

President grieved
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday expressed grief over the death of Sheikh Saeed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the brother of the UAE President. The president condoled over the demise of Sheikh Saeed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and prayed for peace for the departed soul. He also prayed to Allah Almighty to grant strength to the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude.

People of Balochistan have first right on province's resources

PM says sacrifice of Imam Hussain (RA) reminds Muslims to stand against tyranny

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that the people of Balochistan had the first right to the resources of the province as the betterment of their lives would make them own the development.

"The people of Balochistan have the first right to the resources of the province. When their lives and those of their children change for the better, they will own development and become a partaker in it," the PM wrote on social media. The PM spent an "eventful" day in Gwadar on Thursday along with federal ministers, army and naval chiefs, the governor and chief minister of Balochistan, and the government officials, where he inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for a series of development, infrastructural and educational projects that would change the destiny of the region.

"Despite sporadic attempts here and there, Balochistan has been a victim of our collective neglect. The province has not progressed at par with other federating units, which is a shame," he remarked. He recalled that he had toured all the affected regions of Balochistan during the devastating floods last year and saw the conditions for himself. PM Shehbaz said that his idea of development was rooted in the uplift of the standards of living of the people as it was their socio-economic well-being and welfare that formed the core of real development.

He reiterated that Pakistan's progress was linked to that of Balochistan. "My meeting with the youth of the province on the occasion of the distribution of laptops was a high point of my visit. Their beaming faces reassured me that the future of Balochistan and Pakistan is in safe and responsible hands. The old guard only needs to do their bit," the PM remarked.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the sacrifice of Imam Hussain (RA) gave the precious lesson of unwavering faith, piety and struggle for justice, reminding Muslims that it was their moral responsibility to stand up against oppression and tyranny.

PM offers condolences to UAE President over death of brother

ABU DHABI (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Friday offered condolences to United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan on the sad demise of his brother Sheikh Saeed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, in Abu Dhabi.

The prime minister was accompanied by Federal Minister for Finance Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Special Assistant to Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi and Ambassador of Pakistan to UAE Faisal Niaz Tirmizi. The PM conveyed the profound sympathies and condolences of the leadership, Government and people of Pakistan to the president of UAE on his brother's demise, which was received with great warmth by Shiekh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.

Pakistan and the UAE are bound by close fraternal ties. Sheikh Saeed bin Zayed Al Nahyan was a sincere friend of Pakistan. His invaluable contributions will be long remembered by the government and the people of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday said Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had met United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan at the Presidential Palace to express condolences over sad demise of his brother Sheikh Saeed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.

The minister, in a tweet, said that the PM conveyed condolences to the Royal Family on behalf of the Government and people of Pakistan over the sad demise. She said the prime minister, on the occasion, prayed to Allah Almighty to elevate the ranks of the departed soul in paradise and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude. Marriyum said the prime minister reached Abu Dhabi on Friday afternoon specifically to condole with the President of the UAE on demise of his brother. He has returned to Pakistan earlier in the night.

In a message on the occasion of Youm e Ashura, he said Ashura, 10th Muharram, had profound historic and spiritual significance for the Muslims all over the world. It was the day of great struggle, sacrifice and martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA), beloved grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), he said adding on this day, Imam Hussain (RA), along with his companions and family, bravely stood up in the battle of Karbala against oppression, cruelty and injustice and embraced martyrdom for the righteous path.

He said, "The everlasting message of Imam Hussain (RA) echoes till today and it teaches that we should maintain the principles of justice, compassion and steadfastness in all spheres of life. The sacrifice of Imam Hussain (RA) was not confined to a certain time or place but it was a message for Muslims beyond all borders and for all coming generations and continents," he stressed.

The prime minister said the great sacrifice was a reaffirmation that

everyone should strive with unwavering determination for justice, equality and human dignity. The sacrifice of Imam Hussain (RA) imparted the lesson that one encountered difficulties while staying on the path of truth and justice but it was the way to achieve permanent success and blessings of Allah Almighty. He said, "We should learn from the sacrifice of Imam Hussain (RA) to overcome the challenges and difficulties faced by the nation and the whole Muslim Ummah. Remember that the obstacles in the path of truth and success can only be removed through steadfastness, sacrifice and determination."

"Let us try to follow the great example set by Imam Hussain (RA) and his followers, in our daily lives. He is a tower of light and best example for our society. May Allah Almighty shower His blessings on our nation and Muslim Ummah and guide us and give us the strength to follow the teachings of Islam and stay true to the illustrious legacy of Imam Hussain (RA)," he concluded.

Karbala tells us that great goals: FM

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that the tragedy of Karbala teaches us that great sacrifices have to be made for great goals and in the end victory is always for truth.

According to the statement issued by Media Cell Bilawal House on Friday, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said in his message on the occasion of Ashura Day that Imam Hussain (RA), the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) sacrificed his life and that of his loved ones, which taught all of us that the one who stands with the truth can get his head can be cut, but it cannot bend.

He further said that all the companions of Imam Hussain (RA), including his sister Bibi Zainab's courage, patience, independence, and prudence, are also a beacon of light. He said that PPP and its leadership have always fought against every Yazid of the era and offered eternal sacrifices.

He said his party will try to adapt it in the light of Imam Hussain's teachings and on Ashura Day we reiterate our pledge to resist whatever form the Yazidi thought takes in the country and society because Hussain is the name of fighting the oppressor and supporting the oppressed.



PESHAWAR: KP Minister for Excise and Taxation Manzoor Afridi called on Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan.

Road connecting Quetta to Sibi blocked

Balochistan continues to battle floods

QUETTA (Agencies): Balochistan continued to face a flood situation — caused by heavy rainfall in the province — on Friday as multiple roads, including a part of the Quetta-Sukkur N-65 Highway, remained blocked.

According to a report issued by the PDMA late in the evening, Sibi-Quetta section on the Sukkur-Quetta N-65 Highway was blocked, cutting off Balochistan's link to Sindh. Meanwhile, routes connecting Harnai to Sanjawi, Gandhawa to Notal, Sibi to Kohlu, Pinjra Bridge road in Bolan were also blocked amid flash floods, the report said. The main Pinjra bridge on the Bolan river in Kachhi district was swept away in the last year's super flood and it has not been rebuilt by the National Highway Authority so far despite the passage of over one year.

The alternative route being used in its place, too, has been washed away now, according to the PDMA and Bolan district administration. In light of the situation, the administration asked the citizens to avoid travelling.

Meanwhile, Pishin Deputy Commissioner (DC)

Qasir Bazai told media that a 14-year-old died today after he was swept away by the flood water. According to the PDMA data — which does not include the fatality reported from Pishin today — 10 people have lost their lives and 13 suffered injuries in rain-and-flood-related incidents in Balochistan since June 19. Meanwhile, the data show, 112 houses have been completely damaged and 223 completely damaged.

PDMA Director Faisal Naseem said in a statement that relief and rescue activities were under way in different areas of the province and food items were being provided to the affected people. The extent of the damage would be determined by relevant district administrations and the PDMA in the next phase, he added.

A part of these measures, a control room has been setup at the Chief Minister Secretariat on the directives of CM Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo, a statement issued by the Secretariat said. The control room would be used to monitor the relief and restoration activities, as well as situation created due to

torrential rains", the statement said, adding that it would remain operational round the clock. Separately, a statement issued by the provincial finance department said funds for the assistance of affected citizens had been released to relevant districts.

"Rs150 million has been issued to the deputy commissioners and heads of the district disaster management authority in 36 districts on the directives of the chief minister," the statement said, adding that the DCs would be able to use these funds only for the providing assistance to the people affected by floods and rains. Meanwhile, the Punjab PDMA said that torrential rains were likely to continue in the province till August 1. The PDMA spokesperson said there was a concern about urban flooding as a result of torrential rains, adding that the water level in the rivers was continuously rising due to the rains. The spokesperson said instructions for necessary steps were issued to all divisional administrations. The PDMA also shared an update on the water level and flood position at various points of the rivers.

The Frontier Post

Nawaz returns to London

ABU DHABI (Agencies): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former Prime Minister, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, has returned to London from Dubai. According to media reports, Nawaz Sharif is expected to visit Europe after a few days. During this European tour, Nawaz will spend a few weeks with his family. Important meetings with PML-N leaders are also expected during Nawaz Sharif's visit to Europe.



ABU DHABI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meeting with President of UAE Mohammad Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Crown Prince of Dubai Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Makhtoum.

Asad Umar rejects Zaidi's claims

LAHORE (PPI): Former general secretary of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Asad Umar on Friday reacted to former Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) chairman Shabbar Zaidi's claims that the country's economy would have collapsed, had the PTI government completed its tenure.

Taking to Twitter, Umar said: "Hello Shabbar bhai, where did this story come from?" He said that the PTI government was formed in August 2018, adding that the foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) stood at \$9.8 billion at the end of the PTI government's rule.

The PTI leader said the SBP's reserves were \$8.7 billion when he left the finance ministry in April 2019. "From where did the default story come?" Zaidi assumed the charge in 2019. He was removed from the post in April 2020. "Had the PTI government continued, the party would not have even secured 5 percent votes as the country would have economically collapsed," Zaidi said while talking to a private TV channel.

He said he had advised the PTI chief to rectify his government's shortcomings and settle things, but he was not in the mood of listening to anyone. Zaidi mentioned when he pointed out the economic crises, the PTI chief had removed Asad Umar as the finance minister.

The former FBR chief also spoke about influential people forcing him to drop the cases against people close to them or those who were politically important. Zaidi said he "mistakenly" sent a notice to a landowner in Multan. "I asked him to reconcile his wealth with his agricultural income." In response, 40 parliamentarians "barged into my office", led by then-foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, he added.

PTI chief summoned

LAHORE (PPI): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) summoned the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief in a personal capacity on August 2 (Wednesday) in a case of contempt of the electoral watchdog.

According to the written verdict on Friday, the electoral watchdog had suspended the PTI chief's non-bailable arrest warrant. The ECP also approved the request of the PTI chief's lawyers to provide the records.

According to the ECP, the PTI chief should be provided with the required documents by the concerned wing. The non-bailable arrest warrants had been temporarily suspended after the PTI chief's appearance. On Tuesday, the ECP put off indictment of the PTI Chairman till August 2 in contempt of the electoral watchdog and the chief election commissioner (CEC). A four-member bench headed by member Nisar Durrani conducted hearing of the case.

Holy Quran desecration OIC convenes 'urgent moot' on 31st

JEDDAH (Agencies): The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) announced holding an extraordinary virtual session for the Council of Foreign Ministers of Member States (CFM) on July 31 (Monday) to discuss the repeated incidents of desecration and burning of copies of the Holy Quran in Sweden and Denmark.

"This session has been convened at the request of Saudi Arabia, the Chair of the 14th Islamic Summit, and the Republic of Iraq," the top Muslim bloc said in a statement. This urgent meeting of ministers has been called in response to the final statement issued by the OIC Executive Committee after an extraordinary meeting held at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah on July 2, this year, it added.

The statement addressed the burning of a copy of the Holy Quran in Sweden and called for high-level emergency meetings as needed. "The meeting is being held considering the OIC Secretary-General Hissein Ibrahim Taha's consultations with the member states regarding the implementation of the final statement issued by the Executive Committee," read the OIC statement.

Further measures are also being considered in response to the repeated provocative actions that represent deliberate religious hatred and intolerance, it added. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia summoned a Danish diplomat to protest the desecration of the holy book by an extreme-right group in Copenhagen, state media reported early Friday.

Saudi Arabia summons Denmark's charge d'affaires

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia has summoned Denmark's charge d'affaires over recent burnings of the Quran in Copenhagen. The Danish diplomat was handed a memo that "includes a demand from the kingdom to stop the disgraceful acts that violate all religious teachings, laws and international norms," the Gulf country's foreign ministry said in a statement on Friday, without identifying the Danish official by name.

The kingdom's protest comes after far-right activists carried out a number of public burnings of Islam's holy book over the past week in front of the Iraqi, Egyptian, and Turkish embassies in the Danish capital. On Monday, two members of the ultra-nationalist Danish Patriots stomped on a copy of the Quran and set it alight in a tin foil tray next to an Iraqi flag.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen condemned a similar demonstration by the group the previous week as a "disgraceful act" intended to "provoke and create division", but noted that desecrating the Quran is not a crime in Denmark. Activists have also burned copies of the Quran in neighbouring Sweden in recent weeks.

During the meeting on Thursday with the Danish charge d'affaires, Saudi foreign ministry officials delivered a protest note urging an end to "these disgraceful acts, which violate all religious teachings (and) international laws and norms" and can "fuel hatred between religions", the official Saudi Press Agency said. The far-right group Danske Patriotier on Monday posted a video in which a man is seen desecrating and burning what appeared to be a copy of the Holy Quran.

It was just the latest such incident to stir anger in the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia has also denounced protests by a Sweden-based Iraqi refugee who last month burned pages of the holy book outside Stockholm's main mosque. In a separate protest last week, the refugee, Salwan Momika, desecrated the

Holy Quran, prompting Riyadh to hand a protest note to the Swedish charge d'affaires.

A day earlier, Pakistan also strongly condemned the desecration of the Holy Quran and dishonouring of the Pakistani flag in front of the Embassy of Pakistan in Copenhagen, Denmark. "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 Foreign Office said in a statement on Thursday.

The intent of such evil acts is to insult two billion Muslims around the world and create friction amongst communities, cultures, and countries, the statement added. The FO said Pakistan, for its part, will continue to raise the question of Islamophobia at the international level.

Trump denies wrongdoing

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Donald Trump has denied wrongdoing in a growing criminal case into his handling of classified material, hours after United States prosecutors filed new charges accusing the former US president of obstruction of justice.

In an interview on Friday with ??conservative radio host John Fredericks, Trump dismissed allegations that he ordered an employee at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida to delete security camera footage sought by the Department of Justice. "These were security tapes. We handed them over to them ... I'm not even sure what they're saying," Trump said.

US Special Counsel Jack Smith filed three new criminal charges against Trump on Thursday, and charged a Mar-a-Lago maintenance worker, 56-year-old Carlos De Oliveira, with obstruction of justice, among other counts. The new charges add to Trump's long list of legal troubles and investigations, but the Republican presidential frontrunner said on Friday that he would push forward with his campaign even if he

were found guilty and sentenced.

"Not at all. There's nothing in the Constitution to say that it could," he told Fredericks when asked if sentencing would put an end to his 2024 campaign. Trump was indicted last month in the documents case, as prosecutors accused him of taking classified national security files with him after his time as president had ended and he left the White House. He previously pleaded not guilty.

The former president's valet, Walt Nauta, who was accused in June of helping Trump hide boxes of documents sought by the Department of Justice, also faced new charges this week. Nauta previously pleaded not guilty. Federal authorities have accused the former Republican president of keeping the documents at his resort in Florida. They also say he sought to mislead them about his possession of the files.

The case is one of several legal woes Trump faces as he leads a crowded race for the GOP's presidential nomination. On Thursday, Trump said

that his lawyers had met Department of Justice officials earlier in the day to discourage the federal agency from filing charges against him in a separate case linked to the January 6, 2021, US Capitol riot.

Late last year, a congressional panel that investigated the Capitol attack by a mob of Trump's supporters recommended criminal charges against the former president. And last week, Trump said he had received a letter from Smith, the special counsel who is leading federal investigations into the former president, asking him to report to a grand jury.

"My attorneys had a productive meeting with the DOJ this morning, explaining in detail that I did nothing wrong, was advised by many lawyers, and that an Indictment of me would only further destroy our Country," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform on Thursday. Meanwhile, Trump was charged in New York earlier this year for falsifying business records in relation to a hush-money payment made to a porn star before the 2016 elections.

Public Notice

On account of Ashura, the offices of The Frontier Post will remain closed on 29-07-2023 (Saturday). Therefore, there will be no issue on 30-07-2023 (Sunday).

11,333 cops to perform security duty on 10th Muharram

LAHORE (APP): As many as 11,333 policemen including 6 SPs, 34 SDPOs, 83 SHOs, 216 upper subordinates and policewomen would perform security duty on Ashura day in the provincial capital.

In a statement issued here on Friday, Capital City Police Officer Bilal Siddique Kamyana said that foolproof security cover would be provided to 378 Majalis, 20 licensed and 59 non-licensed mourning processions on 10th Muharram.

He said that a continuous monitoring of the processions routes would be ensured through CCTV cameras. The CCPO said that ban on pillion riding would be ensured on youm-e-Ashura. He informed that mobile phone service would be suspended on the central procession route for special timings. The CCPO directed the police to ensure smooth movement of processions with the help of district administration in case of rain. He said that Dolphin squad and PRU (Police Response Unit) would continuously patrol in and around the procession routes.

PU awards ten PhD degrees

LAHORE (APP): Punjab University (PU) has awarded ten PhD degrees to the scholars. The varsity spokesman told media here on Friday that Nourin Aman daughter of Aman Ullah Khan was awarded PhD degree in the subject of Botany, Kashif Iqbal Sahibzada son of Muhammad Iqbal in the subject of Biochemistry, Abdul Qadeer son of Abdul Ghafoor in the subject of Commerce, Atia Rehman daughter of Sana-ur-Rehman in the subject of Zoology, Bilal Ghazanfar son of Ghazanfar Ali in the subject of International Relations, Usman Pasha son of Pasha Parviz in the subject of Biochemistry, Rukhtasha Munir daughter of Malik Muhammad Munir in the subject of Molecular Biology and Forensic Sciences, Tian Xuefeng son of Tian Min in the subject of history, Muhammad Saeed Ali son of Ghulam Abbas Khan in the subject of Urdu and Syed Muhammad Raza Zaidi son of Syed Tanveer Alam Zaidi in the subject of Political Science.

NA Secretariat postpones written test for various posts

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly Secretariat on Friday announced the postponement of the written screening tests for various posts, which were originally scheduled to take place on July 31 and August 1, 2023.

The decision to postpone the examinations comes in light of unavoidable circumstances that have arisen, said an official notification received here.

The aspiring applicants who were eagerly preparing for the tests have been informed about the change in the examination schedule.

CM visits Muharram procession route, inspects security arrangements

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah during his visit to the route of the Muharram procession told the media that some terrorist incidents have taken place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan but "Alhamdulillah Sindh is safe because of intelligence-based targeted operation and close coordination among all the law enforcement agencies."

He said this while talking to the media at M.A. Jinnah Road during his visit to review the security arrangements made for the processions of 9 and 10 Muharram.

He was accompanied by Minister of Labour Saeed Ghani, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Sohail Rajput, and IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon. Shah said 'he has been reviewing the security situation in the province and giving necessary instructions to the police, Rangers, and other security agencies'. "Our law enforcement agencies are alert and working hard for the peace and security in the province," he said.

Replying to a question, the CM said that the mobile phone service has been suspended due to security reasons.

"The terrorist threats can be averted through technology, therefore internet and

cell phone services were suspended," he added. The CM said he also visited the entire route of the procession, entry, and exit point, parking lots, and deployment of policemen and other security agencies personnel. "We have tried to make foolproof security arrangements and Inshallah everything will go as per plan," he said.

Earlier, IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon briefed the chief minister and said that the route of the 9th and 10th Muharram processions would be Nishtar Park- Numaish- M.A Jinnah Road- Mansfield Street - Preedy Street - Tibet Chowk M.A Jinnah Road- Boulton Market - Bombay Bazar- Kharadar - Nawab Mohabbat Road and Termination at Hussainian Iranian Imambargah. He said there would be 20 designated diversion points of the procession right from Teen Hati, Lasbela to Mansfield Street after Tahiri Masjid. Similarly, nine parking lots have been designated. The CM was told that 4698 policemen have been deployed for the security of the processions. CCTV coverage of the procession has also been made and it would be monitored from the main Control Room set up at the IGP Office.

10th of Muharram teaches us the lesson of sacrifice for Islam: Sindh Governor

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori in his message on the day of 10th of Muharram-ul-Haram said that the day teaches us the lesson of sacrifice for Islam.

We have learned a lot from the great sacrifice of Imam Hussain (A.S), his relatives and companions who established the tradition, which is a glowing example for those who follow the straight path in every era, he said.

The Governor Sindh further said that the martyrs of Karbala created a great history of martyrdom in the path of truth and righteousness by their words and deeds.

This great sacrifice is the greatest honor for Muslims today, he added. The Governor said that the sacrifice that Imam Hussain (A.S) and his companions made in Karbala for Islam would remain alive forever.

Sindh Governor holds meeting with scouts performing duties on Muharram processions: Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori on

Friday held an online meeting with various scouts organizations which assist law enforcement agencies in security of Muharram processions as well as organizers of Majalis and mourning processions across Sindh.

The Governor praised the services of the scouts on important occasions, said a spokesperson of Governor House.

He also directed the scouts to perform their duties to assist the participants of processions and also law enforcers for ensuring the security of mourning processions across the province, in an efficient manner.

He said that the scouts have an important role in the maintenance of discipline in the mourning procession and ensure following the designated route.

Kamran Khan Tessori called upon the scouts to keep in close contact with the processions' organizers and the administration during Muharram processions.

All possible measures should be taken to ensure the peaceful start and end of the majalis and processions, he added.

ICCPO visits 9th Muharram processions

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, visited the main procession of 9th Muharram-ul-Haram to review the security arrangements. Over 2,200 police personnel, including senior officers, have been deployed to ensure the safety of citizens and maintain law and order during the 9th Muharram-ul-Haram processions.

ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, accompanied by SSP Operations and Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad, inspected the security measures in place for the procession. He directed the officers to implement foolproof security protocols to safeguard the lives and property of the citizens, emphasizing the importance of maintaining peace and harmony during the observance of Muharram. Speaking about the security arrangements, ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan stated, "We have taken every necessary measure to ensure the safety and security of all citizens during the 9th Muharram procession. The Quick Response Force is on high alert to respond promptly to any potential threats or untoward incidents."

As part of the comprehensive security plan, the state-of-the-art surveillance cameras of Safe City are fully operational to closely monitor the procession routes and surrounding areas. Additionally, the bomb

disposal squad has employed advanced technology to clear the procession routes of any potential hazards, ensuring a safe environment for all attendees. To facilitate the smooth flow of the event, specific entry points have been designated for citizens to enter the procession area, each under the watchful eye of deployed police personnel. Separate entry points have been allocated for women, where lady police officers are present to conduct thorough checks. Furthermore, police commandos have been strategically positioned on rooftops along the procession routes, prepared to respond swiftly to any emergency situation that may arise.

