

Three terrorists killed in Khyber

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Three terrorists were killed in successful operations by security forces in Khyber and South Waziristan tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to ISPR report on Sunday night, one terrorist was killed in an exchange of fire with security forces at Bagh area of Khyber district. Weapon and ammunition were also recovered from him.

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CTD arrested alleged terrorist

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CTD on Sunday arrested one wanted terrorist. According to details, he said the CTD officials conducted an operation on the information received and succeeded in arresting one extortion terrorist, belonging to Afghanistan. The alleged terrorist Bahram the main group member was also wanted in a hand grenade attack including terrorist extortion.

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## 40 martyred, more than 150 injured in blast at JUI-F workers convention Bajaur

PESHAWAR (APP): Maulana Hameedullah Haqqani, General Secretary JUI-F Tehsil Navagai and Maulana Zir Ur Rehman, Ameer Tehsil Khar, were martyred along with 40 other workers and more than 150 others injured in the huge suicide bomb blast during the JUI-F Worker Convention at Dubai More (Shindai), Khal, Bajaur District, the officials of the Rescue 1122 confirmed the incident. Maulana Hameedullah Haqqani, general secretary of JUI Tehsil Navgai and Maulana Zia Ur Rehman, were martyred along with other workers in the Bajaur bomb blast, the officials of the Rescue 1122 confirmed.

District Health Officer Bajaur Dr. Faisal also confirmed that they have received 40 dead bodies with more than 150 injured and among them 16 persons were in critical condition that have been airlifted by Army Helicopters to CMH Hospital Peshawar. The Bacha International Airport Officials also confirmed to have received 16 critically injured persons through two Army Helicopters. Soon after arrival, the injured were shifted to CHM Peshawar.

The number of dead people is more than forty, including the local leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-



Islam Ziaullah Jan, former senator Maulana Abdul Rasheed was slightly injured.

Dr. Faisal Kamal has confirmed that 40 people have died in the blast and more than 150 people have been injured in the Bajaur blast. He said 16 seriously injured have been sent to Peshawar CMH by helicopter. DHO Dr. Faisal Kamal said. He said, many injured in Lower Dir Timergara, many have been

sent to Peshawar.

However, according to reports, 7 ambulances of Rescue 1122 have been deployed at Peshawar Bacha Khan Airport, spokesperson Rescue 1122 said. He said all the injured from the Bajaur blast were shifted to Peshawar by two Army helicopters.

He said, the injured are being transferred to Rescue 1122 ambulances which are equipped

with medical technicians who will provide medical assistance en route. The Rescue official said that they have shifted more than 90 injured to hospital. He disclosed that Rescue 1122 has dispatched 16 more ambulances from Mohmand, Lower Upper Dir, Charsadda, Swat, Peshawar to hospitals while 18 seriously injured have been shifted to Taimergarh Hospital. Caretaker Information Minister Barrister

Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel strongly condemned the Bajaur blast in a political gathering in Bajaur. He said, it is reported that 40 civilians were killed and around 200 injured in the blast.

Heartfelt sorrow and regret for the loss of precious lives in the explosion. The caretaker provincial minister condoled with the families of the deceased. He said they are standing with the bereaved families in this hour of sorrow. He said the caretaker Chief Minister has taken notice of the incident and ordered an immediate investigation.

The injured in the blast have been shifted to hospitals for medical assistance, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel said, adding, an emergency has also been imposed in the hospitals of nearby districts. The provincial government is firm on its resolve to eradicate terrorism, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel said.

Caretaker Provincial Minister Taj Mohammad Afridi condemned the blast and expressed regret over the horrific blast in Khar, Bajaur headquarters. It has been confirmed that 40 persons were killed with 16 are in critical conditions and are being airlifted by Army

choppers to CMH Peshawar, LRH and HMC Peshawar.

Talking to media men, District Health Officer Dr. Faisal while confirming the injured said that more than 150 injured with the bodies of 40 others received and 16 are in critical condition. The caretaker Provincial Minister expressed condolences with the bereaved families in this hour of grief. Instructions have been issued to the relief department officials to take necessary steps in time. The miscreants and anti-peace elements will be dealt with strictly, caretaker provincial minister said in a message.

Rescue 1122 teams are being engaged in rescue operations at the accident site, said the Caretaker Minister, Relief, Rehabilitation and Resettlement. As soon as the information was received, ambulances of Rescue 1122 reached the spot, Taj Mohammad Afridi said.

The staff was alerted to the blast in Bajaur LRH, Asim Khan Spokesperson LRH told APP. Emergency is fully operational, all staff are present, Asim Khan said. After transferring the injured from Bajaur to Peshawar, all kinds of treatment will be provided, Asim Khan said. Emergency

ICU and other wards are also ready, Asim Khan said.

**CM KP condemns Bajaur blast, directs to probe the incident:** Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan on Sunday condemned blast at JUIF political gathering in Bajaur and directed to probe the incident. The Chief Minister has directed the police authorities to provide a detailed report on the situation.

He asked to gather comprehensive information about the incident to understand its full impact and take necessary actions accordingly. Chief Minister Azam Khan has shown deep concern for the injured victims, instructing the hospital administration to ensure the provision of the best medical assistance to those wounded in the blast. He directed Chief Secretary and Secretary Health for provision of best health facilities to the victims.

The incident has caused immense grief and sorrow throughout the area. The Chief Minister vowed to stand in solidarity with the affected families during this tragic hour. However, Information Minister Barrister Feroz Jamal confirmed that more than 200 people were injured, 16 are in critical condition and are being airlifted to CMH Peshawar.

## Inefficiency, criminal negligence of PTI's govt cost country dearly: PM

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday lambasted the criminal negligence and inefficient performance of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) government led by former prime minister Imran Khan Niazi, saying that the country paid a heavy price for their blunders and political vendetta.

The prime minister expressed these views after performing the soft launching of various development projects which included Rs 50 billion Medical City, Rs 52 billion National Health Support Programme, and Rs 30 billion Population Welfare Programme. On the occasion, he also broke grounds for the SL-3 Lahore Ring Road project, Shadara to Kala Shah Kaku Metro Bus extension project, and inaugurated 1263 MW Punjab Thermal power plant in Jhang with the capacity of generating 10 billion inexpensive units annually.

Addressing the ceremony, the PM said Imran Niazi had neglected the completion of the gas-fired Haveli Bahadur Shah power plant due to his animosity with the PML-N leadership and the country had to pay an additional whopping amount of Rs 77 billion besides, its original cost of Rs74 billion at that time due to non-functionality. He said the project was to be inaugurated in 2019 but it was stalled due to criminal negligence of Imran Niazi and the lack of interest of the previous government. A huge amount of the nation went down the drain, causing huge losses for the poor country, he opined, adding it was one of the worst examples of PTI's bad governance. "Who will be held accountable for such a blunder? It is the continuation of a saga of 75 years for which they were all responsible," he quipped.

Why the judiciary did not take suo motu for such negligence? the prime minister questioned and

maintained that he had no intention of victimization and did not want injustice with anyone, but there should be transparent accountability of all those responsible for such failures whether it was done in a dictatorship or democratic regime, justice should be dispensed without any victimization, he said.

With such accountabilities, the nations in the world moved forward, he added. The ceremony was attended by Punjab Governor, Caretaker Chief Minister, federal and provincial ministers, parliamentarians, and the relevant authorities.

The prime minister said these were the facts that the nation must know about the four years rule of Imran Niazi who played havoc with the national economy.

The prime minister said that they felt ashamed while carrying the begging bowl due to the failures of the past government.

"It was a huge mishap of our history (PTI's government) which is already strewn with such unpleasant incidents. If we do not change the attitude, we cannot aspire to achieve anything," he regretted.

Citing the example of China, he said it had now become the world's second-largest economy.

Japan and Germany bounced back economically from the destruction of World Wars owing to commitment, devotion, and determination, he added. "Let us gird up loins and work hard for the country's progress as peeping into the past would be useless. If they failed, the public will not forget them. Let us wash away the blots of the past," the PM stressed.

He also expressed his resolve to revive the country's economy by eliminating poverty and unemployment. The prime minister also regretted that due to PTI's sits at D-Chowk in 2014, President Xi's visit to Pakistan was postponed.

He said under China Pakistan

Economic Corridor (CPEC), the PML-N government had initiated Haveli and Baloki power plants with power generation of 1200 MW each, besides, the 1150 MW Bhikki project in Punjab. The prime minister, on the occasion, said the Medical City project would be completed with all the allied facilities and would be at par with the world's renowned health projects like the PKLI was ranked best among Asia's top institutes.

He said the federal and provincial governments would jointly execute the project.

About the 8km SL-3 Lahore Ring Road, the prime minister said that one part of the ring road was left out, adding now its completion would facilitate a huge number of commuters by removing the vehicular congestion.

The extension of the Metro bus project would serve thousands of commuters on a daily basis, he added and directed for its completion within three months.

Governor Punjab Baligh ur Rehman also highlighted the performance of the coalition government during the past fifteen months in which mega projects of public interest were launched.

**Punjab Governor, Caretaker CM call on PM:** Governor Punjab Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman here on Sunday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi, chief secretary and IG Punjab Police were also present in the meeting. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During the meeting, the prime minister was given a briefing over the law and order situation in the province. The prime minister appreciated the performance of the provincial administration and Punjab police for maintaining law and order during Muharram ul Haram and Ashura.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif offering dua after launching the National Health Support Programme.

## Chinese Vice PM He Lifeng reaches Pakistan on three-day visit

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chinese Vice Prime Minister (PM) He Lifeng has arrived in Pakistan on a three-day visit as part of high-level engagements and dialogues between Pakistan and China.

Chinese Vice PM He Lifeng was received by Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal upon arrival.

During his visit, PM Lifeng will hold meetings with the Pakistani leadership. Lifeng's visit is part of high-level engagements and dia-

logues between Pakistan and China. The federal government finalised the preparations for a central event following the completion of a decade of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

An event will be organised in Islamabad tomorrow over the completion of 10 years of CPEC project titled 'From vision to reality' in which Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chinese Vice PM He Lifeng will be the special guests.

The event will be attended by fed-

eral ministers, lawmakers from the National Assembly (NA) and Senate, secretaries and the business community. Pakistan and China had launched the CPEC project on July 5, 2013, with an investment of over \$25 billion. The officials said that CPEC created employment for millions of people and Pakistan started generating 8,000 MW of electricity via the projects. Under the CPEC, Pakistan started several economic development projects with the collaboration of China.

## Sanjrani drops controversial 'Prevention of Violent Extremism Bill, 2023' from agenda amidst parliamentary reservations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani Sunday took a decision to drop an item, which pertained to 'The Prevention of Violent Extremism Bill, 2023', from the house's agenda due to reservations expressed by several members of parliament.

Clarifying his position, he said the session was not summoned on the holiday due to this particular bill being introduced on behalf of Minister for Interior Rana Sana Ullah Khan for the prevention of violent extremism. The chairman further made it clear that it was decided in the meeting of the advisory committee with the mutual understanding of all parliamentary leaders to summon the session on this day.

However, Minister of State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan, terming the bill in the national interest said this legislation was made in the backdrop of United Nations Security Council Resolutions under

2178 and 2354.

He further clarified that this particular legislation was being made to stop the violent extremism from the country as entire nation stands united against it.

Senator Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) expressed his concerns and threatened to boycott the session if the bill was brought to the house.

He proposed that the bill be sent to the relevant committee for a thorough review of its potential pros and cons to prevent misuse against any political party in the future.

Similarly, Senator Mushtaq Ahmed of Jamaat-e-Islami criticized the bill, stating that it targeted not just a specific party but all political parties. He argued that non-political forces might have designed it to undermine the democratic process repeatedly. Senator Muhammad Tahir Bizinjo of the National Party also opposed the

bill, describing it as an attack on democracy and urged against its hasty passage.

Senator Kamran Murtaza from JUI-F proposed that the bill should not be passed without obtaining the consensus of all allied parties.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's Senator Irfan-ul-Haq Siddiqui, shedding light on the significance of the bill, proposed that it should be discussed on the floor of the house instead of passing in haste.

Adding to the debate, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's Mohammad Humayun Mohman alleged that the bill seemed intended to discourage his party's participation in the upcoming general elections.

Given the diverse perspectives and reservations expressed by parliamentary members, the fate of the 'Prevention of Violent Extremism Bill, 2023,' remains uncertain, pending further consultation and deliberation among political stakeholders.

### COAS Gen Asim, Bilawal visits UAE separately

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir on Sunday visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The UAE Embassy in Pakistan tweeted that UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan received COAS Munir. "H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, receives General Syed Asim Munir, COAS of Pakistan Army, who offered condolences on the death of late Sheikh Saeed bin Zayed Al Nahyan," the tweet read. On the other hand, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari is also on a visit to the UAE. High officials of the UAE and Ambassador of Pakistan to the Emirati state Faisal Niaz Timizi received the foreign minister at the airport. FM Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari will offer condolences to the UAE leadership on the sad demise of the brother of President of the UAE Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed.

## Joint call in Senate to address Quran desecration incidents in Sweden, Denmark

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The legislators from both sides of the aisle in the Senate on Sunday came together to urge the government to take concrete actions against the disgraceful incidents of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and Denmark. During the session in the upper house, Senator Mushtaq Ahmed of Jamaat-e-Islami brought the matter to the attention of Senate Chairman Muhammad

Sadiq Sanjrani, stressing the importance of the upcoming Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) virtual meeting for the Council of Foreign Ministers of Member States on July 31. The meeting aimed to discuss measures against the repeated desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and Denmark, he added. Senator Mushtaq empha-

sized the need to strengthen the OIC's strategy in dealing with the persistent menace of Quran burning on an international level.

He proposed the government halt diplomatic relations, particularly with Sweden and Denmark, to express its disappointment and protest against these recurrent incidents.

Supporting Senator Mushtaq's stance, Senator Molyvi Faiz Muhammad of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl expressed astonishment that believers of other faiths would resort to such sacrilegious acts despite the Holy Quran mentioning the names of many prophets from various religions.

He stressed the importance of cutting off all ties with Sweden and Denmark in response. Senator Khalida Ateeq of Muttahida Qaumi Movement suggest-

ed devising an inclusive policy to address such blasphemous acts on the international stage while ensuring that the religious freedom of minority communities within the country was not compromised.

Apart from condemning the desecration of the Holy Quran, Senator Hidayatullah Khan of Awami National Party called for inter-sect dialogue to maintain peace and tranquility in the country.

He urged religious leaders, Ulema, and Mashaykh, to step forward and lead the nation in resolving issues of terrorism, extremism, and sectarianism using all possible means. Senator Kamil Ali Agha of Pakistan Muslim League proposed passing a unanimous resolution against the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and Denmark.





## Commissioner directs for launching awareness campaign

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta on Sunday directed the authorities concerned to launch a thorough public awareness campaign about Smog Rules 2023 and all-out efforts should be made to ensure full implementation of the Rules.

The Government of Punjab had implemented Smog Rules 2023 across the province from June 06 this year, he said and directed the departments concerned to raise awareness about the rules. The smog rules prohibit the use of weak engines, burning of solid waste and tires, he said adding, the kilns without zigzag technology and factories creating pollution would not be allowed to work. Burning of crop residues and smoke emitting vehicles are strictly prohibited under the rules, the Commissioner added.

Violation of the rules could result in immediate closure of the business, fine up to one million rupees and registration of FIRs against the violators, Liaquat Ali Chhatta said. He also directed the departments concerned to actively participate in the plantation campaign to prevent smog and control diseases spread as a result of this air pollution.

## Minister directs Pindi admin to access damages

RAWALPINDI (APP): Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare and Population Welfare Dr Jamal Nasir here on Sunday inspected the fire-affected plazas on Benazir Bhutto Road and reviewed the rescue operation.

The provincial minister directed the district administration to assess the damage in Rabi Center, Gulf Center and China Center Plazas affected by the fire and asked to conduct a detailed inspection of the three plazas so that there was no possibility of fire again. He asked the police to assist the traders in securing their remaining goods and praised the role of Rescue 1122 staff for timely controlling the fire. On this occasion, Rescue 1122 official informed the minister that the fire was brought under control and apparently the cause of the fire was a short circuit, adding an investigation was also underway to determine the particular root. He said that due to timely action, there was no life of loss while major financial losses had been saved.

## PU to recruit 229 teachers

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab University (PU) has invited applications to fill 229 vacant posts in various disciplines, the Registrar office sources said here. Applications have been invited for posts of professors (pay package BS-21), associate professors (pay package BS-20), assistant professor (pay package BS-19) and lecturers (pay package BS-18).

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) eligibility criteria would be observed strictly in all subjects, which were available on the HEC/Punjab University website.

# PM praises ministers, LEAs for maintaining peace on Ashura

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday lauded the efforts of Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah, provincial home ministers, federal and provincial authorities, and the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) for maintaining law and order on Ashura.

While expressing satisfaction over the peaceful observance of Ashura, the prime minister praised the chief ministers, provincial and district administrations, and inspector generals of police

for chalking out excellent arrangements during Muharram ul Haram, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release issued here.

He observed that excellent arrangements were made for Ashura processions and in this regard, the relevant authorities and security forces collaborated together.

Due to these arrangements, no untoward incident happened, he said while commending round the clock performance of police officials and personnel.

## CM commends ministers, admin, police over peaceful Ashura

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has said that by the grace of Allah Almighty and hard work of the Punjab government, the days of Muharram-ul-Haram especially Youm-e-Ashur passed peacefully.

In his message on Sunday, he said: "I commend the provincial ministers, administration, police and law enforcement agencies on making foolproof arrangements for law and order as well as security. We bow before Allah Almighty on the peaceful ending of Ashura Muharram-ul-Haram." Mohsin Naqvi stated that majalis and processions were held in a peaceful environment with religious respect and devotion to commemorate the martyrs of Karbala, adding that the role of ulema remained praiseworthy in the promotion of brotherhood and interfaith harmony. "I laud the efforts of the ulema from all schools of thought for establishing peace across the province," he added.

The CM acknowledged that the police, administration and law enforcement institutions collectively maintained the environment of law and order as well as peace on Youm-e-Ashur. Excellent security arrangements were being made for the mourners in every city of Punjab including Lahore. The office-bearers of peace committees played their effective role in maintaining the environment of brotherhood during Ashura Muharram-ul-Haram, he concluded.

**CM grieved over Rajanpur traffic accident:** Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has expressed his deep sense of sorrow and grief over the loss of precious human lives in a traffic accident near Rajanpur.

Naqvi expressed heartfelt sympathy with the heirs of the deceased persons. He directed the administration to provide best treatment facilities to the injured and also sought a report about the incident.

**CM inspects construction work on Gujranwala link project:** Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi visited the Gujranwala-link project with the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway and inspected the ongoing construction work on the project. While directing the authorities concerned to expedite work on the project, he said that high quality construction work should be ensured on the project.

Additional resources should be utilised to complete the project in the stipulated period of time.

Mohsin Naqvi also visited the under-construction roads of Gujranwala Motorway-link road project. He issued necessary directions to the officials concerned to complete the project in the stipulated time period.

The CM was informed during the briefing that issues causing obstructing in early construction of the project worth Rs 11 billion had been resolved amicably. The dual carpeted road stretching 15.2-km long will provide excellent access to the motorway. All resources are being utilised to complete the project within 90 days, he was informed. With the latest travel facilities, time and fuel will be saved along with lessening of traffic rush on the GT Road. The officials of FWO gave a briefing to CM Mohsin Naqvi about the project.

The CM told the media persons that the project would be completed in the stipulated period of time despite rains. Holding elections is the job of the Election Commission of Pakistan, he replied to a question. He said a shuttle service had been started between both hospitals of Gujranwala. The shortage of HR would soon be fulfilled in the hospitals.

The initial investigation into the Islamia University Bahawalpur incident had been completed and those responsible would be given stern punishment. If needed, then judicial inquiry would also be conducted, he said. The police had been empowered fully, he added.

Provincial Minister Bilal Afzal, Chief Secretary, Commissioner Gujranwala division, RPO Gujranwala, Secretary C&W, Deputy Commissioner, DPO and other officers were also present on the occasion. CM Mohsin Naqvi also took an aerial view of Gujranwala Motorway link road project. CM Mohsin Naqvi also took an aerial view of 15 KM long link road from Wandu Interchange up to Benazir Chowk and witnessed various sections of under construction Gujranwala Motorway link road project. CM issued directions to Secretary C&W on the spot in this regard. Provincial Minister Bilal Afzal and Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman also accompanied him.

## Ombudsman orders Rs 14.137m financial relief for applicants

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab ombudsman has ordered provision of cumulative financial relief of Rs 14.137 million to applicants hailing from various districts.

In a statement issued on Sunday, a spokesman said the ombudsman's office had received applications for provision of financial relief, death grant, talent scholarships, outstanding dues, and resolution of employment-related issues, including non-payment of pension, leave encashment, GP fund matters, and creation of an OSD [officer on special duty] post, among others. The ombudsman provided justice to Rana Muhammad Ali by ordering his son's appointment as a junior clerk in BPS-11 to the Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) in Okara. Similarly, the School Education Department was directed to appoint Abrara Saadia from Toba Tek Singh and Shahnaz Bibi's son from Bahawalnagar as naib qasid under Rule 17-A of the Punjab Civil Servants (Appointment and Conditions of Service) Rules, 1974.

Moreover, the Punjab Government Servants Benevolent Fund Board was directed to release an educational stipend of Rs 22,000 to Atta-ul-Haq Bhatti's daughter from Okara, Rs 32,000 to Gulshan Parveen's son from Talagang, and monthly grant arrears amounting to Rs 187,000 to Rao Muhammad Anwar from Bhakkar.

Additionally, Tariq Nazir from Chakwal received a farewell grant of Rs 95,750 on the directions of the ombudsman, the spokesman added.

In another development, the Workers Welfare Board disbursed a death grant of Rs 6 lakh to a complainant, Saima Razaq, after the ombudsman office got involved. Furthermore, the ombudsman office successfully ensured the release of petrol bills worth Rs 130,010 for a local petrol station in Narowal, the spokesman added. Also, the office's intervention led to the availability of clean drinking water from the newly installed tube-well in the Jinnah Park locality of Rahim Yar Khan, benefiting the local population.



SWAT: President Pakistan Muslim League-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engineer Amir Muqam addressing a large rally.

# Sindh government distribute ownership rights certificates

### F.P. Report

SHIKARPUR: The Sindh government organized a ceremony to distribute ownership rights certificates of house plots to the flood victims of last year in Shikarpur.

The Sindh government conducted a survey of 2.1 million houses in the whole Sindh, for which a package of six hundred billion rupees has been given by the Sindh Government: Provincial Minister for Energy Intiaz Ahmed Sheikh.

In Shikarpur, the government of Sindh has allocated twenty six billion for the construction of ninety thousand houses in Shikarpur. By the end of this year, twenty four thousand flood victims will be given certificates of house plots: Deputy Commissioner Shikarpur Abrar Jafar.

The event was addressed by District Chairman Zulfiqar Khan Kumario, PPP leader Babul Khan Bhayo, Srsr Chairman Muhammad Dittal Kalhoro and others. According to the details, a ceremony was held in Shikarpur by the Sindh government to distribute ownership rights certificates of plots for the construction of houses among the flood victims of last year. Addressing the event, Provincial Minister for Energy Intiaz Ahmad Shaikh said that last year's rains brought a lot of trouble to the people in which fifteen million people were affected in Sindh. Despite that, the government of Sindh reached out to everyone and rescued



them and provided them with food, rations and treatment facilities.

He said that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari appointed him in charge of the Larkana Relief Committee and he visited the entire Larkana Division with Chairman Bilawal Bhutto, who met thousands of people sitting on the roads and comforted them.

