure conditions meaning that heat in warm sea, land and air continues to build," Cloke explained.

US fears mistreatment of American soldier held by North Korea

WASHINGTON (AFP): The United States fears an American soldier held by North Korea may be mistreated by Pyongyang, which has yet to respond to inquiries about his fate, officials said. Private Second Class Travis King was due to return to the United States to face disciplinary consequences after serving jail time in South Korea, but instead left the airport, joined a tour of the border and fled across it.

The US Army has launched an investigation into the incident, the Pentagon said, but officials have made clear that their first priority is securing the soldier's release. "It makes me very, very concerned that Private King is in the hands of the North Korean authorities... I worry about how they may treat him," Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth said at the Aspen Security Forum.

She referenced the case of Otto Warmbier, an American who was held for a year-and-a-half before being released in a coma to the United States and dying six days later. State Department spokesman Matt Miller also cited Pyongyang's history of mistreating detainees.

"We would always have concern given the treatment by North Koreans of past detained individuals and that's one of the reasons why we are reaching out to ask for more information about his well being," Miller said. "The case continues to be an extremely high priority for the department. Our diplomatic efforts are ongoing," he said. Wormuth said Washington has sought information about King through UN channels, and that various parts of the government are involved in the effort. "The Department

of Defense, the State Department, the White House, we're using UN channels, have been reaching out to (North Korea) to get information about his status and to work with them to try to... bring him back," she said.

Wormuth said the soldier "would have faced additional consequences" had he returned to the United States as planned, though it was unclear if jail time was on the table. He "had assaulted an individual in South Korea and had been in custody of the South Korean government and was going to come back to the United States and face the consequences in the Army. And I'm sure that he was grappling with that," she said. "He may not have been thinking clearly, frankly, but we just don't know." North and South Korea remain technically at war since the 1950-1953

Korean War ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty, with a Demilitarized Zone running along their border. King was on a tour of the Joint Security Area -- where soldiers from North and South Korea face off -- when he crossed the border.

Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said King was escorted up to airport security and that "I don't think anyone anticipated that he was going to leave the airport." US Army counterintelligence is leading an investigation into the incident, which will determine whether or not he is a defector, she said, noting that his current status is absent without leave, or AWOL. But "our biggest concern about Private King is that we want to bring him home, and we are doing whatever we can... to find a way," Singh said.

Russian prosecutors seek 20 more years in prison for Navalny

MOSCOW (Agencies): Russia's state prosecutors have requested a 20-year prison sentence for jailed opposition leader Alexey Navalny on charges including "extremism", according to state news agency TASS. The verdict will be announced on August 4, TASS cited a lawyer as saying.

Navalny condemned Russia's war in Ukraine during closed-door court hearing, according to a statement released by his aides. "[Russia is] floundering in a pool of either mud or blood, with broken bones, with a poor and robbed population, and around it lie tens of thousands of people killed in the most stupid and senseless war of the 21st century," he said.

Navalny is already serving an 11.5-year prison sentence over fraud and other charges, in a maximum security penal colony in Melekhovo, 250 kilometres

(150 miles) east of Moscow. President Vladimir Putin's most prominent and vocal opponent faces a grab-bag of new charges, which he says are similarly fabricated to keep him out of political life. Court records showed they related to six different articles of the Russian criminal code, including inciting and financing extremist activity and creating an extremist organisation. The latest request by prosecutors against the Kremlin's biggest rival could see 47-year-old Navalny remain behind bars for at least 20 more years.

Navalny, who exposed official corruption and organised significant anti-Kremlin protests, was arrested in January 2021 upon returning to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin. He said that prosecutors had provided him

with 3,828 pages describing all the crimes he is alleged to have committed while in prison. "Although it's clear from the size of the tomes that I am a sophisticated and persistent criminal, it's impossible to find out what exactly I am accused of," Navalny said. While imprisoned, the anti-corruption crusader has spent months in a tiny one-person cell, also called a "punishment cell", for purported disciplinary violations, such as an alleged failure to properly button his prison robe, properly introduce himself to a guard or to wash his face at a specified time.

Navalny has complained of health problems since being jailed and experienced significant weight loss due to a mysterious illness. His associates and supporters have accused prison authorities of failing to provide him with proper medical assistance and voiced concern

about his failing health. Russia has outlawed Navalny's campaign organisation as part of a crackdown on dissent that started well before the conflict in Ukraine and has intensified in the nearly 17 months since it started. Navalny has repeatedly denounced Putin's war in Ukraine, describing it as a "tragedy" and saying Moscow's defeat was "inevitable".

The Kremlin has denied persecuting Navalny and said his case is a matter for the courts. The opposition leader - a lawyer by training - has taken prison officials to court to retain access to what he sees as basic prisoner rights. Navalny built a huge social media following by producing videos providing evidence of systemic corruption among Russian elites. He still communicates on social media through his team.

Attacks on Ukraine ports played

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned Russian attacks on Ukraine's Black Sea ports and warned the "destruction of civilian infrastructure may constitute a violation of international humanitarian law." "These attacks are also having an impact well beyond Ukraine," said UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric. "We are already seeing the negative effect on global wheat and corn prices which hurts everyone, but especially vulnerable people in the global south."

Russia has jolted world grain markets with an escalation in the Black Sea, mounting a third-straight night of air strikes on Ukrainian ports and issuing a threat against Ukraine-bound vessels. Kyiv responded by announcing similar measures against vessels bound for Russia or Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory. Moscow has described the port attacks as revenge for a Ukrainian strike on Russia's bridge to Crimea. The moves came just days after Russia quit a deal - brokered by the United Nations and Turkey - that allowed the safe Black Sea export of Ukraine grain for the past year.

The UN Security Council will meet on Friday over the "humanitarian consequences" of Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea deal, Britain's UN mission said. Russia's withdrawal also effectively ended a pact between the UN and Moscow, in which UN officials agreed to help Russian food and fertilizer exports reach world markets. Under that agreement, the UN has said Moscow was no longer fulfilling a pledge to "facilitate the unimpeded export of food, sunflower oil, and fertilizers" from Ukrainian Black Sea Ports. The United Nations said that Russia's attacks on Ukrainian ports also contradict that commitment. "The Secretary-General will not relent in his efforts to ensure that Ukrainian and Russian food and fertilizer are available on international markets as part of his ongoing efforts to fight global hunger and ensure stable food prices for consumers everywhere," Dujarric said.

US plans second summit

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Joe Biden will host a second summit with leaders of Pacific island nations in September, Joseph Yun, the US official responsible to negotiations with three key Pacific island states said. US officials have said the summit is expected to take place around the time of the UN General Assembly meetings in New York in September.

Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said in May Biden would arrange another summit of Pacific island leaders this year after the disappointment caused by his cancellation of a visit to Papua New Guinea due to the domestic debt ceiling crisis. Biden hosted a first summit with the leaders last year. "He has committed (to) holding a second summit in September this year," Yun told an event hosted by the Heritage Foundation think tank. Yun stressed the importance of the US Congress approving new funding for the three Pacific Island countries he has been negotiating with by the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30, given China's strategic ambitions in the region.

Palau, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands all have what are known as Compacts of Free Association (COFAs) with the United States, under which the US has responsibility for their defense and provides economic assistance, while gaining exclusive access to huge strategic swaths of the Pacific. In May, Yun said he had finalized terms with Micronesia and Palau to renew their COFAs and hoped to do so with the Marshall Islands in coming weeks. However, the foreign minister of the Marshall Islands called last week for more US money to deal with the legacy of massive US nuclear testing to enable the renewal of its agreement, the economic terms of which expire on Sept. 30.

Iran's ancient 'wind catchers' beat the heat naturally

TEHRAN (AFP): Tall, chimney-like towers rise from centuries-old adobe houses in Iran's desert city of Yazd, drawing in a pleasant breeze for residents of one of the hottest cities on earth. The wind catchers, called badgirs in Persian, are just one of the engineering marvels inhabitants have developed in this ancient city in central Iran -- where temperatures reach well over 40 degrees celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in the summer.

And, unlike energy-guzzling air-conditioners, they're cost and carbon-free. "For centuries, before we had electricity, they made it possible to cool dwellings," said Abdolmajid Shakeri, the provincial deputy of Iran's cultural heritage and tourism ministry. The oldest of the city's 700 wind catchers dates back to the 14th century, but the architectural feature is believed to date back as far as 2,500 years when the Persian Empire ruled over much of the Middle East. "The badgirs played a key role in the city's prosperity," said Shakeri about the desert city that was a caravan stop on the ancient Silk Road. "Thanks to them, people lived at ease," he added, describing how the wind catchers pull fresh air into buildings and allow hot air to ventilate out through large vertical slots. Majid Oloumi, the head of Dowlatabad garden, home to a towering 33-metre (100 foot) wind catcher -- one of the tallest in the world -- described the cooling method as "totally clean because it uses neither electricity nor polluting materials". UNESCO listed Yazd as a World Heritage Site in 2017, describing the city as a "living testimony to intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival". The bioclimatic architecture which provides thermal comfort for the people of Yazd has attracted interest elsewhere on a heating planet.

"Badgirs demonstrate that simplicity can be an essential attribute to sustainability," said Paris-based architect Roland Dehghan Kamaraji, who has studied Iran's wind catchers. "It goes against the common misconception that sustainable solutions need to be complex or high-tech." At a sustainable urban community called Masdar city in the United Arab Emirates, buildings have been "designed to make use of the natural ventilation for cooling, like

badgirs," he said.

Similarly, ventilation inspired by "termite mounds, an approach similar to that of badgirs" were built atop Eastgate Centre, a shopping mall and office complex in Harare, Zimbabwe. However, Yazd's unique architectural traditions have largely been abandoned at their birthplace. "Unfortunately, our ancestral heritage has been forgotten," especially since the emergence of air conditioners, said Oloumi. Yazd's old town is a labyrinth of narrow streets and roofed alleyways. Its centuries-old edifices made of clay, mud-brick and adobe all provide insulation against the torrid heat.

But the old houses stand in sharp contrast to modern cement buildings and multi-lane roads. "Today, house architecture imitates that in other countries, and cement-based construction does not correspond to the climate of Yazd," he added. Kamaraji says bioclimatic architecture has waned due to economic constraints and modern construction methods that "largely favour the use of energy and fossil fuel intensive materials". Another sustainable architectural feature of Yazd is its system of underground aqueducts called qanats, which transport water from underground wells, aquifers or the mountains. "These underground aqueducts have great utility," said Zohreh Montazer, an expert on the water system. "They constitute a source of water supply and make it possible to cool the dwellings and to preserve food at an ideal temperature." Iran is estimated to have around 33,000 operational qanats today, a significant drop from the 50,000 in use in the mid-20th century.

UNESCO says the decline in qanats is driven in part by the drying up of underground water sources due to overconsumption. Iranian authorities have in recent years sought to rehabilitate the qanat of Zarch -- considered the longest and oldest, dating to some 3,000 years ago. The water network -- which stretches over 70 kilometres across Yazd, and runs at a depth of around 30 metres -- stands as a reminder for Yazd's residents of the challenges ahead. "The day when fossil fuels run out," said Montazer, "we will have to return to these methods."

'NK nuclear attack would mean 'end' of regime'

SEOUL (AFP): Seoul told North Korea Friday that using its nukes would mean the "end" of Kim Jong Un's regime, after Pyongyang threatened nuclear retaliation over growing US military deployments on the peninsula.

Relations between the two Koreas are at one of their lowest points ever, with the North ramping up weapons testing as Seoul and Washington boost military cooperation. Pyongyang's defence minister warned that this week's port visit of a US nuclear-capable submarine to Busan -- the first since 1981 -- could meet the legal threshold for the North to use its nuclear weapons. North Korea last year adopted a sweeping nuclear law, setting out an array of scenarios -- some of which are vague -- in which it could use its nukes, including pre-emptive nuclear strikes if threatened. As Seoul and Washington have "made clear" before, "any nuclear attack on the alliance will face an immediate, overwhelming and

decisive response", Seoul's defence ministry said in a statement Friday.

Were this to happen "the North Korean regime will face its end", it added. The US submarine's port visit is only a "legitimate defensive response" to Pyongyang's ongoing nuclear threats, it said. That visit was agreed during South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's trip to Washington in April, when he and US President Joe Biden issued a similarly stern warning to Pyongyang about the terminal consequences of it using nuclear weapons. South Korea's statement comes as an American soldier, Travis King, is believed to be in North Korean custody after crossing the border during a tourist trip to the Joint Security Area in the Demilitarised Zone. Pyongyang has a long history of detaining Americans and using them as bargaining chips in bilateral ties. It has not yet issued any comment on King. Announcing his new nuclear law last

year, Kim Jong Un said the country's status as a nuclear power was now "irreversible", effectively eliminating the possibility of denuclearisation talks.

The new nuclear law is ambiguous, and claims Pyongyang could use its nukes if "an attack by nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction... is judged to draw near". Analysts have said this could be used to justify the North's possible nuclear use even in the face of conventional attacks. "North Korea is the only entity that has adopted the Nuclear Forces Policy Act, which includes illegal preemptive strikes," Seoul's defence ministry said Friday. Pyongyang is also "repeating actual preemptive strike drills and nuclear strike threats against" the Seoul-Washington alliance, it added. Washington and Seoul also held their first Nuclear Consultative Group meeting in Seoul, to improve their joint response to any nuclear attack by the North.

Former Venezuela spy chief pleads not guilty

CARACAS (Agencies): Venezuela's former spy chief has pleaded not guilty in a United States court to charges he coordinated international drug trafficking while in office. The 63-year-old Hugo Carvajal had served as former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's eyes and ears in the country's military from 2004 to 2011.

US federal prosecutors said, during that time, he facilitated the shipment of thousands of kilograms of cocaine from Venezuela to Mexico, where it was ultimately sent to the US. "Carvajal abandoned his responsibility to the people of Venezuela and exploited his position for personal gain," US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) chief Anne Milgram said in a statement upon his extradition. "DEA and our partners stand united to bring to justice anyone, in any position, who endangers the safety and health of the American people."

