

## Imran's two sisters get bail

LAHORE (PPI): A local court in Lahore Friday granted interim bail to PTI Chief Imran Khan's two sisters in four cases till August 8. Imran's sisters Aleema Khan and Uzma Khan submitted petitions seeking interim bail in four cases related to violence and arson attack on the PML-N office. The petitions were filed through Rana Mudassar advocate. Imran's sisters moved to the court today after their arrest warrants were issued yesterday.

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# PM launches ‘Benazir Social Protection Account’

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday launched the "Benazir Social Protection Account" under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) here along with Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety (PA&SS) and BISP Chairperson Shazia Marri.

Addressing the ceremony, the prime minister directed the BISP authorities to place a condition for the Programme beneficiaries to get their children enrolled in schools to promote the education culture in the country. It must be ensured that after a certain period the beneficiaries would get stipends only in case their children were attending schools, he reaffirmed. The government, he said, should not go for promoting the 'flocks of beggars' in anyway, rather it must promote the ones who were 'doers' in the real sense, with both mental and physical capacity to build Pakistan. The time would come soon when the country would be standing on its own feet and generating resources itself, he added.

The launch ceremony was attended by Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb, Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation Faisal Kareem Kundi, members of diplomatic community and BISP beneficiaries. Briefing about the salient features of the Account, Shazia Marri said under the new system, beneficiary women would have the option to select the bank of their choice, and they would receive the payments directly in their accounts which they could withdraw at their convenience.

Four banks namely National Bank of Pakistan, Bank Alfalah, JS Bank Limited and United Bank Limited had been initially selected through a

## Shehbaz: Youth empowerment key to development, prosperity of Pakistan

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said the government was committed to empower youth of the country as empowering them was key to ensure development and prosperity of Pakistan. He said the youth of the country were capable enough to transform the country's fate as with their hard work and dedication, they could help Pakistan develop at faster pace leaving its neighboring country far behind in term of economic development and prosperity.

Addressing the launching ceremony of laptop programme here, the prime minister said this ceremony reminded him of the days when as Chief Minister Punjab he distributed hundreds of thousands laptops among the students on merit. He said those laptops helped the students a lot during Covid pandemic days when they took their classes online while sitting home and also earned their bread and butter by working as freelancer.

He informed that he as CM Punjab also provided scholarships to the talented youth under Punjab Education Endowment Fund (PEEF), and the beneficiary of these programmes was now serving the country in various areas including health, IT and Engineering. The prime minister maintained that this had been his mission to provide every youth with a laptop machine to enable them to successfully move forward in their respective areas.

She said since 2011, one million laptops had been distributed among talented students while over Rs 100 billion loans had also been provided to the youth to empower them. She said the prime minister would distribute 100,000 laptops among the students in the days to come. Minister for Information Marriyum Aurangzeb, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Interior Attaullah Tarrar, and Chairman of Higher Education Dr Mukhtar Ahmed were also present on the occasion.

**PM urges OIC to chalk out strategy for legal, political deterrence against Islamophobia:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday urged the OIC to chalk out a coordinated and comprehensive strategy, aimed at raising global awareness about its perspective and building legal and political deterrence against rising incidents of anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia. The prime minister, in a telephone conversation with Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hissein Ibrahim Taha, appreciated the OIC chief's role in articulating Muslim Ummah's concerns and demands about the Islamophobic trends and incidents. Referring to the recurring incidents of public burning of the Holy Quran, the prime minister conveyed Pakistan's strong condemnation of the willful and provocative acts, which had hurt the sentiments of Muslims worldwide.

competitive process for the new payment model, she added. PM Shehbaz appreciated Minister Shazia Marri for her hard work to expand the Programme, particularly introduction

of the Benazir Social Protection Account which would help the beneficiaries to receive the stipends with-

(Continued on Back Page)

## Swiss FM arrives on 3-day visit

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of Switzerland Ignazio Cassis on Friday arrived in Islamabad on a three-day official visit to Pakistan.

According to Foreign Office, he met Acting Foreign Secretary Dr Syrus Sajjad Qazi. A high level delegation comprising members of Swiss Parliament and senior officials is also accompanying the Swiss Foreign Minister.

He will call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman. The Swiss Foreign Minister will also visit the National Disaster Management Authority where the two sides will discuss ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in disaster management.

# Funeral prayers of 8 children died in landslide offered

## F.P. Report

SHANGLA: The funeral prayers of the eight children that died in a landslide in Martung area of District Shangla were offered on Friday. A large number of people from political, social and different schools of thought participated in the funeral prayer. However, the people in the area are depressed after the tragic accident where eight children were buried. It was certainly a big tragedy struck as the kids were playing cricket in a local ground when they were buried alive by the landslide.

It is worth mentioning here that the devastating incident, eight children lost their lives in a landslide near a cricket ground in the mountainous Shangla district of Khyber-

Pakhtunkhwa on Thursday last. The local residents initially started the rescue operation, but for two hours, there was no sign of official assistance. Eventually, the Rescue 1122 teams arrived at the difficult-to-access area and commenced the rescue efforts by recovering the victims trapped.

The district had experienced heavy rainfall throughout the night, and the possibility of landslides was apparent in certain areas. Tragically, the children overlooked the risks associated with the weather conditions. In response to such monsoon-related disasters, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), working in conjunction with the relief, rehabilitation, and settlement department, is developing a monsoon contin-

gency plan for 2023.

This plan aims to identify hazards, vulnerabilities, and risks associated with the monsoon season, as well as mapping resources to minimize disaster risks and ensure a coordinated response. Multiple pre-planning and orientation meetings have been held with representatives from provincial line departments to establish roles and responsibilities.

The PDMA is determined to reduce the impact of natural hazards on life and property, especially considering the significant losses suffered by Pakhtunkhwa due to floods in 2022. The vulnerability of the region to climate contingencies during both summers and winters necessitates a comprehensive approach.

## Justice Mussarat takes oath as SC judge



## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial on Friday administered the oath of office to Justice Mussarat Hilali, former Chief Justice, Peshawar High Court, as Judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan here in a simple but dignified ceremony.

Judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Attorney General for Pakistan, Advocate General Islamabad, senior lawyers and law officers, officers of Law & Justice Commission of Pakistan and Federal Judicial Academy Islamabad, attended the ceremony.

The Registrar Supreme Court conducted the proceedings of the oath-taking ceremony. Officers and staff of the Supreme Court of Pakistan also attended the ceremony. After Justice Hilali's elevation, the number of top court judges had increased to 16 out of a total sanctioned strength of 17.

# Justice Ibrahim takes oath as Acting PHC CJ

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa administered oath from Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan as Acting Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC), on Friday.

Secretary Law Shagufta Naveed has announced President of Pakistan summary regarding appointment of Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan as Acting Chief Justice PHC. During the oath taking ceremony PHC's judges, lawyers and caretaker provincial ministers as well as Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa participated in the event.

The participants namely Fazal Elahi, Sawal Nazeer Advocates, Justice (retired) Irshad Qaiser, caretaker advisor to Chief Minister Pir Haroon Shah, Rahmat Salam Khattak, Haji Hidayat Ullah Khan, Dr. Riaz Anwar, IGP Akhtar Hayat Gandapur and administrative officers of various department were present.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali congratulated Acting Chief



Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan for taking new responsibilities. It is worthy to mention that Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan has appointed as Acting CJ PHC after evaluation of Justice Musart Hilali to Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Insaf Lawyer Forum has arranged protest against desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden on the day of Eid-ul-Azha in the front of Masjid while condemned the act and demanded to stop such deeds in future. The protest was led by ILF Khyber Pakhtunkhwa gen-

eral secretary Qaiser Ali Shah while the participants has chanted slogans and inscribed placard with condemnation statements against Sweden.

ILF has arranged rally from PHC to Assembly Chowk while Qaiser Ali Shah and Muzzam Butt advocates addressed the participants and condemned Swedish government for allowing such action. The speakers argued western countries as well as United Nations to take concrete steps against Islamophobia and desecration Holy Quran and other Islamic beliefs.

# IMF team meets Imran

LAHORE (Agencies): PTI leader Hammad Azhar said on Friday night that an IMF team had visited his party's chief, Imran Khan, at his residence in Lahore today where the two sides discussed a recent staff-level pact agreed between Pakistan and the global lender for the disbursement of \$3 billion under a standby arrangement.

Azhar's confirmation of the meeting between the PTI leadership and the IMF team came after the lender said

earlier today that it was in the process of meeting major political parties in Pakistan to seek assurances of their support for key objective of the new deal. "The IMF team called upon [PTI] chairman Imran Khan at his residence today", Azhar — who had earlier also confirmed that a meeting was scheduled between the two sides at Imran's Zaman Park residence — subsequently tweeted.