The provincial minister said that for the solution of this suffering of the people, the chairman held conferences from Karachi to Geneva and brought the UN Secretary General to Pakistan and arranged a large amount of money to provide relief to the people.

He said that a survey of 2.1 million houses has been conducted in Sindh, for which the Sindh government has allocated 600 billion only for the construction of houses and the construction process has been started. Addressing the event, Deputy Commissioner of Shikarpur Abrar Jafar said that the past rains have witnessed the hardships and sufferings of the people, in which four

hundred and thirty six millimeters of rain fell till August 22, due to which there was three to four feet of stagnant water in the cities and agricultural lands.

One hundred and thirteen people died and one hundred and fifty-three thousand acres of agricultural crops were destroyed. Four Lac people were affected, one hundredj and forty-one relief camps were established in which thirty-eight thousand people stayed.

In this situation, sixty thousand ration bags were delivered in time, food was delivered to the camps, water was drawn from the district, compensation was given to the dead and injured, money was distributed to the farmers in the form of seeds and fertilizers, and now for the construction of ninety thousand houses. We have completed the survey and today we are distributing the plot certificates for the ownership rights of the houses.

About 24 thousand people will be given ownership certificates by the end of this year. Addressing the ceremony, Shikarpur dis-

trict council chairman Zulfiqar Khan Kumario, PPP leader Babul Khan Bhayo said that they have helped the people in cooperation with the district administration. They sent ration bags and today under Shaheed Rani Benazeer Bhutto's idea, certificates have been issued for women to become house owners. Addressing the ceremony, local women Mahnaz Mahar, Naseem Khoso and Aman Sachan said that we are grateful to Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari who gave us these certificates of owner rights. The houses are under construction. They said that the PPP government has done great things for women, so they will fight hard and elect Chairman Bilawal Bhutto as the Prime Minister. Srsr CEO Mohammad Dittel Kalhoro also addressed the event.

At the end of the event, provincial energy minister Intiaz Ahmad Shaikh, chairman of the district council Zulfiqar Khan Kumario, PPP leader Babul Khan Bhayo distributed ownership certificates of plots among the thirty affected women and men. Among the recipients of owner certificates were Qaima Khatoon, Mehtab Khatoon, Hadi Baksh, Sufi Muhammad Usman, Imran Ali, Suhail Ahmed, Khuda Baksh, Sonia Khatoon, Shahzia Khatoon, Shabana Khatoon Hakima Khatoon, Hasina Khatoon, Rukhsana Khatoon, Musmat Irshad, Musmat Bilqis and others were included.

## Punjab health sector needs major boost- more budget, more facilities

LAHORE (APP): Heath and Education are among the basic pillars of a society used to gauge how much a government is concerned about the welfare of the masses and the future of generations which is why most of democracies prioritize these areas by spending a decent amount of their GDPs.

Unfortunately, Pakistan is lacking behind both sectors with meager resources and fast-growing population.

Punjab being the most populous province of the country with more than 127.4 million population only has a total of 90 tehsil-level (THQs), 34 district-level (DHQs) and 23 teaching hospitals besides a number of basic health units and dispensaries.

Medical experts believe that hospitals across the province are facing a dire shortage of essential medical supplies, staff, and equipment. As a result of this shortage, the healthcare sector is overburdened and compromised as far as the provision of healthcare facilities is concerned.

According to a report published by the Punjab government, "About 542 beds are available for every one million patients at four major medical facilities operating under the provincial administration. Due to the shortage of beds, sometimes two patients are allotted a single bed in the public sector hospitals, as these health facilities are unable to refuse any patient admission who approaches them."

When APP asked Dr Tariq Shaheen, an assistant professor at Jinnah Hospital Lahore, about the reason for hospitals being overburdened, he said a large number of patients contact doctors when the first phase of their disease had already passed and the patient's condition had deteriorated to the extent that they needed treatment for a longer period of time. He urged citizens to contact a doctor at an early stage of any disease so that

complications could be reduced and treatment could be provided to them as outdoor patients.

Several patients complained about delays in treatment, especially in those cases which required surgery.

"I came to the Mayo Hospital Lahore for gallstone treatment, but doctors are just giving me medicines, instead of conducting an operation," a patient Abdul Aziz from Renala Khurd complained.

According to the Department of Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare sources, "About 4000-5000 patients come to government hospitals and clinics every day, but their capacity to cater to them is limited." Dr Izhar Chaudhry, a representative of doctors, said the population growth rate for the past 12 years was a whopping 25 percent, but the hospital network had been expanded by only 18 percent.

In such a situation, where lesser healthcare facilities had been established, it was unable to provide facilities to patients, he added.

Justifying the delay in the treatment of patients, the medical representative argued that hospitals were not receiving adequate funds from the government. "All doctors would want to serve their patients dutifully, but lack of funds means that there has been a shortage of medicines and other paraphernalia, resulting in an unwarranted burden on the healthcare system," said Dr Salman Kazmi, General Secretary Pakistan Young Doctors Association.

Due to the shortage of essential medical supplies, medicine, and equipment, the government hospitals were unable to provide quality health treatment, the doctor added. However, the incumbent caretaker provincial government claimed, "It is focusing on providing the best healthcare facilities at public sector hospitals."

The caretaker provincial government has formed two different

departments to overcome difficulties and reduce the burden on the health sector. The Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department are responsible for health management, epidemic control, government health policies implementation, data compilation, procurement and provision of medicines in hospitals, and administrative matters of the Health Department.

The Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Department is responsible for medical professionals' qualification, procurement of essential goods for hospitals and medical colleges, registration of medical staff, medical education and institutions, nursing matters, Medical and Dental Council Ordinance, and several other related matters.

The Punjab government has recently allowed social security hospitals to provide healthcare facilities to common citizens so that the burden on the public sector hospitals could be reduced.

Twenty-two more social security hospitals would be established in the province in the near future. Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi, in a meeting, said hospitals would be shifted from old buildings to new ones.

Biomedical machines, medical equipment, and other facilities would also be provided in major hospitals, he promised.

Moreover, 60 basic standard medicines would be provided in seven major teaching hospitals of Punjab, while 25 essential medicines would be provided in all cardiology hospitals.

"With the fast-growing population of the country, there is a need to spend plenty more on the healthcare sector and these facilities should reach out to rural areas as well where there is a severe dearth of doctors and hospitals which ultimately put the burden on health facilities in major cities," he added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb addressing a press conference.





# Governor condemns Bajaur blast — directs for copter service

PESHAWAR, (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali on Sunday expresses deep sorrow and heartfelt sympathy with the grieving families over the loss of innocent precious lives in the Bajaur explosion and directed for helicopter facility.

In this moment of grief, Haji Ghulam Ali stands united with the affected families. The Governor has instructed the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Bajaur to ensure immediate medical aid for the injured.

He firmly oppose granting permission to anyone from any religion to shed the blood of innocent humans. Haji Ghulam Ali considered those who spill the blood of innocent people as enemies of humanity.

Governor prayed for the elevation of the martyrs of the Bajaur explosion and the speedy recovery of the injured.

In compliance with the Governor's orders, a helicopter has been sent to Bajaur to transfer the injured from the explosion to hospitals in Peshawar.

Immediate contact has been made with the Chief Secretary.

All hospitals, including Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar, have been placed on high alert to handle the situation.

Instructions have been given to ensure the availability of all medical assistance for the injured from the Bajaur blast in Lady Reading Hospital and other medical facilities.

Haji Ghulam Ali emphasizes the need for alertness among medical staff and the provision of full medical support to the wounded from the Bajaur explosion.

**Minister Information condemns Bajaur blast**

Caretaker Minister for Information Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel

on Sunday strongly condemns the deadly blast at JUIF political gathering in Bajaur.

The explosion has resulted in the loss of over 35 lives and left around 200 injured, said Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel.

The provincial minister expressed profound grief and sorrow sympathies with the bereaved families of the deceased in the blast.

The Chief Minister has ordered an immediate investigation into the incident to ascertain the cause and hold those responsible accountable, said Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel.

He said that the injured have been shifted to hospitals for medical treatment and emergency has been declared in nearby districts' hospitals to handle the increasing number of casualties. The provincial government remains steadfast in its determination to eliminate terrorism from the region, Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel added.

**Taj Muhammad Afridi condemns Bajaur Blast, directs authority for relief works**

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial caretaker minister for Relief and Rehabilitation Taj Muhammad Afridi expressed deep grief and sorrow over the Bajaur blast on Sunday.

He said that the relief efforts are underway.

He said that authorities of the relief department have been directed to take necessary actions. The provincial minister vowed to tackle the malevolent elements and enemies of peace with utmost severity.

He said that the people would not be left alone in this difficult hour and said that rescue teams are actively engaged in emergency operations at the scene.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali with others offering dua after settlement between families of former judge Aftab Afridi and late Latif Afridi Advocate.

## CTD arrested one alleged terrorist

PESHAWAR (APP): The Counter Terrorism Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sunday arrested one wanted terrorist here, an official told media men here.

According to details, he said the CTD officials conducted an operation on the information received and succeeded in arresting one extortion terrorist, belonging from Afghanistan. The alleged terrorist Bahram is the main group member.

CTD was also wanted in a hand grenade attack including terrorist extortion, the official of the CTD said here. CTD arrested the terrorist from Badhabar Police Station area, the official disclosed.

## Police foil terrorist attack

PESHAWAR (NP): Police on Sunday night foiled a terror attack check post in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

As per details, the terrorists attacked the check post in Bara Spin Qubur in the limits of Khyber police station. The terrorists opened fire and hurled hand grenades. The timely response of police and the FC personnel forced the terrorists to flee the scene.

Following the incident, security has been beefed up after the attack in the area.

Earlier, the police foiled a terror attack on law enforcers at Gomal Bazar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Tank city.

According to details, some police officials in KP's Tank came under a gun attack by a group of heavily armed terrorists. However, police claimed that the attack had been foiled by responding befittingly.

## Police registered FIR

PESHAWAR (APP): The Police have registered an FIR against Gulab Khan, a resident of Bajaur, and arrested him for spreading fake news of a foreign woman on social media.

The arrested person posted on social media as a joke about his friend that a British couple has reached Tali Salarzai to meet her lover, Police said.

The police arrived to provide security to the foreign girl but there was no truth in the news and as a result of fake news posted on social media, the Police took action by registering an FIR and arrested Gulab.

# Mayor appreciates peacefully ends of Muharram

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali Sunday appreciated all the institutions who worked day and night and with dedication for a peaceful Muharram.

I thank Allah Almighty that Muharram-ul-Haram has passed peacefully and I pay tribute to all institutions for celebrating Muharram with peace and unity. Mayor of Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali said that he is thankful to Allah Almighty that Muharram-ul-Haram has passed well and the officers of Capital

Metropolitan, including the Director of Capital Metropolitan Syed Waqqas, for passing Muharram in Peshawar with peace and unity.

Ali Shah, Director East Rehman Khattak, Director West Riaz Awan, Focal Person Engineer Muhammad Riaz Khan, Other Officers, Police, District Administration Officers, WWSPP, Rescue 1122, WAPDA, Pesco Civil, Traders, Civil Society and other agencies. I would like to pay tribute to those who, for the ten days of Muharram, all people

played their role and performed their duties day and night, showing proof of responsibility, due to which Muharram passed smoothly and no untoward incident occurred.

All the institutions have worked diligently and no complaints have been received, for which I thank them from the bottom of my heart and pay tribute to them. "I am grateful for the support of the government and I hope that in the future all issues will be dealt with in the same way with unity."

# Hyderi condemns explosion in JUF-F rally

PESHAWAR (APP): Jamiat Ulema Islam Central Secretary General Senator Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri Sunday strongly condemned the explosion in Jamiat Ulema Islam rally.

This he said in a media release issued by JUI-F Media Cell, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidari said that under a well-thought-out plan, the conditions of the country are being made

worse. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam is a peaceful party, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri added.

"We have always adopted the path of peaceful political struggle and were shocked by the news of martyred workers in the explosion," Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidari. Party workers are our valuable ideological asset, he said. Maulana Abdul Ghafoor

Haideri prayed to Almighty Allah for the speedy recovery of the injured.

Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri said that volunteers of Ansar Islam immediately reached the hospital to donate blood while relief activities at the site of the blast continued.

Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidari also confirmed that the death toll might be increased.

# Negative propaganda against PTI making it more popular

PESHAWAR (INP): PTI leader Asad Qaiser has claimed that one-sided and negative propaganda against his party is making it more popular.

In a video message, Qaiser called for an end to what he called ongoing 'propaganda' against his party. He also urged the 'powerful elements' to ensure the upcoming general elections free and fair.

Qaiser, unlike other party leaders, did not part ways with PTI in the aftermath of the May 9 violence, said, "The one-sided propaganda underway against the party and PTI chief at this time, what do those in power and the PDM (Pakistan Democratic Movement) group think? Do they think they can eliminate the PTI through such propaganda?"

He said they (rulers) were in misconception and

more negative propaganda would make the PTI more popular.

Qaiser also lambasted present ruling coalition government for their performance and questioned what they had done to arrest the sky-high inflation and improve governance during their tenure.

"Show us one sector in which we can say the PDM has shown [good] performance. These 14 months were the worst disaster that is why I want to say to the powerful sectors to ensure fair and free elections within constitutional provisions to save it from any harm."

He claimed the PTI was being deprived of its constitutional right to freedom of expression and political activity within the law.

He stressed the rule of law was important if the country's rulers wanted it to progress.

# Man held for posting fake news on social media

PESHAWAR (INP): Police in Peshawar arrested a man on Sunday for spreading fake news of a foreign woman on social media.

The arrested man, Muhammad Gulab Khan, hails from Bajore district. He had posted on social media that a British lady had reached Tali Salarzai to meet her lover.

The police arrived to provide security to the foreign girl, but there was no truth to the news. As a result of the fake news posted on social media, the police registered an FIR against Khan and arrested him.

Khan told the police that he had posted the news as a joke about his friend. He said that he did not mean to cause any harm or panic. The police have warned people against spreading fake news on social media. They said that such actions can have serious consequences.

# Local Govt Department, NADRA ink MoU for citizen facilitation

PESHAWAR, (APP): Local Government Department and National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) signed Memorandum of Understanding for citizen facilitation of people in the province.

A ceremony was held in the Directorate General LG&RDD, Hayatabad Peshawar, said a hand out issued here on Sunday.

The Minister for Local Government, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sawal Nazeer presided over the ceremony. Secretary Local Government Amer Afaq, Director General Local Government Ifitikhar Alam, Director

General CRMS NADRA HQ Islamabad Col. Retd. Sohail Mehmood and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

The Minister Local Government appreciated the partnership between NADRA and Local Government Department and expressed the hope that "the MoU will facilitate the common citizens of the province to get easy access to birth certificates."

Both NADRA and Local Government would work together to address the remaining issues and hindrances in the smooth service delivery in death and birth registration, especially to the people of remote districts and newly merged areas he said.

He said that service Fee deposit process for birth and death certificates also needs to be computerized for accountability and transparency.

He also suggested to the NADRA team that the domicile-making process may also be computerized to ensure facilitation to the citizens in accordance with the relevant legal regime if possible.

He also emphasized the need to revise the existing rules, particularly the provision related to the condition of requirement of court decree in certain time-barred cases as this is creating difficulty for the citizens.

The Secretary Local Government, thanked the NADRA team for their hard work and suggested that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be open to examine and adopt any national or international best working model to enhance the Civil Registration and Certification process in the province.

He also suggested to explore ways to integrate

birth registration system with hospitals and BHUs for real time data exchange.

The Director General CRMS, NADRA HQ Islamabad, also thanked the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for their trust and confidence and assured that they will take this partnership to new heights.

He also appreciated the cooperation being extended by the LG department to his provincial and field staff which enabled them make good progress during the last two years.

At this occasion the MOU was signed by the head of the delegations from NADRA and Local Government and Rural Development Department, for a period of 2 years to ensure that the joint services, being provided to the citizens through Village and Neighbourhood Councils continue uninterrupted.

## Skyrocketing prices of vegetables, fruits in KP

PESHAWAR (INP): The citizens of the provincial metropolis are worried about the everyday increase in the prices of vegetables and fruits in the local markets and the officials of the price control have so far failed to compel the shopkeepers to sell their food items on controlled rates issued by the administration.

However, some occasional visits by the officials of the price control were witnessed but overall it failed to control the rates.

The price of ginger touched an all-time high of Rs1100 per kg, garlic Rs380, and lemon 160 per kg remained unchanged.

The price of the onion 60, tomato 130, green pepper 80, okra 80 and curry 40 rupees per kg and Potato 120, Kachalu 110, Cauliflower 160, Eggplant 90, Zucchini 130, Tenda Rs. 100 are being sold.

The prices of the fruits, Apple reached Rs350, mango and potato Rs230 per kg and Peach 200, persimmon 230 and banana 170 rupees per dozen sold.

The price of chicken per kg has increased once again. The price of live chicken in the market will reach 405 rupees per kg.

# PPP govt believes in protecting rights of minorities: Bacha

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government believes in protecting the rights of minorities, Provincial President of the Pakistan People Party Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said here Sunday.

Talking to a group of delegation, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said that the organization of the PPP minority wing in the whole province will be completed soon. PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha also met with party officials under the leadership of Pakistan People's Party Minority Wing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President Naseeb Chan and assured them their rights would be protected at any cost.

The officials of the Minority Wing presented

the organizational report. Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha directed the officials of the minority wing to complete the organization in all the districts and to play a role in the party activities.

Naseeb Chan, President of People's Party (PPP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minority Wing, presented the organizational report to Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha and clarified the strategy regarding the performance of the officials in preparation for the elections. Believing in the protection of rights and in this regard no negligence and carelessness will be tolerated.

In a meeting with President of Pakistan People's Party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minority Wing Naseeb Chan, Syed Muhammad Ali Shah

Bacha assured him that PPP has always solved the problems of the minority community on priority basis and the leadership of Pakistan People's Party will take concrete steps to protect the minority community.

In the meeting, Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha instructed the President of the Minority Wing, Naseeb Chan, that the organization of the Pakistan People's Party Minority Wing throughout the province should be completed as soon as possible.

He said that Pakistan People's Party is the only party that includes people of all religions and languages. Those who dreamed of ending the Pakistan People's Party have ended themselves, but the Pakistan People's Party is still alive today.

# Showcasing Kumrat Valley's magnificence through digital media imperative to bolster tourism

PESHAWAR (APP): The hide and seek between clouds and the sun with moderate to erratic rainfall and sometimes snowfall over the snow-capped mountain peaks of Kumrat Valley mesmerize adventure sports enthusiasts and eco-tourists who come to this part of the country from plains to take some respite of the scorching heat in summer.

There are many hidden jewels in Pakistan which are yet to be explored – be they natural sites or minerals- and Kumrat Valley is one of them which was explored few years back and now has become one of the favorite destinations for many national and international tourists due to its untouched beauty.

Known for breathtaking natural beauty, deodar forests and magnificent waterfalls, Kumrat Valley's beauty is still not fully discovered by the tourists who fell into the lap of serenity once they reach the valley.

Located some 45 kilometers of the Thall town on the bank of River Punjkora mostly originated from Dir, Kohistan and Swat's snow-capped mountain peaks of over 81,000 feet sea level, Kumrat Valley's hotels and makeshift inns are packed with tourists these days with many witnessed living in tents to enjoy its pleasant weather.

Impressed by its deodar forest, snowfall and waterfalls, Shahryar Khan, an architect from Peshawar told APP that Kumrat

Valley's black Cheshma (waterfall), brown trout fish and cool breeze originating from snow-clad mountains of Gabral Kohistan, Dir and Swat impressed him the most. Enjoying "Dil Dil Pakistan" song with his family on mobile phone while preparing tea on stove and children playing football around him, he said deodar trees add charm to the valley and their cutting must be stopped by providing gas facilities to local people.

He while urging the provincial government to regulate hotel room charges for the facilitation of tourists said hoteliers were charging people heavily due to lack of camping pods and rest houses.

Unnerved by the poor

condition of Pathrak-Thall Bazaar, Shahryar said roads leading to Kumrat were needed to be repaired immediate so that tourism could be promoted further here as better road infrastructure would bring more people to the valley which would mean more income generation and uplift in the well-beings of the locals.

Dr Muhammad Naeem Khan, former Chairman, Economics Department University of Peshawar, said tourism was a big source of bringing direct foreign investment.

He claimed that China had earned about USD 814.1 billion from tourism and travel industry in 2022, Malaysia's 13.13 billion ringgit and Indonesia's tourism share was 413.73

trillion rupiah in 2021.

Despite enormous tourism potential and home to Ghandhara and Indus Civilizations together with five mountain peaks of over 8,000 meter height, he said Pakistan was unable to earn much from tourism and there was a need to promote the country's splendid sites enriched with enormous beauty by using digital technology.

"Today was the age of digital media and Kumrat valley's beauty needs to be showcased properly through digital technology, documentaries and films abroad to attract foreign tourists inevitable to bolster rural economy," he emphasized.

He said these hidden treasures requires to be pro-

jected through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other digital media tools with small videos to take the country out of existing challenges.

Dr Naeem said tourism in Pakistan especially in Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would grow after completion of CPEC projects and time has come to increase linkages between Pakistani and foreign tourist companies for the promotion of tourism and generation of employment.

He said Swat was going to become a hub of international and domestic tourism due to its unique features of snowfall, watersports, adventure tourism, skiing and trout fish, adding more facilities at Kumrat valley

would reduce tourists' load on Kalam and Malam Jabba.

Omair Khattak, General Manager Investment, Tourism Authority Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said Kumrat Valley and Madaklasht would become a hub of tourism and adventure sports after construction of a cable car between these scenic valleys of Dir Upper and Chitral Lower.

He said the proposed Kumrat-Madaklasht cable car would be constructed with an estimated cost of USD 200 million with assistance of the World Bank.

"The 14 to 16 kilometer long cable car would have 5,280 meter height with facilities of a base station at Kumrat, intermediate stop

stations and car parking plazas for 500 vehicles," he said, adding base station hotels, mosques, hydro plants, walking tracks and final station at Madaklasht would also be built under the project.

Khattak said the feasibility study of the mega project had been started and the project would be completed in seven to eight years.

Besides development of infrastructure and construction of access roads, he said additional aspects such as waste management would also be evaluated.

The cable car project on completion would attract an estimated 1.2 million domestic and international tourists annually to Malakand division giving a real boost to the tourism KP.





## In brief

### Youth held for killing father

**SARGODHA (INP):** Police on Sunday arrested an 18-year-old man for killing his father in Chak Musa, Hayat Colony, situated in the jurisdiction of Jhawarian police station. According to the police, the deceased was identified as Muhammad Hayat, 59, while the accused was identified as his son, Saqib Hayat. According to police, the accused shot his father dead with a gun when he was alone with him in their house. To hide his crime, he got registered a murder case against his opponents, Tahir, son of Mehmood, and others. However, the police came to know during the initial investigation that the teenager was the killer of his father. The accused also confessed to his crime and admitted that he had killed his father on some domestic issue. The DPO Sargodha appreciated Jhawarian police for arresting the real killer.

### DC inspects facilities

**SIALKOT (APP):** Deputy Commissioner Adnan Mehmood Awan visited Allama Iqbal Memorial Teaching Hospital (AIMTH) late at Saturday night and inspected the facilities being provided to patients in different wards. He inquired about the health of patients and listened to their complaints. The DC reviewed cleanliness situation in hospital and also got information about available medicines and medical equipment. He said that providing the best healthcare facilities to citizens was top priority of the Punjab government. He directed the doctors and medical staff to perform their duties in an active manner.