Carvajal's appearance in New York federal court marked the culmination of more than 10 years of effort by the Department of Justice to bring him to US soil. The charges against

him include participating in a narco-terrorism conspiracy, conspiring to import cocaine to the US and conspiring to use, carry or possess "machine guns and destructive devices" in connection with the cocaine trafficking. Carvajal was first arrested in 2014 in Aruba, a semi-autonomous Dutch Caribbean island. He was later released and returned to Venezuela after the Netherlands ruled he had diplomatic immunity. At the time, the US Department of State decried the decision, calling it disappointing and disturbing.

In 2019, he was again arrested, this time in Spain, on US drug charges, but he went into hiding after a court initially approved his extradition. He was re-arrested in 2021. Following his extradition, US prosecutors released a statement explaining that Carvajal - as far back as 1999 - served as one of the "leaders and managers" of the so-called Cartel of the Suns, a group of officials that oversaw drug trafficking. The cartel's name is a reference to the sun insignia affixed to the uniforms of Venezuelan military officers. Prosecutors said

Carvajal partnered with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebel group to set up the cocaine trafficking network. At the time, the prosecutors explained, FARC was responsible for cocaine production across swathes of Colombia and Venezuela. One shipment alone contained 5.6 tonnes of cocaine, flown on board a private jet from Venezuela to Mexico in 2006, according to prosecutors. Mexican authorities intercepted the cocaine upon arrival. Nicknamed "El Pollo" - "The Chicken" - Carvajal had also taken part in the failed 1992 coup that facilitated Chavez's rise to political prominence. He was widely considered to be one of the most powerful figures to serve under the socialist leader. Carvajal later broke with Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, Chavez's handpicked successor.

He threw his support instead behind US-backed opposition leader Juan Guaido and released a video from an undisclosed location in 2019 calling on the military to rise up against Maduro. His appeal went unanswered.

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Pakistan’s IT sector, prospects and limitations

PRIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif has recently stressed the need to increase the Country's IT exports to \$25 billion, coincidence with an investment of over \$20 billion in the same field within the next two to three years. While speaking at a seminar on Information Technology, the Premier noted that the coalition government has already developed a mechanism to ensure a one-window operation to facilitate foreign and local investors. According to him, Pakistan was rich with immense youth potential and its \$2.5 billion exports did not justify the national capacity, while Pakistan's Eastern neighbor excelled in the IT Sector, and Pakistan was positioned to claim its place.

Information Technology has been largely ignored by successive Pakistani governments in the past that adversely affected Pakistan's overall economic growth by pushing the South Asian economy to the last numbers in the region. Pakistan's IT sector grew from scratch due to the digitalization drive of government institutions which attracted foreign firms that brought basic IT infrastructure and technical expertise in the country. Awfully, Pakistani leaders always sought to promote their business interests through nepotism and cartelization in various fields which resulted in unsustainable growth and concentration of wealth in a limited circle of the society. The same happened in the poultry industry, solar energy, and some IT Projects in the country. On the other India timely accessed the importance of Information Technology and welcomed American Tech giants to its nation in the mid 90s. Over the year, India became the world's second largest hub of IT industry and currently ranked as the 40th most developed IT nation with an average revenue of \$ 245 billion per annum. This is the reason that India generates more revenue from its IT exports than Saudi Arabia earns through the trade of black gold.

Unfortunately, this policy gap came up with drastic outcome after 2-3 decades as the incentivized and pro-business approach of Indian rulers transformed India into a major IT hub while selfish policies and mistaken priorities of the leaders converted Pakistan into a food and energy-deficient nation that faces an imminent risk of economic default any movement in the future. Pakistan's IT Sector has grown on its feet over the past two decades while the government support was no more than an offer of free-of-cost IT training to the youth particularly government officials to facilitate their office work only. Interestingly, the former PTI government realized the importance of the IT industry and gave particular focus on increasing IT exports amid downgraded foreign trade in Textile, agriculture, and sports articles of the country. During the last decade, Pakistan has emerged as one of the fasted growing IT exporters in the world, as this sector provides tangible profit without leveling heavy import/ production costs to the country. According to the statistics, Pakistan's IT sector is currently well established and Pakistani IT startups have expertise in the creation of high-end, system integration, mobile apps, gaming, medical transcription, enterprise-grade software development, tele-marketing, and other important software developments and tech services.

Pakistan's IT industry had grown rapidly with a rate of 18% per annum over the past few years and is expected to reach \$7 billion by 2023. Currently, Pakistan's IT industry is based in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad and a pool of over three hundred thousand young IT professionals is the key driver of this magnificent sector. The government has started special initiatives including the constitution of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the Digiskill training program, and other endeavors to attract foreign investors, encourage local youth and young entrepreneurs to make their future in this industry. At the same time, young Pakistani IT Professionals, entrepreneurs, and freelancers are making history through their active contribution toward the economic revival of the country. Currently, over 60% of youth out of the 220 million strong Pakistani nation is the real hope of the country, which will contribute immensely toward the promotion of the IT sector and economic revival of the country if they trained and utilized sufficiently. The incumbent coalition government has made significant endeavors to develop IT infrastructure and boost IT exports in the country. As said, several Gulf countries are willing to invest in Pakistan to mutually harvest the tremendous untapped potential in the IT sector. Meanwhile, a one-window operation has been launched by the government to facilitate potential investors without any delay.

Realistically, the future of the nation lies in Information Technology, Industrial growth, and overall revival of the economic and trade activities in the country. Pakistani leaders always fell victim to the restrictive/ reserved strategies of bureaucracy that often resisted modern innovations and the latest technologies that seriously undermined the economic interests of the nation in the long run. Earlier, Pakistani leaders missed the magnificent opportunity for an IT revolution, currently our nation lags behind in digital currency and blockchain technology, which incurs billions of dollar loss to the country at this point in time. It is high time, that Pakistani Strategists prepare themselves to compete with the challenges of the contemporary world instead of turning a blind eye from realities of the modern society. So, this country gains its due prestige in the community of the nations around the globe.

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Economic gloom looks likely to sink the Tories

Larry Elliott

MORTGAGE rates this week are at their highest level since the global financial crisis 15 years ago. The International Monetary Fund has warned that borrowing costs may need to go higher - and stay there - if the Bank of England is to bring inflation back on target. Pay packets are going up but prices are going up faster. People are getting poorer, not richer.

Clearly, this is a problem for a government that can only delay the next general election for at most 18 months. But it is also a cause for concern for Labour, which stands to inherit an economic mess and a ton of political problems, if it can end a run of four election defeats. Strange things can happen. Rishi Sunak may somehow deliver an economic miracle. When it comes to it, voters may decide they don't fancy Sir Keir Starmer as prime minister and stick with the devil they know. Currently it doesn't look that way. The poor state of the economy helps explain why the Conservatives are more than 20 points behind in the latest opinion polls.

Unless Sunak can conjure up a feelgood factor pretty rapidly, he looks to be on course to lose by a landslide. The Tories have been presiding over a cost of living crisis and could soon be saddled with a housing crash as a result of higher mortgage rates. An economy that has been moving sideways for the past year could easily be tipped into a winter recession if the Bank of England feels the need to heed the IMF's advice. Logically, the worse things get for the economy over the coming months, the better things should look for Starmer. Higher interest rates are pushing up the cost of servicing the UK's national debt, and there is little scope - if any - for the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, to indulge in that time-honoured tradition: pre-election Tory tax cuts. But logic doesn't always count for much, and there is a risk that the worse things get the harder it will be for Labour to win. No question, voters think things are going badly with Sunak in charge, but they might conclude that taxes and interest rates

would be even higher under Starmer. That is what happened in 1992, when the Tories mounted a highly successful Project fear campaign to deny Neil Kinnock victory.

Fear of repeating that defeat explains why Starmer and the shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, have been paring back Labour's spending commit-

ment up. The financial markets rarely give Labour an even break. So what's new? Not much. The Conservatives tend to run the economy into the ground before they leave office, with Blair the only Labour prime minister to arrive in Downing Street with a relatively benign economic inheritance. Significantly, the first big

when the worst is over, and that gives it the chance to take things steadily in the hope of governing for at least two full terms. Inflation will be close to its 2% target, interest rates will be on the way down, living standards will be rising. The IMF is forecasting steady if unspectacular growth of 2% a year in 2025 and 2026.

If they are smart, Starmer and Reeves will

The intention is to give the Tories' negative-campaigning machine as little to work with as possible. Expect the ultra-cautious approach to continue, in the event that Starmer becomes the first Labour leader since Tony Blair in 2005 to win an election. To be sure, governing is not going to be easy, with money tight and heavy pressure to spend more on everything from the NHS to the arts. The unions will expect Starmer to deliver on public sector pay. Labour's green lobby will demand faster progress on achieving net zero. Meanwhile, the City will demand to know whether the new government's sums add up. The financial markets rarely give Labour an even break. So what's new? Not much. The Conservatives tend to run the economy into the ground before they leave office, with Blair the only Labour prime minister to arrive in Downing Street with a relatively benign economic inheritance. Significantly, the first big announcement of the Blair government - independence of the Bank of England - was designed to give Labour credibility with the markets. It worked, too. Judging by the polls, the public's desire to be shot of the Tories is stronger than its appetite for the alternative. The public would harbour doubts about a Labour government even after voting for one. Starmer and his team know they would be on probation, and - hardly surprisingly - that makes them risk averse. Reeves has insisted Labour's fiscal rules - borrowing only for investment and debt falling as a share of national output - are non-negotiable. There are obvious downsides to this approach. Most obviously, it makes it harder for Labour to portray itself as the party of change, and feeds the perception that Starmer doesn't really believe in anything. The upside is that Labour will be taking over the economy

ments, have said very little about tax and have generally been pursuing a safety-first strategy. They don't trust the opinion polls predicting a Labour landslide at the next election and fully expect Sunak to run a "Labour tax bombshell" campaign. The intention is to give the Tories' negative-campaigning machine as little to work with as possible. Expect the ultra-cautious approach to continue, in the event that Starmer becomes the first Labour leader since Tony Blair in 2005 to win an election. To be sure, governing is not going to be easy, with money tight and heavy pressure to spend more on everything from the NHS to the arts. The unions will expect Starmer to deliver on public sector pay. Labour's green lobby will demand faster progress on achieving net zero. Meanwhile, the City will demand to know whether the new government's sums

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take control of the economic narrative, blaming Tory mismanagement for any tough decisions that have to be made. This approach worked a treat for David Cameron and George Osborne in 2010, when they pinned the blame for the coalition government's austerity measures on Gordon Brown's alleged profligacy.

The deferred-gratification approach won't be popular with those who say a Labour government needs to think bigger, but let's be realistic. There will be no radical economic departures from a Starmer government, and if it went into the next election proposing anything that seriously challenged the orthodoxy - Bank of England independence and tight control of the public finances, for example - Labour would probably lose. Sometimes you have to win - and govern - ugly.

The Guardian

Why Russia wants Syria's Bab Al-Hawa crossing closed

Kerry Boyd Anderson

THE UN Security Council last week failed to reach an agreement to keep open the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing that allows international aid to reach northwest Syria. In addition to dire humanitarian consequences, the development also has geopolitical implications.

For several years, the UNSC has provided six-month authorizations for UN agencies to transport aid from Turkiye into northwest Syria, a key area that remains under the control of Syrian opposition groups. Russia has long objected to the crossing but previously had been persuaded to allow it to remain open. However, the constant need to renew approval every six months undermined planning efforts, and the UN secretary-general requested a 12-month authorization. Russia refused to consider a year-long authorization, so the UNSC considered a compromise nine-month extension. Russia made the sole vote against the extension, with China abstaining, thus vetoing the proposal. Russia then offered a six-month extension, but France, the UK and the US opposed it and most other members abstained.

While Russia might have appeared willing to extend approval for six months, its opposition to a longer authorization comes after repeated Russian moves to cut other cross-border routes for aid into Syria. In 2014, the UNSC approved resolutions to authorize providing UN aid through crossings with neighboring states without requiring agreement from the Syrian government. It established four crossings: two through Turkiye, one through Iraq and one through Jordan. After Russia increased its direct support for the Syrian regime, it used its diplomatic leverage at the UN to gradually close all the crossings, now including the last one, Bab Al-Hawa. The humanitarian consequences are disastrous. While some non-UN aid might still make it to the Syrian northwest, the UN aid agencies play an essential role in providing aid and coordinating deliveries with other aid groups. More than 4 million people live in the northwest region and most of them are completely dependent on aid, including many women and children. A majority of the population has been repeatedly displaced. February's earthquake further devastated the region and the Bab Al-Hawa crossing was crucial to recovery. After the earthquake, the Assad regime allowed the UN to open two additional crossings from Turkiye, but that agreement was temporary and most of the aid still flowed through Bab Al-Hawa.

Since last week's UNSC vote, the Assad regime has offered to allow the UN access to the crossing for six months, but with new conditions, including full coordination with the regime. Russia insists that aid can still travel to those in need via the Syrian government. Unfortunately, the Syrian regime has a clear track record of spoiling, stealing, delaying or halting aid shipments to areas held by opposition forces.

Russia's decision to end UN authorization for the Bab Al-Hawa crossing represents both a years-long strategy to cut off aid to opposition areas and a more recent shift in Russia's geopolitical position. Moscow has directly assisted the Assad regime in its efforts to restore control over Syria. One element of Russia's support is its insistence that the UN recognize the regime as the sovereign government of Syria, including sending aid through the government rather than directly to areas held by opposition groups. Furthermore, siege-and-starve tactics have played a significant role in the Syrian civil war and Moscow is well aware that providing aid to populations residing in opposition-held areas limits the Syrian regime's ability to effectively use these tactics. In such a brutal war, the denial of food, medicine, diapers and other essentials to desperate people becomes a weapon, and Russia seeks to ensure that the Assad regime can wield that weapon.