Sharing further details of

Friday's exchange, the former federal minister said IMF resident representative for Pakistan Esther Perez Ruiz visited Zaman Park for the meeting while IMF mission chief for Pakistan Nathan Porter joined virtually from Washington. Meanwhile, Azhar added, the PTI team included him, Imran, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Shaukat Tarin, Omar Ayub Khan, Sania Nishtar, Shibli Faraz, Taimur Jhagra and Muzammil Aslam.

## Major Abdullah laid to rest

## F.P. Report

KOHAT: Pakistan Army Major, Mian Abdullah Shah, who embraced martyrdom in an encounter with terrorists in Khyber district the other day, was laid to rest on Friday morning in Ziarat Sheikh Allah Dad area of Tehsil Gumbat, Kohat on Friday with complete military honor. Senior officers of the government, Pakistan Army and a large number of people from all walks attended the funeral.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Shazia Marri presenting a book on the 15 years journey of BISP to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

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‘Addiction is a poison that destroys not only one person but many families’

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Colonel Anwar Hussain, Joint Director ANF Sindh Directorate organized a drug awareness event at ANF headquarters, the people from various departments participated.

Speaking at the event, the Joint Director said that drug addiction is a poison that destroys not only one person but many families, so we all as responsible Pakistanis have to take steps to prevent its use. Addressing the participants, he said that all of you are our Goodwill ambassadors and hope that you would make anti-drug awareness campaign successful. At the end of the event,

Goodwill Ambassador shields were distributed among the participants. The participants included Kokab Iqbal, Chairman Consumer Association, Ashfaq Chandio, Information Officer Press Information Department Karachi, Faheem Abbas well-known anchor person, Khalil Najmi Artist and other participants.

KUST arranges protest against desecration of Quran

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) has arranged protest against desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden to observe Youm-e-Taqados-e-Quran, on Friday. During the protest Vice Chancellor KUST Professor Dr. Sardar Khan along with Registrar Muhammad Tariq Jan as well as faculty and staffers participated in large number.

Vice Chancellor KUST Dr. Sardar Khan condemned the desecration of Holy Quran and declared that it has hurt sentiments of more than a billion Muslims across the globe. He argued that Holy Quran is candle of knowledge and wisdom for human in general and in particular for Muslims while at the end prayers were offered for nation and the country.

Gang looting cooking oil in police van busted

KARACHI (INP): Karachi police after a successful raid have busted a gang involved in looting stocks of cooking oil in a police van during near the Garden Headquarters, police confirmed on Friday.

According to media reports, more than five suspected members of the gangs were arrested during a raid near the Garden Headquarters.

The arrested persons include the owner of a go-down, a worker and policemen. The officials revealed that the armed men in a police van used to loot goods vehicles transporting stocks of cooking oil in District Central.

They added that dozens of robbery incidents were reported last month. After the robberies, the accused used to hide the cooking oil to the go-down.

## Naqvi inspects lodging construction site at PIC

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi inspected the site of a proposed lodging facility to be constructed by industrialist Gohar Ijaz in 120 days for patients' attendants at the Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC) and ordered for starting work on it without any delay.

He emphasised that the building should be a state-of-the-art facility, ensuring necessary facilities for the attendants. The occasion was marked by a special prayer for success of the project.

Provincial Minister for Industries SM Tanveer, businessman Gohar Ijaz, chief secretary, IG police, CCPO Lahore, chairman P&D, Chairman PIC Dr Farqad, Principal PIC Dr Ahmad Nauman and Dr Amer Bandesha were also present.

**CM reviews facilities at hospitals:** Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi paid visits to the Nawaz Sharif Social Security Hospital at Multan Road and Social Security Hospital at Ferozepur Road. During his visits, the CM thoroughly inspected various wards and assessed the medical facilities provided to the patients. He interacted with the patients, inquiring about their well-being and the quality of medical services they were receiving. The patients and their attendants expressed their satisfaction with the facilities available at the Nawaz Sharif Social Security Hospital, highlighting the availability of doctors and the provision of free medications.

The CM announced the government's

decision to open 22 social security hospitals, across the province, to the public to cater to their healthcare needs. He stated that an agreement would be reached between the government and the Punjab Employees Social Security Institution to facilitate this initiative.

He revealed plans for the establishment of a rehabilitation center for disabled industrial workers, the installation of an MRI machine, and the creation of a burn unit at the Nawaz Sharif Social Security Hospital. He also mentioned that the Rehmatul-lil-Alameen Institute of Cardiology (RAIC) would extend its services to the general public in addition to industrial workers. As part of the ongoing improvements, 50 additional beds will also be added to the hospital.

The CM instructed the development of a new lodging facility outside the RAIC waiting area, designed in line with the standards of Jinnah Hospital, to provide enhanced amenities to patients' attendants.

He emphasized the replacement of old wheelchairs with new ones and stressed the availability of life-saving injections during emergencies. During his visits, the chief minister thoroughly examined the emergency department, X-ray unit, CT scan room, physiotherapy section, record room, and surgical unit. He also toured the Orthopedic Ward, Pediatric Ward, Dialysis Unit, and RAIC, where he interacted with attendants in the waiting areas to address any concerns they might have.

## Faryal Talpur pays condolence visit to family of late Sardar Manzoor Ahmad Panhwar

F.P. Report

JACOBABAD: President of the Pakistan People's Party Women's Wing, Ms. Faryal Talpur, arrived in Jacobabad to offer condolences to the family of the late People's Party leader, Sardar Manzoor Ahmad Panhwar. In Jacobabad, Ms. Faryal Talpur offered her condolences to Aurangzeb Panhwar, the son of the late Sardar Manzoor Ahmed Panhwar, and other family members. She also recited Fatiha.

She stated that the late Sardar Manzoor Panhwar was a principled individual, and his principles earned him the respect of the people. People's Party MNA Aijaz Jakhani, Changez Khan Jakhani,



MPA Sohrab Khan Sarki, MPA Mumtaz Khan Jakhani, MPA Aslam Abro, former Home Minister Sohail Anwar Sial, Babul Khan Bhayo, and other party leaders and officials were present at the condolence event.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Peoples Party, Women Wing's Central President

and Member Sindh Assembly, Faryal Talpur visited today Jacobabad, and offered condolences with the Advisor to Sindh Chief Minister, Aijaz Khan Jakhani on the demise of his aunt and MPA Mumtaz Khan Jakhani on his mother's death, and prayed for the departed soul.

## CTD arrests 177 terror suspects, foil 133 'terrorism' attempts in Punjab this year

LAHORE (NNI): The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Punjab has released its annual performance report, claiming to foil at least 133 attempts of terror attacks and arresting 177 suspects.

According to a Punjab Police spokesperson, the department conducted 901 intelligence-based operations (IBOs) in various districts, including Lahore, resulting in the arrest of 177 individuals involved in terrorist activities and anti-state activities. Moreover, 142 FIRs were registered. The spokesperson further stated that among the arrested individuals, three highly wanted terrorists included in the Red Book were also arrested. They were affiliated with the banned organisations. A large quantity of explosive materials such as suicide jackets, rockets, hand grenades, detonators, IEDs, and explosive substances were recovered from the possession of terrorists.

Furthermore, pistols, ball bearings, bullets, safety fuses, laptops, mobile phones,

banned books, magazines, pamphlets, and other controversial materials were also seized from the terrorists. The Punjab Police spokesperson mentioned that CTD had foiled 133 terrorist plots through IBOs and arrested the conspirators.

Speaking on the occasion, Inspector General of Punjab Police Dr Usman Anwar said that the CTD was actively engaged in countering terrorism, extremism, and other criminal activities, and successfully eliminated 114 networks involved in terrorism facilitation, planning and collaboration through their timely actions. He commended the "excellent" performance of the CTD and directed the Additional IG CTD to increase the intensity of IBOs to ensure the complete eradication of terrorism from the province through effective information sharing. Anwar further emphasized that all terrorists, facilitators, financiers, and criminals should be brought to justice and receive appropriate punishment within the ambit of the law.



KARACHI: Activists take part in a protest demonstration at Karachi Press Club against the burning of holy Quran outside a Stockholm Mosque.

## ‘No compromise on nobility of Prophethood, sanctity of Quran’

LAHORE (APP): Special Representative to the Prime Minister for Interfaith Harmony and Middle Eastern Affairs Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi has said that there will be no compromise on nobility of Prophethood and sanctity of the Holy Quran at all.

Addressing a press conference at Behria Town Grand Masjid, he said the Holy Quran Day was observed on Friday across various countries including Pakistan. He strongly condemned the burning and desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden. He urged the world to make legislation regarding sacred things and the Holy Quran.

Ashrafi said that the Holy Quran teaches respect for all prophets, and it was not permissible to burn the

divine books in Islam.

