

China rolls over \$2.4b loan

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said on Thursday that China has rolled over Pakistan's loan for the years 2023-24 and 2024-25 amounting to Rs \$2.4 billion. In a statement, Ishaq Dar said that China had rolled over a debt of 2.4 billion dollars due to Pakistan. Finance Minister said that EXIM Bank of China had rolled over the loan for two years, Pakistan will pay only interest in both years.



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GAWADAR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif distributing cheques among the fishermen.

Senate passes Army Act (Amend) Bill

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Senate on Thursday passed the Pakistan Army Act (Amendment) Bill 2023. Defense Minister Khawaja Asif had introduced the bill to further amend the Army Act. According to the bill, a person who, in an official capacity makes an unauthorized disclosure of information obtained in the interest and security of Pakistan, will be punished with rigorous imprisonment for up to five years.

A person making such a disclosure with the permission of the army chief or an authorized officer will not be punished, the bill states. Anyone who discloses information against the interest of Pakistan and the Pakistan Army will be dealt with under the Official Secrets Act and the Army Act.

Under this Act, a person shall not participate in any political activity, and the person concerned shall not participate in political activity until two years after his retirement, resignation, dismissal from serv-

ice. A person posted on a sensitive duty shall not participate in any political activity for five years.

A person who violates the ban on participating in political activity will be severely punished for up to two years, the amendment states. It further says that if a person under the Army Act is involved in an electronic crime, the purpose of which is to defame the Pakistan Army, then action will be taken against him under the Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act.

Under the amended Act, a person who defames the army or spreads hatred against it will be imprisoned for up to two years and fined. Moreover, a person who discloses secrets related to national security will be punished for up to five years.

Opposing the bill, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Senator Raza Rabbani on Thursday opposed the Army Act Amendment bill 2023 and walked out from the Senate in protest. PPP Senator

Raza Rabbani said that the Army Act Amendment bill should have been sent to the concerned Standing Committee.

"We were not provided even copies of the bill that just sailed through Senate," he said and marked the day as black in the history of Pakistan's parliament. According to the content of the bill, unauthorized disclosure of information obtained in the interest of national security and interest in the official capacity will be severely punished for up to five years, the disclosure with the permission of the Army Chief or the empowered officer will not be punished.

The bill also said that officials that fall under the law will not be able to participate in political activities within two years of retirement, resignation, or dismissal. According to the bill, a person involved in electronic crime, whose purpose is to defame the Pakistan Army, will be prosecuted under electronic crime.

Bilawal, UN SG discuss revival of Black Sea Grain Initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari held a telephone conversation with the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday to share Pakistan's perspective on the stalling of the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI) and its implications for food inflation worldwide.

Lauding the positive role played by the UN Secretary-General in the finalization of the BSGI agreement last year, the Foreign Minister requested Secretary-General Guterres to continue his valuable engagement for reviving the Initiative through a constructive dialogue that addresses the concerns of all parties.

Condemning the recurring incidents of desecration of the Holy Quran in Europe, the Foreign Minister appreciated the UN Secretary General's advocacy for inter-religious harmony and peaceful co-existence. He called for collective action at the UN level by formulating a comprehensive strategy and action plan to tackle the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia.

The Foreign Minister and the UN Secretary-General also discussed Pakistan's ongoing cooperation with the United Nations in the wake of last year's devastating floods. The Foreign Minister also apprised the Secretary-General of the recent project launched in Sindh to provide land titles to women beneficiaries affected by floods.

Assemblies to be dissolved on Aug 9: Sana

ISLAMABAD (INP): The assemblies will be dissolved on the night of August 09, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said in a television interview on Wednesday night. Ruling PML-N veteran Rana Sanaullah categorically stated that the elections will not be carried forward for any specific purpose or under any conspiracy.

Commenting on demand for holding elections over the new population census, interior minister said, "notifying new census will create more contentious issues". On a question PML-N stalwart claimed that his party didn't forward Finance Minister Ishaq Dar's name for caretaker prime minister's office. "Ishaq Dar, Senator Raza Rabbani or any other politician from a political party can be named for the post of the caretaker PM," he added.

"Nawaz Sharif will return back home one-and-half month before the election," Sanaullah said. "We want the chairman PTI to be disqualified from a court of law and be sentenced to jail," replying a question about the future of the PTI leader he stated.

The Frontier Post

JCP meeting on Aug 2

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial has summoned a meeting of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) on August 2. The chief justice has summoned the JCP meeting to consider the confirmation of Justice Ibrahim Khan as regular Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court (PHC). Justice Ibrahim Khan is currently serving as acting CJP PHC.

Gwadar sea port to be developed as one of the best in world

PM visits Expo Centre in Gwadar, performed groundbreaking for various projects

F.P. Report

GWADAR: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday reiterated the government's firm resolve to extensively develop the Gwadar Sea Port as one of the best in the world.

He said the fate of the people of Balochistan, especially of Gwadar, would be changed through the ongoing development operation across the province. Addressing laptop and cheques' distribution ceremony, he said when Nawaz Sharif was elected prime minister for the third time in 2013, he planned and launched multiple projects in power, infrastructure and other sectors in Gwadar.

However, he deplored that when he visited as prime minister last year here, he was shocked to note that, the previous government had abandoned work on all ongoing projects in the city. He said despite 15 months of challenging time, the coalition government managed to lay foundation of development and prosperity in the country especially in Balochistan.

Balochistan, he said was rich in huge minerals and other natural resources which needed to be explored and the fruits of the development of the area would be passed on to the local people. The local people must enjoy all the basic facilities in all sectors including health and education.

He said the draft of the Gwadar port was one of the deepest among the world's top ports, however dredging of the port which was a continuous process to prevent accumulating silt, was not ensured by the previous government. Now he informed that the current government initiated the dredging process which would be completed by February next year.

He said in five years from 2017 to 2022, only 100,000 tons of goods could arrive here while goods of over 600,000 tons arrived here at the

Gwadar Port during the 15 months of the incumbent government. The prime minister announced that the laptop quota for Balochistan had now been increased to 14% against the 6% population share of the province.

He also directed the relevant authorities to further increase the laptop quota to 18% for next fiscal year. PM Shehbaz said default risk for Pakistan had been averted due to support from the brotherly countries like China, Saudi Arabia and UAE. On Wednesday, he said China Exim bank had rolled over loan of another \$2.4 billion for next two years.

He made it clear that all the support from the friendly countries was totally unconditional as no country had not placed any condition in return to the loan relief. He also directed the relevant authorities to put the security of the foreigners on top priority. Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Faisal Sabzwari said the under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, numerous welfare and development projects were being launched for the uplift of the people of the province.

For the social uplift of the poor fishermen, he said the prime minister had distributed cheques to 3,250 small fishermen amounting to Rs 250,000 per head. Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Shaza Fatima Khawaja said over one million laptops had been delivered since the launch of the laptop scheme by Shehbaz Sharif as Chief Minister Punjab. She said as per new laptop quota, some 14000 talented students of Balochistan would receive laptops this year. Federal Ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Khawaja Saad Rafique, Governor Balochistan, provincial ministers and top government officials were also present on the occasion.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visited China-Pakistan Expo Centre here

along with the Chief of Army Staff to attend a ceremony where the groundbreaking and inaugural ceremony was performed for various infrastructure development projects.

The ceremony was also attended by relevant federal and provincial ministers, Chinese officials, civil administration and representatives from the Fishermen Union. The prime minister was briefed about various projects including Gwadar International Airport, dredging of Gwadar Port and other projects related to the CPEC.

While addressing the ceremony, the prime minister said, "Balochistan, being rich in minerals and natural resources, holds a very important place in the economic recovery plan". The government's focus on the mining and minerals sector, one of the five sectors being emphasized under the overall ambit of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), will greatly improve the per capita income, alleviate the sense of deprivation and bring local employment opportunities.

"Prosperity of Pakistan depends upon stability and mainstreaming of Balochistan," the Prime Minister remarked. In a joint ceremony held at China Pakistan Expo Centre, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stones of Gwadar University and the Hoshab - Awaran - Khuzdar (M-8) road.

Prime Minister also inaugurated seven major projects including the 286 km long 132 KV Khuzdar-Panjgur Transmission Line, Gwadar Water Supply Scheme, Safe City Project, Dredging of Gwadar Port, 1.2 MGD RO Desalination Plant, 106 km dual carriage Basima - Khuzdar road as well as repair work of Awaran - Jhal Jhao road. The PM also distributed laptops among the students of Gwadar University. Earlier on arrival, the PM was received by Governor Balochistan.

CM for running of Sehat Card in organized manner

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In view of the efficacy and significance of the Sehat Card Plus scheme for the poor people of the province, the Caretaker Chief Minister

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan here Thursday stressed the need to run project in a more organized manner so as to ensure the provision of free and quality health care services to the public.

The Chief Minister directed the quarters concerned to adopt a realistic approach in order to make Sehat Card scheme more efficient and viable within the purview of existing legal framework. He was chairing a review meeting regarding Sehat Card Plus scheme here on Thursday at Chief Minister's House Peshawar. Besides Provincial Caretaker Cabinet Members Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel , Himayat Ullah and Dr. Riaz Anwar, Chief Secretary

Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry , Principal Secretary to CM Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Finance Ayaz Khan, CEO Sehat Card Dr. Riaz Tanoli and other relevant Senior Officials attended the meeting.

The meeting made a threadbare discussion on various steps undertaken in health sector especially the importance and utility of Sehat Card Plus . On the occasion, the participants discussed different aspects of Sehat Card Scheme with the aim to run it in a more efficient way.

Speaking on this occasion, the Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan said that Sehat Card Scheme could be made more useful by overcoming weaknesses and removing deficiencies in its process, adding that we had to make sure that citizens especially poor people are getting full benefits of the scheme.

He made it clear to the relevant authorities that quality of treatment facilities being provided to citizens under sehat card must not be compromised at any cost, adding that the government is spending billions of rupees on the health care of public which should bear results in form of public satisfaction.

Muhammad Azam Khan also stressed upon the improvement of local healthcare facilities in far flung areas of the province and said that local health care facilities should be fully equipped so that people of remote areas not to suffer.

Expressing his resolve to facilitate general public, the chief minister said the mandate of caretaker government was limited besides facing financial crunches, however the caretaker government would go all out to facilitate and provide relief to public within its mandate and available resources.

IHC adjourns hearing of Imran's appeal

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday put off hearing of the appeal filed by former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan against the admissibility of Toshakhana reference for hearing until the SC gave its verdict in the case.

Chief Justice Aamer Farooq remarked, "Let's wait for the SC's decision first." Khawaja Haris, Imran's lawyer, told the court that the apex court was presently seized with the hearing of four different appeals by his client, and it had said that it would give decision on them simultaneously. "Of all these appeals, the one relating to Toshakhana is a major appeal," he added. The CJ went on to say that firstly there was the issue of Facebook post of a trial court judge. "What does the judge have to say on that?" he asked. Haris replied that he had admitted that the Facebook account was his, but the post was not. The CJ remarked he had not received anything from judge Humayun Dilawar. "This was the situation yesterday. What is the latest, I can't say with certainty," he added.

CJCSC visits Royal Military College

RAWALPINDI: General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), is on an official visit to Australia from 24-28 July 2023 for defence and security talks and 1.5 track security dialogue.

During the visit, CJCSC met high ranking civilian & military leadership including General Angus J. Campbell, Chief of Defence Forces Australia. In the meetings, both militaries agreed to further expand military to military cooperation. CJCSC also visited Royal Military College and addressed the participants of Australian Defence College.

Centre launches artists' health insurance scheme

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Thursday launched an online registration process for the artists' health insurance scheme by uploading its form on the dedicated website.

"Registration for artists has been started from today under Prime Minister's Health Insurance Programme which will enable them to get comprehensive and quality health facilities from private hospitals without any cost," the minister said while addressing a news conference here.

She said artists could easily fill out the form on www.demp.pk by providing all the relevant details for a 360 health facility.

Marriyum said a health insurance scheme had already been launched for the working journalists and media workers under a transparent system. Funds for both schemes were allocated in the federal budget for the financial year 2023-24. She said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would formally launch the schemes after Muharram (10th) by issuing health insurance cards for journalists and artists.

The minister said the

government had made history by launching a health insurance scheme for journalists and artists. She said the government took the initiative to protect the artists who had been promoting the culture and heritage of the country. "Culture and heritage of the country are our assets and so they are," she added.

Marriyum extended her gratitude to all those who guided the government to work out a comprehensive health initiative for artists and journalists. She urged the artists, journalists and media workers to get registered online, to avail the health insurance scheme.

Pakistan denounces desecration of Holy Quran

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan strongly condemns the desecration of the Holy Quran and dishonoring of the Pakistani flag in front of the Embassy of Pakistan in Copenhagen, Denmark.

According to Foreign Office, a strong protest has been lodged with the Government of Denmark. We expect the Danish authorities to take all measures necessary to stop such acts of hatred and incitement. The intent of such evil acts is to insult two billion Muslims around the world and create friction amongst communities, cultures, and countries.

These acts, by any definition, do not constitute freedom of expression. Nor can the permission to

carry out provocative acts of religious hatred be justified under the pretext of freedom of expression, opinion and protest. As the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has said, "speech and inflammatory acts against Muslims are offensive, irresponsible and wrong".

Pakistan has always maintained that freedom of expression comes with responsibilities. It is the responsibility of national governments, regional organizations and the international community at large to call out, condemn and proactively prevent the vile acts of Islamophobia and religious hatred.

As urged by the UN Human Rights Council, the relevant countries must address, prevent and prosecute such acts of religious hatred.

gious hatred.

The international community must raise its collective voice against Islamophobia and work together to promote interfaith harmony and peaceful co-existence. Pakistan, for its part, will continue to raise the question of Islamophobia at the international level.

This issue was a key point of telephone conversations of Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari with his counterparts from Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkiye and with Secretary General of OIC and the United Nations Secretary General. Issues pertaining to these recurrent acts of Islamophobia are being discussed at the OIC Headquarters in Jeddah and the Human Rights Council in Geneva.



6 dead, 949 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least six people were killed while 949 others sustained injuries in 900 road accidents in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours. Of whom, 497 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 446 people with minor injuries were treated on the spot by Rescue Medical Teams.

Analysis show that 478 drivers, 33 underage drivers, 120 pedestrians, and 351 passengers were among the victims of road accidents. Statistics show that 229 road accidents were reported in Lahore which affected 233 people placing the provincial capital at top of the list followed by 67 in Multan with 67 victims and at third Gujranwala with 37 victims in 37 road accidents. According to the data, 739 motorbikes, 68 auto-rickshaws, 81 motorcars, 22 vans, 18 buses, 23 trucks and 84 other types of auto vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in the road accidents.

CCPO inspects muharram security measures

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Office Lahore (CCPO), Bilal Siddique Kamiana visited the areas of Pandu Street, Islampura, and Northern Cantonment to inspect the security arrangements at Imam Bargahs, locations of Majalis, and procession routes. During the visit, Bilal Siddique Kamiana directed the police officers to swiftly drain out water from the procession routes soon after rain, with the cooperation of district administration.

He also discussed security matters with security personnel and the organizers of Imam Bargahs. Later, the CCPO visited Data Darbar, where he assessed security arrangements and received a briefing about the arrangements for the ritual of 'Ghusl.' SP City Hamza Amanullah, DSP Islampura Naveed Akmal, and other officers were also present on the occasion.

'Qasar-e-Behood to be linked with various technical institutes'

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Minister of Health, Social Welfare and Baitul Maal Dr Javed Akram said that for the capacity building of women, Qasar-e-Behood Khawateen would be linked with various technical institutes. He was presiding over a meeting during his visit to the Qasar-e-Behood Khawateen Model Town and Sanatkar Allama Iqbal Town here on Thursday.

The minister said that Qasar-e-Behood Khawateen was playing an important role in highlighting the role of women in the society. He said that women were being offered professional courses in beautification, sewing, computer software, cooking, fashion designing, jewelry making, bag making, dress making, fine arts, textile designing, driving and others at the Qasar-e-Bahood. He appreciated the institution and expressed his wish to upgrade the institution to the next level.

'Local bodies finalizes arrangements for Ashura-e-Muharram'

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Thursday said that the local bodies have completed the arrangements to facilitate the mourners on the occasion of Ashura-e-Muharram.

The mourners will be provided with all municipal facilities on the 9th and 10th of Muharram. Carpeting of various roads as well as on routes of processions has been completed, he said in a statement.

The Mayor said that the problems of sewage around Imambargahs and mosques have also been resolved.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that he himself and the chairmen of different towns are visiting different areas of Karachi and holding a series of meetings with scholars, Zakirs, elders and organizers of processions.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza

Wahab said that we are fully aware of the problems of the people.

Being the Mayor, it is his duty to look after all the citizens irrespective of religion, sect or language and not only to protect their rights but also to try to provide them with civic facilities.

The Mayor of Karachi said that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's directive is to try hard to maintain law and order during the days of Muharram.

The Mayor Karachi said that the entire municipal administration is active and he hopes that during the days of Ashura, the mourners will not face any kind of inconvenience. He requested the organizers of processions to take out the processions on the designated routes so that the security plans that have been prepared can be fully implemented.

Chairman NDMA directs relevant departments to increase public awareness on remedial measures

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Acting Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Thursday instructed the relevant departments to increase awareness among the masses in local languages about the remedial measures to be taken during the Monsoon season by all departments concerned.

The Acting Chairman NDMA presided NEOC session with key stakeholders on the current monsoon situation. The session was attended by representatives of Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), Federal Flood Commission (FFC), provincial, state and Gilgit Baltistan Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs, SDMA, GBDMA respectively), Flood Forecasting Division (FFD), National Highway Authority (NHA), National Institute of Health (NIH), Provincial and Irrigation Departments, Tarbela and Mangla Dam Management, SUPARCO and Pakistan Commissioner on Indus Water (PCIW), a news release said.

The Acting Chairman NDMA reviewed the situation of damages caused by the recent spell, the situation of major Dams and the regulation of river flows during the ongoing monsoon spell.

The PMD briefed about the heavy rainfall observed in the areas of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmir and the expected heavy rainfall in the Northern parts of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) region from July 27 to August 2.

The PDMAs briefed on the current situation in the respective provinces and highlighted the rescue and relief work carried out. The FFD reported that no high flood situation is expected in any major rivers. However moderate to heavy flooding is expected in the tributaries of River Kabul and Hill torrents of DG Khan Division from July 27 to July 30. The Acting Chairman NDMA also emphasized undertaking encroachment clearance in and around river beds and vigilant monitoring of rivers and reservoirs.

Joint security plan by PSCA, Lahore Police issued for Youm-e-Ashura

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Safe Cities Authority and Lahore Police have issued a joint security plan for Muharram and Youm-e-Ashura here on Thursday.

According to the plan, the Lahore Police would provide security cover to 5,235 majalis and 650 mourning processions in the city. The monitoring of Majalis and mourning processions across the city are being carried out through

650 safe city cameras round the clock, besides all essential locations covered by additional portable cameras. The Safe City Operation and Monitoring Center have assigned police communication officers and technical teams for 24/7 duty. As per SP Awais Shafiq, the central mourning processions will be provided three-tier security comprising Dolphin Squad, Police Response Unit, and

effective patrolling of police vehicles. Continuous moment-to-moment monitoring will be carried out through Safe City cameras during central mourning processions and gatherings. Additionally, a specialized team for checking purposes, including metal detectors and walk-through gates, has been deployed. Over 10,000 dedicated volunteers are diligently fulfilling their duties.

Minister visits Kasur, reviews security measures

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Information and Local Government Amir Mir on Thursday visited Kasur to assess the security arrangements for Muharram-ul-Haram.

Deputy Commissioner Kasur Arshad Bhatti and senior police officials briefed the minister on the arrangements related to Muharram-ul-Haram, says a handout.

The minister was briefed on the security, lighting and sanitation arrangements along the routes of processions and

religious gatherings. He also visited the monitoring control room established for Muharram-ul-Haram and reviewed the monitoring system through CCTV cameras. Later, the minister inspected the arrangements at the central procession route and the Imam Bargah Sadat Manzil. The organizers of the processions and members of the peace committee also brief the minister about the arrangements.

Amir Mir directed the district administration to keep a close eye on suspicious individuals, pick-

pockets and troublemakers during Muharram. He emphasized the importance of alerting the hospitals in case of any emergency and ensuring medical staff readiness.

He said the provincial government was utilizing all available resources to maintain peace and security during Muharram-ul-Haram. Full-fledged security arrangements were made for the processions and religious gatherings by the Punjab government and control rooms were established at the teshil level for their monitoring.



KARACHI: Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon holds a press conference.

CM chairs meeting of standing committee for finance & development

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi chaired the 6th meeting of the cabinet standing committee on finance and development at his office on Thursday. In the meeting, in principle approval was granted for the construction of a flood protection embankment in Chinio's rural area to safeguard them from the flood.

The chief minister ordered that immediate action should be taken to build a flood protection embankment in Chinio, otherwise, other remaining rural areas might also get submerged. The meeting also approved restoration project for channels, drains, and drainage affected by floods in Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur. Moreover, the meeting decided to include Signal Free Corridor Project from Main Boulevard Gulberg (Center Point)

to Walton Road (Defence Mohr), Bedian Road Roundabout Underpass Project and the Lahore Ring Road Southern Loop (SL-3) Project from Raiwind Road to Multan Road in the Annual Development Programme. An allocation of Rs1.80 billion was approved for the construc-

tion of the new emergency and trauma center at Jinnah Hospital. Additionally, a cardiac unit will also be established in the new emergency.

Furthermore, the meeting granted approval to create 515 new vacancies for nurses in hospitals of specialized healthcare and medical education department to manage ICUs' patient care. It was also approved to convert 200-bed Bahawalnagar, and Layyah Maternal and Child Hospitals into General Hospitals. For the Punjab Family Planning Programme, the meeting approved the nomination of the competent authority for signing an agreement on the World Bank programme and authorized the re-release of funds for achieving sustainable development objectives. Thirteen positions for Chief Engineer Power's Re-Consultation Cell in the Energy Department were also approved for recruitment.

The meeting was attended by provincial ministers Mansoor Qadir, Amir Mir, Chief Secretary, Chairman Planning and Development Board, Additional Chief Secretary (Home), and secretaries of relevant depart-

ments, as well as senior officials.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi chaired a meeting regarding peace and security at his office here on Thursday. During the meeting, a detailed review of the security plan was conducted to ensure the protection of the lives and property of the public, especially during Muharram-ul-Haram, specifically on the day of Ashura. The meeting discussed measures taken for the protection of foreign nationals, particularly Chinese citizens. It was decided that complete restrictions on drone coverage would be imposed during processions and gatherings on the 8th, 9th, and 10th of Muharram. The law enforcement agencies, including the army, rangers, and police would hold a flag march.

The CM instructed all commissioners and regional police officers (RPOs) to prepare necessary contingency plans in view of possible rains during the processions and gatherings. He emphasized that the security plan

put in place for the protection of public during Muharram-ul-Haram must be implemented without any compromise and the code of conduct must be strictly enforced. He emphasized that mosques, imambargahs, and other places of worship should receive special attention regarding security measures. Members of the peace committees and elected representatives should play a proactive role in promoting religious harmony, he added. Regarding the protection of foreign nationals, especially Chinese citizens, the chief minister directed to follow the SOPs. Additionally, in response to the events of May 9, the meeting ordered the monitoring of the performance of district joint investigation teams (JITs) and reviewed the progress in prosecuting those involved in the acts of May 9. The Inspector General Police briefed the meeting about the security arrangements during Muharram-ul-Haram. Civil and military officials also presented their reports.

OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER MILITARY ACCOUNTS (PESHAWAR COMMAND) Khyber Road, Peshawar Cantt.