Emergency measures have also been implemented in all hospitals across the federal capital to ensure immediate medical assistance in case of any unforeseen incidents. CPO/DIG Operations Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari, is overseeing all security arrangements for the procession, underscores the commitment of Islamabad Capital Police to uphold law and order. He emphasized, "The Islamabad Capital Police is fully prepared to maintain law and order and respond effectively to any external challenges. We are resolute in our mission to safeguard the peace and security of our city, and we will not allow any elements to disrupt the harmony of this occasion."



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Finance, Ishaq Dar along with others offer Dua after performing the 980th Annual Ghusal of the Shrine of Hazrat Ali Hajveri (RA) known as Hazrat Data Gunj Bakhsh.

Ishaq Dar, Mohsin Naqvi lays foundation stone of Data Darbar expansion project

LAHORE (APP): Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday jointly laid the foundation stone of expansion project of the shrine of sufi saint Hazrat Hassan Ali Hajveri (RA) popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh.

They also bathe the shrine with rosewater and laid Chaddar on the

shrine. The leaders also launched the "Nazrana Online" App.

Briefing the media, the administration informed that the App would be helpful for Overseas Pakistanis to share their contribution in Langar (sacred food) through "Nazrana Online App" while sitting abroad and one could visit the interior of the shrine round the clock.

Later, talking to the media, Ishaq Dar congratulated Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on the commencement of the Darbar expansion project and called it the third major expansion.

They prayed for the safety and prosperity of the country.

PML-N leader Bilal Yaseen and others were also present.

Nawaz Sharif is a better PM than Shehbaz: PDM spokesperson

KARACHI (NNI): Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) spokesperson and JUI-F senior leader, Hafiz Hamdullah on Friday criticised newly formed parties of former PTI leaders Jahangir Khan Tareen and Pervaz Khattak.

While talking to a private TV channel, Hafiz Hamdullah claimed that the newly launched parties Istekham-e-Pakistan Party and PTI Parliamentarians by Jahangir Tareen and Pervaz Khattak, respectively are groups of 'opportunists'.

The PDM spokesperson called

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme Nawaz Sharif a better prime minister than his younger brother Shahbaz Sharif.

People say Shahbaz Sharif is a better administrator but Nawaz Sharif is a better prime minister than his younger brother Shahbaz Sharif, Hafiz Hamdullah said and added that is the reason why he thrice became prime minister of Pakistan. PDM spokesperson said they are democratic people and want elections on time.

He said the informal talks for the appointment of caretaker PM with the

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz have begun. The JUI-F leader said they will not form an electoral alliance with any party, however, seat adjustments can be made.

Hafiz Hamdullah said it was the decision of the allied parties to appoint Haji Ghulam Ali as KP's governor but now the Pakistan People's Party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Awami National Party are opposing him. He said reservations can be discussed in the meeting if there are any, but highlighting them in media would create chaos.

Three members of criminal gangs held; valuables recovered

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police Koral and Phulgran police teams have arrested three wanted members of criminal gangs involved in numerous snatching and theft activities and recovered snatched mobile phone, motorbike and weapons with ammunition used in crime from their possession, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police had categorically started a crackdown against criminal elements in order to save the precious lives and property of citizens.

Following these directions, a Koral police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending two wanted members of a snatcher gang involved in snatching activities. The accused were identified as Fasi ud din and Hamza Azram. Police team also recovered a mobile phone, motorbike and weapons with ammunition used in crime from their possession.

Meanwhile, the Phulgran police team also apprehended a wanted member of a motorbike lifter gang involved in motorbike theft incidents. Police team also recovered spare parts of a stolen motorbike from his possession. The accused was identified as Haider Ali.

Cases have already been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. During the preliminary investigation the accused confessed to being involved in numerous theft incidents in various areas of the city. CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in house burglar activities and said that safety of the lives and property of the citizens is our prime responsibility and no laxity will be tolerated in this regard.

Main mourning procession of Muharram 9 emerges from Nishtar Park

KARACHI (APP): The main mourning procession of Muharram 09, 1445 AH was taken out amid stern security arrangements from Nishtar Park here on Friday. The main procession is led by Shabbar Raza Zaidi while the scouts of Pak Haidery Scouts also assisting the police and rangers in the security arrangements.

Earlier, a Majlis was held at the Nishtar Park, under the foolproof security arrangements by the law enforcers. After emerging from Nishtar Park, the participants of the procession offered Namaz-e-Zoharain at the Imambargah Ali Raza - M.A.Jinnah road here.

Later, the procession proceeded to its traditional route towards Mansfield Street while after passing through, Preddy Street, Tibet Centre, again M.A.Jinnah Road, Boulton Market, Bombay

Bazar, Kharadar, Nawab Mohabbat Khanji Road it is scheduled to culminate at Hussainia Iranian Imambargah Kharadar here. Strict security measures have been made by police and rangers for the participants of the procession. The route of main procession was checked and cleared by the bomb disposal squad.

All the small lanes and connecting roads linked to the route of procession were blocked with containers and other obstacles to stop the unwanted entry. Alternate routes were already issued by the Karachi Traffic police to facilitate the people to continue their journey towards their respective destinations. No vehicle is allowed to come, go or park on the route of main mourning procession while the monitoring is also being performed with close circuit cameras.

IRSA releases 443,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 443,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 520,100 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1532.68 feet and was 134.68 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 280,900 cusecs and 258,500 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1223.65 feet, which was 173.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 63,900 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 290,300, 419,900, 368,600 and 290,400 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 59,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 99,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Amir Mir reviews Ashura security at Sheikhpura

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information and Local Government (I&LG) Amir Mir visited Sheikhpura to review the security arrangements for the Ashura day (10th of Muharramul Haram) observance on Friday.

According to I&LG spokesman here, Sheikhpura Deputy Commissioner Sarmad Taimur and DPO Zahid Nawaz briefed the minister about the security plan regarding Ashura events in the city.

He also visited the control room, routes of main procession of Ashura Day and Imam Bargahs to get a firsthand understanding of the arrangements.

Expressing the utmost concern for the safety of

the public and their property, Provincial Minister Amir Mir emphasized that no effort should be spared to ensure foolproof security during Muharram. He also advocated for dealing decisively with any individuals or groups attempting to spread religious hatred, urging the district administration to handle such elements with an iron hand.

To achieve the goal of a peaceful and secure Muharram, Amir Mir directed the administration to enforce specific restrictions on the timings of processions and Majalis throughout the district.

He emphasized the need for continuous monitoring of Majalis and processions through the

control rooms established at the district and tehsil levels. To ensure maximum safety, police personnel must be deployed along the routes of the processions.

Provincial Minister Amir Mir reiterated that Islam's message is rooted in tolerance, love, and peace. Thus, it becomes the shared responsibility and moral duty of all citizens to maintain peace and order during the sacred month of Muharram.

By adhering to these principles and putting the security plan into action, the government aims to facilitate a safe environment for the entire community to observe Muharram without any apprehensions, he added.



KARACHI: Security personnel standing high alert during the main procession of 9th Muharram-ul-Haram observing Youm-e-Ashur at M.A. Jinnah Road.



9th Muharram processions peacefully conclude in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The ‘Alm and Zuljinnah’ mourning processions of the 9th Muharram was peacefully concluded in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Peshawar amid tight security arrangements by police and law enforcement agencies on Friday.

In Peshawar, the main ‘Alm and Zuljinnah’ procession appeared in the morning from Imambargah Hussainia Hall on main Saddar Road and later was joined by many other processions in parts of the provincial capital amid flagellation and chest beating. The mourners passed through the prescribed routes comprising Saddar Road, Kalabari and Fawwara Chowk where the organisers arranged water, milk and drinks for the Azadars.

The religious scholars delivered special sermon on the importance of 9th Muharram, Ashura Moharram and supreme sacrifice offered by Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) and other martyrs of Karbala. They said the matchless sacrifices of martyres of Karbala were a great source of strength and inspiration for all Muslims. After offering ‘zuhra’ prayer, the procession culminated back at the Imambargah Hussainia Hall at Peshawar Cantonment.

Earlier, the main procession of ‘Alm and Zuljinnah’ of the 9th Muharram was brought out of the Imambargah Hussainia Hall here Friday in a peaceful manner aimed tight security arrangement by the law enforcement agencies. The participants of the procession are reciting ‘Nauhas’ to pay glowing tributes to Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and others martyrs of Karbala.

The Azadars are passing through specified route including Saddar Road, Kalabari, Fawwara Chowk and offered Zohar prayers near Fawara Chowk. They would reassemble at the Hussainia Hall in Peshawar cantonment at afternoon today. Water tanks (Sabeel) had been arranged across the route of the procession.

Before the procession, the mourners were addressed by their religious scholars delivered special sermons on the importance of the 9th Ashura

Muharram and matchless sacrifice offered by Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and other martyrs of Karbala for supremacy of islam. They said Hazrat Imam-e-Hussain (RA) thoughts, teachings and principles are the beacon light for the mankind.

Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and honourable members of his family had laid down lives at sizzling heat at Karbala to defend and uphold glory of the great divine religion of Islam. They said great responsibilities are rest on the shoulders of Ulema, Masaikh and religious scholars to play their due role for promoting peace, brotherhood, politeness and tolerance in the society.

Heavy contingent of police and other law enforcing agencies are escorting the procession. Besides 600 policemen, snipers police were deployed at main buildings for security. The doctors, paramedical staff and ambulance service besides Rescue 1122 staffers accompanied with Azadars while TMA’s officials provided water to mourners.

The 1122 Rescue Service had set up a medical camp to provide timely treatment to the mourners in case of any emergency. The participants were allowed only after body search by the police, law enforcers and volunteers. Walkthrough gates were installed for screening of participants, and surveillance of processions was carried out through video-recording and CCTV cameras fixed for this purpose.

Besides deployment of 600 policemen and sniper shooters, the personnel of bomb disposal unit remained in high alert position and carried out security check of the routes through equipment. The entire city was virtually sealed and no vehicle was allowed to enter the area designated for mourning processions.

Many other processions of 9th Moharram were taken out from several Imambargahs including Bibi Zekri, and concluded at the originating points peacefully. The police have blocked all the entry points to the city and Saddar Raod to facilitate the mourners and avert any untoward incident.

In Haripur, which had been declared the most sensitive district

for Muharram, the mourning processions concluded peacefully at the designated points. The main procession of 9th Muharram was taken out from Imambargah Imamia Sajjadia Mohallah Motian in Haripur and ended at Imambargah Qadeemia Mohalla Chowki police. The mourners from different parts of the district participated. The route had been cordoned off by the personnel of police and elite force besides law enforcers where participants passed through special security mechanism.

In Kohat, the mourners’ processions was concluded peacefully where clerics paid rich tributes to sacrifices of martyrs of Karbala and urged the Muslim Ummah to follow the footprints of the martyrs.

In Lakki Marwat, the 9th Muharram procession ended peacefully in Mohallah Sayyedan in the city. The procession taken out from Imambargah Kashana Bukhari that culminated at the starting point after passing through traditional route.

In Parachinar of Kurram district, the main mourning procession was taken out from Central Imam Bargah and passed through prescribed routes before culminated at the said place.

Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development, Sajid Hussain Turi visited the Crisis Management and Control Room at DC Office Parachinar where he was briefed about security plan of Ashura Muharram. The minister participated in the ‘Alm and Zuljinnah’ procession along with the leaders of Peace Committee and also met the leaders of Markazi Imambargah, Parachinar. Deputy Commissioner Kurram, Syed Saiful Salam Shah and District Police Officer Muhammad Imran accompanied him.

In Mansehra, DI Khan, Nowshera and other districts, the 9th Moharram processions were peacefully concluded after passing through prescribed routes at flagellation and chest beating. The religious scholars paid glowing tributes to the matless sacrifices offered by Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and his fellows in the scorching heat of Karbala for supremacy of Islam.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali inspecting various routes of Muharram processions.

Probe into UoP legal cell demanded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar University Teachers Association (PUTA) has asked the acting Vice Chancellor Dr. Jehan Bakht to conduct an impartial inquiry into the court-related cases of the university during tenure of current legal cell in-charge Riaz Ali Khan and made public all the findings of the inquiry, on Friday.

A press release issued here by the PUTA stated that ever since the current legal cell in-charge Riaz Ali Khan has assumed charge of his office, all the decisions of university employees and students were being settled in the courts which was adding to the university’s already exacerbated financial issues.

It further stated that for each court case, the university acquires the services of a lawyer and gives him hefty amount as fees through the Varsity’s legal cell.

It pointed out that former VC Dr. Idrees had disbursed cash prizes among officials of legal cell for winning some court cases but did not punish the officials for losing cases. It hoped that the current VC Dr. Jehan Bakht will introduce a mechanism wherein officials will be punished for losing court cases.

Facilities at Imambargahs inspected

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Deputy Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Mansoor Arshad here on Friday visited various Imambargahs and Thalajat to inspect facilities put in place for Muharram by the administration.

Accompanied by other senior officials including Assistant Commissioner Farhan Ahmed, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Finance and Planning), Focal Person Muharram Al Haram Syed Gulfam Abbas Shah and Tehsildar Sajid Saleem, the DC visited Thala Yela Shah, Thala Bumun Shah and Imambargahs around. During the visit, he met with caretakers of Imambargahs who expressed satisfaction with the facilities and appreciated the district administration for providing the best facilities.

Later, he visited processions’ routes and took stock of arrangements. He directed the personnel on duty to remain alert and keep a close watch on the movements of the people. He also directed the organizers of the processions to strictly observe timings and ensure designated routes for processions.

He said that security coverage of the main processions should be ensured through CCTV cameras. Speaking on the occasion, the DC said that the district administration was utilizing all available resources to maintain law and order in the district. He also urged religious scholars to play their due role for ensuring peace and harmony during Ashura.

Police high alert to protect masses: DPO

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: District Police Officer (DPO) Najib-ur-Rehman has said that a red-alert has been issued in Mardan after the Peshawar incidents. The police personnel have been instructed not to take any negligence in protecting during Muharram-ul-Haram, all policemen vacations had been canceled.

More than 1000 personnel are performing duties to maintain law and order. Talking to the media here on Friday, DPO Najib-ur-Rehman said that the morale of the police is high, the spirit of protecting the soil is in our blood, we have taken an oath to protect the life and property of the people and fulfill our duties in every case. He said that after the incidents in Peshawar, security has been tightened throughout the city.

Suspicious persons are being closely monitored, black glasses, double riding and the display of weapons is completely open, while

on the roads leading to the Imambargah, other than the police, officials in white sheets are on duty.

Additional personnel have been deployed on the routes leading to Imambargah, while alternative routes have been arranged to keep the traffic flowing for the 10th Muharram procession. The vices of the society will be dealt with an iron hand and the clear orders of the IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Regional Police Officer (RPO) will be fully implemented Cooperate with the police.

PESCO imposes Rs4.3m fines on alleged electricity thieves: Sub Divisional Officer (SDO) Peshawar Electricity Supply Company (PESCO) Bakhshali, Sajjad Khan, fined the consumer Rs 43 lakh for direct electricity connection and registered a case of electricity theft against him. The transformer and cable were taken into government custody.

According to the details, on the special instructions of SE Mardan Circle Ajmal Khan and XEN Mardan 2 Nisar Ali, SDO PESCO Sub Division Bakhshali Sajjad Khan along with PESCO staff raided the crushing plant in the limits of Bakhshali Sub Division during general checking. the crushing plant owner had taken direct connection to a transformer having a load of 116 KW.

A consumer involved in electricity theft was arrested red-handed and fined Rs 43 lakh while the consumer deposited Rs 25 lakh on the spot, according to SDO Sajjad Khan, the connection to the transformer was cut and taken into custody. While a case has also been registered against the said consumer under the Electricity Theft Act for further legal action, SDO Sajjad Khan said that electricity thieves will not be forgiven under any circumstances and action should be taken immediately upon receiving information.

Turi visits security control room

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development, Sajid Hussain Turi here on Friday visited the Control Room of Crisis Management Cell established at the office of Deputy Commissioner Parachinar, District Kurram.

The Deputy Commissioner gave him a detailed briefing regarding the comprehensive security plan pre-

pared for Muharram. Speaking on the occasion, the federal minister said that Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) was a beacon of light for the humanity and the Muslim world. He said islam teaches us brotherhood and harmony.

Therefore, we should maintain the atmosphere of peace and brotherhood during Muharram by performing our duties in a good manner. Later, the minister along with the leaders of the

Peace Committee participated in the procession and met with the officials and leaders of Markazi Imambargah, Parachinar.

Deputy Commissioner Kurram Syed Saiful Salam Shah and District Police Officer Muhammad Imran were also present on this occasion.

District Police Officer Muhammad Imran also gave a detailed briefing to the Federal Minister regarding the security plan for Muharram.

Security arrangements for procession inspected

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a bid to ensure the safety and peace during the central procession of Muharram al-Haram, the Haripur Police Friday has taken comprehensive security measures. Commissioner Hazara, Aamir Sultan Khan Tarin, and Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Hazara, Tahir Ayub Khan also paid a visit to assess the security arrangements along the procession routes of Haripur.

During their visit, they

received a detailed briefing on the security protocols from District Police Officer (DPO) Haripur, Muhammad Umar Khan.

This meeting aimed to synchronize efforts and optimize security strategies. To further enhance the security measures, the police and district administrations of the region also engaged in dialogues with key stakeholders. Meetings were held with the Peace Committee, market administration, and representatives of the Shia community

to address any concerns and facilitate a peaceful event.

During an interaction with the media, DIG Hazara, Tahir Ayub Khan, assured that all processions and gatherings related to Muharram al-Haram would be conducted peacefully. He commended the collaborative efforts of the district administration, scholars, peace committee, traders association, and media in preserving harmony and tranquillity during this significant religious event.

Govt erasing poor people instead of poverty and price-hike: ATP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chairman, Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) Muhammad Faiq Shah said rulers have left no stone unturned to add to the misery of inflation stricken people, saying that the government is taking measures to erase poor people instead of price-hike, poverty, hunger. Shah made these remarks while talking to different delegations, including noted political figures, lawyers and social activists here on Friday.

He highly condemned the hike in power tariffs twice and thrice within a week. Similarly, he said gas prices have extremely increased, which was unaffordable for the poor masses. He said

inflation has touched a new toll after slapping massive taxation by the government. He said poor people are compelling on begging, suicide and starvation.

Faiq questioned: "How the poor people, especially daily-wagers will survive after the spiraling price-hike"? He criticized the incumbent coalition government for failing to deliver the people during the last 15 months. Day is not far away when rulers will be held accountable for their misdeeds, he added.

The ATP chairman vowed to raise voice for rights of downtrodden and poor segments of the society at every forum. He added the party is carrying out a vigorous political campaign and awareness across the country. He made

it clear that issues cannot be resolved until and unless ensuring public authority and powers.

Shah said that ruling elites and politicians were busy in finalizing caretaker government and seat adjustment instead of addressing public issues like rising inflation, unemployment, poverty and deprivations. He said, on the other hand, the world was making efforts to improve the lives of the people by eradicating poverty. The ATP chairman went on to say that every segment of the society was suffering from depression and tension due to the economic situation highlighting the country was not poor but the rulers made it so by adding all the people involved in non-serious issues.

Two alleged dacoits held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Police has arrested two alleged dacoits while recovered stolen items from their possession in the premises of Nizampur police station.

The alleged dacoits identified as Israr and Abdul Haq residents of Char Pani area of Nowshera while recovered stolen items on their identification. Police has registered First Information Report against the culprits while initiated further investigation and interrogation from alleged dacoits involved in house thieves.



PESHAWAR: Mourners touching Zuljinnah during 9th Muharram procession.

JI ready to hold a massive protest rally against tax imposition

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Jamaat-i-Islami nominated candidate for PK 13 and former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan has said the people of Malakand would never accept the imposition of any tax in the region and they will strongly resist any such move from the government. He was addressing a public gathering at Lajbok as chief guest here on Friday. The former lawmaker said the JI would hold a massive protest rally against the imposition of taxes at Chakdara on July 30 that would be addressed by the party chief Sirajul Haq and other central leaders.

Sahibzada Yaqub said the rulers had mortgaged the country to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by agreeing to its hard conditions for \$3 billion loans. He said the JI would hold the current and former rulers accountable for laundering national wealth if it was given the opportunity to rule the country. The JI leader said the country was passing through a difficult situation but the rulers were busy in ending their corruption cases and concealing their ‘looting’ and

money laundering. He said the record inflation, unemployment and devaluation of Pakistani currency had broken the back of poor masses. He asked the gathering to participate in the JI proposed protest rally against all kinds of taxes in Malakand division to be held at Chakdara on July 30.

Also on Friday the JI Youth wing Lower Dir chapter organized a motorcycle rally to mobilize its workers and general masses to participate in the July 30 rally at Chakdara. Dozens of motorcyclists led by Malik Sher Bahadar marched on the roads and chanted slogans in favour of their party. The marchers asked the masses to make the JI July 30 rally a success so that the government should be forced to reverse its decision regarding the imposition of taxes in Malakand division.

PML-N joined: Several political activists including Najibullah, Hafeezur Rehman, Daud Khan, Shehzad, Ziaullah, Bakht Baidar, Pervaz, Adnan, Farooq, Maaz and others on Friday announced to join the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz during a gathering held at Ouch Gharbi. Engineer Faizullah Khan was

chief guest on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion Faizullah Khan welcomed the new entrants and said the party would not leave their families alone. He said the PML-N leader Mian Nawaz Sharif would soon return to Pakistan to lead the election campaign.

Meanwhile the PML-N Lower Dir general secretary advocate Sardar Javed Tajak rejected the establishment of a toll plaza at Chakdara and demanded the government to review its decision. Talking to local journalists at Timergara he said the government should reconstruct the Chakdara Timergara dilapidated road and provide civic facilities to local residents before establishing a toll plaza at Chakdara. He said the PML-N government led by Mian Nawaz Sharif had abolished all taxes in Malakand division when Engineer Ameer Muqam had tendered his resignation in the past. He said the government should take the people into confidence before imposing taxes in the region. He said the region was one of the worst affected areas in the country and the government should facilitate its residents one way or the other.



PESHAWAR: Allam Fateh Muhammad Alvi Sialvi addressing a ceremony in connection with Ashra Muharram-ul-Harram.



In brief

Fire damages school building
Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: A school building was completely burnt in a fire in the Topsin area of Swat, police said on Friday. According to rescue sources, the fire broke out at 7am in Government High School, Topsin. The cause behind the fire eruption was stated to be a short circuit. As the locals live away from the school building, they remained unaware of the fire. As a result, the fire engulfed the entire school building. Due to summer vacations, the school building was empty, and the school watchman was also not present in the school. The rescue personnel and TMA fire brigade were informed about the fire late. They reached the spot upon being informed and extinguished the fire, but the fire had already reduced the building to ashes.