### Youngster shot dead

**MULTAN (APP):** A youngster was shot dead over a minor dispute near Care Family Hospital Qasim Bela here on Sunday. According to Rescue 1122 sources, a youngster namely Danial s/o Akbar resident of Qasim Bela was playing snooker. All of a sudden, his opponent player shot him dead after an exchange of hot arguments. The rescue officials reached the spot and shifted the body to a nearby hospital, however, police concerned have also started investigations into the incident, police sources said.

### Rescue 1122 provides aid

**D.I.KHAN (APP):** The district emergency service Rescue 1122 provided first aid to 3414 mourners and shifted 60 patients to the hospital during processions and 'majalis' on Ashura. According to spokesman Izaz Mehmood, Rescue 1122 has set up a medical camp at Imamia Gate to provide services to the mourners in addition to the deployment of five fire vehicles, one fire bike and five medical bikes teams who were patrolling procession routes and other areas to provide instant first medical aid to mourners. Under the leadership of District Emergency Officer Awaiz Babar in line with directives of Director General Rescue 1122 Dr Khatir Ahmed, more than 200 rescuers were deployed and performed their duties. He said the rescuers also visited tehsils of the district, including Tehsil Dera, Tehsil Paharpur, Tehsil Kulachi and Tehsil Prova and they provided instant services to people there. He said in line with the rescue 1122 Muharram plan, more than 17 ambulances and medical teams continued to perform their services at various locations throughout the district.

# 'PMLN's plitics revolves around welfare of masses'

**SHANGLA (APP):** Adviser to the Prime Minister, Engr Amir Muqam has said that politics of Pakistan Muslim League-N was revolving around welfare of masses and development of Pakistan.

Addressing a big public gathering here at Dandai area after inauguration of various projects including Kabalgram bridge, Engr Amir Muqam said Hazara Motorway constructed by the Nawaz Sharif Govt have brought positive changes in lives of people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa especially of Hazara division.

He said the distance between Shangla and Islamabad has been significantly reduced after construction of Hazara Motorway that promoted trade, business and tourism in Hazara in particular and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general.

Engr Amir Muqam, who is also the President of Pakistan Muslim League N KP, said that his party vision was uniformed development of Pakistan, people socioeconomic welfare and resolution of problems at their doorsteps.

The Prime Minister aide said that Besham-Khwazakheela Expressway was cleared by Central Development Working Party and approved by ECNEC that would be completed with an estimated cost of Rs80 billion.

Upon its construction, he said the distance between Shangla, Swat, Dir, Mardan and Peshawar districts would be reduced significantly besides making the entire Malakand Division a hub of trade and invest-

ment.

He said the coalition government has saved the country from economic default and bring the economy back on track.

He said the previous government have destroyed the country's economy and tried to politically destabilize the country.

Engr Amir Muqam said that May 9 vandalism hse exposed the negative designs of a leader, who deceived people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the name of change.

Amir Muqam said that all the ill designs of the previous ruler that deceived people of KP on the name change for 9 years and tried to make the country bankrupt, has been foiled by the coalition government.

He said that saving the country from bankruptcy and economic default after agreement with IMF was a big achievement of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and his financial team.

Engr Amir Muqam said that PMLN leadership had stood with people of Khyber in all difficult circumstances whether it was 2005 earthquake, 2010 and 2022 floods and terrorism and addressed their problems.

He said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had visited all flood hit areas of KP last year including Swat and Kohistan and disbursed billions of rupees among floods victims.

Engr Amir Muqam said that despite several attacks on his life, he stood with people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and raised their problems at all

forums.

He said that PMLN after coming into power would continue development projects and address peoples problems at their doorsteps.

On this occasion, eminent political workers including Nazeerzada, Zayad Khan, Subhanullah, Sher Dil, Shamsur Rehman and others resigned from others political parties and joined PMLN.

They expressed full confidence in the leadership of Engr Amir Muqam and vowed to utalize all their energies for strengthening of the party.

Amir Muqam welcomed the new entrants in the party fold and assured full support to them.

**10 members delegation of all primary teachers association KP calls on Amir Muqam**

A ten members representative delegation of all primary teachers association KP led by its Provincial President, Azizullah Khan called on Adviser to Prime Minister Engr Amir Muqam at his residence at Malam Jabba here on Sunday.

The delegation raised different problems of the teachers and requested for issuance of an upgradation of all teachers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Azizullah said that promotion of teachers were pending for long and urged the PM aide to help in resolution of their long awaited issue.

The Prime Minister aide assured to support the teachers in resolution of their genuine problems.

The delegation thanked the Prime Minister's adviser for his support.

## DG Agri KP visits Malakand Agri Extension



**MALAKAND (APP):** The Director General Agriculture Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Jan Muhammad Khan visited Malakand Division and especially Swat Tehsil Barikot. Agriculture Extension Office on this occasion he along with Agriculture Officer Jawad Ali also inspected various peach orchards in Swat and free of charge from the Department of Agriculture.

The fruit fly traps pro-

vided were also reviewed. Director General Jan Muhammad also met the owners of different orchards on this occasion and informed them about the importance of free fruit fly traps and said that these traps provide protection against fruit flies for ten years which will end the wastage of fruits and vegetables and increase the economic prosperity of the farmers.

Director General Jan

Muhammad directed the Agriculture Officer Jawad Ali to solve the problems of the farmers at their doorsteps.

Appreciated Jan Muhammad's campaign to connect farmers.

On this occasion, farmers, landlords and gardeners thanked the Department of Agriculture and Director General Jan Muhammad and his staff and appreciated the project of fruit fly traps.

## Sub Inspector suspended over absence from duty

**FAISALABAD (INP):** A police sub-inspector (SI) was suspended on Sunday for his absence from security duty on the route of a mourning procession.

According to police official, the SI, Rana Shehzad Ahmad, was performing duties as the investigation officer in Mamon Kanjan police station. He was deployed at the route of the mourning procession for security duty, but he remained absent without any information to the department concerned.

SP Sadar Shamsul Haq Durrani suspended the SI and appointed SI Hajji Sakhawat as investigation officer to Mamon Kanjan police station. The suspension of the SI comes as a strong message to the police force that there will be no tolerance for negligence on duty. The police are responsible for the security of the people, and they must be held accountable if they fail to do their job.

**Dacoit gangs busted, nine arrested**

Police in Faisalabad on

Sunday busted three dacoit gangs and arrested nine of their active members.

According to the media reports, the police recovered six motorcycles, cash, illegal weapons, and other items from the possession of the arrested suspects.

The first raid was conducted by the Sadar police in Chak No 228-RB, where four active members of a gang were arrested. They were identified as Mehran Ali, Mohsan, etc. The police also recovered two stolen motorcycles, cash, mobile phones, and illegal weapons from their possession.

The Raza Abad police arrested three outlaws of a gang in Baghwali Pulli. They were identified as Muhammad Ali, Khizar Hayat, and Sharjeel. The police recovered one motorcycle, pistols, cash of Rs 50,000, mobile phones, and other items from their possession.

In the third raid, the Millat Town police nabbed two criminals of a gang in Millat Town. They were

identified as Ali Haidar and Sikandar. The police recovered five stolen motorcycles, Rs 250,000 in cash, illegal weapons, mobile phones, and other items from them.

All the accused were wanted to the police in dozens of cases of dacoity, robbery, theft, etc. The police have sent the accused behind bars and further investigation is underway.

### Teenager dies from snake-bite

**SARGODHA (INP):** A 17-year-old boy, Yousaf Iqbal, son of Muhammad Iqbal, a resident of Wadhi village situated Sahiwal police station precincts, was bitten by a snake when he was cutting grass in his fields for cattle on Sunday. The snake so poisonous that the victim died on-the-spot.

Later on, he was buried in his native village Wadhi.



**BARA:** Political activists hold placard during a protest to condemn FIR lodged against elites of Sayasi Ittehad and conducting raids at house of their leaders.

## Elders urged to cooperate for peace, prosperity

**D.I.KHAN (APP):** District Police Officer (DPO) South Waziristan Lower Farmanullah has urged elders to cooperate with police to ensure peace and prosperity in the area.

He expressed these views while talking in a meeting with leaders of the Shakai.

The DPO said that after the merger of FATA, the laws had been enforced in the area which needed to be enforced for ensuring peace and development of the region.

In this regard, he called upon the leaders of the area to join hands and cooperate with the police.

Shahkai police station SHO Israr Khan was also present on the occasion.

They assured their full cooperation to ensure peace and prosperity in the area and added they would not act against the laws.

The DPO assured that the police would always be ready at all times for all the help and welfare of the people.

He asked the dwellers to keep an eye on suspicious elements and report suspicious activity to the police immediately so that crimes could be eradicated in a timely manner.

## ATH doctors perform Laparoscopic surgery

**ABBOTTABAD (APP):** Ayub Teaching Hospital (ATH) Abbottabad in a bid to provide state-of-the-art healthcare facilities to the patients, on Sunday introduced a brand new 4K UHD laparoscopic surgery system. Laparoscopic surgery system Model Karl Storz Image IS is an advanced system, imported from Germany, has been successfully utilized in its first operation with remarkable results.

Laparoscopic surgery, also commonly known as laser operation, is a groundbreaking minimal invasive or minimal access surgery technique performed through small incisions in the abdomen.

It involves the use of long instruments and a camera system to examine the internal organs visually. The newly installed Karl Storz Image IS system offers an unprecedented 3840x2160 resolution, providing highly detailed visuals and enhancing surgical precision.

The benefits of laparoscopic surgery for patients are numerous. Unlike traditional open surgeries that require large incisions, laparoscopic procedures eliminate the need for extensive cuts to the abdomen.

As a result, patients experience faster recovery times, reduced chances of infection, early mobilization, decreased pain, and shorter hospital stays. Ayub Teaching Hospital Abbottabad is privileged to possess such a cutting-edge laparoscopic surgery system, equipped with unique specifications, making it one of the few of its kind in Pakistan.

Dr. Bahri Rome expressed gratitude for the acquisition of the laparoscopic surgery system. "With this advanced technology, our surgical team can provide unparalleled care to our patients. The high-resolution visual feed allows us to detect even the smallest details during surgeries, enhancing accuracy and improving patient outcomes."

## Bara Sayasi Ittehad flay FIRs, filed against its leaders

**Ahmad Nabi**

**BARA:** To disapprove lodging of First Information Report against local political leadership and conducting raids on their houses, a protest of *Sayasi Ittehad* (Political Alliance) Bara was held here on Sunday.

It is to be mentioned here that the district administration filed FIRs, nominated four local leaders including Khan Wali, Malik Naseer, Hussain Ahmad and Abdul Ghani speaking against the State departments in last week's peace gathering in Tirah Valley, Bagh.

Large number of protesters took the rally from Minar Mosques to Khyber Square where it was converted into

a public gathering.

Addressing on the occasion Political Alliance, Bara chief Shah Faisal Afridi, Haji Shereen Afridi of Awami National Party, representative of Khyber Union, Zahidullah, Jamat-e-Islami, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa youth wing President Shah Jehan Afridi, local leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Abid Afridi, Sadeeq Cherag Afridi and others categorically condemned the government for lodging FIR against leaders of the Sayasi Ittehad and said it was equivalent to impose ban on the basic right of expression.

The government utilized unfair means to suppress

them but they would accept any pressure and would echo their voice for restoration of peace in Khyber, they opined.

"We are not against the State or any department of the State however we want durable peace in our area," they remarked.

They demanded to forthwith withdraw FIRs filed against the local political elites who only committed crime while raising voice for peace on behalf of tribesmen.

The participants who carried banner inscribed with statements in favor of their demands, shouted slogans against the government and dispersed peacefully.

## Kundi inaugurates BISP Dynamic Survey Center

**DIR LOWER (APP):** Advocate, Ex-MPA Muhammad Zamin, Malik Barkat Khan and others spoke.

On this occasion, BISP Dynamic Survey Center was inaugurated at Talash and Blambat and Khal, Dir Lower.

Provincial President Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, Divisional President Malik Azmat Khan, District President Mahmood Zaib Khan, Former Provincial Minister Muzaffar Syed, Former Senator Ahmed Hasan Khan, Alamzeib

Advocate, Ex-MPA Muhammad Zamin, Malik Barkat Khan and others spoke.

On this occasion, BISP Dynamic Survey Center was inaugurated at Talash and Blambat and Khal, Dir Lower. The speakers claimed that the coming time belongs to PPP.

Central leader Faisal Karim Kundi while addressing the rally said that he will try for the rights of Malakand division.

He said that PTI went down as fast as it went up. He said that the country is developing rapidly.

On this occasion, he inaugurated Benazir Income Support Program Offices in Talash, Blambat and Khal. He said that the new survey of Benazir Income Support Program has been started in which the number of people receiving Benazir Income Support Program will increase from Ts. 9 million to Rs. 50 million.

## FC arranges four days free medical camps

**F.P. Report**

**CHITRAL:** Frontier Corps North is continuously focusing to provide basic health facilities to the locals living in far flung areas of Chitral. For the purpose, 41 members medical team was invited in Chitral including 6 eyes specialists, 2 gynaecologists, 1 radiologist, 6 paramedics, 17 medical students and 9 college students as volunteers to organise four days Free Medical Camps.

The medical team visited various places to provide free medical treatment to

the locals. In Chitral, a total of 187 patients were treated at Scouts Hospital Chitral. 20 Cataract Surgeries were also performed. In order to facilitate the locals, Frontier Corps North arranged free transport facility to 51 patients from Ursun, Domel, Arandu & Ramran.

On the 2nd day of the visit, In Chitral and Garam Chashma 200 Patients were checked. OPD of 300 patients were also done. 20 patients were shifted to Scouts Hospital for Surgeries from Garam Chasma. A total of 50

Surgeries were performed at Scouts Hospital Chitral. On 3rd day, the medical team visited Mastuj owing to recent floods in Upper Chitral where OPD of 312 patients were done.

In addition to OPD, 2 surgeries were also done. On the last day of the visit, the medical team visited Bamburaite where OPD of 65 patients were conducted. Locals appreciated the efforts of the Frontier Corps North for organising such important Free Medical Camps at the time when those needed the most.

## River Sutlej embankment breach floods Chishtian

**B A H A W A L N A G A R (INP):** A breach in a temporary protective embankment on the River Sutlej in Dullah Akko area of Chishtian tehsil, Bahawalnagar district, Pakistan, on Saturday caused flooding of nearby settlements.

The extra ordinary flow of water caused the breach, which disrupted the road network leading to several settlements. Floodwater entered the low-lying neighbourhoods, causing difficulties for the native residents.

Rescue teams have been deployed to the area to evacuate stranded people and provide relief. The authorities have also warned people living in low-lying areas to remain vigilant as the water levels are expected to rise further.

The breach is the latest in a series of flooding incidents in Pakistan this year. In June, heavy rains caused widespread flooding in the country, displacing hundreds of thousands of people.

The government has been criticized for its handling of the recent flooding incidents. Critics have said that the government has not done enough to build and maintain flood protection infrastructure.

The flooding has also had a significant impact on the economy. The government has estimated that the recent flooding has caused billions of rupees in damage.

In addition to the breach in the Dullah Akko embankment, the River Sutlej also overflowed at Kund Qabil in Arifwala district. The overflowing

water collided with the Norath protective embankment, weakening and cracking it.

This has raised fears that the embankment could collapse, submerging Qasba Chok Marlay and other areas.

The residents of the affected areas have expressed concern that the Norath embankment is not being adequately reinforced, despite their repeated appeals to the district administration. They have emphasized the need to strengthen the embankment expeditiously.

The full extent of the damage caused by the flooding is still not known. However, it is clear that the incidents have caused widespread disruption and hardship for the people of Bahawalnagar and Arifwala districts.





## At least nine killed in Thai fireworks warehouse blast

BANGKOK (AFP/APP): A powerful explosion ripped through a fireworks warehouse Saturday in southern Thailand, killing nine people and injuring more than 100, a senior official said, as several nearby homes were levelled or damaged.

The blast in the town of Sungai Kolok in the border province of Narathiwat is thought to have been caused by welding during construction work on the building.

"A warehouse storing firecrackers in Sungai Kolok exploded this afternoon, the latest number is nine dead and 115 injured," Narathiwat governor Sanan Pongaksorn told AFP.

"The fire is now under control. Preliminary investigation suggests the cause is a technical error during the steel welding process, as the building is under construction."

The explosion devastated a substantial area around the warehouse. Footage on local media showed a massive plume of smoke rising into the air and numerous shops, homes, and vehicles badly damaged by the force of the blast -- some ablaze and many with their roofs blown off.

Some media are putting the death toll at 10 but the figure could not be confirmed. AFP photos from the scene show the warehouse reduced to rubble and twisted metal.

The Bangkok Post cited the Ministry of Interior reporting that as many as 200 houses were damaged



by the explosion in the border town on the frontier with Malaysia. Other media had said up to 500 homes could have been damaged.

"I was playing with my phone inside the house then suddenly I heard a loud, thunderous noise and my whole house shook," eyewitness Seksan Taesen, who lives 100 metres (110 yards) away from the warehouse, told AFP.

"Then I saw my roof was wide open. I looked outside and I saw houses collapsing and people lying

on the ground everywhere. It was chaos." A video shot by Seksan showed a scene of turmoil at a local market that serves the district next to the Malaysian border, with dazed locals wandering around and emergency services rushing to help.

Broken glass, roof tiles, and other debris litter the ground. Several market stalls were shredded or otherwise heavily damaged. Explosions at workshops producing firecrackers and other pyrotechnics are not uncommon in Thailand.

## 'Scary' toll on Ukrainian children's mental health leaves its mark on Zinchenko

PARIS (AFP/APP): Arsenal defender Oleksandr Zinchenko says he only had to look into the eyes of Ukrainian children who lived under Russian occupation in a village to find the motivation to raise money to rebuild their school.

"You realise the mental injuries they will carry for the rest of their lives," he told AFP.

The 26-year-old Ukraine international went home in May for his first trip since Russia invaded in February 2022 -- "even the air smelt different," he said -- and visited the village and the school, the Mykhailo-Kotsiubynsky Lyceum in Chernihiv Oblast, northern Ukraine.

It was heavily damaged in a rocket attack on March 4 last year killing a 62-year-old female cleaner -- the death toll could have been a lot worse as there were around 100 civilians, the youngest aged two months, living in the basement.

"I was really upset, it was very hard for me morally to understand it," the school's headmaster Mykola Shpak told AFP.

"When I saw the level of destruction I understood how much work will be needed to renovate it and restart education."

The estimated cost of the rebuilding work is \$1.7 million (1.54 million euros). Zinchenko and Ukrainian football great Andriy Shevchenko, who accompanied him on the visit, played with some of the 412 pupils and chatted to them about their experiences when the Russians occupied the village from February 28 to March 31 last year.

As a result of the visit, the star pair decided with the charity United24 to organise an all-star match,

Game4Ukraine, at the Stamford Bridge home of one of Shevchenko's former clubs, Chelsea, on August 5 to raise funds for the school.

The charity was launched by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to collect donations to cover Ukraine's most pressing needs, among them rebuilding the country which has been devastated since Vladimir Putin launched the invasion.

"Around 800 schools have been damaged by the Russians, more than 200 of them we are not able to rebuild," Zinchenko told AFP earlier this month.

"This school was important because 10 villages are using it."

It was, though, not just that which left such a mark on Zinchenko but listening to the children and their accounts of life under Russian occupation.

"A few were telling us about the Russian army in their houses, you look in their eyes and you realise the mental injuries they will suffer from for the rest of their lives."

"That is a scary thing." Neither Zinchenko nor Shevchenko have a personal connection with the school - "I changed schools three times" explains Zinchenko with a wry smile -- which makes it even more touching for Shpak, the headmaster.

"I feel what a person can feel when he receives hope," he said.

"And of course this hope is great when it is initiated by such people as those two."

"I was filled with even more hope when they played football with our boys and girls on the field which was destroyed by missiles."

Shpak speaks with the emotion of someone with deep ties to the school

-- his parents were both teachers there and after studying he returned as a geography teacher in 1993 and became head in 2015.

Although he would go home at night, he ensured the 100 or so people housed in the basement were fed -- visits from the Russians were for him mercifully few.

"They only entered the school after the shelling of our district, I cannot say why they came to the school. I think they wanted to see the results of what they did," he said.

"We had prepared food for our children, about 30 pieces of bread. But after their visit we could not find it as they had taken it."

Shpak -- who has two grown up sons -- feels enormous loss at the former pupils who have died in the war.

"There are a lot of children who graduated from this school who I will never see again and that is terrible," he said.

Zinchenko has not lost any close friends but says he "will never understand" the invasion.

"When one has been born and raised on land where you know every single stone and tree and then one day someone comes from another place and they can do what they want, they can kill women, men and children and destroy everything around, in the 2020s, it is absolutely incredible."

Zinchenko -- whose wife Vlada is expecting their second child -- is pleased he did not take up arms but is doing his bit for his country in a field he knows better.

"I hope if my children ask me 'Daddy what did you do in that time, how did you help?', I will be able to look them in their eyes and reply I was doing my best."

## Colombian president's son arrested on money laundering charges

BOGOTÁ (AFP/APP): Colombian President Gustavo Petro's son Nicolas was arrested Saturday on charges of money laundering and illicit enrichment in a scandal linked to Petro's election campaign, officials said.

Colombia's first leftist president wrote on Twitter, which is being rebranded as X, that police arrested his son and the son's ex-wife Daysuris Vasquez.

Security agents arrested Nicolas Petro, 37, and Vasquez in the coastal city of Barranquilla and brought them to the capital Bogota, where prosecutors said they were secured under heavy guard at a bunker awaiting a court hearing.

In March, in an interview with the magazine Semana, Vasquez alleged that Nicolas Petro received large amounts of money from drug traffickers and smugglers in 2022 for his father's ultimately success-

ful presidential campaign.

But instead, the younger Petro used it to live in luxury in Barranquilla, Vasquez alleged. Petro wrote: "I wish my son luck and strength. May these events build his character and may he reflect on his mistakes."

"As a person and father it hurts to see so much self-destruction," he added, and vowed to stay out of the legal proceedings involving his son. Prosecutors confirmed the arrest of Nicolas Petro on charges of money laundering and illicit enrichment. Vasquez was also charged with money laundering. Since the scandal broke, President Petro has denied receiving money from the country's powerful cocaine lords. He himself asked that his son be investigated. Nicolas Petro was born in the 1980s while his father was in the Marxist M-19 urban guerilla insurgency, one of several armed groups fighting the lock on

power by traditional political parties.

The father recently said he was absent from his son's life due to the civil war, unlike with his five younger children raised after a peace accord with the M-19 movement was signed in 1990.

Nicolas Petro was a lawmaker for his father's party in the Northern Atlantic department. News outlets published bank records of his showing he had far more assets than his salary from Congress justified.

In that department and elsewhere along Colombia's Caribbean coast, the younger Petro became a key player in his father's drive to become president.

People in the country's Caribbean region have historically been wary of leftist politicians, but in 2022 they supported Petro as the country elected him as its first leftist president after

decades of rule by conservatives.

Vasquez said in the March interview with Semana that her former husband received the equivalent of \$124,000 from a former drug trafficker named Samuel Santander Lopesierra.

She said President Petro was not aware of the money Nicolas Petro got from the convicted trafficker.

Santander Lopesierra served 18 years in prison in the United States for drug trafficking. In another scandal, involving illegal wiretaps, former Colombian ambassador to Venezuela Armando Benedetti threatened to reveal what he said were irregularities in the Petro campaign in the Caribbean region. In leaked conversations with the president's ex-chief of staff, Benedetti suggested Nicolas Petro was involved in these irregularities.