“Muslims believe in all prophets, and they want respect for all sacred articles related to Islam,” he added.

He said that the honour of the last Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him should also be respected as well.

Special Representative to the Prime Minister for Interfaith Harmony and Middle Eastern Affairs Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi said all Muslims should raise voice against the desecration of Holy Quran collectively. He said all Muslims should be part of peaceful protest against such abhorrent acts, leaving aside their political and religious differences.

Special Representative to the

Prime Minister for Interfaith Harmony and Middle Eastern Affairs Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi said all activists of political parties should take to the streets without their flags and give a message of unity to the world.

He said it was not permissible in Islam to burn a church, Torah, Psalms and Bible, and similarly desecrating the Holy Quran.

“We hope that the European Union will pay attention to the crucial issue and there will be legislation at the international level in this regard,” Ashrafi added.

He said that all minorities in Pakistan had also condemned the Quran desecration incident and they were standing with the Muslims on this issue.

## Security Forces attended an Education Seminar at Government High School Khaisora organised by Khaisora youth organisation

F.P. Report

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: In District South Waziristan, Security Forces attended an Education Seminar at Government High School Khaisora organised by Khaisora youth organisation. The purpose of the seminar was to spread education awareness amongst the locals of the area.

During seminar, importance of education in Islam and current area was focused. Education is essential for personal grooming and social cohesion. According to Security Forces officials, all out efforts are being made to resolve the issue of attendance of teachers.

Soon IT centers will be established in Tiarza to



enable youth to start online earning. According to Khaisora Youth Organisation an academy at

Government High School Khaisora to be started for the tuition of students.

According to Security

Forces , maximum assistance will be provided for the establishment of academy.

## 8 dead, 1,080 injured in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least eight persons were killed and 1,080 others were injured in 1,039 road traffic crashes (RTCs) in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

As many as 573 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 507 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams. The analysis showed that 526 drivers, 37 underage drivers, 109 pedestrians, and 453 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes. The statistics show that 207 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 198 persons, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by 83 in Multan with 85 victims, and at third Faisalabad with 82 accidents and 91 victims.

## SSP reviews officers performance

LAHORE (APP): SSP Internal Accountability Imran Kishwar presided over a meeting of officers from the Investigation Wing at his office here on Friday, aimed at conducting a comprehensive evaluation of their performance in handling pending road certificates and disposal of under-investigation cases. Expressing dissatisfaction, the SSP addressed the underwhelming performance of certain SDPOs in dealing with pending road certificates and under-investigation cases.

## KATI strongly condemns desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden

KARACHI (APP): The Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), on Friday, condemned the recent incidents of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden firmly declaring such acts as utterly unacceptable. President KATI Faraz-ur-Rehman, Deputy Patron-in-Chief Zubair Chhaya, Senior Vice President Nighat Awan, Vice President Muslim Muhammadi and members of Executive Council, in a statement issued here, emphasised the need for international organisations to take swift action against those who violate the sanctity of holy books and figures across all religions.

They also stressed on implementation of strict punishments for offenders and the formulation of international laws to address acts of religious insensitivity, racism, and sectarianism.

President KATI and his associates highlighted the targeted persecution faced by Muslims worldwide, citing the incident in Sweden as not an isolated case. They pointed out that the absence of international laws exacerbates the pain and distress felt by the Muslim community, numbering

over two billion people. They stressed that Muslims hold a profound respect for other religions and cannot fathom desecrating the sanctity of any faith. They demanded severe punishment for those responsible for the desecration in Sweden and called for robust measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

President KATI, Faraz-ur-Rehman, expressed deep concern over the increasing instances of Islamophobia, mentioning previous attempts to ban the hijab and the disrespectful depictions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

He characterised those actions as part of a larger conspiracy to deliberately hurt the sentiments of Muslims worldwide and undermine global peace. Faraz-ur-Rehman called upon the international community and the United Nations to take immediate and meaningful steps to counter the rising tide of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred.

Muslim hatred. He urged the adoption of effective measures to address the grave issue, safeguard religious sanctity, and foster understanding and harmony among different faiths.

## Smuggling bid fails as drone carrying heroin crashes

LAHORE (APP): An attempt to smuggle drugs worth millions of rupees failed as a drone, carrying heroin worth millions of rupees crashed in fields of Rasoolpura village in Halloki, Kahna Town area, here on Friday.

A spokesman said police and rangers personnel reached the drone crash site after receiving information. Station House Officer (SHO) Abdul Wahid said a large-size drone was carrying six kilograms of heroin when it crashed into the fields due to some technical fault.

Police took the drone and drugs into custody. A number of locals also gathered around the drone after the crash.

Police said the drone and drugs had been handed over to the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) for further investigation.

It will be investigated from where the drone was operated and what was its destination.

Meanwhile, Manawan police arrested two drug-peddlers and recovered three kilograms of charas from them.

The accused were identified as Farooq and Suleman.

Further investigation was under way.



KARACHI: Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab receives the key of mobile workshop for water and sewerage board during his visit to Mairaj Limited factory.





# Yaum e Taqqus e Quran observed across KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Following the Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's announcement of observing Friday as 'Yaum-e-Taqqaddus-e-Quran' (Sanctity of the Holy Quran), protest rallies were carried out across the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to lodge a strong protest against the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden.

Demonstrations were held provincially, with people from different walks of life and political parties participating in the protests to express their resentment over the desecration of the holy book. A large number of people took out protest rallies on main GT Road and Saddar Bazaar in Peshawar who chanted slogans against the Swedish government for allowing such a condemnable and disgraceful activity on its soil.

Several demonstrations later joined the main protesting rallies on GT Road with people belonging to other religions also partaking in them to express their annoyance over the desecration of the holy book. After Friday Prayer, the protest rallies gathered near the Hashnagri where the people carried placards inscribed with slogans against Sweden and desertion of the Holy Quran. The protestors seemed quite angry with the most deplorable act of desecration of the holy Quran on the first day of Eid ul Adha in Sweden.

The speakers on the occasion said the Quran was our redline and no one would be allowed to cross this line. They said the Quran was saved and protected in our hearts and it will be passed on to our generations till the Day of Judgement. They said the Quran teaches us to be patient in situations however, such incidents were tantamount to incite the sentiments of Muslim Ummah that were absolutely unacceptable. They were of the view that no one can desecrate our holy book as Allah Almighty has taken the responsibility to protect the Holy Quran.

They said this shameful act depicted that the government of Sweden has failed to provide security to the people of other religions or otherwise has allowed its people to play with religious sentiments of believers of other religions. The speakers demanded of the Swedish government to arrest and award exemplary punishment to the man who desecrated the holy Quran in order to avoid recurrence of such shameful incidents in future.

The protest rallies were also carried out in Kohat Bazaar, Bank Road Mardan, Shawa Adda Swabi, Tank Road Dera Ismail Khan, main bazaar Bannu, Cantt Road Nowshera, Charsadda Chowk and other cities. The Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif on Tuesday last, while presiding over a meeting in Islamabad had announced to stage countrywide

protests over the incident and appealed to all the political parties and the nation to partake in the rallies.

"Speaking with one voice, the whole nation will give a message to the evil minds," said the premier. He maintained that the nation will observe the "Yaum-e-Taqqaddus-e-Quran" on Friday. The PM said the nation stands united when it comes to the Holy Quran, noting that not only Pakistanis but the entire Muslim world was concerned over this vile act. He said people across the country would express their emotions over the heart-wrenching incident after Friday prayers, where "all Muslims will raise the flag of the Holy Quran's honor and record their protest".

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari in his statement over the issue has said that the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden was another example of the rising Islamophobic mindset that seeks to dehumanize and denigrate Islam. "It is an act of blatant provocation to try to inflame sentiments and undermine Islam as a religion of peace, tolerance, and acceptance," the top diplomat said. It merits a mention here that a person, who migrated from Iraq to Sweden, burned pages of the Holy Quran outside a mosque in Stockholm on the first day of Eid ul Adha, prompting outrage in the Muslim world. The act was also condemned by Pope Francis.



PESHAWAR: Adviser to KP Caretaker CM Malik Mehr Elahi leading a rally to protest against the desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden.

Faiq calls for expediting work pace on CPEC projects

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) chairman Muhammad Faiq Shah on Friday called for expediting the pace of projects initiated under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and reap full benefits to bring economic prosperity and development in the country.

Shah described China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as an epic manifestation of ironclad friendship and all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between Pakistan and China. Furthermore, he said that CPEC is a project of significant economic value that has further strengthened the time-tested relations between Pakistan and China.