INVITATION TENDERS

Sealed bids/tenders are invited from well reputed firms/dealers who are registered with Tax Authorities in the relevant business and on Active Taxpayer List of the Federal Board of Revenue for supply of **Stationery** to CMA (PC) Khyber Road Peshawar Cantt. 2. The specifications, terms conditions and quantities in respect of items to be purchased/ supplied are contained in bidding documents which can be obtained from G-Cash Section of CMA (PC) Peshawar Cantt. 3. Interested firms/bidders will have to deposit earnest money amounting to 2% of bid amount in the shape of CDR or Bank Guarantee issued by scheduled bank in favor of Controller Military Accounts (Peshawar Command) Peshawar. 4. The bid rates shall be rational and all taxes applicable would be deducted as per prevailing government rules. 5. After advertisement of this Notice, Tenders/bids complete in all respect should reach in G-Cash Section of this office up to 15-08-2023 till 11:00 A.M which will be opened on same date i.e. 15-08-2023 at 11:30 A.M in the Conference Room CMA (PC) Peshawar.

Group Officer Controller Military Accounts (Peshawar Command) Peshawar. (Chairman Purchase Committee) O/O of CMA (PC) Main Khyber Road Peshawar Cantt.

PD(P) 275/23

Senator Talha releases post-Hajj statistics

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood on Thursday released the post-Hajj statistics, highlighting the successful efforts to provide enhanced facilities to the pilgrims despite expansion projects and logistical challenges at the holy sites.

He, in a press conference held here in the ministry, praised the accomplishments in catering to the needs of the pilgrims during the annual Islamic pilgrimage. According to the data presented, 78% of the honored pilgrims were accommodated in close proximity to the holy city of Medina, ensuring ease of access to the religious sites.

Police register 4691 cases of illegal weapons this year

LAHORE (APP): Lahore police registered 4691 cases of illegal weapons in the provincial capital and seized 49 Kalashnikovs, 293 rifles, 197 guns, 4073 pistols and 56,777 bullets from accused during the current year.

In a press statement issued here on Thursday, Capital City Police Officer Bilal Siddique Kamiana said that action had been taken against anti-social elements involved in firing incidents. During the ongoing operation, 558 cases were registered at various police stations, leading to the arrest of 600 individuals.

Apart from this, 224 cases were filed against those displaying arms, resulting in the recovery of 3 Kalashnikovs, 22 rifles, 11 guns, and 76 pistols from the possession of suspects.

He directed the police officers to intensify the crackdown against individuals displaying arms and engaging in firing, in order to instil fear and deter such activities.

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

Public Health Engineering Division, Kurram invites electronic bids from registered Firms/Contractors on the basis of Single Stage Single Envelope System in accordance with KPRA Rules 2014 for the following work:

S.No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (M)	Bid Security @2% + Stamp Duty	Closing Date & Time
F/S and Construction / Reh: & Solarization of Drinking Water Supply Schemes in Newly Merged Districts ADP No. 237/210601				16-08-2023 12:00 (Noon)
01	DWSS Zeran Main Line Reh:	14.10	0.3008	
02	DWSS Deng Ragha Quabad Shakhel Reh:	6.224	0.1433	
Construction / Rehab: of Drinking Water Supply Schemes in Newly Merged District (AIP) 234/200103				
01	DWSS Zeran New Killi	10.393	0.2267	

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- Instructions to bidders and any other information may be obtained from the office of the undersigned prior to closing date of bid submission on any working day.
- The contractor/bidders while quoting their rates shall submit 2% bid security (CDR) and additional security as per KPRA notification No. SRO (14)/Vol:1-24/2021-22 dated 10-05-2022/6058-71.
- The bidder shall submit along with their bids, photo copy of PEC Registration, Enlistment, renewal for the year 2022-23, renewal of KPRA, FBR/NTN, CNIC etc. in sealed envelope through Courier Service, in person or through special messenger to XEN PHE Division Kurram at Parachinar on before closing date at time.
- All notifications of the govt. about taxes and other online E-bidding tender rules/policy of KPRA will be applicable on tender works awarded to contractor.
- In case of identical rate of two or more than two bidders, their bids shall be evaluated on their technical soundness and experience OR on toss basis.
- Contractors will quote their rates electronically, Tender & BOQ can be downloaded from PHED, and KPRA website www.phedkp.gov.pk, www.kppra.gov.pk prior to closing date & time.
- Bidding/Tender documents must reach to the office of Executive Engineer PHE Division Kurram on or before dated 16-08-2023 at 12:00 Hours, which will be opened on the same day.
- The competent authority reserved the right to reject any or all bids by assigning cogent reason.
- All others terms & condition will be as per KPRA Rules and All Taxes will be deducted as per Govt. Policy.
- Bidders shall submit Tender Form Fee non-refundable for the work separately @ 0.03% (CDR) on the Engineer Estimate Cost in the name of Executive Engineer PHE Division Kurram.
- CDRs of 1st, 2nd and 3rd Lowest will be released till completion of tender process.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING DIVISION DISTRICT KURRAM
Office: Opposite Governor Model School Parachinar
Ph # 0926-313253, Email: xenphedkurram@gmail.com

INF(P) 1770/23



KARACHI: Children having cold drinks at a Sabeel in connection with 8th Muharram ul Haram in the city.



Caretaker Minister visits central control room in Home Dept



PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Information, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel has said that provincial government has taken all the necessary steps and security steps for peaceful observance of Muharram.

The caretaker provincial minister expressed these views during his visit to the central control room that was established in Home Department. Secretary

Home, Abid Majeed, other officials were also present on this occasion.

On the occasion, caretaker minister was briefed about working of central control room. It was told that nine departments including security agencies are performing duties in the central control room.

Muharram mourning processions are being monitored in 14 districts of the province from control room that has been working seven days a week during

month of Muharram. Online software has been established for central control room and data from 14 districts and concerned departments is fed to central control room through software.

Caretaker minister also visited Strategic Analysis Wing of Home Department and inspected the reports. He said that control room is providing best assistance to relevant institutions in maintaining peace during Muharram.

Shahid Khattak resignation approved

PESHAWAR (APP): The resignation of the Caretaker Minister Shahid Khattak Thursday was accepted soon after receiving the summary of the resignation of Shahid Khattak, caretaker minister of the administration department.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa signed the resignation summary of Caretaker Minister Shahid Khattak.

The Caretaker Chief Minister sent a summary to the Governor to accept the resignation of Minister Shahid Khattak.

Noor Badsha drown in canal

PESHAWAR (APP): A 55-year-old Noor Badshah, son of Saeed Badshah Sukna, fell into Din Bahar canal near Din Bahar Colony, Rescue 1122 official confirmed the incident.

The Rescue 1122 diving team and ambulance reached the spot on receiving the information and pulled out Noor Badshah from the canal by the diving team after the search operation. The body was handed over to the relatives after the necessary procedures, said an official of the Rescue 1122.

Chances of more rains forecast

PESHAWAR (APP): Chance of more rains with thunder in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Peshawar, said Meteorological Department here on Thursday.

Chance of heavy rain in the evening in Peshawar city, the official of the Meteorological Department said, adding, "The minimum temperature of Peshawar is 35 centigrade. In the last 20 hours, the heaviest rainfall in Abbottabad is 87 mm, 48 mm in Balakot, 45 mm in Buner, 39 mm in Malam Jabba, Meteorological Department officials said.

In the others areas including 6mm in Saidu Sharif, 6mm in Cherat, 5mm in Balakot, 3mm in Timurgarh, 2mm in Tira, 2mm in Kohistan, while Peshawar recorded 1mm of rain, Meteorological Department said, adding, rains are likely to continue intermittently till Sunday.

Power shutdown notified

PESHAWAR (APP): PESCO authorities have notified power shutdown from Sheikh Muhammadi Grid Station due to necessary maintenance work.

According to PESCO, power supply will remain suspended from 500 KV Sheikh Muhammadi Grid Station on 30th July from 7:00 AM to 1:00 PM, resultant consumer of 66 KV Badaber, 11KV Surizai, Surizai Bala, New Musazai and Shalozan feeders will face inconvenience.

Similarly, power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Dalazak Grid Station on 31st July and 3rd August from 7:00 AM to 12:00 PM, resultant consumers of 11 KV OPF, BRT, Duran Pur, Fato Abdur Rahim, Wadpaga and Pakha Ghulam feeders will face inconvenience.

Sheikhul Hadees Dr Maulana Abdul Nasir of Wafaqul Madaris said that attacks on Ali Masjid had exposed the evil mindset of the attackers who have no regard for Islam and humanity and demanded strict action against such elements.

The Ulama said that attacks on Ali Masjid and Police Lines Peshawar Mosques exposed the barbaric mindsets of suicide bombers and their facilitators and abettors and the entire nation was backing the valiant security forces of Pakistan to frustrate the evil designs of the attackers and enemy of peace.

He also demanded for the reconstruction of the Ali Masjid so that people of the area could continue their worship in it.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan chairing a meeting regarding Sehat Card Plus Scheme.

KP Revenue Authority exempted tribal, semi-tribal districts from sales tax

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority Thursday exempted tribal and semi-tribal districts from sales tax for four months, a notification issued in connection here said.

The Revenue Authority has issued a notification of exemption from sales tax to the erstwhile federal and

provincial tribal districts under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sales Tax on Services Act 2022. Exceptions have been decided by the Authority's Policy Board with the permission of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government, the Notification said.

Sales tax will not be applicable on provision of

services in these districts, the Notification said. Sales tax exemption will be applicable only on supply of services to residents of these areas and sales tax exemption for businesses located within these districts, the notification clarified.

This sales tax exemption will not apply to

telecommunication, other allied services and PSDP, ADP projects, said the notification.

This sales tax exemption will be applicable to businesses and contracts in these districts from July 1, 2023 and this exemption will be effective till October 31, 2023, the notification said.

RTS summons Secretary Workers Welfare Board to appear along with record

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Public Service Commission (KPRTPSC/RTS) summoned Secretary Workers Welfare Board to appear before commission along with record, on Thursday.

Chief Commissioner RTS Muhammad Salim Khan along with Commissioners Muhammad Asim Imam and Zakir Hussain Afridi heard three complaints filed by residents from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

A worker named Khayal Zada approached RTS with complaint that he has submitted application for allotment of quarter in factory's quota in which he is working as guard but Worker Welfare Board didn't entertain his plea.

AD Colonies Labor department appeared before RTS and briefed the commission regarding rules and regulations for allotment of quarter. However, RTS ordered to submit all record including data of residents and payment procedure by factories while ordered Secretary Worker Welfare Board to appear before the commission.

A resident of Peshawar named Muhammad Ayaz has filed complaint for registration of First



Information Report which is denied by concerned police station and Deputy Superintendent of Police against firing over money dispute. However, RTS forwarded complaint to Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) as first appellate authority and ordered to concluded inquiry within one month and submit report before the commission.

Moreover, RTS ordered District Police Officer Battagram to conduct inquiry on complaint of Sanubar for registration FIR personally because as first appellate authority DPO can't transfer his power to subordinates. It is worthy mention that DPO Battagram has conducted

inquiry by his subordinates stated that both families are old rival and making such allegation against each other regularly.

RTS stated public service is fundamental right of every citizen and commission is committed to ensure good governance by delivery of services within stipulated timeframe.



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Salma Begum presiding over 31st Provincial Council for Social Welfare Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Problems of Garhi Qamruddin to be solved on priority basis, says Mayor Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali Wednesday said that the problems of Garhi Qamar Din will be solved on priority basis.

Talking with the Chairman of TWNC 66, Shah Faisal, met with the Mayor of Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali, and presented the problems of his area, including the construction of a crematorium in the area, the reconstruction of roads and pavement of

streets and streets lights in Garhi Qamruddin.

The change of gas pipelines, the installation of CCTV cameras outside schools and other places, and the installation of traffic signals in Garhi Qamruddin Chowk to control the chaos, upon which

Peshawar Mayor Haji Zubair Ali said that he will try his best to ensure completions all pending projects.

He assured Chairman Shah Faisal that the problems of Garhi Qamruddin should be solved on a priority basis.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali listening people's problems at his office.



PESHAWAR: Police personnel stand alert during 8th Muharram procession in provincial capital city.

Free fruit fly traps distributed among farmers

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Agriculture Muhammad Javed Marwat distributed free fruit fly traps among the farmers, landowners and gardeners on Thursday to protect fruit orchards and gardens of Swabi.

Director General (DG) Agriculture (Extension) Jan Muhammad and DG on Farm Water Management Javed Iqbal Khattak were also present on the occasion.

The distribution of free fruit fly traps among landowners, farmers and gardeners by the Agriculture Extension department started in Tehsil Razar of the district Swabi and will continue in all tehsils of

the district. During the process 24000 traps will be distributed among both registered and unregistered landowners.

The people of Swabi appreciated this initiative of the department and thanked the provincial government.

Addressing the fly traps distribution ceremony, Secretary Agriculture Muhammad Javed Marwat said that the initiative will help reduce the losses of farmers, landlords and gardeners into optimum level. These efforts of the agriculture department, he said are aimed to solve the problems of the farmers at their doorsteps.

He urged farmers and landowners of the district to contact the officers of the Agriculture Department for all types of quality seeds and insecticidal sprays. He said that the doors of the agriculture department are open for farmers.

He said that farmers have suffered a lot due to climate change and the department is trying to compensate them through provision of good variety of seeds and fruit plants to save them from losses.

At the end of the programme, free fruit fly track backs were distributed to farmers, landowners and gardeners.



PESHAWAR: Director General Capital Metropolitan Govt Syed Waqas Ali Shah reviewing security arrangements.

KP Ulema resent suicide attacks, terrorism incidents

PESHAWAR (APP): Eminent Ulama-e-Karam and religious scholars from different schools of thoughts here on Thursday strongly condemned the suicide attack at Ali Masjid mosque at Khyber district and declared that suicide attacks, terrorism and militancy were totally prohibited in Islam.

They said that under the Pagham e Pakistan national 'Fitawa', the renowned Ulama, Khatteeb, Mufties and Religious Scholars of Pakistan representing all schools of thoughts have jointly declared that suicide attacks, terrorism and militancy in Pakistan was

unlawful under an Islamic law and there was no room for terrorism and subversive activities in Islam.

These views were expressed by noted Ulama and Khatteeb during a joint press conference at press club. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Khatteeb and renowned religious scholar, Maulana Tayyab Qureshi said that the recent suicide attack at Ali Masjid mosque at Khyber in which a police inspector was martyred, was highly condemnable and declared that such terror acts were against the teaching of Quran and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

"The Holy Quran says whosoever killed a person it shall be as if he had killed all mankind," Maulana Tayyab Qureshi reiterated. He said that the religious scholars of all faiths and schools of thoughts were unanimously agreed that attacks on security forces, police and the people of Pakistan were strictly prohibited as our religion did not allow terrorism in all forms and manifestations.

Religious scholar, Dr Maulana Ataur Rehman said that Islamic ideology was the key for creation of Pakistan and that was why Islam was declared the official religion of the country.

Strongly condemning suicide attacks on security forces of Pakistan including Ali Masjid attack at Khyber, Maulana Ataur Rehman said that all the religious scholars had passed a unanimous Fitwa of Pagham e Pakistan against menace of terrorism and suicide attacks and demanded exemplary punishment to elements involved in killing of innocent people and attacking Ali Masjid mosque.

He also demanded for the reconstruction of the Ali Masjid so that people of the area could continue their worship in it.



In brief

FC organizes Ulema seminar F.P. Report

GHALANAI: Keeping in view the prevailing security/ threat environment, there was a dire need to organize a seminar with Ulema/ Religious Scholars and locals. In this regard, a grand interaction/seminar was organized by Frontier Corps North in Mohmand. During seminar, all renowned Ulema of district participated and condemned the Terrorists and recent attack on Ali Masjid & Police Lines Mosque Peshawar during this year. Ulema focused on the basic message of Islam, Teachings of Quran & Hadees on peace in Society, How Terrorists bring bad name to Islam, Role of Ulema to educate society and draw line between Muslim and Terrorist/ Khawarij, Role of Ulema and Madaris in guiding the masses specially youth in right direction. A large no of locals including, Ulema and officials of District Administration and Frontier Corps North attended the seminar. Ulema and locals appreciated security forces for organising such important seminar at the right time.

DPO, DC visits sensitive areas F.P. Report

KOHAT: District Police Officer (DPO) Kohat Farhan and Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kohat, Azmatullah Wazir on Wednesday visited sensitive areas of the city and routes of processions. Spokesman for Kohat police has said that heavy contingents of police have been deployed on sensitive areas and all the necessary arrangements including installation of CCTV cameras and setting of checking points have been completed as part of security arrangements. He said that strict checking is underway on egress and ingress points of the city and measures have been taken to stop unauthorized persons from entering sensitive areas. Aerial surveillance of processions and Imambargahs has also been started through drone cameras and armored vehicles were parked at intersections situated around mourning procession routes.

One shot killed on bypass road F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: A 31-year-old Usman Khan, son of Dilawar Khan from Lal Qila Maidan, was shot for unknown reasons on Maidan Bypass Road near Odigram Lower Dir. As soon as the information was received, the medical team reached the spot along with the police control. Informed, 1122 medical team of Rescue Lower Dir transferred the dead person to Timergara hospital. Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner Timergara Dr. Nida Iqbal has directed all the government departments to use all available resources to take steps to solve the problems and problems faced by the people while addressing a meeting of government officials in her office. She said that the servant of the people and we should all serve the people selflessly by being servants. Government officials should keep the doors of their offices open for the public so that the problems of the citizens can be solved in time. She instructed the traders to strictly follow the official price list, avoid the sale of defective items, avoid hoarding and take special care of cleanliness, otherwise strict action will be taken against the violators.



HARIPUR: District and Session Judge Shehnaz Hameed Khattak offering dua after planting a tree during moonsoon plantation drive.

Chairman's disappearance Dir tehsil council faces troubles

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Pakistan Peoples' Party member provincial council and senior activist Sahibullah has said the Balambat tehsil council and its staff faced difficulties in running day to day affairs due to the disappearance of tehsil chairman Asim Shuiab.

Talking to local journalists at Timergara here on Thursday the PPP activist said the Balambat tehsil council chairman Asim Shuiab had gone underground after the May 9 and 10 riots as he was wanted to police and other security agencies for attacking the FC public school Balambat and Dir Scouts' Fort.

The PPP activist said that several affairs like salaries of the staff, utility bills of water supply schemes and newspapers' advertisements were pending because the tehsil council chairman had gone into hiding. He said the citizens visited the office but returned empty handed. The PPP activist said the government and its relevant ministry should issue a call attention notice to the missing chairman and the council should be authorized to elect another chairman if he failed to turn up within the next ten days.

Meanwhile the PPP district secretary information advocate Alam Zeb told local journalists that federal minister Faisal Karim Kundi and party's provincial president Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha would visit the district and address a public gathering at Talash on July 30. He said the federal ministers would also inaugurate BISP offices at Talash, Khall and Odigram. Mr Zeb asked party workers and activists of People Youth Organization, People Students' Organization, People Lawyers' Forum and People Traders' Forum to ensure their participation and mobilize the workers to attend the event in a large number.

Traffic jam: Vehicular traffic on the main Timergara Peshawar road and Kalpani Talash bypass roads remained jam for more than eight hours on Thursday as torrential rain and floodwater washed away the diversions over a stream in Talash at Ziarat and Shamshi Khan areas. It began to rain for an hour

late on Wednesday night that damaged the diversions on the main road as construction work on a culvert and a small bridge is in progress.

The district administration diverted the traffic on the incomplete Talash bypass road but due to vehicles' rush, traffic remained jammed on it too. The motorists and passengers suffered hard as long queues of vehicles were seen on both the roads. The torrential rains also inundated hilly areas in other parts of the district damaging standing crops on the river banks.

Man killed: A man identified as Usman Khan 31 s/o Dilawar Khan, a resident of Lal Qila was killed when unknown persons opened fire on him on the Maidan bypass road at Odigram in the jurisdiction of Balambat police station here on Thursday. The attackers escaped from the scene. The Rescue 1122 emergency team shifted the body to the district headquarters hospital Timergara. The motive behind the crime is not known. The Balambat police registered a case and started investigations.

Ownership certificates distributed F.P. Report

SHAHADADKOT: A ceremony was held in Qamber Shahdadkot district for the ownership certificates of the houses constructed for 500 flood victims.

On this occasion, Provincial Minister Taimur Talpur, Member of Sindh Assembly, Nawab Sardar Khan Chandio, Commissioner Larkana Division, Gahnur Khan Laghari, SSP Qamber Shahdadkot participated on this occasion, Nawab Sardar Khan Chandio and Taimur Talpur distributed ownership certificates of the houses built for the flood affected women of Qamber Shahdadkot district. 500 women, including Zubaidah Khatun, were distributed the ownership rights certificates of the new houses built by the Sindh government. Speaking on the occasion, MPA Nawab Sardar Khan Chandio said that Hamari Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari told the flood victims.

The promise made for their rehabilitation has been fulfilled, while Pakistan People's Party always believes in public service, God willing, due to this public service, we will succeed in the next election and make the public good public.

Monitoring plan finalized F.P. Report

MULTAN: The Department of Primary and Secondary Health Care South Punjab has launched a monitoring plan for hospitals and health centers during Ashura.

On the instructions of Secretary Primary and Secondary Health Care South Punjab Mehr Muhammad Hayat Lak, monitoring duties have been assigned to the officers, the post continues. Additional Secretary Qamar-ul-Zaman Qaisrani and Deputy Secretary Dr. Maria Mumtaz will monitor health centers in Multan district.

Additional Secretary Shahid Abbas Joya District Muzaffargarh and Director General Health Services South Punjab Dr. Mehr Muhammad Iqbal will monitor in District Lodhran. Deputy Secretary Sheikh Muhammad Tahir Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan while Director Health Dr. Mehboob Hasnain Qureshi will perform duties in Leh district.

The Secretary of the Department of Primary and Secondary Health Care South Punjab Mehr Muhammad Hayat Lak said that attendance of doctors and staff will be ensured at all hospitals and health centers of South Punjab during Ashura. Availability of sufficient stock of medicines at all hospitals and health centers will be ensured during Ashura. Any negligence in the performance of duties during Ashura will not be tolerated.

Mardan Mayor city council presents surplus budget

F.P. Report

MARDAN. City Mayor Mardan, Himayatullah Mayar, presented a surplus budget of more than one billion 71 crore sixty lac rupees of City Council Mardan for the financial year 2023-24.

Presiding officer Baber Khan chaired the meeting. While presenting the budget, City Mayor Himayatullah Mayar said that the estimated expenditure in the budget is 1 billion 69 crore 49 lakh 83 thousand rupees, from which more than 1 crore 66 lakh is expected to be saved at the end of the year. Explaining the details of the income, City Mayor said that the expected income from the provincial government has been estimated at 61 crore 3 lakh rupees, while the income from Tehsil Mardan's own sources has been estimated at 35 crore 77 lakh 90 thousand rupees.

Explaining the details of the expenses, Mayor said that in the budget, 88 crore 3 lakh 27 thousand rupees have been set aside for salaries, pensions, etc., 44 crore 31 lakh rupees for non-developmental expenditure, and 37 crore 5 lakh rupees for development expenditure, in which the ongoing development projects have been allocated Rs. 2 crore 60 lakhs, while Rs 35 crore 45 lakhs have been set aside for new development projects. The city mayor said that in the budget, Rs 2 crores have been allocated for the establishment of libraries in mosques and community centers. 1 crore 25 lakh rupees for scholarship for two hundred students who get positions, 1 crore rupees for youth talent hunt, 5 crore rupees for promotion of sports activities in Tehsil Mardan and one crore for welfare of disabled people.

Similarly, one crore rupees have been allocated for purchase of necessary equipment for women resource center, one crore rupees for cottage fisheries project to increase income sources for women, one crore rupees for mosques. Another beautification of Mardan city, intersections. Another Rs. 5.5 crore has been set aside for beautification and widening of intersections, installation of traffic singles, Rs.5 crore for purchase of garbage collec-

tion vehicles and equipment for TMA, Rs.7 crore for installation of new street lights and repair of old ones, one crore rupees has been earmarked for the appointment of a consultant for the establishment of a standard educational institution for the children of government employees in Mardan.