## Greek ecosystems face increasing fire risk, experts say

ATHENS (AFP/APP): Two weeks of sweltering heat and wildfires have confirmed fears that Greece's ecosystem is under increasing risk, experts say.

Some 50,000 hectares (123,500 acres) of forest and vegetation have been left scorched, according to estimates by the National Observatory of Athens.

This makes the month of

July the worst in 13 years in terms of burned land, said Charalampos Kontoes, a research director at the observatory.

"It was a dry winter, and spring rains were not enough to maintain" moisture in the soil, Kontoes told AFP. Civil protection minister Vassilis Kikilias this week said crews had bat-

tled more than 660 blazes this month, an average of 50 to 70 fires a day.

Businesses and farms on the tourist islands of Corfu and Rhodes, Greece's second-largest island of Evia and the countryside near Volos, central Greece, bore the brunt of the damage this year.

The Greek state association insuring farmers,

ELGA, estimates that 50,000 olive trees and 2,500 animals and beehives have been destroyed on Rhodes.

In the Volos area, the organisation said it had found "significant losses" in harvested grain and grapes, in addition to farm machinery and buildings.

Major losses in livestock have also hit, it added.

## UNSC slams 'efforts to unconstitutionally change' Niger's government

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The U.N. Security Council members have called for the immediate and unconditional release of Niger's democratically-elected President, Mohammed Bazoum, and underscored the need to protect him, his family and members of his Government.

In a press statement, they strongly condemned the efforts to unconstitutionally change the legitimate government of the Republic of Niger on July 26. Earlier this week, the demand to release the

President of Niger was voiced by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Late on Wednesday, a group of Niger's military officers made a television announcement declaring a coup, after members of the president's own guard detained him inside his offices in the capital city of Niamey. According to news reports, "The attempted coup did not have the backing of the entire military, but the head of the army announced that he supported the move."

In their statement, the Security Council members

expressed concern over the negative impact of unconstitutional changes of government in the region, the increase in terrorist activities, and the dire socio-economic situation. They also underlined their regret over the developments in Niger, which undermine efforts at consolidating the institutions of governance and peace in that country.

The Council expressed support for the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), and the United Nations and welcomed their statements

reaffirming their opposition to any seizure of power by unconstitutional means, as well as the calls to the forces involved to refrain from violence, hand over power and return to their barracks. Reiterating support for efforts to reverse unconstitutional government changes, the Council backed ECOWAS and the AU in strengthening governance and normative frameworks. In solidarity with the people of Niger, the Council emphasized the importance of protecting civilians and providing humanitarian assistance during this challenging time.

## Kenya says ready to lead multinational force in Haiti



NAIROBI (AFP/APP): Kenya is ready to lead a multinational force in Haiti and will deploy 1,000 police officers to the strife-torn Caribbean nation once its offer is accepted, the foreign minister said Saturday.

Gangs control around 80 percent of the Haitian capital, and violent crimes such as kidnappings for ransom, armed robbery and carjackings are common. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry have for nearly a year sought international intervention to help support the police, but no country had stepped forward.

"Kenya has accepted to positively consider leading a Multi-National Force to Haiti," Kenya's Foreign Minister Alfred Mutua said in a statement late Saturday.

"Kenya's commitment is to deploy a contingent of 1,000 police officers to help train and assist Haitian police

restore normalcy in the country and protect strategic installations."

Its "proposed deployment" still required a mandate from the UN Security Council and approval from domestic authorities, he said. "An Assessment Mission by a Task Team of the Kenya Police is scheduled within the next few weeks. This assessment will inform and guide the mandate and operational requirements of the Mission." US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke by phone last night to Kenyan president William Ruto, according to State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller.

Kenya is seen as a democratic anchor in East Africa, and has participated in peacekeeping operations in its immediate region including in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. No other details about the Haiti deployment were immediately available.

Hemisphere's poorest nation, has seen compounding humanitarian, political and security crises, with gangs controlling most of Port-au-Prince.

Guterres said this month that violence had continued "to escalate and spread", citing murders, kidnappings, rape of women and girls, looting, and the displacement of thousands of people. Guterres, relaying a request from Henry, began calling in October for an international, non-UN deployment to help support police in the troubled nation. The Security Council this month adopted a unanimous resolution encouraging member states "to provide security support to the Haitian National Police," including through "the deployment of a specialized force."

But the text, which was focused on a one-year extension of the mandate for the special UN political mission to Haiti, BINUH, stopped short of making any direct plans for such a force. The council has asked Guterres to present by mid-August a report on all possible options, including a UN-led mission.

Earlier this month, Blinken said the US remained active in its search for a country to head a multinational force in Haiti. This week, Washington ordered nonessential personnel and family of government employees to leave the country. Staff at the US embassy in Port-au-Prince already live under tight security -- confined to a protected residential area and forbidden to walk around the capital or use any public transport or taxis.

## World Youth Day, the biggest event in the Catholic Church

VATICAN CITY (AFP/APP): World Youth Day, which takes place next week in Lisbon in the presence of Pope Francis and an expected one million pilgrims, is the largest Catholic event in the world.

Initiated in 1986 by Pope John Paul II, the global gathering is normally held every two or three years, although the calendar was disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic and the most recent World Youth Day was in Panama City in 2019. The 16th international edition this year runs from August 1 to August 6, presided over by 86-year-old Pope Francis, making his first trip abroad since undergoing hernia surgery in June. The week revolves around a series of cultural, spiritual and festive events, from concerts to debates and prayer sessions.

Events are targeted at Catholics between the age of 16 and 35, although organisers insist that everyone is welcome to attend, with no registration necessary. More than 700 bishops and 20 cardinals will attend, alongside 20,000 volunteers and pilgrims from more than 200 countries, according to the Vatican. The young people will initially spend time in different dioceses across Portugal, before gathering in the capital, which is preparing with about 16,000 members of law enforcement and emer-



gency services to be deployed. World Youth Day is spread across several venues in Lisbon, a city of 550,000 inhabitants already busy with summer tourists.

Key moments with the pope include Thursday's welcome ceremony, the Stations of the Cross on Friday, a vigil on Saturday night and large mass on Sunday morning.

The Argentine pontiff is expected to address themes such as climate change, social media and the scandal of clerical sex abuse of children that has caused enormous damage to the reputation of the worldwide Catholic Church.

The first international World Youth Day was held in Rome in 1986, fol-

lowing two successful gatherings of young people in the Italian capital in 1984 and 1985. Then came Buenos Aires in Argentina (1987), Santiago de Compostela in Spain (1989), Czestochowa in Poland (1991), Denver in the United States (1993) and Manila in the Philippines (1995).

They were followed by Paris, France (1997); Rome again in 2000; Toronto, Canada (2002); Cologne, Germany (2005); Sydney, Australia (2008); Madrid, Spain in 2011; and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2013. The biggest event was Manila, which drew five million pilgrims, followed by Rio de Janeiro with 3.7 million, and Krakow, Poland in 2016 with three million.



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# The Palestine cause and impotence of the UN

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. While addressing the 15-member most effective arm of the UN, Ambassador Munir Akram strongly condemned the recent large-scale Israeli military operations in Jenin in the occupied West Bank and called for holding Israel accountable for its grave human rights violations and war crimes in the illegally occupied zones. According to Pakistan's Permanent Envoy to the UN, the rule of law can be upheld only if it is applied universally and consistently, without exceptions or double standards, which prolong the period of suppression and provides salient support to the unlawful acts of the aggressor.

Historically, the role of the United Nations and the 15-member UN Security Council (UNSC) had never been encouraging for the achievement of peace and the resolution of the Palestine dispute over the past seven and a half decades. The UN has not only failed to alleviate the genuine grievances of the Palestinian people but displayed miserable impotence in ending unimaginable Israeli atrocities against innocent Palestinians. Realistically, the 193 members' global forum had been used by the Israeli apartheid regime and its proponents including the United States and its Western allies for consolidation of the unlawful Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and furtherance of Tel Aviv's political agenda in the Middle East and North African regions. The impunity that Israel has enjoyed for its acts of violence over decades only fuels and intensifies the recurring cycle of violence. Currently, over 5.5 million Palestinians are living in an open prison and under continuous blockade in the West Bank and Gaza, and they are not safe for a single moment, even their homes, worship places, schools, and hospitals are prime targets of their worst enemy. The ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the expulsion and eviction of Palestinians from their properties has exceeded all limits but no civilized nation and relevant UN agencies take note of those illegal actions and grave violations of UN Security Council resolutions and international law, including global humanitarian law.

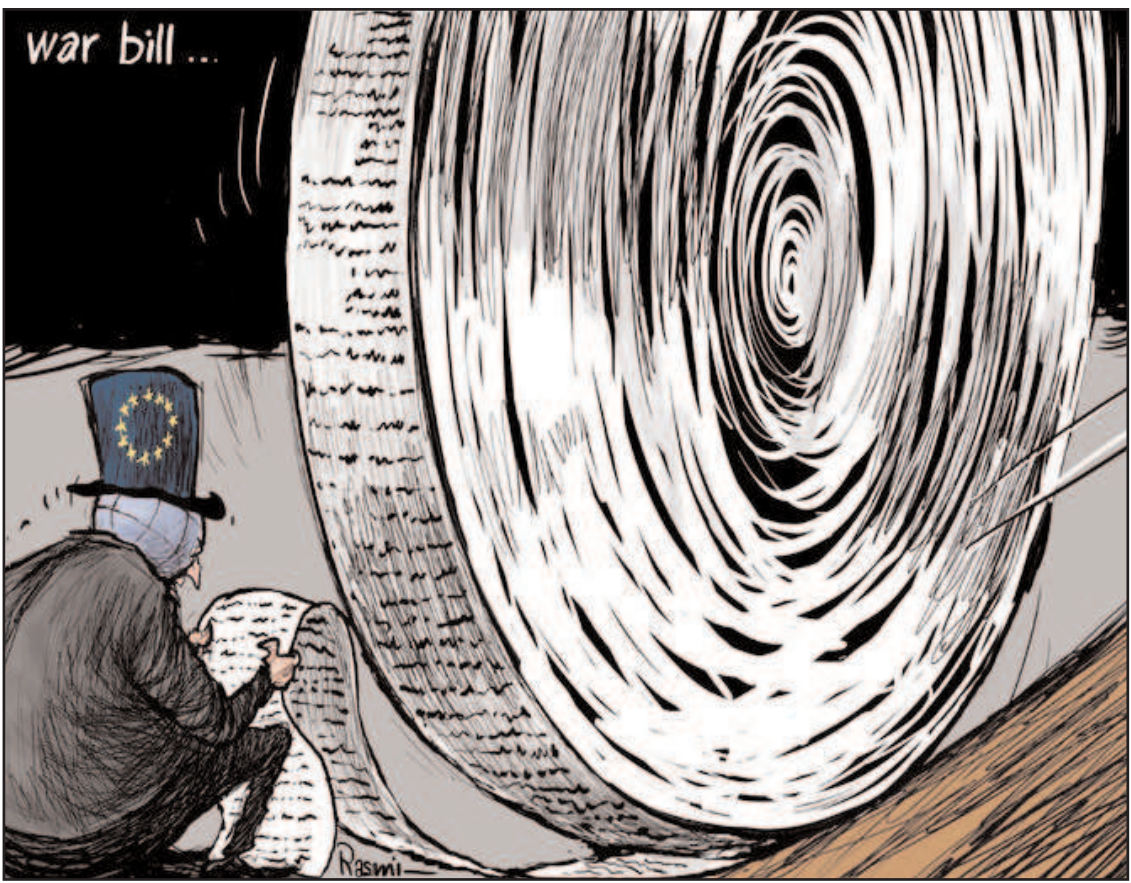
In fact, the Palestine dispute has humanitarian, social, religious, and political dimensions alongside the ongoing illegal and immoral occupation of the Arab land. The rights of Palestinians living under occupation including those under blockade and restrictions need to be protected by the global community, particularly by the UNSC and human rights defenders including the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) who have the right to intervene in the dire situation and gross human rights violations which are no less than grave war crimes against innocent civilians, the apartheid rule that prevails in the occupied Palestinian land over the past several decades. The continuous suppression and inhumane restrictions imposed by the Israeli government have caused a humanitarian situation and nearly half of Palestine's population currently faces food insecurity, lack of education, health, and other essential needs in the occupied territories in the West Bank and Gaza. Meanwhile, ceaseless conflict and Israel's brutal military operations left a significant number of the population homeless, who need shelters and economic support to rebuild their household.

Historically, the Palestine issue is the foremost longstanding dispute on the agenda of the UN Security Council (UNSC), while the global forum had categorically recognized the Palestinian's right to self-determination and called for the implementation of the two-state formula to constitute a separate and autonomous Palestinian state alongside the Jewish nation, but Israeli government with the support from the powerful Jewish community and western allies had been successful in holding back this issue at the global level so far. On the other hand, the Jewish state ramped up its genocide operation against Palestinians in Jenin and the greater west bank area blatantly killing children, women, and elderly persons with complete impunity and shamelessness.

The government and the people of Pakistan always support disadvantaged communities and marginalized nations across the globe, while Pakistanis have a special religious bond and association with Palestinian people and Masjid Al-Aqsa (Bayt-Al-Magdis), and they had always been at the forefront of the efforts for the liberation of the Holy land. The government of Pakistan must raise its voice against Israeli suppression of innocent Palestinians by stressing the global forum to chart out an immediate action plan, with the necessary resources and the will to implement it by all means. So, this decades-long clash comes to an end, the dream of free and independent Palestine comes true, millions of homeless Palestinians return to their country, and durable peace triumphs in the Holy Land forever.

## Important Notice

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 tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



# Israeli government has won a battle, but must lose the war

Yossi Mekelberg

There are moments in history when it becomes clear that things will never be the same again, and in an ominous way. That is the feeling right now among most Israelis. Over the past six months, there has been a growing sense that the country has been irreversibly changed, and trust has been shattered between the government and large parts of society.

Last Tuesday was a defining moment in this protracted crisis, and many in Israel, and outside it, have been left with the worrisome feeling that their government has not been bluffing or pretending, but has for all means and purposes declared war on the country's democratic system and on the majority of the population who are adamant in their demands that its liberal-democratic character be retained.

In ratifying a bill aimed at weakening the judiciary and thereby placing the executive above the other branches of government, the country's ruling coalition has shown its true anti-democratic colors. To add insult to injury, it also dispatched the police to brutally suppress those who protested, injuring and arresting more people than ever before in the largest street protests in the country's history. And worse is still to come, as we are promised that this is only the beginning, and much more awaits in the coming weeks and months.

When the bill to overturn the reasonableness standard passed a second and third reading in the Knesset, it ended the Supreme Court's ability to strike down any government decision that it deemed unreasonable. By removing this power from the judiciary, the far-right and religious coalition has sent a clear message that the government can now act with impunity and without accountability, relegating the courts, until now the gatekeepers on behalf of the public, to mere observers.

It is not only the legislation, as alarming as it may be, but also the deep cracks that have become painfully apparent in Israeli society as a result that should worry anyone with any sense of responsibility for the future of the country and its people. And while there are many in the government who have contributed in their zeal to undermining the judiciary, and have been more than ready to sow division and

son, as they have been by Netanyahu, with his initial aim of remaining indefinitely in power and, later and more pressingly, of ensuring that his trial on three counts of corruption is derailed or, should he be convicted, that he would by then have appointed enough cronies in key positions to be able to overturn that decision. For the sake of avoiding justice, he is ready to lie and deceive, and to betray any principle

***Make no mistake, the latest bill to overturn the reasonableness standard was not the first and will not be the last in the government's attempt to downgrade the democratic system and hand more power to the executive at the expense of the judiciary. Judging by the dubious record of some Cabinet members, which includes convictions for corruption and for supporting a terrorist group, and by the fact that most of them despise the notion of liberal democracy, we can be certain that this government is determined to take the country on a disastrous journey toward authoritarianism, increasingly imposing Jewish jurisdiction throughout the land.***

hatred, the chief culprit is none other than Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

No one should delude themselves that Israel's democratic system was not fragile before the sixth Netanyahu government was sworn in, because it was. Furthermore, no one should deceive themselves that the country's deep social divisions have appeared suddenly, since these are as old as the state itself and intrinsic to the way it was formed. However, at no point in the country's short history have these social cleavages been exploited so cynically and unscrupulously by one per-

on a disastrous journey toward authoritarianism, increasingly imposing Jewish jurisdiction throughout the land.

As the Knesset goes into its summer recess, it leaves the country more divided than ever and wracked with uncertainties, with outbreaks of violence becoming increasingly frequent. The shocking scenes of demonstrators injured by police or water cannon should alarm everyone. For now, in the battle between the anti-democratic coalition and the pro-democracy movement, the government has won a significant victory, which may lead to more legislation on the path to a semi-authoritarian political system that looks likely to include strong elements of ultra-orthodox dominance. But this war is far from over. In the longer term, pro-democracy protesters will remain the backbone of Israel's security and prosperity, and this appalling administration will continue to ignore at their own peril the demands which are supported by most of Israeli society.

On the day after the Knesset overturned the reasonableness standard, international financial institutions expressed their concerns. Morgan Stanley cut the country's credit rating, while the shekel lost value, and prices dropped sharply on the Tel Aviv stock market. Add to this that thousands of reservists who serve in key military positions have signed letters announcing that they will no longer volunteer, while other sectors are contemplating strikes and many are considering leaving the country, and a bleak picture of the destruction this government is inflicting on the country becomes clear.

It is certainly not all over for those who oppose the government. They have the leadership, determination, conviction and the tools to maintain their active resistance to a government that does not have the interests of its people at heart.

# Time for world leaders to help restore grain deal

Luke Coffey

One of the many unintended consequences of Russia's action in Ukraine last year has been the conflict's impact on the security and stability of global food supplies.

Before the invasion, Ukraine was the world's largest exporter of sunflower oil, the fourth-largest exporter of corn, and the fifth-largest exporter of wheat. When the fighting broke out in February 2022, the future of Ukraine's agricultural exports was placed in doubt. However, a Turkish-led diplomatic effort brokered the Black Sea Grain Initiative between Russia and Ukraine last summer. The deal, overseen by the UN Joint Coordination Center, allowed Ukrainian agricultural products to be exported to the world.

From the very beginning of the grain deal last year, there was a concern it would not last long. Less than 24 hours after signing the agreement in July 2022, Russia launched a cruise missile attack on the port at Odesa — one of the locations identified in the agreement as being allowed to ship Ukrainian grain. Even so, the deal finally got off the ground, and fears of a global food crisis were averted — at least temporarily.

However, earlier this month, Russia announced it was no longer participating in the initiative. This announcement was followed by a statement from the Russian Ministry of Defense, warning that "all vessels sailing in the waters of the Black Sea to Ukrainian ports will be regarded as potential carriers of military cargo," and adding that countries operating such vessels will be considered to be involved in the conflict on the side of Ukraine. This has placed the global food supply in a precarious situation.

Since leaving the agreement, Russia has launched a series of targeted airstrikes against facilities involved in exporting Ukraine's agricultural products to global markets. Photos and videos on social media show the destruction of grain storage sites in Ukrainian ports. So far, these attacks have destroyed more than 60,000 tons of grain. In the words of Barbara Woodward, the UK's permanent representative to the UN, this "is enough to feed 270,000 people for a year or to double WFP (World Food Programme) shipment to both Sudan and Somalia."

The Middle East and North Africa region, in particular, is dependent on Ukrainian grain. For example, before the war, 81 percent of Lebanon's wheat imports came from Ukraine. For Qatar, the total was 64 percent. About half of Tunisian and Libyan wheat imports came from Ukraine, as did just over a quarter of Egypt's.

Unsurprisingly, the issue of Ukrainian grain exports became a topic of discussion at the Russia-Africa summit in St. Petersburg last week. Speaking to the media, Comoros President

Azali Assoumani, who currently oversees the 55-nation African Union, said: "We will discuss it (the grain deal) with Putin to see how we can restart this agreement."

The impact of the agreement ending is also felt outside the region. China is the single largest beneficiary from the grain deal, having imported 8 million tons of agricultural products from Ukraine since the agreement went into force last summer. Bangladesh has also benefited significantly from the initiative. According to the UN, 57 percent of agricultural items exported from Ukraine over the past year went to developing countries. Since the grain initiative was launched last July, Ukraine has also supplied the WFP with 80 percent of all its grain. By comparison, before the war, it provided only half. This is now all in jeopardy.

The timing of Russia's withdrawal from the grain deal is also bad news for Ukrainian farmers. Ukraine's agriculture sector depends on grain storage facilities being emptied in order to receive new inventory by harvest time each autumn. If Ukraine is unable to shift its exports currently in storage, not only will the agricultural products rot and become useless, but there will also be nowhere to store this year's harvest, now only a few months away.

Exacerbating the global food security problem is the intense heat threatening much of the northern hemisphere this summer. The last major heat wave in Europe in 2018 led to a 50 percent drop in crop yields in central and northern Europe. With this summer already one of the hottest on record, it remains to be seen how the agriculture sector, as well as global markets, will be affected.

In the past 50 years, there have been numerous occasions when a surge in food prices led to instability, rioting and revolution in the MENA region. Before the recent suspension of the grain deal, the WFP estimated that 349 million people are now in a state of "acute hunger." This is a new record. With the removal of Ukrainian agricultural products from international markets, there is a genuine threat of even more hunger and instability. This is the last thing the MENA region, or indeed the world, needs.

Some have called on NATO to assemble a coalition to escort Ukrainian grain ships out of the Black Sea, but this seems unlikely to happen. With Russia threatening to attack any vessel arriving into Ukrainian ports, insurance companies will be reluctant to extend coverage for cargo ships. All eyes are on Türkiye to see if it can get the original deal back on track, but so far, no obvious progress has been made.

The most effective and realistic way to get the grain deal back is for the leaders of countries most affected to pressure the Kremlin before it is too late.

# Is Saudi normalization with Israel possible?

Faisal J. Abbas

Much has been said about the recent visit of US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan to Jeddah. According to US press reports, one of the topics on the table was the prospect of a US-brokered Saudi-Israeli normalization deal. Of course, there has been no official confirmation from the Kingdom. However, one has only to speculate, contextualize, and take recent developments into consideration to reach the conclusion that it is highly likely that such a deal might be possible.

Before I go on, allow me to shush conspiracy theorists who will jump to the conclusion that Saudi Arabia has "sold out" the Palestinian cause. They will argue that proof of this theory is that the discussions — if they occurred — happened in secret, which in itself is reason for them to believe that something dodgy was cooking. Well, with all due respect to the intellect — or, rather, the very little intellect — of

those who propagate such views, the norm for any talks of this nature is that they happen in secret and are announced only when/if successful. Just ask the Palestinians, or watch the film "Oslo."

Second, Saudi Arabia is one of the few countries that actually practices what it preaches. Unlike Tehran, Riyadh's position has never been ideological in the sense that we never preached — or to be more precise pretended to preach — throwing Jews into the sea (while secretly getting weapons from Israel during the war with Iraq, as Iran did in the 1980s). In fact, since the Madrid conference of 1991, Saudi Arabia has been at the forefront of trying to achieve a peace deal that puts Palestinian rights first, while at the same time offering Israel the recognition and guarantees it needs.

As a reminder, it was actually the late King Abdullah who offered Israel the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the

Arab League in 2002. More recently, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told the Atlantic magazine last year that the Kingdom sees Israel as "a potential ally."

"We don't look at Israel as an enemy; we look to them as a potential ally, with many interests that we can pursue together," he said in remarks carried by the official Saudi Press Agency. "But we have to solve some issues before we get to that," the crown prince added, saying that he hopes conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians will be resolved.