The war in Ukraine and the recent Wagner Group mutiny have shifted Russia's global position in ways that might have reduced the international community's ability to persuade it to support a UN-authorized border crossing. Since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the US and Europe have dramatically intensified pressure on Moscow, including through sanctions. An unintended consequence might be reduced leverage over Russia's government. The war in Ukraine and other developments have also reshaped Russia-Turkiye relations. Turkiye has sought to balance its relations between the West and Russia, and Ankara and Moscow have worked together through the Astana process to manage their interests in Syria. However, in recent weeks, Turkiye has appeared to tilt toward the West, including allowing Sweden to join NATO, expressing support for Ukraine's desire to join NATO, providing armed drones to Ukraine, and releasing five Ukrainian soldiers from a prisoner swap deal arranged by Ankara. Turkiye wants the Bab Al-Hawa crossing to remain open for several reasons; in particular, it wants to avoid a new humanitarian disaster that could push more refugees into Turkish-controlled areas in Syria or to the Turkish border. Russia's move to close the crossing might partly be in retaliation for Turkiye's recent actions.

The Wagner Group mutiny in Russia also has consequences in Syria, where the group has been very active. Globally, the mutiny also damaged President Vladimir Putin's reputation. Taking an important step to support the Assad regime, a Russian ally, against international pressure might be a way for Putin to reassure partners in other countries that he has their backs. Meanwhile, the humanitarian consequences will be severe. Once again, Syrian civilians will bear the brunt of geopolitical maneuvering.

Labour voters are disillusioned with the party

Jamie Driscoll

“Why have you resigned from Labour to run as an independent?” I’ve been asked by a dozen different journalists in the past 24 hours. Truth is, there are probably a dozen different reasons. The overwhelming support I’ve had since Labour HQ summarily blocked me from standing for the North East mayoralty is part of it. On Saturday night I went to a local beer festival. People I’d never met kept saying: “It’s terrible what they’ve done to you. I hope you run as an independent.” Labour members and Tory councillors, union leaders and business people have all said: “Run, and I’ll vote for you.”

There’s the fact that I spent years negotiating the best funded devolution deal in England - and worked cross-party to do it - so we can invest in our public transport system.

Then there’s the sense of justice. It’s not just that I disagree with the underhand moves to deny local Labour members their freedom to choose - or not to choose - their own candidate. And it’s not just my distaste at the dishonesty and barrage of broken promises from the Labour leadership. The refrain we hear again and again is “We have to be electable.” No one disagrees. But is that actually what’s happening? If the point is to be electable, why say you’re not interested in change and hope? Why accept big money from private healthcare, and then say Labour would fund profit-making private hospitals? It won’t bring waiting lists down.

And where are the votes to be gained in visiting Google, and just days later rowing back from a £3bn tax on tech giants? Everyone hates tech billionaires. And the tech billionaires even hate each

other. Something like fighting child poverty is a motherhood-and-apple-pie policy. Everyone supports it. I know this - I’m running a child poverty prevention programme in the North of Tyne right now. It makes long-term economic sense to not have kids growing up with stunted life chances. So where are the votes in the Dickensian cruelty of punishing families with three or more children? And investment to tackle the impending climate catastrophe is not a “nice to have”. It’s not optional. It’s not wasted money either. Our electrical infrastructure is in dire need of upgrade - after decades of privatisation our industry is suffering from an inadequate grid. I don’t buy that this is all about economic competence. I know about economic competence in politics. I’ve worked with busi-

nesses large and small to deliver more than 5,000 well-paid, permanent jobs. My combined authority has increased skills training courses from 22,000 a year to 33,000 a year on the same budget - a 50% increase in value for taxpayer money. I’ve written a paper for the RSA on how fiscal devolution can generate wealth in the north-east without raising taxes - and I’ve not charged residents a penny more in council tax. The Tories have done Labour’s work for them. Keir Starmer is right when he says Britain is broken. Food banks. Spiking mortgage rates. Crumbling public services. Business investment flatlined. Life expectancy falling. People with chest pains waiting an hour for an ambulance. And Tory integrity shot to pieces, from Chris Pincher to Partygate to tractor porn.

Of course they should be replaced. But when it comes to a response, there’s a total incoherence across politics. And that’s what prompted me to stand. Millions of people feel no one speaks for them. Everywhere I go, people tell me they want politicians to work together to get results. They want people to make realistic promises and stick to them. They want the unvarnished truth.

I’ve been asked, “Can you win?” Yes. Tribal loyalties have broken down in the north-east. People want someone who’ll put region above party. And I’m the only person who’s done the job - experience counts. It’ll be tough going, against national parties with slick press offices. But when we launched a crowdfunding for the campaign yesterday, I said if we could raise £25,000 by the end of August, I would run. We’ve raised £75,000 in small

donations in just one day. People believe in this campaign. The last time something like this happened was in 2000, when Labour changed the rules to stop Ken Livingstone. He ran as an independent and outpolled Labour by three to one. And the north-east has already elected independent mayors in Hartlepool and Middlesbrough. People are ready for a real fix for our broken politics, our broken economy, our broken ideas. Why did I run? I think the clincher was at the family dinner table last week. “Should I run?” I asked. My 15-year-old son answered: “You’re still going to campaign and fight for a better world. Why not fight for something where you’ll have the power to do something about it?” He’s right. The task is monumental. But I’ve never been timid about getting stuck in. As we say in the north-east, shy bairns get nowt.

Despite the Kremlin’s best efforts, Putin’s facade has cracked

FOR the outside observer, Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to be riding high on a wave of national support and euphoria following the Wagner rebellion. Immediately after the June 23-24 mutiny, the Kremlin's PR team shifted into high gear to hide its weaknesses and demonstrate that everything - as always - is under control. Below the surface, however, it is growing increasingly apparent that much is not going according to plan.

On July 7, the independent Levada Center pollster published statistics from the end of June arguing that Yevgeny Prigozhin's mutiny and march on Moscow did not negatively affect the Kremlin's approval ratings, but may have even strengthened public opinion toward the Russian authorities. Though there are a number of methodological issues with wartime polling - and polling in Russia in general - the Levada Center numbers are likely representative of the success of the Russian authorities in controlling the media space and reclaiming the post-rebellion narrative. That being said, it is highly unlikely that little, if anything at all, will go back to normal. Firstly, Putin as an actor seldom reacts to the world around him. Rather, he weighs the possibilities brought to him by his advisers and the few remaining people that still have access to him, meticulously planning his next moves. Yet just days

Joshua R. Kroeker

after the rebellion, Putin was walking amongst the crowds in Derbent, Dagestan, mingling with ordinary citizens, taking selfies, and acting as if he was on the campaign trail. For a president who has spent the past two years distancing himself from everyone around him, forcing those that he will see in person to quarantine for two weeks - and centering much of his rule above the common folk - descending into a crowd of thousands is a notable break with former praxis.

Being jostled from event to event, smiling and euphorically speaking to the public, armed forces, politicians, and business leaders, Putin is clearly on the defensive. This new, reactive Putin, in contrast to the former cool, distanced boss, is far more susceptible to manipulation from those around him. Putin's aloofness and detachment from most current events in Russia, including Ukrainian drone attacks on Moscow, could permit actors close to the president to push their own agendas, thereby escalating political infighting to new, destabilizing levels.

Secondly, despite the severity of the crimes committed by Prigozhin and Wagner in rising up against the state, the Kremlin is hardly doing anything to punish those responsible for what amounted to the greatest threat to Putin's rule in 23 years. Exiling the former and dissolving the lat-

ter may be effective in solving that problem, but they only lead to a weakening of Putin's image in the eyes of those around him - and those with grander aspirations.

The Kremlin is taking a more forgiving tone in order to avoid further publicity and quickly move past the unfortunate - but not all too problematic - days of yore. This may be effective for the immediate future, but it is more likely to have the effect of emboldening actors within the siloviki looking for career advancement. In other words, Putin's recent actions have opened the doors to dissent among his inner circle and the country's security forces, which are in a permanent battle for influence. Over 23 years, Putin has created a system of rule in which the strongest comes out on top.

Exhibiting weakness will not bode well for him. Finally, Tatiana Stanovaya, a Carnegie Eurasia fellow and founder of R.Politik, argues that for Putin, his image has always been of second-rate importance. Though this is true, it is also an axiom that for countless Russians, the image of a strong, iron-willed leader is of primary importance. For decades Putin has cultivated the persona of the archetypal Russian man: tough, exacting, bare-chested, and even ruthless. Throughout Russia's war against Ukraine, and foremost following the Wagner rebellion

and Putin's reactions, that image has begun to crack. If Putin can no longer project the image of a macho man who is in control of the situation and rules with an iron fist, but rather that of an aloof, reactive pensioner feebly responding to the world around him, his carefully curated persona begins to fall apart. Whether this is true or not is hardly relevant; for many Russians who are beholden to populism and the politics of imagery, disillusion is on the horizon. Stanovaya went as far as to refer to this as a "severe blow" to Putin and the state.

In the end, for Putin's inner circle, Russians en masse, the entire Ukrainian army, and the West, Prigozhin's rebellion happened under Putin's watch. Tanks drove through Rostov-on-Don, Wagner soldiers marched to Moscow, and the world's largest country was brought to a standstill by a few hundred armed militants. Statistics will not mask that reality.

Even Stalin's paintbrush will not be able to erase that blunder from the memories of Russians and anyone growing tired of Putin's outdated, weakened, and costly rule. Although this may not have immediate political implications, it opens the door to a significant challenge to Putin himself and his system of semi-totalitarian state control in the future. The once-infallible regime and the carefully choreographed imagery it created have begun to crack.

The Moscow Times

Shipping industry underwhelms with vague new green targets

Ranvir S. Nayar

BARELY four months before the next global climate change summit, COP28, gets underway in Dubai and with all alarms ringing out loud, the global shipping industry this month underwhelmed climate watchers with its vague promises and commitments at a meeting organized by the International Maritime Organization, the global maritime regulator and an agency of the UN.

Exactly how much shipping accounts for in terms of climate change is a highly debated issue. Firstly, it is only international shipping that is taken into account, even though a large part of the shipping in many countries that have large rivers or coastal areas is domestic. International shipping accounts for about 3 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, the same as Europe's largest economy, Germany. At the IMO meeting, the global shipping industry agreed to reduce emissions of planet-warming gases to net zero "by or around 2050."

This has roiled environmentalists around the world, who point to the similarly loose language and lack of firm and enforceable commitments made at the COP21 summit in Paris in 2015. This stands in tatters today as practically every single signatory has failed to come anywhere near meeting the commitments made in Paris. This has created a situation where most experts, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the body mandated by the UN to track climate change, has said that a 1.5 degrees Celsius rise in global temperatures - the red line for planetary safety - is set to be breached within a couple of years and that the rise in temperatures by the turn of this century could be as high as 3 C or even 4 C above the pre-industrial era, creating a catastrophic future for the world.

In such a situation, it is distressing to see a major sector of the economy trying to fudge its way through without making any commitments or sacrifices in terms of short-term profits in exchange for long-term gains for the entire planet. For now, the shippers have promised to

"try and cut their emissions as close as possible to zero by around 2050." Try and find an international agreement with less commitment, let alone enforceability, which has turned out to be a fatal flaw in the Paris Agreement, as many had feared even in 2015, when global leaders opted for a loosely worded agreement that was not worth the paper it was signed on. In Paris, the "agreement" was signed for public consumption so that the global leaders assembled there could come out looking like they were committed to fighting climate change, even though it was clear to anyone who cared to read the details of the agreement that it was a dud.

Almost a decade later, the world is paying a heavy price for that deal and now the shipping industry has rather disingenuously tried to ape the language of Paris and is similarly trying to present it as a pathbreaking agreement that will turn the industry into a climate savior. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the next seven years, the shipping industry needs to cut its emissions by 15 percent in order to be on track for a net zero scenario by 2050. But the trajectory of emissions has been progressing in the other direction. In 2022, global shipping emissions rose by 5 percent to reach 706 million tons, close to the peak of 708 million tons seen in 2018 and nearly 50 percent above the 504 million tons recorded at the turn of the century.

The emissions are almost certainly going to be even higher in 2023 if the expansion of the global economy is any indication, as it means more trade and that means more shipping. With each passing year, the target of a 15 percent cut in emissions by 2030 looks increasingly laughably unrealistic. Reducing emissions will be an uphill task for the shipping industry, as it uses the heaviest of fuels that are loaded with carbon and which have among the highest emissions per unit of fuel consumed. Replacing these fuels with lower-emission ones like biofuels may be technologically feasible,

but would significantly increase operational costs in the industry, which is almost always in a fragile financial state and which is just about recovering from the pandemic shock that severely impacted global trade for at least 18 months.

While the shipping industry may point to the COVID-19 pandemic as the main reason for it being slow in adopting climate-friendly technologies, it has been lethargic on this issue for a long while. It is among the slowest of all industries to move toward green technologies. For instance, even as the aviation and automobile industries are moving, even if at varying speeds, toward battery-powered aircraft, cars and even trucks, for the shipping industry, these elements have remained primarily in the corporate boardrooms or at best on the design blueprints. There are hardly any ships currently on the oceans that are not running on traditional, highly polluting oils. Shipbuilders ought to rapidly increase their investments in developing vessels powered by batteries, renewable energies like biofuels or hydrogen, or perhaps even nuclear power, as some advocate. But that is likely to open up another debate about how safe the world would be with hundreds of small nuclear reactors floating around the globe, when each is capable of inflicting catastrophic damage to a large area. There are some solutions already in place that can cut about 5 percent of the shipping industry's emissions. First is to retrofit ships so that they can use shore-side power when they are in port, instead of using their own highly polluting diesel.

There are some ports with power facilities, but this also needs to be expanded. A switch to biofuels is also feasible, though expensive, but if the aviation industry can start adopting sustainable aviation fuel, which is also a biofuel, there is no reason the shipping industry should remain anchored in its old practices. Unfortunately, the shipping industry can only be moved by tightening the agreement reached at the IMO meeting. Until then, the smokestacks will continue to billow poisonous gases into the atmosphere.

Ukraine and West facing a devastating defeat

Robert Clark

SINCE Putin's tanks crossed into Ukrainian territory last year, three options have been on the table for how this war would end: victory for one side or the other, a frozen conflict or a negotiated settlement. The public comments made this week by Oleksiy Arestovych, a former advisor to Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff, appear to indicate the last may be more likely than previously thought.