Addressing the meeting, City Mayor said that work is underway on several projects for the development of Mardan Tehsil. He said that water treatment at a cost of one and a half billion rupees will be done through the Water Supply and Sanitation Services Company under the Asian Development Bank. Work on the plant is in progress, while a garbage disposal plant will be built at a cost of Rs 4.5 billion and green belt and plantation will be done at a cost of Rs 58 crore. Later the presiding officer adjourned the meeting till July 31.

Commissioner distributes appreciation certificate among officials: Commissioner Mardan Division Yousaf Rahim gave away certificates of appreciation to the management and officials of Tehsil Municipal Administration of Mardan and Water Supply and Sanitation Company Mardan for successfully completing the cleanliness campaign on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha in his office.

Additional Commissioner Mardan Naem Akhtar, Additional Deputy Commissioner Engineer Shahzeb, General Manager of WSCC Mardan Engineer Muhammad Khalil Akbar and officers of TMAs were present on this occasion. Commissioner Mardan appreciated the role of WSCCM and TMAs for providing a healthy and clean environment to the citizens and taking timely measures to dispose of the sacrificial items on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

Commissioner especially praised the field staff and workers who worked day and night in the scorching heat and sacrificed their Eid happiness for the citizens of Mardan. He hoped that the citizens of Mardan would cooperate with the sanitation staff to keep the environment clean and healthy.

DFC commits to arrest defaulter flour dealers

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: The food department has approached the district police authorities for the arrest of defaulter flour dealers and recovery of a huge amount of the Ramadan free flour package from them.

The government has launched a scheme to provide free flour to deserving people during the holy month of Ramadan. The food department with support of local administration nominated dealers for transparent and just distribution of the commodity among the citizens and continued supervision and monitoring of the distribution process in the entire month.

"During the distribution of free flour among people, the food department officials had found several dealers involved in irregularities and flour theft", revealed district food controller Aman Khan. He said that his department approached area police for registration of cases against flour dealers under relevant sections of Foodstuffs Control ACT (FSCA) and immediate action against them.

"The dealers involved in free flour theft had caused a loss of Rs 5.9 million to the government exchequer and the higher quarters concerned are pressing hard to recover the amount from them", he maintained. He said that the recovery of the huge money from accused flour dealers was the primary responsibility of the food department therefore it was in the dire need of full support and assistance by the police department.

DFC said that he held meetings with district police office authorities in this connection and requested them to direct SHOs and other subordinate officials to ensure arrest of the defaulter dealers. "The arrest of dealers will pave the way for early recovery of the government amount from them and save the government kitty from a loss", he added.



QUETTA: Chairman of Khidmat-e-Khalq Foundation Niamatullah addressing a press conference.

Shopkeepers arrested for not displaying price list

KHANEWAL (INP): The District Administration has taken action against shopkeepers who have not been displaying price lists outside of their outlets. In a monthly performance report issued on Thursday, DC Wasim Hamid revealed that 53 shopkeepers had been arrested, four of whom had been booked for violating the law. Additionally, 327 shopkeepers were fined a total of Rs. 1,294,500.

The report also found that 69 shopkeepers had been detected for not displaying price lists outside of their shops. These shopkeepers were warned to improve their compliance with the law. DC Hamid said that the administration would continue to take action against shopkeepers who did not display price lists. He urged all shopkeepers to comply with the law

and to display price lists outside of their shops so that customers would be able to know the prices of goods before they made a purchase. The administration's crackdown on shopkeepers who do not display price lists is a positive step. It is important for customers to be able to know the prices of goods before they make a purchase, and the administration's actions will help to ensure that this happens.

The administration also warned magistrates who appeared passive or caught lethargy in their performance. These magistrates were told to improve their workings in their respective domains across the district. The administration's actions are a sign that they are committed to ensuring that the law is enforced and that customers are protected. It is important for the administration to continue to take action against those who violate the law, and to ensure that customers are able to get the information they need to make informed decisions about their purchases.

to continue to take action against those who violate the law, and to ensure that customers are able to get the information they need to make informed decisions about their purchases.

Motorcyclist killed

FAISALABAD (INP): A motorcyclist was killed in a road accident in the area of FIEDMC police station in Faisalabad on Thursday.

The victim, identified as Ramzan Mushtaq, was traveling on his motorcycle when his bike slipped and he fell down near FIEDMC Industry Chak Jhumra. He died on the spot. Rescue 1122 personnel arrived at the scene and shifted the body to the mortuary of Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital.

Admn commits to operationalize camping pods

F.P. Report

BUNER: The competent authorities including elected Local Government (LG) members, administration and Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) Mandanr for operationalization of camping pods installed at Bar Char located Mahaban forest area of Amazai at Buner district.

This was claimed by Assistant Commissioner Maryam Bakhtawar along with Tehsil Nazim Mandanr Naseeb Khan, Additional AC Muhammad Khan and Tehsil Municipal Officer Amin Khan during visit to the tourist spot. During the visit dustbin

were installed in the premises to ensure cleanliness and protection of natural as top priority.

Assistant Commissioner Mandanr Maryam Bakhtawar assured establishment of water channel to the premises of camp pods established by provincial government with the assistance of United Nation Development Programme six years earlier. She claimed that Mahaban is most attractive spot in Buner with diverse beauty of historical and religious for tourism.

Tehsil Nazim Naseeb Khan claimed that place for water-extension has been identified while added that

works should be initiated as soon as possible. He claimed that elected LG and tehsil council will facilitate tourists and will uphold voice for development of tourism sector in the premises.

TMO Amin Khan said that municipal administration is committed for development Bar Char camping pods because it has great potential for both business and employment opportunities for local community.

Moreover, AC Mandanr claimed that administration will uphold the issue on operationalization of camping pods with tourism department to ensure facilitation of tourists in the area.

One dead, two injured in landslide

F.P. Report

MARDAN: One dead while two other miners injured in landslide at Katlang Sangao mountain while the injured were immediately shifted to Type D Hospital Katlang and later to Mardan Medical complex.

According to the details, on Thursday morning, the miners were busy working on the Sangao mountain, when they were hit by a landslide. After four hours of continuous operation, the three miners were pulled out of the wreckage. Among them, Parvez son of Haji Barooz was killed on the spot while Amjad son of Mir Haider, Najibullah son of Muhammad were taken out with serious injuries. He was immediately shifted to the hospital for treatment.

AWKUM signs MOU with BISE: A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) and Mardan Education Board. The MOU was signed by Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Zahoor-ul-Haq and Chairman Mardan Board Farid Ahmad Khan

Khattak. Dr. Idris Dr.Tariq Mehmood, Muhammad Ali Shah and Sajjad Tariq were also present on this occasion. As per terms and conditions of this agreement, both institutions will jointly conduct seminars, workshops, conferences and research activities by utilizing their mutual resources. Apart from this, both institutions will mutually use each other's resources for the promotion of sports. Both institutions should use all their resources for research so that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can improve the transparent and standardized examination system.

Monthly performance meeting held: A meeting was held in the DC conference room to review the monthly performance of the administration and revenue officers under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Mardan Abdur Rehman, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Engineer Syed Shahzeb, Assistant Commissioner Mardan Ayesha Tahir, Additional Assistant Commissioners, Deputy Director SDC, Tahsildaran and Revenue Staff participated.



Biden looks to provide relief from extreme heat

WASHINGTON (AP): With millions of Americans facing broiling heat across the Southwest, President Joe Biden on Thursday plans to announce new steps to improve weather forecasts and make drinking water more accessible, according to the White House. He'll be joined by the leaders of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House press secretary, described the heat wave as "a difficult time" and said Biden was treating climate change with "the urgency it requires." Climate activists and some Democrats have pushed Biden to declare a climate "emergency," but the White House has resisted. The mayors of Phoenix and San Antonio, two cities that have suffered from the heat waves, are expected to participate in the White House event virtually.

Phoenix has seen at least 26 days in a row of temperatures exceeding 110 degrees. Maricopa County, where the city is located, reported recently that there were 18 heat-associated deaths between April 11 and July 15. Another 69 deaths remain under investigation. There were 425 heat-associated deaths in the county last year. San Antonio saw 15 straight days of 100-plus degrees. At least 13 deaths in Texas have been blamed on the extreme heat. Thursday's announcement follows other steps that the administration has taken to adapt to increasing threats from extreme heat. Among those it is highlighting: The Department of Labor is developing a standard for how workplaces deal with heat. The proposed rule by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration would require employers to provide adequate water and rest breaks to outdoor workers, as well as medical services and training to address signs and symptoms of heat-related illness. OSHA is holding meetings this summer to hear comments on how the heat standard would affect small businesses.

In order to keep low-income populations cool, the Department of Health and Human Services expanded its Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program to provide more access to air conditioning and cooling centers such as libraries, senior centers or other public buildings. The Environmental Protection Agency also has provided assistance to help communities develop cooling centers within schools. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has



been helping cities and towns map "heat islands" with dense buildings and fewer trees, and the Department of Agriculture issued guidance for creating more tree canopy coverage, which helps with cooling environments. In addition, the administration launched a website called heat.gov with interactive maps, weather forecasts and tips for keeping cool amid record-breaking heat.

More than 100 members of Congress, led by Texas Democratic Reps. Greg Casar and Sylvia Garcia and Rep. Judy Chu, D-Calif., have called on the administration to implement the new heat standard for outdoor workers as quickly as possible. "We know extreme weather events such as heat waves are becoming more frequent and more dangerous due to climate change. Urgent action is needed to prevent more deaths," the lawmakers wrote in a letter. The United Farm Workers and other groups also called on OSHA to immediately issue a nationwide rule protecting outdoor workers after farm worker deaths this month in Florida and Arizona.

"Farm workers need and deserve the access to shade, water and paid breaks," said UFW President Teresa Romero. "How many more workers will we let dangerous heat and callous employers kill before this nation acts?" Douglas Parker, assistant Labor secretary for occupational safety and health, called heat illness prevention a top priority. As OSHA works toward a final rule, the agency is enhancing enforcement efforts "to make sure employers and workers understand the dangers of heat illness and how to prevent it," Parker said in a statement. Casar, 34, a freshman lawmaker from Austin, staged a "thirst strike" outside the US Capitol, forgoing water breaks for nearly nine

hours, to protest a new Texas law that bans local governments from requiring water breaks and other safety measures for outdoor workers. Casar called the law "insane" and accused Republican Gov. Greg Abbott of being "on the wrong side of history."

At least 42 workers died in Texas between 2011 and 2021 from environmental heat exposure, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Democrats are going to stand up for common sense and for working people," Casar said. Ladd Keith, an assistant professor at the University of Arizona who studies heat policy and governance, said the record-breaking heat much of the nation is experiencing "is very much in line with climate change projections." While not surprising, "they're certainly a continuation of a concerning trend of climate impacts that we've seen," he said.

Despite the recent headlines, rising temperatures have typically not received the same level of attention as other climate risks, such as flooding and wildfires. Keith said. "Heat has just not been a topic at the national level or local level that we've even considered addressing until the last couple of years," he said. However, Keith said the administration has ramped up its focus because of searing weather events, such as the heat dome in the Pacific Northwest in 2021 that prompted record temperatures and dozens of deaths across the region. OSHA fined a Florida farm supervisor last month for exposing workers to excessive heat after a 28-year-old worker from Mexico died at a farm in Parkland, Florida. Investigators determined the worker's death could have been prevented if a labor contractor had followed established safety practices regarding heat-related hazards.

Soldiers claim to have overthrown President

ABUJA (Agencies): Soldiers in Niger claimed to have removed President Mohamed Bazoum from power, hours after members of the presidential guard detained the politician at his official residence. In a statement broadcast on national television, Colonel-Major Amadou Abdramane said that "the defence and security forces ... have decided to put an end to the regime you are familiar with".

"This follows the continuous deterioration of the security situation, the bad social and economic management," The soldier said the country's borders were closed and a nationwide curfew was in place. All institutions of the country were also suspended, he added. Abdramane was seated and flanked by nine other officers wearing fatigues as he read out his statement. The group, which is calling itself the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Country, warned against any foreign intervention. The announcement came after a day of uncertainty as Niger's presidency reported that members of the elite guard unit were engaging in an "anti-Republican demonstration" and news agencies reported that Bazoum was being held at the palace by the mutinous forces. It was unclear where the president was at the time of Abdramane's announcement or if he had resigned. The United States immediately called for Bazoum's release. "I spoke with President Bazoum earlier this morning and made clear that the United States resolutely supports him as the democratically elected president of Niger," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters in New Zealand. "We call for his immediate release," he said.

UN rejects Russia's claims

NEW YORK (Agencies): UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk rejected on July 25 Moscow's claims that Ukrainian prisoners of war who died in the Olenivka massacre were killed by a Ukrainian HIMARS strike. "While the precise circumstances of the incident on the night of 28-29 July 2022 remain unclear, the information available and our analysis enable the Office to conclude that it was not caused by a HIMARS rocket," the statement said.

The international body noted that Russia did not provide assurances about secure access to the site but the UN agency will nevertheless continue to follow up on the incident. "The prisoners of war who were injured or died at Olenivka, and their family members, deserve the truth to be known, and for those responsible for breaches of international law to be held accountable," the UN human rights chief commented. Between July 28 and 29, 2022, an explosion in Russian-occupied Olenivka, Donetsk Oblast killed over 50 Ukrainian prisoners and injured 75 more, Kyiv called this a deliberate Russian war crime. Ukrainian authorities said that days before the attack, Russians singled out Ukrainian members of the Azov Regiment, who were captured in Mariupol and were awaiting a prisoner exchange, to a separate part of the prison building - the one that was destroyed. According to Kyiv, Russia either hit the prison with artillery or blew it up from inside.

Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office said that Russia likely used a thermobaric munition at the Olenivka prison.

Russia has accused Ukraine of attacking the prison with HIMARS, a high-precision rocket system. The UN launched a fact-finding mission to uncover the circumstances of the massacre but disbanded it in January 2023 "in the absence of conditions required for the deployment of the mission to the site." On Jan. 12, Kyiv informed that it retrieved the bodies of 54 prisoners killed in the Olenivka massacre in a transfer mediated by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Russia and North Korea forge closer ties amid shared isolation

SEOUL (Reuters): Russia's defence minister was photographed this week viewing banned North Korean ballistic missiles with leader Kim Jong Un at a military expo in Pyongyang, signalling deeper ties between the two countries as they face off with the United States. As Russia's isolation over its war in Ukraine has grown, it has seen increasing value in North Korea. For North Korea's part, relations with Russia haven't always been as warm as they were during the heady days of the Soviet Union, but now the country is reaping clear benefits from Moscow's need for friends.

Here's how North Korea-Russia relations began, and how they are becoming closer: Communist North Korea was formed in the early days of the Cold War with the backing of the Soviet Union. North Korea later battled the South and its US and United Nations allies to a stalemate in the 1950-1953 Korean War with extensive aid from China and the Soviet Union. North Korea was heavily reliant on Soviet aid for decades, and when the Soviet Union collapsed in the 1990s, it contributed to a deadly famine in the North. Pyongyang's leaders have tended to try to use Beijing and Moscow to balance each other. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un initially had a relatively cool relationship with Russia and China, which both joined the United States in imposing strict sanctions on North Korea over its nuclear tests.

After his country's last

nuclear test in 2017, Kim took steps to repair ties. He met Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2019 for the first time in a summit in the Russian city of Vladivostok. In October, Kim sent a birthday greeting to Putin, congratulating him for "crushing the challenges and threats of the United States". In a message for Russia's National Day in June, Kim vowed to "hold hands" with Putin and bolster strategic cooperation. Russia has joined China in opposing new sanctions on North Korea, blocking a US-led push and publicly splitting the UN Security Council (UNSC) for the first time since it started punishing Pyongyang in 2006.

North Korea has reciprocated with public support for Moscow after Russia invaded Ukraine. It was one of the only countries to recognise the independence of breakaway Ukrainian regions, and it expressed support for Russia's proclaimed annexation of parts of Ukraine. The United States has accused North Korea of providing arms to Russia for the war effort, including a "significant" number of artillery shells, as well as a shipment of infantry rockets and missiles to the private Russian military company, the Wagner Group. Both Russia and North Korea have denied those claims, but this week promised to deepen defence cooperation. "Moscow's 'special military operation' in Ukraine has ushered in a new geopolitical reality in which the Kremlin and (North Korea) may become increasingly close, perhaps

even to the point of resurrecting the quasi-alliance relationship that had existed during the Cold War," Artyom Lukin, a professor at Far Eastern Federal University in Vladivostok, wrote in a report for 38 North. It is notable Pyongyang has begun using the new phrase "tactical and strategic collaboration" to describe its relationship with Russia, he added.

Last year, Russia and North Korea restarted train travel for the first time since railway journeys were cut during the COVID pandemic with an unusually opulent cargo - 30 grey thoroughbred horses. Shortly after that Russia also resumed oil exports to North Korea, United Nations data shows, the first such shipments reported since 2020. The vast majority of North Korea's trade goes through China, but Russia is a potentially important partner as well, particularly for providing oil, experts said. Moscow has denied breaking UN sanctions, but Russian tankers have been accused of helping evade caps on exporting oil to North Korea and sanctions monitors have reported labourers remain in Russia despite a ban. Russian officials have openly discussed "working on political arrangements" to employ 20,000 to 50,000 North Korean labourers, despite UN Security Council resolutions that ban such arrangements. Russian officials and leaders in the breakaway regions in Ukraine have also discussed the possibility of having North Korean workers help rebuild those war-torn areas.

Angry Russia refuses to speak at UN meeting

UNITED NATIONS (AP): In an escalation of Russia's anger at Ukraine and its Western backers, Russia refused to speak at a UN Security Council meeting called to discuss Moscow's recent devastating attacks on the key port of Odesa immediately following its refusal to extend the Black Sea grain deal.

The confrontation began at the start of a council session called by Russia on the divided Orthodox Church in Ukraine. Russia's deputy UN ambassador, Dmitry Polyansky, protested that Britain, which holds the council presidency, was allowing only two briefers and Moscow wanted a third - Archbishop Gideon of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The Ukrainian government has cracked down on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church over its historic ties to the Russian Orthodox Church, whose leader, Patriarch Kirill, supported Russian President Vladimir Putin over the invasion of Ukraine.

Polyansky accused the UK of bias, censorship and obstruction for limiting the number of briefers. Deputy British ambassador James Kariuki responded that because of a tight time schedule to fit in two council meetings, the UK had offered a compromise to allow a third Russian briefier to submit a statement to the council, which

he said was "not unreasonable." Polyansky was not satisfied, and Kariuki then put Russia's proposal to have the archbishop speak to a vote. Russia got support only from China and Brazil, with the 12 other council members abstaining.

Polyansky called the council's refusal to allow the archbishop to speak an "egregious" example of double standards on human rights and freedom of religion. As "a sign of protest," he said, Russia wouldn't speak in the Ukraine-backed council session called by Ukraine to take up the Odesa attacks. The meeting on the Orthodox Church then went ahead. The director of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, Nihal Saad, told the council that the division between Ukraine's Orthodox bodies "has existed for decades." But she said it has been exacerbated since the February 2022 Russian invasion and has "reverberated worldwide as Orthodox churches have struggled with how and whether to take sides." Saad said the "heartbreaking" damage to Odesa's historic church, the Transfiguration Cathedral, caused by a Russian missile strike Sunday was condemned by many, including the UN secretary-general. The cathedral is in Odesa's historic city center that is a

UNESCO world heritage site and had been largely spared since the beginning of the war.

Saad lamented that it was one of 116 religious sites damaged since the invasion, according to a preliminary assessment by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. In her briefing, Saad cited restrictions to freedom of religion by both Russia and Ukraine since the invasion, saying "the politicization of religion in the war in Ukraine fuels intercommunal tensions, stokes fear and triggers violence." Polyansky called the devastation to the cathedral "a horrible tragedy" and reiterated Russia's claim that the cathedral was damaged by a piece from Ukraine's anti-air defenses - not a Russian missile. If a Russian missile targeted the cathedral, he said, "then there would be nothing left of the cathedral at all." The Russian deputy ambassador left the council chamber at the end of the session.

The council meeting that followed on the Russian attacks on Odesa came days after President Vladimir Putin pulled Russia out of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a wartime deal that enabled Ukraine to export more than 32,000 tons of foodstuff to many countries facing the threat of hunger.

Bolivia interested in obtaining Iranian drone technology

LA PAZ (AP): Bolivia is interested in obtaining Iranian drone technology to protect its borders and combat smuggling and drug trafficking, the Andean country's defense minister confirmed, a day after Argentina demanded information on an agreement reached by Iran and Bolivia that has raised security concerns in the region.

Edmundo Novillo dismissed those concerns, saying they were "exaggerated" and came from an Argentine lawmaker "who, I understand, has Israeli origins," whom he did not name. The minister spoke to the press a day after Argentina's foreign ministry sent a note to the Bolivian embassy in Buenos Aires requesting information "about the scope of the discussions and possible agreements reached" during Novillo's visit to Iran last week. Bolivian opposition lawmakers also filed a request for information after they found out through the media about an alleged

defense and security memorandum of understanding signed between Novillo and his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, on July 20.

Novillo characterized concerns as an "exaggeration" and a "political show," speculating that it had to do with the upcoming elections in Argentina and that some sectors of the country's right wing are trying to use the issue for political purposes. Argentina will hold primary elections next month ahead of presidential elections in October. Argentina's foreign ministry declined to comment on Novillo's news conference. The Bolivian minister also denied that a memorandum of understanding had been signed with Iran, saying only that he signed an "act" with his counterpart in Tehran to identify common points of interest. Iran's state-run news agency IRNA had reported on the memorandum of understanding. Neither country has made the docu-

ment public. Novillo said Bolivia was interested in Iranian high-tech drones that can monitor mountainous areas and provide real-time images to the armed forces, stating that their technology could help the Andean country's efforts to boost border security.

He did not say whether Bolivia would purchase the drones or if they would be a donation but the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), based in Washington, said last week that "Iran has sought to increase the number of countries that buy Iranian drones in recent years." Venezuela had previously said it was building drones with Iran's help, according to Annika Ganzeveld, an Iran analyst for the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute, an ISW partner organization. "President Ebrahim Raisi has shown a greater interest in developing relations with South American countries than his predecessor," Ganzeveld said. "Iran's renewed focus on Latin

America indicates it is trying to increase its foothold in this region, especially by bolstering economic interactions and possibly pursuing arms deals."

The reported deal raised particular concern in Argentina, where prosecutors have long alleged that Iranian officials used the Lebanon-based militant group Hezbollah to carry out the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people. Iran has denied any involvement in the incident. "Argentines must remain vigilant and monitor the presence of Iranian agents in Bolivia who, under the pretext of cooperating on drug trafficking issues, will likely engage in intelligence activities that may impact or affect Argentina," Jorge Faurie, a former Argentine foreign minister, wrote on social media. Novillo said his visit to Tehran should not be seen as a "threat," emphasizing that Bolivia is a "pacifist government."

Russia-Africa summit: Putin seeks to extend influence

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): When President Vladimir Putin opens the Russia-Africa summit in St Petersburg on Thursday, the attendance cast list will be closely scrutinised - in Paris, Washington, London, and at United Nations headquarters in New York. But Africans will view the event quite differently.

For Western foreign ministries fretting about the Kremlin's declared ambition to expand its political, military and economic footprint south of the Sahara, the gathering is an indicator of how far Russia's influence could now extend and where it will meet a friendly welcome. Unlike the previous Russia-Africa summit in 2019, attended by 43 African leaders, this time only 17 are expected in St Petersburg.