Third, comes the aspect of the additional Saudi demands that have been reported since late 2022. As mentioned in this column last March, a fair and just solution for Palestinians has always been the Kingdom's first priority. However, let us suppose Israel takes serious and satisfactory steps toward a solution, and suddenly a

Saudi-Israeli normalization and peace treaty becomes a potential reality. What, then, would the subsequent consequences be?

If such a treaty were signed, then the US should have no more concerns about a Saudi nuclear program (which was always meant to be peaceful anyway), nor should it have any reservations about putting its verbal commitments to protect the Kingdom in writing. Indeed, although Israel has never been a security threat to Saudi Arabia, a peace treaty with Israel would mean that the only real threat to the Kingdom would be from Iran and the Houthis. Given that the first refers to the US as the Great Satan, and the latter's official slogan is "Death to America," then the Biden administration should really have no reservations committing to a signed treaty with the Kingdom, be it in the form of a "major non-NATO ally" or something else.

(This, of course, is assuming Iran doesn't abide by the China brokered peace treaty with Riyadh).

In fact, apart from the deeply rooted, multifaceted 80-year relationship between the two countries, it makes perfect sense for the US to safeguard the oil wells from any attack that would cause a supply shortage, which would, in turn, ultimately cause a huge increase in price — something any junior economist would be able to point out to cynics.

Apart from that, this would be a huge foreign policy win for the highly criticized Biden administration before a crucial election year — although pushing such a decision for Congressional approval will require an enormous effort by the White House despite some bipartisan approval as demonstrated by Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham giving it a public endorsement last April.

Last but not least, this might be a much-needed

double-edged instrument which could both rein in the far-right lunatics in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's current government, and also guarantee Palestinians a state, once and for all.

As our respected colleague Thomas Friedman eloquently wrote in The New York Times: "Netanyahu's ruling coalition of Jewish supremacists and religious extremists would have to answer this question: You can annex the West Bank, or you can have peace with Saudi Arabia and the whole Muslim world, but you can't have both, so which will it be?"

Once again, none of this is official, but even the prospect is a huge step forward for Palestinians, Israelis, and indeed for Saudi Arabia, which has embarked on a new, remarkable foreign policy that safeguards not only the huge prosperity Vision 2030 has achieved, but also aspires to be a force for good across the region and the world.



# Turkiye rediscovers value of good relations with Arab countries

After several ups and downs, Turkish-Arab relations have now been stabilized. Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently paid a visit of gratitude to Saudi Arabia. He had a warm exchange of views with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The joint communique issued after the meeting contained almost all subjects of cooperation. The areas of security and defense were given a separate chapter in the communique. An acquisition contract was signed between the defense industry company owned by Erdogan's son-in-law and the Saudi Ministry of Defense.

Relations between Türkiye and the UAE have also experienced some fluctuations. At one stage, Ankara harshly criticized Abu Dhabi, accusing it of having helped the 2016 military coup that was staged in Türkiye by a Muslim cleric, Fethullah Gulen, who lives in exile in the US.

Furthermore, these two countries found themselves on opposing sides in the Libyan turmoil. The reason for this was related to the Muslim Brotherhood, which supported the Government of National Accord operating in Tripoli. The UAE was supporting Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar's forces in Libya.

The two countries have now put aside these reciprocal accusations. As there is huge potential in their economic cooperation, they want to utilize it.

The UAE regarded political Islam as a threat to the traditional administrations of the Gulf countries, while Türkiye supported it because Erdogan's political party, the Justice and Development Party, known

as the AK Parti, had an ideological affinity with the Muslim Brotherhood. Therefore, Türkiye-UAE relations became cooler during this period. But a visit paid last year to Türkiye by President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan helped thaw these frosty relations. Erdogan reciprocated this visit with a big delegation.

This recent visit of the Turkish delegation to the UAE changed the course of events and ended with the signing of 13 agreements

**The relations between Türkiye and Egypt are the most striking. The two sides started by reciprocally exchanging harsh rhetoric and withdrawing their ambassadors from each other's capital. This was mainly because of the rise to power of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. Türkiye had previously extended strong support to the democratically elected government of Mohammed Morsi. Despite the tensions, the strong historical relations between the peoples of these two countries helped ensure that the trade volume was not affected and the Turkish companies operating in Egypt did not face any major hardship. Türkiye did not need to interfere in the domestic affairs of Egypt. It could have issued a communique outlining its concerns, like many other countries did, and stopped there.**

amounting to \$51 billion. Some \$8.5 billion of this will be used to issue bonds for the benefit of the victims of the earthquake that took place in Türkiye in February. The two countries also decided to establish a joint high-level strategic council. This mechanism will allow them to have more structured relations. Türkiye has such councils with several other countries with which it maintains strong economic ties. Most of the documents signed during such visits are memorandums of understanding. Therefore, their implementation will

Yasar Yakis

depend on the determination of both sides.

Türkiye also enjoys good relations with Kuwait. Their bilateral relations did not become as shaky as Ankara's ties with the UAE did. Kuwait cooperates with Türkiye in the defense industry as well. It did not have problems with Türkiye like Saudi Arabia and the UAE did.

Turkish-Qatari bilateral relations have so far fared well but, during the ten-

Turkiye needs to avoid being on either side.

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Egypt relations was already strong.

These two countries will hopefully now leave behind all mistakes that they may have committed and look forward to better relations. Improved relations between Türkiye and Egypt may also contribute to the solution of the problems related to the delineation of maritime jurisdiction areas in the Eastern Mediterranean, as Cairo is one of the main actors in the region. Having previously contributed to Turkish-Egyptian relations for four years in my capacity as Turkish ambassador to Egypt, I am very much looking forward to seeing these two friendly countries further strengthen their ties.

The two countries exchanged ambassadors again this month. Türkiye appointed to Cairo a charge d'affaires who already had the ambassadorial title. He is a distinguished member of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so this facilitated the formalities.

Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran are the main pillars of the Middle East. If they establish good communications among themselves, these four countries can greatly contribute to stability in the region.

The Middle East needs peace and stability. The atmosphere today looks suitable for a lasting peace in the region. In addition to the thawing of tensions in the region as a whole, Erdogan met President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine in Türkiye last week. He also invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to visit three days later, although this trip was postponed due to Netanyahu's health. However, Erdogan's past dealings have not been satisfactory. Let us see whether Türkiye will perform better this time.

# Israel continues to treat Americans differently based on their ethnicity

Daoud Kuttab

similar categories of travelers have been created with different requirements for entry/exit. The memorandum distinguishes between American travelers on the basis of whether they hold a Palestinian ID, reside in the West Bank, reside in Gaza, reside outside of the Occupied Territories, or have a first-degree family member they seek to visit in Gaza.

For example, while Israel has agreed to allow Americans who are resi-

Americans on the Palestinian population registry who reside in the West Bank or Gaza must obtain a military-issued permit to enter Israel. Again, this is not equal treatment for all US citizens and keeps the final decision in Israeli hands.

The restrictions placed on travel to Gaza are arbitrary, capricious and discriminatory. There is no logic behind limiting the possibility of entry to Gaza for first-degree family members of people who live there. Why should a

**The discrimination faced by Americans who want to get to or leave the Gaza Strip is an even more difficult situation. Palestinian Americans are only allowed to visit Gaza if they can prove that they have a relative of the first degree (parent, child or sibling), while being denied permission to visit a grandparent or an uncle and certainly being denied a visit to Gaza for any other reason. Americans living in Gaza cannot simply go to Ben Gurion Airport via the Erez checkpoint. Israel, however, says it will allow them to travel in a special bus to the King Hussein Bridge so that they can travel to and from the US via Jordan. The memorandum allows Israel to apply military law to some Americans and civilian law to others based solely on national origin or religion. Americans on the Palestinian population registry who reside in the West Bank or Gaza must obtain a military-issued permit to enter Israel. Again, this is not equal treatment for all US citizens and keeps the final decision in Israeli hands.**

dents of the West Bank to travel to and from the US using Israeli entry points such as Ben Gurion Airport, which they were previously banned from using, it deals with them differently than it deals with American Jews. Palestinian Americans who are residents of the West Bank cannot drive their cars in Israel, including to the airport, while other Americans, including those living in settlements, are able to use Israeli cars and drive them both in the West Bank and in Israel.

The discrimination faced by Americans who want to get to or leave the Gaza Strip is an even more difficult situation. Palestinian Americans are only allowed to visit Gaza if they can prove that they have a relative of the first degree (parent, child or sibling), while being denied permission to visit a grandparent or an uncle and certainly being denied a visit to Gaza for any other reason. Americans living in Gaza cannot simply go to Ben Gurion Airport via the Erez checkpoint. Israel, however, says it will allow them to travel in a special bus to the King Hussein Bridge so that they can travel to and from the US via Jordan.

The memorandum allows Israel to apply military law to some Americans and civilian law to others based solely on national origin or religion.

grandchild be denied the right to be reunited with their grandparents? Why should any US citizen that passes through Israel's stringent airport security checks be denied travel to Gaza? And why should a Palestinian American resident of Gaza be denied the ability to travel out of Israel's Ben Gurion Airport when all other Americans are provided that right?

Israel must allow all Americans reasonable access to travel and transit. Any legitimate security concerns Israel has may be addressed at the Erez crossing to Gaza, which it controls. The security of US citizens inside Gaza has only been put at risk during Israel's military escalations against the Strip. No American citizen has posed a security risk to Israel during their stay in Gaza. Limiting US citizens' access to Gaza is, therefore, punitive and arbitrary.

The Israel-US visa waiver appears to be a win-win for Palestinian Americans and for Israelis. But the danger in this process is that Israel is allowed to continue discriminating between Palestinian Americans, albeit to a lesser degree than previously, and at the same time it is unclear whether the Israelis will not revert to more overt discrimination if the visa waiver is not finally approved by Washington in September.

# Saving mangroves is possible but it requires joint action

These days, positive news about ecology is a rare thing, as most reports deal with catastrophes and dire warnings. Thus, it was heartening when, on July 26, which is recognized as the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN released a report saying that the rate of destruction of mangroves around the world has decelerated, mainly thanks to localized efforts.

The FAO stated that, over the past 40 years, more than 20 percent of mangroves across 123 nations were destroyed, mainly due to human activity. In 2020, the world had only 14.8 million hectares of mangroves left. However, the UN organization encouragingly added that the rate of destruction of mangroves in the decade 2010 to 2020 fell by 23 percent compared to the previous decade. Even more encouraging was the news that almost 400,000 hectares of new mangrove forest had grown in areas where it was not present in 2000.

Further, the decrease in the destruction of mangroves was spread across the world, with Asia, home to more than 50 percent of global mangroves, seeing a

significant decrease of 54 percent in its rate of destruction, while North and Central America actually saw an increase in net area of mangroves. Worryingly, however, increases in net losses were seen in Oceania and South America.

The news from the FAO is certainly encouraging, but the threat to the mangroves is far from over. Human activity is still leading to their destruction in many parts of the world, notably the coastal areas of developing nations. It is important to note that, while the rate of destruction has fallen, we are still losing mangroves at a rapid clip.

And humans are not threatening the mangroves only directly through their activities in mangrove areas. Climate change, also provoked by human activity, has emerged as a significant threat to mangroves, which are highly sensitive and fragile. Climate change threatens not just the plants, but the entire ecosystem of plants and animals harbored by mangroves.

The rising level of carbon dioxide in the air and increasing salinity and temperatures in the seas are noxious for mangroves, which also face existential threats from rising water levels and violent storm surges that are becoming

Ranvir S. Nayar

increasingly common due to climate change.

Reports indicate that, in Asia alone, more than 3.5 million people are at risk due to the disappearance of mangroves. But the threat is not just in Asia. Analyst reports say that, among the countries with the highest vulnerability to tropical cyclones and the largest area of mangroves, the estimates show that sea level rise due to climate change is likely to destroy 100 percent of coastal mangroves in Mexico, 85 percent in the Philippines, 59 percent in Venezuela, 31 percent in Papua New Guinea and 27 percent in Myanmar. This shows that the risk to mangroves is not limited to a single region.

One can never overstate the importance of mangroves for the well-being and even the survival of the planet as we know it. They are not just huge reserves of biodiversity, but they also produce food for human consumption. And they trap fertile soil, sediment, nutrients and contaminants to maintain water quality and protect coral reefs, which also provide coastal protection and support fisheries and tourism.

They also act as a cushion to coastal areas, pro-

tecting them against storms and rising seawater. But perhaps the most crucial role played by the mangroves is sucking noxious carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. Scientists say that they are among the most carbon-rich ecosystems on Earth, storing an estimated 6.23 gigatons of carbon worldwide in their biomass and soils. If we can regenerate the mangroves, then we can ensure that they can continue removing greenhouse gases at least to some extent.

In this era of carbon offsets, mangrove restoration is one of the easiest ways that the biggest polluters in the world can try to decrease the harm they do on a daily basis.

But one certainly cannot and should not wait for corporate leaders, who are only concerned about shareholder returns and their own financial packages, to take remedial action.

Restoring mangroves and even enhancing them is a relatively simple task, but one that needs commitment by the entire community living in the vicinity of the mangroves, and not even a lot of money. The fact that it can be done locally and very effectively is perhaps the best highlighted by the resounding success of the restoration of mangroves

undertaken by the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia.

Thanks to a concerted effort by the university, located north of Jeddah on the Red Sea, the mangroves at and around the campus have not only been protected, but have seen a dramatic regeneration. According to the university, the area covered by mangroves has risen by 45 percent to 110 hectares.

In 2017, KAUST also set aside an additional 152 hectares as a nature conservation area as part of its commitment to protect and enhance the local biodiversity.

While these numbers may be small compared to what is needed all over the world, it is crucial to remember and acknowledge that the responsibility of protecting our planet and restoring its biodiversity is not the responsibility of one person, institution, company, community or country.

Collectively, if the leaders of every business, every community and every country follow the example set by the likes of KAUST, mangroves can indeed be saved and even grown more than ever. For they are the most effective bulwark against the damage caused by climate change.

# Will economy-driven Türkiye-Gulf relations yield political gains?

Sinem Cengiz

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's intense three-day Gulf tour was remarkable both symbolically and strategically, reflecting Ankara's projection of its relations with the states of the region in the coming years. Erdogan's visits to both Saudi Arabia and the UAE were aimed at cementing the rapid normalization process following the years of tension in Türkiye's relations with both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, while the visit to Qatar aspired to boost the two countries' already enlarged cooperation.

It was Erdogan's first official visit to the region since his reelection as president in May and he brought with him a large entourage including both political and business figures. It also confirmed that the formula founded by

Turkiye and the Gulf countries for sustainable relations based on mutual economic and security interests was not going to remain in the realm of rhetoric. However, what political results could this tour yield for Turkish-Gulf relations? What is the basis of the new partnerships that Ankara aims to develop with the Gulf countries?

Before delving into this, it is worth mentioning some key notes from Erdogan's visit to each Gulf state, toward which Ankara pursues a different approach based on diverging agendas. During his three-nation trip, the Turkish president gifted each Gulf leader with a domestically produced electric car made by Togg, which is evolving to be another angle for Turkish soft power. The images of Erdogan and the Gulf leaders taking a car ride togeth-

er without their entourage and security offered a clear indication of how world leaders have started to use different modes of diplomacy to show the personal closeness between them.

The Turkish president's first stop was Saudi Arabia, where the two countries signed a defense cooperation agreement that is said to be "the biggest defense and aviation export contract in Türkiye's history." The nature of Türkiye's defense cooperation is such that Gulf countries orient their defense relations on the basis of their respective national interests and regional strategies. On the other side, the growing Gulf interest in the Turkish defense industry is a boost for Ankara, which is trying to increase exports to help ease its economic problems. This equation forms the defense-economy nexus

in Türkiye-Gulf relations.

Besides the five agreements inked on investment, the defense industry, energy and media cooperation, both the Saudi and Turkish leaders touched upon Iran and stressed the importance of Tehran's commitment to a peaceful nuclear program, among other things. Being two heavyweights in the region, Ankara and Riyadh's vision on regional issues have both aligned and clashed over the past decade; however, there are some dossiers, such as Syria and Iraq, that necessitate tangible cooperation between the two countries despite some areas of competition. In this regard, Turkish-Saudi relations can be described as manageable competition that is based on a realistic and pragmatic approach.

The second leg of the Gulf tour was to Qatar, a visit which was mostly a symbolic one that celebrated the 50-year anniversary of Turkish-Qatari diplomatic relations. Although Ankara's relationship with Doha has strong economic motivations, it could be better described as a marriage of convenience based on ideological and political motivations.

The third stopover in the Gulf tour was to the UAE, where Erdogan was awarded the Order of Zayed, which is considered the highest civilian honor granted by the Emirates. Türkiye and the UAE signed and ratified 13 agreements in various fields worth \$50.7 billion. Ankara and Abu Dhabi also agreed to establish a high-level strategic council, ele-

vating the level of their relations to a strategic partnership. From former foes to today's strategic partners, the Turkish-Emirati relationship can be described as a middle of the road one based on economic gains, while political issues are off the agenda for the moment.

The focus now turns to seeing when and how the agreements signed during these visits can be turned into sustainable and deepened economic cooperation. The rapprochement efforts between Türkiye and the Gulf states were initially based on economic targets, with political issues put aside. However, sustained economic and security cooperation between Türkiye and the Gulf states will certainly have political outcomes in the region in the long term.

Ankara's bilateral ties

with each Gulf state have their own dynamics. There are still political disagreements between Türkiye and some Gulf states that the parties have decided to turn into an "agree to disagree" understanding to avoid deadlocks. Neither the Gulf states nor Türkiye are keen to take aggressive foreign policy approaches at the expense of their newly repaired ties. For both Türkiye and the young leaderships in the Gulf states, a long-term strategic partnership offers strategic benefits.

In particular, Türkiye's five-year investment plans are an attractive strategy for the Gulf leaderships that seek critical investments and projects in accordance with their ambitious national visions and economic diversification agendas. The Gulf countries, specifically Saudi Arabia, are going through an important

transformation process. Türkiye's cooperation in economic and security means over the next five years can raise the level of relations to a strategic point.

While the major issues that led to the tensions in Turkish-Gulf relations are not present anymore or have been partially resolved, the two sides still share concerns about instability in Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq. Türkiye needs cooperation with the Gulf states on these specific regional dossiers.

Long-term economic agreements between Türkiye and the Gulf states may pave the way for closer regional cooperation based on their shared political interests. The key question is how, with which Gulf states and on which dossiers this cooperation will kick off.





## ICCI to give awards to conveners of its top performing sub-committees

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari on Sunday said that the top performing sub-committees of the Chamber would be given awards to recognize and acknowledge their effective role in resolving the issues of the business community of their respective sectors.

He said this while presiding over a meeting of the conveners of ICCI sub-committees, said a news release issued here.

A large number of conveners including women attended the meeting and briefed the President ICCI about the performance of their respective sub-committees.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that during his tenure, 150 sub-committees had been formed in the Chamber, but only some of them were showing good performance. He urged all the

conveners to further improve the performance of their committees and present their performance reports on a monthly basis to ICCI.

He assured that ICCI would provide all possible support to the committees in discharging their responsibilities.

He announced that conveners of high performing committees will be given special awards while inactive committees will be replaced next year and the whole process will be done on merit basis.

ICCI Group Leader Khalid Iqbal Malik said that just like the active role played by the standing committees of the Parliament in the legislative process, the sub-committees of the Chamber can also play an effective role in solving the issues of the business community of their respective sectors.

He said that the purpose of forming committees was

to highlight the issues faced by the business community in their respective fields so that the Chamber could take up them with the relevant departments for their solution. He emphasized that all Committees should play their active role in this regard.

Former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari said that the sub-committees led by the executive members were working in various fields and the well-performing committees also reflected the excellent performance of the executive members.

He said that these committees had an important role in the decision-making process of the Chamber and they should play their role in order to deliver up to the expectations of the business community.

He said that the future leadership of ICCI would emerge from these committees as those Executives

who would show excellent performance in Committees would have a good chance to lead ICCI in future.

Vice President ICCI Engineer Azharul Islam Zafar, Former Presidents Zahid Maqboo & Mohammad Ijaz Abbasi, Khalid Chaudhry, Ms. Fatma Azim, Ms. Zeenat Ayesha, Abbas Hashmi, Aizaz Muhammad, Tahir Ali Naqvi, Baber Chaudhry, Ch. Ashraf Farzand, Dr. Usman, Ch. Muhammad Ali, Ameer Hamza, Malik Shabbir, Rizwan Chheena, Faheem Iqbal, Hazoor ul Islam, Kashif Zaheer, Ms. Nasira Ali, Musharraf Janjua, Nasir Chaudry, Naveed Satti, Nisar Mirza, Rohail Anwar Butt, Sohail Chaudhry, Waqas Khan, Zulqarnain Abbasi, Raja Imtiaz, Ch. Irfan, Shahid Abbasi and others also spoke on the occasion and presented performance reports of their committees.



ISLAMABAD: President ICAP Muhammad Ali Latif presenting cheque for Rs.5 million to Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division as donation in PM Relief Fund for Floods, Earthquake & Calamities on behalf of ICAP.

### President ICAP calls on Finance Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) Muhammad Ali Latif on Sunday called on Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and donated Rs 5 million to Prime Minister Relief Fund.

According to the official account of the finance ministry, the president presented a cheque of Rs 5 million as a donation to the Prime Minister Relief Fund for Floods, Earthquakes, and Calamities on behalf of ICAP.

“Muhammad Ali Latif, President Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) called on Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, today and presented a cheque for Rs 5 million as a donation in the PM Relief Fund for Floods, Earthquake & Calamities on behalf of ICAP”, the ministry tweeted.

### UAE bans rice exports, re-exports for 4 months

ABU DHABI (APP): The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has imposed a four-month ban on rice exports and re-exports, the country's Ministry of Economy said Saturday.

The ban, with effect from July 28, covers the free zones in the UAE and applies to all rice varieties, including brown rice, fully or partially milled rice, and broken rice, according to a statement released on the ministry's social media account.

Companies interested in exporting or re-exporting rice must request an export permit from the Ministry of Economy, said the statement. The ban can be automatically extended unless a decision is made to cancel its implementation, it added.

The UAE ban comes after the Indian government decided last week to halt exports of non-basmati white rice because of the price rise in domestic market and significant crop damage caused by late but heavy monsoon rains.

The UAE imports nearly 90% of its needed food.

### Heartland Tri-State Bank closed

NEW YORK (APP): US federal regulators closed Heartland Tri-State Bank after it failed on Friday, the fifth bank failure in the country this year.

The bank, located in Elkhart, the state of Kansas, was taken over by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), according to an FDIC announcement.

The FDIC said it had entered into a purchase and assumption agreement with Dream First Bank of Syracuse, Kansas, to assume all of Heartland Tri-State Bank's deposits.

The four branches of Heartland Tri-State Bank will reopen as branches of Dream First Bank on Monday, according to the FDIC.

## FTO Coordinator advocates for corporate farming — to boost Pak's economy, agriculture

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis on Sunday said with corporate farming, Pakistan would not only stimulate economic activities but also revolutionize it's agriculture sector unlocking potential opportunities in food-related various industries.

Speaking at a seminar on “Corporate Farming Promise Food Security” held under the aegis of Gold Ring Economic Forum, he said adopting corporate farming on state lands will not only facilitate the implementation of modern irrigation systems but also contribute to land development in Pakistan, said a news release issued here.