Shah's remarks came when Pakistan is marking the ten-year completion of the CPEC Belt Road Initiative- the multiple billion dollar project and framework of regional connectivity, which could not only benefit China and Pakistan but will also have positive economic and social impacts on the whole region. He congratulated Chinese President Xi Jinping and Pakistani leadership for successfully completing the ten-year of CPEC. The party chief stressed the need for bringing relations between Pakistan and China to new heights, especially through CPEC.

Faiq emphasized that the whole nation would have to work hard to get benefits from CPEC otherwise it could become game changers only for 'elites' of this country. The ATP chairman urged the business community to devise a comprehensive plan to benefit from CPEC and tap the potential of our talented youngsters for promoting business activities.

Rescue 1122 to provide services in Polo festival

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Director General Rescue 1122 Dr. Khateer Ahmed Friday announced that Rescue 1122 would provide services during the Shandur Polo Festival playing on the world rooftop. Talking to media, Director General Rescue 1122 Dr. Khateer Ahmed disclosed that Rescue 1122 formed teams of special medical personnel for the Shandur Polo Festival, Dr. Khateer Ahmed, Director General Rescue 1122, said that they have established medical camps at Shandur Polo Ground that including 2 ambulances, fire truck and 22 personnel of Rescue 1122.

He said the Rescue 1122 has set up waypoints for tourist access and information to Shandur and the Rescue 1122 teams are deployed in Lower Chitral Lowari Tunnel with rescue vehicles as well. Dr. Khateer Ahmad said that Rescue points have been set up at Upper Chitral Ration and Mastuj and Special Camps of Rescue 1122 are established at various tourist spots of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Adnan, Afghan official agree to boost trade

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Muhammad Adnan Jailil has said that apart from religious, cultural similarity and border connectivity, Pakistan and Afghanistan has cordial relationship, based on closed proximity and neighborhood between the two countries. He said that people of Both countries feel brotherly sentiments for each other while Pakistan wish for sustainable peace in Afghanistan, which is a catalyst for the stability of the whole region.

The provincial minister said that there are vast possibilities for more deepening the bilateral trade and economic ties, which requires to facilitate the business and investors community of both countries. He expressed these views during a meeting with the Afghan diplomatic delegation led by Afghan Consul General Hafiz Mohibullah, at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (KPBOIT) office here at Peshawar on Friday.

During the meeting, Director Business Development KPBOIT Bilal Sarwar, Coordinator FPCCI Sartaj Ahmed Khan, Economic Advisor Industries Department Abdul Rehman and other officials were also accompanied the provincial minister. The provincial minister discussed matters of mutual interest with the Afghan diplomats, focusing further expansion of trade and business activities between the two countries, increasing the volume of Pak-Afghan trade and taking benefits from cross



border investment opportunities.

The minister also invited Afghan relevant authorities, traders and business community to come Pakistan and participate in the upcoming Pak Afghan Expo, to be held at Peshawar in upcoming month of September, while accepted the offer of Afghan officials for participating of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa investors and relevant officials, at Afghan Business Conference, to be held in Afghanistan in near future.

On this occasion, border trade was also came under the discussion while the minister termed it a major source of trade development between the two countries. He said that Afghanistan in this purpose, as a trade corridor should provide facilities for the peaceful access of the Pakistani businessmen to Central Asian countries so that to run the Cross-border trade and business activities in conducive environment.

The minister assured the Afghan diplomatic delegation that efforts will be made to provide all sort of facilities to Afghan investors and business classes in the province while steps will be taken to

resolve their problems.

He said that now the entire region is going to be connected in trade links which is a good gesture for the development and economic prosperity of entire regional countries. The Afghan Consul General on this occasion, expressed that Pakistan has provided its full support and assistance to Afghanistan at all times and the millions refugees hospitality for decades was a day light example of this brotherhood and support.

He said that the enhancement of bilateral trade is very important for the economic stability of both countries that is why it is inevitable to provide all kinds of facilities to the business community in this regard. He assured for easing the Afghan visa procedure for Pakistani trade delegations and making efforts to solve the problems hindering the Pakistani businessmen in cross-border trade. On this occasion, the Coordinator of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sartaj Ahmad Khan lauded the Afghan authorities and investors willingness for participation in the upcoming Pak-Afghan Expo at Peshawar in next month.

## KhUJ stages protest against desecration of the Holy Quran

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A protest outside Peshawar Press Club organized by Khyber Union of Journalists in Peshawar on the occasion of Holy Quran Day.

A large number of journalists participated in the protest. In the demonstration, the protesters raised banners and shouted slogans against the Swedish government. Ambassador

of Sweden should be expelled, President KHUJ, Nasir Hussain said in his address.

Desecration of the Holy Book of the Muslim Ummah in foreign countries is not acceptable under any circumstances, President's KHUJ said. Demonstrators also condemned desecration of Holy Quran in Charsadda and Parachinar, President's KHUJ said.

The Holy Quran is our

red line, Secretary KHUJ Imran Yousafzai said in his address to the protestors journalists. The Quran is our faith and our leader, Imran Yousafzai said. Desecration of the Holy Quran is not acceptable under any circumstances, Secretary KHUJ said. Government should announce a social boycott including diplomatic relations with Sweden, Secretary KHUJ.



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

## Cloudy weather with isolated rains likely

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Friday predicted that cloudy and humid weather is expected in most districts of the province.

It further said that isolated rain/wind-thundershowers with a few heavy falls is likely to occur in Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Battagram, Torghar, Kohistan, Shangla, Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Swat, Buner, Malakand, Bajaur, Mohmand, Mardan, Swabi, Nowshera, Charsadda, Peshawar, Khyber, Kohat, Hangu, Karak, Orakzai, Kurram, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, D. I. Khan, North & South Waziristan districts.

During the last 24 hours humid & partly cloudy weather occurred over most districts of the province. However, rain/wind-thunderstorm occurred at scattered places in the province. Rain recorded (in mm): Balakot 103, Cherat 73, Upper Dir 37, Bunner 33, MalamJaba 29, Takht Bhai & Risalpur 28 (each), Saidu Sharif 25, Kalam 24, Kakul 18, Pattan 15, Peshawar (Airport 13 & City 06), Landikotal 09, Mirkhani 08, Drosh & Ghalani 06 (each), Mamad Gut 05, Timergara & Parachinar 04 (each) & Khaar-Bajaur 03.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 37/21, Chitral 33/18, Timergara 30/22, Dir 30/15, Mirkhani 35/19, Kalam 24/09, Drosh 38/18, Saidu Sharif 34/15, Pattan 33/20, Malam Jabba 21/11, Takht Bhai 35/21, Kakul 29/17, Balakot 32/16, Parachinar 27/15, Bannu 27/15, Cherat 25/15, D.I. Khan 35/23. The highest temperatures recorded in the province were 38°C in Drosh and 37°C in Peshawar City.

## Taj grieves over death of children

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial Caretaker Minister for Rehabilitation and Relief, Taj Muhammad Afridi has expressed grief over death of children in landslide and said that government fully supports bereaved families in this hour of distress.

In a statement issued here Friday, caretaker minister said that government stands with ill-fated families in this hour of need. He also directed relief department and Rescue 1122 to remain vigilant and be prepared to meet any untoward incident during monsoon. He also directed authorities to inform public about any situation and adopting preventive measures. He also urged people to help government in its efforts and avoid littering to clear sanitation channels.

## Online training for teachers inaugurated

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Honourable Dr. Aneela Mahfooz Durrani, Secretary of the Higher Education Department (HED) KP, inaugurated the online mandatory training for teachers at HEART Academy in Hayatabad, Peshawar. The event was attended by various dignitaries, including Directors of affiliated formations and presidents of teachers' associations.

Secretary Dr. Aneela Mahfooz Durrani addressed the trainees through Zoom and emphasized the importance of online training, as well as her commitment to strengthening HEART Academy and aligning its development with recognized institutions like NSPP, NIM, and PPSA. She highlighted the need for upgrading the Academy, exploring new trends, conducting feasibility studies, and granting it greater independence. She also shared valuable insights on training methodologies and



character building.

During her speech, Secretary Durrani acknowledged the active involvement and tireless efforts of Mr. Waheed Khattak and Mr. Jamshed Khan, Presidents of the teachers' associations representing General and Commerce colleges in KPK. She recognized the crucial role of teachers in society and their contribution to social development and tolerance, emphasizing the indispensability of training to meet modern needs and relevancy.

Tasbiullah, Director of HEART Academy, delivered a detailed presentation

discussing the Academy's structure, legal basis, and future vision.

He highlighted the challenges faced by HEART Academy, such as financial difficulties and building structure issues. Mr. Tasbiullah expressed gratitude to Secretary HED for her keen interest in developing HEART Academy and organizing the online training program, despite the limited resources and financial constraints. He thanked all the dignitaries for their presence and expressed satisfaction with Secretary HED's leadership and continued support.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Tehreek-e-Ishq-e-Mustafa (SAW) holding a rally in Gulbahaar.