But which of them will take prominent speaking roles in the summit? What

deals will be struck with Mr Putin? European and US policymakers until recently saw China as their main competitor in Africa - but now find themselves observing with deep unease Russia's assertive return, epitomised by the presence of Wagner mercenaries in Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), Libya and, briefly, northern Mozambique. And of course, the invasion of Ukraine has dramatically heightened Western mistrust of Russia's ambitions around the world. Yet little suggests that African leaders share this perspective. Most countries on the continent, even those that have regularly voted at the UN to condemn the attack on Ukraine and its impact, do not want to get drawn into taking sides in a new "Cold War" or become pawns in a tussle for global influence and powerplays. In any case, Russia is just one

of several major actors now stepping up efforts to court political and economic influence in Africa - alongside not only China, but also India, Turkey, the Gulf states, South Korea and, of course, Western nations and Japan. Having sometimes struggled in the past to mobilise international assistance in tackling their development and security challenges, African governments are not spurning these overtures.

And Russia knows this. In the run-up to the summit, its officials promised a new programme of support for the continent. The summit agenda includes an "economic and humanitarian forum" and African business figures have been invited; the Kremlin promises a raft of agreements on trade, investment, scientific and technical cooperation. In pursuing this agenda, Russia may be able to build on the academic and

research ties developed during the Cold War era, when many Africans studied at Soviet universities. Whatever the presidential turnout, few governments will actually snub the summit.

But that does not mean most participants will approach St Petersburg with an uncritical mindset - even if diplomatic politeness prevents them from speaking frankly. Last month's African leaders' peace mission to Russia and Ukraine was blurted in telling Mr Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky that the war should be ended, for the sake of the rest of the world. And Moscow will hardly have bolstered goodwill by its decision to abandon the agreement for the safe export of both Ukrainian and Russian grain through Black Sea ports, even if Mr Putin has pledged to make up that shortfall.

US judge tightens Bankman-Fried's bail

WASHINGTON (Agencies): FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried's bail conditions have been tightened after United States prosecutors accused him of witness tampering by sharing a former romantic partner's personal writings with a reporter. Judge Lewis A. Kaplan imposed a "gag order" restricting Bankman-Fried's ability to speak publicly and said he would consider prosecutors' request to jail the former billionaire until the first of two trials in October.

"I am certainly very mindful of his First Amendment rights, and I am very mindful of the government's interest here, which I take very seriously," Kaplan told a Manhattan federal court. "And I say to the defendant, Mr Bankman-

Fried: You better take it seriously, too." Assistant US Attorney Danielle Sassoon said Bankman-Fried "crossed a line" when he shared personal correspondence by Caroline Ellison, the former CEO of FTX offshoot Alameda Research, with the New York Times, which published an article detailing how Ellison had been "unhappy and overwhelmed" at her job and upset over her breakup with Bankman-Fried. Ellison has agreed to testify against Bankman-Fried as part of a deal for leniency after admitting to charges that carry a punishment of up to 110 years in prison.

Bankman-Fried's lawyer Mark Cohen said his client should not be punished for seeking to protect his reputation, including through the

media. Kaplan gave both sides until August 3 to make their case for whether Bankman-Fried should be taken into custody until he goes on trial for allegedly cheating investors and looting FTX customer deposits. Bankman-Fried has pleaded not guilty to 13 fraud and conspiracy charges against him. The 31-year-old crypto entrepreneur has been free on a \$250m bond since his extradition from the Bahamas but has been required to stay at his parents' home in California and had his electronic communications limited. The one-time crypto icon was feted as one of the world's youngest billionaires and a visionary in his field until the speculator collapse of FTX last year amid allegations of massive fraud.

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573
E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com
Lahore Office: 0335-4026284
Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com
Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253
Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com
Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907
Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com
*USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Election Saga and the caretaker setup

PAKISTAN'S parliament on Wednesday approved legislation that empowered the next caretaker government to take important decisions and engage with international institutions ahead of the upcoming general elections. The development takes place after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government introduced multiple amendments to the Election Act-2017, days before the National Assembly completes its five-year constitutional term next month. Section 230 of the Elections Act empowers caretaker setups to make important decisions like elected administrations of the country. According to the Law Minister, the country has gone through a serious economic crisis, meanwhile, some investment and other agreements worth hundreds of millions of dollars are expected to be signed in September. These crucial agreements about existing bilateral, multi-lateral, and ongoing projects with international institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should be handled by the interim government, as those important events lay during the period of caretaker setup.

Currently, the long-awaited election season has commenced and political activities had taken birth in a country that was seriously hit by chaos and political violence over the past year. The consultation regarding the next caretaker setup is underway and various candidates for the slot of caretaker Prime Minister started lobbying at the Prime Minister's House, the GHQ, and other centers of power in the National Capital. The law demands and the position merits as well, a nonpolitical, impartial, and honest individual from former bureaucrats, technocrats, and notable from civil society that enjoys the trust of all contesting political groups in the country. However, Pakistani leaders have translated this sensitive constitutional process into a source of the bargain, and interplay to adjust each other interests, while the state institutions including the ECP and the Judiciary are salient over such a grave transgression of the constitution. The coalition government has nominated the current Finance Minister, and PML-N leader Senator Ishaq Dar as a candidate for the position of caretaker Prime Minister and actively lobbying to install its henchman in the most powerful position in the next setup, which is not only lamentable but disgusting.

The state of Pakistan fell prey to unrestricted greed and lust for power of the so-called pro-nation leaders who blatantly pursue their political agendas in the name of service to the nation. Every leader claims to be the foremost rescuer of the country but intends to accomplish his mission using self-service, nepotism, and mockery. Ironically, the warring political groups and incumbent rulers in the center and the provinces had abused their authority and violated the law by using the constitutional provisions to their advantage. The incumbent caretaker setup in Punjab is purely the choice of the Federal government, whereas KP's interim administration is the sole product of political collusion between the past PTI government and the opposition. Meanwhile, the coalition government is endeavoring hard to orchestrate a dubious arrangement under the leadership of the current Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar, who will surely pursue his party agenda to the full extent.

Days before the lower house of the parliament matures its five-year constitutional term, the Shehbaz government has introduced multiple amendments to the Election Act-2017 including section 230 which empowers the caretaker setup to take crucial decisions like democratically elected government in the country. There are wide-ranging disagreements within the coalition government regarding the recent amendments to Election Act, as the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) objected to the proposed amendments which authorize a non-elected setup to decide the most important affairs related to the country's economy, bilateral and multi-lateral arrangements that would have long-lasting effects on the country in the future. Inter alia, if so essential, it should be specific and only limited to Pakistan dealing with the IMF and the world bank, etc instead of granting permission to handle all bilateral and multi-lateral arrangements at the global level that might have serious economic and security repercussions in the future.

Seemingly, the coalition government has failed in delivering the nation, whereas thoughtless Dar's dogma has cast a heavy price on the Country. The PML-N-led coalition government currently actively working to install its team B as the next caretaker setup to effectively steer the upcoming general election, while the recent legislation was aimed at furtherance of the government agenda. Such efforts will not only reverse the political gains made by the coalition government over the past year but also validate the stance of their opponents ahead in this regard. The coalition government should resist unilateral actions that undermine the credibility of the electoral process, empowers the ECP, and engage with the opposition to pave the way for a transparent headcount that is the only way forward to transition power with respect and dignity.

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Book burning must be banished from political discourse

Yossi Mekelberg

THERE is something frighteningly true in the observation of the 19th-century German poet Heinrich Heine, which was prompted by a burning of the Qur'an in 1493 in Granada, as he warned humanity: "That was but a prelude; where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people as well." These chilling words are now engraved in the ground of Berlin's Opernplatz, commemorating the horrific burning in 1933 of 25,000 books decreed by the propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels to be "un-German." Not long afterward came the Holocaust and its mass murder of millions by the Nazis.

Recent incidents in Sweden and Denmark have highlighted that there are those who still refuse to heed Heine's cautionary words. In their distorted view, they still believe that this abject act is an acceptable and legitimate expression of freedom of speech. Well, it is not. It is simply an extreme form of incitement against what is held sacrosanct by others, and it should be universally regarded as a hate crime.

In the first incident, an Iraqi Christian immigrant burned Islam's holy book outside a Stockholm mosque on - of all days - the major Muslim festival of Eid Al-Adha. In the second case, a Swedish national backed off after threatening to burn the Torah, the Jewish holy book, in front of the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm, claiming that he was not interested in setting fire to the holy book, but was merely testing the Swedish authorities to see whether or not they would enforce the law selectively regarding the burning of religious texts. That the authorities should not enforce the law selectively enjoys a broad consensus, but this does not extend to consenting to the burning of any book considered holy by any religion or belief system, or more generally any book at all. Not only is freedom of expression not absolute, but the burning of someone else's holy or deeply meaningful book is not an expression of opinion or part of any acceptable debate in a civilized society between disagreeing individuals or groups. It is simply an act

of aggression against what a book represents to others, an attack on their beliefs and on a crucial aspect of their identity. It is an attempt to demean, to establish a sense of hierarchy, to instill fear and even provoke a reaction that would serve as an excuse to accelerate the marginalization of whatever group con-

lack of any legal framework for clamping down on these actions, that makes those communities and countries complicit through their inaction. In some European countries, burning a holy book is considered a hate crime and is punishable by law. Criminalizing such behavior as a tool to impose tol-

Using the freedom of expression argument to defend the burning of books or, more generally, offending other people's beliefs is a lousy and disingenuous response. Yes, freedom of expression is a fundamental human right that is generally enshrined in international law. Disagreeing with others' ideas and beliefs and promoting your own is part and parcel of freedom of expression, but this has nothing in common with the sheer provocative vandalism of burning books. Living in diverse societies brings with it proven benefits, among them prosperity, appreciating the value of tolerance and the broadening of one's horizons; but it also poses challenges that need to be addressed with conviction, openness, attentiveness, flexibility and sensitivity in order to overcome them, but not with acts of violence.

siders that text to be sacred. While these two Swedish cases were apparently the work of individuals, in recent years book burning has become something of a despicable political act perpetrated mainly by right-wing, anti-migrant politicians and activists. More worryingly, in some cases it has been officially sanctioned. In 2010, Terry Jones, known for his extreme Islamophobic views and slurs, burned a copy of the Qur'an in his tiny Florida church, shamefully hiding behind the First Amendment. And earlier this year, Rasmus Paludan, the far-right Danish-Swedish politician and lawyer, set fire to a copy of the Muslim holy book in front of the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm to gain maximum publicity for his anti-migrant policies. There are those who dismiss these vile acts as those of negligible characters who are desperate for attention. Be that as it may, it is the lack of a firm response by their respective communities, or even the

erance might be seen as counterintuitive in any civilized society where there is an expectation of respect for other people's beliefs, values and symbols, instilled from an early age at school and through other instruments of socialization, and where such respect becomes part of the society's DNA and need not be enforced. However, with the emergence of multicultural societies where the required tolerance cannot always be taken for granted, moves to curtail hate crime that are supported by law have become increasingly necessary.

Using the freedom of expression argument to defend the burning of books or, more generally, offending other people's beliefs is a lousy and disingenuous response. Yes, freedom of expression is a fundamental human right that is generally enshrined in international law. Disagreeing with others' ideas and beliefs and promoting your own is part and parcel of freedom of expression, but this has

nothing in common with the sheer provocative vandalism of burning books. Living in diverse societies brings with it proven benefits, among them prosperity, appreciating the value of tolerance and the broadening of one's horizons; but it also poses challenges that need to be addressed with conviction, openness, attentiveness, flexibility and sensitivity in order to overcome them, but not with acts of violence.

By burning books, one does not make them disappear, as they will long outlive those who burn them. To torch the written word is an extension of attempts to silence people and ideas, to censor them and pretend that a book's content will disappear along with its physical destruction. There is, sadly, a long tradition of burning books, going at least as far back as 213 B.C., when Emperor Qin Shi Huang ordered the burning of all philosophy and history books from states other than Qin. In the late 15th century, the Spanish Inquisition burned about 5,000 Arabic manuscripts; in the 16th century, copies of Martin Luther's translation of the Bible were incinerated by the Catholic Church; in 1683, several books by Thomas Hobbes and other authors were put to the flames at Oxford University; and the list goes on. In some cases, the burning of people did quickly follow. In the toxic political environment and social turmoil we currently inhabit, which polarizes communities, burning books has become the weapon of opportunists who feed and thrive on division and discord by pushing their xenophobic agenda and putting the blame for all their society's ills on those originating from other countries and subscribing to other faiths. It is a debased tool to build their power and influence and maintain their inflated egos.

This cynical exploitation of freedom of expression demands a legal, political and social response that will make burning books illegal, banishing the practice from political discourse before it can exacerbate the already fragile intercommunal relations we are witnessing in many liberal democracies, from where such inflammatory actions are threatening to spread.

Arab News

Lebanese must be allowed to build, preserve and prosper

Khaled Abou Zahr

VIDEOS and images of wild summer parties are flowing through social media. Yet the ones that have been most talked about are not from Ibiza, Mykonos or Saint-Tropez but from Beirut. These clips have foreigners wondering how this works. How, in a country in full crisis and a state of disintegration, can there be concerts, entertainment and fun? There are several answers, all of which tell us about Lebanon and its people.

A funny post of a Lebanese comedian holding a board stating, "I hope the IMF does not see Lebanese social media," hit the nail on the head better than any of us commentators could manage. This references the fact that, if the International Monetary Fund were to see the posts, it would surely cancel any aid or support to Lebanon, as they project happiness and prosperity. The reality is that the disintegrating government and its tyranny and corruption do not represent the Lebanese. They have, in turn, learned to live and bypass it to find solutions in the face of its ruthlessness. Whether it is for electricity, healthcare, business or security, they count on themselves and not the useless national institutions. In these images, there are undoubtedly the hands of many of the Lebanese diaspora that come back to visit their home country during the summer and inject hard currency into the economy. The local food and beverage scene has become dependent on them, just like the entire economy, with remittances being the most important pillar and, for many homes, their only source of revenue. This is the true contradiction. A country of entrepreneurs, of creators, is reduced to a state of dependency. And so, if we dig down, there is the true, sad story of Lebanon. A large majority has reached an unprecedented level of poverty, while the figures for starvation have become even more alarming.

Many Arab friends who have seen these party videos shared their views with me by stating that one cannot bring down the Lebanese. Despite the troubles, the insecurity and the political disintegration of their country, they still have a spark and want to enjoy life and live it to the full. They also continue to talk about how, no matter how many times the country is destroyed, they will rebuild and continue with their daily lives. And this is the true problem; it is not that they are dancing while the country is burning and, let's face it, ignorance (or denial) is bliss. It is that they accept building on rotten ground; they accept the dirty political system; they accept the dirty occupation. One after the other and throughout history. This is what needs to change. These contradictions have always been there. And, in all transparency, it is not

the fact that Lebanon lights up during summer that shocks me. It is that we still have a character like Hassan Nasrallah come out on television, shake his finger and threaten the population and the stability of the country. This was very symbolic in the summer of 2006, when we had the Lebanese enjoying their lives on the one side and tensions building up and Nasrallah threatening stability on the other. This is the true contradiction in Lebanon. The occupiers want an archaic vision of unnecessary martyrdom for the country, while most Lebanese want to live.

This is further proof that Lebanon is de facto not a viable centralized state and therefore needs a new political system. Each community needs to make its own decisions. I have always been a supporter of the federal system for Lebanon, though many criticize it as a ploy by part of the Christian community to destroy the country. As a Sunni, I also think it is the needed solution, maybe for different reasons. I see it as the best way to put our community in front of its responsibilities, take charge and decide if we want to follow the path of darkness or of enlightenment. It is a struggle the Lebanese Sunni need to face, and no one can do it for them. As long as we have the current system, it will empower the bad and the violent. Moreover, regarding these accusations against the Christians, we need to ask why Lebanon was different to Syria or any other country in the Levant? The truth is that, without the Christian community and the efforts it put into education and enlightenment at a time when the Middle East was still sleeping after the Ottomans had left, there would be no Lebanon. Lebanon was and still is its own contradiction within the Levant region. However, the qualities that made Lebanon different and the Lebanese a special breed of creative entrepreneur that is successful in many fields are disappearing. This richness of culture mixing together was the spark of creativity. Now, unfortunately, it is disappearing. There is no way the country can be saved in its current status, so the Christians, as all others, should have the right to try and protect this heritage.

It is well known that, even during the terrible years of the civil war, the Lebanese still knew how to live and enjoy life. But it is now high time to build, preserve and prosper, not dance on the rubble and rebuild fading copies of what Lebanon can and should be. A federal system is the right path to this; even if the delivery might be painful, it is the only way forward. Let each community face down their leaders, hold them accountable and refuse their trading games with the occupier and their business acolytes. It is time for a cleanup to revive the country before it is too late.

Aljazeera

Oman shows how a fossil fuel producer can embrace clean energy

Salim Al Auli & Fatih Birol

AHEAD of the COP28 climate talks in Dubai later this year, the role of oil and gas-producing economies in the clean energy transition is coming into sharp focus. Ensuring that countries - including those that have relied on oil and gas revenues to support their economic development - can transition to a low-emissions future in an orderly manner is essential to international efforts to limit global warming to 1.5 °C, one of the key goals in the Paris Agreement.

Oman is a clear example of one such country that is setting a bold energy transition vision at home - in line with its international commitments. Oman's oil and gas industries account for around 60 percent of its income from exports. In addition to a heavy reliance on revenues from this trade, oil and gas activities - including power generation and industry - are also responsible for the majority

of the country's emissions. Natural gas alone accounts for over 95 percent of electricity generation while iron, steel, aluminium, petrochemicals and refining also contribute significantly to the national emissions footprint.

But the country has prepared itself for change. The government has its sights firmly set on its target of achieving net zero emissions by 2050, which was adopted late last year. Reducing emissions in Oman's flagship industries is an important component of the country's broader decarbonisation agenda. Establishing a path to net zero is an opportunity for Oman to create economic value, improve industrial competitiveness and attract investment to help diversify and strengthen the country's economy. The government has already committed to ramping up clean energy production in which renewable energy, green and low carbon hydrogen and deriv-

atives will play a starring role. Beyond fossil fuels, Oman is endowed with significant natural resources such as solar and wind and to some extent, geothermal and tidal energy.

Expanding renewable power generation can bring many positive impacts. These include opportunities to decarbonise domestic industries, making them more competitive, as international markets are set to have more opportunities for the trade of low-emissions industrial products such as steel. Furthermore, the rapid deployment of renewables will also enable Oman to gradually capture gains from the solar and wind value chains as well as those of other clean energy technologies such as hydrogen and low-emissions synthetic fuels. Additional renewable power can also support the electrification of a portion of Oman's oil and gas supply chains, thereby reducing

the industries' emissions intensity.

Oman has already taken steps to lay the groundwork for achieving its ambitions. It has set up an independent entity to oversee its national hydrogen strategy - an important step that demonstrates the country's commitment and provides the certainty that investment and industry stakeholders will need to support the development of the sector. If the strategy is implemented in full and on time, renewable hydrogen production could eventually exceed the size of Oman's current liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports. But the size of the task is significant: Oman anticipates that cumulative investments would need to reach \$140bn through 2050 to achieve the targets set out in its strategy, which utilise only 30 percent of the designated high potential solar and wind land.

To help advance this,

Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals has worked with the International Energy Agency to examine in depth both the potential and the challenges of scaling up hydrogen production from renewable electricity in the country.

Oman's position as an exporter of fossil fuels means that some of the foundations for a renewable hydrogen economy are already in place. Existing infrastructure such as transport networks, industrial ports and gas storage can be used directly or repurposed to support a hydrogen enterprise. In addition, Oman's workforce has important skills related to chemical, temperature and fluid engineering, the distribution and handling of fuel, as well as related health and safety expertise. These give the country a significant edge to fulfil its renewable hydrogen ambitions.

Oman currently benefits from a first-mover advantage. According to the

IEA's latest global assessment of announced hydrogen projects, it is on track to become the sixth-largest exporter of hydrogen globally by 2030. It is, with other Gulf producer economies - such as Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia - among the frontrunners who can help to support an orderly transition to a low-emissions global energy economy. As Oman moves forward on its energy transition journey, it is poised to become a significant player in renewable energy and a model for other nations. By harnessing its natural resources, its established trade links and its longstanding reputation as a trusted energy partner, Oman has a strong point of departure, not only for securing its economic and energy future but also to be one of the leading oil and gas-producing economies in the fight against climate change.

Countries need to strengthen cross-border environmental diplomacy

THE global political system is based on sovereign states whose governments exert control over the territory within their borders. However, environmental concerns have long demonstrated the challenges behind that idea, as governments have limited ability to avoid the spillover of environmental problems from other countries into their own territory. Climate change is intensifying this old problem and countries need to strengthen mechanisms that facilitate the addressing of cross-border concerns.

Some of the toughest trans-boundary environmental challenges come from things that float: air, temperature and rain. Governments can regulate air pollution produced within their country but cannot stop pollution that floats across their border. Many Americans have experienced smoky skies this summer, as smoke from wildfires in Canada drifts into parts of the US. There are many examples of air pollution from manufacturing and other sources crossing borders, including the US-Mexico border. The 1986 Chernobyl disaster spread radioactivity around Russia and Europe.

Anthropogenic climate change affects the entire planet, regardless of which countries produce the most greenhouse gas emissions. This summer has brought record-breaking heat waves on several continents. Rain also floats over borders, outside of governments' control. Contaminated rain can carry pollution across borders. Rain that falls quickly in large amounts can cause flooding that affects populations across borders; for example, monsoon floods can affect people in India, Pakistan,

Bangladesh, Nepal and elsewhere.

Drought similarly has impacts that are not limited by borders. Dust storms cross political lines, such as the storms across the dried-out Aral Sea that affect Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, across the Syrian-Iraqi border and even Saharan dust storms that blow across the Atlantic to the Americas. Governments have somewhat more control over things that flow, but within narrow limits. "Transboundary waters account for 60 percent of the world's freshwater flows," according to the UN. Dams and other infrastructure can change the shape and flow of lakes and rivers, creating their own cross-border problems. Upstream countries often use water in ways that hurt downstream populations. There are multiple examples, including Turkey's use of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers at the expense of Syria and Iraq, Ethiopia's management of the Blue Nile that raises Egyptian worries, and disputes between Afghanistan and Iran over the Helmand River. Countries also argue about water usage, pollution and fishing on transboundary lakes, including disputes over Africa's Great Lakes. Also, pollution from one country can flow through borders into the water resources of another state.

Countries have almost no control over pollution or the changing temperatures, levels and acidity of oceans. Some of these problems are specific to a region. For example, pollution from northern Mexico affects beaches in southern California. Other problems are more global. Plastic pollution spreads throughout the oceans. Shipping disasters affect nearby

coasts, regardless of where the ship is coming from. For example, the 2021 sinking of the X-Press Pearl created an environmental disaster for Sri Lanka. Climate change is changing ocean temperatures, levels and chemical composition, with impacts on countries that have significantly contributed to climate change and those that have played little role in changing the climate.

Disputes over transboundary water systems and pollution can increase hostility between countries. Disagreements about the use of the Blue Nile and its downstream impacts have heightened tensions among Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan in recent years. Israel's disproportionate use of water from an aquifer is an important source of tension in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Mekong basin is a growing area of concern, as China's intensified use of the river raises problems for Southeast Asian countries. This year, tensions between India and Pakistan rose over the Indus Water Treaty. However, the reality that countries share the environment can contribute to diplomatic solutions. Many disputes over transboundary water resources - including most of those mentioned above - have treaties, agreements and diplomatic structures in place to help manage disagreements. Often, these are bilateral or regional arrangements. Examples include the International Boundary and Water Commission that manages US-Mexico trans-boundary water agreements, the Nile Basin Initiative, the Mekong River Commission and the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air-Pollution. The Indus Water Treaty was widely

seen as an example of successful transboundary diplomacy until new concerns emerged this year.