He said, “It entails reclaiming barren lands including deserts and hilly areas and transforming them into arable lands suitable for farming and agriculture.” “Corporate farming requires simultaneously addressing the needs of small-scale farmers giving them access to modern processes, quality inputs, tools, and techniques for

sustainable competition,” he emphasized.

He said, “For attracting foreign direct investment, the government must declare agriculture as an industry and implement a timely investment policy tailored to induce foreign investment which will pave the way for the country's progress and prosperity.”

Meher Kashif Younis said, “Agriculture development is one of the most powerful tools to end abject poverty, boost shared prosperity and feed a projected 9.7 billion people by 2050.”

He said, “Growth in the agriculture sector is two to four times more effective in raising the income among the poorest compared to other sectors. However, he said the potential in this sector is not being fully exploited in Pakistan.”

He said, “Approximately seven million acres of identified land suitable for corporate agriculture across all provinces is available that needs the immediate attention of the stakeholders at the helm of affairs.

He said, “Pakistan is

among the countries facing the potential threat of food insecurity as ranked 99 out of 121 countries in the world hunger index.”

He said, “Food security remains a significant challenge and with escalating inflation of food-related products, the affordability of essential commodities for common man may become difficult in coming years.” “Therefore, the timely move towards corporate farming is the right step by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.”

He said, “This approach will not only make Pakistan self-sufficient in meeting its food-related requirements but also help in generating and sustaining substantial foreign exchange reserved for Pakistan.”

“Corporate farming is a well-recognized practice adopted by several countries like China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and India where they invest in farms and acquire land from various countries for this purpose while some countries have ventured into innovative techniques like vertical farming,” he added.

## Govt urged to explore sustainable energy options

ISLAMABAD (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik Sunday urged the government to explore alternative energy source measures that could lead to a shift in the energy mix towards more sustainable options, which might have long-term benefits for energy security and environmental sustainability.

Talking to a delegation of traders led by Muslim Khan Bunerhi he said, “If industries face higher costs they may resort to cost-cutting measures, including workforce reduction, to maintain profitability,” said a news release issued here.

“It will result in job losses and increase unemployment rates,” he added.

Iftikhar Malik said, “To

address the potential negative impacts of increased power tariffs on the economy, the government may need to focus on improving energy efficiency, promoting renewable energy sources, reducing transmission and distribution losses, and implementing targeted subsidies to protect vulnerable sections of society.”

“Higher power tariffs lead to an inflation increase, increasing the cost of production besides mounting inflationary pressures on the economy.”

“Electricity is a critical input for various economic activities, and any changes in its cost can affect industries, businesses, people, and the overall economic growth,” he added.

He said, “Industries that heavily rely on electricity,

such as manufacturing, textiles, and chemicals may face higher operating costs due to increased power tariffs.” “This can impact their competitiveness both in domestic and international markets, potentially leading to reduced industrial production and a decline in exports,” he added.

He said, “SMEs that operate on tight profit margins could be particularly vulnerable to higher power tariffs. It may become challenging for them to sustain operations, leading to reduced investment and affecting potential business.” He said, “It will deter foreign Investors may be concerned about the increased operational costs, which can negatively impact the inflow of foreign direct investment.”

## Shahzad highlights China's expertise in agri technology

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan Hitech Hybrid Seed Association (PHHSA) Shahzad Ali Malik Sunday said China had made substantial advancements in agricultural technology, including hybrid seed development, and had the expertise to share the practices with Pakistan.

Shahzad Ali Malik currently visiting China with a delegation said, “More collaboration between Pakistan and China in the agricultural sector, particularly in the development of new varieties of hybrid seeds in the private sector, is possible and could have significant benefits for both countries,” said a news release issued here.

He said, “Collaboration in the private sector allows for joint research and

development initiatives between both countries.”

He said, “Such projects can lead to the creation of tailored hybrid seed varieties that cater to the specific needs of Pakistani farmers and align with the country's agricultural practices and climate.”

He said, “China and Pakistan have longstanding ties, and such meetings could potentially lead to advancements in hybrid seed technology and agricultural practices, benefiting both countries' agricultural sectors.”

He said, “Fruitful meetings between agricultural organizations from different countries can be beneficial for exchanging knowledge, technology, and expertise in the field of seed development and agriculture.”

He said, “Hybrid seeds are created by crossing two genetically different parent plants to produce offspring with desired traits, such as improved yield, resistance to pests and diseases, or better adaptability to local environmental conditions.”

He hoped, “Such collaborations with Chinese counterparts can further help Pakistan enhance its agricultural productivity and food security.”

Shahzad Ali Malik said, “The Chinese private sector is taking a keen interest in further enhancing collaboration with Guard Agriculture Research and Services as we have excellent experience with the Chinese for evolving the first-ever variety of hybrid rice in Pakistan and still a team of ten Chinese scientists engaged with us.”

## Volatile exchange rate, record hike in markup to shut local industry

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Association Front (PIAF) has said that the country's economy has been facing crisis majorly due to non-serious and poor domestic policy decisions and mismanagement, as the rupee continued to remain unstable while the key interest rate have been escalated to the record historic high level, which will destroy the economy completely.

Asking the authorities to include serious and progressive fiscal reforms in the IMF program PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol observed that it is very clear that IMF programs focus on stabilization and crisis management rather than growth-oriented policies that require structural reforms.

He stressed need for a revisit of government policies including the coordination exercise between the Ministry of Finance and SBP, as no independent economist could support the economic policies that are currently in place.

He added volatility con-

tinued to exist despite IMF program is revived and inflows are materialized. He said the delay in IMF funding created uncertainty in currency market and added that a number of payments related to imports have been made, leading to pressure on the rupee, as the move to a market-based currency exchange rate regime is one of a list of actions the IMF wants Pakistan to complete to clear its 9th review.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has already taken most of the other prior actions, which include hikes in fuel and energy tariffs, the imposition of new taxation measures, and withdrawal of subsidies in export and power sectors.

PIAF Chairman said that the Pakistan's economy can grow sustainably only if the country introduces productivity-enhancing reforms that facilitate a better allocation of resources into more dynamic activities, and productive uses. He stated that the country's inability to allocate all its resources to the most productive uses has stunted economic growth. It presents evidence of sys-

tematic productivity stagnation across firms and farms. In manufacturing and services, most of the productivity stagnation is related to firms losing efficiency over time.

The government needs reminding that remittance inflows were 29.4 billion dollars last fiscal year and this large inflow was also due to the fact that the interbank and open market rates did not diverge significantly during the previous tenures.

Thus the current untenable situation is due to a perceived policy of exchange rate manipulation and cannot be attributed entirely to the warnings of impending default or criticism of the handling of the economy.

Faheem Saigol observed that coordinating fiscal and monetary policies may be beneficial yet with inflation attributed to administrative decisions in nearly all recent Monetary Policy Statements and the government unwilling to implement key reforms in the power sector and tax structure the SBP needs to be vigilant in ensuring market-

based exchange rate policy and a positive discount rate while the Ministry needs to revisit its tax policy, utility pricing policy and of course continued massive injections into loss-making state-owned entities.

The country has had several finance ministers, who massively misjudged their capacity to get the International Monetary Fund to agree to phasing out the harsh upfront conditions that were agreed—a miss-judgment that delayed the success of the mandatory quarterly reviews and thereby delayed the disbursement of the tranches on which rollovers by friendly countries as well as pledged new loans estimated at around 4.2 billion dollars are dependent.

Firms that decide to embark upon export-oriented manufacturing despite these adverse incentives face a further distortion. The distortions in place in Pakistan are to a large extent the result of powerful insiders, albeit limited in number, who influence the policy making process to maximize their own benefits.

## Further jump in key policy rate to deepen economic crisis: BMP

Further jump in key policy rate to deepen economic crisis

### F.P. report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has warned the central bank of any further jump in the key policy rate, as it would deepen the economic crisis amidst record highest markup rate in the region.

FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said that already unprecedented inflation and high markup rate have drastically reduced private sector borrowings during the outgoing fiscal year.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is all set to announce its latest monetary policy on Monday, with many experts fearing further hike in interest rate which is already touching the historic-high of 22 percent.

He said that the central bank raised its key interest rate to 22 percent, exceeding investor expectations, as the cash-strapped country attempts to encourage the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to release critical funding. The key rate of the State Bank of Pakistan now stands at 22 percent, its highest level since October 1996.

Now, there are reports that the SBP would raise the interest rate by another 1 percent at the upcoming meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to please IMF. The Businessmen Panel (BMP) chief suggested the central bank to adopt an accommodative monetary policy

stance, asking the finance minister to fulfil his commitment of reining in inflation besides cutting interest rate and strengthening the undervalued local currency against dollar.

The SBP has raised its key policy rate by 12.25 percentage points since April 2022, mainly to curb soaring inflation.

However, it held rates steady in June saying inflation had peaked at 38pc in the preceding month. But before the end of the month, it raised rates by 100 bps at an emergency meeting in an effort to secure IMF funds, citing slightly deteriorated inflation outlook.

In the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) that resulted from its talks with the IMF, Pakistan said it stands ready to consider further action at the next monetary policy committee meeting and subsequent ones until inflation and inflation expectations are on a clear downward path.

The SBP on its website says: “Monetary policy involves central banks' use of instruments to influence interest rates and/or money supply in the economy with the objective to keep overall prices and financial markets stable. Monetary policy is essentially a stabilization or demand management policy that cannot impact long-term growth potential of an economy.”

However, the ground realities are totally different when it comes to monetary policy cannot impact long-term growth potential of an

economy as the record-high interest rates and inflation skyrocketing the cost of production mean no one is ready to invest in productive sectors. Thus, this rate policy advocated by the IMF and pursued by top central banks will push Pakistan further into quagmire.

Demanding competitive interest rate at regional countries' level, he said that the SBP's stance of keeping monetary policy rate at 22 percent was already high compared to the markup rate of China, India and Bangladesh.

He said that further monetary tightening and high current account deficit had sparked panic selling across the board, leading to the capital market's massive tragedy.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the rate hike was a key requirement to get the IMF funding released.

The MPC noted that the recent fiscal adjustments and exchange rate depreciation have led to a significant deterioration in the near term inflation outlook and a further upward drift in inflation expectations, as reflected in the latest wave of surveys.

In this context, the MPC emphasised that anchoring inflation expectations is critical and warrants a strong policy response. He said that while the CPI can potentially increase more with the fiscal actions related to subsidy removals and exchange rate weakness, the government needs to focus on improving the supply side urgently, especially of food and agricultural items.





## In brief

## Pakistan team earns first victory

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Street Child Football team downed Norwegian club Frog Oslo FK in their first match of the World Youth Football Cup 'Norway Cup' on Sunday. Pakistan Street Child Football team outplayed Norwegian club Frog Oslo by a huge margin of 11-1. Abid Ali was the star scorer for the Pakistan Street Child Football team as he attained four goals while Saud Ahmed and Faisal Ahmad smashed two goals each, respectively. One goal each was scored by Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Adeel and Sahil Gull. Meanwhile, the lone goal for Norwegian club Frog Oslo was hit by Scott McNol. The second match of the National Street Football Child team would take place on Monday while the third match on August 1. The Pakistan squad includes Forwards: Tofail Shinwari, Faisal, Shamir Ali, Saud; Midfielders: Abdul Wahab, Muhammad Ali, Ali Asif, Ahmed Raza; Defenders: Muhammad Adeel, Abid Ali, Obaidullah, Asad Nasir; Goalkeeper: Abdullah, Sahil. It should be mentioned that Pakistan Street Child Football Team has been runner-up in the Street Child Football World Cup held in Qatar and has secured the second position in Norway Cup 2015 and third position in Norway Cup 2016.

## Rahane pulls out of Leicestershire stint

LONDON (Agencies): Ajinkya Rahane has pulled out of a stint with Leicestershire following his recall to India's Test team. He was expected to link up with the team for the One-Day Cup next month, but will instead take a short break from cricket. India's next World Test Championship (WTC) assignment, though, is only in December-January, a two-match series away in South Africa. Peter Handscomb, meanwhile, will extend his stay with Leicestershire as a replacement for Rahane, having already represented them in the County Championship and T20 Blast this season. Leicestershire explained in a statement that Rahane's arrangement with the county had changed "due to increased international commitments", which had not been factored into his plans. "[He] has now expressed his desire to take a break from cricket during August and September," they said. Claude Henderson, Leicestershire's director of cricket, said: "We are fully understanding of Ajinkya's situation. He has experienced a hectic schedule in recent months, both in India and travelling with the national team, and we accept his wishes to recover and spend some time with his family. "We have been in constant communication with Ajinkya and accept how situations can change quickly in cricket. He is extremely grateful for our understanding and still hopes to play for Leicestershire one day. "Thankfully, we had planned for a situation like this, and we are delighted Peter is staying on with the team. He brings many qualities alongside his batting and wicketkeeping, including strong leadership, which is a massive help to Lewis [Hill] and the rest of the guys in our changing room." Rahane was recalled to India's Test squad for the WTC final against Australia and their subsequent series in the West Indies on the back of impressive form in the 2022-23 season of Ranji Trophy and in the IPL for Chennai Super Kings.

## Colombia stun Germany at WC but New Zealand out in tears



SYDNEY: Manuela Vanegas (L) scores the second goal of Team Columbia during the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand Group H match.

SYDNEY (Agencies): Colombia scored a 97th-minute winner to stun Germany 2-1 on a night of Women's World Cup drama Sunday which also saw Norway and Switzerland into the last 16 but co-hosts New Zealand dumped out in tears.

Germany smashed Morocco 6-0 in their opener to underline why they were among the pre-tournament favourites, along with Spain and England, to snatch away the United States' crown.

But they came crashing back down to earth at the hands of a Colombia side

inspired by 18-year-old Linda Caicedo and roared on by the majority of a rowdy 40,000 crowd in Sydney. The Real Madrid attacker scored one of the best goals of the tournament so far, darting past two Germany defenders before curling the ball into the top corner to open the scoring.

Germany thought they had salvaged a point in the 89th minute when skipper Alexandra Popp defied the whistles to score from the penalty spot. But with a pulsating game that deep into stoppage time appeared destined for a draw, Manuela Vanegas

popped up to head home from close range and put Colombia on the verge of the last 16.

"Germany is a world power, that's a reality, but Colombia has been making great strides and today Colombia is a world power," said the defender Vanegas. "I dreamed of scoring a goal in a World Cup, I knew it was going to come and I decided to do it for today's game."

Going into the last round of group matches, Colombia are top of Group H on six points, Germany and Morocco have three and South Korea have zero.

Germany's fate is still in their own hands when they face the Koreans next, with Colombia against Morocco.

Morocco won a Women's World Cup match for the first time after Ibtissam Jraidi struck early to give them a 1-0 victory over South Korea.

In the match, Moroccan defender Nouhaila Benzina became the first player to wear a hijab at the Women's World Cup.

Norway through, New Zealand out -

Norway and Switzerland both emerged out of an excruciatingly tight Group A. Former champions Norway thrashed the Philippines 6-0 in Auckland to squeeze into the last 16 on goal difference from New Zealand.

A full house in Dunedin saw the co-hosts held 0-0 by a stubborn Switzerland as the Football Ferns bowed out of their home tournament in tears.

The 1995 champions Norway needed a win and they did it in style against World Cup debutants the Philippines, who themselves were still in with a chance of reaching the knockouts. Sophie Roman Haug scored a hat-trick as the Philippines' fairytale journey came to a shuddering halt. With Norway well ahead, New Zealand now needed to beat Switzerland.

The hosts had the better of the first half with a string

of chances, the pick of which saw forward Jacqui Hand rattle the post on 24 minutes. As Norway chalked up the goals in Auckland, the New Zealanders upped the intensity, knowing only a win would be good enough to advance.

But the goal they so desperately needed never came. "There are a lot of tears out there, but they should be so proud to finish on four points," captain Ali Riley said.

Australia wait on Kerr - On Monday, Australia will hope to avoid the same fate as their co-hosts.

The Matildas must beat Olympic champions Canada to guarantee a place in the last 16 but are still sweating on their skipper and talismanic striker Sam Kerr. She has declared herself available after a calf injury but it remains to be seen how much of a part she plays.

"Everyone involved in sport knows that with calf injuries it's one thing that you're available, but there's also risk when you come back from a muscle injury," said Australia's coach Tony Gustavsson. Also in Group B, surprise-package Nigeria need just to avoid defeat against already-eliminated Ireland to progress.

Former champions Japan and title contenders Spain meet to decide who tops Group C with both already into the last 16.



## Verstappen takes a crushing eighth win in a row

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS (Reuters): Formula One championship leader Max Verstappen roared to a crushing eighth win in a row, one short of the all-time record, in a Red Bull one-two with Sergio Perez at the Belgian Grand Prix on Sunday.

Red Bull's 13th consecutive victory made the team the first in the sport's 73-year history to win the opening 12 races of a season, one more than McLaren managed in 1988 with Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost.

Verstappen, who started sixth after a five-place grid penalty, extended his championship lead over Perez to 125 points -- effectively five races -- after taking the chequered flag 22.3 seconds ahead of the Mexican. "I knew we had a great car, it was just about surviving turn one," said the double world champion, who has now won in Belgium for the last three years in a row including from 14th on the grid last year.

"From there onwards we made the right overtakes and moves." He is heading for a third title with plenty of races to spare, the only real doubt being where he might seal it.

Charles Leclerc, who started on pole for Ferrari, completed the podium with Lewis Hamilton fourth and securing fastest lap for Mercedes.

The one-two was Red Bull's fifth of the season and so comfortable for Verstappen that his feisty radio chats with race engineer Gianpiero Lambiase provided much more of a talking point. They also showed his supreme confidence. "I could also push on and we do another stop? A little bit of pit stop training," Verstappen suggested with 14 laps remaining.

"No, not this time," came the reply.

Lambiase had earlier told Verstappen sharply to "use your head a bit more" and questioned whether it had been sensible for the driver to push so hard on the tyres on his out lap after a stop. "Max, please follow my instruction and trust it," Lambiase told his driver as early as lap 12 after his word had been questioned.

## AGGRESSIVE START

Perez made an aggressive start from second on the grid, tucking in behind Leclerc through the tight, opening La Source corner and then blasting past on the Kemmel straight to seize the lead. Verstappen was already up to fourth and chasing Hamilton.

He passed the seven-times world champion on lap six at Les Combes and pulled off a similar move on Leclerc three laps later at the same place to start the chase of Perez and a private Red Bull battle.

By lap 16, after both had pitted with Verstappen's stop half a second faster, the Dutch driver was right on Perez's tail and perfectly placed to blow past the Mexican on the Kemmel straight and pull away.

Perez never got another chance after that.

McLaren's Oscar Piastri was the race's first casualty, the Australian rookie stopping by the side of the track after Ferrari's Carlos Sainz squeezed him against the wall at La Source on the opening lap.

"I don't know what he was doing. I was there and he just turned in like I didn't exist," said the Australian rookie who finished second in Saturday's sprint.

Sainz's sidepod was holed in the contact and the Spaniard dropped down the field before pitting to retire at the end of lap 23, with the car wheeled into the garage.

## The Ashes 2023 Broad to retire after conclusion of series

LONDON (Agencies): England bowler Stuart Broad says he will retire after the conclusion of the fifth Ashes Test at The Oval.

The 37-year-old has taken 602 wickets in 167 Tests, making him the second most successful paceman in Test history behind team-mate James Anderson.

Broad said he made the decision on Friday evening.

"It's been a wonderful ride, a huge privilege to wear the Nottinghamshire and the England badge as much as I have," he told Sky Sports. "I've been thinking about it for the last few weeks but England v Australia has always been the pinnacle for me. "I've loved the battles I've had with Australia. I've got a love affair with Ashes cricket and I think I wanted my last bat and bowl to be in Ashes cricket." England reached 389-9 on day three of the series finale, leading by 377, with Broad batting late in the evening.

If they complete victory over the final two days, they will draw the series 2-2, denying Australia a first Ashes win in England since 2001. Broad has taken 20 wickets in the series, the most by an England player, and has admitted his own surprise at being fit to play in all five Tests which have been played in just six weeks.

He has been one of England's great performers in Ashes cricket, taking a record 151 Test wickets against Australia. "I'm loving cricket as much as I ever have," Broad said. "It's been such a wonderful series to be a part of and I've always wanted to finish it at the top."

"This series feels like one of the most enjoyable and entertaining I've been a part of."

"I got emotional when I told Jimmy"

Broad made his debut against Sri Lanka in December 2007. Last week, during the fourth Ashes Test in Manchester, he became just the second pace bowler after Anderson to take 600 Test wickets.

He and Anderson, who has ignored calls to retire himself, are the most successful bowling partnership in Test history. "He just said 'are you joking?'," Broad told BBC Test Match Special, after being asked when he gave Anderson the news.

"We then had a hug. It is always hard.

"When I spoke to Jimmy, I got a bit emotional. But ultimately we have a game to win here. We can do the reminiscing afterwards if we get the job done."

After defeat in the 2021-22 Ashes series in Australia, Broad and Anderson were dropped for a tour of West Indies in the spring of last year but were then recalled when captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum took over. "I told Stokesy [England captain Ben Stokes] last night and told the changing room this morning and to be honest, it felt the right time," Broad said.

"I have thought a lot about it and even up until 8 o'clock last night I was - I wasn't 50/50 - but I was a little bit unsure. "But once I went to Stokesy's room and told him I felt really happy.



THE OVAL: Usman Khawaja opens the face for a guide through deep third, England vs Australia 5th men's Ashes Test.

## Northern Territory Strike beat Pakistan Shaheens by 59 runs

DARWIN (APP): Northern Territory Strike beat Pakistan Shaheens by 59 runs in the opening match of the Top End T20 Series at the Gardens Oval in Darwin on Sunday afternoon.

Shaheens will take on ACT Comets on Monday at the DXC Arena. The first ball will be bowled at 1800 local time. The tournament matches will be live-streamed on Tapmad within Pakistan.

Opting to bat first, Northern Territory Strike scored 185 for five in 20 overs. Param Uppal top-scored for his side, returning unbeaten on 59 off 28 balls, hitting six fours and two towering sixes. Opening batter Josh Kann was another contributor with the bat, scoring a 31-ball 47, which included two fours and four sixes.

For Shaheens, spinners Aaliyan Mahmood and Arafat Minhas bagged two

wickets apiece.

In turn, Shaheens got off to a shaky start, losing two wickets in the first two balls of their innings to right-arm fast Tom Menzies. Opening batter Shamyl Hussain was joined by Captain Rohail Nazir and the pair stitched a 49-run partnership for the third wicket. Left-handed Shamyl returned back to the hut in the eighth over after scoring 26 off 23 balls, which included two fours and a six. After Shamyl's departure, Arafat (3) off 5 balls was soon back in the hut with Shaheens reeling at 62 for four in 8.5 overs.