## Women's access to justice through DRC's ensured

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Blue Veins, in collaboration with Aurat Foundation and supported by UN Women, is implementing the "Promoting Rule of Law, Legal Literacy, and Women's Access to Justice" project in the four districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The initiative, with a focus on addressing barriers in access to available justice mechanisms for women and girls in GBV cases and improving legal literacy among women and girls, is also working with Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs) for effective redressal at the community level.

The constitution of Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs) by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Government represents a

groundbreaking step toward dispute resolutions. The DRCs, launched following amendments to the Police Order 2002, herald a transformative approach to conflict resolution. They offer mediation services for disputes under the supervision of local police, bringing access to justice to local communities. The importance of this initiative was further emphasized through statutory reinforcement under section 73 of The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Act, 2017. This legal protection serves to affirm the DRCs' critical role in dispute resolution and peacebuilding.

In a press statement, Blue Veins strongly urges the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police to take proactive measures to propagate the services of the

DRCs and ensure that information about their existence and functioning is widely disseminated. It is essential for women across the region to be aware of the resources available to them for resolving disputes and seeking justice. This can be achieved through targeted awareness campaigns, community outreach programs, and collaboration with local civil society organizations.

Furthermore, Blue Veins emphasizes the importance of capacity-building training for the members of the DRCs. Enhancing their knowledge and skills in dispute resolution, gender sensitivity, and human rights will enable them to effectively address the specific needs and concerns of women who seek their assistance.





## In brief

### UNOPS rep, DC discuss bridges Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: United Nations Office for Projects Services (UNOPS) representative Trevor Sway called on Acting Deputy Commissioner Swat Sohail Khan at his office here on Friday. On this occasion, UNOPS representative Trevor Sway told the acting Deputy Commissioner Swat that work is underway to restore the flood-affected bridges in collaboration with the District Administration Swat in Kalam. He said that after the unprecedented floods, the UNOPS team has reviewed the damage caused to the eight bridges that have been damaged, which have been planned for restoration. The acting Deputy Commissioner thanked the UNOPS representative for their endeavors to reconstruct the damaged infrastructure of the Swat district and assured all out support in execution of the rehabilitation work.

### Over 100 cattle heads killed

THARPARKAR (PPI): More than 100 cattle heads were killed after being struck by lightning during rains in different areas of Tharparkar, according to a report on Friday. According to the Meteorological Department, it rained with thunderstorm in Mithi, Islam Kot, Nangarparkar and other areas of Tharparkar. It rained 55mm in Islam Kot. The low-lying areas were flooded with rainwater while the administration was nowhere to be seen. More than 100 cattle heads were also killed after being struck by lightning at various places during rains. The Meteorological Department has forecast more heavy rains in the next 24 hours.

### FIA nabbed director IC

ABBOTTABAD (INP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Abbottabad region on Friday arrested the director of an Islamic Centre (IC) for allegedly sexually harassing a woman. According to media reports, the perpetrator, Zahid Iqbal, utilized WhatsApp to share objectionable content featuring the victim. The FIA Cyber Crime wing took swift action against Zahid Iqbal, who stands accused of disseminating explicit images and videos, as well as sending threatening blackmail emails to the victim. The case also involved the accused making threats to the victim using explicit material. Zahid Iqbal initially deceived the woman by falsely promising marriage, subsequently obtaining objectionable material from her. It is noteworthy that Zahid Iqbal held the position of director at an esteemed Islamic centre located in the upscale area of Islamabad.

### Babusar Top receives snowfall F.P. Report

KAGHAN VALLEY: The Babusar Top and adjacent hills received snowfall the other day changing the weather into cold in Kaghan valley. According to district administration and locals the climate change has caused snowfall for the second time in the month of July. So far two inches of snowfall was recorded at the Babusar Top. Due to the snowfall the Babusar Road has been closed for vehicular traffic while the Karakoram Highway was closed at three places of Minarthor, Tatta Pani and Cadet College. Work on clearing the highway at TattaPani and Cadet College was underway, the district administration said and added that rescue teams have been called in to clear the road in Minarthor area.

# Tribesmen observe Yaum e Taqqus e Quran

F.P. Report

WANA: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Jamaat-e-Islami took out a big rally against the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden Lower Waziristan Wana, in which a large number of people participated. The participants of the rally carried placards and banners inscribed with slogans against the desecration of the Holy Quran.

Addressing the participants of the rally, the speakers said that the current government is a group of incompetent people and cannot even utter a word to condemn the desecration of the Quran due to personal interests with the West. They said that the ambassador of Sweden should be expelled immediately because some people of Sweden have offended the entire Muslim.

They said that all the Muslim countries of the world should be united so that no one dares to desecrate the Holy Quran again. They also appealed to the Muslim Ummah to boycott Swedish products. Tehreek-

e-Insaf workers addressed the participants of gathering and said that when PTI Chairman Imran Khan was the Prime Minister, no western country could even think of desecrating the Holy Quran.

**Free fruit saplings distributed:** Under the special instructions of the District Agriculture Director of South Waziristan Dr. Mohammad Anwar Khan Bettani, Agriculture Officer Wana Habib Ur Rahman Wazir and field assistants in Wana AC Jirga Hall in the presence of Assistant Commissioner Wana Yasir Salman Kundi, local tribal elders and farmer councilors, distribution of free fruit ply traps why Fruit fly or fruit flies lay eggs in various fruits and vegetables and damage the fruits and to remedy this, farmers use poisons every day and by which one they cause economic loss and secondly they poison our environment.

On this occasion, the staff of the Department of Agriculture Extension, with the coloboaration of the World Bank, started the dis-

tribution of free fruit fly traps to the landowners and farmers. Thousands of traps have been distributed free of charge to the agricultural landowners in Wana, the district headquarters.

Agriculture Officer Habib-ur-Rehman Wazir said that God willingly will greatly reduce the losses of fruit flies in thousands of acres of fruits and vegetables in our region. Agriculture Officer Habib Ur Rahman Wazir advised the landowners and farmers that it is your responsibility to properly install these traps in your gardens. However, if anyone disposes of these traps improperly, they are national criminals and will be prosecuted.

In the end, the farmers of Wana expressed their gratitude to Agriculture Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Abdul Halim Qasuria, Agriculture Secretary KPK Muhammad Javed Marwat, DG Agriculture Murad, Assistant Commissioner Wana Yasir Salman Kundi, District Director Dr. Anwar Bettani to take concrete and timely steps for a solution.

## Full proof security for Muharram directed

F.P. Report

BANNU: Traders will provide food and a power generator facility to Shia mourners in Bannu during the first ten days of the holy month of Muharram. The assurance to this effect was given by the leaders of traders' bodies at a high-level meeting chaired by divisional commissioner Parwez Sabatkhel in his office on Friday.

The meeting discussed matters pertaining to fool proof security for Muharram processions and majalis, peaceful observance of Ashura and provision of security to mourners. Bannu DC Manzoor Afridi and DPO Iftekhar Shah, Lakki Marwat AC Tariq Mehmood and SP Murad Ali Khan, representatives of Shia community, religious scholars and members of peace bodies were in attendance.

At the meeting, the representatives of the Shia community shared the plan and schedule of mourners' processions and majalis with the government authorities. They asked the district administrations to ensure provision of uninter-

rupted power supply to their areas so that the mourners could perform their religious rites without any trouble.

They assured the administrations that they would confine their processions to traditional routes and would assist police in their efforts to maintain peace and harmony during the holy month. On the occasion, a traders' leader told the meeting that the business community would provide food and a power generator facility to Shia mourners as a gesture of goodwill and brotherhood.

"The traders will cooperate with the administration, police and religious sects to ensure peaceful observance of 10th of Muharram", he maintained. The police authorities shed light on the security plan and said that provision of fool proof security to the mourners would be ensured at all costs. They said that the police would provide three-tier security to the mourners' processions. "Besides plugging in processions' routes, the police will set up special checkpoints there as part of the security plan", they added.

The divisional commissioner stressed the need for effective coordination among all stakeholders for the peaceful observance of 10th of Muharram in Lakki Marwat and Bannu districts. He asked the Ulama to promote sectarian harmony, tolerance and brotherhood through their sermons and help divisional and district administrations and police and other law enforcement agencies to maintain peace and tranquility during Muharram-ul-Haram.

He said that people from all schools of religious thoughts had the constitutional right to carry out their religious rites freely. Sabatkhel said that there was a historical tradition of peaceful observance of Youm-e-Ashura in Bannu division and his administration would put in place all available resources to maintain the tradition and foil nefarious designs of miscreants. He appreciated the business community for the mourners-assistance initiative and said that it would help to promote brotherhood, tolerance and religious harmony in the society.