Some of the agreements use global institutions, such as the UN or the World Bank, to act as mediators. There are also multiple diplomatic vehicles for managing shared concerns about the ocean, air and freshwater resources through the UN and other international organizations. In an example of how mutual impacts can prompt hostile countries to cooperate, Israel lifted some restrictions that had undermined Gaza's ability to treat sewage. The sewage had contaminated Gazan and Israeli beaches and temporarily closed Israel's Ashkelon desalination plant. Eventually, Israel allowed efforts to proceed so that Gaza could treat sewage and clean up beaches, with significant aid from foreign countries and support from EcoPeace, an environmentalist organization.

Unfortunately, many of the diplomatic mechanisms designed to manage transboundary environmental concerns are weak. Some regional agreements do not include key countries or are vague and outdated. Some commissions have little influence or authority. Some are under-resourced and unable to take necessary actions. As climate change adds pressure, countries should recognize that they cannot fully control the actions of other states or build walls high enough to keep out air pollution or changing climate conditions. Cross-border environmental concerns will increasingly demand cooperative solutions. Multiple diplomatic tools already exist to facilitate effective responses, but they require strengthening and reinforcement now, as their importance will only grow.

Regular exchanges important to build Sino-US mutual trust

Cao Lei

THE recent high-level exchanges between China and the United States have injected some positive energy into bilateral relations, raising hopes that the tensions between the two sides will ease and China-US ties would be back on track. The latest such meeting was between China's senior diplomat Wang Yi and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Jakarta on the sidelines of the ASEAN foreign ministerial meetings, where they tried to address thorny issues as part of the efforts to nurture talks in order to normalize bilateral ties.

The recent round of parleys began with Blinken's visit to China in June, followed by the visit of US Secretary of Treasury Janet Yellen, who held talks with Premier Li Qiang as well as Vice-Premier He Lifeng in early July.

US Special Presidential Climate Envoy John Kerry was the latest to visit China in an effort to revive Sino-US climate cooperation. The China-US relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the 21st century, which has a profound impact on both peoples' well-being and the world's future. As Premier Li said during his meeting with Yellen, the world needs a stable Sino-US relationship.

However, due to the political polarization in the US, some politicians are trying to turn back the wheel of history by opposing the US' engagement policy with China, obstructing normal exchanges between the two sides, provoking China by targeting its core interests and launching smear campaigns against it. Such vilification campaigns can influence public opinions in the US and turn American people against China, which will make it even more difficult to normalize Sino-US relations. The so-called politically correct cabal in the US is extremely harmful to the development of China-US relations because it has, through its

machinations, pushed bilateral ties to the lowest level. Sound and stable China-US ties are good for the wellbeing of people not only in China and the US but also in the rest of the world. So the US should not allow a handful of self-serving politicians to further worsen bilateral relations. And to do that, the US has to abide by the principles and spirit of the three joint communiques and stop interfering in the internal affairs of China, while the two sides should respect each other's core interests and major concerns.

More specifically, the two governments should follow the principle of mutual respect, build political mutual trust, and respect each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, social and political systems, development path and core interests. Also, the two sides should regularly communicate with each other and restart as many dialogue mechanisms as possible, so as to avoid misunderstandings and misjudgments. China and the US are competitors, but they are also indispensable trading partners, with common interests in various fields and growing people-to-people exchanges.

For example, Sino-US trade is growing despite all the bilateral disputes and about 295,000 Chinese students are studying in the US, accounting for one-third of all international students in the country. As such, the two sides need to make good use of the various mechanisms for security cooperation and dialogue, promote exchanges in fields such as education, science and technology, culture, sports and the media, in a bid to build mutual trust, reduce misgivings and prevent misunderstandings and misjudgments.

During his meeting with Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in Beijing last month, President Xi Jinping said more people should travel between the

two countries and communicate with each other to increase mutual understanding as the world tries to overcome the impacts of the three-year COVID-19 pandemic. It is in the interest of the two countries to strengthen people-to-people exchanges in the face of new global threats and challenges. But they should remember that virtual meetings can never replace face-to-face communication when it comes to building mutual trust. Therefore, the two sides need to handle their relations with responsibility and follow the principle of mutual benefit, in order to deepen pragmatic cooperation in fields such as trade, law enforcement and fighting drug trafficking, and boost cooperation in areas including new energy, robotics, artificial intelligence and online education.

There is also a need to encourage communication between the think tanks of the two countries, because that can help them settle their differences and disagreements, while regular dialogue on military security can help prevent strategic misjudgments and ensure bilateral ties do not derail or spin out of control. History shows that when China and the US have respected each other's core interests, bilateral relations have developed smoothly. Cooperation is the right and only choice for the two sides, not least because it can help them address each other's concerns if and when such a situation arises. A peaceful, cooperative and open China is an opportunity, not a challenge, for the US, and a constructive China is a partner, not an adversary, for the US. China and the US, as great countries, should have the ability, confidence and wisdom to properly manage their differences, remove all barriers to cooperation and deepen bilateral ties. After all, the world is big enough to accommodate both China and the US and allow them to promote common development.

The China Daily

Guess who's holding Trump accountable? Regular American jurors

Andrew Mitrovica

SHORTLY after the United States Constitutional Convention ended on September 17, 1787, Dr Benjamin Franklin stepped out of what is known today as Independence Hall in Philadelphia into the summer sun. For four months, Franklin and the other 54 delegates present had negotiated a four-page Constitution that established the US government from the disparate threads of 12 of the 13 original states.

A woman approached Franklin. "Well, Doctor, what have we got - a republic or a monarchy?" "A Republic, if you can keep it," Franklin replied. Franklin's remark was, at once, a celebration and a warning. A fragile federation had been born, bound by a newly minted constitution. Inevitably, Franklin implied, that bond would be tested. In those trying circumstances, vigilance by all would be vital to keeping the republic whole. More than two centuries later, Franklin's prophecy came to pass yet again in a nation whose history teems with tumult and division.

On January 6, 2021, the US's republic was tested by an insurrection. A mob, primed and encouraged by an angry, vanquished president, attacked the Capitol with one aim: to prevent the certification by Congress of Joe Biden's election as president. The insurrection failed. Most members of Congress, who had taken shelter from the marauding mob, emerged later that jarring day determined to fulfil their constitutional duty to

ratify the new president's decisive victory. Since then, scores of the insurrectionists have been arrested, charged and convicted for their often violent roles in the thwarted coup d'état.

On July 24, a truck driver from Arkansas was sentenced to 52 months in jail for beating a police officer with a flagpole while shouting: "That entire building is filled with treasonous traitors. Death is the only remedy for what's in that building." So far, the chief architect of the madness and mayhem has evaded the same fate. Happily, it appears that Donald Trump's reprieve is about to end. Last week, Special Counsel Jack Smith sent Trump a letter informing him that he was a "target" of a probe into the cacophonous events of January 6th and invited him to testify before a grand jury considering indicting the defeated president. Trump's carousel of lawyers rejected the special counsel's offer, insisting their rule-of-law-allergic client had "done nothing wrong" and, with typical bluster, accusing Smith of being Biden's handmaiden. Apparently, a grand jury disagrees.

Trump could soon be charged with a slew of counts in connection to three felonies, including conspiracy, obstruction and witness tampering. If that happens, it will mark the third time Trump has been indicted since March. He is, of course, the first former president to face such a blunt legal reckoning. Trump's long rap sheet reflects the sorry character of a career crook-turned-president. He

is a philanderer and a liar who pays hush money to a mistress to keep her mum. He is a raging narcissist who hoards reams of the nation's secrets, brandishing them like a petulant child eager to impress and soothe his insatiable ego.

He is a confidence man who revels in and exploits for his parochial ends the ignorance, malice and manufactured grievances of his maniacal followers. Most egregious of all, he is a conniving impostor who betrayed his oath to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States". Dissatisfied, a few liberal commentators grumble that the indictments, while welcomed, represent an anti-climactic denouement that may or may not result in Trump's comeuppance or political demise. I share a bit of their chagrin. I have written about Trump's persistent and perplexing popularity even in the face of a host of criminal charges that, if decency or probity mattered, should have disqualified the 45th president from becoming commander-in-chief once more. Still, I remain convinced that these occasionally grating curmudgeons miss the reassuring meaning and purpose of Trump's indictments.

The ordinary, anonymous Americans who constitute the three grand juries which, to date, have charged or are expected to charge a vulgar simpleton who was cloaked in enormous power as president have heeded Franklin's call to keep their republic intact. They are doing their part in corraling an unrepentant scoundrel

who yearns to exercise the privileges and prerogatives of an omnipotent monarch. This is an essential act of citizenship that has required enlightened Americans to reject - sometimes at great risk and usually with little fanfare - the sinister designs of a demagogue who prefers autocracy to democracy. So was the defiance of largely anonymous Capitol police officers, motivated no doubt, in part, by the imperative to preserve, protect and defend the US Constitution. They stood their ground despite being outnumbered, overwhelmed and hurt in body, mind and spirit. They prevailed. Rather than wallow in disappointment, forlorn liberal writers ought to applaud the resolve of honourable Americans who have held a dishonourable president to stiff account. They have acted as a bulwark - as Franklin envisioned - against a "populist" charlatan intent on extinguishing the republic in his obsessive pursuit of money, power and vengeance. The delicious irony is that, ultimately, Trump's fate will be decided by the kind of everyday, anonymous Americans he detests and to whom he would deny membership at his gilded monument to kitsch and extravagance, Mar-a-Lago.

Trump has bullied and berated much of the Republican Party into complicity and silence. He did not count on the legion of wise Americans who refuse to be intimidated into complicity or silence - inside a courtroom or at the ballot box. However frayed, it is their republic - not Trump's - and they intend to keep it.

Rishi Sunak's only hope of a legacy is to govern as though he has already lost election

Rafael Behr

BRITISH politics is shrinking. Partly that is a trick of perspective as an election comes into view and the ruling party flinches from long-term challenges. A government wanting to stay in office will focus on sweetening the electorate, pushing bitter choices to the far side of polling day. But Rishi Sunak's policy cupboard is bare, the economy is stagnant and the cost of living crisis shows no sign of abating. Many voters have lost any appetite for Tory rule.

That is the evidence from two out of three byelections last week. Labour took Selby and Ainsty in North Yorkshire, and the Liberal Democrats won Somerton and Frome in Somerset, overturning majorities of 20,137 and 19,213 respectively. In both seats, voters coalesced around whichever opposition candidate was best placed to thrash the local Tory. That suggests a collective turning of electoral stomachs against a noxious brand. With time running out, Downing Street is increasingly reliant on its most dependable defensive technique - stirring fear that, no matter how bad things seem now, Labour can contrive to make them worse.

Conservative strategists think the viability of that device was proven in the third of last week's byelection trio. There was still a big swing to the opposition in Uxbridge and South Ruislip, but it was checked by aversion to a Labour policy - a levy on polluting vehicles already established for inner London and due to be extended to the capital's outer suburbs. The ultra-low emission zone (Ulez) is municipal not national policy; conceived when Boris Johnson

was mayor, extended by Sadiq Khan. It is not Keir Starmer's choice. But that distinction doesn't count for much in byelections, when a shrewd local campaign can rewrite the question on the ballot paper. If Johnson had still been the local MP, it might have been a referendum on his probity, in which case Labour would probably have won. But Johnson's resignation allowed the Tories to do some campaign jiu-jitsu, reversing the usual anti-incumbency effect, casting Labour, via Ulez, as the local party of power to be given a kicking.

That manoeuvre will be hard to pull off in a general election, when the bigger question of whether Britain wants a fifth term of Tory government will be unavoidable. The wrong conclusion from Uxbridge would be that voters don't like environmental policy and that Sunak should strip the greenery from his agenda. The Tory faction that wishes this were true is celebrating vindication despite evidence that voters of all ages and in all constituencies care about a range of ecological issues, from sewage in the sea to carbon in the atmosphere. (Besides, Labour fell short by fewer votes in Uxbridge than the number who backed the Greens and, presumably, back ultra-low emissions. Sunak got lucky.) In Labour HQ, the Uxbridge result is deciphered as confirmation that the leader's office must keep an iron grip on policy to avoid things flapping loose that could be seized and weaponised by Conservatives. As Starmer put it in a speech over the weekend: "We are doing something very wrong if policies put forward by

the Labour party end up on each and every Tory leaflet."

It is true the opposition should avoid gifting attack lines to the government. This is why the shadow cabinet is not allowed to make spending commitments without matching them to revenue-raising measures, and why Labour will not make a case for European integration if it sounds anything like open-door immigration. It is a fine balancing act. Selby proves the merit in making Labour an unthreatening repository for anti-Tory votes. Uxbridge shows the downside to campaigning from a defensive crouch, which limits agility. It should not have been so hard to weave an anti-pollution argument around a call to stop the Tory rot: fresh start plus clean air. Starmer's tactical caution has worked so far, but it has also contributed to the miniaturisation of politics. There are things Sunak can't talk about because his party's record is so abysmal, and things Starmer won't talk about for fear that stray pronouncements will be mangled, misrepresented and used against him. That doesn't leave much space for meaningful debate. The Labour leader's supporters point out that he has so far shown an aptitude for strategic timing, steadily dragging his party from the bottom of an electoral abyss to within sight of governing heights. There will be a moment to reveal more of his hand but the pace won't be dictated by the impatience of newspaper commentators or the frustration of leftwing activists.

The period between now and an election gives Starmer room to expand his pitch to voters. For Sunak

it offers only a narrowing of options. Plan A was to look competent, managerial, the steady-handed former chancellor steering the ship of state out of turbulent waters. That hasn't worked. Plan B is increasingly deranged attacks on Labour as allies of eco-fanaticism and, in the case of immigration policy, accomplices to the criminal gangs that smuggle migrants across the Channel. The problem is that Sunak's personal brand has already been shaped around plan A. The shiny image is now tarnished, but activating plan B will only contaminate it further with inauthenticity and the whiff of desperation. Aggressive polarisation only shrinks the audience by chasing away anyone attracted to moderation. The prime minister's better option, perhaps the only one, is not to obsess over the shrinking patch of ground at his feet but raise his eyes to a place beyond the election. He is still a young man.

If he is ousted, he will still have a long professional life after Downing Street, in which case he may want to be remembered as the leader who pointed his party back towards sanity and drained some of the venom out of British politics. Aspiring to be that guy is also probably the likeliest way to earn back some respect from the electorate in advance of polling day. The best way to salvage some Tory credentials as a serious party of government may be to act as though the election is already lost. But that approach takes courage. It means taking a view of politics as something bigger than it has become in Britain. Sunak's way will make it even smaller.

The Guardian

My war on woke banks is about to rapidly expand

Nigel Farage

DAME Alison Rose's resignation was inevitable. Having broken the first rule of banking by breaching client confidentiality, she had to go. Now the rest of the NatWest Board must follow. Under the Chairmanship (or should I say chairpersonship) of Sir Howard Davies, they endorsed Rose's behaviour by backing her.

An emergency root and branch examination of what has happened at NatWest under Rose's leadership must now take place. In recent years this bank - 39 per cent owned by taxpayers, remember - has morphed into a woke warrior. It has become obsessed with public displays of political correctness rather than focussing on the business of managing and making money. The truth is that in its quest to promote diversity and inclusion, this corporate giant has turned into a divisive and poisonous monster. Now it seems that other British banks are also marching down this one-way street. They do it in part to deflect customers' attention from the fact that they exist to make vast profits. They want people to think they are nicey-nicey but they know this isn't how corporate life in a capitalist society really works. Banks can be a force for good, but not by discriminating against people with whom they happen to disagree.

I hope that this week marks a turning point. The City Minister, Andrew Griffith, has read the riot act to the 19 bank bosses who were summoned to the Treasury for a meeting. This is a good start. People's lawfully held political and personal opinions should have nothing to do with their right to a bank account. Banks should not be and must never become political organisations. Any bank that treats a single customer in the way that Coutts acted towards me must have its licence

revoked. This point also marks the start of a much bigger campaign for me. As I have said before, the only reason I decided to go public - and ultimately cause myself quite a fair degree of embarrassment - is that I realised over the last couple of years that many people had wrongly had their bank account closed. Since I told my own story this month, I have been inundated with tales from others in genuine distress who have also suffered the indignity of being "de-banked". I have encouraged all of them to make a Subject Access Request to establish why this happened.

Sadly, a bank account being closed at short notice has made it almost impossible for many people to get a new account opened in time. Some people have been ruined as a result. This is especially true of small business owners who take cash payments, whether they run a local window cleaning firm or a pawn broker. Not having a bank account in the 21st century makes it almost impossible to function. Any bank employee who has allowed such a state of affairs to exist should have this on their conscience. British taxpayers bailed out the banks after the greed and stupidity of executives crashed the system 15 years ago. In return, these same banks have closed hundreds of branches around the country in order to swell their profits, ruined the lives of many by "de-banking" them, and embarked on a holier-than-thou greenwashing exercise as a way of hoodwinking the public into thinking they are caring and responsible. Bluntly, the banks have spat in the faces of the people who should matter most to them, their clients. Now it is time to fight back. A common feeling that has been expressed to me over these past few weeks is one of helplessness bordering

on despair. It is clear that nobody has been speaking up for everyday people. Now, I intend to be their voice and to campaign for the cultural and legal changes that our banking system needs. Every law-abiding citizen in this country should have the right to a bank account. The resignation of Dame Alison Rose is the first step to ensuring this can happen. Banks must return to operating as they used to do. Then - and only then - can we return to business as usual.

I am now seriously motivated by this issue. The desperation of those that have been wronged by the big banks means that I simply have to do something. I may not have picked this fight, but I now find myself right in the middle of it. I will be launching, over the course of the next few days, an exercise designed to gather together all of those that have been de-banked. I'm hoping to build a very large database of cases to find out which banks are the worst offenders and what the commonest reasons are, so that we can prepare and present a lobby to ministers, and to Parliament, in order to achieve fundamental change. It might be said that the cultural problem within our banks has, so far at least, only affected a small proportion of the population. But if these institutions continue to believe they can become moral arbiters, monitoring the social media profiles of account holders, the numbers affected will quickly grow.

Our current rulebook, backed up by aggressive compliance departments, has proved to be a sledgehammer that has missed the nut. It isn't money launderers but innocent people who are paying the price. It simply cannot continue. I will be asking people out there to come and join me. Let's fight this.

The Telegraph



SBP imposes monetary penalty on 6 banks for violating instructions

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) imposed monetary penalty of Rs.350,799 million on 6 banks for violation of regulatory instructions during.

The banking supervision department of the central bank taken the significant enforcement actions during the quarter ended June 30, 2023, against violation of regulatory instructions pertaining to customer identification, asset quality, foreign exchange, general banking operations, anti-money laundering and terrorist financing.

The contravening banks were also advised to strengthen their controls and processes in the identified areas and ensure meticulous compliance with the regulatory instructions.

The central bank imposed a penalty of

Rs.144,207 million on National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) on charges of violation of regulatory instructions pertaining to customer due diligence (CDD), know your customer (KYC) and Asset Quality. In addition to penal action, the NBP has been advised to enhance the internal processes and controls.

The SBP imposed a penalty of Rs.125,253 on Bank Alfalah Limited for violation of regulatory instructions pertaining to anti-money laundering (AML) and counter financing for terrorism (CFT), CDD and KYC, foreign exchange (FX) and General Banking Operations while the bank has also been advised to ensure meticulous compliance with the regulatory instructions.

Meezan Bank Limited and Allied Bank Limited

have been penalised Rs.38.03 million and 20.66 million respectively on charges of violating regulatory instructions pertaining to CDD, KYC, FX and general banking operations. In addition to penal action, the banks were advised to improve their internal processes as well.

Punjab Provincial Cooperative Bank Limited received a penalty of Rs.12,229 million for violation of regulatory instructions pertaining to CDD, KYC, asset quality and general banking operations while SBP advised the bank to improve its internal processes and controls.

The central bank has imposed penalty of Rs.10,42 million on Bank Al Habib Limited or violating regulatory instructions pertaining to CDD,

KYC, FX and general banking operations and advised the bank to monitor the usage of card based transactions.

The SBP has also clarified that the actions were based on deficiencies in the compliance of regulatory instructions and did not constitute a comment on the financial soundness of the banking sector entities.

Customer due diligence (CDD) in broader terms includes identifying the customer and verifying the customer's identity on the basis of documents, data or information obtained from customer or through reliable and independent source while know your customer (KYC) standards are designed to protect financial institutions against fraud, corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing.

Economic integration in South Asia holds potential for regional development: Iftikhar Ali Malik

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik said the economic integration in South Asia holds significant potential to address future challenges and foster regional development.

Chairing a seminar on "Economic Integration in South Asia" he said that South Asia, a diverse and populous region faced with several shared challenges that could be better tackled through closer economic cooperation, said a news release issued here Thursday.

By integrating their economies, South Asian countries can create a buffer against external shocks, he added.

Diversification of markets and sources of investment can help countries better with stand economic

downturns and reduce vulnerabilities.

He said closer economic ties can lead to increased trade volumes, investment flows and technological transfers, which can boost economic growth and development across the region.

This growth can be inclusive, benefiting various sectors and sections of society.

He said many South Asian countries heavily rely on a few trading partners outside the region.

Economic integration can help diversify trade by fostering intra-regional trade, reducing dependence on external markets, and creating a more robust regional market for goods and services.

About infrastructure development he said this region needs substantial investments in infrastruc-

ture, including transportation, energy, and communication networks.

Economic integration can facilitate the pooling of resources to develop cross-border infrastructure projects, enhance connectivity, and promote regional trade and investment, he added.

Regarding leveraging the demographic dividend he said South Asia is home to a large and youthful population.

By integrating their economies, the region can create a larger and more skilled labor market, attracting investments and promoting industrial growth.

He said this would be crucial for harnessing the demographic dividend and creating employment opportunities for the growing workforce.

Iftikhar Ali Malik said historically, economic

interdependence has been linked to reduced tensions and conflicts between countries and strengthening economic ties can promote mutual interests, trust, and cooperation, contributing to peace and stability in the region.

He said poverty and inequality, addressing common challenges, promoting regional values chains and industries and harmonization of policies and standards are also equally crucial and important to be taken care of to attain desired results.

However, concerted efforts by regional organizations like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and bilateral agreements can play a crucial role in overcoming these barriers and advancing economic integration in South Asia.



ISLAMABAD: Participants in a group photo during appreciation ceremony for Exemplary Disbursement Targets Attained during FY 2022-2023 at Ministry of Economic Affairs.

SBP's MPC meets on Monday

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) will meet on Monday, July 31, 2023 to decide about Monetary Policy. Governor SBP, Mr. Jameel Ahmad will announce the Monetary Policy decision at a press conference on the same day after the MPC meeting.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, BBC Plata, Asia Inspire, BW Kobe and Flagship Privet scheduled to load/offload Rice, Palm oil, Canola and Mogas, berthed at Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, Grain and Fertilizer Terminal, and FOTCO oil Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, three more ships, CMA CGM Butterfly, Emma Grace, and Banda with Containers, edible oil, and furnace oil also arrived at the outer anchorage of Port Qasim on the same day.

A total of nine ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, MSC Elaine, Southern Quokka, Al-Jassasiya, and N-Orhan sailed out to sea on Thursday (today) morning while another ship 'Oriole' is expected to sail today afternoon.

The cargo throughput of 129,926 tonnes, comprising 88,304 tonnes imports Cargo and 41,622 tonnes of export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,486 Containers (58 TEUs Imports and 2,428 TEUs export) was handled at the port during the last 24 hours.

There are nine ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, Navios Lapis, CMA CGM Butterfly, Star Pisces, Chemroad Echo, and LPG FSM carrying Container, Coal, Chemicals and LPG are expected to take berths at Container Terminal, Bulk Terminal, Engro Terminal and Gas Terminal respectively on 27th July, while other containers ship RDO Fortune is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Friday.

Hong Kong raises base rate to 5.75%

HONG KONG (APP): The Hong Kong Monetary Authority announced on Thursday that the base rate has been set at 5.75 percent with immediate effect according to a pre-set formula.

According to the monetary authority, the base rate is the interest rate forming the foundation upon which the Discount Rates for repurchase transactions through the Discount Window are computed.