Arestovych raised the prospect of Ukraine making territorial concessions in return for the rest of the country receiving the most cast-iron security guarantee there is: Nato membership. These comments have proved highly controversial. Not only would such an outcome be unpalatable to many in Kyiv and other European capitals, raising it as a possibility highlights a growing uncertainty about the long-term sustainability of the war - particularly amongst Ukraine's western backers. Arestovych's suggestion comes at a crucial time. The long-planned counter-offensive, now in its second month, has run into several problems - not least that Kyiv is still waiting for approximately half of the western military equipment promised earlier in the year. Meanwhile, its forces are under increasing pressure to commit its reserves as Russian troops - despite reports of low morale across the front - remain dug-in, seemingly committed to defending every inch of Ukrainian ground captured since last year.

As Russian minefields take their toll on western-supplied tanks and Ukrainian sappers, their forces have so far retaken approximately five miles

of the sixty miles they need to split the land-bridge connecting Russia to Crimea. The land between Mariupol in the east and Melitopol to the west is seen as the vital ground to achieving this. It is incredibly tough going for the Ukrainians. They lack the air cover and advanced jets to protect their ground forces from Russian attack helicopters and fighters. Their soldiers, meanwhile must negotiate miles of minefields, tank-traps and then ultimately the heavily dug Russian trench networks. This gruelling endeavour was always going to take longer than the occasionally impatient international audience was prepared to wait for. It is a military effort of immense proportions, where mass, manpower, morale, equipment, stocks, logistics, grit and luck all play vital roles. So far, the Ukrainians are displaying all of these military qualities.

The variable that isn't on their side is time. In war, time is perhaps the cruellest factor one cannot change. We saw this in NATO's operation in Afghanistan, where the Taliban took great delight in the retelling of a famous Afghan proverb; "you may have the watches, but we have the time". Summer will soon begin to roll into autumn. Indeed, we are already half-way through the season. The fighting will begin to grind to a cold halt as the freezing winter saps troops' ability to conduct high-intensity warfare. This will only give Russia more time to further build up its defences, as it did last winter. By this point in the West, meanwhile, all eyes will be on the upcoming US election, with more

political attention diverted by the UK's general election. Kyiv knows it has a shortened window of opportunity to capitalise on its battlefield initiative and take back as much ground as it can. If Kyiv fails in its battlefield endeavours to split that land bridge, and retake much of its own territory by winter, then vocal calls of territorial concessions for marginal political outcomes will likely become far more prevalent - not just in Ukraine but likely from western capitals, as so-called "war-fatigue" begins to bite, international stockpiles of equipment and ammunition wither and politicians begin to worry about domestic budgets ahead of national elections.

While much fighting remains to be done across Ukraine's southern farmlands over the coming months, governments across the west must be prepared for the grim prospect of territorial concessions as one potential political outcome of a failed counter-offensive. Whether a Putinist Kremlin would respect such a deal if Kyiv were to receive security pledges short of full Nato membership is extremely doubtful. Regardless, this would surely be a favoured outcome for China's ruling "wolf warrior" foreign policy elite.

Beijing would be utterly delighted if the war were to end with Ukraine divided, Russian troops permanently in the Donbas harassing Kyiv and Europe, and Nato fractured on political lines. Such an outcome would be a gift to China as Xi Jinping begins to ramp up his own imperialistic and extra-territorial ambitions across the Indo-Pacific - and a devastating defeat for the West.

Changing the culture at the World Bank

Bertrand Badré & Peter Blair Henry

JAY Banga, the newly-appointed President of the World Bank, is taking the helm at a pivotal moment. The devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have impeded progress in developing countries and pushed 124 million people into extreme poverty. And Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine, which has exacerbated inflation and US-China tensions, promises to trigger even more volatility. Consequently, the Bank projects that economic activity in emerging economies will not return to pre-pandemic levels by 2024.

Low- and middle-income countries need the World Bank to spearhead global efforts to reduce extreme poverty and enhance living standards. By helping them to reduce their debt burdens and combat climate change, the Bank could also help to improve their air and water quality, increase their access to clean energy, and bolster their food security. But scepticism about the Bank's capacity to address the challenges facing developing countries is running high. In a recent speech, Banga said that the World Bank needs a "new playbook" for engaging with the developing world. While this is undoubtedly true, any updated strategy must acknowledge a fundamental truth: the Bank is unlikely to have enough capital to finance the investments required to address the enormous challenges facing poor countries. Given this, it must mobilise its knowledge and relationships, as well as its capital, to encourage investments that enhance growth and employment while also facilitating the green transition. That means establishing itself

as its stakeholders' partner of choice. By collaborating with policymakers in developing and developed countries, other multilateral development banks, and the private sector, the World Bank could incentivize what Banga has called "informed risk-taking." This approach would enable the Bank to use its limited balance sheet to encourage private, public, bilateral, and multilateral lenders to increase their annual investments in sustainable development from "billions to trillions" of dollars. But first, Banga must guide the institution toward complete transparency. Fostering transparency starts with acknowledging the obvious. The debt crisis currently engulfing emerging economies was exacerbated by the pandemic, but these countries were on a perilous path long before. Today's debt conundrum is the result of borrowers and lenders - including the Bank itself - pursuing low-return projects that could not cover their costs. To avert future debt crises, multilateral institutions must stop financing economically unsustainable projects. While technical discussions about how to generate additional financing are crucial, they must not distract the Bank from the vital task of collaborating with decision-makers in developing countries. Identifying future investments that could boost growth and accelerate the energy transition would be far more beneficial.

The first step toward a more effective World Bank has already been taken by the Bank's partners during the recent Paris Summit for a New Global Financing Pact. With roughly 1.2 billion people

in poor countries lacking access to electricity and another billion living more than a mile from an all-season road, infrastructure investments could foster sustained growth, help reduce debt, and mitigate the effects of climate change. Given that two billion people in emerging and developing economies are expected to migrate from rural to urban regions by 2030, it is crucial to build climate-friendly power plants, roads, and railways in these countries.

The Bank's technical teams, working closely with other multilateral lenders, must estimate the additional output that each dollar invested in such projects could generate. For example, consider a project that contributes 30 cents to GDP for every dollar of investment, resulting in a 30% rate of return. For such a project to be deemed economically viable, the borrowing cost would need to remain below 30%.

As the Bank increasingly evaluates partner project proposals based on expected returns, it will likely encounter pushback against climate-related projects whose benefits cannot be captured by GDP alone. While the Bank's assessment process should emphasize that many climate projects can deliver high rates of return, it is crucial to recognize that there are valid reasons to invest in projects that may not yield short-term economic benefits. At the same time, to mitigate risks to debt sustainability, economic and non-economic investments must be carefully balanced.

To this end, the Bank should adopt a two-tiered assessment process. The first tier would com-

prise projects approved solely on the basis of projected returns, and the second tier would include projects whose anticipated environmental benefits outweigh their cost. Projects approved on the basis of economic merit could be further divided into two groups: high-return projects that could attract private-sector financing and lower-return projects that require concessional funding. As one of us (Henry) recently wrote, the Bank has the financial and human resources to implement a data-driven investment approach. But to succeed, it must produce estimates of expected returns on prospective projects, ensure that estimates are independently reviewed and verified, and make this information freely accessible to governments, investors, and the general public. Publishing this data would enable governments to identify infrastructure projects with the greatest potential to boost growth, help private investors make informed financing decisions, and allow civil-society groups to hold leaders to account. By cultivating a culture of transparency regarding the costs and benefits of the Bank's investments, Banga could boost its credibility. Increased trust would encourage shareholders to consider capital increases, and engagement with the private sector and other development institutions would generate scale and momentum.

To be sure, changing the World Bank's culture will not be easy. But many people around the world have been waiting for such an effort, and they would likely support Banga in transforming a lethargic institution into a powerful force promoting a just and sustainable future.

The Project Syndicate



Weekly inflation falls by 0.07 pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a nominal decrease of 0.07 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on July 20, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 258.45 points as compared to 258.63 points during the past week, according to the PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 29.16 percent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732, increased by 0.51 percent and went up to 267.24 points from last week's 265.88 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517, and Rs 29,518-44,175; however increased by 0.35 percent, 0.20 percent, and 0.03 percent respectively while it declined by 0.28 percent for consumption group above Rs 44,175.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 30 (58.82%) items increased, 09 (17.65%) items

decreased and 12 (23.53%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW), included onions (10.29%), chicken (8.57%), bananas (8.34%), wheat flour (0.98%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (0.49%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.39%), cooking oil 5 liter (0.30%), petrol (3.40%) and diesel (2.64%).

The items that recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis, included tomatoes (36.06%), chillies powder (20.17%), sugar (4.77%), eggs (4.70%), gur (3.66%), shirting (2.64%) and garlic (2.31%).

The commodities that witnessed a decrease in price on a Year-on-Year (YOY) basis, included onions (35.27%), electricity for q1 (14.58%), pulse masoor (8.08%), LPG (1.06%) and vegetable ghee 1 kg (0.51%).

On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices included wheat flour (126.82%), cigarettes (110.75%), gas charges for q1 (108.38%), tea packet (98.99%), rice basmati broken (79.37%), rice irri-6/9 (74.14%), sugar (66.18%), potatoes (60.32%), gents sponge chappal (58.05%), tomatoes (57.58%), gur (54.21%), salt powdered (53.83%) and bread (46.93%).



MULTAN: A vendor along with his son busy arranging and displaying bread trays and other domestic-use items to attract customers at his roadside setup.

PSX witnesses bullish trend as index gains 522 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Friday, gaining 522.42 points, a positive change of 1.15 percent, closing at 45,920.73 points against 45,398.31 points the previous trading day.

A total of 504,550,463 shares were traded during

the day as compared to 464,226,100 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 12.012 billion against Rs 10.104 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 339 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 197 of them recorded gains and 121 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 21 companies

remained unchanged. The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 106,503,443 shares at Rs 1.46 per share; Fauji Foods Ltd with 44,280,040 shares at Rs.6.88 per share and Cnerygic PK with 35,911,615 shares at Rs.3.32 per share.

Colgate Palm witnessed a maximum increase of Rs

89.45 per share price, closing at Rs 1,475.00, whereas the runner-up was Mehmood Tex with an Rs 29.00 rise in its per share price to Rs 729.00. Bhanero Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 30.00 per share closing at Rs 920.00, followed by Philip Morris Pak with Rs 14.99 decline to close at Rs 419.01.

Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, CMA CGM Ivanhoe, JBU Opal and IVS Okudogo, carrying Container, Palm oil and Coal, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Thursday. Meanwhile three more ships, Nord Agano, Sea Elegant and Sea-Ranger also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours. A total of 06 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a 'Gas Zeus' sailed out to sea on Friday morning, while three more ships, CMA CGM Ivanhoe, Chai and JBU Opal are expected to sail on same day.

Cargo throughput of 149,230 tonnes, comprising 128,830 tonnes imports Cargo and 20,400 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,980 Containers (1,780 TEUs Imports and 1,200 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours. There are 07 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them four ships, San Antonio, NV Minerva, Sea Elegant and Sea Ranger carrying Coal.

PCJCCI for Pak-China Women's Development Employment Initiative

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki has said that there is a dire need to establish Pak-China Women's Development Employment Initiative to empower the women of Pakistan and China at broader level.

In a meeting with Fang Yulong, Senior Vice President PCJCCI, Ghurki said, "We should start such projects under BRI for the growth of young Pakistani businesswomen to instill a significant impact on the gender equality and women empowerment." The experience of Chinese women will help in the social growth of Pakistani women.

The PCJCCI President added that through this initiative various short courses related to technical and vocational training will be launched like; garments, food, handicrafts, languages, and I.T sector.

These courses will be a part of China's efforts for women empowerment,

offering them an excellent chance to become an integral component of the "high-tech man force" directly needed for Gwadar free zones as well as national and internationally competitive markets.

Fang Yulong, Senior Vice President PCJCCI said that with technical and professional education, and other allied facilities awarded to them free of cost, these women will prove to be an agent of change, transforming a small town to a modern smart city. Garment sector is one of the important sectors in which women can flourish rapidly, with their skills and knowledge to create garments of various designs they can enjoy a bright professional path on various upscale garment industry in Pakistan. Chinese women have deep interest in Pakistani clothing style and 'we can connect women of both countries through online portals for the buying and selling of such products'.

Hamza Khalid, Vice

President PCJCCI added that women in Pakistan are very talented, but previously, they did not have any platform to show their skills. There are several vocational training institutes to teach basic skills to women, but this center is the first of the kind to provide an opportunity to skilled women to generate income in an organized way. Pak-China Women's Development Employment Center could help women to be financially independent, giving them an opportunity to play their pivotal role to improve their standards of living and fight against poverty, he added.

Salahuddin Hanif, Secretary General PCJCCI added that PCJCCI always stressed to initiate such projects which can add value to the business of both countries. Pak-China Women's Development Employment Initiative would definitely open up new vistas of opportunities for both the women of Pakistan and China, he added.

United Bank Limited reports strong results for H1'23

E.P. Report

KARACHI: United Bank Limited (UBL) declared a Consolidated Profit Before Tax (PBT) of Rs. 52.0 billion for the half year ended June 30th 2023, with an impressive growth of 50% over last year. Profit After Tax (PAT) was reported at Rs. 27.5 billion, with a two-fold increase. Earnings per Share (EPS) was measured at Rs. 22.01 (H1'22: Rs. 9.77). The ROE for the current period was reported at 26% (H1'22: 13%).

The asset base has crossed Rs. 3.4 trillion, deposits have reached Rs. 2.4 trillion and advances were recorded at Rs. 916 billion as at Jun'23. The Bank's gross revenues stood at Rs. 85.5 billion, growing by 36%, driven by the buildup in the deposit base and well positioned investment portfolio. Net-

markup income (NII) increased by a robust growth of 54% to Rs. 72.3 billion for H1'23. The Bank's Non-Fund Income (NFI) was reported at Rs. 13.1 billion for H1'23.

Domestic CASA deposits averaged Rs. 1.5 trillion for H1'23, with a growth of 13% year on year and a portfolio increase of Rs. 167 billion. The average CASA to total deposits ratio continued to strengthen and was measured at 90% in H1'23 (H1'22: 87%).

Islamic banking remains a key priority and UBL continues to expand within this fast-growing segment. UBL Ameen's branch network stands at over 150 branches with 500 Islamic Banking Windows (IBWs) all across Pakistan. The bank sees the Islamic segment as a tremendous growth opportunity and will continue to build on

the UBL Ameen footprint.