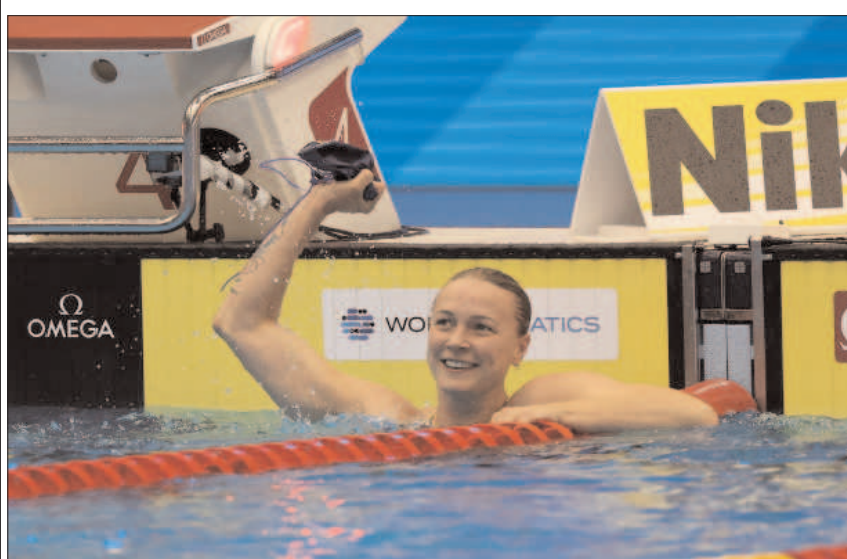
At that stage, Mohammad Irfan Khan joined captain Rohail and the duo knitted 29 runs for the fifth wicket -- the second-best partnership of the innings for the visiting team. The dangerous looking Rohail got out in the

13th over after scoring 41 off 33 balls, hitting two sixes and a four. Irfan (20 off 15 balls with two boundaries and Ahmed Khan (19) off 12 balls with one boundary and one six were the other contributors with the bat before Shaheens were bundled out for 126 in 18.4 overs. For the Northern Territory Strike, Jack Wood and Menzies took four wickets each.

**Scores in brief:** Northern Territory Strike beat Pakistan Shaheens by 59 runs.

Northern Territory Strike 185-5, 20 overs (Param Uppal 59 not out, Josh Kann 47; Arafat Minhas 2-20, Aaliyan Mahmood 2-42)

Pakistan Shaheens 126 all out, 18.4 overs (Rohail Nazir 41, Shamyl Hussain 26, Mohammad Irfan Khan 20, Ahmed Khan 19; Tom Menzies 4-24, Jack Wood 4-28).



FUKUOKA: Sarah Sjoestrom celebrates victory in the Women's 50m Freestyle final on day eight of the Fukuoka 2023 World Aquatics Championships.

## Morocco's Benzina makes history with hijab at Women's WC

ADELAIDE (AFP): Nouhaila Benzina became the first player to wear a hijab during a Women's World Cup game when she sported the Muslim headscarf in Morocco's match against South Korea on Sunday.

World governing body FIFA lifted its ban on footballers wearing the hijab nearly a decade ago, after previous concerns over player safety.

The 25-year-old defender Benzina, who plays her club football in Morocco, ran out against South Korea in Adelaide to write her name in the history books.

Benzina shared social media posts in the lead-up to the World Cup about wearing a hijab, but has not spoken to the media in Australia and New Zealand about it. She told broadcaster Al Jazeera recently it would be a proud moment.

"Lots of work was done over many years, and thank God it had a positive result," she said. "We hope to play at a high level and honour Moroccans."

Several other sports have lifted hijab bans in recent years including basketball, but it is still not allowed during official football matches in France.

The Moroccan women, coached by Frenchman Reynald Pedros, are at their first Women's World Cup on the back of a historic runners-up finish at the 2022 Women's Africa Cup of Nations.

They were thrashed 6-0 by Germany in their tournament opener, with Benzina remaining on the bench.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 443,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 443,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 538,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1533.65 feet and was 135.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 283,700 cusecs and 256,300 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1227.00 feet, which was 177.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 76,900 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 314,700, 368,300, 450,200 and 360,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 69,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 70,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Sunday issued power suspension programme for Monday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesperson, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 2:00 PM Islamabad Circle, Upper Topa, Patriata, TDCP Feeders, From 07:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Islamabad Circle, Highway, Zia Masjid, Service Road East, Iqbal Town Feeders Rawalpindi City Circle, Fazahia, Nogzi, Bajnyal, Azizabad, People's Colony Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Rahmatabad-1feeder, Chakwal Circle, Chakral, Sarkal, Latifal Feeders, Jhelum Circle, Express Mangala, Madu Kals Feeder, Attock Circle, Pind Pran, Valley, Gulshan Sehat, Sangjani, Shahullah Dutta, AWT 4, MVCHS, MPCHS B-17, Paswal, Sarai Kharboza Feeders and surrounding areas.

### AIOU commences final examinations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is conducting examinations of open courses, certificate courses, Matriculation, F.A. and I.Com programs offered in the spring 2023 semester from September 1, 2023, to October 5, 2023, throughout the country. The date sheet is available on the university website [www.aiou.edu.pk](http://www.aiou.edu.pk), said the press release issued by the AIOU. Roll number slips are being uploaded to students' CMS portal and will be dispatched to the students at their addresses as well. Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof Dr. Nasir Mahmood has instructed the examinations department to ensure transparency and provide all facilities to the students during the conduct of examinations.

### PHA to set up grand nursery

RAWALPINDI (APP): Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi would set up a grand nursery to provide plants to the citizens at affordable rates and to generate more revenue, said PHA spokesperson. She informed that the authority had kicked off the monsoon plantation drive.



ISLAMABAD: Billboard and Pak-China flags are being displayed at Srinagar Highway in connection with 10 years celebration of CPEC.

## PPP always focused on well-being of people: NA Speaker

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf reaffirmed on Sunday that Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)'s top priority is the progress of the nation and people's happiness.

He conveyed these thoughts while addressing the participants of a public meeting held in Chhapar village, a Union Council Kori Dolal. Provincial Assembly candidate Khurram Pervez Raja was also present on the occasion. The speaker emphasized that the PPP had always focused on the well-being of the people.

He further stated that the party had relentlessly worked towards the nation's development and will continue to sacrifice anything for the prosperity of the people in the future.

On this occasion, a significant number of people from Union Council Kori Dolal announced their formal joining of the PPP, saying goodbye to their previous parties.

Among those who joined were Raja Muhammad Irfan, Raja Muhammad Yasin, Raja Shahid Mahmood, Raja

Muhammad Nauman, Raja Muhammad Sufian, Raja Wasim, Raja Abdul Wahab, Raja Umair Farooq, Raja Faisal, Raja Manzar, Raja Majid, Khalid Mahmood Raja, Raja Israr, Raja Sajjad, Raja Adeel, Raja Sajid, Raja Atif, Raja Abid Chohan, Raja Riaz Chohan, Raja Javed, Raja Khizer Hayat, Raja Azhar Mahmood, Raja Majid, Raja Sarfraz, Raja Naseer, and other individuals.

Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf warmly welcomed all those who joined the party and expressed gratitude to them for showing confidence in the party leadership. He mentioned that under the guidance of the party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and President Asif Ali Zardari, the party was tirelessly working for the betterment of the people day and night.

He expressed the hope that in the upcoming elections, the PPP would achieve significant success.

He assured that every possible means would be employed to ensure the happiness of Pakistan's people, especially in Gujar Khan. The speaker stated that they were well aware

of the challenges and hardships faced by the people and taking effective measures to provide them with necessary facilities.

He acknowledged the trust and confidence the people of Gujar Khan had placed in him by electing him as their representative in the parliament.

He pledged to continue raising their issues on every platform without any hesitation. He affirmed that immediate and permanent solutions were taken to address the problems of his constituency, be it in education, roads, gas, electricity, or any other issues.

He promised to continue being the voice of his people in the future, ensuring that their fundamental needs were met without any difficulties. He reiterated his commitment to take initiative for the resolution of problems faced by all those who have joined the party. All those who joined the PPP commended Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf's efforts for the happiness of his constituency and pledged to work together with him and the party for the progress and well-being of the country and the nation.

### Muharram processions provided best security: CPO

RAWALPINDI (APP): CPO Rawalpindi Syed Khalaid Hamdani has said that best possible security arrangements were finalized for Muharram processions and Majalis of Rawalpindi district.

CPO informed that over 6000 cops had been deployed to guard 447 processions and 1925 Majalis of Rawalpindi district. He said that Rawalpindi District Police had finalized all the arrangements to ensure fool-proof security arrangements for Muharram ul Haram. The CPO said that over 6000 police personnel were performing security duties while more than 1000 officers and personnel of traffic Police were also deployed to ensure traffic arrangements.

## Delaying election for holding new census not possible: Kaira

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advisor to the Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira Sunday said that it would not be possible to delay elections on the basis of holding a new 'Census' by demanding establishing new parties.

Talking to a private news channel, Kaira informed that the process of electoral reforms was already started and the Election Commission was busy in the preparation of conducting elections at its specific time and period.

Replying to a question, he said that delaying elections would not be favorable

for the country's stability and PML-N was also not in favor to delay the process at any cost. "The caretaker setup has a huge responsibility to run a country in an appropriate manner," he added.

Kaira said that even the issuance of the notification about new census would not stop the process of elections.

"In the caretaker setup, politicians need to come and participate in it and perform with a huge responsibility. As most of the politicians are performing their responsibilities beyond the limits, however the country's stability lies in the Constitution and rule of law", he concluded.

## ANF seizes over 371 kg drugs in 12 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 12 operations across the country managed to recover over 371 kg drugs and arrested 10 accused including three women and a foreigner.

Spokesman of ANF Headquarters told on Sunday that one kg hashish was recovered from a woman, resident of Charsada arrested near Motorway Toll Plaza Islamabad.

In another operation, 1.8 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused resident of Boner rounded up from the parking area of PIMS Hospital Islamabad. In third operation, 80 intoxicated tablets were recovered from the possession of an accused, resident of Islamabad netted from F-10 Center

Islamabad. 115 grams cocaine was recovered from a foreigner, riding a motorcycle and was arrested from British Homes Rawalpindi.

288 kg hashish recovered from an oil tanker intercepted on Peshawar Kohat Indus Highway which was concealed in secret cavities of the tanker. The accused resident of Karachi was trying to smuggle hashish from Peshawar to Karachi was nabbed during the operation.

In a major operation at the cargo of Karachi Jinnah International Airport, over 4.1 kg hashish was recovered from a parcel being sent from Portugal to Paraguay via Pakistan.

In another operation at Jinnah International Airport, 1.1 kg heroin was

recovered from the possession of a Colombo-bound passenger, resident of Gujranwala, going on flight no UL-184.

In the eighth operation, two women and a man, residents of Chaman, traveling in a taxi car were arrested near Lakpas, Quetta and recovered from them 21.6 kg hashish hidden in their clothes.

In the ninth operation, 1.2 kg hashish was recovered from an accused, a local resident rounded up near Kot Ghulamabad Bypass, Okara.

The spokesman informed that in three operations conducted in Jurobi, Zakhkhail area of Khyber, 52.5 kg hashish was recovered.

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

## Acknowledging brilliance of talented youth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Brilliant youth excelling in education and research provide as a backbone for any nation and its economy as they take strides in different arenas of life competing regionally and internationally to develop a strong base.

Their acknowledgment in the form of equipping them with the latest research techniques and gadgets pave the way for them to be compatible with international standards and capture more and more slots at universities abroad.

As many poor students who win laurels in studies were hit by abject poverty and lacking the latest equipment to compete in the world market, therefore the PML-N government has revived the Laptop Scheme for the outstanding students by allocating Rs 10 billion in budget 2023-24.

This amount would be spent to provide 100,000 high-quality latest laptops to talented students of public sector universities studying all degree programs including BS (16 Years), MS/MPhil (18 Years), and PhD under the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme.

Laptops' share is calculated on an enrollment basis in each degree program as the scheme announced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif aims at facilitating outstanding students to continue higher studies and earn a respectable living.

"In this era of latest learning techniques, laptops, and smart gadgets have an important role in building a knowledge economy and creating massive job opportunities for youth," said Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Youth Affairs Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

Commenting on the scheme, she informed that the laptop scheme which was halted by the previous PTI government, has been revived with plans to distribute 100,000 laptops among talented students.

"It was a flagship project of

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), launched during the government of the then Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif with a vision to empower youth by creating an enabling environment," she added.

She also mentioned the distribution of half a million laptops from 2013-2018 by the then PML-N government keeping in mind the importance of the latest technologies.

"This scheme will improve the quality of science and technology education by increasing productivity and efficiency of students in advanced IT technologies."

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has successfully executed two such schemes in the past by following strict criteria to ensure transparency.

According to an HEC official, the program would benefit the students who are enrolled in any five-year program after June 30, 2018, and before June 30, 2023, while for the four-year program, the students must have been enrolled after June 30, 2019, and before June 30, 2023.

Similarly, students enrolled in a two-year program must be admitted after June 30, 2021, and before June 30, 2023. For 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 years programs, the starting admission dates are December 31, 2019, December 31, 2020, and December 31, 2021, with the end date remaining the same as June 30, 2023 for all three programs.

"Students' eligibility and enrollment status as defined is validated prior to distribution of laptops and only those students who apply timely through an online portal and fulfill specified criteria are awarded laptops," the HEC official said.

"Merit is strictly observed to distribute laptops among students of all degree programs including BS (16 Years), MS/MPhil (18 Years) and PhD." He said, "The students must

have secured 70 percent marks in the semester system and 60 percent marks in the annual system."

"CGPA/ GPA to percentage conversion shall be governed by the HEC-defined formula. The top meritorious students assigned the allocated quota of each department/ program are considered for the award of laptops as per their respective quota (year-wise or semester-wise)."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has also reiterated that the laptop scheme under the Youth Program had become a creed for the progress of Pakistani youth.

"The scheme would bring a knowledge revolution and create practical opportunities for online employment," he said in a tweet on his Twitter handle. "Today I am pleased to know that by taking advantage from this scheme brilliant male and female students were writing exemplary chapters of success."

He remarked that these intelligent students were our asset and they would find him along with them in excelling in different fields of life. "For the youth laptops are a machine but for me it is a mission."

Since the government has increased financial allocation for this scheme, it is also distributing laptops purely on merit. The Prime Minister is himself attending the laptop-giving ceremonies across the country to ensure transparency and encourage the brilliant students of the motherland. "I believe there should be no hindrance in their journey of gaining education and knowledge and touching the sky in their endeavors by exploring new horizons," the PM remarked. It has been noticed that over the period mushroom growth of educational institutions had deteriorated the education standard within the country, there is also a dire need for the present and the upcoming governments to ensure quality education keeping in view the international standards.

## Marriyum condemns violence against 14-year Rizwana

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb has strongly condemned the incident of violence against a 14-year-old domestic worker Rizwana and demanded swift justice in the case. The minister, in a news statement on Sunday, called the incident "shameful" and "condemnable."

She emphasized that no society could tolerate such oppressive elements, especially when it involved child labor and the brutal treatment to young individuals like Rizwana. Marriyum said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed Caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi to take serious notice of the matter

and ensure swift action to bring the perpetrators to justice. The government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, was committed to play its due role in ensuring that the accused were punished according to the law, she added. She regretted that the courts were granting bail to the culprits instead of delivering justice to the innocent victim, Rizwana.

The minister stressed that delivering justice to Rizwana was a litmus test for the judiciary's reputation. She pledged all-out efforts to ensure that the oppressed daughter, Rizwana, received the justice she rightfully deserved. The nation, she urged, should unite in prayers for her early recovery.

## British High Commissioner-designate arrives in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): British High Commissioner-designate to Pakistan, Jane Marriott CMG OBE, has arrived in Islamabad on Sunday to take up her new posting at British High Commission Islamabad. Jane arrives at an important time for UK-Pakistan relations, with a significant uplift in UK aid spending in Pakistan that focused on strengthening climate resilience and reducing humanitarian risks. Last month, the UK also launched the new Developing Countries Trading Scheme, which will help Pakistan to boost exports by reducing tariffs and simplifying trade terms.

On arrival in Islamabad, she said, "I am delighted to be here in Pakistan, a country

that deeply matters to, and has a long-standing relationship with, the UK. With over 1.6 million people of Pakistani heritage in the UK making up every part of British society, we have a special and ever-growing special bonds. "Our friendship stems from our shared history and values, deep people-to-people ties, growing trade links and a renewed development partnership. I will be working hard to continue to expand these. "With the climate emergency a growing threat to health and livelihoods across the world, I have a particular interest in ensuring the bilateral relationship between our countries is a green, sustainable one, she added."

## River Indus runs in medium low flood with rising trend

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Flood Commission (FFC) has said that presently, River Indus is experiencing medium flood in Guddu-Sukkur Reach with rising trend whereas it is in low flood situation at four locations (Tarbela-Kalabagh-Chashma-Taunsa). According to daily FFC report on Sunday, Rivers Sutlej at Head Suleimanki, Ravi in

Balloki-Sidhnai Reach and Kabul at Nowshera are flowing in low Flood. Rivers Jhelum and Chenab are discharging normal flows. Tarbela Reservoir has attained water level of 1534.61 feet (15.39 feet below against its Maximum Conservation Level (MCL) of 1550 feet) whereas Mangla Reservoir is at an elevation of 1227.00 feet (15.00 feet below its MCL

of 1242.00 feet).

According to Flood Forecasting Division (FFD), Lahore, yesterday's trough of Westerly Wave over Northern parts of Pakistan lies over Kashmir and adjoining areas. Seasonal Low lies over North-western Balochistan.

Mild moist currents from Arabian Sea are penetrating into upper parts of the country upto 5,000 feet.



ISLAMABAD: A family is enjoying the motor boat ride at Rawal Dam.



Muttaqi meet British scholars

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi in a meeting with British scholars who are on a visit to Afghanistan, said that positive interaction with the world is one of the primary goals of the Islamic Emirate's foreign policy. A statement from the office of Foreign Ministry said, Acting Foreign Minister, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi met with a number of scholars who had traveled to Afghanistan from Britain at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Minister arrives in Doha

KABUL (Agencies): A delegation led by Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi traveled to Doha on Sunday to discuss some crucial matters with US Officials. Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed the delegation's trip to Doha. The delegation is scheduled to discuss lifting sanctions, removing IEA leaders from blacklists, release of foreign exchange assets of Da Afghanistan Bank, and the violation of Afghan airspace with US representatives.

Ministry says it will pay compensation to disabled, other eligible people

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled announced the payment of compensation to the disabled, orphans, and widows this year. Faisal Khamosh, the spokesman for the ministry, said the current government will pay the salaries of six months of year 1402 to the disabled, orphans, and widows. "For the disabled, orphans, and widows, the distribution of salaries for the six months of the 1402 year has been started across the country and each of them will be paid their salaries in turn," the spokesman said. According to the ministry spokesperson, to clarify the process of the distribution of funds to the disabled, databases have been created in 18 provinces, including the capital, and more than three thousand people who were not eligible for this process have been removed from the databases. "So far, the database system has been activated in 18 provinces including Kabul, Jawzjan, Ghazni, Laghman, Nangarhar, Herat, Balkh, and other provinces. The database system will provide transparency in the distribution of salaries to the disabled, orphans, and widows," said Faisal Khamosh. Meanwhile, some disabled people emphasized the need for transparency and the acceleration of the process.

Railway transit up 25% from last solar year: ARA

KABUL (TOLONews): Bakht Rahman Sharafat, acting head of the Afghanistan Railway Authority, in an annual activities report said there has been a 25 percent increase in the transit of goods via railway in the first quarter of the current solar year compared to the same period last year. He also mentioned the trans-Afghan railway project, saying that the project will connect Central Asia to South Asia and Eastern Europe to South Asia and its work has accelerated. "In transit, compared to previous years. We had a 25 percent surge in the first quarter. Which means that we have a 25 percent increase in revenue as well in the transit between Afghanistan and regional countries through the Hairatan, Aqeen, Toghondi and Rozanak railways," said Bakhrahman Sharafat, head of the ARA. According to officials, more than 4.5 million met-



ric tons of goods have been carried via railway. "The Afghanistan National Railway Authority has been able to collect its revenue via the banking system of RMIS and CBS and we assure the nation that even one afghani of revenue cannot be wasted or looted. All the revenue is being collected transparently," said Abdul Sami Durrani, a spokesman for the ARA. The ARA said that there are many projects underway to improve the Afghanistan railway industry.

Security forces work tirelessly to ensure countrywide security: Hanafi

KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi in a meeting with a number of leaders and influential figures from Shia community, said that the officials and security organs are working day and night to ensure security in all corners of the country. According to a statement released by Prime Minister Office, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, met with a number of Shia elders and influential people in his office. Sheikh Madar Ali Karimi Bamiani, deputy urban development minister, Mr. Seyed Sufi Gardizi and Seyed Hassan Sharifi Balkhabi who were present in the meeting, talked about the security situation of Muharram ceremonies and praised security forces for their continued efforts for the protection of worship places. The officials, security organs and the Mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate are working day and night to ensure the security and safety of citizens of the country, said Deputy Prime Minister Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi.

Iran's export to Afghanistan reaches \$44m in 4 months

KABUL (Khaama Press): According to Mehdi Davandeh, the governor of Taybad, Iran exported 150,126 tonnes of goods worth \$44.5 million to Afghanistan over the Dowqarun border during the first four months of the current solar calendar (March 21-July 22). Iran's export to Afghanistan stood at 150,126 tons worth \$44.5 million through the Dowqarun border during the first four months of the current solar year, registering an 8% and 7% year-on-year rise in weight and value, respectively, Davandeh said on Saturday, Mehr News Agency reported. He said that foodstuffs, petroleum products, and various building materials are key exports from Iran to Afghanistan. Meanwhile, 170,829 tons of goods worth \$596.2 million were transported from other countries through Iran to Afghanistan. Earlier in March, the deputy head of Afghanistan's Chamber of Commerce and Investment said that Iran is a significant trade partner of Afghanistan. Khanjan Alkozai emphasized the trade relations between both countries, referring to Iran as Afghanistan's major trade partner. He said that trade between Afghanistan and Iran is currently worth \$2 billion and has the potential to grow by \$10 billion annually. According to him, the two countries can potentially increase their bilateral trade to \$10 billion. He also stated that Afghanistan is keen to invest in the mining and mineral sectors, agriculture, and herbal remedies.

Afghan Minister tells Turkish envoy deportation not solution



KABUL (Agencies): Afghanistan's deputy minister of migration has met with Turkey's ambassador to Kabul and said deporting Afghan migrants is not a permanent solution, and that Ankara should instead take in workers on an official quota basis.

Mohammad Arsla Kharouti told the Turkish envoy Cihad Erginay that as migrants are deported, another group enters Turkey illegally. Kharouti said that Erginay promised to investigate problems Afghan migrants are facing in Turkey and that plans

would be drawn up for an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) delegation from the ministry to visit Turkey in the near future. This comes amid an accelerated process of deportation and forced returns of Afghan migrants from Turkey in the past few

months. In the past year, Turkey has deported more than 57,000 illegal Afghan migrants. Turkey however remains the most popular overland route for Afghan migrants seeking refuge in Europe. Currently, Turkey hosts about 300,000 Afghans.

Construction of Sar-e-Pul and Uruzgan dams to start soon

SAR-E-PUL (Agencies): Two new major dams will be built in the near future after the Islamic Emirate's economic commission on Saturday approved contracts for the projects. At a regular meeting of the commission, at Marmarin Palace, which was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, the contracts for the construction of Sultan Ibrahim Dam in Sar-e-Pul

province and the Agha Jan Dam in Chinarto district of Uruzgan were signed with the National Development Corporation. According to the deputy prime minister's office, the projects are scheduled to commence in the near future. A decision was also taken at the meeting to stop the transloading of petroleum products at the Farah, Herat and Nimroz ports. Going forward, the transportation of such products will only be imported into

Afghanistan in one vehicle – from source to destination. It has been common practice for more than one tanker to be used – where fuel is transferred from one vehicle to another at border posts before entering the country. Based on the Economic Commission's decision, Afghan fuel tankers will also in future be authorized to transport fuel and oil into Afghanistan. In addition, the Ministry of Justice and the

Department of Revenue of the Ministry of Finance presented a plan focused on increasing revenue and implementing effective management practices. The plan entails revitalizing existing sources of income for the Ministry of Justice and exploring 14 new revenue streams within its framework. This comprehensive strategy is expected to significantly boost the annual income of the Ministry of Justice.