The base rate is currently set at either 50 basis points above the lower end of the prevailing target range for the US federal funds rate or the average of the five-day moving averages of the overnight and one-month HIBORs, whichever is the higher.

Following the 25-basis point upward adjustment in the target range for the US federal funds rate on July 26, 50 basis points above the lower end of the prevailing target range for the US federal funds rate is 5.75 percent, while the average of the five-day moving averages of the overnight and one-month HIBORs is 4.78%.

Ayaz hails WB, ADB economic support for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Thursday appreciated the World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) support for Pakistan during the devastating floods of 2022.

The minister highlighted that WB and ADB cumulatively greatly helped Pakistan in dealing with the adverse impacts of the devastating floods of 2022, the balance of payment issues, and improving the implementation progress of the development portfolio, said a press release issued here.

"Due to joint and well-coordinated efforts of WB, ADB, and EAD, we were able to achieve disbursement of US\$ 4.4 billion during FY2023. Together, we have set a remarkable precedent, setting the stage

for even greater achievements in the future," said the Minister

The Secretary expressed gratitude to the WB, ADB, and his highly motivated team for responding to Pakistan's development needs and ramping up support, especially during emergency situations.

This level of disbursement is attributed to the tireless efforts and rigorous follow-up by EAD and both the banks with all stakeholders to proactively address the bottlenecks.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs hosted an Appreciation Ceremony to acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of relevant EAD officers and the esteemed partners, the WB and ADB in achieving an exceptional level of disbursements during FY

2022-23.

Najy Benhassine, the Country Director of the World Bank in Pakistan, and Yong Ye, the Country Director of ADB in Pakistan, delivered heartfelt appreciation remarks, acknowledging the relentless commitment of the team of the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

They praised the unwavering dedication of the team of EAD and emphasized the harmonious partnership between the organizations and the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

The highlight of the event was the distribution of appreciation certificates by the Minister to the outstanding team members of the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Turkish private sector interested in collaborating with Pak furniture industry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Mian Kashif Ashfaq on Thursday said that the Turkish private sector had evinced keen interest in collaboration, joint ventures, and investment with the Pak furniture industry.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq who is currently on a Türkiye visit said that fostering better collaboration and attracting foreign investment to Pakistan's furniture sector could have a positive impact on the industry's growth, leading to economic benefits for the country as a whole, said a news release issued here.

"Collaborating with international counterparts

can open up new avenues for growth, innovation, and increased market access", he remarked.

"Moreover, attracting foreign investment could bring in capital, technology, and expertise, which can help enhance the overall competitiveness and productivity of the sector."

By holding fruitful meetings with Turkish counterparts, he said, "PFC is working towards strengthening ties with foreign businesses and investors."

This could involve discussing potential partnerships, joint ventures, or investment opportunities in Pakistan's furniture industry, he added. "Additionally, such interactions may also facilitate knowl-

edge exchange, best practices sharing, and access to new markets," he added.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq said, "Foreign investment can play a significant role in economic development and the furniture industry, being a key sector with potential for growth and employment generation, can greatly benefit from these initiatives."

He said, "It can create job opportunities, boost local production, and improve the overall quality of products and services offered in the market."

However, he said, "it is essential to maintain transparency, uphold business ethics, and ensure mutual benefits for all stakeholders involved in these collaborations."

Türkiye's Central Bank revises up inflation forecasts

ANKARA (APP): Türkiye's Central Bank on Thursday revised its year-end inflation forecast upwards for 2023, 2024 and 2025.

The annual consumer inflation is projected to hit 58% this year, revised 35.7 points up from the previous forecast, Governor Hafize Gaye Erkan told a meeting held to release the bank's third quarterly inflation report this year.

The end-2024 forecast was raised to 33% from the previous projection of 8.8% and end-2025 forecast to 15% from 5%, Erkan noted.

The upward revisions were due to Turkish lira-denominated import prices, output gap, food prices, administered prices and unit labor cost and forecast deviation and change in forecasting approach.

"Compared to the previous reporting period, developments in lira-denominated import prices pushed our year-end inflation forecasts for 2023 and 2024 up by 7.5 and 8.3 points, respectively. This was mainly driven by exchange rate developments," Erkan explained. Food prices added 8.5 percentage points for 2023, and 6.0 percentage points for 2024 to the bank's forecasts, she stressed.

"Changes made to other economic policies, such as transfers to households, taxes, wages and adminis-

tered price adjustments, raised the end-2023 inflation forecast by 7.5 points and end-2024 inflation forecast up by 8.3 points."

The stronger-than-expected domestic demand pushed the year-end inflation forecasts up by 1.3 points for 2023 and by 0.4 points for 2024, Erkan noted. "Lastly, the effects of forecast deviations and the change in forecasting approach added 10.9 and 5.9 points to our year-end forecasts for 2023 and 2024, respectively," she said.

While gradually raising the policy rate, the bank is committed to boost the functionality of market mechanisms through the simplification process with a view to enabling market rates to become more aligned with inflation expectations, the governor said.

Erkan underlined that the bank will continue to take stabilizing steps that target inflation through selective credit tightening and aims to ensure stable development in the Turkish lira liquidity without generating excessiveness in exchange rates and domestic demand.

"The Central Bank will make decisions based entirely on data and in complete coordination in line with the principles of confidence, stability and transparency," she said.

Chinese market makes up for US downturn

BEIJING (APP): LVMH, the world's leading luxury products group, has said that while the recovery of the Chinese sales market has helped business remain steady, the US luxury market has slowed down.

LVMH's US sales slid 1 percent in the second quarter from the prior-year period, which was caused by a decline in sales of entry-level products, said Jean-Jacques Guiony, CFO of LVMH, during the Tuesday earnings call.

The CFO said the exact reason was not clear, but fading stimulus payments after COVID-19 could have contributed to the drop. He added that high-priced goods at LVMH's most expensive brands are holding up well in the United States, presumably due to wealthier shoppers who are less sensitive to inflation, student debt and the economy.

"China offered a major contrast" from the United States, US media outlet CNBC reported. Overall, the article said, LVMH's reported sales rose 17 percent in the first quarter, helped by a 34% increase in Asia excluding Japan. In April 2023, LVMH shares soared to a record high, making it the first European company to surpass 500 billion US dollars in market value, the New York Times said earlier.

‘One Life, One Liver: Protect Both with Prevention & Treatment’ World Hepatitis Day marked

F.P. Report

LAHORE: World Hepatitis Day is marked by the World Health Organization as a public health issue of priority. The theme this year is "One Life, One Liver" to highlight the importance of protecting both by prevention and treatment. Pakistan has one of the highest rates of hepatitis B & C in the region, and unfortunately, a large number of people suf-

fering from chronic hepatitis remain unaware of their diagnosis. If left untreated, chronic hepatitis can progress to an irreversible stage of advanced liver disease and may lead to liver cancer, liver failure, or even death. We cannot wait and must act now to fight both hepatitis and cancer to save lives.

On this occasion, in a television interview, Dr Faisal Sultan, CEO of Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer

Hospital and Research Centre (SKMCH&RC) emphasised that people must not demand unnecessary injections and healthcare professionals must avoid unsafe injection practices, using un-screened blood for transfusions, and unsterilized equipment for dental or surgical procedures for prevention of hepatitis B and C. A vaccine is available for hepatitis B, which makes possible to control new

cases and treatment is available for hepatitis C.

The sooner you start treatment for hepatitis, the better chance you have at a long and healthy life. At Shaukat Khanum Laboratory

Collection Centres across Pakistan, testing is available for hepatitis. Gastroenterologists at SKMCH&RC also offer comprehensive evaluation and treatment for gastrointestinal diseases, including hepatitis B and C.

Economic Watch: China's Guangxi reaps cross-border trade bonanza with influx of goods and travelers

NANNING (APP): Soon after the Youyiguan border crossing in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region opened for customs clearing, a procession of trucks carrying goods like fruits, electronic appliances and agricultural products from ASEAN countries began streaming into the world's second-largest economy.

Simultaneously, vehicles laden with textiles,

auto parts, and steel moved in the opposite direction, facilitating seamless trade between the regions.

The daily traffic capacity of Youyiguan Port, one of China's most vibrant land ports for imported and exported fruits, located at the China-Vietnam border in Pingxiang City, has now fully returned to the pre-pandemic level after nearly three years of partial closure.

In the first half of 2023, the total value of Guangxi's cross-border trade hit 62.6 billion yuan (about 8.71 billion US dollars), up 126.3 percent year on year, accounting for 18.5 percent of the region's total foreign trade value, customs data showed.

Imported durians, characterized by their pungent aroma and thorny texture, were neatly lined up on custom platforms, awaiting clearance by customs officials.

Upon completing the inventory of a fresh batch of durians, Nong Liqing, the general manager of an import and export company based in Pingxiang, swiftly coordinated the transportation of the spiky fruits to her clients in the neighboring Guangdong Province

and east China's Zhejiang Province.

"We imported over 1,000 containers of durians in the first half of this year, doubling the amount for the same period last year," said Nong, adding that currently, over a dozen containers of durians are imported every day.

In the first six months of this year, Youyiguan Port witnessed an astounding 180 percent increase in car trips compared to the previous year, with nearly 200,000 journeys made. This remarkable surge in vehicle traffic is equivalent to the total recorded for the entire year of 2022, with the port experiencing a substantial influx of vehicles crossing its gates from both sides of the border.

"After China downgraded its COVID-19 management early this year, Guangxi's customs clearance capability has been rebounding massively, and the scale of its border trade has also climbed up steadily," said Yang Baoqing, deputy director of Nanning Customs.

Holding a 15-day tourist visa, Hoang Thi Tuyet, from northern Vietnam, arrived at the Youyiguan border crossing on the afternoon of July 19, and it

only took her a few minutes to get the paperwork sorted at the checkpoint.

"I visited China as a tourist a few years back, but this time, I plan to stay for around 10 days," said Hoang, "I will visit some friends in the city of Wuzhou, and take a tour around Pingxiang on my way back to Vietnam."

Guangxi has seen a growing influx of travelers coming in through its border with Vietnam since the beginning of this year as cross-border tourism has been rebooted and started to pick up steam.

Official data from Youyiguan Port shows that between January and June, the Youyiguan border checkpoint handled over 604,000 passenger trips, up 180 percent year on year, while the Dongxing Port, which borders Vietnam, saw over 1.53 million passenger trips.

According to Fan Guoqing, the director of culture, sports and tourism bureau of Dongxing, with the total number of tourists reaching 5.61 million, the city experienced explosive growth in the tourism sector, raking in 5.66 billion yuan in revenue in the first half of this year.



In brief

McIntosh wins world title

F U K U O K A (AFP/APP): Canadian teen Summer McIntosh won the women's 200m butterfly title at swimming's world championships on Thursday. The 16-year-old came home in 2min, 04.06sec to finish ahead of Australia's Elizabeth Dekkers on 2:05.46 and American Regan Smith on 2:06.58. McIntosh, the defending champion, had endured a frustrating championship going into the race. She finished fourth in the 400m freestyle on the opening night, losing her world record to gold-medallist Ariarne Titmus. She then finished third behind Australian pair Mollie O'Callaghan and Titmus in the 200m freestyle. Smith had already won silver in the 100m backstroke and was set to swim in the 50m backstroke final around half an hour later.

Top performers to get advance training

LAHORE (APP): Sports Board Punjab (SBP)'s Summer Camps of various games were conducted across all the divisions of the province on Thursday. Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail said that thousands of boys and girls are taking part in summer camps of 14 games in all divisions where expert coaches are imparting training to camp probables. "The summer camps are being organized to incline our young boys and girls towards healthy sports activities during their free time of summer vacations". Dr Asif Tufail informed that Sports Board's expert coaches were imparting training to young camp probables in two sessions in all divisions of the province including Lahore Division, Bahawalpur, Sargodha, DG Khan, Gujranwala, Sahiwal, Multan, Faisalabad and Rawalpindi. DG , SBP informed that the competitions will be organized among the top performers of summer camps.

Wahab Riaz greets Pakistan cricket team

LAHORE (APP): Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz has felicitated Pakistan cricket team for winning second Test match by an innings and 222 runs and inflicting a 2-0 whitewash against hosts Sri Lanka in 2-match Test series on Thursday. In a greeting message here on Thursday, Riaz said the Pakistan cricket team proved their supremacy in all departments of the game against the host team. He said that the national cricket squad and team management deserved huge appreciation for their magnificent performance. He praised the match winning performance of batters Abdullah Shafiq (201 runs) and Agha Salman (132). He also appreciated the performance of bowlers Noman Ali (7 wickets), pacer Naseem Shah (6 wickets in match) and Abrar Ahmed (4 wickets) in the convincing innings victory.

PSB issues NOS

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) on Thursday issued no objection certificate (NOC) for national men hockey team's participation in the Asian Champions Trophy, starting in Chennai, India, from August 3. The NOC was issued after getting clearance from the ministries concerned and other relevant authorities, said a press release issued here. The process to secure the NOC for travel to India is rigorous and PSB has diligently facilitated the necessary procedures. Asian Champions Trophy is one of the major hockey events on the Asian Hockey Federation Calendar.

Noman Ali seven-for wraps up Pakistan's 2-0 victory



COLOMBO (Sri Lanka) (APP): Taking 11-catches, two run-outs and a stump mean excellent fielding by Pakistan team who squeezes Sri Lanka at their home ground in the second Test securing an innings and 222 runs victory and become the first team to beat Sri Lanka in the 5-Series, breaking England record of four times.

With the victory in the second Test, Pakistan finished the Series 2-0. Pakistan squeezed Sri Lanka by winning two Test Series, the first one in Galle and second one in Colombo. It is worth mentioning here that Pakistani fielders have taken 18 catches out of 20 wickets while in the second Test taking another 11 catches out of 20 wickets.

It is a unique record that Pakistan have taken all the 10 wickets in the first innings at Galle and similarly 8 in the second innings while in the second Test played at Colombo Pakistan took 11 catches overall, six in the first innings and five in the second innings.

The spectacular performances of the Pakistanis against Sri Lanka is because of the excellent fielding as well. Pakistan defeated Sri Lanka by an innings and 222 runs to win the two-match series 2-0. The highlight of the fourth day of the second Test was Nauman Ali's innings with seven wickets. Abdullah Shafiq's double century reminded us of the beauty of cricket.

However, both Pakistan and Sri Lanka batsmen piled up 2115 runs overall while the bowlers did not remain behind who took 65 wickets overall, which showed the overall beauty of the cricket between two key teams of the cricket world. Pakistan took the Test Series victory after

two-years. Pakistan won the series by an innings and 222 runs on the fourth day of the second Test of the series being played at the Sri Lanka Kesinhalese Cricket Club Ground, Colombo. This was Pakistan's fifth victorious series in Sri Lanka. There is a new record. Before that, England and Pakistan had lost four times to Sri Lanka in the Test series at their home ground. Abdullah Shafiq's double century, Salman Agha's century and Noman Ali's innings had seven wickets in Pakistan's victory. If we look back at the series, the Pakistan team looked very united under the leadership of Babar Azam. Secondly, all the players were young, who showed a great performance.

The catches that Pakistani fielders caught will be remembered for a long time. Saud Shakeel's seventh consecutive half-century is also a highlight of

this Test match. Saud Shakeel has also scored a double century in the first match, thanks to which Pakistan managed to win the first match of the two-Test series. Saud Shakeel was declared the man of the match. Left-handed middle order batsman Saud Shakeel became the first batsman in the history of Test cricket to score more than 50 runs in each match in the first 7 matches.

Saud Shakeel made 76 in his first match against England, 63 in the first innings of the second match and 94 in the second, and 53 in the third match against England. In addition, he scored 53 runs in the third match against New Zealand in the first Test match of the home series played in Karachi. He was not out by scoring 55 runs in the first innings and 125 runs in the second Test match.

The left-handed batsman scored an unbeaten 208 runs in

the first and sixth matches of the current series against Sri Lanka, while he was dismissed for 57 runs in the match being played in Colombo.

On the fourth day, Pakistan declared the first innings against Sri Lanka by scoring 576 runs for the loss of 5 wickets, not-out batsman Salman Agha and Muhammad Rizwan opened the innings. When Muhammad Rizwan completed his half-century, Babar Azam declared the innings. Salman Agha was not out on 132 and Muhammad Rizwan was not out on 50 runs.

In this way, he got a big lead of 410 runs over the host team. The second innings man Sri Lankan openers Madushka and Dimuth Karunaratne provided a start of 69 runs in the first wicket partnership. It seemed that the match would go on till the fifth day, but as soon as Noman Ali came, the Sri Lankan batsmen

were turned around.

The wickets started to scatter like autumn leaves and the whole team was bowled out for 188 runs. On behalf of Sri Lanka, Nishan Madushka 33 runs, captain Dimuth Karunaratne 41 runs, Kaushal Mendes 14 runs, Dinesh Chandimal one and Dhananjaya de Silva 10 runs, Sudira Samara Wickrama 5 runs, Ramesh Mendes 16 runs, Parbat Jayasuriya (0). Aseetha Fernando Safar and Dilshan Madushanka also got out for zero, experienced batsman Angelo Mathews scored 63 runs. Left-arm spinner Nauman Ali took 7 wickets while fast bowler Naseem Shah took 7 wickets from Pakistan.

Pakistan had consolidated their position by the end of play on the third day of the second Test match against Sri Lanka. Thanks to Abdullah Shafiq's double century and Agha Masood's century, Pakistan has made 563 for the loss of five wickets and its overall lead against Sri Lanka has become 397 runs. The highlight of the third day's game was opener Abdullah Shafiq. It was a double century.

Opener Salman also scored another century for Pakistan on the third day and thus increased Pakistan's lead. After Abdullah Shafique was out, Mohammad Rizwan came to support Saud Shakeel. Currently, Agha Masood is on 132 while Mohammad Rizwan is on the wicket with 37 runs.

Saud Shakeel has scored 875 runs at an average of 87.50 in 13 Test match innings in the last one year. Captain Babar Azam scored 650 runs at an average of 50 in 13 innings, while Salman Agha, who made his third century today, scored 542 runs in 13

innings at an average of 54.20. Madhav Shanka was caught off Surya's ball.

At the start of the day, Abdullah Shafiq resumed his innings with 87 runs and in the final session he managed to cross the 200-run mark. After this achievement, he took off his helmet and pointed to his name written on the back of his jersey. He faced 326 balls and his innings included 19 fours and four sixes. Now the series of tributes to Abdullah Shafiq continues on social media. The highlight of his innings is that he became the second Pakistani batsman to score a double century against Sri Lanka in Sri Lanka. In the third day's play, Salman also played attacking cricket, which is the new style of the Pakistani team and completed his second century with a four. ?Salman Ali Agha was declared Man of the Series while Abdullah Shafiq got Man of the Match trophy.

Summaries Score: Pakistan won by an innings and 222 runs, winning the Two Test Series 2-0.

Sri Lanka 166 first innings
Dhananjaya de Silva 77 (68)
Dinesh Chandimal 34 (60)
Abrar Ahmad 4/69 (20.4)
Naseem Shah 3/41 (14)
Pakistan 576/5 declared First Innings

Abdullah Shafique 201 (326)
Salman Ali Agha 132 not out (154)

Asitha Fernando 3/133 (25)
Prabath Jayasuriya 2/194 (53)
Sri Lanka 188 2nd Innings
Angelo Mathews not out 63 (127)

Dimuth Karunaratne 41 (61)
Nouman Ali 7/70 (23)
Naseem Shah 3/44 (17.4)
Toss: Sri Lanka, decided to bat first

World Cup mums balance parenting with football ambitions

SYDNEY (AFP/APP): Jamaican Women's World Cup player Cheyna Matthews tears up when she recalls one of her three little boys saying: "Why are you always gone so long?"

But some players at the tournament in Australia and New Zealand have found a solution to suffering similar anxieties about being apart from their young children for weeks -- they have brought them with them.

Midfielder Melanie Leupolz has her infant son and a nanny for the tournament, which will last one month if her German side

fulfill expectations back home by reaching the final in Sydney on August 20. Throw in preparations in the build-up and it can be a long trip.

Leupolz left the youngest member of the Germany squad with his nanny for two days at the team base north of Sydney while the team flew to Melbourne, where they opened their campaign with a 6-0 thrashing of Morocco.

"It's quite a challenge. It's draining and takes up a lot of energy," the 29-year-old Chelsea player said in an interview with broad-

caster DAZN, reflecting on balancing her playing career with parenting.

"I wanted to show women: Hey, you can do both. That's what drove me." In an interview broadcast this week by football's governing body FIFA, Matthews and her Jamaican team-mate Konya Plummer are seen laughing as they look at videos of their children. But there are tears, too, because they are apart.

"The reason I really push to play soccer is that I want my kid to know I am strong," says Plummer, who has a baby boy.

Pakistan U16 volleyball team advance to Asian Volleyball C'ship semifinal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan under 16 volleyball team showcased an outstanding performance, defeating Thailand and earning a well-deserved place in the semifinals of the 1st Asian U16 Volleyball Championship in Uzbekistan on Thursday.

In an exhilarating match against Thailand, the young Pakistani athletes demonstrated exceptional skills and determination, resulting in a well-deserved victory with a final score of 3-0, according to information received here.

The spirit and agility exhibited on the court were indicative of the immense talent and potential possessed by the rising stars of Pakistan's volleyball.

Volleyball Pakistan

Federation (PVF) in a statement acknowledged the team's accomplishment.

Chairman PVF Muhammad Yaqoob was effusive in his praise for the U16 team, emphasizing their commitment and hard work, which enabled them to surpass a formidable opponent like Thailand.

He expressed his delight at the team's achievement and expressed confidence in their ability to excel in the forthcoming matches.

President PVF Sohail Khawar Mir also extended his warmest congratulations to the victorious athletes, highlighting their extraordinary teamwork and skill set.

Mir attributed the success to the relentless efforts of the coaching

staff and the undying spirit of the players, who showcased resilience and never-give-up attitude throughout the match. Associate Secretary, former xaptain Pakistan Volleyball Team Naseer Ahmed appreciated young players and announced Rs1,00,000 for the team.

The Pakistani team, under the able leadership of their coach, has been displaying exceptional teamwork, resilience, and technical expertise, making the nation proud with their remarkable performance in the championship thus far. With their recent victory, the U16 team has elevated the expectations for future volleyball tournaments.

Malicious elements trying to cheat players & Public: PBBF

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) has clarified that it is the only elected body under the leadership of Brigadier (ret'd) Muhammad Itfikh Mansoor and Khalid Bashir which has affiliation with Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) and international bodies of basketball.

It has also clarified in a statement that the elected president of Pakistan Basketball Federation is Brigadier (R) Muhammad Itfikh Mansoor and Secretary General Khalid Bashir, which is the only representative organization of Pakistan Basketball Federation and under their umbrella all the national and international events can be held including the development and promotion of basketball.

The elected body is also affiliated with the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) and Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) as well as all departments, provincial and divisional teams are also affiliated with the federation, while under the agreement of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the government of Pakistan also recognizes the same federation which is affiliated to the world body. It stated that some malicious elements are trying to deceive the players and the public by using the name of Pakistan Basketball Federation and harming the game of basketball, so beware of the evil elements and protect yourself from harm.

Warner dismisses suggestions of quitting Test cricket

LONDON (INP): Australia opener David Warner has dismissed suggestions he and Steve Smith are going to quit Test cricket after the final Ashes contest against England beginning here at the Oval on Thursday. Warner has expressed his desire to play his last Test in Sydney against Pakistan in January next year though he wants to play on until the 2024 T20 World Cup.

Australia have already retained the Ashes urn taking a 2-1 lead heading into the final Test, and former England captain Michael Vaughan is among those who believe the duo could exit after the match at the Oval. Warner, talking to reporters on the eve of the match, called it a "joke".

"And Smithy [is retiring] too apparently. So obviously it's a joke," Warner said. "I won't take that too seriously ... I don't have an announcement."