UBL has embraced the digital age by offering a comprehensive range of digital banking services. UBL's digital banking platform has revolutionized financial services, providing convenient, secure, and user-friendly solutions. In 2023, the number of registered accounts reached 3.7 million increasing by 27%. The number of financial transactions has increased by 69%, while the payment value of financial transactions has grown by 84% to over Rs. 2.1 trillion YTD Jun'23. The Bank is redefining the financial landscape with a futuristic mindset, innovative ideas and well directed capital allocation towards technology investments.

Branch banking remains the foundation of our business, and we are investing in our footprint while

improving service and staff levels across the country. UBL is committed to actively contribute to the development of the economy as Pakistan's leading financial institution, with a major presence across all sectors. We will continue to build on financial inclusion in the country and provide banking services throughout Pakistan across all our touch points.

UBL's most valuable asset is our people, and the bank is committed to investing in their growth and development. We remain extremely focused on our customer service levels, growth in digital banking, as we build our franchise in coming years. We remain fully committed to delivering a strong return on equity, with an efficient capital base as we drive the organization towards a larger ambition.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Agriculture and other chemicals imports into the country during the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2023, decreased by 36.61 per cent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of last year.

During the period from July-June, 2022-23, agriculture and other chemicals costing \$8.928 billion were imported as compared to the imports of \$14.085 mil-

lion in the same period last year. Meanwhile, the import of fertilizer manufactured was reduced by 28.52 per cent as 903.693 metric tons of fertilizer valuing \$604.376 million were imported as against the import of 1.290 million tons costing \$845.538 million in the same period last year. However, during the last fiscal year, the imports of insecticides into the country grew by 1.45 per

cent as about 37,188 metric tons of insecticides valuing \$204.666 million imported as compared to the imports of 34,622 metric tons worth \$201.732 million of the same period last year.

By June 30, 2023, the country spent \$2.273 billion on the imports of plastic materials and imported over 1.636 million tons of plastic materials as compared to the import of 1.942 million tons valuing \$3.135

billion in the same period last year. During the fiscal year 2022-23, the imports of plastic materials grew by 27.50 per cent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of last year. In order to fulfill the local requirements, medicinal products worth \$1.328 billion were also imported during the period under review as against the imports of \$4.052 billion in the same period last year.

SECP takes Actuarial Advisor on board for Insurance Division

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Friday announced the appointment of Falak Sher Soomro as Advisor to the Commission on Insurance for strengthening its insurance sector regulatory responsibilities.

The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), in line with its focus on strengthening its insurance sector regulatory responsibilities, is pleased to announce the appointment of Falak Sher Soomro as Advisor to the Commission on Insurance. Soomro is

an Associate of the Institute of Actuaries, UK, said a press release issued here.

He is a risk and insurance professional with over 15 years of experience in General & Medical insurance across KSA, the UAE, Oman, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Malta (EU).

He will be based in Karachi and will assist the Commission on its key reforms agenda related to the insurance sector. Soomro will bring his valuable expertise in Reserving, Motor Medical & Group Life Pricing and Underwriting, Solvency Capital Modelling and

Financial Reporting, Reinsurance Optimization, Investments Strategies and Risk Management. His experience includes advising insurance/takaful and reinsurers on regulatory and non-regulatory assignments. He has also conducted technical reviews for regulatory and financial reporting purposes.

He has done BSc (Hons) in Actuarial Mathematics and Statistics from Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, UK. SECP is looking forward to the addition of Soomro to its ranks of Insurance professionals.

Markets fluctuate as US jobs data knocks rate hopes

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian equities wobbled again Friday at the end of a draining week as fresh US jobs data put revived bets on two more Federal Reserve interest rate hikes, adding to ongoing worries about China's economy.

Investors have largely been on the back foot since Monday, when Beijing announced a big miss on second-quarter growth that indicated the post-Covid recovery had come to a juddering halt. The uncertainty in Asia followed a sell-off in New York, where tech titans were hammered after earnings reports from Netflix and Tesla disappointed.

This week's stumble follows a rally last week when a faster-than-expected slowdown in US inflation stoked hopes the Fed could end its rate hikes after July's meeting while also avoiding a recession.

But confidence

took a knock Thursday when fires showed a surprise drop in US jobless claims last week, suggesting the labour market remained resilient.

While data has recently pointed to a weakening in the US economy that would help ease inflation, the Fed has said it needed to see more softening in the jobs sector.

SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes said that while there was a good chance the economy will

avoid contraction while the Fed brings inflation down, traders remained cautious.

"For now... investors are likely waiting on further evidence of soft landing dynamics to come into play -- the resilient growth met with a further softening in wage and price inflation," he said.

He added that would suggest "the economy is coming into better balance". Markets fluctuated Friday in Asia.

COURT NOTICE

In The Court of Sana Afzal Civil Judge V Kohat, Suit no 287/1 Date of hearing 25-07-2023 Titled: Saeeda Bibi Vs Nasir Shah, Notice against: (4) Rubina Dugther of Najmuddin Wife of Shahid Nawaz (5) Liaqat Muhammad Son of Fazal Karim R/o Mansoor Khel Jungle Khel District Kohat presently R/o (now in Abroad) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit of against you defendants in which date of hearing 25-07-2023 is fixed for your appearance. Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 25-07-2023 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order issued on 19-07-2023. (Court of C.J V, Kohat)



MULTAN: People selecting and purchasing old clothes displayed by the roadside vendor to attract the customers.



In brief

Spain cruise in World Cup display

WELLINGTON (AFP/APP): Coach Jorge Vilda says Spain will try to eke the best out of Alexia Putellas at the Women's World Cup after she made a cameo off the bench in Friday's ominous 3-0 win over Costa Rica. The Spaniards showed why they're among the favourites with a classy display in a Group C mismatch in Wellington, firing 46 shots against opponents who spent nearly the entire game defending and were flattered by the scoreline. La Roja threatened a rout when all three goals came in the space of six minutes midway through the first half but they couldn't score again. The European powerhouses received a boost in the 77th minute when reigning two-time Ballon d'Or winner Putellas entered the match, with her fitness under a cloud after cutting short a training session on Monday. The Barcelona midfielder produced some neat touches over the closing minutes and Vilda said her limited minutes come under advice from medical staff. The 29-year-old is still to complete a full game since returning in April from a serious knee injury. "We are going to follow their recommendations and they recommended for today that Alexia could play a little bit," Vilda said.

Mohoric denies

Asgreen in photo finish

POLIGNY (AFP/APP): Slovenian Matej Mohoric won a photo finish to take stage 19 of the Tour de France on Friday and deny Dane Kasper Asgreen back-to-back stage wins. The Bahrain Victorious rider said he almost felt guilty after pipping Thursday's stage winner Asgreen on the line after a late escape following the 173 km run from Moirans-en-Montagne to Poligny. Australia's Ben O'Connor was a close third, four seconds behind with runaway race leader Jonas Vingegaard retaining the yellow jersey with two stages left after finishing among the peloton nearly 14 minutes off the pace. "I almost feel bad for Asgreen taking him on in that sprint but in the end you do it for yourself," said Mohoric after his third Tour stage victory two years after his double. "This is the Tour de France, everyone gives everything believe me, it changes your life."

Chelsea striker joins Marseille

LONDON (BBC): Marseille have signed Chelsea striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang. The 34-year-old Gabon forward scored just three goals in 22 appearances for Chelsea after joining from Barcelona in a £10.3m deal last September. Neither club have revealed whether Marseille have paid a fee for the France-born player. Aubameyang exits the Premier League for the second time in 18 months, having spent four years at Arsenal from 2018 before joining Barca in January 2022. He scored 13 goals in 23 matches in his six months in Spain, but was unable to replicate that form under three different managers during a season-long stay at Stamford Bridge. The 2015 African footballer of the year arrived at the end of the summer transfer window and made just one appearance under Thomas Tuchel, his former boss at Borussia Dortmund, before the German was sacked and replaced by Graham Potter.

Arshad's five-haul takes Pakistan Shaheens into grand final

COLOMBO (Sri Lanka) (APP): Arshad Iqbal's five-wicket haul and half-centuries by Omaid Bin Yousuf and Mohammad Haris led Pakistan Shaheens to a 60-run victory over Sri Lankan-A in the first semi-final of the ACC Men's Emerging Teams Asia Cup at the P Saravanamuttu Stadium here on Friday.

Defending Champions Shaheens will now play against the winners of the second semi-final which is taking place between Bangladesh-A and India-A at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo. The final will take place on Sunday at the R Premadasa Stadium, where the first ball will be bowled at 2.00 p.m. local time.

Chasing 323 to win, Sri Lankan-A lost three wickets in quick succession with 33 runs on the board. Opening batter Avishka Fernando and Sahan Arachchige got together and added 128 runs for the fourth wicket.

After the departure of Fernando 97 of 85 ball with dashing 12 boundaries and two towering sixes, Sri Lankan-A lost wickets at regular intervals which

included prized scalp of Arachchige, also on 97 off 109, with twelve cracking boundaries and one six and were bundled out for 262 in 45.4 overs.

Arshad, playing a key role, ended up with match figures of five wickets in his 7.4 overs off 37 runs – his maiden list-A five-wicket haul. Mubasir Khan and Sufiyan Muqem grabbed two wickets each.

Earlier after opting to bat first, Shaheens lost opening batter Sahibzada Farhan on 12 runs off 22 balls with hitting one boundary in the sixth over to Lahiru Samarakoon. Saim Ayub was joined by Omaid Bin Yousuf and the pair added 37 runs for the second wicket before Saim was caught behind for 22 off 41 balls, which included three fours as Shaheens' scorecard read 61 for two in 13 overs. Omaid – the top run-getter for his side in Friday's match – partnered with Tayyab Tahir, who scored 26 runs off as many balls with four boundaries and stitched a 61-run partnership for the third wicket. After Tayyab and Qasim departed with the score at 145 for four in 26 overs,

captain Mohammad Haris and Omaid knitted a 48-run partnership for the fifth wicket. Omaid scored 88 off 79 balls, smashing 10 fours and a six. Haris and Mubashir, who made 42 off 45 balls with two boundaries and as many sixes added another 73 valuable runs for the sixth wicket stand. Haris made a quick-fire 43-ball 52, hitting five boundaries. Shaheens were dismissed for 322 on the final ball of the innings. For Sri Lankan-A, Chamika Karunaratne, Lahiru Samarakoon and Pramod Madushan bagged two wickets each.

Scores in brief:

Pakistan Shaheens beat Sri Lanka A by 60 runs
Pakistan Shaheens 322 all out, 50 overs (Omaid Bin Yousuf 88, Mohammad Haris 52, Mubasir Khan 42; Lahiru Samarakoon 2-42, Chamika Karunaratne 2-55, Pramod Madushan 2-56)
Sri Lankan-A 262 all out, 45.4 overs (Avishka Fernando 97, Sahan Arachchige 97; Arshad Iqbal 5-37, Sufiyan Muqem 2-44, Mubasir Khan 2-45) Player of the match – Arshad Iqbal (Pakistan Shaheens).

First phase of Peshawar Zalmi Talent Hunt Sindh has started in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The first phase of Peshawar Zalmi Talent Hunt Sindh has started in Karachi. Registration of more than ten thousand young cricketers for Zalmi Talent Hunt Sindh. A large number of young cricketers reached Rashid Latif Academy on the first day of trials Peshawar Zalmi president and legend Inzamam-ul-Haq, director of cricket Muhammad Akram,

Kamran Akmal took the trials. Former captain Rashid Latif, Test cricketer Asim Kamal, Shadab Kabir were also present on the occasion of the trials.

Peshawar Zalmi President Inzamam ul Haq said that in the past, Karachi has given legendary cricketers, especially batsmen and wicketkeepers to Pakistan Cricket, & now Zalmi will try to give opportunities to the talented

cricketers of Karachi and Sindh through Zalmi Talent Hunt, Peshawar Zalmi Director of Cricket Muhammad Akram said that Peshawar Zalmi will do their best to find new talent and give opportunities to young cricketers. Cricketers from Interior Sindh & other cities of Sindh will be appear in Trials on Saturday. Matches between shortlisted cricketers will be held on Sunday.



Fleetwood sets pace at British Open alongside amateur Lamprecht

HOYLAKE, United Kingdom (AFP/APP): Home favourite Tommy Fleetwood set the pace on the opening day of the British Open with a five-under-par 66 alongside South African amateur Christo Lamprecht and Emiliano Grillo as the big guns struggled.

World number one Scottie Scheffler and five-time major winner Brooks Koepka are at one under, while Rory McIlroy salvaged a par at the 18th to end the day at Hoylake five shots off the lead.

Lamprecht shone on his

debut at the majors with a 66 after earning his place by winning the Amateur Championship at the nearby Hillside course last month. The powerful 22-year-old, who stands 6 feet 8 inches (2.03 meters) tall, used his long levers to great effect around the Royal Liverpool course on Thursday. "I earned my spot to be here. I think the way I played today I earned to be on the top of the leaderboard, as of now," said Lamprecht.

Fleetwood, who hails from Southport, just 30 miles (48 kilometres)

from the course, gave his chances of a first major title win a huge boost with a run of three consecutive birdies between the 14th and 16th.

"If you aren't going to enjoy this and these experiences, what's the point? Make sure you have the time of your life out there because it's very special," said the world number 21.

"I'm leading the Open and had cheers like that, it's really special." Argentina's Grillo produced a stunning five-under par back nine to surge into a share of the overnight lead.



HYDERABAD: Women Players of range during the march past in the opening ceremony of Prime Minister's talent hunt youth sports league at Public School Ground.

Shahnaz Sheikh planning to make national hockey team a binding force

ISLAMABAD (APP): The newly-appointed consultant of Pakistan hockey team Olympian Shahnaz Sheikh said on Friday that he would join national team's camp in Lahore on Saturday where he would be trying to knit the players together to make the team a binding force.

"I will want our players to give up their individual game and fight like a unit," Shahnaz told APP.

"I will also try to inculcate a spirit of playing attacking hockey in them. I believe in aggression as this is the brand of hockey we used to play in our days, which is considered the golden era of Pakistan in the game," he said. He said he would hold a meeting with the management of Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) to discuss his plan to raise a strong national side. "I believe we need to take on board the former greats of our hockey. So in the meeting, I will be discussing with them [the PHF management] the ways of availing the expertise of our erstwhile Olympians.