## Action Plan: UNDP trains public servants

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted a comprehensive three-day training on Climate Change Adaptation Action Plans for officials from various government departments, and community members in Peshawar and Chitral.

The objective of the training was to equip participants with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively implement climate change adaptation measures outlined in the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plans and the National Climate Change Policy.

The training, organized under the UNDP's GLOF-II Project, a joint initiative with the Ministry of Climate Change and supported by the Green Climate Fund, focused on enhancing participants' understanding of Disaster Risk Reduction and Response, particularly on Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), and the impacts of such disasters on women, children, and differently-abled persons.

The participating community members were from the GLOF-II Project valleys, and are active members of the Project's Community Based Disaster Risk Management Committees (CBDRMCs). Enhancing their understanding on climate-induced disasters (such as GLOFs) through CCAP trainings further ensures

sustainable climate action and strengthened climate resilience.

During the training, participants were briefed on climate change indicators and future projections specific to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) regions. Moreover, valuable insights were shared on climate change, including evidential data, historical trends, and anticipated future changes influencing GLOFs in KP and GB. The training sessions also shed light on global and national climate change policies and frameworks.

Sanovia Kakar, Section Officer of the Forest Department, expressed her enthusiasm for the training, stating, "These trainings are integral for us at this point as they equip us with information on climate change considering our vulnerability and susceptibility to climate-induced disasters such as GLOFs."

UNDP's GLOF-II project operates in 16 valleys of Gilgit Baltistan and 8 valleys in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It empowers communities to identify and manage risks associated with GLOFs and related impacts of climate change, strengthen public services to lower the risk of disasters related to GLOF, and improve community preparedness and disaster response. The project also supports development of sustainable options for livelihoods in project areas, with a particular focus on

the participation of women in ensuring food security and livelihoods.

### Bandits kills taxi driver

SADIQABAD (PPI): A murder incident was reported from Sadiqabad Tehsil of Rahim Yar Khan where bandits killed a taxi driver as he failed to pay the ransom, police said Friday.

According to the police officials, the taxi driver, a resident of Rawalpindi, was abducted by bandits through a honey trap a few days ago and demanded a ransom of Rs 20 million. The police said that the robbers killed the taxi driver as his sister failed to give ransom, the audio conversation between the robbers and the victim's sister has been obtained.

Earlier this, Karachi police arrested three suspects allegedly involved in the murder of security guard during a robbery in a factory located in North Karachi. According to details, a joint operation by New Karachi Industrial Area Operation and Investigation Division led to the arrest of three suspects involved in the murder of a security guard during a robbery at a factory on April 18 this year. Police revealed that one of the arrested suspects, Ayaz, turned out to be a worker at the factory, while the suspects carried out the robbery based on the information provided by Ayaz.



SHANGLA: Activists of Almi Majlis Tahafuz Khatme Nabuwat holding a rally to protest against the desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden.

## KUST holds protest against desecration of Holy Quran F.P. Report

KOHAT: Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) has arranged protest against desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden to observe Youm-e-Taqados-e-Quran, on Friday.

During the protest Vice Chancellor KUST Professor Dr. Sardar Khan along with Registrar Muhammad Tariq Jan as well as faculty and staffers participated in large number.

Vice Chancellor KUST Dr. Sardar Khan condemned the desecration of Holy Quran and declared that it has hurt sentiments of more than a billion Muslims across the globe. He argued that Holy Quran is candle of knowledge and wisdom for human in general and in particular for Muslims while at the end prayers were offered for nation and the country.

## Committee meeting held F.P. Report

ATTOCK: Additional Deputy Commissioner General Adnan Anjum Raja while reviewing the overall performance of district emergency response committee for anti-dengue campaign has directed the relevant stakeholders activate the surveillance teams for eradication of dengue virus from the district Attock failing which any kind of negligence will not be tolerated.

He was chairing the meeting here on Friday. Among others, the meeting was attended by Chief Executive Officer, District Health Authority Attock Dr. Asad Ismail, Deputy Director Public Relations Shahzad Niaz and heads of provincial departments. Additional Deputy Commissioner General also directed the participants of the meeting that proceedings will be initiated against the delinquents in case a complaint of production of larvae is received from any corner of the district.

There is a high probability of movement of dengue larvae in the current weather conditions, so surveillance activities should be continued regularly in any case, he added. CEO Health Attack gave a detailed briefing to the Additional Deputy Commissioner General and the participants about the activities regarding the anti-dengue campaign.

ADCG made a detailed review of the performance of all the tehils. He also advised the dengue larvae production should be monitored regularly as larvae might be reached at the alarming proportion during the prevailing season.

He said the performance of all departments is being analyzed particularly with reference to anti-dengue move. He said that any type of negligence regarding dengue will not be tolerated and strict action should be taken against those responsible if dengue larvae are found, added.

## Timely steps for rains, Muharram directed

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Division Zafar-ul-Islam on Friday directed the authorities concerned to take timely measures to deal with monsoon rains and possible flood situation in its wake. The commissioner also underlined the need for taking comprehensive arrangements to ensure peace and harmony during Muharram-ul-Haram.

He expressed these views while presiding over the meeting held in his office to review arrangements for dealing with the monsoon rains and peaceful observance of Muharram. The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners Tank Muhammad Shoib, South Waziristan Upper Ashfaq Khan, South Waziristan Lower Nasir Khan, Additional Deputy Commissioner Dera Tariq Mehmood, Additional Deputy Commissioner Relief Ahad Yusuf, District Police Officer Tank, South Waziristan other related departments participated.

During the meeting, Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Division Zafarul Islam was given a detailed briefing regarding the past floods in Dera Ismail Khan, situation, measures, relief

activities, restoration of roads and other infrastructure and the affected areas. Giving instructions in this regard, Commissioner Dera Division said that due to heavy rains and flood situation, timely arrangements should be made to deal with it.

He said focal persons should be nominated by the concerned departments and a WhatsApp group should be created to improve coordination. Similarly, apart from human resources, details regarding rescue machinery, life jackets, available machinery including road clearance and water extraction machinery from low altitude areas should be sought from the concerned departments, he directed.

The Commissioner further directed to provide timely information about any defect or deficiency so that steps could be taken immediately to its rectification. He said that all Deputy Commissioners should display boards in their offices with the names of all focal persons with mobile numbers to ensure immediate contact.

He directed all the departments, especially the health department and rescue 1122 to keep alert and also ensure the availability of medicines by the health

department including the staff. He said If there was a lack of funds, let them know as soon as possible. Similarly, Commissioner Dera Division Zafarul Islam while issuing instructions regarding the arrangements for Muharram, said that the police department should prepare a foolproof security plan in time like CCTV cameras, control rooms and other security arrangements should be finalized in time.

He said that resources should be ensured to take all these measures. While giving a briefing to the Commissioner on this occasion, it was told that Dera Ismail Khan is one of the sensitive districts. He was informed that the district was facing a shortage of personnel, so the services of FC should also be sought and it was discussed in the meeting and FC officials assured full cooperation.

Speaking on the occasion, the commissioner said that the administration would cooperate and help on all fronts. However, he said it was the responsibility of all the concerned departments to perform their duties effectively. In this regard, he said complacency or negligence on the part of any department would not be tolerated.

## Contractor seeks probe against Dean BKMC

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A contractor has demanded of the authorities concerned to take stern departmental action against the Dean of Bcha Khan Medical College (BKMC) and a member of Board of Governors (BoG) of Medical Teaching Institute (MTI) Mardan Medical Complex for their alleged embezzlement and irregularities in awarding a contract.

The contractor identified as Saeed Khan was speaking in a press conference held here on Thursday. Talking to journalists at Mardan press club, the contractor claimed that six contractors including him, had submitted tender documents for to get a canteen contract.

The contractor said they took back their tender documents as a protest when unnecessary delay was made to unceal the bidding envelope. Later on, it had come their knowledge that the hospital canteen contract had been awarded by Dr Amjid-Deen of Bacha Medical College- and BoG member Arshad Khan to their blue-eyed person against the amount Rs. 0.1 million and twenty thousand only. He alleged that his offer was 0.8 million when he was going to protest on the delay.

As per the rules, he claimed that it was necessary that there must be at least three bidders at the time of bidding for award of a contract. But the said contract was awarded to their blue-eyed person on very amount silently. He

demanding for not only taking stern action against the above mentioned Dean of BKMC and a member of BoG but also to cancel the award of contract.

**As many as 100 PTI's workers bail extended:** The bail of 100 workers, including 2 ex-members of PTI, who got anticipatory bail in the May 9 arson and siege incidents, has been extended till July 18. More than 100 accused persons, including former members of the Assembly Iftekhar Ali Mashwani and Malik Shoukat, appeared in the court of Anti-Terrorism Judge Syed Obaidullah Shah and requested for bail extension through their legal team. The court granted an extension of twelve days and set the date of July 18 for the next hearing.