Tight security arrangements

MULTAN (INP): Police evluted tight security arrangements for 156 processions on the 9th of Muharram in Multan region. According to official sources, 80 processions are being taken in Multan, 18 in Vehari, 41 in Khanewal and 17 in district Lodhran. Over 4000 police officials are performing security duties. Similarly, 1448 volunteers are also assisting in authorities in maintaining peaceful environment. In the region, for 351 Majalis, 2705 police officials have been deputed.

Security sites reviewed

HYDERABAD (INP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Sajid Amir Sadozai has visited the oldest mourning site in the Tando Jahaniyan area, here. According to a police spokesman on Friday, SSP met with the organizer of the traditional mourning Syed Moazam Ali Shah. Incharge of DIB Inspector Akber Lund, SHO Cantt Inspector Ejaz Lakho, and other relevant officials were also present on the occasion. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) visited the Qadeemi mourning site and adjacent areas to check the security arrangements. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) also met with officers and jawans deployed for security at Tando Jahaniyan and issued special directives about ensuring strict security arrangements.

ANP calls for welfare of people
F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: Awami National Party (ANP) took concrete steps for socio-economic uplift of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by achieving provincial autonomy and welfare of marginalized community put priority of the party. This is claimed by ANP central leader and expected candidate in upcoming general elections named Nawab Zada Sher Afghan along with Mian Sahib Shah and Danyal Khan while addressing press conference at Takhtbhai press club. He claimed that Awami National Party (ANP) has initiated several projects for economic independency of the province but unfortunately it was neglected by successive governments. Awami National Party (ANP) leader claimed terrorism was eliminated from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa varisities were expended across the province to ensure provision higher education at doorstep. He claimed Awami National Party (ANP) is of the hour to reach power corridors for securing rights of Pakhtun.

Police hold march to pay tribute to martyrs

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Police arranged march from Maidan Lal Qila Police on eve of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Martyrs' Day. Apart from police officers, regional leaders also participated. DSP Lal Qila Sher Bhader Khan gave a briefing to journalists in connection with Police Martyrs' Day March.

On the occasion of the Martyrs' Day march, the police and elders raised slogans of Police Zindabad in favor of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police. DSP Circle Maidan Sher Bhader Khan told reporters that the sacrifices of the police and the blood of the martyrs will bring color. It will not go in vain. He said about law and order that peace is maintained with the cooperation of the police and security forces.

But the cooperation of the people is also very

important. On the occasion, DSP Sher Bhader Khan, SHO Saleem Shah Khan, SHO Zemdara Shah Faisal Khan, SHO Haya Siri Sajjad Khan, Elite Force etc. Sajid Iqbal, Sher Khan etc. participated. At the end of the police march, prayers were offered for the elevation of the martyrs.

Jirga rejects imposition of taxes: Dir Loya Jirga rejected the imposition of all kinds of taxes in Malakand Division and strongly demanded to lift the ban on local minerals, to maintain the ownership of forests and to supply electricity to the people of Malakand Division at discounted rates from all the power projects here.

In order to resolve the problems and disputes of the people, the establishment of the Dir Loya Jirga was also implemented. Malak Muhammad Zaib, Syed Anwar Khan, Mian Anwarzeb, Malik Bacha Zadeh, Malik Jan

Muhammad, Raja Amir Zaman, Malik Zer Khaliq, Malik Taimand Syed, Malik Ayub, Ihsan Muhammad and others attended the Loya Jirga in large numbers. He said that according to the 1973 constitution, Malakand division is a tax free zone and we are not ready to impose any kind of tax on the people of Malakand division.

People can't afford more taxes, so the government exempted Malakand division from taxes for 100 years. Speakers said that the government should take steps to promote tourism here. Expressing complete indifference to the Grand Jirga, he formed the Dir Loya Jirga for the rights of the people, their problems and resolving disputes. The district administration of Dir can take the Dir Loya Jirga into confidence on national issues, law and order situation and other matters.



PARACHINAR: Federal Minister for Overseas Sajid Hussain Turi participating in the procession along with members of peace committee.

Police kill 8 bandits in operation

KASHMORE (PPI): Kashmir police on Friday claimed to have killed eight dacoits during a shootout in the katcha area of the district. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amjad Ali Shaikh said the dacoits were killed in an encounter with the police in the katcha area of Kashmir, adding among those were Janoo Ander, Somar Sher, Nazroo Sher, and Mashero Sher.

The killed bandits Janoo Ander, Nazroo Sher, and Mashero Sher carried a bounty of Rs10 million each on their heads. The dead dacoits were entering Sindh's katcha area from Punjab when they met an encounter with the police, he added.

The dacoits were wanted to police in heinous crimes like dacoities, kidnapping for ransom and murders. SSP Amjad Shaikh said. The SSP expressed his resolve to press on with the action until all the dacoits threatening the peace and security of the region are eliminated.

Earlier on May 24, the Sindh government gave go-ahead for military operation against bandit gangs in Shikarpur's katcha area. Provincial minister Mir Shabbir Bijarani stated that the military troops and the Rangers personnel will launch an operation against bandits in katcha area along with the Sindh police.

PPP leader house attacked

Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: The house of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader, Pir Aslam was attacked by an alleged militant after he refused to pay extortion money, however no casualty was reported.

Police said Friday that an alleged militant hurled a hand grenade at the male guests room of Pir Aslam's house located in Risalpur and escaped. Resultantly, the house and the adjacent hujra were damaged partially. However, Aslam and his family members remained unharmed.

Police registered a case and started an investigation. Pir Aslam is the provincial leader of Pakistan Peoples Party and had contested elections twice on the party ticket, but he could not make it to Assembly. The civil society and politicians strongly condemned the attack and demanded arrest of the culprits.

Of Pakistani state and its citizens

Khalid Nawaz

THE way it is it seems that Pakistan's ruling elites have a kind of reverse socialism, socialism for the rich. While the monsoon and its disasters, in the shape of floods and their harmful impacts, are upon the poor mortals, something equally or in a way greater in importance is the eroding, disappearing trust between the state and citizens. The citizens at the private, as well as public level, are rightly raising questions regarding the intent and actions of the government which represent the state.

Every passing day, week rather than year it's getting shamefully and dangerously clear that neither the social contract between the state and citizens of their rights nor the legal framework of the state, which is supposedly governing these relationships, can address the problems faced by what we call the masses. The radio tax and the TV license fee is just a symptom. The power elites are unapologetically callous in their clarity to fleece the poor, helplessness taxpayers in as many ways as possible. Even worse, they could devise, and invent newer methods. There is no end to this madness.

From the unjustified increase in the judges' salary to the bonuses and perks given to the senate employees the plunder and pillage is on under the garb of law and rules. They make the laws, they make the rules then they could bend them too for their own nefarious ends.

Nothing could justify such ignominious rises and the moral falls of the so-called lawmakers of the republic. That too is at a time when the poor souls are caught in the vicious circle of runaway inflation, and rupee depreciation, and are led and forced to commit suicides when they are unable to pay back the loan they took from the loan sharks. Forget about the developed civilized world; such harrowing news would have shocked some lesser and not-so developed societies.

By avoiding the looming default finance minister doesn't seem to have saved The Titanic from sinking. On the face of it he might have just steered its wheel to another nearby iceberg and have just bought some more time before the inevitable strike and consequential sinking. By then there will be another martyr-pants on the national and financial horizon asking for miracles to happen.

All this could have been more acceptable if the citizens of the republic also had this lifestyle to eat, drink, and be merry, and that too on borrowed money. Well, it is just the opposite. At a personal level, such behaviors are despised.

Those who borrow try their best to avoid it in the first place or if it is necessary then make sure that installments are paid on time and no embarrassment shall occur. But of-course strange are the ways of the state represented by the government which could come up with anything and everything to justify any unjustifiable acts.

Though disappointed by mainstream media, which is tied to corporate and government interests, the general public hasn't lost all hope yet. True, that there is general apathy prevailing among the masses that hardly something could be done to stop the rot, but they're a growing realization is also taking place among the sections of the public that something or anything should be done to shake up a bit the status quo of the present day which is solely serving the interests of those who are in the club. The message is gaining ground in the shape of memes, cartoons, jokes, and banter spreading shared messages through the platform of social media which is beyond the reach of the propaganda of the government and corporate sector.

To all intent and purpose, it may look that such unorganized efforts hardly could be termed as resistance to influence the decision-making process, and aimed to change the direction of the policies, but the slow and steady dissemination is making the citizen more critical in their relationship with the state and the government.

True that people are struggling to keep their bodies and souls together. They are not in a position to organize themselves in a mass protest and bring the ruling elites back to earth. But there must be a logical end to the Pakistani government's anti-masses policies and practices. For how long the powers that are could insulate themselves from the heat waves of public anger, resentment, and discontent?

One killed, 15 injured in bus-trailer collision

FAISALABAD (INP): A driver was killed while 15 passengers sustained multiple injuries in a road accident on motorway, in the limits of Samundri police station.

Rescue-1122 spokesman Zahid Lateef said here on Friday, the accident took place on Lahore-Multan Motorway M-3 near Samundri Interchange in the wee hours where a bus of a private company collided with a trailer in a bid to overtaking.

As a result, bus driver Imran Baloch (29) died on the spot while 15 passengers identified as that Marwa Tariq (25), Tasawwar Abbas (24), Nasir (32), Rafiqat Abbas (30), Feroz (40), Munir Ahmad (36), Tariq

(26), Abdul Ghafoor (55), Nadia Shamroz (30), Abu Huraira (21), Irfan Khan (31), Usman Zahid (23), Asrar (30), Fahem Ali (32) and Mahboob (39) received multiple injuries.

Rescue-1122 shifted 15 victims to Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital Samundri where the condition of five was stated to be critical. The police took the body and vehicles into custody.

Meanwhile, a motorcyclist was killed in a road accident, in the remit of Thikriwala police station. Rescue-1122 spokesman said here on Friday that Ali Usman (16), resident of Chak No 48-GB was riding a motorcycle when a rashly driven bus hit his two-wheel

er near Attock petrol Pump on Sadhar Bypass. He died on the spot. Police took the body into custody and started investigation.

SSC 2nd annual examination from September 15: Secondary school Certificate (SSC) 2nd Annual Examinations 2023 will commence under the aegis of board of Intermediate & Secondary education (BISE) Faisalabad from September 15, 2023.

According to BISE spokesman, candidates could submit their admission forms with single fee from August 01 to 12 while the same would be received with double fee up to August 16 and with triple fee up to August 19, 2023.



QUETTA: IGP Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh pinning promotion badge to AIG (Operations) Abdul Haq Imran.

HEC abolishing BA & MA programs deprived marginalized students

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: The recent decision by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to phase out private Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Master of Arts (MA) programs in universities has sparked concerns over the future of underprivileged students who relied on these programs to pursue higher education. The HEC's move, which aims to standardize and enhance the quality of higher education through the introduction of a mandatory four-year regular Bachelor of Science (BS) program, has inadvertently widened the educational divide, leaving economically disadvantaged stu-

dents with limited options.

For many students hailing from low-income families, private BA and MA programs offered a lifeline to achieve their academic dreams. Through part-time jobs and flexible schedules, they could support their families financially while pursuing their education. However, the closure of these private programs has left them uncertain about how to proceed with their educational journey.

One such student, 23-year-old Salma from Abbottabad, shared her heartbreaking story of perseverance and dedication. Working as a private school teacher during the day and studying for her MA degree in the evening,

Salma was committed to contributing to her family's income while pursuing her passion for learning. With the private MA program no longer available, she fears that her dreams of earning a degree are now shattered, and affording a four-year regular BS program seems out of reach.

Student representatives and civil society organizations have raised their voices against the decision, urging the HEC and the government to reconsider and find alternative solutions that accommodate students from all socio-economic backgrounds. They emphasize the need for scholarships and financial aid programs to support underprivileged

through the new four-year BS program, ensuring that deserving individuals are not left behind due to financial constraints.

Many believe that continuing both BA and MA programs simultaneously can provide a safety net for those who need it the most. While the HEC's decision is aimed at aligning Pakistan's education system with global trends and improving graduate employability, critics argue that it disregards the socio-economic realities faced by many young scholars. They stress the importance of inclusive policies that prioritize accessibility and opportunity for all.

Former lawmaker Amna Sardar pointed out that the fate of thousands of underprivileged students hangs in the balance as the academic community debates the implications of the HEC's decision. She stressed the importance of considering the social implications and devising comprehensive strategies that uphold the principles of inclusivity and accessibility in education.

The issue has also raised concerns among university vice-chancellors, who stated that 25 percent of their total revenue came from admission fees for BA and MA programs. They expressed resentment over the decision, citing its impact on the

financial stability of universities. As the debate gains traction, student activists and civil society organizations are calling for a dialogue between all stakeholders to find a middle ground that ensures the transformation of the higher education system while safeguarding the aspirations of underprivileged students.

The dreams and aspirations of thousands of students are at stake and their voices must be heard and taken into account in shaping the future of higher education in the country. The government is being urged to review the decision and consider the needs of the marginalized students in its pursuit of educational reform.



Japan raises alarm over China's military

TOKYO (AP): The Japanese government stepped up its alarm over Chinese assertiveness, warning in a report issued Friday that the country faces its worst security threats since World War II as it plans to implement a new strategy that calls for a major military buildup.

The 2023 defense white paper, approved by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's Cabinet, is the first since the government adopted a controversial new National Security Strategy in December, seen as a break from Japan's postwar policy limiting the use of force to self-defense. China, Russia and North Korea contribute to "the most severe and complex security environment since the end of World War II," according to the 510-page report. It says China's external stance and military activities have become a "serious concern for Japan and the international community and present an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge."

Russian and Chinese delegates joined North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in North Korea's capital for a military parade that showed off the country's latest drones and long-range nuclear-capable missiles. Russia and China have also stepped up strategic ties, the white paper said, noting five joint bomber flights since 2019, and several joint navigations of Chinese and Russian warships that it said were "clearly intended for demonstration of force against Japan and of grave concern" to both Japan and the region.

The report predicted that China will possess 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035 and increase its military superiority over Taiwan, in

what Japan views as a security threat, especially to its southwestern islands including Okinawa. While Okinawan Gov. Denny Tamaki has called for US bases there to be reduced and for greater efforts in diplomacy and dialogue with Beijing, the central government has been reinforcing the defenses of the remote southwestern islands, including Ishigaki and Yonaguni, where new bases for missile defense have been installed.

Many residents of Okinawa have bitter memories of the Battle of Okinawa, in which Japan's wartime military essentially sacrificed the local population in an attempt to delay a US landing on the main Japanese islands. Many Okinawans worry they would be the first to suffer in the event of a Taiwan emergency. Earlier this week, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno visited Ishigaki and acknowledged the challenges of evacuating residents from remote islands, and pledged to give firm support. Ishigaki Mayor Yoshitaka Nakayama asked for airport and port facilities to be reinforced and for underground shelters to be built as preparation for a possible Taiwan emergency.

China claims self-governing Taiwan as its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary. Chinese President Xi Jinping, who in 2017 set a goal of building a "world-class military" by the mid-21st century, may move the target forward, the report said, noting his call for a rapid advancement of the People's Liberation Army in his speech at the Communist Party congress in October.

North Korea is rapidly

progressing in its nuclear and missile development and poses "a graver, more imminent threat to Japan than ever before," the report said. North Korea has test-fired around 100 missiles since the start of 2022, including ICBMs, and the report noted it is now believed to have an ability to conduct nuclear attacks on Japan and the continental United States. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the Japanese defense paper interfered in China's internal affairs and "deliberately played up the so-called Chinese threat and created tensions in the region." She said Japan's own military buildup has drawn concern from its Asian neighbors and the international community, and urged Tokyo to "stop finding excuses for its military expansion."

She said China's military policy is defensive, and "military cooperation such as joint patrols with relevant countries is in line with international law and practice." South Korea, despite the rapid improvement of its ties with Japan this year due to shared concern over China's threat, slammed Japan's claim in the defense report to a South Korean-controlled contested island, calling it "unjust."

The report comes seven months after Kishida's government adopted new national security and defense strategies that called for doubling the defense budget to 43 trillion yen (\$310 billion) by 2027. Questions have been raised about whether the ambitious expansion of military capability and funding for it is feasible in a country that has a rapidly aging and shrinking population.

Japan welcomes thaw with South Korea

TOKYO (Reuters): Japan welcomed a thaw in relations with South Korea in its annual defence paper on Friday but otherwise offered a gloomy assessment of the threat of China's territorial ambitions, its security partnership with Russia and a belligerent North Korea.

"Amid the increasing severity and difficulties we face, the need for Japan and South Korea to align has become increasingly important," the Ministry of Defence said in the 2023 Defence White Paper. Surrounded by nuclear-armed rivals, Japan has to contend with intensifying Chinese military manoeuvres around Taiwan and disputed islands in the East China Sea, a growing threat from North Korea's ballistic missile programme and deteriorating regional security after Russia's attack on Ukraine, it said.

Shared security challenges helped US allies Japan and South Korea mend relations that had soured over disputes about compensation for women forced to work in Japanese military brothels and other Koreans drafted as wartime labourers. At a meeting in May with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on the sidelines of a Group of Seven summit in Japan, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol praised his counterpart for expressing compassion for those who suffered under Japan's colonial rule. The two leaders will meet for the fourth time this year with President Joe Biden in the US next month for a trilateral summit that could further cement their detente.

This year's white paper is the first since Japan announced, in December, a plan to double defence spending over the next five years to fund the acquisition of new weapons and capabilities, including longer range missiles that Japan says will help deter China from resorting to military action. A separate national security strategy document promised close cooperation with the United States and other like-minded countries.

The defence paper said partners include Australia, India, European countries such as Britain, and South Korea. Japan is also pursuing stronger ties with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. A key aim of the white paper this year is to explain why Japan is undertaking its biggest military build-up since World War Two, a defence ministry official told a briefing. It also outlines developments over the past decade during which Japan has more than quadrupled the number of annual military exercises it undertakes with the US, and tripled the number of countries it offers security assistance to.

Wagner boss spotted in Russia

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin was photographed in St Petersburg during this week's Africa-Russia summit. He was seen shaking hands with Ambassador Freddy Mapouka, a senior official in the Central African Republic (CAR).

The image was posted on Facebook by Dmitri Syty, who reportedly manages Wagner's operations in CAR. It is the first confirmed sighting of Mr Prigozhin in Russia since Wagner's failed mutiny in June. Mr Prigozhin and Mr Mapouka's meeting took place at the Trezzini Palace hotel in St Petersburg, BBC Verify confirmed.

BBC Verify used facial recognition software to compare known photographs of the CAR official with the picture featuring Prigozhin and got a 99% match, indicating the two images are of the same man. Details of the interior seen in the background of the photo were also matched to the Trezzini Palace hotel which, according to Russian media, is owned by Prigozhin. The lanyard worn by Mr Mapouka has a distinctive pattern, which is identical to that of the official lanyard worn by delegates at the summit.

Niger coup: Tchiani declares himself leader

NIAMEY (BBC): Gen Abdourahmane Tchiani has declared himself the new leader of Niger after a dramatic coup. Also known as Omar Tchiani, he staged a takeover which started when the presidential guards unit he led seized the country's leader. This shatters Niger's first peaceful and democratic transition since independence in 1960.

President Mohamed Bazoum is thought to be in good health, and still held captive by his own guards. The coup has been roundly condemned by international bodies including the African Union, West African regional bloc (Ecowas), the EU and the UN. However, the leader of Russia's Wagner mercenary group has reportedly praised the coup, describing it as a triumph. "What happened in Niger is nothing other than the struggle of the people of Niger with their colonisers," Yevgeny Prigozhin was quoted as saying on a Wagner-affiliated Telegram channel.

The BBC has not been able to verify the authenticity of his reported comments. Gen Tchiani, 62, has been in charge of the presidential guard since 2011 and was promoted to the rank of general in 2018 by former President Mahamadou Issoufou. He had also been linked to a 2015 coup attempt against the ex-president, but appeared in court to deny it. Speaking in a televised address, Gen Tchiani said his junta took over because of several problems in Niger, including insecurity, economic woes and corruption, amongst other matters.

Niger's coup is the latest in a wave of takeovers that have hit the West African region in recent years, toppling governments in countries including Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. Military coups were a regular occurrence in Africa in the decades after independence and there is concern they are starting to become more frequent. The takeover in Niger, led by soldiers belonging to the presidential guard, is just the latest in a string of coups that have taken place in recent years.

There were two in Burkina Faso in 2022 as well as failed coup attempts in Guinea Bissau, The Gambia and the island nation of Sao Tome and Principe. In 2021, there were six coup attempts in Africa, four of them successful. Last year, a senior African Union official, Moussa Faki Mahamat, expressed concern about "the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government". One definition used is that of an illegal and overt attempt by the military - or by other civilian officials - to unseat sitting leaders. A study by two US researchers, Jonathan Powell and Clayton Thyne, has identified over 200 such attempts in Africa since the



1950s. About half of these have been successful - that is lasting more than seven days.

Sometimes, those taking part in such an intervention deny it's a coup. In 2017 in Zimbabwe, a military takeover brought Robert Mugabe's 37-year rule to an end. But one of the leaders, Maj Gen Sibusiso Moyo, appeared on television at the time, flatly denying it was a military takeover. In April 2021 after the death of the Chadian leader, Idriss Deby, the army installed his son as interim president, leading a transitional military council. His opponents called it a "dynastic coup". "Coups leaders almost invariably deny their action was a coup in an effort to appear legitimate," says Jonathan Powell.

The overall number of coup attempts in Africa remained remarkably consistent at an average of around four a year between 1960 and 2000. Jonathan Powell says this is not surprising, given the instability African countries experienced in the years after independence. "African countries have had conditions common for coups, like poverty and poor economic performance. When a country has one coup, that's often a harbinger of more coups." There was a noticeable decline in the numbers of coups (and attempted coups) after 2000.

However, although there was only one coup reported in 2020 (in Mali), in 2021 there was a noticeably higher than average number. In 2022, there were five attempts, but only two - in Burkina Faso - succeeded. Ndubuisi Christian Ani from the University of KwaZulu-Natal says popular uprisings against long-serving dictators have provided an opportunity for the return of coups in Africa. "While popular uprisings are legitimate and peo-

ple-led, success is often determined by the decisions taken by the military," he says.