As former Olympians we can help our hockey by passing on our skills to the current players," he said.

According to Shahnaz preparing coaches to train budding players as well as polish the skills of senior players would be part of his plan. "I feel we need to prepare coaches to train players at all levels. For that we'll have to chalk out a proper policy." He said his first focus would be to enable the team to put up a good show at the Asian Hockey Champions Trophy, to be held in the Indian city of Chennai from August 3-12. "This event is very crucial as in September-October we will be playing in the Asian Games, to be held in Hangzhou, China.

"The Games serve as Olympic qualifiers. A top podium finish will mean a direct entry to the quadrennial spectacle."

He said he believed though currently Pakistan were a low-ranked side they could still make a cut to the Olympics. "I'm an optimist. Hockey

is in our blood. I'm sure we can once again become a formidable side. I have a plan for that and it will be my effort it is fully implemented," he added. Earlier, on Friday the PHF through a press release announced to appoint Shahnaz as the consultant of the national team for a two-year period. The decision to appoint Shahnaz as a consultant was taken during a meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, the press release said.

The PHF expressed the hope that Shahnaz would help revamp the performance of the national players.

The decision garnered appreciation from the Standing Committee, underling the positive impact his appointment could have on the national setup.

Chairman of the Standing Committee, Nawab Sher Wasir and Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination, Ehsan Ur Rehman Mazari lauded the PHF for their foresight in making this crucial decision.

Swimming summer camp

LAHORE (APP): The Sports Board Punjab's Summer Swimming Camp is under way quite successfully here at state-of-the-art Punjab International Swimming Complex.

Director General Sports Board Punjab Dr Asif Tufail said here on Friday that a large number of male and female athletes are taking part in the summer camps of 14 games. "Hundreds of young swimmers are taking part in a swimming summer camp in two sessions daily under the supervision of Sports Board Punjab's nine expert coaches," he added.

Dr Asif Tufail further said that young male and female swimmers are keenly taking part in Swimming Summer Camp. "The holding of Summer Camp is a useful activity carried out by Sports Board Punjab and young swimmers must avail this golden opportunity and polish their skills under the guidance of qualified coaches".

He said that swimming is one of the most popular sports among the younger generation. "We are quite upbeat that the swimming summer camp will help a lot in further nurturing the potential of young camp probables".

Pakistani squad winning medals in Int'l Taekwondo in Thailand warmly welcomed

PESHAWAR (APP): Warm welcome given to the Pakistan Taekwondo squad after recording stunning performances of winning one gold, two silver and four bronze medals in the International Taekwondo competitions held in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand.

Adviser to the Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs Matiullah Khan Marwat, said that participation in international competitions plays an important role in highlighting the hidden talent among our youth, due to which Pakistan has a unique position in the field of sports in the world today.

He was talking to the media men during a warmly welcome reception held in honor of the Pakistan Thailand bound team by winning one gold medal, two silver medals and four bronze medals. He appreciated the players for their remarkable performances by winning one gold, two silver and four gold medals in international competitions held in Thailand.

The Adviser Matiullah Khan Marwat mingled with the players who won

medals and also garlanded them. While appreciating their performance of the players, he said that their participation in international competitions and winning medals is commendable. All the expenses incurred on the competitions will be provided by the government. He said that the government wants Arab Niaz Cricket Stadium and Hayatabad Cricket Stadium to be completed soon to ensure holding of the upcoming PSL-9 because the positive image of Peshawar will spread worldwide.

He said the Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan also took notice of terminating 295 contractual and contingency staff including 84 coaches for which the PC-I has been revised and all of them would be enrolled very soon. The summary in this connection has been dispatched to the finance division for approval wherein the Chief Minister also issued special instructions in this connection.

He said for the continuity of the sports activities in the province, on the advice

of the Chief Minister KP Muhammad Azam Khan, steps have been taken to avoid any deadlock in holding healthy sports activities besides issuing funds in this connection. "We will not accept any deadlock in holding of various sports activities, rather we want to ensure continuity in the same," Matiullah Khan Marwat said. Accompanied by Director Operation Aziz Ullah Jan, Administrator Peshawar Sports Complex Syed Jaffar Shah, Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Taekwondo Ilyas Afridi, team officials and players, Matiullah Marwat lauded the players for their excellent performance. Pakistan Taekwondo Team Manager Nasir Khan Mohmand, youngest athlete Wanya Hassan, who won one gold, one silver and a bronze medal, 10-year-old Ayan Hassan, winning one silver and a bronze medal and Waqar Afridi claimed two bronze medals.

It is obvious that showing good performance in spite of short time and less resources is the result of someone's hard work and efforts, Matiullah Marwat said.

Kohli puts India on top on first day of second West Indies Test

PORT OF SPAIN (AFP/APP): Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja combined in an unbroken century partnership for India to regain the ascendancy over West Indies at 288 for four at stumps on Thursday, the opening day of the second and final Test.

After being put in to bat at Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad, India started strongly before faltering in the afternoon session. After tea, Kohli played with the exaggerated caution of a man keen to leave a significant mark on the 500th international match. His unbeaten 87 (161 balls, eight fours) with the support of Jadeja (36 not out) put India back in command.

Their stand of 106 frustrated the Caribbean team in a long final session with captain Kraigg Brathwaite resorting to his own loopy off-breaks in search of a breakthrough.

It was a different tempo at the start, with skipper Rohit Sharma and Yashasvi Jaiswal picking up where they left off in the first Test.

At Windsor Park Stadium a week earlier, they put on 229 for the first wicket to lay the platform for a crushing victory by an innings and 141 runs in three days.

This time they blazed 121 by lunch and added another 18 in the afternoon before Jason Holder finally brought much-needed discipline to the West Indies bowling. He was rewarded with the wicket of Jaiswal for 57 via a low catch at deep gully by debutant batsman Kirk McKenzie.

That was the trigger for a mini-slide as Shubman Gill went caught behind to Kemar Roach for 10, his second consecutive failure at number three. Sharma followed, bowled for 80 by a perfectly pitched delivery from left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican. Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane seemed to have weathered the mid-afternoon storm only for Shannon Gabriel, the second change to the West Indies from the first Test, to uproot Rahane's off-

stump on the stroke of tea. "It felt like the heavens came down because not much was happening out there," said an exhausted Gabriel, reflecting on his lone wicket of the day.

"We were all over the shop in the first session and worked out our plans a lot better at lunch and got the reward. On a pitch like this, with hardly anything in it for the bowlers, we're happy to have taken four wickets." India are giving a debut to right-arm fast-medium bowler Mukesh Kumar in place of seamer bowling all-rounder Shardul Thakur.

This is the 100th Test match between the West Indies and India since the first was played in Delhi in November, 1948 at the start of the Caribbean side's historic inaugural tour to the sub-continent. Despite being winless against their opponents for more than 21 years, the West Indies still lead India 30-23 in Test victories across the 99 matches.



In brief

IRSA releases 448,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 448,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 540,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1521.73 feet and was 123.73 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 285,300 cusecs and 251,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1211.85 feet, which was 161.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 68,000 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 272,300, 182,800, 152,100 and 88,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 97,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 97,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

ANF recovers 101 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations across the country managed to recover 101 kg of drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed that two operations were conducted at Islamabad International Airport and ANF recovered 146 Ice-filled capsules from the possession of three passengers, going to Oman and Bahrain by flight number PK-187 and WY-348. In another operation near Kot Abdul Malik Toll Plaza, Sheikhupura, 21.6 kg opium, and 52.8 kg hashish were recovered from a vehicle. An accused resident of Peshawar was also arrested during the operation. In the fourth operation, over 26 kg hashish concealed in plastic bags was recovered from a deserted area near Zero Line Torkham. Separate cases have been registered against all the accused while further investigations are under process, he added.

AIOU announces admissions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Friday commenced the admissions for matriculation to Ph.D. programs in the autumn semester of 2023 across the country. Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood Vice Chancellor of AIOU, has desired that not a single student should be deprived of higher and quality education owing to lack of financial resources. In this regard, AIOU is providing scholarships, fee concessions, and financial assistance schemes for underprivileged and marginalized strata living in far-flung areas of the country. Moreover, to utilize these schemes, deserving candidates are required to contact their respective regional offices of AIOU established in all four provinces of Pakistan, including Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan. The financial assistance committee of AIOU will assess the needs of the students and will make recommendations. This initiative will play a key role in eradicating illiteracy across the country. It is pertinent to mention here that the university is playing its due role in the process of national progress and development as well as bringing the out-of-school children into the educational network by providing free matriculation education to the people of Balochistan, merged districts (former FATA) and Gilgit Baltistan.



ISLAMABAD: Member National Assembly & Chairman Balochistan National Party Sardar Akhtar Mengal call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Meeting of Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights

ISLAMABAD (APP): A meeting of Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights was held here at Parliament House with Senator Walid Iqbal in Chair. The Senate Committee deliberated on the point of public importance regarding the murder of Professor Ajmal Sawand in Kandhkot, Sindh. Irfan Ali Samo, SSP Kashmir, apprised the Committee that Dr. Ajmal Sawand's murder was in consequence of old enmity between Sawand and Sundrani tribes.

He further informed the Committee that, since the matter was last taken up by the Committee on 7th June 2023, when SSP Kashmir had assured the Committee that the culprits would be apprehended very soon, the Sindh Police had made two further raids on the hideout of the culprits in Katcha

forest area to arrest the accused Ajaz Ali Sundrani and his nine accomplices, but to no avail, because the Police, even though using armored personnel carriers, was equipped with ordinary weapons, while the culprits attacked the Police with rocket launchers, mortars and other sophisticated weaponry. In addition, since the last time the matter was taken up, yet another member of the Sundrani tribe was killed by the Sawand tribe.

The Committee thereupon expressed its concern upon the writ of the State not being enforceable in the territory concerned, and unanimously recommended, first, that Sindh Government should equip the Sindh Police with the latest weaponry, secondly, that all resources of the State should be availed to over-

come and arrest the miscreants, including Pakistan Rangers and the Armed Forces, and thirdly, sincere attempts should be made to get the Sawand-Sundrani feud to be amicably resolved so that the blood-letting should come to an end. The Committee further recommended, unanimously, that the Interior and Defence Ministries be also called upon to take necessary action in this regard, and directed the Sindh Police to submit a progress report within one month. The meeting was attended by Senator Prof. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani, Senator Dr. Muhammad Humayun Mohmand, Secretary for Ministry of Human Rights Ali Raza Bhutta, SSP Kashmir, Irfan Ali Samo, and other senior officers of relevant departments.

Dr Jamal directs to devise backup plan for Muharram's security

RAWALPINDI (APP): Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare and Population Welfare Dr Jamal Nasir on Friday directed the district administration and police to re-examine the security of all Masajids, Imambargahs, and sensitive places and devise a backup plan to deal with any emergency.

Presiding over a meeting at Deputy Commissioner's office, he directed the officials to identify flaws in the security plan so that anti-Pakistan forces could not get an opportunity to disturb the law and order situation in the country on the pretext of sectarian hatred during this holy month.

The minister said that all institutions must be on red alert while fool-proof security should be provided to all Imambargahs and the provision of necessary police force must be ensured. He asked the administration to keep close liaison with the scholars of all schools of thought and implement the code of conduct in letter and spirit.

Dr Jamal further directed the officials to remove the hanging electric wires, and building materials and ensure the cleanliness of mourning processions routes. He directed the officials to activate the peace committees set up at the Police station level for the implementation of the code of conduct.

Commissioner directs RWMC for daily shifting of garbage

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaqat Ali Chatha on Friday directed the officials of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) to shift the garbage to the landfill site on the daily basis as its abundance was causing the spread of various diseases.

During a visit to the Losar landfill site to review the disposal of the district's waste, he directed the RWMC officials to ensure the cleanliness of the city regularly as the recent rains had increased the threat of dengue spread. He directed the relevant officials to improve the performance of RWMC while no compromise would be made on the city's cleanliness. Deputy Commissioner Hasan Waqar Cheema, Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Nabil Sindhu, CEO RWMC Rana Sajid Safdar and other officers were also present.

PML-N to win next election on basis of performance: Talal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Talal Chaudhary Friday expressed confidence that the party would bag a 2/3 majority in the upcoming general elections under the leadership of Mian Nawaz Sharif and would grab the victory on the basis of its commendable performance.

"People wanted to vote for the PML-N and Nawaz Sharif as a Prime Minister because they understood that Pakistan's future and progress were linked with this party", he claimed while talking to a Private news channel.

He said that the last four years of the PTI government were a waste of time, adding, PML-N's politics were based upon decency and civilized culture as it did not

resort to false promises or used foul language against anyone.

"It is only Nawaz Sharif's party which has carried out major developments projects," he said, adding, "Today the PML-N is delivering and a democratic process is continuing in the country." Replying to a Query, he said, "Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice president Maryam Nawaz is actively busy in the election campaign and her party has geared up to win elections." "We want timely elections in the country," he said. "The supreme leader and former prime minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif will defiantly return back to the country before the general elections and will re-elect the Prime Minister of Pakistan," he added.

Program launched to help Somali students in science & technology, higher education

ISLAMABAD (APP): In order to support Somali students in their endeavors in science and technology as well as in the higher education sector, COMSTECH-the OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation has launched a specialized "Somalia Science and Technology Cooperation Program" in a ceremony here on Friday.

The initiative was launched with the efforts of the Embassy of the Republic of Somalia here in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Addressing the ceremony, COMSTECH Coordinator General Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary emphasized the need for joint collaborative country-specific programs to address the specific needs of each OIC member state with tailor-made solutions.

He appreciated the efforts of Somali Ambassador Shirwa Abdullahi Ibrahim and the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Science and Technology, Pakistan, for launching this program. The Charge de Affairs, Medical College in

Embassy of the Republic of Somalia, Shirwa Abdullahi Ibrahim appreciated the visionary initiative taken by the COMSTECH leadership to address the Science and Technology needs of his country. He thanked Prof. Choudhary for starting country-specific programs for OIC member states specifically in the African continent, adding the program will contribute to further mutual collaboration. The High Commissioner of Pakistan in Nairobi, Kenya, Saqlain Syedah addressed the launching ceremony online and appreciated the COMSTECH initiative for Somalia, and other African OIC member states.