A fixture at the top of the Australian order since his debut in 2011, Warner has managed 201 runs in the ongoing Ashes series averaging 25.12 with a top score of 66. "I've probably left a few out there but in saying that, I've played a lot better than what I did last time," Warner said.

"I feel like I'm in a good space, contributed well, and as a batting unit we're all about partnerships, and I think the partnerships that we've had in key moments of this series have actually worked very well for us as a

team." Warner knows he is near the end of his Test career and the 36-year-old backed Matt Renshaw to succeed him and dominate both Test and ODI formats like Australia batting great Matthew Hayden did in his playing days. Australia's captain Pat Cummins also dismissed the "completely made up" suggestion that Warner and Smith would walk away at the Oval and said they were focused on the task at hand.

"It's a big week," the fast bowler said. "If we win this one and you look back, it's been an incredible tour over. "It's already a fantastic tour. But to go home winning the urn will be phenomenal. It's a final thing to tick off the list of titles to win for a few of the guys.

Grandhomme aids Brampton Wolves to edge Montreal Tigers in GT20

BRAMPTON (INP): An all-round effort from Colin de Grandhomme bolstered Brampton Wolves to sink Montreal Tigers by 15 runs in the top-of-the-table clash of the ongoing GT20. The former New Zealand all-rounder backed his first-innings half-century with two wickets and a run out to dent the Tigers' expedition of emerging victorious in the GT20 top-of-the-table clash.

Put into bat first, the Wolves could accumulate 143 before being bundled out in the final over despite Colin de Grandhomme's gutsy half-century. The Wolves had a dis-

mal start to their innings as Shakib Al Hasan castled Aaron Johnson (6) to push the visitors on the back foot. Wicketkeeper batter Usman Khan, however, stitched an anchoring second-wicket partnership with Mark Chapman before falling to Aayan Afzal Khan in the seventh over.

He scored a brisk 21-ball 33, laced with six boundaries. The Wolves coped another blow in the same over when Hussain Talat perished for a three-ball duck. Following back-to-back dismissals, Mark Chapman joined forces with his countrymate Colin de

Grandhomme and the duo stitched a crucial partnership for their side. The Kiwi pair added 36 runs to their fourth-wicket partnership before Abbas Afridi got rid of Chapman, who contributed notably with a 22-ball 21.

Chapman's dismissal sparked a frustrating collapse in the Wolves' batting lineup. Meanwhile, Grandhomme kept the scoreboard ticking single-handedly whilst losing partners at the other end at an alarming rate and scored a fighting half-century before finally perishing in the final over.

Liverpool confirm captain's move to Al-Ettifaq

LONDON (BBC): Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson has joined Saudi Arabian club Al-Ettifaq.

The England midfielder, 33, has moved in a deal worth £12m plus add-ons. In a goodbye video a day earlier, Henderson had announced that he would be leaving the club after 12 years during which he won the Premier League and Champions League.

"Everyone at the club wishes to place on record their thanks and gratitude for everything Jordan did for us," said a Liverpool statement. Henderson had been at Liverpool since joining from Sunderland in a deal worth £20m in June 2011. He played 492 times for the Reds, scoring 33 goals and registering 57 assists, and won seven major trophies with the club. "You are a legend," said Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp in a video on the club's social media channels. "I know people say recently we use that word slightly too often. I can

tell you, that it's not in your case." Henderson, who has signed a deal running until 2026 with Al-Ettifaq, will link up again with ex-Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard, who is manager of the Saudi Pro League side. The pair were teammates at the Anfield club before Gerrard left in 2015.

"I know it was a really, really tough decision for Hendo and I was around or with him all the way," Klopp told Liverpool's website. "It's sad, absolutely strange, because he is the only captain I had here at Liverpool, but I think it is exciting for him as well."

"We will miss him, without a shadow of a doubt, that's clear - as a man and as a player. But, as I said, that's football." Henderson became Liverpool captain in 2015 and led the side to Champions League victory in 2019 before they went on to win the Uefa Super Cup and Fifa Club World Cup later that year.

He was also the Reds skipper when the club won the 2019-20 Premier League to end a 30-year wait for the English top-flight title. Henderson's other honours at Liverpool include winning the FA Cup in 2022 and League Cup in 2012 and 2022.

He travelled with Liverpool for their training camp in Germany but was not involved in their opening game of pre-season against Karlsruher on 19 July after a deal was agreed in principle between them and Al-Ettifaq.

"In the moment, it is absolutely fine but it was already ongoing for a while now, so we had time to adapt to it and get used to it," said Klopp.

"It is football, it is life, it is normal, these kind of things happen."

"Monday, when we arrived back in Liverpool, Hendo was waiting for us to say goodbye properly to the team and to the coaching staff as well, so that was a really nice gesture - a really nice thing to do."



In brief

IRSA releases 439,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 439,700 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 537,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1531.90 feet and was 133.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 287,100 cusecs and 261,300 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1222.20 feet, which was 172.22 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded 82,400 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 307,700, 387,600, 349,700, and 260,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 67,100 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 79,200 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

World Hepatitis Day today

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Hepatitis Day will be marked on Friday (July 28) across the globe including Pakistan to promote awareness of hepatitis, a disease that affects the liver. One way of preventing hepatitis is to get a vaccine against the disease before traveling. The United Nations and the World Hepatitis Alliance work with individuals and community groups to promote awareness raising campaigns worldwide about hepatitis. Information about World Hepatitis Day is usually distributed via social media, newspapers, posters, and through the World Health Organization (WHO) website. Hepatitis simply means inflammation of the liver and can be caused by different things. One of the most common causes of chronic (long-term) hepatitis is viral infection. According to the World Hepatitis Alliance, about 500 million people are currently infected with chronic hepatitis B or C and 1 in 3 people have been exposed to one or both viruses. The World Hepatitis Alliance first launched World Hepatitis Day in 2008. Following on, the UN declared official recognition of this event in 2010.

AIOU announces admission schedule

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced the admission schedule for merit-based (face-to-face) programs offered in the first phase of semester autumn 2023 admissions. According to AIOU, face-to-face programs offered in this phase include BS, MBA, M.Sc (Hons), MPhil, MS, and PhD programs. Admission forms and prospectuses of these programs are available on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk). New students can apply online till August 15, while current students in these programs (continuing students) can enroll in the next semester till August 22. The entrance test/interviews for admission to MPhil, MS, and Ph.D programs will be held from August 17-23. According to the details, the tests/interviews of the Faculty of Education will be held on August 17-18. Tests/interviews for the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities are scheduled on August 18-19, the Faculty of Science on August 21-22 while Tests/Interviews for the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies will be held on August 22-23. Merit Lists of successful candidates will be uploaded on the university website within two weeks.



ISLAMABAD: Heavy machinery being used to expand lanes on Islamabad Expressway.

NA speaker pays tribute to Capt Sarwar Shaheed on his 75th martyrdom anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly (NA) Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Thursday commemorated Captain Muhammad Sarwar Shaheed, who embraced martyrdom in the Uri sector of Kashmir in 1948 while defending the motherland with great reverence.

He, in a statement, praised Captain Muhammad Sarwar Shaheed's unparalleled bravery and courage in the pages of history.

In recognition of his

valor and bravery, the speaker said Captain Sarwar Shaheed was posthumously honored with the nation's highest military award, Nishan-e-Haider. "On the occasion of his 75th martyrdom anniversary, the entire nation pays tribute to Captain Muhammad Sarwar Shaheed, saluting his bravery and courage," he added. He acknowledged the Captain Muhammad Sarwar Shaheed's ultimate sacrifice for the defense of the

motherland.

"The valleys of Kashmir still bear witness to the bravery and courage of Captain Muhammad Sarwar Shaheed," he added. "Martyrs are our true heroes, and living nations always cherish their heroes," the speaker remarked adding, "Today, we breathe in the air of freedom, thanks to the sacrifices of the martyrs. He said the nation took pride in its brave and gallant sons, and sacrifices of martyrs teach us unity, brotherhood, and fraternity.

'Fading Vistas' reminds Northern Areas of Pakistan at stakes amid climate change: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday said the coffee table book 'Fading Vistas' underscoring the beauty of Northern Pakistan reminded that what was at stakes in the highly glaciated region of the country due to climate change.

The Minister expressed her views while launching the coffee table book launched under the GLOF-II project with the title "Fading Vistas --Beauty of Northern Pakistan" which was followed by a photograph exhibition showcasing the natural beauty and unprecedented scenic ecosystems existing in the mountainous region of the country. The GLOF-II is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Climate Change

and Environmental Coordination, United Nations Development Programme-Pakistan (UNDP) supported by the Green Climate Fund.

In her keynote address, Senator Rehman appreciated the book and also lauded UNDP partnership in Pakistan. She said the mountains of the country were stunning and had emerged like a poster child at the content of every tourism company, social media magnets showcasing natural beauty and nature.

Pakistan had the largest glaciers outside the polar region and the experience of watching Indus River passing by the mountains in the north was a humbling feeling. "Many cities are holding direct flights to northern areas bringing plethora of tourists despite knowing the

fact that it might not accommodate such huge number of masses," the Minister said. She added that these mountains were facing real risk as these glaciers were melting faster than average. Senator Rehman in a calculated estimate said that the glacial melt was probably beyond 300% which she said on the basis of the past glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) event.

The Minister noted that there was no data available on the pace of melting glaciers. However, she said the melting of glaciers varied from glacier to glacier as some of it were more resilient due to rocks on it, hence causing slow melt.

She underlined that littering at snowy peaks was reaching at a critical level event at the highest peaks that were hard to access.

Key findings on DMPA-SC self injection disseminated

ISLAMABAD (APP): A national dissemination event of key findings on a national policy landscape analysis on DMPA-SC as self-injection in Pakistan was held here on Thursday.

The event was attended by national and provincial family planning partners including government representatives including departments of health and family planning, development partners and family planning private sector organizations. The event organized by RIZ Consulting and Jhpiego shared crucial insights and recommendations on DMPA-SC as self-injection in Pakistan.

Secretary National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, Iftikhar Ali Shallwani, acknowledged

the monumental efforts of RIZ Consulting, Jhpiego and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in advancing family planning initiatives in Pakistan.

He reaffirmed the Pakistan and specifically the federal Government's commitment to addressing population growth and promoting family planning, aiming for a healthier and empowered future while highlighting some of the potential challenges.

He mentioned capacity building of health providers, commodity security and the behaviour change communication will be some of the critical areas which need to be addressed while developing the strategy. The Secretary expressed heartfelt gratitude to donor agencies

for their support and sought continued partnership from RIZ Consulting, Jhpiego, and other partners to further expand the implementation of DMPA-SC self-injection in Pakistan.

During the event, the introduction and scaling up of DMPA-SC, particularly in Sindh province, were recognized as a pivotal game-changer in family planning methods, contributing to controlling population growth and optimizing the use of available resources. He reiterated the unwavering commitment of the Government of Pakistan and its partners to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, promoting gender equality, and prioritizing the reproductive health and well-being.

ANF seizes 64 kg drugs in four operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force while conducting four operations across the country, seized 64 kg of drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here Thursday.

He informed that in an operation, two accused including a woman, real brother and sister, resident of Turbat, allegedly trying to smuggle drugs were arrested near Indus Chowrangi in Karachi. The ANF recovered 10 kg hashish and 4 kg heroin from their possession.

In the second operation, 3 kg heroin was recovered from the secret cavities of a

car intercepted near Gahi Khan Chowk Quetta. Two accused residents of Mastung, trying to smuggle drugs from Mastung to Quetta were netted during the operation. In the third operation, 30 kg of opium concealed to smuggle was recovered near Dalbandin Bypass Chagai.

In fourth operation, 17 kg of hashish concealed in plastic bags was recovered from a deserted area of Jarobi Zakha Khail, Khyber.

Separate cases have been registered against all the accused and further investigations are under process.

Capital's air quality healthy for third consecutive day

ISLAMABAD (APP): The air quality of the federal capital is healthy for the consecutive third day with a peaceful and soothing ambience embracing clouds hovering over Margalla Hills National Park with a light drizzle kissing the foothills of Himalayas on Thursday.

The air pollution in the metropolis remained low since the onset of the recent monsoon spell as prolonged rainy weather helped in containing air pollutants ration in the atmosphere. The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) daily air quality report indicated a reduced ratio of air pollutants, recorded below permissible limits, and the air quality was healthy. The Agency is responsible to ensure the protection of the environment under the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act 1997.

The hazardous air pollutant particulate matter of 2.5 microns (PM2.5), which was a hazardous atmospheric contaminant, remained 14.49 microgrammes per cubic meter on average which was higher than the national environmental quality standards (NEQS) of 35 microgrammes per cubic meter and denoted the air quality unhealthy.

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a historic collaboration, four leading Pakistani state-owned companies will join hands for Greenfield Refinery Project in Baluchistan. The momentous Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony took place at OGDCL House Islamabad.

The Pakistani state-owned entities, Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Pakistan State Oil (PSO), Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), and Government Holdings Private Limited (GHPL), will collaborate through a joint investment strategy. The project will have significant foreign investment from world-class oil and gas giants through equity participation.

The project envisions setting up an integrated refinery petrochemical complex with crude oil processing capacity of minimum 300,000 BPD along with petrochemical facility in Pakistan. The integrated refinery petrochemical complex shall comprise of various

President calls for early diagnosis of hepatitis cases to avert liver cancer epidemic

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has said that as Pakistan has the world's largest population of hepatitis patients, it was a must to prioritize the screening and early diagnosis of the disease and any delayed action could lead to a devastating liver cancer epidemic.

"Presently, Pakistan has the world's largest population of patients living with Hepatitis C, a staggering 10 million cases... Without timely action, the number of HCV-infected cases in Pakistan may rise exponentially, leading to a devastating liver cancer epidemic," the president said in his message to the nation on World Hepatitis Day annually observed on July 28.

He said World Hepatitis Day was commemorated to raise awareness about the critical issue of hepatitis and related diseases in Pakistan. He said Hepatitis B and C viruses posed significant public health threats, causing immense morbidity and mortality worldwide.

"In the Eastern

Mediterranean Region, a staggering 80% of the hepatitis C disease burden lies in Egypt and Pakistan. While Egypt has made commendable progress in combating hepatitis C, regrettably, our country remains a major contributor to this burden in our region," he remarked.

The president said Hepatitis C was a dangerous, silent disease, often carrying no signs or symptoms until it has done significant damage to the liver.

We must realize that individuals infected with this virus continue to carry it for years, putting them at high risk of advanced-stage liver disease and cancer, he added. He said in order to ensure the well-being of our nation, we need to prioritize the screening and early diagnosis of hepatitis C cases. It is our duty to actively screen our entire population and promptly treat those found positive, the president added.

"The consequences are alarming: numerous deaths, liver cirrhosis cases, and a

significant burden on our economy. We cannot let this happen; we must take action today to secure a healthier and prosperous future for our nation," he advised. He said on World Hepatitis Day, the nation should reaffirm its commitment to making hepatitis prevention, control, and elimination a national priority. We are scaling up screening, testing, and treatment efforts while emphasizing preventive interventions nationwide.

President Alvi called for addressing the risk factors of the disease urgently, such as ensuring safe blood transfusions, using auto-disable syringes, strict infection control practices in healthcare settings, and implementing hepatitis B birth dose and adult vaccination. He called upon all healthcare workers, stakeholders, and citizens to join hands in this crucial endeavour. "Let us spread awareness about hepatitis prevention, screening, and treatment throughout our communities."

Admin, Police finalize foolproof arrangements for Muharram

RAWALPINDI (APP): All the arrangements have been finalized for the 9th and 10th of Muharram while over 6000 cops would guard 64 mourning processions and 113 majlis of the district.

The district administration and law enforcers have finalized all necessary arrangements to facilitate the mourners.

Rawalpindi District Police, City Traffic Police (CTP), Rescue-1122 Rawalpindi, and other relevant departments have finalized all the arrangements for 'Youm-e-Ashura', to be observed on Saturday.

Six main processions of Zuljanah, Alam, and Tazia would be taken out on Ashura from different areas of the city.

All the processions would culminate at 10:00 p.m. at Imambargah Qadimi. Clerics and religious scholars would highlight the teachings of Imam Hussain (RA) and various aspects of the tragedy.

According to City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani, the Police had finalized elaborate security arrangements for the peaceful passage of 9th and 10th of Muharram and to avoid any untoward incident. Special security arrangements had been finalized for Muharram ul Haram in the district, he said.

"A three-layer security cover would be provided particularly to the main

Muharram processions with special arrangements ensuring rooftop duty and deployment of Quick Response Force (QRF)," he added.

"The foolproof security arrangements had been finalized for the main 10th Muharram procession of the city which starts from Satellite Town and culminates at Imam Bargah Qadimi."

Over 2500 security personnel would be deployed to guard the main procession while 3500 cops would provide security cover to other processions and majlis of the district. More than 1000 officers and personnel of traffic police would ensure traffic arrangements, he informed.

According to a police spokesman, no one would be allowed to carry weapons in Muharram procession except designated police officers. Police would not allow anybody to organize a new Muharram procession and on SOPs violation strict action would be taken against the violators, he added. A special 24/7 control room had also been set up, he said and informed that strict monitoring of Ashura processions would be conducted as Close Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras had been installed at routes of main Zuljinnah processions and places where majalis would be held.

Pakistani Oil Companies collaborate with Saudi Aramco for \$10b Greenfield Refinery Project

F.P. Report

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The Pakistani state-owned entities, Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Pakistan State Oil (PSO), Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), and Government Holdings Private Limited (GHPL), will collaborate through a joint investment strategy. The project will have significant foreign investment from world-class oil and gas giants through equity participation.

The project envisions setting up an integrated refinery petrochemical complex with crude oil processing capacity of minimum 300,000 BPD along with petrochemical facility in Pakistan. The integrated refinery petrochemical complex shall comprise of various



components such as marine infrastructure, petrochemical complex,

storages for crude oil and refines

utilities, pipeline connectivity etc.

Secretary Petroleum – Captain (R) Muhammad Mahmood in his opening remarks shared salient aspects of the Greenfield Refinery Policy and underscored the commitment of the Petroleum Division towards the

development and growth of the Petroleum Sector.

MoS (petroleum Division) – Dr. Musadik Masood Malik highlighted details of the project and its benefits to national economy by way of economic growth, foreign exchange savings, energy security, employment opportunities and social upliftment.



ISLAMABAD: A Silver man standing on the roadside at PWD Islamabad Expressway.

47 killed in flooding

KABUL (Pajhwok): At least 104 people have suffered casualties in last week's flash floods in 11 provinces of the country, the State Ministry for Disaster Management says. Shafiullah Rahmimi, head of the ministry's media office, said: "At least 47 people have died and 57 more have been wounded due to recent flooding in Maidan Wardak, Kabul, Kunar, Pakita, Khost, Nuristan, Nangarhar, Ghazni, Paktika, and Helmand."

The Frontier Post

Muharram 09, 1445 — Friday, July 28, 2023

Journalists facing new issues

KABUL (Agencies): Journalists in Afghanistan are facing a new requirement from the MIC to register and obtain identification cards in order to verify their identities and professional affiliations. "We started the process in Kabul and have informed provincial authorities to do the same," Abdul Wahid Rayan, MIC's director for media monitoring said. The identification cards issued to journalists will feature a bar code linked to the MIC website.

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

Afghan Foreign Minister to meet American officials

DOHA (TOLOnews): The spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tweeted that a delegation of the Islamic Emirate led by acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi is scheduled to travel to Doha at the end of this month to meet with American officials.

Abdul Qahar Balkhi tweeted that in the meeting, ending sanctions and blacklists, releasing Afghanistan's bank reserves, and stopping violations of Afghanistan's airspace will be discussed.

According to Muttaqi, the delegation of the Islamic Emirate will also discuss bilateral relations with Qatari officials.

The US Department of State said in a statement on Wednesday that the Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West

and Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls, and Human Rights Rina Amiri will travel to Astana, Kazakhstan, and Doha, Qatar from July 26-31.

Vedant Patel, the deputy spokesman for the US Department of State, said in a press briefing that "travel for special representative Tom West and Rina Amiri does not indicate any change in the policy of the United States, and "we have been very clear that we will engage with the Taliban appropriately when it is in our interest _ to do so. This does not - this is not intended to mean any kind of indication of recognition or any kind of indication of normalization or legitimacy of the Taliban."

Once again, he criticized the violation of human rights by the "Taliban" and

the marginalization of Afghan women and girls and called it worrying.

Meanwhile, the US special envoy for Afghan women and human rights, Rina Amiri, said on Twitter that she visited the UAE and encouraged by "discussions with representatives of Albania, Bangladesh, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the OIC and Tunisia."

"The reps stated that women's rights are protected in Islam and key to economic progress and stability," she said.

"There was wide agreement that the extreme repression of Afghan women and girls sets a dangerous precedent, particularly for Muslim-majority countries; these policies should not be normalized and the world must stand with Afghan women & girls," Amiri said.

Afghan relocation flights paused, activists call for resumption

WASHINGTON (VoA): Relocation flights from Afghanistan carrying Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applicants to US immigration processing centers in Qatar and other countries have been suspended for more than one month, and it's unclear when they will resume.

For nearly two years since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, the US Department of State's Office of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) has been relocating SIV-eligible Afghans by air and overland routes.

The US government used military planes to evacuate tens of thousands of Afghans amid a chaotic withdrawal from the country in August 2021.

Subsequently, most Afghans have been relocated by chartered commercial flights from Taliban-controlled Kabul airport.

A spokesperson for the Department of State confirmed that the relocation flights have been "paused since mid-June" but did not offer additional details because of operational sensitivity.

"We are hopeful these flights will resume soon," the spokesperson said.

Despite condemning the Taliban's repressive policies, US officials had previously welcomed the ability of SIV-eligible Afghans to board relocation flights.

Sources involved in support of CARE operations gave different explanations for the pause in the flights from Kabul.

One source, who asked not to be named in this article because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the group's security and operational issues, said the Taliban had suspended the flights because of internal disagreements.

However, Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesperson, said he was not aware of any restrictions imposed on the relocation flights on their part.

A second source said the US had paused the flights due to concerns that the Taliban leadership was benefiting from the chartered flights by Afghan carriers, potentially violating US economic sanctions on the Taliban.

Calls for resumption

While the US has no diplomatic presence in Afghanistan and has largely curtailed engagement with de facto Taliban authorities, activists say now is not the time to wind down the relocation program.

"Any efforts that the US has to meet our obligation to our allies should not be paused," said Shawn VanDiver, president of #AfghanEvac, an umbrella body of individuals and non-government organizations advocating for Afghans who worked for the US in Afghanistan.

"We have an obligation to those left behind," said Chris Purdy, director of Veterans for American Ideals and Outreach, a coalition of veterans that advocate for human rights.

Over 152,000 Afghans who say they worked for the US military in Afghanistan prior to the Taliban's return to power in August 2021 have applied for the SIV program, according to the Department of State.

They are competing for about 17,000 principal SIVs remaining in the program. Some US lawmakers have proposed legislation that will add 20,000 additional principal SIVs through 2029.

Human rights groups have accused the Taliban of targeting former Afghan government forces and individuals who worked for the US in the past, a charge the Taliban deny, saying the group has offered a general amnesty.

"I don't trust the Taliban," Purdy told VOA. "Just because someone has successfully hidden for two years doesn't mean that they should have to live their lives under fear."

Critics have also complained that the program is not moving quickly or efficiently enough to relocate vulnerable Afghans.

"For nearly two years, the US government has failed to evacuate at-risk Afghans in a speedy and efficient manner," said Adam Bates, a policy counsel with the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP).

The IRAP has filed a lawsuit in a US court accusing the government of leaving thousands of Afghan and Iraqi SIV applicants at serious risk in their home countries.

"Instead of abandoning its allies, the US must increase efforts and resources to create viable pathways to safety for at-risk Afghans, better late than never," said Bates.

US officials say they are committed to making every feasible effort to relocating SIV-eligible Afghans.

"Many factors in the relocation process impact the pace of operations and are out of the control of the US government," said the Department of State's spokesperson.