Sudan has had the most coups and attempted takeovers amounting to 16 - six of them successful. In 2019, long-serving leader Omar al-Bashir was removed from power following months of protests. Bashir himself took over in a military coup in 1989. Burkina Faso in West Africa, has had the most successful coups, with nine takeovers and one failed coup. Nigeria had a reputation for military coups following independence with eight between January 1966 and the takeover by Gen Sani Abacha in 1993. However, since 1999 transfers of power in Africa's most populous nation have been by democratic election. Burundi's history has been marked by eleven separate coups, mostly driven by the tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi communities.

Sierra Leone experienced three coups between 1967 and 1968, and another one in 1971. Between 1992 and 1997, it experienced five further coup attempts. Ghana has also had its share of military coups, with eight in two decades. The first was in 1966, when Kwame Nkrumah was removed from power, and in the following year there was an unsuccessful attempt by junior army officers. In 2021, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that "military coups are back," adding that "geo-political divisions are undermining international co-operation and... a sense of impunity is taking hold," he said. Overall, Africa has experienced more coups than any other continent. Of the 17 coups recorded globally since 2017, all but one - Myanmar in 2021 - have been in Africa.

Ministry of Defence accidentally emails ally of Russia

MOSCOW (BBC): The Ministry of Defence has launched an investigation after emails containing classified information were sent to a close ally of Russia in a typing error. The emails were intended for the US military, which uses the domain name ".mil". But they missed out the letter i, and so the messages went instead to the West African nation of Mali.

The MoD said fewer than 20 emails were sent to an "incorrect domain" and were "not classified at secret or above". In a tweet, it said it was "confident there was no breach of operational security or disclosure of technical data", calling the emails "routine". "We have opened an investigation after a small number of emails were mistakenly forwarded to an incorrect email domain," an MoD spokesman told PA news agency.

The spokesman added that all sensitive information used by the government department was "shared on systems designed to minimise the risk of misdirection". "The

MoD constantly reviews its processes and is currently undertaking a programme of work to improve information management, data loss prevention, and the control of sensitive information," they added. Earlier this month, it emerged that millions of US military emails had also been sent to Mali, because of the same typing error.

Some of those emails were believed to have contained sensitive information including passwords, medical records and the itineraries of top officers. Mali was one of the six African countries promised free grain shipments by Russian President Vladimir Putin after the collapse of the Black Sea deal with Ukraine earlier this month. Russia's navy blockaded Ukraine's Black Sea ports following its invasion in February 2022, trapping 20 million tonnes of grain which were meant for export and creating food shortages in Middle Eastern and African countries.

Mali is also a close Russian ally because Moscow's Wagner mercenaries have been deployed

in the country to fight alongside the army against jihadists. Earlier this week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Mali's defence minister, air force chief and the deputy chief of staff would be sanctioned for co-ordinating the spread of Wagner in the West African country.

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Russian, Chinese officials join Kim at NK mily parade

SEOUL (Reuters): Chinese and Russian officials stood shoulder to shoulder with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as they reviewed his newest nuclear-capable missiles and attack drones at a military parade in the capital, North Korean state media showed on Friday.

The widely anticipated parade in Pyongyang the previous day commemorated the 70th anniversary of the end of the Korean War, celebrated in North Korea as "Victory Day". Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu's visit was the first by Moscow's top defence official since the 1991 break-up of the Soviet Union. The Chinese delegation was the first since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Their appearance at events with the North's nuclear-capable missiles - banned by the UN Security Council with Chinese and Russian support - was in contrast from previous years, when Beijing and Moscow sought to distance themselves from their neighbour's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile development. Kim, Shoigu and Chinese

Communist Party Politburo member Li Hongzhong talked, laughed and saluted as North Korean troops marched and weapons rolled past, photographs and footage aired by North Korean state media showed.

The parade included North Korea's latest Hwasong-17 and Hwasong-18 intercontinental ballistic missiles, according to the KCNA state news agency. They are believed to have the range to strike anywhere in the United States. The event also featured a flyover by new attack and spy drones, KCNA reported. Kim hosted a reception and lunch with Shoigu and vowed solidarity with Russia's people and military. Shoigu praised the North Korean military as the strongest in the world, and the two discussed strategic security and defence cooperation, KCNA said.

At another meeting, Shoigu read a congratulatory message from Russian President Vladimir Putin who thanked North Korea for its support during the "special military operation"

in Ukraine, media reported. The United States has accused North Korea of providing weapons to Russia for its war in Ukraine. State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said the US was "incredibly concerned" about their ties. North Korea and Russia have denied conducting any arms transactions.

The new surveillance drones could be used to survey targets, assess damage and generally enhance situational awareness, said Ankit Panda of the US-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In December five North Korean drones crossed into the South, which scrambled fighter jets and helicopters in response. It increased anti-drone measures at key facilities, including the presidential office.

The attack drones would have limited use in a war on the Korean Peninsula given their vulnerability to anti-aircraft defences, but "North Korea may seek to offer these drones to external customers", Panda said.

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Gwadar is a game changer for Pakistan if works upon

PRIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday said that the concert-ed efforts and true implementa-tion of the vision of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) would usher in the revolution and guarantee the prosperity of 220 million people of Pakistan. According to the Premier, the SIFC is the big-gest motivating engine and vi-sion for Pakistan's progress and prosperity. This will bring in revolution and nothing can impede Pakistan's progress, if this idea could be implemented in true letter and spirit. During a visit to a poverty-hit province, the Prime Minister inau-gurated multiple development projects including the Khu-zdar-Panjgur transmission line; con-struction of a two-lane Khu-zdar-Basima road; water supply and distribution scheme; 1.2MGD RO Desalination Pant; and initia-tion of Gwadar Port dredging. The Premier also attended the groundbreaking ceremonies for the re-habilita-tion and upgradation of the Awaran-Naal and Awaran-Jhal Jaho roads; the Khuzdar section of M8; the Gwadar Safe City project; and the establishment of the University of Gwadar.

Gwadar, Pakistan's first deep seaport on the Arabian Sea, lies at an important geostrategic location at the mouth of the Persian Gulf and next to the Strait of Hormuz, the important global maritime trade route that deals in nearly half the world oil trade and good transportation between Europe and East Asia. Although the idea of establishing a deep seaport on the Makran coast in Balochistan had taken birth in the early years of Pakistan's inde-pendence and remained under discussion in suc-cessive decades, however, this magnificent project became a reality during the Musharraf era in the early 21st century. Economically most viable and strategically highly important, Gwadar deep seaport became a target of a regional conspiracy in its early stage while China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the flagship project under the Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) brought this prestigious economic and regional development project into the center stage of the global rivalry between major powers in the world. Although Pakistan and China launched Gwadar and CPEC as regional connectivity and a shared economic development mechanism, that offers equal economic opportunities to all nation-states in South, Central, and Western Asia. However, New Delhi and the anti-Beijing Western bloc perceive this multi-billion dollar development project as Beijing's military outpost to counter Malacca Dilemma, which was an all-weather strategic setback for the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army Navy in any future military standoff with its competitors.

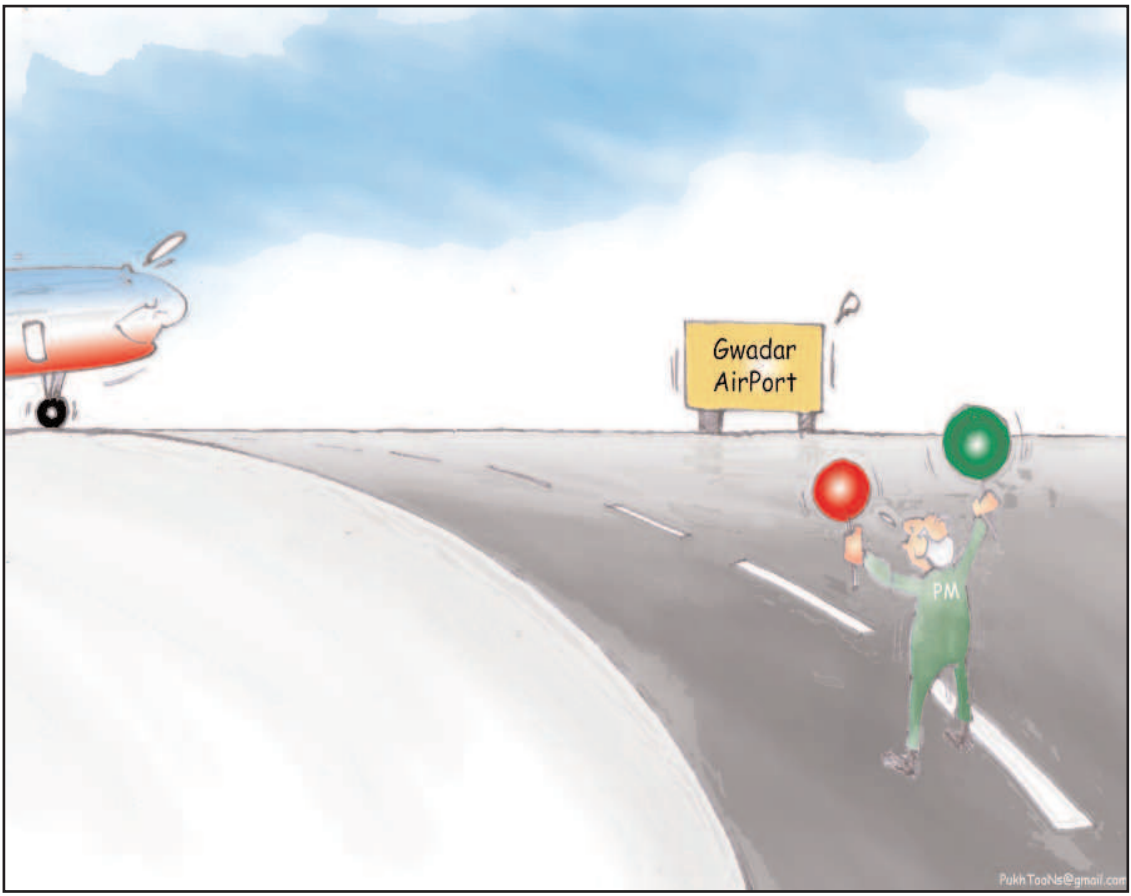
Presently, Gwadar Deep Seaport is an important part of the widely advertised China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Beijing and Islamabad have agreed to enhance the port capacity through the construction of additional births, an increase in cargo tunnels and ceilings along with the establish-ment of a desalination plant, a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), and a floating Liquified Natural Gas Terminal that would include Gawadar in major deep seaports in Asia. In the current scenario, the Gwadar Port and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are fundamental pillars of Pakistan's future economic and social uplift plan, which will not only boost the country's economic and industrial growth but will act as a global trade route for China, Afghanistan and Central Asia's trade with rest of the world including Europe and the Middle East. At the same time, this extensive road, railway, and industrial infrastructure will boost regional connectivity, interstate trade, and tourism and will lead to wider cooperation and prosperity in the region and beyond.

Historically, the Gwadar port could not attract sufficient business and shipping activities after its inauguration in 2007, primarily due to the absence of any industrial hub in its vicinity, Baloch armed insurgency, and no flow of transit trade through the deep water port facility even after the CPEC has completed a decade of development and integra-tion. The incumbent government has resumed the development and extension work at the Gwadar port and an overall development plan has been launched to integrate less developed Balochistan, particularly Gwadar district into the mainstream areas. Historically, the Gawadar deep water port and billions dollar investment, trade, and energy projects under CPEC have not yielded their true potential so far because of haphazard policies and lack of interest of the political governments who frequently changed their priorities and plans in sup-port of Washington and Beijing alternatively that seriously marred national interests and lost the trust of friendly nations.

Gwadar and CPEC are the game changers and their potential can turn the fate of the entire region but for that end, Pakistani leaders have to scarify their short-lived political interests, by bringing sus-tainability and predictability to their economic and foreign policies, which earn the confidence of fore-ign nations, global investors, and business com-munity, so an economic revival could take place in the country which in turn attracts greater regional cooperation and development in the future.

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The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or teshil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Ruto unmasked: Breaking the rules of Kenya's game of thrones

Patrick Gathara

AT the end of January 2018, Kenya's veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga took the oath of office as the self-described "people's president", barely three months after boycotting a repeat election called following the annulment by the courts of the initial poll in August.

His rival, Uhuru Kenyatta, the incumbent president, had been declared duly re-elected, and Odinga had threatened to hold a parallel inaugura-tion ceremony for himself, then tried to back out, before being pushed by the younger and more militant fringe of his coalition into doing it. However, even then, he could not bring himself to take the oath as prescribed in the constitu-tion. He seemed to know what the limits were and would go no further.

That event neatly illus-trates one of the challenges facing Kenya today and the reason why the current face-off between Odinga and Kenyatta's successor, his former deputy and BFF-turned-foe William Ruto, are so profoundly distur-bing and frightening for many Kenyans. Elite con-testations for power and opportunities for extraction in Kenya have had a fairly predictable logic and pat-tern - one could say, as Joe Kobuthi of The Elephant has written, that there have always been "unwritten rules of engagement govern their game of thrones".

Both politicians and the common Kenyans who must endure their violent predation have had an idea of where the red lines that limit how far they can go are. The elite who govern Kenya via a series of crises, each fomented for the sake of gaining a seat at the eat-ing table, required such rules to keep the whole thing from imploding. It is these rules that have creat-ed what Charles Obbo describes in The EastAfrican as "the amorality - and even immorality - of [Kenyan] politicians [that] ... has helped them avoid civil wars and the do-or-die politics that have ruined many an African country". Street protests have, for example, been an effective way for the oppo-sition to demand reform and their share of the loot from recalcitrant regimes. It is a tactic that seeks not just to demonstrate public

backing for the opposition's cause, but also to provoke the state into an overreac-tion that would inevitably position it as the enemy of constitutionalism and democracy. And it almost always works, with the state happy to constantly reprise its role as the pur-veyor of colonial terror in a bid to remind the natives of their place. Following peri-ods of intense contestations during which death, maim-ing and destruction on a scale acceptable to the elite occurs, the politicians cut a

spoke to this as does the fact that barely a year later, Odinga appears to have completely abandoned the claims of rigging and settled for the more potent complaints about Ruto's stewardship of the economy and inability to tame rising prices. Still, his weaponisation of street demos for purely selfish ends has been unsettling. On the other hand, the state's response to the protests also indicates the changing of the rules. In the past, elites have preferred

plicity, gangs of youths invaded and vandalised a farm belonging to the Kenyatta family. On the same day, another group attacked the premises of a company belonging to Odinga. Last week, the former president had to rush to his son's aid after the latter's house was raided by police. Such personalisa-tion of political violence is not the done thing within the small incestuous mafia for whom politics is not personal, it is just business. Within that context, the violence unleashed by Ruto on protesters takes on a new and more sinister hue. Elected on a populist plat-form of making Kenya work for its poorest, his administration has initially shown remarkable restraint when compared with pre-vious regimes. Perhaps that was simply because the ini-tial protests had little trac-tion. But as they morphed into a forum for expressing much more widely held sentiments about the cost of living, it was predictable that a crackdown would come. When it arrived, however, its ferocity and brutality caught many by surprise.

Egged on by his own lunatic fringe, which includes his deputy, Rigathi Gachagua, and the likes of Cabinet Minister Moses Kuria, whom even the Americans seem to consider too extreme, Ruto flooded the streets of the capital and other major cities with police, seemingly loosened from all restraint. Opposition politicians were abducted and kept incom-municado, many have gone into hiding, protesters and bystanders have been shot and beaten, tear gas used on homes and children, and hundreds, including opposi-tion bloggers, arrested. Nobody knows how far Ruto is willing to go, per-haps least of all, he himself and his band of rogues. There does not seem to be much scope for or interest in a deal, neither within the shell-shocked opposition nor the chest-thumping regime. There are increasing fears of a rebirth of the Daniel Moi dictatorship, an eventuality that many believed was fading as a real option despite the efforts of his successors. Odinga's Azimio la Umoja coalition has called off this week's protests, but Kenyans still wait to find out what the new red lines will be, and what the new rules of the game are.

The initially muted public response to his calls for demonstrations spoke to this as does the fact that barely a year later, Odinga appears to have completely abandoned the claims of rigging and settled for the more potent complaints about Ruto's stewardship of the economy and inability to tame rising prices.

deal before it all gets out of hand. As Kobuthi notes, "internal squabbles [between elites], which have regularly led to episodic violence in the country, they have been mediated through elite 'handshakes' - essentially boardroom deals".

However, over the last few years, as the independ-ence generation of politi-cians has left the stage, their successors have increasingly seemed unwilling to respect the rules of the game. And this is what is driving much of the angst around the current protests and the state's reac-tion. While it may look like the usual intra-elite quarrel over power, it is in many ways a subversion of the game. When the demon-strations were called last year in the wake of Ruto's elections, they represented a flipping of the script. Rather than a way to rein in an administration going rogue, they were rightly perceived by many as an attempt by Odinga, yet again the losing presiden-tial candidate, to hold the country to ransom despite failure to produce any cred-ible proof that the election had actually been stolen from him. The initially muted public response to his calls for demonstrations

the bodies and property of common Kenyans as the battleground for settling their disputes, and have largely avoided targeting each other personally. In July 2008, for example, during a heated debate, a cabinet minister was caught on camera inviting a rival MP to "bring his people" for an all-out battle to settle the issue, suggesting his group had already slaugh-tered between 600 and 1,000 of them.

In fact, protecting each other, while murdering and displacing each other's fol-lowers has been a running theme of Kenya's post-independence politics. Just as Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya, pro-protected the white settlers he had claimed to fight from the appropriation of their stolen farms, his successor Daniel Moi protected the Kenyatta family's own cor-rupt acquisitions. Then Mwai Kibaki, the third president, and Odinga pro-protected Moi's corrupt fortune and Uhuru Kenyatta (Jomo's son) protected Kibaki's. Ruto, who accus-es his predecessor of financing the ongoing protests, has however seemed less inclined to continue in that tradition, at least for now. In March, with his government's com-

We've had almost 99 years of Tory rule in Totnes

George Monbiot

TRUST no one, trust everyone: this paradox is the foundation-principle of democracy. We should not trust any politician's promises until they've been delivered. We should not trust anyone to represent us without constant pressure and feed-back. But we should trust society as a whole - trust everyone - to make choices for the good of all. Otherwise we would need a different system.

The problem is that the will of those we should trust - each other - is constantly thwarted by the will of those we shouldn't. Political and elec-toral systems, governed from the centre, are designed to grant us a semblance of own-ership and control, while depriving us of real power. The political parties that claim to represent us too often respond instead to the dem-ands of the powerful: media barons, corporations, party funders. In extreme cases, such as the UK's current gov-ernment, they are reduced to corporate lobbyists, deliver-ing the country to the most antisocial interests.

This problem is com-pounded where elections are unfair by design, like the UK's first-past-the-post sys-tem. At the 2019 general elec-tion, the Conservatives took 56% of the seats on 43.6% of the vote. They gained one seat for every 38,264 votes cast. Labour needed 50,837 votes to win a seat, the Liberal Democrats 336,038 and the Greens 866,435. In 229 out of 650 constituencies, votes against the successful candidates outweighed the votes in favour. As recent opinion polls suggest, there is massive public appetite for changing the system, but this appetite is not shared by the two parties most likely to form a government. The Lab-our leadership won't commit to proportional representa-tion, no matter how many party members demand it, because it sees itself as the winner in a winner-takes-all election.

To make matters worse, every recent Labour leader has flatly refused to strike electoral deals with other parties. For 13 years, Labour has shut itself out of power by rejecting strategic alliances. The first-past-the-post system also enables Keir Starmer to wage his brutal war against dissent within the party, against diversity of thought and strategy, against hope. Because he is confident that voters in many constituencies have nowhere else to go, he can respond to the media barons and corporate lobby-ists, rather than the people. So what do we do, desperate for change, but denied it by those who claim to act on our behalf? How do we take back control? The answer, I believe, has been developed where I live. Totnes and south Devon is a prize example of what the democracy cam-paign Compass calls a "pro-gressive tragedy". The latest election predictions (aggre-gated from three different websites) show the Conservative MP winning on 34% of the vote, while the Lib Dems, Labour and Greens between them are expected to take 59%. The Tories have held this seat for almost 99 years, and the split progressive vote threatens to sustain their hegemony. The problem we face here, as in many other constituencies, is that everyone opposed to the Conservatives has to guess other people's intentions in seeking a tactical overthrow.

So here's the plan local people have devised to break minority rule. It's simple and seems hard to fault. It's called

the South Devon Primary. Voters are invited to a series of eight town hall meetings, all held within a fortnight, in dif-ferent parts of the consti-tuency. At these meetings, the leading progressive candi-dates (likely, in this con-stituency, to be Labour, Lib Dem and Green) make their pitch. Members of the audi-ence are not asked to decide whom they like the most, but whom they believe is best-placed to beat the incumbent MP. At the end of each meet-ing, there's a secret ballot. There are basic precautions to ensure no one from outside the constituency can vote and no one votes twice. The pri-mary is run by volunteers, and depends for its success on the-ir ability to excite people about the possibility of change and encourage them to attend the meetings. In other words, political re-engame-nt is baked into the model. The campaign has so far rec-ruited 40 local ambassadors to talk to people in the consti-tuency's towns and villages.

Progressive candidates, regardless of their party line on electoral pacts, have a powerful incentive to attend the meetings, as a no-show would greatly reduce their chances of success, both in the primary and in the gen-eral election. When all eight meetings have taken place, the total vote is released. The campaign will then urge pro-gressives to unite behind the leading candidate: not only voting for them, but leaflet-ing and canvassing for them. Local people, in other words, will then be able to trust other people's tactical votes. There's no obligation on the losing candidates to stand down at the election. But their parties will be disinclined to put much effort into their campaigns, knowing that the constituency is swinging behind another. It seems to me that this approach could, in the future, perhaps, also provide openings for inde-pendents peeling away from Labour. If the prospect of independents winning their primaries were seen as a real threat, Starmer would be forced to abandon his purge of diverse and independent thinking from the Labour party. The Conservative MP for Totnes, Anthony, com-plaints the primary will "restrict democracy". It's not clear why. In fact, it's pretty obvious that it enhances and empowers democracy. He appears to be rattled.