## Mohtasib mediate to ensure payment to workers

F.P. Report

MULTAN: More than 100 daily wage labourers working in the Multan Electric Supply Company (MEPCO) were provided five months salary by their contractor due to the timely intervention and mediation of Mr. Muhammad Zahid Senior Investigation Officer (IRD) of Wafaqi Mohtasib Office, Multan.

Mr. Muhammad Zeeshan a daily wage labourer along with 33 others lodged complaint against "Ali Azam Enterprises", a contractor of MEPCO, wherein they claimed that the said contractor had failed in pay-

ing their daily wages for the last five months and they were living miserably.

The Complaint was processed under Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) through mediation and conciliation between the representative of MEPCO and the contractor, Mr Riaz Ahmad, under Wafaqi Mohtasib IRD Mechanism.

The said contractor admitted the fact about non-payment of wages and undertook that payment of wages to all the laborers of D.G Khan, Kot Chutta and Rajanpur MEPCO Division would be made till June,

26th, 2023.

On 27th June, the representative of "Ali Azam Enterprises" appraised the Wafaqi Mohtasib Office that pending wages of more than 100 labourers amounting to Rs Five million has been paid and their rightful grievance have been redressed through mediation and conciliation. Zeeshan, the representative of the complainants also endorsed version of the agency to the extent that their wages have been paid before Eid-ul-Azha and extended gratitude to the Ombudsman office for redressal of their grievances.





## UK announces toughened up sanctions regime against Iran

LONDON (AP): Britain announced plans for a tougher sanctions regime against Iran over alleged human rights violations and hostile actions against its opponents on UK soil. The new sanctions regime will expand existing penalties imposed by creating new criteria under which individuals and entities can be hit.

They include any Iranian activities "undermining peace, stability and security in the Middle East and internationally", and the "use and spread of weapons technologies from Iran". Russia has been accused of unleashing Iranian-made attack drones in Ukraine, while Tehran is a close strategic ally of Syria, and backs

Lebanon's Hezbollah. "The Iranian regime is oppressing its own people, exporting bloodshed in Ukraine and the Middle East, and threatening to kill and kidnap on UK soil," said Foreign Secretary James Cleverly.

"Today the UK has sent a clear message to the regime -- we will not tolerate this malign behaviour and we will hold you to account. "Our new sanctions regime will help to ensure there can be no hiding place for those who seek to do us harm," London accuses Iran of stepping up efforts to kill or kidnap perceived enemies of its regime, including in the UK.

It says the Iranian intelligence services have developed close relationships with organised criminal

gangs in Britain and across Europe to help target opponents. Since the start of 2022, the UK has uncovered "more than 15 credible threats to kill or kidnap British or UK-based individuals by the Iranian regime", it added. The latest measures add to ones already taken over Tehran's hardline response to protests that have rocked the Islamic republic since the September 2022 death in custody of Iranian-Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini. The 22-year-old had been arrested for an alleged breach of strict dress rules for women.

Demonstrations swept Iran after Amini's death, with at least thousands arrested since then, according to the United Nations and rights groups. Ten months on, Iran was still punishing those suspected of involvement in the mass protests, according to a UN fact-finding mission which reported its findings. "Harsh punishments continue to be meted out to those involved in the protests, including for exercising rights protected under international human rights law," Sara Hossain, chair of the independent international fact-finding mission, told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

"Most chilling, seven men have already been executed following hasty proceedings marred by serious allegations of fair trial violations, including confessions extracted under torture."

Since the start of the year, the UK has imposed dozens of asset freezes and travel bans, citing alleged human rights abuses, on Iranian individuals and organisations including leading Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commanders and Tehran's prosecutor general. The United States and the European Union have also toughened their own sanctions.

The UK said it had sanctioned 13 more people, including prison governors overseeing torture and inhumane treatment, intelligence and cyber organisations under existing human rights sanctions powers. In February, the independent Iranian International TV said it had been forced to shut down its London studios due to an escalation in "state-backed threats from Iran".

It followed the arrest of an Austrian man near the studios in southwest London who was later charged with "collecting information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism". The British government summoned Iran's top diplomat in London over "serious threats" to the lives of UK-based journalists. The BBC meanwhile has repeatedly complained of an ongoing campaign of threats and intimidation against journalists for its Persian-language service and their families at home and abroad which it has blamed on Iran.

## Iran and Sudan look to restore relations

DUBAI (Reuters): Iran and Sudan said they were planning to restore ties after the Iranian foreign minister met his acting Sudanese counterpart for the first time since diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed seven years ago. Sudan's foreign ministry said in a statement that the meeting, on the sidelines of a Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Azerbaijan's capital Baku, had discussed restoring relations "as soon as possible".

Sudan's acting Foreign Minister, Ali Sadeq, also thanked Iran for supplying humanitarian aid through the Iranian Crescent during the conflict between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian tweeted: "Our delegation met with the Sudanese foreign minister and discussed how to imminently resume diplomatic ties between Khartoum and Tehran." "In this meeting, talks were directed at resolving misunderstandings between the two countries and strengthening the political and economic relations between Tehran and Khartoum," Iran's official IRNA news agency said. Sudan cut diplomatic ties with Iran in 2016 following the storming of the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Tehran.

Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to resume ties in March under a deal negotiated by China, raising expectations that Tehran and other Arab countries would fully re-establish diplomatic relations. Sudan's Sadeq was quoted as saying the deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran would enhance security and stability in the region and the Islamic world.

## US 'actively' seeking leader for Haiti force

GUYANA (AFP): The United States remains active in its search for a country to head a multinational force in troubled Haiti, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, without offering Washington's lead. Blinken met at a Caribbean summit with Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry and again spoke of the urgency of an international force in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation, where gangs have taken over broad stretches of territory.

But no country has stepped forward despite nearly a year of calls for the force by Henry and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "We're in very active conversations with countries in the region and beyond about such a force and we're in active conversations, of course, at the United Nations about what it might do to give a force the proper imprimatur from the international community," Blinken told reporters in Guyana, his second stop on a regional tour. "Part of this involves making sure that countries step up to play important roles in such a force, particularly identifying a country that would play a leading-nation role," Blinken said.

But he declined to offer such a role for the United States, which has a long history of intervention in Haiti, and instead reiterated US support for building Haiti's fledgling national police. US President Joe Biden -- who ended America's longest war in Afghanistan -- has made clear he has no intention of putting US troops at risk in Haiti. Blinken met Henry at the Caribbean summit in Trinidad and Tobago, where the top US diplomat also called for renewed efforts to hold elections in Haiti. Haitians have not voted since 2016, with the last elected president, Jovenel Moise, assassinated in July 2021. Henry has promised to step down after a new government is installed in February 2024, although election targets have repeatedly slipped in Haiti.

Speaking next to Blinken, Guyanese President Irfan Ali said there was progress on Haiti at the Caribbean summit, with Kenya and Rwanda -- whose president, Paul Kagame, was in attendance -- offering support for the police force.

## US set to destroy its last chemical weapons

RICHMOND, Ky. (AP): At a sprawling military installation in the middle of the rolling green hills of eastern Kentucky, a milestone is about to be reached in the history of warfare dating back to World War I. Workers at the Blue Grass Army Depot are close to destroying rockets filled with GB nerve agent that are the last of the United States' declared chemical weapons and completing a decades-long campaign to eliminate a stockpile that by the end of the Cold War totaled more than 30,000 tons.

The weapons' destruction is a major watershed for Richmond, Kentucky and Pueblo, Colorado, where an Army depot destroyed the last of its chemical agents last month. It's also a defining moment for arms control efforts worldwide. The US faces a Sept. 30 deadline to eliminate its remaining chemical weapons under the international Chemical Weapons Convention, which took effect in 1997 and was joined by 193 countries. The munitions being destroyed in Kentucky are the last of 51,000 M55 rockets with GB nerve agent - a deadly toxin also known as sarin - that have been stored at the depot since the 1940s.

By destroying the munitions, the US is officially underscoring that these types of weapons are no longer acceptable in the battlefield and sending a message to the handful of countries that haven't joined the agreement, military experts say. "One thing that we're really proud of is how we're finishing the mission. We're finishing it for good for the United States of America," said Kim Jackson, manager of the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant.

Chemical weapons were first used in modern warfare in World War I, where they were estimated have killed at least 100,000. Despite their use being subsequently banned by the Geneva Convention, countries continued to stockpile the weapons until the treaty calling for their destruction. In southern Colorado, workers at the Army Pueblo Chemical Depot started destroying the weapons in 2016, and on June 22 completed their mission of neutralizing an entire cache of about 2,600 tons of mustard blister agent. The projectiles and mortars comprised about 8.5% of the country's original chemical weapons stockpile of 30,610 tons of agent.