Foreign Ministry holds coordination meeting with UN agencies in Kabul



KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) said on Wednesday, that a coordination meeting between the IEA and the United Nations agencies was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the presence of the minister of foreign affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi.

The ministry said deputies and directors of the Ministries of Interior, Finance, Public Health and Economy were also present along with Daniel Anders, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Coordinator of Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations; and UNAMA officials; the heads of the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Program (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Office of Migration (IOM) and other agencies.

Daniel presented information about the new strategic plan of the United Nations for Afghanistan and the current situation of international aid, and expressed the renewed commitment of the United Nations to

help the people of Afghanistan. He said that the funding situation has improved after the last meeting. He further added that "the goal of the new United Nations plan is to harmonize humanitarian and development efforts by considering Afghanistan's long-term needs and the principle of aid sustainability."

The Minister of Foreign Affairs said that "the Islamic Emirate wants to turn the future aid to Afghanistan into business opportunities and manage it in such a way that its sustainable benefits reach the people and that Afghanistan gradually moves towards self-sufficiency."

IRC scales up support for Afghan flood victims



KABUL (Agencies): The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is scaling up support to the communities affected by the recent devastating floods in Kabul, Maidan Warak and Logar provinces in Afghanistan. The floods, triggered by heavy rainfall and exacerbated by climate change, have caused immense devastation in the region.

Climate change has emerged as a potent threat, disproportionately affecting regions like Maidan Wardak and Logar provinces, where populations rely on agricultural productivity and where they already face multiple challenges, including poverty and limited access to resources.

As a result of the floods, these populations have had to flee their homes, meaning they are left without basic provisions such as food and adequate shelter.

Rising temperatures, changing weather patterns, and increased frequency of extreme events, such as floods, are compounding the struggles of these communities, disrupting livelihoods, and eroding the

resilience of the local population. Regrettably, those who contribute the least to climate change are bearing the brunt of its consequences, the IRC said in a statement.

In addition, the IRC underscored the urgent need for global action to address climate change, its impact on vulnerable communities, and the inherent injustice in its unequal distribution of harm.

Mohammed Riyas, Regional Emergency Director for IRC in Asia, said: "Communities in Maidan Wardak and Logar provinces are grappling with the aftermath of these devastating floods, with more rainfall projected in the coming days. The situation demands immediate attention and support."

"While climate change is a global crisis, it is unequivocally evident that its impact is felt disproportionately by those who have contributed the least to its causes. We must stand in solidarity and recognise the moral imperative to support vulnerable communities as they face the consequences of a crisis they did not create."

"The IRC's emergency

response teams are working tirelessly to provide essential aid and services to those affected in Kabul and Logar, including health and medical support. In the coming days, we will also distribute cash to affected populations so that they are able to buy essential items. Just today, IRC launched a report that highlights that cash-based anticipatory action can help recover from, and build resilience to, climate disasters in fragile settings affected by both conflict and climate change."

The IRC calls on governments, international organizations, and individuals worldwide to rally together in addressing climate change and supporting vulnerable communities disproportionately impacted by its effects. Further, the humanitarian response plan is less than 25% funded, whilst 28.8 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. IRC calls on international donors to not leave the most vulnerable countries behind in climate financing, especially when many disasters are predictable.

‘Taliban needs to start actions if intends to seek int’l recognition’

WASHINGTON (TOLOnews): The deputy spokesman for the US Department of State, Vedant Patel, said that if the Taliban intends to seek international recognition, they need to "start directly with the actions and the policies they choose to undertake in Afghanistan."

Speaking at a press conference in Washington DC, Patel said that the US is "going to be watching very closely and will continue to take appropriate actions as needed."

"As it relates to the United States and Taliban, we have been incredibly clear, quite regularly condemning the clear backsliding that we are seeing in Afghanistan, the egregious human rights abuses, the marginalization of women and girls," he said.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Emirate said that ensuring the rights of women is an internal issue and no country should interfere in this regard.

"The Islamic Emirate has its own rules in issues of values and women—whatever the Islamic Sharia allows and whatever is ensured is based on Shariah. The Americans and other countries should not interfere in the internal issues of Afghanistan," said Zabiullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Islamic Emirate.

This comes as political analysts said that the issue of recognition is linked to the formation of an inclusive government, and the fulfillment of the international commu-



nity's wishes.

If the interim Afghan government does not take "some of the rules and procedures on the international level to recognize the government and doesn't take practical actions to eliminate restrictions against them, it will not be recognized by the international community, particularly the US," said Najib Rahman Shamal, political analyst.

"The main content and the fundamental issue is a change in the current political government of Afghanistan," said Wais Naseri, political analyst.

This comes as acting Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani at a gathering in Logar said that the Islamic Emirate does not need recognition of other countries as it has the support of the people of Afghanistan.

Iranian representative confer on refugee issues



KABUL (BNA): The Afghan charge de affairs in Tehran, Mawlawi Fazl Mohammad Haqqani, met with Dr. Mahmoudi, executive director of the consular

affairs of the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Afghan Embassy in Tehran in a statement said that the two sides discussed the creation of a Joint

Consular Commission, the issuance of machine-readable passports for newborns and students, and other issues related to the problems of Afghan refugees in Iran.

Farkhar residents lack access to education, health services

TALOQAN (Pajhwok): Some residents of Farkhar district in northern Takhar province have complained against the lack of basic services, including education and health, and asked concerned authorities to address their problems.

Mawlawi Zaidullah, a local elder expressed pleasure over the establishment of security and order, but complained that people in Farkhar did not had access to clean drinking water and health service.

He said Farkhar was rich in natural beauty and could attract tourists but its inhabitants did not have access to basic services.

He asked the government to address the social

problems faced by the local residents.

Najmuddin, head of the Farkhar Development Council, said proper attention was not paid to development of Farkhar district in past years.

He said work on some development projects such as the Kandal Canal which has the capacity to irrigate 2,500 acres of land and generate jobs had been postponed.

He asked the government to resume work on half-completed schemes.

Qari Hazratullah, another local elder, said the only source of income of Farkhar people was agriculture. He said due to drought and flash floods people suf-

fered financially.

"We want the government to ensure the implementation of development projects in coordination with NGOs," he said.

Deputy Education Director Mawlawi Khal Mohammad said 70 percent students in the district were deprived of education facilities. He acknowledged some schools in the district were without buildings too.

He said current government leadership and cooperative NGOs would pay attention to the development of education in the province.

Dr. Akhtar Mohammad Ebrat, deputy head of District Hospital, said the construction work of the

district hospital was expected to be completed in previous government. Around 70 percent of the construction work was incomplete which deprived thousand from health service, he added.

He said the resumption of the hospital's construction work was suggested to the government but no practical step had been taken so far.

Relevant officials have assured that government will pay serious attention to address the problems faced by the people of Farkhar.

Mullah Esmat Noor Mohammad, Takhar Rural Rehabilitation and Development Director, linked delay on the devel-

opment project with the non-availability of funds. He said some projects were funded by the World Bank who stopped the provision of funds after regime change for these projects.

He stressed the international community should separate politics and the provision of aid when it is linked directly with the survival of people.

Farkhar District Chief Mawlawi Abdul Basir Talha said 80 percent people in the district lived under the poverty line because it is a mountainous area.

He asked the NGOs for support.

He said local residents were cooperative with the



government and efforts were underway to address them.

This comes that earlier total 700 schools in the province were without school buildings. According to the Education Department 360 of the



ANKARA: Turkiye President Tayyab Erdogan shaking hands with Chinese Communist Party member Wang Yi prior to a meeting.

Balochistan’s uplift at par with other provinces inevitable: PM

F.P. Report

GWADAR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that the development of Balochistan at par with other provinces, was inevitable, which faced a 'criminal negligence' during the last five years.

The prime minister, who was on a visit, inaugurated multiple development projects which were conceived during Nawaz Sharif's tenure and were put to the backburner during the last five years. He told the newsmen that he had inaugurated a clean drinking water project, launched by Nawaz Sharif in 2015 but faced an unnecessary delay since then.

Similarly, the dredging of Gwadar Port was planned in 2015 but could not be completed despite the fact it had reduced the port's depth to impact the movement of ships. However, the incumbent government executed the project on a war-footing basis that would be completed by early 2024.

The prime minister said during the last five years, the cargo weighing 100,000 tons could be brought to the Gwadar Port comparing 600,000 during last 14 months of the current government which benefited the locals including laborers, transporters, cold storage owners and others. He said not only Pakistan, but other countries in the region will also benefit from the development of Gwadar Port.

He said the projects like Gwadar Export Zones also faced neglect in the past and an impression was created that Baloch locals were being neglected in the process which was not true and accurate in any way. The prime minister told the newsmen that his

True implementation of SIFC vision to usher in revolution: Shehbaz

F.P. Report

GWADAR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that the concerted efforts and true implementation of the vision of the SIFC would usher in the revolution and guarantee the prosperity of 220 million people of Pakistan. "The SIFC (Special Investment Facilitation Council) is the biggest motivating engine and vision for Pakistan's progress and prosperity. Nothing can impede our progress, if we follow this vision. This will bring in revolution," the prime minister said addressing the inauguration ceremony of multiple development projects here.

The prime minister unveiled the plaques to inaugurate Khuzdar-Panjgur transmission line; construction of a two-lane Khuzdar-Basima road; water supply and distribution scheme; 1.2MGD RO Desalination Plant; and initiation of Gwadar Port dredging. He broke ground for the rehabilitation and upgradation of Awaran-Naal and Awaran-Jhal Jaho roads; Khuzdar section of M8; Gwadar Safe City project; and the establishment of the University of Gwadar. He also unveiled the plaque marking the completion of airside infrastructure (runway, taxiway and apron) at New Gwadar International Airport. Lauding the vision and efforts of Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir - also present at the ceremony - for the establishment of SIFC, said a mechanism had been established to attract investment and put the country on the course of progress.

government had completed a project of 100 MW power transmission line from Iran to ease the lives of locals. Similarly, a Panjgur-Khuzdar transmission line has also been completed.

He said all of the said projects were conceived during Nawaz Sharif's tenure and funds were also allocated but "criminal negligence" was shown by the previous government. Similarly, he said the laptops were distributed among the top-performing students of public universities, which the previous government failed to do so, despite it being a tool for progress in the modern era.

He said the incumbent government

allocated billions of rupees for the laptop scheme. He said instead of a 6% allocated share of the laptop scheme for Balochistan, the federal government gave away the machines with a ratio of 14%, and the quota had further been increased to 18% for fiscal 2023-24. He said the federal cabinet had green-signalled a 300 MW coal power project for Gwadar and NEPRA had also approved the tariff. The prime minister thanked Chinese President Xi Jinping for a rollover of a \$2.4 billion loan for two years by EXIM Bank and overall support in the form of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Judge’s wife gets bail in maid torture case

LAHORE (INP): In a recent development, the wife of a civil judge has been granted protective bail in the case of the tortured maid in Sargodha. According to the details, Justice Farooq Haider of Lahore High Court (LHC) heard the protective bail plea and granted the protective bail to the accused till August 1.

It is pertinent to mention here that a case has been registered against the wife of a civil judge in Islamabad police station. A 14-year-old maid was allegedly subjected to brutal torture by the wife of a civil judge in Islamabad and a case was lodged by the parents of the girl at a local police station.

The wife of a civil judge namely Asim Hafeez deputied at the Federal Judicial Academy - Sargodha allegedly tortured her maid namely Rizwana after blaming her for stealing gold jewellery. The family of the affected maid said that the girl was working as a servant at the civil judge's house in Islamabad for six months and she was subjected to brutal torture by the civil judge's wife. They added that the owners did not pay a single penny of salary to the girl.

Police said that more than 15 torture marks were found on the affected girl's face and body. The seriously wounded maid was immediately shifted to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital for medical assistance. The doctors of the DHQ Hospital referred the girl to the Lahore Hospital for further treatment. Police said that the torture case will be lodged at a police station in Islamabad.

NEPRA notifies hike in base power tariff

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Neptra) on Thursday notified a massive increase in the base tariffs of electricity by up to Rs7.50 per unit at the request of the federal government.

In a notification, the power regulatory authority said the new tariffs would be effective from July 1, 2023. The lifeline consumers will be exempted from the recent power tariff hike. The protected consumers using 200 units in a month will not be affected from the base tariff hike.

The power tariff will be increased to Rs16.48 per unit after the hike of Rs3 for consumers using up to 100 units in a month. According to the notification, for consuming 101 to 200 units, the tariff was increased by Rs4, taking it to Rs22.95 per unit. Similarly, the power tariff has been increased by Rs5 for users consuming 201 to 300 units, taking it to Rs27.14 per unit.

For consuming 301 to 400 units, the tariff was jacked up by Rs6.5, taking it to Rs32.03 per unit. For consuming 401 to 500 units, the power tariff will be increased by Rs7.5, taking it to Rs35.24 per unit. For consuming 501 to 600 units, the tariff will be increased by Rs7.5, taking it to Rs36.66 per unit.

For consuming more than 700 units, the power tariff will be increased by Rs7.5, taking it to Rs42.72 per unit. After the inclusion of sales tax, Rs50.41 per unit will be charged at maximum.

Chile woman lands in Charsadda

CHARSADDA (INP): After the arrival of Indian and Chinese girls, now a Chile woman has reached Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) to marry her Pakistani lover after their friendship on social media, it came to light on Thursday.

A 36-year-old Nikoli Anaragalsalos landed KP's Charsaddah to meet her social media friend Ikramullah, 27 years old. The woman who is a resident of Chile, a sovereign country in Latin America, has now reportedly converted to Islam and married her Pakistani lover. After conversion, the Chile woman adopted the name of Noreen.

Ikramullah said he used to upload videos on TikTok, where he became a friend of Anaragalsalos. The Pakistani youth said Noreen wants to take him to the United States.

Sindh govt aims to generate employment opportunities: Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit of Sindh, Sharjeel Inam Memon, addressed the press conference following the meeting of the Sindh Cabinet on Thursday. He emphasized that the Karoonjhar Mountain holds significant historical value, and the Sindh government is committed to preserving its historical status from any potential impact. He further stated that the government has invested billions of rupees to construct several small dams, providing water to the villages and lands surrounding Karoonjhar. The objective behind these efforts is to safeguard the historical significance of Karoonjhar while simultaneously improving the economic conditions of the local communities in the area.

He said that Karoonjhar is the area where I commenced my political career as a candidate for the Provincial Assembly. He highlighted that the people of Karoonjhar and Thar have consistently demonstrated their trust and support by voting for the Pakistan People's Party. Moreover, he mentioned that the party has successfully accomplished remarkable projects, including generating electricity from coal in Thar, establishing an airport in the region, constructing an extensive network of roads, installing RO plants, and initiating various development projects focused on housing, education, healthcare, and economic prosperity for the people of Thar. He concluded by affirming the party's commitment to continuing their duty of public service.

He mentioned that the Sindh Cabinet has taken several significant decisions, it has decided to grant pensions to retired employees of the Workers Welfare Board, the formation of governing bodies of SSSI has been approved, and there will be a representation of women in all such governing bodies as part of the women empowerment policy.

He said that the Cabinet has given its approval for the establishment of a Provincial Financial Commission. In order to streamline processes, the rules of the Building Control Authority in Khairpur Special Economic Zone will be handled under a one-window system. To promote investment and create employment opportunities in Sukkur, the Cabinet has made the decision to allocate an industrial area there, a committee has been formed to create an industrial zone in Hyderabad.

He said that the Sindh government, led by the People's Party, aims to generate employment opportunities and drive economic development for the betterment of the people. He announced that the Sindh government is committed to supporting the establishment and training of an autism center, allocating a budget of 70 crore rupees for this purpose, the Cabinet has approved several new schemes aimed at improving facilities and services for the people, the Sindh government has made a significant decision to write off government loans that were taken by government departments since 1980.

Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the largest project in the world's history, aimed at providing houses for 21 lakh homeless

people, is progressing rapidly, the titles of these houses are being registered in the names of women, empowering them in the process. He further added that if the People's Party forms the government after the elections, they will continue to allocate houses to those affected by floods throughout Pakistan who have lost their homes.

Sharjeel Inam Memon criticized Imran Khan's party and said that they misused funds meant for housing projects for their own benefit, without fulfilling their promise of providing houses to the people. In contrast, the People's Party is dedicated to constructing houses for the homeless with full ownership rights, ensuring a secure future for them.

In response to a question, Sharjeel Inam Memon emphasized that the law should take strict action against any politician or ruler who discloses official secrets. He also highlighted that the Sindh government is actively engaged in continuous efforts to promote the establishment of industries in the region. To facilitate this, the government is taking steps to create industrial zones, fostering an environment conducive to industrial growth and development.

In response to a question, Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that he had a goodwill meeting with the Prime Minister yesterday.

Regarding the loan issue, he clarified that the government has not waived the loan of any individual; rather, only the loans of government institutions have been approved for certain measures or purposes. In response to a question, he mentioned that he had said on the floor of the assembly and invited the leader of the opposition to come, but the leader did not attend.

Regarding the performance of the Pakistan People's Party during its tenure, he expressed that the party has accomplished exemplary work. He said that the People's Bus Service in Karachi will soon introduce new routes, scheduled to begin on Monday or Tuesday. He assured that both the Sindh government and relevant institutions are vigilant and fully prepared to address any potential law and order situation.

In response to a question, he emphasized that the Karoonjhar Mountain holds immense historical value and the government is committed to safeguarding it from any harm or damage. He further explained that substantial investments, amounting to billions of rupees, have been made to construct small dams in Karoonjhar, ensuring a stable water supply to the surrounding villages.

Moreover, he highlighted that the people of Karoonjhar have consistently shown their support to the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) through their votes. As a result, the PPP has initiated various development projects, including the construction of roads, an airport, power projects, and other essential facilities in Thar. In response to a question, Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Election Commission has made a clear decision regarding the census, affirming that the upcoming election will be conducted based on the data from the last census.

Kuwait hangs five, including 2015 mosque bombing convict

NA passes Pakistan Air Safety Investigation Bill

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Safety Investigation Bill, 2023 was smoothly sailed through National Assembly here Thursday. The Bill was moved by Parliamentary Secretary for Parliamentary Affairs Saad Waseem. The House passed the Bill following its clause by clause reading.

The parliamentary secretary also introduced further amendments in the Newspapers Employees Condition of Service Act 1973 (the Newspapers Employees Condition of Service Bill, 2023) and a National Commission of Human Development Ordinance 2002 (National Commission of Human Development Bill, 2023).

Thursday included a Kuwaiti, an Egyptian and a member of Kuwait's stateless Bidoon minority, all of whom had been convicted of murder. A Sri Lankan was put to death on drug charges. The Public Prosecution said all five were executed by hanging.

The executions are the first since the oil-rich Gulf state put to death seven people in November last year ending a five-year moratorium.

Although Kuwait has executed dozens of people since it introduced the death penalty in the mid-1960s, the punishment is relatively rare. Most of those condemned have been convicted of murder or drug trafficking. In April 2013, Kuwaiti authorities hanged three men convicted of murder. Two months later, two Egyptians, convicted of kidnap and murder, were executed.

Nine die as more rains, floods lash parts of country

QUETTA (PPI): At least nine people, including women and children, lost their lives as torrential rains lashed several parts of the country during the last 24 hours. According to officials, three girls drowned when they fell into a flooded watercourse at a village in Sohbatpur district in Balochistan. The bodies were fished out and handed over to the family.

A 12-year-old girl was swept away by floodwaters in Jhal Magi area, while a man died in Khuzdar when lightning struck him during heavy rain and thunderstorm. In Mansehra district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, four people, including three children, were killed when roof of a house caved in due to incessant rains. The incident took place in a suburban village of Mansehra district.

Flooding in streams across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was witnessed on Thursday as heavy rainfall continued to lash parts of the province. In Lower Dir, rain drains of Talash Bazaar, Shamshi Khan and GT Road were once again flooded. The Peshawar Highway was also closed for all types

of traffic, causing severe difficulties to commuters. The monsoon rains also lashed Tangi tehsil, causing river streams to overflow. Moreover, rain-water entered shops in Tangi Nusratzi Bazaar.

Rains also caused landslides in Swabi near Bagnar on Beer Gali Road in the remote hilly area of Gadoon Amazai. Due to landslides, access to Kala Dhaka, Nara Amazai and Beer Gali areas was blocked. Heavy showers also caused property losses in several areas of Balochistan. Road link of the province with Karachi, Punjab and other parts of Sindh could not be restored despite the passage of 48 hours, forcing the authorities concerned to prepare alternative ways on Bolan and Hub rivers.

Quetta and surrounding areas also received heavy rain, suspending power supply and disrupting internet service. The provincial capital remained without electricity for several hours while there is no power supply in surrounding areas. Officials of the Quetta Electric Supply Company said some grids tripped owing to rain.

Heavy rains, accompanied by thunderstorm, continued to lash the northern, central and southern parts of the province causing flash floods in the mountainous areas. With their catchment areas continuously receiving showers, Bolan, Nai Gaj, Teli, Mola, Lehri and other seasonal rivers were flowing in flood.

Reports said floodwater entered some villages close to the river in the Sibi area, forcing the residents to leave their houses for safe places. Many mud houses were damaged in Sibi, Nasirabad, Mashkel, Washuk, Jhal Magi and some other areas. The district administration was helping the affected families move to safe places. Technical staff, along with their colleagues from irrigation and other departments, were strengthening the dykes around Sibi to protect the town from flood as the Nari and other rivers passing through the area were carrying floodwater. The rivers bursting their banks have also affected the efforts for restoring the road link between Mach and Sibi through Pinjra bridge.

UN chief says Earth in ‘era of global boiling’, calls for radical action

NEW YORK (Agencies): United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday pleaded for immediate radical action on climate change, saying that record-shattering July temperatures show Earth has passed from a warming phase into an "era of global boiling".

A blistering heatwave is sweeping the northern hemisphere, including parts of Europe and the Americas, with record-high temperatures triggering devastating wildfires in countries such as Greece, Italy and Algeria along the Mediterranean. Speaking in New York, Guterres described the intense heat across the northern hemisphere as a "cruel summer".

"For the entire planet, it is a disaster," he said, noting that "short of a mini-Ice Age over the next days, July 2023 will shatter records across the board." "Climate change is here. It is terrifying. And it is just the beginning. The era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived." According to ERA5 data from the European Union-funded Copernicus Climate Change Service, the first three

weeks of July have been the warmest three-week period on record and the month is on track to be the hottest July and the hottest month on record.

Complete ERA5 data for July will be available and published on August 8. The previous hottest month on record was July 2019. With large swathes of the United States facing a record-breaking heatwave, President Joe Biden on Thursday called the soaring temperatures from climate change an "existential threat". "I don't think anybody can deny the impact of climate change anymore," he said at the White House.

Biden, who said heat was the "number one weather-related killer" in the US, causing 600 deaths every year, announced moves to bolster heat-related safety rules for workers, especially those labouring outdoors. The extreme impacts of climate change have been in line with scientists' "predictions and repeated warnings", Guterres said, adding that the "only surprise is the speed of the change".

In the face of "tragic" consequences, he repeated his call for swift

and far-reaching action, taking aim once again at the fossil fuel sector. "The air is unbearable. The heat is unbearable. And the level of fossil fuel profits and climate inaction is unacceptable," said Guterres, Portugal's former prime minister. "Leaders must lead," he said. "No more hesitancy. No more excuses. No more waiting for others to move first."

Ahead of the Climate Ambition Summit he is set to host in September, Guterres called on developed countries to commit to achieving carbon neutrality as close to 2040 as possible, and for emerging economies as close as possible to 2050. The "destruction" unleashed by humanity "must not inspire despair, but action", he said, warning that to prevent the worst outcomes humanity "must turn a year of burning heat into a year of burning ambition". Extreme weather through out July has caused havoc across the world, with temperatures breaking records in China, the United States and Southern Europe, sparking forest fires, water shortages and a rise in heat-related illnesses and hospitalisations.