The University of Lahore Rector Dr. Muhammad Ashraf applauded the efforts of COMSTECH for expanding collaborative programs with African countries, stating being a member of CCoE the University of Lahore is an active partner in all its programs.

He informed that over 500 foreign students including 360 African students were enrolled at the University of Lahore and it has also established a Medical College in

Uganda. Chairman, Association of Private Sector Universities of Pakistan, Prof. Dr. Ch. Abdul Rehman extended his heartfelt support on behalf of his university and the Association of Private Sector Universities to the COMSTECH-Somalia Science and Technology Cooperation.

He said, "We will foster scientific and technological advancements, promote collaboration, and contribute to the development and progress of Somalia and the entire OIC region."

The Ambassador of Pakistan to Niger, Mr. Ahmed Ali Sirohey, and Justice Dr. Syed Mohammad Anwar Ali, Aalim Judge, Federal Shariat Court Islamabad appreciated the COMSTECH efforts for the Science and Technology development in the OIC region and expressed their full support for COMSTECH programs.

COMSTECH in close coordination with the OIC General Secretariat, Jeddah, has launched several new initiatives and programs for the capacity building of OIC states, particularly for the African OIC LDCs.

Islamabad Police introduce Dolphin Unit

ISLAMABAD (APP): The official inauguration of the Islamabad Police Dolphin Emergency Response Unit took place here Friday, signaling a significant stride in curbing street crime and bolstering citizen protection in the capital city. The inaugural ceremony was graced by Minister for Interior, Rana Sanaullah Khan, who marked the occasion by officially initiating the operational activities of the Dolphin Unit of Islamabad Police.

The minister appreciated the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan for establishing this unit in a short time to ensure public safety. Addressing the personnel of the Dolphin Force, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan emphasized the noble duty entrusted to them, stating, "Your duty is the protection of the citizens, which is a form of worship." He

expressed the hope that they would diligently safeguard the lives and property of the citizens.

The minister lauded the establishment of the Dolphin Force and commended the entire team especially, ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan for their commitment to ensuring public safety and security. He highlighted the importance of the Force in controlling street crime and bringing perpetrators to justice. Rana Sanaullah Khan expressed the confidence in the capabilities of the Force and their ability to significantly reduce street crime in the capital city.

The inspiration behind the establishment of the Dolphin Force came from the success of a similar initiative first introduced in Lahore. Witnessing the increasing street crime in Islamabad, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, driven by the vision of safer com-

munities, provided funds for the formation of the Dolphin Emergency Response Unit.

The Dolphin force, consisting of 900 skilled police officers, will actively patrol the streets of Islamabad to gain control over street crime and swiftly respond to emergencies. The force will also play a vital role in securing religious places and processions, ensuring a safe and peaceful environment for citizens during religious events. To commence the operations, the Dolphin Force has been equipped with 40 vehicles and 200 motorbikes, facilitating their rapid response to incidents across the city.

As the Dolphin Emergency Response Unit takes charge, citizens of Islamabad can look forward to enhanced security measures, reinforcing the efforts of law enforcement agencies to combat street crime and maintain public safety.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Rana Sana Ullah Khan cutting Ribbon during the inauguration of Dolphin force.

Kisan Itehad delegation meets minister

LAHORE (APP): A delegation of Kisan Itehad led by Khalid Mehmood Khokhar called on Provincial Minister for Agriculture, Industries and Trade SM Tanveer and discussed issues pertaining to farmers, agri research and promotion of agriculture sector on modern lines.

The delegation appreciated that the steps taken for development of the agriculture sector under the vibrant leadership of SM Tanveer would bear fruit.

The provincial minister reiterated that the chief minister was fully committed to develop the agriculture sector on modern lines and welfare of the farming communi-

ty was also a priority of the Punjab government. The agriculture sector and agro based industries promotion was an important agenda of the government, he said.

The minister emphasized that payment of hardwork done by farmers was ensured to them and farmers were facilitated by increasing support prices of cotton and wheat. The farmers were provided a continuous assistance about their crops and effective measures were taken to sensitize growers about results of agricultural research. The delegation was comprised of Dr Shahzad Naveed Jadoon, Salahuddin, Saeed Jafar and others.

Afghan poet Wasef Bakhtari dies

KABUL (TOLONews): Afghan poet Wasef Bakhtari has died at age 81 in California, US, people close to him told TOLONews. Bakhtari was born in 1942 in Balkh province and was a prominent figure in modern Afghan poetry. "He was one of the greatest poets of Afghanistan, whom we lost. The legacy of Professor Wasef Bakhtari includes not only esteemed poetry but works in the field of mysticism and philosophy," said Manochri Faradis, a writer.

3 persons die in Faryab

MAIMANA (Pajhwok): One person committed suicide and two persons died in traffic accidents in three districts of northern Faryab province, police said on Friday. Faryab crime branch police deputy director Damla Maawiz told Pajhwok Afghan News that Ghulam Sakhi, a 45-year-old resident of Qarghan district hanged himself to death yesterday afternoon. He said the deceased was a drug addict and hanged himself from the roof of his house room.

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

Iran FM claims Daesh leaders coming to Afghanistan



KABUL (TOLONews): Amir Hossein Abdollahian, Iran's foreign minister, claimed that leaders and fighters of Daesh have recently moved to Afghanistan from Iraq, Syria and parts of Libya.

Abdollahian said that the shifting of the Daesh leaders to Afghanistan has become one of the main challenges ahead of the interim Afghan government. The Islamic Emirate has yet to react to the

Iranian foreign minister's remarks. Previously, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, Zabiullah Mujahid, told TOLONews that Daesh is being suppressed in Afghanistan and that there is no threat from

Afghan soil to other countries. Janat Fahim Chakari, a political analyst, said that security is one of the main achievements currently in Afghanistan.

"The regional countries should not be worried. They should focus on their internal issues. The only achievement that Afghanistan has right now is security," he said. "If any terrorist groups seek to conduct destructive actions, it is suppressed by the ruling government."

The Iranian foreign minister also voiced concerns saying that any kind of instability in Afghanistan will directly affect the border region between the two countries. Abdollahian also voiced concerns about the entry of Afghan refugees to Iran. He stressed the need for the formation of an inclusive government, saying that Iran has not recognized the Taliban politically and this issue has offended the interim Afghan government.

Kabul governor says daesh is 'US phenomenon'

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate's governor of Kabul, Mohammad Qassim Khalid, said that the US is behind Daesh and that the group is an American phenomenon. In a special interview with TOLONews, Khalid said that there are documents that he has that show the US has trained Daesh.

"The enemies do not want Afghanistan to be calm and so they create bias through various ways. Daesh is ... produced by the US," he said. "... It is a fact that Daesh is an American phenomenon."

Khalid also denied the killing of Ayman al-Zawahiri, co-founder and second leader of al-Qaeda in the capital city of Kabul, saying that there is no evidence to prove Zawahiri was killed in Kabul.

"The US claims that they eliminated Daesh in Afghanistan. The docu-



ments and evidence that would be valid for the media or between countries have not been provided by them," he said.

Khalid also talked about

land grabbing in Kabul, saying that 300,000 acres of land has been grabbed by various people. "Around 150,000 acres of land is being assessed and around

100,000 acres of land have been identified," he said.

He also urged the former Afghan officials and political leaders abroad to return to the country.

Audit fails to win US backing for release of Afghan central bank funds

KABUL (Reuters): A U.S.-funded audit of Afghanistan's Taliban-run central bank has failed to win Washington's backing for a return of bank assets from a \$3.5 billion Swiss-based trust fund, said two U.S. officials and a former U.S. official, a move that would help ease the country's financial crisis.

The audit has not changed the U.S. Treasury's view that the bank must make reforms before the department will support disbursements from the Afghanistan Fund to Da Afghanistan Bank, or DAB, as the central bank is known, said a U.S. Treasury official on condition of anonymity.

The Swiss-based Afghan Fund was set up last year with half of about \$7 billion in central bank funds that were frozen in the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in August 2021 after the Islamic Emirate took control of the country as the last foreign forces withdrew following two decades of war.

DAB must show that it is free "from political influence and interference," said the Treasury official, referring to the need for professional bankers to replace

the three Taliban officials who oversee the bank and are under U.S. and U.N. sanctions. It also must prove that it has "adequate" controls against money-laundering and terrorism financing and install a "reputable" independent monitor, said the Treasury official. "Our assessment of DAB remains unchanged," said one of the U.S. officials. The two officials and the former U.S. official, who has knowledge of the U.S. position, spoke on condition of anonymity because of the confidentiality of the matter.

A Taliban administration spokesman and a spokesperson for the Afghan central bank did not respond to request for comment. Concerns in Washington and other capitals about the bank's leadership and anti-money laundering safeguards are at the heart of a standoff over the Taliban's demand for the return of DAB cash frozen in the United States and other countries after the Taliban seized power.

Because the four-member board that oversees the trust fund must approve disbursements unanimously, the support of its U.S. government representative

is essential.

Afghanistan remains mired in grave humanitarian and economic crises that some experts say has been worsened by U.S. restrictions hampering DAB's ability to perform key central bank functions, such as ensuring stable exchange rates and prices.

The audit, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and conducted by an outside contractor, examined DAB's controls against money laundering and terrorism financing, and its banking oversight and payments departments, according to an April report by the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

The findings have not been made public. Calling the audit a "preliminary assessment," the Treasury official said its "limitations" suggested that "more comprehensive third-party assessment efforts may be needed."

Shah Mehrabi, an Afghan-American economics professor who is on DAB's governing board and co-chairs the Afghan Fund board, said the audit - which he has not seen - was

completed in March and currently is with the State Department. The State Department declined to comment. Mehrabi and his co-chair, Anwar ul-Haq Ahady, a former DAB governor and former finance minister, told Reuters that they would consider the findings once they are available. Mehrabi said use of the Afghan Fund's assets should focus on stabilising prices and ensuring banks had enough liquidity, as the entire financial system was at risk from declining foreign donor funds to Afghanistan.

The other \$3.5 billion in DAB assets frozen in the United States is being sought in lawsuits against the Taliban brought by families of victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. A U.S. judge in February ruled against the plaintiffs who are appealing. The Deputy Minister of Economy, Abdul Latif Nazari, said that Afghanistan's assets, which were frozen by the US, are the property of the people of Afghanistan and should be released soon. "The assets which are frozen are the property of the people of Afghanistan and without any doubt they should be released."

Nadeem, Durrani talk visas to Afghan students, scholarships

KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting higher education minister Maulvi Neda Mohammad Nadeem and Pakistan's special representative Asif Durrani discussed a number of matters of mutual interest including giving Afghan youth 3,000 scholarships.

The Ministry of Higher Education in a statement

said Nadeem met Durrani at his office in Kabul.

Congratulating Asif Durrani on his new job, Nadeem hoped educational and academic relations between the two countries would develop.

The acting minister stressed improved academic cooperation

between Afghanistan and Pakistan as both countries enjoyed religious and cultural commonalities. Both sides discussed problems Afghan students faced in obtaining visas, giving 3000 scholarships to Afghan youths and mutual cooperation in improving the capacity of teachers of both countries.

Asif Durrani promised to cooperation in the mentioned areas and assured that the existing problems would be solved.

"We are working on an educational mechanism to provide more better opportunities to Afghan students."



Exhibition of Afghan, Iranian products held in Herat

HERAT (TOLONews): A joint exhibition of products of Afghanistan and Iran was held in the western province of Herat, where the domestic products of the two neighboring countries were displayed.

The exhibition, which is being attended by Iranian visitors as well, will last for four days. There are a total of 22 stalls.

"The economy of Iran is complimented with the economy of Afghanistan. The Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to launch a pro-

duction line in Afghanistan because all kinds of production technology exists in Iran," said Ali Khaksar, an organizer of the exhibition. "The introducing of the Iranian industrial businesspeople with the Afghan industrial businesspeople... can be effective," said Ahmad Saeed Sideqi, deputy of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Herat. However, the participants of the exhibition expressed concerns over the economic hardships in both

Afghanistan and Iran.

According to the traders, the extension of relations and the facilitation of trade exchange helps bilateral trade. "As the markets are down, this exhibition is good. The visitors come and see our products and their quality," said Farhad Rahmani, a participant.

"The exhibition is an opportunity for traders to display their views, and goods," said Hassan Mehrabi, a participant.

Iran's consul in Herat,

Mohammad Sediqi Far, said that the extension of trade between Afghanistan and Iran benefits the two countries. "Recognition of the Afghan markets by major Iranian companies, their presence in the Afghan market and their physical presence, can improve their capacities which have been neglected," he said. According to official numbers, the trade rate between Afghanistan and Iran has reached \$2 billion annually.



Beauty salon ban in Afghanistan a blow to women's financial freedom

KABUL (Reuters): For the last eight years, Marzia Reyazee has supported her family with the earnings from her female-only beauty salon in Afghanistan, a business she spent more than \$18,000 setting up.

But the 34-year-old mother of two is likely to find herself without her business, and with few other prospects for a livelihood, when the Taliban administration's order to shutter women's beauty salons comes into effect on July 25. "We can't work here, we can't feed our family, we need to work," she said. Like many women in Afghanistan's beauty services sector, Reyazee is the main breadwinner in the family. The ban on beauty salons is the latest in a series of restrictions imposed by the Taliban on women in Afghanistan since taking control of the country two years ago during the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. troops.

More than 60,000 women are likely to lose their jobs, and 12,000 beauty businesses are likely to shutter, according to industry estimates, putting further strain on an economy already in crisis.

"It will disproportionately impact female entrepreneurs, which is a setback for resilience, poverty reduction, and economic recovery," Roza Otunbayeva, the U.N. Secretary General's special representative in Afghanistan, told Reuters.

A spokesperson for the Taliban administration did



not respond to request for comment. The ban will also create a "significant" decrease in women's employment, the International Labour Organization (ILO) told Reuters. During the rule of Afghanistan's foreign-backed government, female participation in the formal work force was only around 23%, according to the ILO.