UN forced to cut food aid to millions globally

KABUL (Agencies): The United Nations has been forced to cut food, cash payments and assistance to millions of people in many countries because of "a crippling funding crisis" that has seen its donations plummet by about half as acute hunger is hitting record levels, a top official said Friday. Carl Skau, deputy executive director of the World Food Program, told a news conference that at least 38 of the 86 countries where WFP operates have already seen cuts or plan to cut assistance soon – including Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and West Africa. He said WFP's operating requirement is \$20 billion to deliver aid to everyone in

need, but it was aiming for between \$10 billion and \$14 billion, which was what the agency had received in the past few years. "We're still aiming at that, but we have only so far this year gotten to about half of that, around \$5 billion," Skau said. He said humanitarian needs were "going through the roof" in 2021 and 2022 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine and its global implications. "Those needs continue to grow, those drivers are still there," he said, "but the funding is drying up. So we're looking at 2024 (being) even more dire." "The largest food and

nutrition crisis in history today persists," Skau said. "This year, 345 million people continue to be acutely food insecure while hundreds of millions of people are at risk of worsening hunger." Skau said that in March, WFP was forced to cut rations from 75% to 50% for communities in Afghanistan facing emergency levels of hunger, and in May it was forced to cut food for 8 million people – 66% of the people it was assisting. He urged world leaders to prioritize humanitarian funding and invest in long-term solutions to conflicts, poverty, development and other root causes of the current crisis.

‘Over 100,000 tankers entering country checked in past year’

KABUL (TOLONews): Faizullah Tamim, acting head of the Afghanistan National Standards Authority (ANSA) said that more than 100,000 tankers of oil, gas and other fuels have been tested over the last year, of which 2,000 have been rejected due to low quality. Speaking at a press conference on the organization's annual activities, Tamim said that there has been a 15 percent increase in ANSA's revenue compared to previous years. "I want to assure all our countrymen that up to 70 percent of transparency has been ensured in the standardization process," he said. The officials of ANSA called on the traders to avoid importing low quality goods to the country. "Those traders who lack access to national standard measures, they can refer to



ANSA and receive it and continue their activities based on policies and standards," said Ashoquallah Waziri, a spokesman for ANSA.

The deputy head of ANSA, Mohammad Asif Qanat, vowed to implement the standardization measures in various sectors.

"There are 775 standardization measures in engineering, development, construction, highways and bridge design," Qanat said.

UAE supports efforts for stability in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Top UAE and UN diplomats have discussed Afghanistan's overall situation and the prospect of collaboration. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, met with Ambassador Feridun Hadi Sinirlioglu, UN-appointed Special Coordinator for the Independent Assessment of the Situation in Afghanistan. Sheikh Abdullah reiterated the UAE's support for the UN Security Council-mandated Independent Assessment of the Situation in Afghanistan. The UAE's initiatives for supporting Afghanistan and its people across various sectors highlighted the importance of bolstering international cooperation to tackle the challenges facing the people in Afghanistan, including women, and support efforts to meet their needs, according to the Emirates News Agency. After the meeting, the top diplomat for the UAE



wished Ambassador Sinirliolu success in carrying out his responsibilities and reaffirmed the UAE's steadfast commitment to supporting all global initiatives that aim to bring peace, stability, and prosperity to the Afghan people. Since the Taliban took

over Afghanistan, the UAE has provided humanitarian support to the people of Afghanistan, particularly in medical and food supplies to Afghanistan, to meet the needs of families affected by natural disasters. According to the UAE's Foreign Ministry, the coun-

try's humanitarian operations in Afghanistan from 2021 to 2022 included the creation of a relief air bridge that dispatched 28 planes with 623 tonnes of food and medical supplies, helping about 1.1 million people, including 850,000 women and children.

EU, US airlines to use Afghan airspace, says media report

KABUL (TOLONews): The Economic Times reported that in the coming weeks the travel time between the East, including India, and the West will be significantly reduced, especially after key aviation regulators will allow commercial aircraft to resume flying over Afghanistan. According to the Economic Times, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has granted permission to American airlines to fly over the Kabul Flight Information Region (FIR) at altitudes exceeding 32,000 feet. "The first benefit for

Afghanistan is that it once again connects with all Europe and all other countries which in fact creates credibility. Second, it earns revenue," said Sayed Masoud, an economist. This decision comes as the FAA has assessed reduced risks to US civil aviation operations at higher altitudes in the region, the report said, adding that the move aligns with the European Union Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) directive to its member state airlines, urging them not to fly below 32,000 feet due to ongoing potential threats to civil aviation and high operational risks at

lower altitudes. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Transportation and Aviation Authority said that efforts are underway to attract more airlines to use Afghan air space. Imamuddin Ahmadi, a spokesman for the ministry, said that it has earned more than \$8.4 million in revenue from the use of Afghan airspace within the past four months. "Any flight which is crossing the Afghan air space should pay \$700. As the flights increase, it benefits Afghanistan," he said. Meanwhile, an official of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI),

Khanjan Alokozai, called for an improvement of diplomatic efforts to pave the way for an increase in flights over Afghanistan. "The Ministry of Transportation and Aviation Authority and the Islamic Emirate should try to convince the world countries to fly their airlines through our air space," he said. After the Islamic Emirate came to power, many airline companies stopped using Afghan air space. The Ministry of Transportation and Aviation Authority said that the Afghan airspace is safe and opened for the airlines.



# Dar pledges to raise foreign reserves to \$15 bln in 7 weeks

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Ishaq Dar, on Sunday, pledged to increase the country's foreign exchange reserves from \$14 billion to \$15 billion in the next seven weeks. Speaking on a Point of Order in the Senate, Dar mentioned that the past 11 months had been challenging due to predictions from rating agencies about Pakistan's potential default. The country faced pressure to pay a significant sum of 3 billion dollars.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said China has extended the loan duration of \$2.4 billion for two years. This month, Pakistan, facing financial constraints, received a total of \$4.2 billion, which comprised \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia, \$1 billion from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and \$1.2 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF approved \$3 billion for Pakistan as part of a Standby

Arrangement (SBA).

Dar revealed that Pakistan received \$300 million from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) to strengthen the country's foreign exchange reserves. He said the irresponsible statement of former Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar caused a loss of Rs70 billion to Pakistan International Airlines (PIA).

He emphasized that the timely legislation will result in the finalization of PIA's flight operation to the United Kingdom by October next.

The finance minister criticized the PTI government, expressing concern about Pakistan's economy, which dropped from the 24th to the 47th ranking.

He stressed the importance of joint efforts to regain the lost position. Additionally, he proposed creating a charter of the economy involving all political parties to promote economic growth.

## Five names finalized for Caretaker PM, says Shah

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Water Resources Syed Khurshed Ahmed Shah has said that five names have been finalized for Caretaker Prime Minister (PM) and assemblies will dissolve on August 09.

He said a Committee of all parties finalized these names. The shortlisted candidates for Caretaker PM were neutral and they were not associated with any political party.

While talking to media persons after visiting the site of the Greater Karachi Bulk Water Supply Scheme K-IV project at Keenjhar Lake on Sunday, he said that they were making all-out efforts to complete the project by 2024 or at the start of 2025. Replying to a question over the delay of the K-IV project which was expected to complete in 2018, he said, "Where there is a will, there is a way."

He said that their 'Will' was that they had to complete this project whether two months before or two months later. He said that an investigation should be carried out to know about the responsible for the project's design, and who become the cause of the failure of the first project. He further said that the delay was a big tragedy.

Khurshed Shah said that the design of the project had been finalized while keeping in view the failure of the first project.

Replying to another question, he said that the water of the K-IV project would be supplied through pressure pumps. While expressing his concerns over the non-availability of infrastructure to supply water to the K-IV project, he said that talks with the Sindh government were underway over the issue and he hoped that the provincial government would look into the matter immediately.

## Mahmood Khan among 22 expelled from PTI

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) terminated the membership of 22 leaders, including former Punjab chief minister Mahmood Khan, according to a report on Sunday.

The development came after Khattak formed the breakaway faction, PTI parliamentarians. Other leaders who had been expelled from the party were Shafiq Afridi, Ziaullah Bangash, Ishia Umar, Iqbal Wazeer, Yaqoob Sheikh and Wilson Wazeer. The notice was issued by PTI secretary general Omar Ayub Khan to the defected members. Earlier this month, Khattak formed his own political party after parting with the original party. The party had been named Pakistan T e h r e e k - e - I n s a f (Parliamentarians), and Khattak will be its head.

The party membership of Khattak had been revoked. For not responding to the show-cause notice, the PTI had taken action against Khattak. Khattak's basic membership was terminated, according to a notification from PTI Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan. Earlier, the PTI issued a show-cause notice to Khattak for allegedly inciting members to leave the party.

police recovered a big Cache of Weaponry from them and recovered eight abductees who were kidnapped for ransom.

The CM said that he has directed the IG Police to send the recovered sensitive weapons for forensic testy so that it could be ascertained from where they were bringing the weapons which were even not available with the police. The CM told the media that during briefing the IG Police told him that 10 persons were still in the possession of the dacoits.

They include Farhan Ali Soomro, Jagdish Kumar, Jai Deep Kumar, Sadaqat Hajano, Maqbool Mirani, Dr Munir Naich, Rehman jafari, Ahmad Alio Punjabi, Waqas Ahmad and Asghar Bhatti were in the possession of the dacoits. "I have given seven days to the police to recover the kidnapped persons and I am sure our police were capable enough to recover them.

Police has given me a detailed briefing about all the districts of katcha area where dacoits have created a law & order situation.

Mr Shah said that when PPP had taken over in Sindh 2008 no highway was safe even during the daytime. "Our government restored the writ of the government nad eliminated the dacoits factor," he said and added again the dacoits have challenged the government and we would crush them shortly. Mr Shah said that the IG Police told him that some gangs of dacoits were active in Kashmore district and they were using most sensitive weapons. The CM said that IGF Police told him that the notorious gang of Janu Inder and Soomar Shar have been eliminated on July 27, 2023.

They were involved in the killing of police in District Ghotki and Kashmore and started a new wave of extortion and kidnapping for ransom. The

## Air Chief holds key meetings during China visit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu called on various dignitaries during his visit to China.

In these meetings, the Air Chief called on Chinese Defence Minister and State Councilor General Li Shangfu, People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) Commander General Chang Dingqiu, Chief of Equipment Development Department General Xu Xueqiang and Director General Bureau of Military Equipment and Technical Cooperation (Bometec) Major General Fan Jianjun, a Pakistan Air Force (PAF) news release said. During the meetings matters pertaining to mutual interest and regional security situation were discussed. The dignitaries also discussed the evolving geopolitical environment and regional developments having significant implications for both countries.

During this historical engagement between the highest level military leadership of the two nations, the Chief of the Air Staff

said that Pakistan values its strong diplomatic and defence ties with China which are based on convergence on all important issues related to regional peace and security while reiterating strong strategic partnership in the face of shared challenges.

A smartly turned-out contingent presented a guard of honour to the Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force on his arrival at the PLAAF Headquarters, in Beijing, China. The PLAAF Commander expressed his admiration for the professionalism of the Pakistan Air Force personnel and praised the remarkable progress made by the Pakistan Air Force through indigenization. The Air Chief reiterated his unwavering commitment to enhancing the existing bilateral ties in military-to-military cooperation, strategic alliance and the training domain.

Later, during two separate meetings between the Air Chief and General Xu Xueqiang, Chief of the Equipment Development Department, and Major

General Fan Jianjun, Director General Bureau of Military Equipment & Technical Cooperation (Bometec), several key points on exploring opportunities for technology transfer and collaborative development of advanced military hardware were also discussed. The Chief of the Air Staff also met the Industrial heads of the Chinese Defence Industry.

The meetings were focused on defence acquisitions and technology collaboration between the two sides. Highlighting the significance of the longstanding partnership between the two countries, the Air Chief said that PAF leadership wishes to further deepen the existing aviation cooperation and exchanges with China in the fields of human resources and technology so as to jointly address shared security challenges. The visit of the Chief of the Air Staff to China is a testament to the strong commitment of both nations to further enhance their strategic partnership through continued dialogue and military collaboration.

## CM Murad announces special allowance for police

F.P. Report

KANDHKOT, KASHMORE: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has announced giving 'special katcha allowance' to the policemen working in Riverine Area (katcha area) against the dacoits and would strengthen them further by constructing their police pickets.

"I would also give other rewards to the police if the people, including Irfan Soomro kidnapped from Kashmore, recover from the clutches of dacoits within the next week." This he said while addressing a press conference just after presiding over a law & order meeting here at SSP Office on Sunday. He was accompanied by provincial ministers, Shabir Bijarani, Mukesh Chawla, Jam Khan Shoro, Advisor to CM Aijaz Khan Jakhrami, and IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon. The CM said that he has chaired a meeting on law & order at the SSP office where IG

Police has given me a detailed briefing about all the districts of katcha area where dacoits have created a law & order situation.

Mr Shah said that when PPP had taken over in Sindh 2008 no highway was safe even during the daytime. "Our government restored the writ of the government nad eliminated the dacoits factor," he said and added again the dacoits have challenged the government and we would crush them shortly. Mr Shah said that the IG Police told him that some gangs of dacoits were active in Kashmore district and they were using most sensitive weapons. The CM said that IGF Police told him that the notorious gang of Janu Inder and Soomar Shar have been eliminated on July 27, 2023.

They were involved in the killing of police in District Ghotki and Kashmore and started a new wave of extortion and kidnapping for ransom. The

## Three Ukrainian drones downed over Mosow: Russia defence ministry

MOSCOW (AFP/APP): Three Ukrainian drones were downed over Moscow early Sunday, Russia's defence ministry said, in an attack that briefly shut an international airport.

While one of the drones was shot down on the city's outskirts, two others were "suppressed by electronic warfare" and smashed into an office complex. No one was injured.

Moscow and its environs, lying about 500 kilometres (310 miles) from the Ukrainian border, had been rarely targeted during the conflict in Ukraine until several drone attacks this year. The attack reported Sunday is the latest in a series of recent drone assaults -- including on the Kremlin and Russian towns near the border with Ukraine -- that Moscow has blamed on Kyiv.

The defence ministry called it an "attempted terrorist attack".

"On the morning of July 30, the Kyiv regime's attempted terrorist attack with unmanned aerial vehicles on objects in the city of Moscow was thwarted," it said on Telegram.

"One Ukrainian UAV was destroyed in the air by air defence systems over the territory of the

Odintsovo district of Moscow region.

"Two more drones were suppressed by electronic warfare and, having lost control, crashed on the territory of Moscow-City's non-residential building complex."

Moscow-City is a commercial development to the city's west.

City Mayor Sergei Sobyanin posted on Telegram that the "facades of two city office towers were slightly damaged". He added that there were "no victims or injured".

The TASS state news agency reported that the capital's Vnukovo airport was "closed for departures and arrivals, flights are redirected to other airports". Within less than an hour, operations appeared to have returned to normal. Earlier this month, a volley of drone attacks briefly disrupted air traffic at the same airport, to the city's southwest.

The attacks on Moscow come several weeks into a Ukrainian counter-offensive to claw back territory captured by Russia since large-scale hostilities erupted in February 2022.

Russia's foreign ministry has said such attacks "would not be possible without the help provided to the Kyiv

regime by the US and its NATO allies". On Friday Russia said it had intercepted two missiles over its southern Rostov region bordering Ukraine, with at least 16 people wounded by debris falling on the city of Taganrog.

**Putin defends arrests of critics during 'armed conflict' with Ukraine:** President Vladimir Putin on Saturday defended an unprecedented crackdown on dissenting voices in Russia at a time of "armed conflict" with Ukraine, urging everyone to follow "certain rules."

"It's the year 2023, and Russia is engaged in an armed conflict with a neighbour. And I think that there should be a certain attitude towards people who harm us inside the country," Putin told reporters in Saint Petersburg. "We must keep in mind that in order for us to achieve success, including in a conflict zone, everyone needs to follow certain rules," Putin added. The Russian president was responding to a question from a reporter who asked him to comment on the recent jailing of a theatre director and a sociologist.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah welcomes Chinese Vice Prime Minister (PM) He Lifeng.

## Marriyum reiterates govt commitment to upgrade PTV, Radio Pakistan

### Marriyum condemns explosion in JUI-F workers' convention

RAWALPINDI (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb Sunday reiterated the government's commitment to upgrade Pakistan Television (PTV) and Radio Pakistan which were indispensable to promoting national heritage and narrative at the global level.

"The national broadcasting institutions are more than just structures as they hold a paramount position in representing the country's identity to the entire world," the minister said while talking to media men after laying the foundation of 1000 KW Digital DRM Medium Wave Transmitter Project at Radio Pakistan, Rawat.

Marriyum regretted that the previous regime of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was bent upon auctioning the national institutions including Radio Pakistan and others.

Highlighting the pivotal role of these national broadcasters, she stressed that the government was determined to leverage PTV and Radio Pakistan to enhance Pakistan's global presence and counter negative narratives about the country.

At the outset of the media talk, the minister said Radio Pakistan accomplished a milestone today as the first time in history a Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM) technology had been launched.

She said Radio Pakistan was based on analogue and short-wave technology since 1947 and most of its transmitters had already completed their life. The broadcaster was in dire need of DRM as analogue and short-wave

technologies became obsolete a long ago, she added.

Marriyum said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed Finance Minister Ishaq Dar to release funds for transforming Radio Pakistan on modern lines. The minister extended gratitude to PM, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, and Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal for the initiative. With the implementation of the 1000 kilowatt digital DRM medium wave transmitter, she said Radio Pakistan's reach would transcend borders, resonating in more than 52 countries. She said the initiative would help promote Pakistan's narrative, news, heritage, and culture across the world. Out of 20 existing transmitters of Radio Pakistan, 14 had already become obsolete.

The cutting-edge technology incorporated in the 1000kw medium wave transmitter would yield significant cost savings for Radio Pakistan, with an estimated 33% reduction in electricity consumption, she added.

Marriyum said the project which was launched today would complete in the next two years.

She recalled that a group of arsonists set the Radio Pakistan archive and building on fire in Peshawar on May 9. Similarly, the same people attacked the building of Pakistan Television in 2014.

The minister said the building of Radio Pakistan in Peshawar and Chaghi Studio had been restored. Meanwhile, the upgradation of Radio Pakistan was started today.

It was a historic initiative that would enable overseas Pakistanis to access the Radio Pakistan broadcast across the world, she maintained.

The minister said PTVflix had also been launched by digitalizing the entire archive of Pakistan Television.

Likewise, the national archive of Radio Pakistan had been digitalized and would be inaugurated by PM Shehbaz Sharif this week.

She said apart from the subcontinent, audiences in Central Asia, the Middle East, the Far East, Turkey, and Greece would now be able to access Radio Pakistan.

## Security forces repulse attack on checkpoint in Khyber district

KHYBER (PPI): Law enforcers on Sunday repulsed an attack on a checkpoint in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Khyber district. According to reports, an assailant fired shots and threw a hand grenade at the checkpoint, but police and Frontier Corps (FC) personnel's response and counteraction forced the attacker to flee.

There were, fortunately, no casualties in the terror attack. This assault on law enforcement adds to the ongoing security issues in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which has been witnessing numerous militant attacks in July alone.

On July 21, at least four terror attacks were reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in just 48 hours, including one in the capital city of Peshawar, where authori-

ties were successful in foiling it. A policeman, on July 20, was martyred, and 10 others were injured after a terrorist blew himself up. When the police intercepted him and his accomplice while entering the Bara tehsil compound — which houses the Bara Police Station, government offices, and a cell of the counter-terrorism department (CTD).

The province has seen a surge in terrorist attacks — from improvised explosive device blasts to suicide bombings — since late last year when the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) ended its ceasefire with Islamabad.

Pakistan's government has warned Afghanistan against providing safe havens to the banned TTP — a terrorist organisation targeting security forces.

## Denmark to look for 'legal tool' to prevent Holy Quran burnings

C O P E N H A G E N (Agencies): The Danish government will seek to "find a legal tool" that would enable authorities to prevent the burning of copies of the Holy Quran in front of other countries' embassies in Denmark, Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen told the national broadcaster DR on Sunday. "The burnings are deeply offensive and reckless acts committed by few individuals."

These few individuals do not represent the values the Danish society is built on," Rasmussen said separately in a statement. "The Danish government will therefore explore the possibility of intervening in special situa-

tions where, for instance, other countries, cultures, and religions are being insulted, and where this could have significant negative consequences for Denmark, not least with regard to security," Denmark, Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussensaid.

Denmark and Sweden have found themselves in the international spotlight in recent weeks following anti-Islam protests where the Holy Quran has been damaged or burned, offending Muslims around the world. Both countries have said they deplore the burning of the Holy Quran but cannot prevent it under rules protecting free speech.



### Request for Proposal Hiring of Consultancy Firm for Development Project Positions

**Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI)** intends to hire the services of a Consultancy Firm for Recruitment of IT professionals on contract basis for an IT Project titled as "Revamping EOBI Applications & Database for Strengthening Social Security System by the Institution". Bids are accordingly invited from competent Firms to undertake services of screening, written test & initial interview of the eligible applicants in an efficient/ timely manner and as per bid documents. Bidding will be conducted **Rule 36(b), Single Stage Two envelope procedure of PPRA Rules 2004** and is open to Bidders who meet following criteria:

- The bidder is a registered firm under the Companies Act 2017 and is operating in Pakistan for at least three fiscal years.
- Must be in the Latest Active Taxpayer List of FBR.
- The bidder must be registered in EOBI and regularly paying contribution.
- The bidder must have provided hiring services to at least two public sectors and at least three private sector organizations in the last five years and made recruitment/selection for senior and middle level position in these organizations.
- The bidder should have at least annual revenue/turnover of Rs. 500 million during the last five fiscal/ calendar years.
- The bidder must not be in litigation with EOBI and Federal Government and has not been blacklisted by Government.

#### AVAILABILITY OF BID DOCUMENTS:

Bid documents shall be available from the date of publication of tender notice in the newspapers from the below mentioned address or EOBI Zonal Offices situated at 57-L, Gulberg-III, Lahore and Plot No.32, 33 & 34, Sector G-10/4, Islamabad, on production of Rs. 5,000/= Pay Order (non-refundable) drawn on any commercial bank in favor of **"EMPLOYEES' OLD-AGE BENEFITS INSTITUTION, HEAD OFFICE, KARACHI"**.

#### BID CLOSING, OPENING, VALIDITY, & BID SECURITY:

Bids prepared in accordance with the instructions in the bidding documents containing Technical and Financial Proposals in separate envelopes, must reach at address given below on or before 16.08.2023 at 11:00 am. Opening of technical bid is set for **16.08.2023** at 11:30 am in the Board Room of EOBI Head Office, at 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Representatives of bidders may attend the bid opening. All bids submitted must have a validity of at least 180 days. Validity shall be counted from the date of opening of Financial Bid. Financial Bid shall be opened after evaluation of technical bids for which bidders will be informed. All bids are to be accompanied with a "BID SECURITY" pay order of Rs.500,000/= in favor of **"EMPLOYEES' OLD-AGE BENEFITS INSTITUTION, HEAD OFFICE, KARACHI"**.

#### BID REJECTION:

Incomplete, conditional, and/or bids without Bid Security shall be instantly rejected. Bids without proof of eligibility conditions stated above shall also be rejected.

#### Director (General Administration Department)

EOBI Head Office, 190/B/1, P.E.C.H.S Block # 2, Near Blue Ribbon Bakery, Off Shara-e-Faisal, Karachi. Tel.No: 021-99225397

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