Campaigners in another constituency - Godalming and Ash, in Surrey, where the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, will stand at the next election - are now adopting the model. Several other constituency groups are interested. The south Devon pioneers are offering their design to any constituency in which the Tories are likely to win by default in a largely progres-sive constituency. But it will not be made available to those in which polling sug-gests a progressive candidate already has a high chance of unseating the Tory incum-bent. Of the 62 "progressive tragedies" in the UK, the campaigners estimate that roughly 50 could make good use of the strategy. Enough to swing an election. This strate-gy offers more than just an end to minority rule. It also has the potential to under-mine the power of dictatorial party leaders, of whatever persuasion, and return power to constituents. This simple, local idea, which enhances our trust in each other, could transform our political sys-tem. It will help deliver some-thing closer to the democracy we have so long been prom-ised and so long denied.

I can't solve Brexit or the culture wars - but I've learned to see the other side of even the most polarised debates

Anne McElvoy

VEHEMENTLY dis-agreeing comes naturally to many of us, and the fraught times we live in often make it seem easier to find divisions than bridging points. But as noble as it is to stand up for our beliefs, there's also a wearing quality in being defined by our disagreements. From Brexit to the endless culture wars, these spat and blame games are easier to start than to end.

Like a lot of columnists, I have been booked for many pro-and-con debates on the "classic" dividing lines over the past decade. So since 2018, I have taken a break from the weekly wrangles over rights and wrongs to do something a bit different on the summer airwaves. Across the Red Line on BBC Radio 4 came about because myself and the show's producer, Phil Tinline, felt that many pub-

lic formats of debate were frustrating, even stultifying. It was easier to get locked in your own worldview and seek a volley of ammunition to fire at opponents than to get to the reasons why reasonable people can end up in a bubble of the like-minded. A joke about needing conflict resolution experts sparked the idea of a show that would focus on why people hold the views they do, and what it might feel like to have convictions very different from our own.

We would ask partici-pants who are often defined by what they stand for or against to be guided by our experts in "active listening" techniques - I am blessed with two wonderful conflict resolution practitioners, Gabrielle Rifkind and Louisa Weinstein - in order to explore the roots of the other side's convictions, and then (the fun part) swap

positions to express the opposing view. This season, we've covered immigration, with two speakers who both have migrant family back-grounds but diverging views on how much of it is good for Britain. Previously, we've abolished (or not) the monarchy and tussled about taxation. And we've also tried to get to the root of subtler themes that shape our time - has poor old "centrist dad" had his Blairite day? And is it a blessing or curse to seek fame? I remember in our first episode, Hugh Muir (now the executive editor of the Guardian's Opinion sec-tion) and Charles Moore, the high Tory commentator and former editor at the Telegraph, addressed whether it is OK to be wary of those from different backgrounds. Muir used to work at the Telegraph and

he said Charles really hadn't realised what it was like for a young black man to work in an all-white newsroom, or to venture out into un-diverse villages for report-ing assignments.

The breakthrough for me was hearing Moore reflect, after the role-swapping part, that if he had had Muir's experiences, he would think differently on some things: a simple recognition, but one that doesn't always come about automatically. It's not about a "mea culpa" so much as an "I see better where you are coming from". Watching two very convinced people trying out each other's way of thinking puts a different lens on why we clash and how we can still communicate. A listen-er wrote that she liked the sense of people "working hard at their disagree-ments". I remember Polly

Toynbee worrying about the part where we ask the partici-pants to express the view of the other person. She worried that if someone switched on halfway through the show on assist-ed dying when she was attacking the practice, she might be mistaken for her opponent. But taking the other side is a key method in conflict resolution - and very hard to do well. Listening back to parish councillor Jackie Weaver, of lockdown Zoom fame, swapping sides to argue the boomer case against Conservative Home's Henry Hill on the topic of boomers v millennials, the airwaves crackled. Has the format worked its magic on me? For sure. I hear more of the areas now in debates where there could be com-monality or understanding. I recognise better the "cliff edge" points of our argu-ments - where we know we

are on crumbling ground and prefer not to interrogate our flaws or defaults. And the way formative experi-ences or moments in our life stories have a long tail in forming opinions we might think of as strictly rational. And listening, it turns out, is a muscle we need to exer-cise if it isn't just going to be about waiting for your own chance to speak.

In our episode this week, we had Peter Tatchell defending disruptive protest as a veteran of the clashes over apartheid and clause 28. He was talking to Bruce Anderson, who thinks that his own time as a firebrand protester in Northern Ireland created more strife than it resolved. They didn't always see eye to eye. But my sense is that they left with a better idea of why someone opposed to their opinion feels so strongly. That's a small leap for-wards.

Putin’s new target is a cultural and economic jewel

Michael Bociurkiw

IT'S just past 3:00 a.m. About two hours ago, air raid sirens started to sound across the Odesa region, prompting me to leap out of bed and into my safe space - the windowless wash-room in the rented flat of a 200-year-old building, which has survived all sorts of calamities over the centuries. War forces you to seek out places that can outsmart Russian drones and missiles. My building is a low-rise, strong, obscure - it almost oozes strength and so it seems a reasonable alternative to a bomb shelter.

As an added layer of comfort, I've my trusty red sleeping bag from a Canadian mountaineering company. It's accompanied me to trouble spots as diverse as the Turkish-Iraqi border, Ukraine's Donetsk region and rural Papua New Guinea.

In my protective space at nights, I'm connected virtually with countless others on Telegram who - like me - are scrolling through Ukrainian channels. All of us trying to find out whether there will be drones or hypersonic missiles; how many, from which direction - and most importantly, where they've already fallen. But as much as I keep telling myself I can weather this out - having worked and lived in many conflict zones over the years - I am beginning to recognize the gathering dark clouds that signal it's time to leave. The daily rollercoaster of emotions, fighting back tears when describing the situation around me on live television, how even the smallest sounds seem to trigger the instinctive flight-or-fight response.

I'm not the only one. Sadly, after several nights of violent strikes, it feels as if the war is finally closing in on us in Odesa, Ukraine's jewel on the Black Sea and my beloved temporary home over the past year. (I previously wrote here about ditching my comfy Canadian lifestyle for Ukraine.) With its seemingly endless seaside promenade, joyful outdoor gyms, Miami-like flair and New York chutzpah, Odesa has made me its number one fan.

I doubt Russian forces intend to lay waste to Odesa the way they did to the Ukrainian city of Mariupol early on in the war. But then again, we seem to have reached a tipping point in human cruelty in this war. Late last week, Russian cruise missiles blasted the port and an overlooking bluff where the imposing Chinese consulate is located. That's a 10-minute walk from my flat and an area which I'd previously considered off limits to Russian aggression (isn't Beijing one of the few buddies Moscow has left?).

And early Sunday, another strike ripped into Odesa's historic district, with its architectural gems, museums, restaurants and famed music school. The impact sent shards of glass tumbling onto the sidewalk of my favorite hangout, Dizyngoff Restaurant, and onto the square where the statue of Odesa's founder, Russian Empress Catherine II, once stood. Lika Bezchastnova, a dear friend and owner of Dizyngoff, told me after the strike: "I've never felt this way before but we are losing hope in the war ending in our favor. We are

Impact" podcast. Odesa's art museum sits near grain storage areas of the main port, so it is especially vulnerable. Kovalchuk tells me her team is rushing to protect the art works.

In the past, friends in Kyiv often talked of the zombie state they'd experience after relentless nightly waves of Russian bombings. That's now commonplace in Odesa: You can see it on the worn faces of residents taking their pet dogs out on their morning constitutional. As daylight broke on Sunday, after the double strike on the

Especially at night, a home-cooked meal feels extra special knowing it could be my last for a while. I've made it a habit to bid sleep-deprived shop clerks a quiet night. The other night in a vacated flat next to the Opera House, one of Odesa's famed pianists, Andrii Pokaz, gracefully fulfilled requests from us on a grand piano as air raid sirens blared. In my head I labelled the impromptu concert: "Waiting for the Rockets to Come."

feeling helpless. It's come to the point where we feel neither protected nor supported by the West. And I don't want to feel that way." Oleksandra Kovalchuk, Deputy Director of the Odesa National Fine Arts Museum (so far spared by the Russian missiles) told me: "Even though we've seen how dangerous it became in other parts of Ukraine in the past year and a half, including targeted hits on cultural heritage, we were totally unprepared for something of this scale in Odesa - five cultural institutions impacted by blast waves."

"It's intense, heartbreaking and very painful for everyone," she added. "These institutions are very core to us: we've been visiting them since we've been little children. Seeing them hit was a very, very painful thing. It was hard to imagine that the Russians are that barbarian to target central Odesa. But they are." To put things into perspective, the US-based geopolitical commentator with a unique expertise in cultural property during times of war, Laura Ballman, said such assaults on priceless cultural heritage should be seen in a similar prism as the destruction of the Statue of Liberty in New York City or the Eiffel Tower in Paris. "It constitutes cultural genocide," she recently told our "Global

Transfiguration Cathedral and the historic district, it seemed that moms were hugging their kids tighter, that faces became more stern. Handshakes seemed more firm, as if they could be the last for a while.

When I asked one taxi driver whether the nightly violence would prompt folks who returned from overseas to flee again, he replied: "There's nowhere for us to go anymore. This is home." Another told me he evacuated his wife and kids to the countryside after the anxiety from the sirens and explosions became too much. One of my long-time friends - a local business owner who I'd considered a pillar of strength - fled Odesa for Western Europe last week just for some peace and quiet. Our wartime humor may not be understood by everyone but, trust me, it helps us cope. My friends and I debate whether, during these times, wine consumption should be increased to numb the senses - or be reduced to keep alert in case there's a need to flee (I've staked ground somewhere in between the two approaches).

Especially at night, a home-cooked meal feels extra special knowing it could be my last for a while. I've made it a habit to bid sleep-deprived shop clerks a quiet

night. The other night in a vacated flat next to the Opera House, one of Odesa's famed pianists, Andrii Pokaz, gracefully fulfilled requests from us on a grand piano as air raid sirens blared. In my head I labelled the impromptu concert: "Waiting for the Rockets to Come." Russia has crossed so many red lines since the start of its full scale invasion in February 2022 that it feels almost meaningless to re-attach that label to the recent attacks on Odesa. Even the most skeptical of us never expected Russia to strike the main port - a crucial cog in the global food supply chain. In a further escalatory step overnight on Monday, Russia bombed Ukrainian ports on the Danube River, within view of NATO member Romania, and on an alternative waterway to the Black Sea where it was thought grain exports would be safe.

Odesa has borne the brunt of Russia's fury over the Crimean bridge attack this month. The attacks also coincide with Russia pulling out of the Black Sea grain deal that was keeping Ukrainian grain flowing to the world. It's becoming clearer that part of the Kremlin's military strategy to defeat Ukraine has expanded to the Black Sea, from where the deadly Kh-23 and Oniks anti-ship cruise missiles are launched. They fly unbelievably fast, are capable of traveling extremely high and low altitudes and are pretty much immune to interception by conventional means (which is why the leadership here in Ukraine is calling for Patriot missile defense systems).

The twisted Kremlin's end game this time, it seems to me, is to rip apart Ukrainian agricultural export infrastructure to the point that desperate markets have no choice but to source from Russia. Consider that East Africa, where the World Food Program says millions of people are experiencing unprecedented levels of food insecurity, is hugely dependent on Ukrainian grain. As much as words of condemnation from austere bodies such as UNESCO have become a customary response to Russian aggression, words don't repel missiles the way the Patriots do. So will I stay in Odesa or will I go? There's no easy answer. The world needs trusted eyes and ears on the ground to report what is happening, to give context to the Russian aggression. My inner Ukrainian self, as unconventional as it sounds, tells me not to run from the burning house. But my journalistic sense tells me that I am of no use to anyone if I am silenced. All I know is, I want to be in the fan zone when Ukraine declares victory over Russia.

The one way to stop billionaires from ruining our democracy

THE two of us **Barbara Lee & Abigail E. Disney** have led very different lives. One is a multimillionaire who grew up flying her famous family's private plane to her famous family's private castle in Ireland. The other is a member of Congress who was born in the hallway of a segregated hospital and who raised two sons as a single mom on public assistance. Our disparate experiences have nonetheless led us to the same conclusion: **Extreme wealth inequality is a threat to our economy and democracy, and we need a tax specifically aimed at constraining it.**

The Supreme Court recently agreed to hear a case, *Moore v. United States*, which will decide the constitutionality of a little-known tax known as the mandatory repatriation tax. Although it's not receiving much attention, the potential effects of the case cannot be understated. Should the court rule in favor of the plaintiffs, the case may essentially quash other proposals to tax extreme wealth and, in so doing, impede the ability of Congress to fight inequality.

But the Supreme Court's baffling decision to entertain radical legal theories won't deter us. The stakes are too high to do nothing. Economic inequality in America has reached heights not seen since the Gilded Age, when "robber barons" like Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller and Cornelius Vanderbilt amassed their infamously large fortunes. America's 735 billionaires now hold more wealth than the entire bottom half of the country. Over the course of the pandemic, America's billionaires increased their combined wealth to nearly \$4.7 trillion. And, if that's not enough, there's talk that America (and the world) may soon see its first trillionaire.

This extraordinary concentration of wealth in so few hands is concerning to us for many reasons, but primarily because of the destabilizing effect that it has on our democracy. As the rich have gotten richer over the last few decades, they have used their wealth to dominate the campaign finance system. In the 2022 midterm elections, billionaires contributed no less than \$1 billion to candidates' campaigns and super political action committees (PACs) - more than 300 times

what they spent just over a decade ago. During the 2020 election cycle, the top 20 billionaire donors spent \$2.3 billion, or more than twice as much as the entire Biden campaign. They've gone a step further than traditional campaign finance, though. Recent reports have revealed that they've even tried to use their fortunes to cozy up to Supreme Court justices. Lavish vacations, luxury fishing trips, tuition payments and real estate deals are all means to an end for billionaires trying to score wins with the nation's highest court before it hears a case about whether those same billionaires should be taxed reasonably.

In return for their massive political contributions, America's wealthiest have received a system of government that caters to their every whim and wish. If a political donor calls a member of Congress, their offices are three to four times more likely to make room in their schedule than they are with their regular constituents. Consequently, public policy outcomes have come to largely reflect the interests of the wealthy and well-connected. People constantly talk about the need to safeguard and strengthen our democracy, especially since the January 6 Capitol attack. But if we are not able to constrain exploding inequality, there won't be a democracy left to protect. We're speed-racing toward an oligarchy, where a handful of spectacularly wealthy people call all the shots. We need significant reform to our campaign finance system, but that's not enough - the sheer size of the fortunes of some of America's richest people are themselves destabilizing.

This threat calls for direct action from our government, which is why we need the Oppose Limitless Inequality Growth and Reverse Community Harms (OLIGARCH) Act. Our tax code can and should play an important role in reining in runaway wealth. Strong progressive tax codes have coincided with periods of both thriving middle-class growth and lower levels of inequality. For example, in 1978, when wealth inequality was at its lowest point in modern American history - the top 1% held less than 25% of

the nation's wealth - the federal income tax and estate tax both had top marginal rates of 70%. Today, however, the top 1% holds almost a third of the nation's wealth, while the top marginal rates for the federal income tax and estate tax have dropped to 37% and 40%, respectively.

The OLIGARCH Act aims to right America's economic ship through the introduction of an annual wealth tax, with a progressive rate structure that waxes and wanes depending on how much we build up the median American's household wealth. The tax will only impact those who have at least 1,000 times the median household wealth in this country (currently people with more than \$120 million in household wealth). It will levy a 2% tax on wealth between 1,000 and 10,000 times the median; a 4% tax on wealth between 10,000 and 100,000 times the median; a 6% tax on wealth between 100,000 and 1,000,000 times the median; and finally an 8% tax on wealth over 1,000,000 times the median. Despite what our critics say, we have no interest in punishing the wealthy for hard work or ingenuity. We are also not trying to encourage them to take their fortunes and leave the country. In fact, there is no evidence to support the idea of "millionaire tax flight." On the contrary, billionaires' wealth is so extreme that taxes are an afterthought - if even a thought at all - when they're deciding where to live.

In the end, there simply comes a point where obscene wealth endangers our economy and democracy. Our wealth tax aims to tackle this threat. If we allow inequality to grow to the point where a small handful of individuals hold oversized political influence in this country, the nearly 250-year-old American experiment will crumble. The late Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis once said, "We must make our choice. We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both." For the past few decades, America has chosen extreme wealth concentration. The time has come for us to choose democracy again, pass the OLIGARCH Act and take a first step in taming inequality.

CNN

The opportunities offered by Saudi-Central Asia cooperation

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami

THE Saudi city of Jeddah last week hosted the first summit between the Gulf Cooperation Council states and Central Asian nations. The joint statement issued at the end reflected the importance of moving forward in strengthening the relations between the two sides on the collective and bilateral levels. The statement emphasized the need for joint work to ensure flexibility of supply chains, while improving transportation and communication as well as food, energy and water security. The statement also called for coordination to confront challenges.

In light of the summit, observers have high expectations, suggesting a qualitative transformation in the relations between the two blocs given their significant geographic, economic, cultural and historical bonds. Over the past three years, I have visited several of the Central Asian nations. A number of research and academic partnerships have been established with universities and institutions specializing in studies on the East and the West.

In light of the growing international competition over the region, there emerges an urgent Saudi need to boost ties with the Central Asian nations - but with tools different from those deployed in the past. During our visits there, we felt the desire by the governments and peoples of these countries to strength-

en ties with Saudi Arabia at all levels, as well as their confidence in the Kingdom. Some of these countries are undergoing radical transformations in terms of openness to others and carrying out political, economic and social reforms. In addition, they are promoting a religious middle way and moderation, thus making the relationship more likely to succeed with the Gulf states than with other nations. I have personally met with several influential people in these states, who all reiterated their nations' desire to boost ties and open up new avenues of economic and trade cooperation with the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia has started directing investments toward these nations, including Uzbekistan, where its investments have amounted to about SR45 billion (\$12 billion) in different sectors. In my viewpoint, there will be bigger investment opportunities in the future, in addition to investments in other Central Asian nations.

Thus, perhaps Saudi businessmen and investment funds need to conduct a serious assessment of these nations' market trends, as well as the investment climate. Central Asian nations are endowed with fertile agricultural lands and amazing natural scenery, which could make them popular tourist destinations for Saudis. They also possess untapped natural resources

due to the poor infrastructure and lack of skilled human resources. Additionally, the Saudi market could be a suitable destination for the agricultural products coming from these nations. There is a clear desire among the Central Asian nations for a Gulf partnership to construct a railway linking Pakistan and Afghanistan with the countries of the region. This would be faster and easier than the transit corridor that connects Oman and Iran with the countries of Central Asia via Turkmenistan, known as the Ashgabat Agreement. This route is a strategic project for the Gulf. I think that the security concerns in the region regarding passing through Afghanistan can be overcome in light of the fact that trucks are passing through the country within days and without any significant security challenges. There is also a need to construct a road to facilitate trade between the two blocs.

Two years ago, I attended an international conference in Tashkent, in which the Uzbek president gave a clear explanation, supported by pictures and maps, of the need for connectivity and its importance to the Gulf states, China and Europe. That conference was before the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan and I tweeted at the time about the rivalry that was present between Afghan

President Ashraf Ghani and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan. It is a given that the economic and trade trajectory is a conduit for political understandings and reaching harmony in terms of visions and positions. Saudi Arabia's absence from the cultural landscape in these countries needs serious reconsideration. There is a stereotype about Saudi Arabia historically, culturally and intellectually, which should be addressed in a way that sincerely reflects the reality and dissipates the existing judgments adopted by the Central Asian elite.

Thus, I suggest forming a cultural committee and another economic-commercial committee to visit these countries and hold sessions and workshops involving Saudi intellectuals and businessmen. Saudi cultural days, though modest at the beginning, should also be held, since this would open up significant horizons for the Kingdom and its projects arising from Vision 2030. Reliance on Saudi soft power, with all its various tools, currently plays a major and vital role in correctly and realistically defining the Kingdom's capabilities and potential. It also contributes to forging ties with a lot of nations and relations that are based on correct information and a true image, away from distortions and fabrications aimed at defaming the Kingdom's image, orientations, history and culture.

Jordan’s war on illegal drugs from Syria may need Iran

Dale Gavlak

WHEN Jordan and other Arab nations brought Syria back into the Arab League, one of the conditions was that it tackle its burgeoning unregulated drug production and stop using Jordan as a transit point for its criminal drug trade to wealthy Gulf nations. However, observers say they are seeing little action from Damascus.

On Monday, Jordan's border forces shot down a drone carrying two kilograms of crystal methamphetamine from Syria. The bust came just a day after Syrian and Jordanian security officials met in Amman to discuss how to end illegal cross-border drug smuggling. Damascus has pledged to rein in its flourishing criminal drug trade in exchange for changing its pariah status with its 2011 brutal civil war. Observers blame the Syrian leadership of Bashar al-Assad, its military and Iran-backed militias in southern Syria for overseeing the smuggling of mainly the amphetamine Captagon, which is cheaply produced and very addictive, destined for Gulf Arab states. The Syrian government denies any involvement in the production of Captagon. Jordanian analyst Amer al-Sabaiheh, a nonresident fellow at the Washington-based Stimson Center, tells VOA that it is unlikely in the short-term that Syria will do much to stop the multibillion-dollar a year illicit drug flow, especially as its official econo-

my tanks. "On the ground things are too much rooted in the region, networks are very big. The parallel economy in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, groups, militias are depending totally on this income for years now, especially since the sanctions that took place over Syria and Lebanon," he said. "These networks are very strong, very deeply rooted, and the economy of these parts of the region is depending on this trade."

Jordan's foreign minister, Ayman al-Safadi, told the online meeting of the US-led global coalition to combat illicit drug trafficking earlier this month that in the past few years alone, Jordanian authorities had seized more than 65 million Captagon pills. The only way to combat the unregulated trade, he said, was through a collaborative effort. It's believed that Jordan used a targeted airstrike in May against a drug dealer inside Syria. Observer Baria Alamuddin, writing in the Saudi Arab News, suggested Jordan will use its military "inside Syria if narcotic smuggling is not brought under control."

Alamuddin, al-Sabaiheh and other observers say it's not only drugs being smuggled, but also weapons. "The Assad clan have flooded the region with tons of narcotics, while becoming notorious for smuggling weapons, people and contraband goods. States such as Jordan and Lebanon have been doubly afflicted -

awash with cheap, deadly drugs, and also enmeshed in the transit of these products," Alamuddin wrote. "If Damascus desires to benefit from re-established trade relations with Arab nations, it should disabuse itself of the fantasy that its future prosperity is based on the narcostate model." Al-Sabaiheh warns that security services battling drugs may be "a tool for infiltration" for the Syrian regime's backer, Iran.