In addition to offering the usual services, the beauty salons provide many Afghan women with a safe, female-only space where they can meet outside their homes and without a male chaperone. The Taliban administration say they respect women's rights in line with their interpretation of Islamic law and Afghan culture.

The ban on salons, released on July 4 by the morality ministry, said it

was based on an order from the supreme spiritual leader. Similar orders have led to the closure of high schools and universities to women and stopped many Afghan female aid staff from work, moves foreign officials say are hampering any steps towards the formal recognition of the Taliban administration.

With sanctions on the banking sector, a cut in development aid and looming drops in humanitarian funding, the Taliban administration has said it is focused on weaning the country off reliance on aid and boosting the economy through private sector development.

Senior Taliban officials say they support the development of female-owned businesses and have allowed spaces for women at trade fairs. Otunbayeva, howev-

er, said the ban on salons "goes against past commitments from the de facto authorities that they will support female entrepreneurship".

Faced with rapidly diminishing options, dozens of women, mostly employees of beauty salons, staged a protest this week against the ban, a rare event since the Taliban clamped down against protests over the closure of universities to female students in December. The Taliban used water cannons and fired shots into the air to break up the demonstration, protesters said.

"Day by day, the Taliban are trying to eliminate women from society. We are also human beings," said a make-up artist, her eyes filling with tears. She declined to be named due to concerns for her safety.



ISLAMABAD: Activists of Muslim Talba Mahaz chanting slogans during protest at Aabpara Chowk, against the burning of the Quran in Sweden.

Mily trials: AGP seeks a month's time on matter of right to appeal

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan on Friday requested the Supreme Court for a month on the matter of granting the right of appeal to people to be tried in military courts.

"This matter needs very careful consideration; It has to be done in such a way that the country's position at the global level is not affected," the AGP said. The AGP's request came during a hearing of identical petitions challenging the government's decision to conduct trials of civilians in military courts.

The six-member bench comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Sayeed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi and Justice Ayesha Malik.

At the start of the hearing, AGP Awan took to the rostrum and reiterated the need for military courts. He also assured the bench that arrests were made very carefully after a thorough investigation. He further contended that according to the Army Act, those breaking the discipline of civilian forces came under the law. He then said he wanted to brief the court on the amendments to the Army Act.

However, Justice Akhtar inquired: "Does injuring an army officer amount to preventing him from performing his duty?" He further slammed the AGP for contradictory statements: "On the one hand, it is stated that the state cannot make any law beyond human rights. "On the other, you are saying that human rights are not applicable in this particular law. "I am unable to understand the logic of your argument." "After the 21st constitutional amendment, the law of trial in military courts of civilians came into force," the AGP said. The CJP then inquired if civilians had been included after the amendment of the Army Act. The AGP confirmed that was the case.

During the hearing, Justice Akhtar asked the AGP: "If parliament wants to include basic human rights in the Army Act tomorrow, can it?" "Parliament has full power to legislate," the attorney general responded. "This would mean that the parliament has the power to grant or not grant basic human rights in the Army Act," Justice Akhtar probed.

"It is not possible that a parliament today includes fundamental rights in the military act and the next Parliament removes them," he noted, adding that the law should be absolutely clear. Justice Ahsan further remarked: "The 21st amendment was made to apply the Army Act to civilians." At this, Justice Ayesha contended that human rights were protected by the proposed procedure for trials in the 21st constitutional amendment.

LPG sellers call for strike

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A day after petroleum dealers announced strike, sellers of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) on Friday also called for a countrywide strike against the sale of the commodity at 'expensive prices'.

In a statement, Chairman LPG Industries Association Karachi Irfan Khokhar said that the distributors will observe a shutter down strike across the country from August 5. Khokhar pointed out that LPG was not being sold anywhere in the country at the fixed official price, adding that due to black marketeering, the gas is being sold at higher prices.

He alleged that top officers of SSGC were behind the sale of 'expensive gas'. He added that the price per kg is Rs178, but LPG was being sold at Rs220 to Rs350 per kg, announcing to move court against it. The announcement comes just a day after petroleum dealers in Pakistan announced an indefinite strike, starting from July 22 (Saturday). According to the official notice issued by PPDA Chairman Abdul Sami Khan, the association demanded the government to increase the distributors' commission.

FO: Pakistan wants peaceful resolution of Ukraine conflict

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has expressed the hope that Ukraine conflict will be instantly and peacefully resolved through negotiations and Pakistan was ready to play its part in promoting a dialogue to end this war.

Responding to a question at her weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Friday, she said Pakistan and Russia are friends we have a very solid relationship. She said Pakistan's engagement with Russia will continue and Islamabad is concerned about sufferings of the civilian population on both sides.

To another question, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan has raised his concerns with the Afghan interim authorities at level regarding the use of Afghan soil in carrying out terrorist activities inside Pakistan. She said Pakistan expects that Afghanistan will adhere to its commitments it made with the international community to not allowing any individual or group to use its soil to pose threat to regional peace and security.

The FO spokesperson speaking about Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba ongoing visit to Pakistan said it has been the first ever move of this kind since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 1993. She said Pakistan and Ukraine has agreed to enhance mutually beneficial cooperation in trade, investment, higher education, agriculture, defence, and information technology for the mutual benefit of both countries. They agreed on the importance of regular dialogue and engagement and decided to hold meetings of various institutional mechanisms in due course. She further said that it was also agreed to deepen cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts.

She also spoke about the founder and President of Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party Shabbir Ahmad Shah, who completed six years of his continued detention this month. She said incarcerated currently in New Delhi's infamous Tihar Jail, Shabbir Shah has spent 36 years in prison for his political views. She said that the total

period of his confinement exceeds half of his life. He was rightly called by the 'Amnesty International' as a 'Prisoner of Conscience'.

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch urged India to put an end to the protracted imprisonment of Shabbir Shah and thousands of other Kashmiri political leaders and activists, whose "basic crime" is to demand their inalienable right to self-determination. These political prisoners must be released and acquitted of the fabricated charges against them.

Updating the media persons on the Greek Boat Tragedy, Spokesperson said two separate flights carrying the mortal remains of four Pakistanis who perished in the disaster have arrived in Lahore and Islamabad. She said the mortal remains have been handed over to the families in the districts of Gujrat and Gujranwala. She said Pakistan Mission in Greece has made plans for the transportation of the remaining dead bodies within the next few days. She said we also remain in contact with the Greek authorities for identification of the victims.

Locals say no to terrorism activities in Bara

F.P. Report

BARA: A protest rally of residents of Khyber against suicide attack on the tehsil compound was held in front of Bara press club on Friday.

Denouncing last day's offense where three cops embraced Shahadat and eleven got injured, a number of people relating from political and social organizations while carrying banner and placards inscribed with slogans in favor of their demands, participated in the protest demonstration.

Addressing on the occasion ameer Jamat-e-Islami, Bara chapter Khan Wali Afridi, Aftab Shinwari and others categorically condemned the suicide blast and blamed that some elements deliberately sabotage peaceful environment of Bara.

They added that resurgence revisited the area as target killing and bomb blasts started again in Bara that put a question mark at the competency of the security agencies. For restoration of durable peace, people from different walks of life would participate in the Aman March from Bara to Tirah to be scheduled on July 25, 2023; they added and said it was their democratic right to raise voice for the calmness in the Valley. They expressed their grief over the loss of precious lives of police cops in the suicide blast in Tehsil compound and offered condolence to the bereaved families besides prayed for departed souls.

Qureshi, Asad's bail extended

LAHORE (PPI): A local anti-terrorism court in Lahore today accepted the bail applications of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi and the party deserter Asad Umar in terrorism cases and extended the interim bail of the duo till August 8.

The court heard six cases against Qureshi related to his involvement in an attack on Jinnah House and Askari Tower and other cases of vandalism and torching. The court granted interim bail to the PTI Vice Chairman till August 8 and sought arguments on the bail in the next hearing.

ATC Judge Abhar Gul Khan heard the application of Asad Umar who was seeking bail in cases related to an attack on Askari Tower and other cases of vandalism. The judge granted him interim bail till August 8. The Gulberg police have registered the Askari attack case against Umar and others. Qureshi and Asad Umar both appeared before the court.

WHO team calls on President

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has stressed the need to focus on provision of assistive technology for the rehabilitation and convenience of special and differently-abled people.

Talking to a delegation of the World Health Organization and John Hopkins University led by WHO head in Pakistan Dr Palitha Mahipala in Islamabad on Friday, he called for providing high quality, safe and affordable rehabilitation services to the differently-abled persons.

Dr Arif Alvi said that society needed to change its attitudes towards the people with different abilities and provide them assistive technology services at primary and community levels. During the meeting, he emphasized the need to provide skilled education to the special people to ensure their financial independence.

The President lauded the World Health Organization for launching the Recovery 2030 plan and also appreciated the WHO and John Hopkins University for conducting the Restorative Leadership Course. The delegation appreciated the efforts of the President and the first lady on the uplift of special persons, breast cancer, mental health and other medical issues.

JIT probe declares Imran 'responsible' for May 9 violence

ECP witnessed cross-examined in Toshakhana case against Imran

ISLAMABAD (PPI): A hearing of the Toshakhana case was held Friday in a district and sessions court in Islamabad during which the lawyer for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman cross-examined a witness of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Additional District and Sessions Judge Humayun Dilawar heard the case. Khawaja Harris, the lawyer for PTI chairman Imran Khan, and Amjad Pervaiz, the lawyer for the ECP, along with witnesses appeared in the court. Khawaja Harris cross-examined the first witness, Waqas Malik, and asked: "When did you join the ECP?" Waqas Malik replied: "I joined the ECP as Election Officer in 2006. I joined the NIM training in May 2023. The verification of the complaint was done in October 2022."

Khawaja Harris further asked: "Did you read the complaint in detail before filing the complaint?" Waqas Malik replied: "Yes! I read all the details before filing the complaint." ECP's lawyer Amjad Pervaiz attempted to talk to the witness during the cross-examination, but Khawaja Harris requested him to refrain from doing that. "When did you sign the complaint?" Khawaja Harris put another question to witness Waqas Malik. "The complaint was taken from a computer. The verification came out by itself," the witness replied. "I did not ask for this. This is not a statement. This is cross-examination. It is not legally allowed," Khawaja Harris asserted. "There is a difference between signing a complaint and an affidavit. The word 'affidavit' is not written on the complaint verification," the witness replied while being cross-examined. "There are my signatures on the complaint and affidavit," he added.

military installations of accused nominated and arrested in 10 cases were proved in geo-fencing report. According to the police JIT, investigation report into all cases will soon be submitted in court. The PTI chairman, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Hammad Azhar, Murad Saeed and Ali Amin Gandapur are nominated in the case registered under terrorism and 20 other charges, the police said.

IHC to hear Imran's appeal in Toshakhana case on 27th: The Islamabad High Court will hear an appeal challenging the decision of a trial court which declared the Toshakhana case against PTI Chief Imran Khan admissible next week.

The Registrar Office of

the Islamabad High Court has fixed the case hearing on July 27. In the last hearing, PTI Chairman Imran Khan could not get a stay order on the Toshakhana trial proceedings. Imran's lawyer had pleaded with the high court to issue a stay order on the trial court proceedings till a final decision on the case.

IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq issued a notice at the request of the PTI chairman. Besides this, the court will also hear Imran Khan's petition to transfer six of his cases to another court. The court will also hear a petition filed by Bushra Bibi to transfer her case to another court. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq will hear the cases on July 26.

Strong govt with real mandate need of hour: JJ

F.P. Report

MULTAN: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sirajul Haq has said that a strong government elected with the real mandate is the pressing need of the hour, demanding the Election

Commission ensure transparent and timely election as per the direction of the constitution after the dissolution of assemblies on August 12.

Addressing a seminar on interest-free economy in Multan, he appealed to the masses to vote for the JI to bring real change and get rid of the riba which plagued the national economy.

Sirajul Haq said that the electoral watchdog should hold consultation with the political stakeholders to ensure free and fair polls.

The election should be held in way that no one could raise objection on the outcome, he said, adding the caretaker government must cooperate with the ECP for smooth and peaceful process of national vote, standing impartial.

The JJ chief said the foreign minister promised to eliminate interest but Ishaq Dar desperately failed to keep his words. The head of the PDM government, he said, was also a religious scholar and leader of a religious party, but his government jacked up interest rate instead of following the Federal Shariat Court's order. He said the corruption, interest-based economy and unfair distribution of resources were the real problem of the country. The two percent ruling elite, he said, captured the state

resources, ignoring the need of the masses. The economy damaged due to bad-governance and ill-conceived policies of the current and previous rulers who only focuses on their own and family well-being while staying in power, he said.

The rulers who had been controlling the affairs of the country now wanted their children in power, he said, blocking the progress of a common man. The political parties who were alien to concept of democracy and acting as family clubs and one-man show would never be interested in strengthening democracy, he said, adding only the JI which was the only democratic party could introduce real democracy, rule of law and impartial accountability.



KARACHI: Commuters facing trouble in maneuvering through flooded roads at Nagan Chowrangi area after heavy rain fall.

Energy efficient technologies crucial to cope energy crises: Asif

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Defense Minister Khawaja Asif on Friday stressed the need for adopting energy-efficient technologies in order to fight against energy challenges in the country.

The minister made remarks during a national-level consultation on "Energy Efficiency and Conservation Action Plan 2023-30, Energy Conservation Building Codes (ECBC)- 2023 and Pakistan Energy Labels Regulations". The consultation was organized by National Energy Efficiency and Conservation

Authority (NEECA).

The minister said that fans and air-conditioners were two main sources of electricity consumption in peak loads which was around 18000 MW out of the total demand of 30000 MW. "We are still manufacturing Fans of 120 W and 100 W while Fans with capacity 40 W and even 30 W are also available, and it is a globally adopted technology. We can address the issues of peak loads by adopting energy-efficient technologies," he added.

He said that motorbikes constituted the major portion

of energy consumption in the transport sector and the country badly failed to introduce electric bikes due to the resistance by the big guns. He appreciated the NEECA team for their efforts to make energy efficiency a workable agenda and presentation of content in an impressive manner.

Khawaja Asif also inaugurated the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Behavior Change Campaign launched by NEECA and requested the media to play their role in the dissemination of public service messages.