"This is not just drugs, in my opinion. It's a tool of infiltration for the region," he said. "The aim is transforming Jordan to be a hub, not just for drugs but as well for weapons. Worrying now is also how to transform Jordan to be a transitional point for weapons to go to the West Bank. This is a declared old goal of the Iranians. There are Iranian militias in the south of Syria working is not just to generate money. It is something that goes beyond." In a separate incident, Jordan charged a lawmaker, Imad al-Adwan, in May with transporting weapons in his car with the intention of traveling to the West Bank. Israel arrested him at a border crossing after guns were found inside his car. Meanwhile, weapons stockpiles have been found in the city of Jenin. Earlier this month, the United States set up a global coalition of 97 countries, including Jordan, to combat the threat of synthetic drugs such as Captagon and fentanyl.

VOA

Tony Blair gave Keir Starmer his blessing - and he needs it

Tim Stanley

ONLY Nixon could go to China and only Keir Starmer could give a speech to Tony Blair's Future of Britain Conference, a centrist dadathon held to discuss the future of tomorrow, today. Keir joined a chorus of sparkly think-leaders with preposterous names - Poppy Gustafsson, Sims Wetherspoon, Mete Coban - plus no-nonsense business dragon Deborah Meaden and cheeky chef Jamie Oliver (Sue Cook pulled out).

There was even a fawning interview with Henry Kissinger - accompanied by images of his meeting with Mao - who reassured us that we have nothing to fear from the Chinese Communist Party. As Confucius said: "Pull other one, Has bells on." Had Jeremy Corbyn been invited to this

conference, he'd have glued his hands to the floor in protest - but that's the point. Corbyn was a socialist; Keir is desperate to prove he's anything but. So while he outrages his backbenchers by signing up to the Government's Two Child welfare policy, he also pays tribute at the court of Blair, signalling that if you vote Labour, you'll get New Labour back. "It's impossible to list the challenges" we face, he said, for "we'd be here all day". Then he listed them. The audience slipped into a gentle coma, 'till Tony walked on stage for a chat - his presence so electric it was almost supernatural. With mad eyes, white hair and alarming teeth, Blair at 70 looks as if he has been raised from his tomb after a bunch of teenagers, sheltering from a storm,

found an ancient book beneath a floorboard and read from it backwards. "How are you enjoying prime minister's questions?" asked the Crypt Keeper. "I'm a bit out of practice," Keir joked (Sunak keeps avoiding them). "That's something I really don't miss," said Tony, his cold eyes glazing over at the memory of power. Wherever he is in the world, at "midday, Wednesday, I get this uneasy feeling..."

He told Starmer that he'd done well to turn Labour around since 2019, that his task was even greater than in 1997. "I was lucky enough to have Neil Kinnock and John Smith before me. You weren't." Keir and the audience enjoyed that pop at Corbyn, but it could also have been a dig at Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband.

Tories go into government assuming they were born to rule, observed Tony; the Left, not so much. He's correct. Social democrats like Keir feel an overwhelming need to prove they can be every bit as hard as Conservatives; hence, they'll endorse welfare cuts and military adventures. Much of politics is elites flirting. Opposites attract. When Nixon met Mao, Mao said he had voted for him. Of course, no one ever voted for Mao... Chairman Blair left Starmer with his blessing, and it couldn't hurt. The master of the dark arts is as compelling as ever, statesman-like yet personal, witty and insightful. He remains a man millions would be willing to follow into battle, which is fortunate because old Tony always did love a war.

The Telegraph



Pakistan's total foreign reserves soar to \$13.53b

ISLAMABAD (INP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$13,534.1 million while reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan climbed to \$8,186.1 million.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement, informed that SBP's reserves decreased by US\$ 541 million to US\$ 8,186.1 million mainly due to external debt repayments during the week ended on July 21, 2023. Meanwhile,

net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at US\$5,348 million, the SBP added. In the previous week ending on July 14, 2023, total liquid foreign reserves held by the country were US\$14,065.3

million. Among them, foreign reserves held by the central bank were US\$8,727.2 million while net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were US\$5,338.1 million.

US annual inflation posts smallest rise in more than two years

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Annual U.S. inflation rose at its slowest pace in more than two years in June, with underlying price pressures receding, a trend that, if sustained, could push the Federal Reserve closer to ending its fastest interest rate hiking cycle since the 1980s.

The improving inflation environment was reinforced by other data on Friday showing labor costs posted their smallest increase in two years in the second quarter as wage growth cooled. It mirrored reports this month showing the economy shifting into disinflation mode, with consumer prices moderating sharply in June and producer inflation muted.

That, together with labor market resilience, which is underpinning consumer spending, raised cautious optimism of a "soft landing" for the economy envisaged by Fed officials rather than the recession that most economists have been predicting.

"The inflation outbreak is winding

down quicker and with less pain for the labor markets than economists could have imagined just a year ago," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWD BONDS in New York. "This means policymakers can most likely skip a rate hike at the upcoming September meeting."

The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index increased 0.2% last month after edging up 0.1% in May, the Commerce Department said. Food prices dipped 0.1% while the cost of energy products increased 0.6%. In the 12 months through June, the PCE price index advanced 3.0%. That was the smallest annual gain since March 2021 and followed a 3.8% rise in May.

Excluding the volatile food and energy components, the PCE price index gained 0.2% after rising 0.3% in the prior month. That lowered the year-on-year increase in the so-called core PCE price index to 4.1%, the

smallest advance since September 2021. The annual core PCE price index climbed 4.6% in May.

Line chart with data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis and Federal Reserve shows PCE inflation slowed to 3% year-on-year in June, while core PCE inflation also eased to 4.2%. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the core PCE price index would gain 0.2% and rise 4.2% on a year-on-year basis. They calculated that the "super core" increased 4.1% on a year-on-year basis after rising 4.7% in May. This measure of services less housing is being closely monitored by policymakers to gauge progress in the inflation fight.

The PCE price indexes are the Fed's preferred inflation measures for its 2% target. The core PCE price index reading in June was just above the Fed's recent forecast of 3.9% for the fourth quarter of 2023.



HYDERABAD: Woman secreting and purchasing Muharram ul Haram related stuff on ahead of start Ashura Procession.

End of Nigerian fuel subsidy set to squeeze Europe's refiners

LONDON (Reuters): One of Europe's main markets for gasoline has shrunk, threatening to squeeze European refiners, after Nigeria removed fuel subsidies, which destroyed much of the country's domestic demand and a regional market for smuggled fuel.

North America and West Africa (WAF), with Nigeria at the helm, historically have been the top two destinations for petrol exports from Europe, which produces more gasoline than it uses, meaning its refiners rely on exports to support profit margins.

A steady decline in

European refining margins in recent years, as competition from the Middle East, the United States and Asia grew, was reversed when fears of fuel supply shortages boosted profits after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. So far, benchmark profit margins for gasoline in northwestern Europe have held firm at around \$27 a barrel, Refinitiv Eikon data shows.

They have been supported by demand from North America, a shortage of high quality blending materials, disruption caused by low water levels inland and local refinery outages.

But analysts say the

reduction of flows following the upheaval in Nigeria will increase pressure on European refiners, and any winners are likely to be newer Middle Eastern refineries. At the end of May, Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu scrapped a popular but expensive subsidy on the fuel, which cost the cash-strapped government \$10 billion last year. Petrol demand in response fell by 28%, official data showed. Symptomatic of the fall in demand, onshore gasoline stocks in Nigeria have climbed to 960,000 tonnes from an average 613,000 tonnes between January and

June, said Jeremy Parker at the CITAC consultancy which focuses on Africa's downstream energy market.

Meanwhile, the black market for smuggled subsidised Nigerian fuel in Togo and neighbouring Benin and Cameroon has collapsed, further reducing demand for shipments via Nigeria. There is no reliable data on how much fuel was smuggled out of Nigeria under the subsidy regime, but a comparison of estimates from official and independent sources indicate more than a third of petrol could have left state oil firm NNPC's depots every day to be sold illegally abroad.

Mark Zuckerberg: Threads users down by more than a half

NEW YORK (BBC): Meta boss Mark Zuckerberg says its new social media platform, Threads, has lost more than half its users. The Twitter rival rocketed to more than 100 million users within five days of its launch earlier this month.

But Mr Zuckerberg has acknowledged those numbers have now tumbled. "If you have more than 100 million people sign up, ideally it would be awesome if all of them or even half of them stuck around. We're not there yet," he said.

Mr Zuckerberg - who made the comments in a call to employees, heard by the Reuters news agency - described the situation as "normal" and said he anticipated retention to improve as new features were added to the app. Threads was criticised for the limited functionality it had when it launched. Meta has since added new features, such as separate "fol-

lowing" and "for you" feeds, and increased scope to translate posts into different languages.

The company's chief product officer, Chris Cox, told staff it was now focused on adding more "retention-driving hooks" to draw people back to the platform.

He gave the example of "making sure people who are on the Instagram app can see important Threads". The two platforms are closely tied - in order to sign up for Threads, users must have an Instagram account.

Mr Zuckerberg also updated employees on the company's enormous bet on a yet-to-be-created virtual reality world, called the Metaverse.

He said work on the augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technology that would power it was "not massively ahead of schedule, but on track", adding that he didn't anticipate it going mainstream until the

next decade.

That prediction may intensify concerns that Meta has dedicated too much time and money to the Metaverse - its Reality Labs division, which produces VR headsets and other products, has racked up multi-billion dollar losses.

The company as a whole though continues to perform well financially - announcing this week it made a profit of \$7.79bn in the last quarter.

Mr Zuckerberg also addressed one other headline-making issue - his proposed cage fight with fellow tech titan Elon Musk. From the safety of their keyboards, the two men indicated in June that they were both keen on a bout - even going as far as suggesting a venue in Las Vegas. However, when pressed about it on the call, Mr Zuckerberg said he was "not sure if it's going to come together".

British Airways owner IAG sees record profits as air travel recovers

The owner of British Airways has posted record half-year profits helped by higher fares and the continued rebound in travel post-pandemic. Airline group IAG reported operating profits of 1.3bn (£1.1bn) after being boosted by a "strong" recovery in leisure travel. In the same period last year it had posted a loss of 446m.

IAG chief Luis Gallego said the group was aiming to be back at pre-pandemic levels of demand by the end of year.

However, the company - which also owns Iberia, Aer Lingus and Vueling - said that while there was no sign of weakness in forward bookings at the moment, it was "mindful of wider uncertainties" that could affect fuel prices and consumer confidence in the months ahead.

IAG said flight capacity was back to 94% of pre-pandemic levels in the first half of the year.

Fares were up by about 9.5% on average, and revenue reached 13.6bn - an

increase of nearly 45% from a year earlier.

IAG said it had seen a "strong leisure traffic recovery", adding premium leisure demand "continued to perform very well".

"Customer demand remains strong across the group, particularly for leisure travel, with around 80% of passenger revenue for the third quarter already booked," said Mr Gallego.

"And our airlines have put in place plans to support operations during the

busy summer period."

However, IAG said that some of its operations "are not where we would want them to be and this is affecting our overall customer service".

It said French air traffic control strikes were affecting most of its airlines, while global supply chain issues were "reducing aircraft availability".

The company said British Airways was "particularly affected" because of its "London exposure and complex schedule".

European stocks rally, Wall Street slumps on interest rate concerns

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Stock markets had a mixed showing Thursday as European indices rallied while Wall Street slipped on concerns over interest rates.

European Central Bank policymakers delivered another interest rate increase as anticipated, with eurozone consumer prices still rising fast.

But ECB chief Christine Lagarde sent dovish signals, leaving open the possibility of a pause in its streak of rate hikes as the eurozone's economic outlook has deteriorated.

Frankfurt set a record close, while Paris and London logged gains as well. "We've seen a strong session ... as investors increasingly adopt the view that central banks could be

done when it comes to further rate hikes," said analyst Michael Hewson at CMC Markets.

He added that the latest set of economic numbers "pointed to a goldilocks scenario for the US economy." The US Federal Reserve, as expected, also raised borrowing costs again on Wednesday as it seeks to bring inflation down further, but there remain lingering worries of more aggressive actions ahead.

Wall Street stocks tumbled on resurgent concerns about higher rates after US second-quarter gross domestic product growth topped expectations.

FHN Financial's Chris Low said the jump in the yield on the 10-year US Treasury note above four

percent reflected a rethink of Fed Chair Jerome Powell's commentary on Wednesday, when the US central bank lifted rates and kept alive the possibility of more hikes.

Key figures around 2030 GMT -

New York - Dow: DOWN 0.7 percent at 35,282.72 points (close)

New York - S&P 500: DOWN 0.6 percent at 4,537.41 (close)

New York - Nasdaq: DOWN 0.6 percent at 14,050.11 (close)

London - FTSE 100: UP 0.2 percent at 7,692.76 (close)

Frankfurt - DAX: UP 1.7 percent at 16,406.03 (close)

Paris - CAC 40: UP 2.1 percent at 7,465.24 (close)

EURO STOXX 50: UP

2.3 percent at 4,447.44 (close)

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP 0.7 percent at 32,891.16 (close)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: UP 1.4 percent at 19,639.11 (close)

Shanghai - Composite: DOWN 0.2 percent at 3,216.67 (close)

Euro/dollar: DOWN at \$1.0978 from \$1.1089 on Wednesday

Pound/dollar: DOWN at \$1.2794 from \$1.2943

Euro/pound: UP at 85.78 from 85.65 pence

Dollar/yen: DOWN at 139.44 yen from 140.34 yen Brent North Sea crude:

UP 1.6 percent at \$84.24 per barrel

West Texas

Intermediate: UP 1.7 percent at \$80.09 per barrel

Netflix touts \$900k AI jobs amid Hollywood strikes

NEW YORK (BBC): Netflix has triggered an angry response from striking Hollywood actors and writers after posting a job advert for an artificial intelligence (AI) expert.

The new position would join its Machine Learning Platform team, which drives the Netflix algorithm helping viewers pick new programmes to watch.

It pays up to \$900,000 (£700,000) per year, fuelling further outrage.

Hollywood unions are striking over concerns about how AI affects the entertainment industry and pay. The job listing, which was first reported by The Intercept on Tuesday, is one of several listed on the Netflix job page that calls for applicants with experience in machine learning (ML) and AI.

It is unclear from the expansive job advert whether the role will advise on content - the TV pro-

grammes and films that Netflix chooses to invest in. Another open listing for a product manager on the Machine Learning Platform team says the future employee will "collect feedback and understand user needs" and ultimately helping with investment decisions. The description appears to suggest that the role will include using AI to assess funding needs for different programmes.

This is a key concern of the union representing actors, Sag-Aftra, which has spoken of its fears that algorithms have too much power. Sag-Aftra's Fran Drescher told Time magazine the singular success of any film or television programme is now much less important than when broadcast television was dominant. "Algorithms dictate how many episodes a season needs to be before you reach a plateau of new subscribers and how many

seasons a series needs to be on," she claimed.

"That reduces the amount of episodes per season to between six and 10, and it reduces the amount of seasons to three or four. You can't live on that. "We're being systematically squeezed out of our livelihood by a business model that was foisted upon us, that has created a myriad of problems for everyone up and down the ladder." The writers' guild, WGA, has proposed a system that regulates the use of AI in the writing process and prevents it being used as source material.

Netflix declined to comment about the job listings, but has previously said AI will not replace the creative process. "The best stories are original, insightful and often come from people's own experiences," Netflix has said. The news of the most recent AI-based job listing

was condemned by some striking actors, who must earn \$26,470 before being eligible for health insurance benefits. "So \$900k/yr per soldier in their godless AI army when that amount of earnings could qualify thirty-five actors and their families for Sag-Aftra health insurance is just ghoulissh," actor Rob Delaney, told The Intercept.

Javier Grillo-Marxuach, who is best-known for the series Lost, accused Netflix of "pleading poverty while recruiting VERY (more than I've ever made in a year BY FAR) well-paid generals for your soulless army of silicon plagiarists". Earlier this week, Netflix announced the launch of a new app - My Netflix - which the company calls "a one-stop shop tailored to help you with easy shortcuts to help you choose what you want to watch".

China's expertise sparks growth potential for Pakistan's Electric Vehicle Industry

SHANGHAI (INP): "Over the past two decades, China has successfully established a complete and efficient supply chain for Electric Vehicles, with strengths in technology, design & development, and manufacturing."

According to Dr. Li Xiangping, Former Director of Dongfeng Motor Co., Ltd. and Doctor of Mechanical Engineering at the Polytechnic University of Turin, China's experience suggests EVs can be an opportunity for developing countries to leapfrog developed countries. During the China Pakistan Electric Vehicle Industry Technology

Service Cooperation Forum held earlier this month, Dr. Li noted that the most growth potential will likely come from 'emerging Asia,' including Pakistan, which has a large population, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The region will continue to need more EVs for its energy transition even after China's domestic market becomes saturated.

China's dominance in the global electric vehicle (EV) market has positioned the country as a key player in the industry. China has been the world's No. 1 auto market for more than a decade. In 2022, worldwide auto sales were 80.18 million units, with China sell-

ing 23.24 million (27.48 million including CV) units, accounting for a 33% market share. It was followed by the United States with 13.73 million and Europe with 11.29 million.

What has shocked the world is China's rapid progress in mobility electrification. Last year, worldwide EV production was 10.31 million, with China producing 6.5 million PV (plus 0.3 million CV EV), representing 63% of worldwide EV sales.

China's EV penetration rate was 28%. Among the top 10 EV brands, 8 are local Chinese brands, and two are from other countries, namely Tesla and

Volkswagen. China's EV market is roughly four times the size of Europe and eight times the size of the United States.

According to Dr. Li, China's leadership in the electric vehicle industry can be attributed to the forward-looking long-term planning and consistent support policies of the Chinese government, huge investment and resources, and a fully developed and efficient supply chain or ecosystem from which Pakistan can benefit. Pakistan can learn from China's experience and implement similar policies to spur the growth of its own EV market.

**In brief****Babar Azam gifts jersey to fan**

COLOMBO (Web Desk): Pakistan skipper Babar Azam won the hearts as he gifted his official jersey to a young fan at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground in Colombo. On Thursday, the Team Green sealed a dominant innings victory over Sri Lanka, completing a 2-0 series triumph and earning crucial points in the ICC World Test Championship 2023-25 standings. Pakistan commenced their WTC25 campaign on a solid note, having registered an away series victory against Sri Lanka in the two-match series. After winning the match, players were returning to the dress room when Babar Azam spared some time to meet his Sri Lankan fans near the stands. He took selfies and also gave autographs to them. Videos capturing the moments have went viral on social media, showing the right-handed batsman is the legend across the border too. At one point, one of the young fans asked him to give her the official jersey. Babar Azam, in a quick response, put off the shirt, gave it to him and went to the dressing room. Later, the young fan can be seen placing the shirt in his bag with a big smile on his face.

Swiatek into Warsaw quarters

WARSAW (Agencies): Iga Swiatek eased into the quarterfinals of her home WTA tournament on Thursday while Karolina Muchova, the woman she defeated in the French Open final, crashed out after squandering four match points. World No. 1 Swiatek swept aside Claire Liu of the US 6-2, 6-2. It was Swiatek's fourth win in four meetings against Liu, three of which have come this year. Second seed Muchova, ranked 18 in the world, was upset by Slovak qualifier Rebecca Sramkova 7-5, 3-6, 7-5 after failing to convert on a 5-1 lead and four match points in the third set. Muchova has struggled since finishing runner-up to Swiatek at Roland Garros. She was knocked out in the first round at Wimbledon to world No. 103 Jule Niemeier of Germany.

Benn cleared over positive drugs tests

LONDON (Agencies): Conor Benn says he is free to resume his boxing career, announcing he has been cleared by a UK Anti-Doping investigation into the two failed drugs tests that forced the cancellation of his fight with Chris Eubank Jr. Benn was formally charged by UKAD in April after twice testing positive for the female fertility drug clomifene in the build-up to October's domestic catchweight showdown. But the 26-year-old son of British great Nigel Benn revealed in a social media post that the charge has been dismissed. "Today marks the end of a gruelling 10-month process, during which the WBC (World Boxing Council) had already decided I was innocent of any wrongdoing," Benn said. He said he has been "vindicated for the second time" after a hearing with the National Anti-Doping Panel and UKAD. "Hopefully, the public and various members of the media can now understand why I have maintained my innocence so strongly all the way through," he added. "The UKAD process has now formally ended and I remain free to fight." October's proposed bout was intended to be a continuation of the Benn v Eubank feud in which the rivals' fathers -- Nigel Benn and Chris Eubank Sr -- battled it out in two ferocious contests in the early 1990s.



SYDNEY: Lauren James of England in action during the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023 match between England and Denmark at Sydney Football Stadium.

India-Pakistan tie among Cricket World Cup matches set to be rescheduled

NEW DELHI (Reuters): Barely three months to go before the start of the 50-overs World Cup, the organizing Indian cricket board has said the schedule would be adjusted and an Oct. 15 India v Pakistan humdinger in Ahmedabad could be among matches affected. World Cup schedules are usually announced a year before the start of the event but the fixtures for the tournament in India, scheduled from Oct. 5, were unveiled only last month.

The inordinate delay has inconvenienced fans who plan to travel to India for the tournament and Indian board secretary Jay Shah confirmed even the schedule announced last month is not final.

"Two or three boards have written in, asking to change based on the logistical challenges," Shah told reporters on Thursday.

"There are some matches where there is only a two-day gap, so it will be difficult to play and then travel next day."

"We are working out with the ICC, and we should be able to clear it in two or three days," he said, referring to the governing International Cricket Council. The organizers have not announced when and where fans can buy tickets from and an ICC spokesperson said it would be BCCI's call.

Media reported that the much-anticipated India v Pakistan tie would be

brought forward by a day as adequate police security may not be possible on Oct. 15, which marks the beginning of a Hindu festival.

India and Pakistan have been implacable rivals since they emerged as independent countries at the end of British colonial rule in 1947, fighting three wars since then and still rattling sabres at each other when tensions rise.

Pakistan have said they would require government permission to travel to India for the World Cup though the ICC is hopeful of their participation.

The bitter neighbors have played each other only in multi-team events at neutral venues over the past decade.

Ramiz Raja joins Lanka Premier League 2023 commentary panel

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former PCB chairman, Ramiz Raja, will join the commentary panel for the upcoming Lanka Premier League (LPL) season four after his successful comeback during the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Test series.

He'll be joined by Aamer Sohail, Roshan Abeysinghe, Russell Arnold, Scott Stiris, Frances Mackay, and HD Ackerman for an enriching cricketing experience.

Following his appointment as the chairman of the PCB in September 2021, the former cricketer took a break from commentary responsibilities.

However, his tenure was cut short when he and other PCB members were ousted from their positions after only a year, leading to the formation of a 14-member management committee led by Najam Sethi.

The upcoming fourth edition of the LPL is set to take place from July 30 to August 22.

practice processes and procedures".

They added: "We look forward to continued dialogue with the ECB to ensure the financial penalty does not hinder our ongoing commitment to build on the strong foundations that have been laid. "We remain focused on efforts to secure YCCC's sustainability, ensuring the stability required to create a brighter future for all associated with Yorkshire Cricket."

The immediate points deduction in the County Championship effectively all-but ends Yorkshire's hopes of grabbing the second promotion place, dropping them from sixth place to bottom of Division Two, 63 points behind second-placed Sussex..

This year's T20 Blast has already finished and Yorkshire have now dropped to eighth out of nine in the North Group final standings. "At least next year we know where we stand," said coach Otis Gibson.

"We have four games left in the Championship this season. That's 96 points that we can play for. We'll try and win the next four games. That's all we're trying to do - win every game we play."

James stars as England close in on last 16 with win

SYDNEY (Agencies): England are on the brink of last-16 qualification in the Women's World Cup after a much-improved performance saw off Denmark - though they lost key midfielder Keira Walsh to a worrying injury.

Lauren James announced herself on the global stage with a superb strike from the edge of the box just six minutes into her first World Cup start and it proved to be the decider in Sydney.

However, a serious-looking injury to Barcelona midfielder Walsh dampened what was a positive, attacking performance from the Lionesses after a scrappy 1-0 win over Haiti in their opening group match.

Walsh went down under little contact and immediately gestured to the dugout, appearing to say: "I've done my knee." Visibly in pain, she was taken off on a stretcher after 38 minutes.

The sight of an injured Walsh - arguably England's most crucial player - flattened the atmosphere in a Sydney Football Stadium dominated by Lionesses supporters. Denmark capitalised on the change of mood, creating a chance for ex-Chelsea striker Pernille Harder which she scuffed wide, though England's half-time lead was deserved.

James continued to impress throughout, providing the creativity and unpredictability that has excited fans in the Women's Super League, and showing she is more than deserving of a regular starting spot with England.

She had chances in the

first half either side of a header from Lucy Bronze which went over the bar, though Denmark pounced on defensive errors with Rikke Madsen and Janni Thomsen coming close.

Denmark continued to search for an equaliser and almost found one when substitute Amalie Vangsgaard - who scored a 90th-minute winner against China - headed a cross against the right post.

But on the whole they did not test goalkeeper Mary Earps enough, while England had further chances through striker Alessia Russo and substitute Bethany England.

"It's all about winning games of course. We also want to play well. But we never take anything for granted," said England manager Sarina Wiegman. "We have to work really hard every time we play any game. We are really happy with the 1-0 in the end and that's what counts."

England cannot confirm a place in the last 16 until they face China - who beat Haiti 1-0 - in their final Group D match on Tuesday, while Denmark face Haiti and can also still qualify.

England moving through the gears

There were concerns after England's opening victory over Haiti, a side ranked 49 places lower than the Lionesses, as they lacked ruthlessness and had not scored a goal from open play in 337 minutes.

So when Wiegman's team selection included exciting talent James, there was an expectation for England to attack and create chances.

Pakistani mountaineer dies in avalanche on K2

KARDU (PPI): A Pakistani mountaineer, Muhammad Hassan, died in an avalanche on the world's second highest mountain K2, sources said Friday.

According to sources, Muhammad Hassan who was from the district Shigar of Gilgit Baltistan, died when he was summiting K2.

Sources said that he died when the huge avalanche hit him near the Bottle Neck at the end of his summit. It was impossible to bring the mountaineer back so he was buried on the Bottle Neck.

Earlier, Polish climber Pawel Tomasz Kopec died due to acute altitude sickness after conquering the treacherous Nanga Parbat (8,126m), the world's ninth-highest peak.

"Kopec and his two other compatriots -- Piotr Krzyzewski and Waldemar Kowalewski summited Nanga Parbat on Sunday," the club said in a statement.

Separately, Pakistani climber Asif Bhatti, who had proceeded for the final summit push of the treacherous Nanga Parbat (8,126m) mountain, was stranded with snow blindness.

"Asif is stuck at camp 4 with snow blindness at altitudes 7,500-metre to 8,000-metre. He needs help," ACP Secretary Karrar Haidri said. "A helicopter will be needed to pick him up but for that, he will have to come down to around 6,000-metre to 6,500-metre," he added.

It is pertinent to mention here that Muhammad Ali Sadpara, a highly accomplished mountaineer from Skardu, went missing on the mighty K2 while attempting a winter summit with Iceland's John Snorri and Chile's Juan Pablo Mohr in January. The team had been missing since February 5, even after multiple rescue efforts.



SPA, BELGIUM: Max Verstappen driving the (1) Oracle Red Bull Racing RB19 on track during qualifying ahead of the F1 Grand Prix of Belgium.

China beat Haiti despite first-half red card

PARIS (Agencies): China earned their first victory at the 2023 Women's World Cup by beating Haiti in Group D, despite playing for more than an hour with only 10 players.

The win for China means England, who beat Denmark 1-0 earlier on Friday, have not qualified for the last 16 yet. Midfielder Zhang Rui was sent off after 29 minutes for a dangerous knee-high challenge on Haiti's Sherry Jeudy.

But Wang Shuang scored the only goal, converting a 74th-minute penalty after Ruthny Mathurin fouled Zhang Linyan. England would have advanced to the knockout stages with a match to spare if China had drawn or lost to a Haiti side ranked 53rd in the world.

The last matches in the group take place on Tuesday, with leaders England, on six points, playing against China, while Denmark face Haiti at the same time.

China and Denmark both have three points, while Haiti, playing at their first World Cup, have zero points but can still qualify if they beat Denmark and China lose to the Lionesses.

Haiti miss chance to create history

This was a missed opportunity for Haiti to capitalise on their player advantage and secure what would have been the country's first World Cup point at their debut finals.

Melchie Dumornay's shot was tipped over by Zhu Yu as they pushed for a goal, and that proved to be the Caribbean nation's only shot on target in the 90 minutes, but there was almost a dramatic twist.

In the second minute of additional time at the end of the second half, referee Marta Huerta de Aza awarded Haiti a penalty following what looked like a clear foul by Wu Chengshu on Roseline Eloissaint.

But, following a check from the video assistant referee, Huerta De Aza reviewed that decision on a pitch-side monitor and changed her mind.

Haiti's frustrations were evident and they had another shout for a penalty when Dumornay was blocked off by Li Mengwen, only for the referee to again not give the decision Haiti's way.

In the 13th minute of added time, Haiti coach Nicolas Delepine was booked for disputing the decisions against his team.

China, World Cup runners-up in 1999, had lost 1-0 to Denmark in their opening match but will now be hoping to beat England on 1 August.

If China and Denmark both win, they along with England will each have six points, with goal difference deciding which two teams advance to the knockout stage.

Asian Champions Trophy

Pakistan hockey team to leave for India on August 1

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) confirmed on Friday that the national team would travel to India for Asian Hockey Champions Trophy on August 1.

Pakistan team will travel to the neighbouring country via Wagah Border and will reach Chennai from Amritsar by road. Chennai will host the Asian event from August 3 to 12.

Three officials of the Pakistan team are still waiting for the visa. The newly-appointed head coach Shahnaz Sheikh is also facing issues in getting a visa on time. Pakistan are scheduled to play their first match against Malaysia on August 3. The Green Shirts will lock horns with arch-rivals India on August 9.

Squad: Muhammad Umar Bhatta (c), Akmal Hussain, Abdullah Ishtiaq Khan, Muhammad Abdullah, Muhammad Sufyan Khan, Ehtsham Aslam, Osama Bashir, Aqeel Ahmed, Arshad Liaquat, Muhammad Imad, Abdul Hanan Shahid, Zakaria Hayat, Rana Abdul Waheed Ashraf (Vice Captain), Roman, Muhammad Murtaza Yaqoob, Muhammad Shahzaib Khan, Afraz, Abdul Rahman, while the standby includes Ali Raza, Muhammad Baqir, Muhammad Nadeem Khan, Abdul Wahab, Waqar Ali, Muhammad Arsalan and Abdul Qayyum.



LONDON: Steven Smith drives back down the ground, England vs Australia, 5th men's Ashes Test.



In brief

Special Traffic education

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police took prompt action against underage motorcyclists and drivers and imposed fines on them under the campaign of Special Traffic education and enforcement. Following the directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police launched a special traffic education and enforcement campaign in order to solve the traffic related problems faced by the citizens on roads, a police public relations officer said. He said that, campaign is underway against underage bikers, those involved in rash driving and violating traffic rules. Under the supervision of chief traffic officer Islamabad, zonal DSP's are ensuring strict action against those violating traffic rules. In this regard, Islamabad capital police already formed special squads to set up special roadblocks in major highways and squares of Islamabad in order to take strict legal action against underage drivers and other traffic rules violators.

Eight Outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (NNI): According to details, Islamabad Capital Police apprehended eight outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO), Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police have intensified their crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate crime from the city. Following these directives, the Sumbal police team arrested a drug peddler namely Muhammad Aurangzeb and recovered 1050 gram hashish from his possession. The Golra police team arrested an accused namely Abdul Rehman involved in illegal gas refilling. Likewise, the Sangjani police team arrested an accused namely Fazal Khan and recovered one pistol with ammunition from his possession. The Kirpa police team arrested two accused namely Nouman Qasim and recovered two 30 bore pistols from their possession. Similarly, the Nilore police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Umer and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession.

Bike lifters gang held

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police anti robbery and dacoity unit (RDU) police team has arrested 03 wanted members of a bike lifters gang involved in numerous bike lifting incidents and recovered three stolen motorbikes from their possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements involved in bike and car lifting incidents in order to eliminate the crime from the city. According to the details, the Anti-robbery and dacoity unit (ARDU) police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending 02 wanted members of a bike lifter gang involved in numerous bike lifting incidents. The accused were identified as Kamil Yousaf and Farman Police team also recovered 03 stolen motorbikes from their possession. Cases were already registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.



ISLAMABAD: Volunteers serving Sabeel (special drinks) during the main procession of 9th Muharram-ul-Haram observing Youm-e-Ashura at G-6 Road.

Sheikh sees judiciary could give important decisions in line with constitution

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid said Friday that the country's politics will be in the decisive phase from Aug 1.

Taking to Twitter, the former interior minister said the judiciary could give important decisions in line with the constitution and law.

"The decisions of judiciary are being mocked publicly. There is no respect for law, constitution and justice in the country these days," he lamented.

He said amendments to Article 224 and 230 were

contrary to the constitution and therefore, the judiciary shouldn't remain silent on it. The senior politician said the name of Ishaq Dar as nominee for caretaker prime minister became controversial the moment it was suggested.

Criticising the prime minister, the AML chief said Shehbaz Sharif was playing on both sides of the wicket and he was deceiving his brother.

"Shehbaz wants the caretaker government to act as his interim government but his wish will not be fulfilled," he added. "It is not

democracy to pass 29 bills in just one hour as this legislation has been done on the pressure of someone," Rashid said.

He said the country was going through the darkest time in the history. The residences of people were attacked brazenly and children and women were picked up before moving them to undisclosed locations, he deplored.

"People can remain silent on this cruelty for their survival and honour but they will teach a lesson to these rulers on the polling day," he reiterated.

1,572 newly passed out officials transferred to different divisions

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Islamabad Capital Police announces the deployment of 1,572 well-trained personnel from the 38th Basic Recruits Course to various divisions, reinforcing its commitment to enhancing security and ensuring public safety in the capital city, a police public relations officer said. He said that, under the directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the passing out officials from the 38th Basic Recruit Course have been assigned to different crucial divisions within the Islamabad Capital Police.

The operation divisions will be bolstered by 482 personnel, including 335 male police personnel and 75 female officers, all equipped to handle various challenges and emergencies. To fortify security measures, 400 personnel have been assigned to the security divisions, which include 44 women police personnel, while enhancing logistical support, 190 personnel have been allocated to the logistics divisions, further strengthening the overall efficiency of the police operations.

A total of 148 personnel were transferred to the law and order division. The esteemed Dolphin Squads, known for their swift response and vigilance, will be augmented by 143 personnel, enhancing their capacity to combat crime effectively.

Tragedy of Karbala: A lesson in sacrifice, devotion, and resilience

ISLAMABAD (NNI): National Assembly Speaker, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, and Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani said the incident of Karbala stands as an unparalleled example of unwavering faith in Allah Almighty, unmatched devotion to the cause, bravery, patience, and the spirit of martyrdom, as mentioned in the Holy Quran, to be remembered until the Day of Judgment. They, in a message to the nation on the occasion of Youm-e-Ashura, the speaker remarked that the tragedy of Karbala reminds the great sacrifice made by Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and his companions for the sake of truth and justice.

He praised the Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and his companions for exemplifying Quranic teachings, endurance, sacrifice, and the fervour of martyrdom.

"As Muslims, it is our social responsibility to stand firm against tyrannical forces that seek to spread chaos in society to achieve their reprehensible goals," the speaker asserted.

He emphasized that paying tribute to the martyrs of Karbala is best achieved by dedicating ourselves to the betterment of humanity and the development of the country. He declared the sacrifices made on the Day of Ashura against falsehood as

a guiding light for future generations, stating that they would not hesitate to make any sacrifices for the protection and preservation of Islam, the homeland, and its integrity.

Meanwhile, Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani, stated that the incident of Karbala serves as a lesson for Muslims to firmly stand against the forces of falsehood. "This is the same path our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) taught us to follow, and which Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and his companions exemplified through their timeless sacrifices," he said.

Durrani added that the tragedy of Karbala instills in us the spirit to be ready at all times to make any sacrifices for the elevation of religion and the welfare of the nation. The messages from the speaker and the deputy speaker of the National Assembly resonate with the significance of Youm-e-Ashura, as it continues to inspire millions of Muslims worldwide to uphold the values of truth, justice, and sacrifice for the greater good of humanity and their nation.

The nation observes this solemn day with prayers and reflections, vowing to uphold the spirit of Karbala in the face of adversity and commit to the path of righteousness for generations to come.

PGF-2023 adopts resolution to implement STAR governance system

ISLAMABAD (APP): The two-day Pakistan Governance Forum 2023 (PGF), organized by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, has adopted a resolution calling for the immediate implementation of the Stable, Transparent, Agile, and Responsible (STAR) governance system in the country.

The resolution was adopted at the conclusion of the PGF-2023 held in Islamabad, aiming to develop a roadmap for a stable, transparent, agile, and responsible governance system in the country, a need release said.

The forum saw participation from hundreds of prominent figures from across diverse sectors, political leaders, experts, and representatives from civil society, who highlighted crucial aspects of governance. The forum committed to upholding a governance framework that embodies the principles of STAR. This commitment underscores the resolve to promote peace, enhance

transparency, and ensure public accountability while focusing on improved service delivery, embracing innovation and technology, and adapting to emerging challenges. According to the resolution, stability entails the continuity of inclusive, consultative, and evidence-based policies fostered through collaborative working relations between all organs of the state including the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary; the Federal, Provincial, and Local tiers of government; as well as the political leadership, bureaucracy, and military.

Effective measures should be taken to promote harmony and teamwork among state institutions within the constitutional framework, the resolution said. Ensuring stability necessitates incorporating the views and aspirations of all segments of society, especially under-represented groups such as youth, women, and diverse religious and ethnic communities. It said this inclusivity must be institutionalized

within all tiers of government through affirmative action and adopting an all-of-government approach, as emphasized by the resolution in highlighting the key feature of stable governance. Furthermore, the resolution stressed the need for establishing peace within the country and the region, ensuring law and order, and upholding the rule of law to create a conducive environment for good governance.

It called for resolving conflicts along political, ethnic, religious, and other lines through peaceful means, unequivocally rejecting violence.

Regarding transparency in governance, the resolution underscored the importance of enhancing transparency to eradicate corruption and strengthen public accountability at all tiers of government. Utilizing advancements in technology, particularly in prudent and responsible spending of public money, offers unprecedented opportunities to increase transparency in all government functions.

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

ISLAMABAD (NNI): President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday 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. Together, we can create a healthier and brighter future for Pakistan, free from the burden of hepatitis and its related diseases by protecting the health of our people," he remarked.

WHO committed to eliminate hepatitis from Pakistan: Dr Palitha

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Health Organization (WHO) has reiterated its commitment towards eliminating hepatitis from Pakistan.

In a message on the occasion of World Hepatitis Day 2023, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Pakistan, Dr Palitha Mahipala said, "Viral hepatitis affects 360 million people worldwide and claims 3,000 lives every day."

He said that in 2015, the World Health Assembly adopted a strategy to eliminate hepatitis by 2030 through prevention, testing and treatment.

Dr Palitha said, "World Hepatitis Day, observed on every 28th of July, serves as reflection on the achievements of our fight against viral hepatitis."

"It is also an opportunity to address the gaps and needs to enhance our efforts in eliminating these diseases as a public health concern."

He said that Pakistan is facing a considerably high disease burden due to viral Hepatitis B & C. Pakistan has the highest prevalence of Hepatitis C (7%) globally and has the highest number of people suffering from HCV, he added.

Dr Palitha said around 15 million people are estimated infected with Viral Hepatitis C in the country. Another 5 million are estimated infected with Viral Hepatitis B in the country.

He said unfortunately, our response to

viral hepatitis has stagnated in recent years and added testing for viral hepatitis has not been scaled up as tests and treatment are considered expensive.

Dr Palitha said the theme of world hepatitis day this year 'Hepatitis Medicines are Cheaper - Treat to Save Lives' aims to raise awareness to scale treatment for people living with viral hepatitis.

He said that now the manufacturers have announced to lower down the price of WHO prequalified hepatitis B and C drugs in low- and middle-income countries. This has been a concerted effort by partners to ensure affordability and accessibility to hepatitis treatment, he added.

Dr Palitha said these new drug prices will significantly reduce the cost of treatment to low and middle-income countries, and scale up hepatitis programs to meet growing demand, all towards eliminating hepatitis.

He said, "On this World Hepatitis Day, WHO calls on health authorities to scale-up viral hepatitis B & C testing and treatment, as an essential part of WHO vision of health for all by all."

He said that the WHO and all stakeholders will ensure affordability and accessibility of medicines, testing and treatment to millions in low and middle-income countries. "This is indeed a major step towards elimination of hepatitis by 2030," he added.



ISLAMABAD: A deserted view of Faisal Avenue on 9th Muharram-ul-Haram observing Youm-e-Ashura in the federal capital.

150 wedding guests poisoned

QALA-I-NAW (Pajhwok): One hundred and fifty guests at a wedding reception in the Sang Atash district of northwestern Badkhis provinces have been poisoned, an official said on Friday. Provincial Hospital Director Dr. Amir Mohammad Mashwani said the incident happened on Thursday evening in the Jumma Bazaar locality. He said 150 wedding guest have been poisoned, a medical team in the district was providing treatment to the patients.

Kuwait releases 3 Afghan prisoners

KABUL (Agenices): The Islamic Emirate's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has recently announced an agreement with the government of Kuwait. This agreement led to the transfer of three Afghan prisoners back to Afghanistan, a process overseen by Interpol police. Zia Ahmad Takal, the deputy spokesperson for MoFA, confirmed this development during an announcement accompanied by a video documenting the return process.

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

Stanekzai criticizes airspace violations by US, neighboring countries



KABUL (TOLONews): Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai said that the foreign drones, which are "not only from America," but also from "neighboring countries" fly in Afghan airspace.

Addressing a gathering of Ashura mourners in the Dasht-e-Barchi area of Kabul, he said that there are problems that exist ahead, particularly in education, the economy, politics and security. "You see that still even now foreign drones

move in our airspace. These drones are not only from America, there are drones from our neighboring countries as well that fly here," Stanekzai said. "But we do not yet have the capacity to prevent this. This is because nothing has been

left for us. We can prevent it when we join hands together and make our country technically and defensively (strong), so no one can violate our airspace and territorial integrity."

He also expressed his hope that the gates of "schools will be opened without discrimination for all Afghans."

"There are problems in every area. You also don't expect a home that has been damaged for the past 40 years can be reconstructed in 20 days or two years," he said. "I hope the door of the schools will be reopened for all Afghans without any discrimination. There are some arguments. We know the society. If you go to the villages you will find five people agree with the (reopening) of the schools and two people are against it," he added. 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.

Ashura marked in separate ceremonies in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): The residents of Kabul mourned the 10th day of Muharram, known as Ashura, with separate ceremonies.

However, some of the mourners voiced criticisms over the restrictions imposed for mourning on Ashura and called on the interim government to rescind such restrictions.

"Our people complained that there should be no restrictions in the west of Kabul—There could have been some miscommunication among security officials," said Sayed Hassan Fazalzada, head of the assembly of Shia Ulema of Afghanistan.

"We are proud that we are following Husayn and ... we have never used the Ashura tribune against others," said Asadullah Sadati, former deputy of the High Council for National Reconciliation.

Ashura is recognized as the day of martyrdom of the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), Husayn ibn Ali, and his death is mourned around



the world with special ceremonies.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Minister for Policy and Strategy of the Ministry of Interior (MoI), Makhdom Abdul Haq, who also attended a ceremony of Ashura in Kabul, said that all kinds of religious freedoms of citizens are

ensured.

"If he is Hindu, Sikh or anyone else or even Jogi. All of these people are from the Afghan nation and are my brothers... we will try day and night for their security," he said.

"One year includes 12 months and we just mourn for 10 days which is regis-

tered in the history of the Muslims," said Sher Mohammad Hossieni, a resident of Kabul.

Meanwhile, residents also reported that telecommunication services in the city of Kabul were shut down on Friday, but Islamic Emirate officials have yet to comment.

29.2m Afghans will need humanitarian aid in 2023: UNICEF

KABUL (TOLONews): In a recent report, UNICEF said 29.2 million people are projected to need humanitarian assistance in 2023 and over 15 million people are projected to be in crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity during the period of May to October 2023.

Drought-like conditions, floods, insecurity, harsh winters, political and economic instability, and displacement, have increased recession in Afghanistan.

"The economic crisis is expected to continue, with 64 percent of households unable to meet their basic needs as vulnerable populations are pushed to the brink," the UNICEF report said. "The main goal of humanitarian aid and food security is to raise the level of consumption and the basic needs of families," said Sayed Masoud, an economist.

UNICEF added that the ban on Afghan women from working with non-governmental organizations and the United Nations has significantly increased protection risks for vulnerable women and children.

"The best talents exist in women, and they can play an active role in the social



and work fields, but unfortunately, the current government has not been able to solve this problem in the country so far," said Surya Paykan, women's rights activist.

"If women have a share in government posts, this shows the justice of Islamic governance -- that it considers women and men equally in governance privileges and fulfills their rights for them," said Robina Merzada, a

women's rights activist.

The Ministry of Economy of the Islamic Emirate once again asks the international community not to stop their humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

"Focusing on development programs in job-creating sectors is among the priorities of the Ministry of Economy. The support of the international community for economic programs and the removal of economic sanctions by the

United Nations can improve the economic and livelihood situation and create job opportunities for our people," said Abdul Rahman Habibi, spokesman for the Ministry of Economy. UNICEF added in the report that for 2023 \$1.45 billion is urgently needed for the organization and without this funding the humanitarian needs of 19 million people in Afghanistan will remain unmet.

Positive interaction with world; focus of commerce minister and UN envoy discussion



KABUL (Agenices): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC) of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan says that the acting minister of the IEA met with with Roza Otunbayeva, United Nations' Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of

UNAMA, in his office.

In a statement of this ministry, it is stated that while welcoming the United Nations Special Representative for Afghanistan, Nooruddin Azizi thanked the international community for its support and assistance to the people of Afghanistan

and emphasized on the continuation of assistance and positive interaction with the international community.

In this meeting, the two sides discussed the issues of interaction and banking relations, creating work for entrepreneurs and creating careers and work for poor families, finding a

way out of the crisis and economic challenges and strengthening the foundation of the economy, the industrial revolution, the growth of the industry, the support and assistance of the community. They discussed the implementation of economic programs in Afghanistan.

Local farm produce, handicrafts exhibition held in Jawzjan



JAWZJAN (TOLONews): An exhibition showcasing agricultural products and handicrafts was held in Jawzjan with the aim of empowering women's economy. Local officials in Jawzjan said that in this exhibition 100 women displayed their agricultural products and handicrafts in 50 booths.

Some women who participated in this exhibition asked for the creation of a special market for market-

ing their products.

In this exhibition, which was held on Thursday in the city of Sheberghan, the capital of Jawzjan province, enterprising women asked for the support of the current government. Such exhibitions are very effective and good for business. We want the same kind of exhibitions to be created. The lack of market is very worrying for us," said Muqads Sadat, a businesswoman. "We want a

market to be created so that we can use it to sell our products," said Friba, a businesswoman.

The local officials of Jawzjan also believe that holding such exhibitions is beneficial for the growth of business activities of women entrepreneurs. According to them, right now four thousand women are working in the agriculture and handicraft sectors in this province.

"In Jawzjan, there are

four thousand girls working in the field of handicrafts and agricultural products," said Mohammad Zarif Faiz, head of the economy department in Jawzjan.

This exhibition is being held in Jawzjan, while the businesswomen and farmers in this province are complaining about the lack of a markets for their agricultural products and handicrafts, and they want the government to address this challenge.

The museum at Shah Bobo Jan Palace in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): A 100-year-old museum in Shah Bobo Jan palace in the capital city of Kabul includes thousands of historic and cultural relics.

Shah Bobo Jan Palace was constructed during the term of Amir Abdul

Rahman Khan at the end of 19th century.

"The goal of the establishment of this museum is to showcase historic and cultural relics of various provinces," said Khair Mohammad Walid, head of the museum.

The museum includes

military equipment of previous governments.

"This museum includes four parts.

The first part is the relics, ethnography, clothes, jewelry and war equipment," Walid said.

Employees working in the museum said that the

majority of visitors are students.

"The university students who need to learn about culture come here as these museums are the places for cultural and historic topics," said Shuib Ghazizada, an employee of the museum.



Maid torture case

Police say teenage victim’s statement has been recorded

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Islamabad police said on Friday that the statement of a teenage maid, who was reportedly severely tortured by a civil judge’s wife, had been recorded. A resident of Sargodha, the teenage girl was shifted to the Lahore General Hospital on Monday when her employers — a civil judge in Islamabad and his wife — were accused of torturing her.

According to the girl’s medico-legal certificate (MLC), she had “laceration on head from vertex, on forehead, right side above eyebrow, swollen upper lips, laceration under upper lip on right side, broken left incisor and left canine, laceration on cheek, nose bleed, laceration on left side of vertex, multiple bruises on lower leg, fracture on right forearm, swollen left and right eyelids, bruise on right skull, laceration on back, multiple bruises on back and attempt on strangulation.” After initially showing reluctance, Islamabad police had registered a first information report in the case on July 26. Police booked the judge’s wife for criminal intimidation and wrongful confinement, without mentioning physical torture in the FIR.

On Thursday, the Lahore High Court granted protective bail to the judge’s wife till August 1. In a tweet today, the Islamabad police said the statements of the victim and her father had been recorded but the medical report had not yet been received.

It stated that all those involved in the crime were being investigated and action was being taken according to the law. “Child labour is a crime under the law. If anyone is aware of any such incident, report it to the police,” the capital police added.

Earlier, a police officer told media that the capital police initiated the investigation over the case and sent a team to Lahore and other cities to arrest the accused. The investigation is being conducted by the relevant police station instead of the investigation wing’s Special Sexual Offence Investigation Unit under the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act 2021. The SSOIU has a mandate to investigate offences against juveniles under the act, he added.

The police team raided houses in Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Gujranwala to arrest the accused but it failed, the officer said, adding that the supervisory officers of the team were informed that the accused obtained a pre-arrest bail. Following the information about the bail, the team was

asked to move to Lahore and meet the victim and her family, the officer said, adding that in response the team met the girl and her family at a hospital, and their statements were recorded.

Speaking on the matter to the media on Friday, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SPAM) on Youth Affairs Shaza Fatima Khawaja asked police to “improve the FIR” of the case. “I will ask the police to improve the sections included in the FIR. The girl’s parents have some reservations and the FIR needs to be improved,” she said, assuring that the government was standing with the girl and her family.

The SAPM termed the matter “unfortunate” and pointed out that under the Punjab Domestic Workers Act, it was illegal to hire a domestic servant below the age of 15. She further stated that subjecting an individual to the extent of “cruelty” that the girl in this case had to bear “goes beyond one’s understanding” and could not be the work of a person “having a normal mental state”.

Khawaja also regretted that the suspect in the case had been granted pre-emptive bail. “It (bail) should not have been given ... everyone should be equal in the eyes of law and judges ... we should save anyone or stop their arrest by illegal means,” she said.

The case was registered at the Humak police station in response to the complaint from the girl’s father, a labourer by profession. According to the FIR, he sent his daughter to the house of the judge at Zartaj Housing Society through an acquaintance against Rs10,000 per month salary. On July 23, he along with his wife and brother-in-law came to the judge’s house to meet his daughter and found her injured and weeping in a room, it added. They found infected injuries on his head besides wounds all around the face, both arms and legs, the FIR said, adding her tooth was also found broken and swilling on both lips and eyes.

“Her ribs were also found broken, and injuries were found on her back. Marks of strangulation were also found around her neck.” When asked, she told her family that the judge’s wife used to torture and beat her with batons and spoons daily and did not provide her with dinner. The FIR said the girl was detained in a room since her arrival at the house. Later, the family took her to the Sargodha DHQ hospital where the girl’s condition deteriorated and was then referred to Lahore.

5 names shortlisted for caretaker PM slot: Asif

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif revealed Friday that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had shortlisted five names for the slot of caretaker prime minister.

In a statement, the PML-N stalwart confirmed that all the shortlisted candidates are politicians. He also clarified that he had not received any offer to lead the interim setup. Mr Asif said the names of the candidates would also be discussed with other political parties and hoped that a name would be finalised within a week. He announced that the final decision would be taken by the leadership of the coalition partners.

“In my opinion elections should be held in 90 days as it suits us,” he said while talking about the prevailing political situation in the country. He also hinted at premature dissolution of the National Assembly, saying: “I thing assemblies would be dissolved two days before their tenure ends”. “It would have been very difficult if the field in the assembly had been left vacant,” he said.

The defence minister also rubbished the reports that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar’s name had been recommended for the post of the caretaker prime minister. He said Mr Dar had never expressed such intentions at any forum. Talking about his statement that PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari was not trust worthy person, he said it was his opinion, adding: “I am still cautious about him”.

8 killed in road accident near Chilas

CHILAS (PPI): At least eight people lost their lives and nine sustained serious injuries after a car and a van near Babusar Top in Chilas area on Friday.

The car-van collision occurred at Gati Das locality near Babusar Top in which eight tourists were killed and nine got injured. Locals and rescue teams rushed to the scene and shifted the injured people to the hospital.

Rescue officials told the media that a passenger van and a car fell into a steep ravine after collision and both vehicles caught fire. The deceased eight persons were belonging the same family and residents of Sahiwal.

Eighteen members of the Sahiwal family were travelling to Babusar Top – Chilas where they met the fatal accident. Earlier in the month, at least five people including woman were killed while 13 others sustained injuries in a car-van collision in Buner district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The incident took place when a vehicle collided with a passenger van while taking a sharp turn. The vehicle was travelling from the Shakolai area of Shangla to Swari. Upon receiving the information, rescue teams and the local police reached the scene to provide immediate assistance. The deceased and injured victims were promptly transported to a nearby hospital for medical attention.

Pakistani mountaineer dies

SKARDU (PPI): A Pakistani mountaineer, Muhammad Hassan, died in an avalanche on the world’s second highest mountain K2, sources said Friday.

According to sources, Muhammad Hassan who was from the district Shigar of Gilgit Baltistan, died when he was summiting K2. Sources said that he died when the huge avalanche hit him near the Bottle Neck at the end of his summit. It was impossible to bring the mountaineer back so he was buried on the Bottle Neck.

Earlier, Polish climber Pawel Tomasz Kopec died due to acute altitude sickness after conquering the treacherous Nanga Parbat (8,126m), the world’s ninth-highest peak. “Kopec and his two other compatriots – Piotr Krzyzewski and Waldemar Kowalewski summited Nanga Parbat on Sunday,” the club said in a statement.



WASHINGTON: Ambassador Masood Khan shaking hands with Senator Todd Young, Chairman Armed Services Committee Congressman Mike Rogers prior to a meeting.

Pakistan calls for Israel to be held accountable for its ‘crimes’

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has urged the UN Security Council to “fully and forcefully” implement its resolutions on the Middle East conflict that give the right of self-determination to the Palestinian people.

Speaking in the 15-member Council, Ambassador Munir Akram also strongly condemned the recent large-scale Israeli military operations in Jenin in occupied Palestinian West Bank, and called for holding Israel accountable for its “grave human rights violations and crimes in occupied Palestine.” “Unfortunately,” the Pakistani envoy said, “the killing of children, women and men continues in occupied Palestine with complete impunity.”

He added, “The rule of law can be upheld only if it is applied universally and consistently, without exceptions or double standards.” Ambassador Akram regretted that the Security Council has not been able to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in occupied Palestine. “Given the erga-omnes character of the right of self-determination,” the Pakistani envoy said it is also incumbent on all States to ensure that any impediment to the exercise of the right to self-determination by the Palestinian people is immediately terminated.

He said that on 5 July, three Special Rapporteurs of the United Nations Human Rights Council stated that Israeli attacks against the Jenin refugee camp may constitute a war crime and had no justification under international law. The impunity that Israel has enjoyed for its acts of violence over decades only fuels and intensifies the recurring cycle of violence.

The Special Rapporteurs also

called for Israel to be held accountable under international law. The Pakistani envoy said the continuing expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the expulsion and evictions of Palestinians from their properties are illegal and grave violations of Council resolutions and international law, including humanitarian law. “The international community cannot accept the fait accompli Israel is seeking to impose with the design to perpetuate its forcible occupation and destroy Palestinian nationhood,” Ambassador Akram said.

“There will be no durable peace in the Holy land until the creation of an independent, viable and contiguous State of Palestine, established on the basis of pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.” Opening the debate on the situation in the troubled region, Khaled Khari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, said that from 27 June through 24 July in the occupied West Bank, 25 Palestinians, including 5 children, were killed, and 249 Palestinians were injured by Israeli security forces. According to Israel, 2 Israeli security forces personnel were killed while another 39 Israelis were injured by Palestinians. This deterioration is taking place alongside ongoing unilateral steps that undermine a two-State solution, the absence of a peace process and the continuing economic challenges facing Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority, he stressed.

On 3 and 4 July in the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, Israeli security forces carried

out an operation marked by multiple drone strikes and over 1,000 ground troops. Twelve Palestinians, including four children, were killed and over 140 injured — the most in a single operation in the West Bank since the United Nations began tracking casualties in 2005. Palestinian Islamic Jihad al-Quds Brigades claimed 8 of the 12 fatalities as members, including children. Israeli settler violence continues, albeit not at the scale witnessed in June, he pointed out, reminding Israel of its responsibility to abide by international humanitarian law when carrying out security measures. The funding gap faced by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is of grave concern, Khari went on to say, urging the international community to contribute the \$200 million the Agency urgently needs to maintain services from September onwards.

Ambassador Riyad Mansour, the Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, said that there are more than 700,000 Israeli settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. “So, let us start by calling things by their name, he urged, stating that the Israeli occupation is a settler-colonial occupation and that the only way the international community can end it is to address its settler-colonial nature.

We need an action plan, with the necessary resources and the will to implement it, he stressed. The International Criminal Court investigations must start yielding results by providing justice for victims and deterring perpetrators. The International Court of Justice advisory opinion will give the United Nations and all States guidance on their legal obligations.

African leaders press Putin to end Ukraine war

CAIRO (Reuters): African leaders pressed Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday to move ahead with their peace plan to end the Ukraine war and to renew a deal on the export of Ukrainian grain that Moscow tore up last week.

While not directly critical of Russia, their interventions on the second day of a summit with Putin were more concerted and forceful than those that African countries have voiced until now. They served as reminders to the Kremlin leader of the depth of African concern at the consequences of the war, especially rising food prices.

“This war must end. And it can only end on the basis of justice and reason,” African Union Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat told Putin and African leaders in St Petersburg. “The disruptions of energy and grain supplies must end immediately. The grain deal must be extended for the benefit of all the peoples of the world, Africans in particular.”

Reuters reported in June that the African plan floats a series of possible steps to defuse the conflict including a Russian troop pull-back, removal of Russian tactical nuclear weapons from Belarus, suspension of an International Criminal Court arrest warrant against Putin, and sanctions relief. Putin gave it a polite but cool reception when African leaders presented it to him last month. On Friday he said Moscow respected the proposal and was carefully studying it.

Congo Republic President Denis Sassou Nguesso said the African initiative “deserves the closest attention, it mustn’t be underestimated...We once again urgently call for the restoration of peace in Europe.” Senegal’s President Macky Sall called for “a de-escalation to help create calm”, while South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said he hoped that “constructive engagement and negotiation” could bring an end to the conflict.

The stream of calls prompted Putin repeatedly to defend Russia’s position and place the blame on Ukraine and the West. Responding to Mahamat, he said Russia was “grateful to our African friends for their attention to this problem” but it was Kyiv that was refusing to negotiate with him under a decree it passed shortly after he claimed last September to have annexed four Ukrainian regions that

Russia partly controls.

Russia has long said it is open to talks but that these must take account of the “new realities” on the ground. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has rejected the idea of a ceasefire now that would leave Russia in control of nearly a fifth of his country and give its forces time to regroup after 17 grinding months of war. At the summit, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi urged Russia to revive the Black Sea grain deal which, until Moscow refused to renew it last week, had allowed Ukraine to export grain from its seaports despite the conflict.

Sisi, whose country is a big buyer of grain via the Black Sea route, told the summit it was “essential to reach agreement” on reviving the deal. Putin responded by arguing, as he has in the past, that rising world food prices were a consequence of Western policy mistakes long predating the Ukraine war. He has repeatedly said Russia quit the Black Sea agreement last week because it was not getting grain to the poorest countries and the West was not keeping its side of the bargain.

Since withdrawing from the deal, Russia has bombed Ukrainian ports and grain depots, prompting accusations from Ukraine and the West that it is using food as a weapon of war, and global grain prices have risen again. On Thursday, he promised to deliver free Russian grain in the next several months to six of the countries attending the summit. Putin is seeking to use the event to inject new momentum into Russia’s ties with Africa and enlist the continent’s support in countering what he describes as US hegemony and Western neo-colonialism.

Many of the African leaders had warm words for Moscow’s record of support for their countries in their 20th century liberation struggles and more recently. The leaders of Mali and Central African Republic, whose governments have relied heavily on the services of Russia’s Wagner mercenary group, both expressed their gratitude to Putin. CAR President Faustin Archange Touadera said his country’s relations with Russia had helped it to save its democracy and avoid a civil war, thanking it “for helping us to oppose foreign hegemony”. Mali’s Assimi Goita told Putin: “You have shown pragmatism and realism in efforts to reach agreement with Ukraine.”

Russia warns civilian vessels in Black Sea, Ukraine says

KYIV (Reuters): A senior Ukrainian official accused Russia on Friday of threatening civilian vessels in the Black Sea, and urged the international community to condemn what he said were “the methods of terrorists”.

Russia last week quit a UN-brokered deal allowing Ukraine, a major global grain producer, to safely export its grain via the Black Sea and warned that ships heading to Ukrainian seaports could be considered military targets. “Russian warships are threatening civilians in the Black Sea, violating all norms of international maritime law,” Andriy Yermak, head of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s office, wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

In a separate statement, Ukraine’s border guard service said it had intercepted a warning communicated by Russia to a civilian vessel passing near a Ukrainian port on Thursday. It did not identify the name of the ship or the port, but said: “The aggressor’s warships continue to behave brazenly and audaciously in the waters of the Black Sea, violating all the norms of international maritime law”. The statement quoted the Russian party as saying: “I am warning you about the ban on movement to the ports of Ukraine.”

“Also, the transport of any cargo to Ukraine is considered by the Russian side to be the potential transportation of military cargo,” it was quoted as saying. The country of the vessel’s flag would be considered a party to the conflict in Ukraine, it said.

G20 meeting ends sans pact on climate crisis

CHENNAI (Agencies): Environment ministers from G20 nations have failed to agree on ways to curb emissions and other crucial measures to address the global climate crisis ahead of the UN climate change conference at the end of the year.

The European Union’s environment commissioner on Friday criticised the outcome of the meeting of the world’s largest economies in the Indian city of Chennai. He said it showed G20 countries, which account for up to 80 percent of global greenhouses emissions, were “nowhere” on their commitments to address climate change. “We were asked to make bold choices, to demonstrate courage, commitment and leadership, but we collectively failed to achieve that,”

Virginijus Sinkevicius said a day after UN chief Antonio Guterres said July was the planet’s hottest month on record by far.

A blistering heatwave has been sweeping the northern hemisphere with record-high temperatures causing deadly wildfires in Greece, Italy and Algeria. Sinkevicius added that some delegations had even tried to walk back previous climate pledges.

“We cannot be driven by the lowest common denominator or by narrow national interests. We cannot allow the pace of change to be set by the slowest movers in the room,” he told his fellow ministers. No breakthrough was possible on several key points, including reaching a consensus on drastically scaling up renewable energy use.

The failure to reach an agreement comes just a week after the G20, a bloc made up of 19 countries and the EU, disagreed on phasing down fossil fuels. Indian Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav said his country, which now holds the rotating G20 pres-

idency, will soon issue an outcome statement instead of a joint communique, which is released when there is unanimous agreement among member nations on all issues.

French Ecological Transition Minister Christophe Bechu told the Agence France-Presse news agency after the meeting that he was “very disappointed” with the outcome. “Records of temperatures, catastrophes, giant fires, and we are not able to reach an agreement on the peaking [of] emissions by 2025,” he said.

Bechu added that discussions with China, Saudi Arabia and Russia had been “complicated”. Peter Newman, a member of the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, told Al Jazeera that the effects of global warming were now before everyone’s eyes. “We’re facing death and seeing that climate change is not an idea just of science.

US stands against China’s behaviour: Pentagon

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The United States stands with countries fighting China’s “bullying behaviour”, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has said, as he launched bilateral talks in Australia aimed at countering Beijing’s growing influence in the Asia-Pacific.

Chinese policy in the region will be a key point of discussion on Friday and Saturday as the US and Australian defence and foreign affairs ministers meet for annual, bilateral meetings. Austin and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in the Australian city of Brisbane late on Thursday in advance of the talks, which also will focus on a deal to provide Australia with a fleet of submarines powered by US nuclear technology.

“We’ve seen troubling [Chinese] coercion from the East China Sea to the South China Sea to right here in the Southwest Pacific,” Austin said before meeting his Australian counterpart, Richard Marles, on Friday. “We’ll continue to support our

allies and partners as they defend themselves from bullying behaviour,” the Pentagon chief added.

Ties between Beijing and Washington have soured in recent years over a range of issues, from trade and the status of Taiwan to China’s expansive claims in the South China Sea and an ongoing US push against growing Chinese influence in the Asia-Pacific region. But senior US officials, including Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, have travelled to China in recent weeks in an effort to deepen communication between the two countries and avoid veering into a confrontation.

The abrupt removal of Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang earlier this week could complicate those efforts to revive tanking relations, analysts told Al Jazeera, though it is unlikely to result in a major change. Asked this week about US accusations that China is engaged in problematic behaviour in the Asia-Pacific region, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning

said Beijing “is not interested in competing with any country for influence”.

“The cooperation between China and Pacific island countries is open and transparent and fully respects countries’ sovereignty and will. We never attach any political strings and never target any third party,” Mao told reporters on Thursday. “Pacific island countries are not the ‘backyard’ of any country. China is not interested in competing with any country for influence, or seeking the so-called ‘geopolitical presence’ or ‘sphere of influence,’” she said.

China has spoken out against the trilateral defence deal between Australia, the US and the United Kingdom – dubbed AUKUS – under which Canberra is to obtain three US Virginia-class, nuclear-powered submarines in the early 2030s, among other provisions.

Another Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian, condemned the alliance when it was unveiled in 2021 as an “extremely irresponsible” threat to regional stability.