Nearly 800,000 chemical munitions containing mustard agent were stored since the 1950s inside row after row of heavily guarded concrete and earthen bunkers that pock the landscape near a large swath of farmland east of Pueblo. The weapons' destruction alleviates a concern that civic leaders in Colorado and Kentucky admit was always in the back of their minds. "Those (weapons) sitting out there were not a threat," Pueblo Mayor Nick Gradisar said. But, he added, "you always wondered what might happen with



them."

In the 1980s, the community around Kentucky's Blue Grass Army Depot rose up in opposition to the Army's initial plan to incinerate the plant's 520 tons of chemical weapons, leading to a decadeslong battle over how they would be disposed of. They were able to halt the planned incineration plant, and then, with help from lawmakers, prompted the Army to submit alternative methods to burning the weapons. Craig Williams, who became the leading voice of the community opposition and later a partner with political leadership and the military, said residents were concerned about potential toxic pollution from burning the deadly chemical agents. Williams noted that the military eliminated most of its existing stockpile by burning weapons at other, more remote sites such as Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean or at a chemical depot in the middle of the Utah desert. But the Kentucky site was adjacent to Richmond and only a few dozen miles away from Lexington, the state's second-largest city. "We had a middle school of over 600 kids a mile away from the (planned) smokestack," Williams said. The Kentucky storage facility has housed mustard agent and the VX and sarin nerve agents, much of it inside rockets and other projectiles, since the 1940s. The state's disposal plant was completed in 2015 and began destroying weapons in 2019. It uses a process called neutralization to dilute the deadly agents so they can be safely disposed of.

The project, however, has been a boon for both communities, and facing the eventual loss of thousands of workers, both are pitching the pool of high-skilled laborers as a plus for companies looking to locate in their regions. Workers at the Pueblo site used heavy machinery to meticulously - and slowly - load aging weapons onto conveyor systems that fed into secure rooms where remote-controlled robots did the dirty and dangerous work of eliminating the toxic mustard agent, which was designed to blister the skin and cause inflammation of the eyes, nose, throat and

lungs. Robotic equipment removed the weapons' fuses and bursters before the mustard agent was neutralized with hot water and mixed with a caustic solution to prevent the reaction from reversing. The byproduct was further broken down in large tanks swimming with microbes, and the mortars and projectiles were decontaminated at 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit (538 degrees Celsius) and recycled as scrap metal. Problematic munitions that were leaky or over-packed were sent to an armored, stainless steel detonation chamber to be destroyed at about 1,100 degrees Fahrenheit (593 degrees Celsius). The Colorado and Kentucky sites were the last among several, including Utah and the Johnston Atoll, where the nation's chemical weapons had been stockpiled and destroyed. Other locations included facilities in Alabama, Arkansas and Oregon.

Kingston Reif, an assistant US secretary of defense for threat reduction and arms control, said the destruction of the last US chemical weapon "will close an important chapter in military history, but one that we're very much looking forward to closing." Officials say the elimination of the US stockpile is a major step forward for the Chemical Weapons Convention. Only three countries - Egypt, North Korea and South Sudan - have not signed the treaty. A fourth, Israel, has signed but not ratified the treaty.

Reif noted that there remains concern that some parties to the convention, particularly Russia and Syria, possess undeclared chemical weapons stockpiles. Still, arms control advocates hope this final step by the US could nudge the remaining countries to join. But they also hope it could be used as a model for eliminating other types of weapons. "It shows that countries can really ban a weapon of mass destruction," said Paul F. Walker, vice chairman of the Arms Control Association and coordinator of the Chemical Weapons Convention Coalition. "If they want to do it, it just takes the political will and it takes a good verification system."

## At Iowa event, Trump plans to go after DeSantis over ethanol

IOWA (AP): Former President Donald Trump plans to headline his largest Iowa campaign event in nearly four months with a speech to thousands at an arena in the western part of the state. Trump will use his appearance in Council Bluffs to attack his top GOP rival, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, for opposing the federal mandate for ethanol, a renewable fuel additive that Iowa leads the nation in producing.

"DeSantis has problematic policy positions that hurt farmers and demonize ethanol," Trump spokesperson Steven Cheung told The Associated Press ahead of Trump's visit. "President Trump plans to highlight that." The large Republican

presidential field has spent a lot of time over the last few months in Iowa, the leadoff GOP caucus state. In June, more than a half dozen candidates, including DeSantis, former Vice President Mike Pence, former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley and US Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, attended Sen. Joni Ernst's annual "Roast and Ride" fundraiser that kicked off a busy summer campaign season. Trump campaigned in the Des Moines area last month, meeting with GOP state lawmakers, influential conservative pastors, campaign volunteers and a suburban Republican breakfast club. That visit came about a week before he was indicted on federal charges stem-

ming from classified records he kept at his Florida home. Before, his last large event in Iowa was in March, when he spoke to more than 1,500 people at a theater in Davenport and also went after DeSantis on ethanol. He was due to hold an outdoor event in May in Des Moines with about 5,000 attendees expected, but his campaign called it off because of bad weather.

Although caucus campaigns have become more focused on national party priorities over the past two decades, some candidates have continued to portray support for ethanol - specifically the federal mandate that the nation's fuel supply contain a minimum volume of renewable fuels - as a lit-

mus test in Iowa. As a congressman from Florida, DeSantis co-sponsored a bill in 2017 that would have immediately ended the renewable fuel standard, a position consistent with fiscal conservatives who see such mandates as government overreach. As a candidate, Trump has promoted the executive order he signed as president increasing the retail sale of fuel containing 15% ethanol. Recent history, however, suggests a lack of support for ethanol may not be disqualifying. In 2016, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, who opposes the mandate, won Iowa's Republican caucuses, handing Trump an early defeat in his ultimately successful White House campaign.

## I have veto over use of Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus: Lukashenko

MINSK (Reuters): Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said that he would have a veto over any use of the Russian tactical nuclear weapons - over which Putin has the ultimate decision-making power. "Control is carried out perfectly, jointly by Belarusians and Russians," Lukashenko said. "If Russia ever decided to use nuclear weapons, I am sure that it would consult with its closest ally - with us."

"If I or our people or our state does not want something - then it means it will not happen." Lukashenko told reporters no one wanted to attack the United States or European powers with the nuclear weapons, saying they were exclusively defensive. The Federation of American Scientists said in a research note last month that it had yet to find visual evidence that conclusively indicated the presence of an active nuclear weapons facility on the territory of Belarus. Its top nuclear researcher, Hans Kristensen, said that the US Central Intelligence Agency had picked up a visit earlier this year by a senior Russian officer to a facility at Osipovichi for a potential upgrade to nuclear weapons storage. Lukashenko said a "number of nuclear warheads have been moved to the territory of Belarus".

He said the Russian nuclear weapons, which are controlled by the Russian defence ministry's 12th Main Directorate (known as 12th GUMO), had not been transported by land. "I'll tell you a damning fact: We did not move nuclear warheads by land," he said, adding that the transport of the nuclear weapons had gone unnoticed by the Central Intelligence Agency, by Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (known as MI6) or by German intelligence. "Neither you nor the United States, nor MI6, nor in Germany - have noticed this anywhere. That was the

plan."

Reuters has no way of verifying the secret assessments of spy agencies. The United States has criticised Putin's nuclear deployment but has said it has no intention of altering its posture on strategic nuclear weapons and also that it has not seen any signs Russia is preparing to use a nuclear weapon. Putin has said not said which "tactical" nuclear warheads have been deployed, though Lukashenko has said the warheads are three times more powerful than the atomic bombs the United States dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. The Hiroshima bomb, made from highly enriched uranium-235, was about 16 kilotons (equivalent to 16,000 tonnes of TNT), while the Nagasaki bomb, made from plutonium-239, was about 21 kilotons, according to the World Nuclear Association.

## Japan's water release plan meets standards: SK

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korea said Japan's plan to discharge treated radioactive water from its tsunami-wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant met global safety standards and it respected the UN nuclear watchdog's approval for the release. Japan plans to soon start releasing more than a million tons of treated radioactive water, now being stored at the crippled plant north of Tokyo, most of which was used to cool the reactors destroyed by a March 2011 tsunami.

Japan has faced opposition to its plan, both at home and abroad, including from South Korea, despite assurances that the water is safe after being filtered to remove most isotopes. South Korea's assent for the plan comes after it conducted its own assessment and as the old northeast Asian rivals have been taking steps to improve their ties. "Based on a review of the treatment plan of contaminated water presented by Japan, we have confirmed concentration of radioactive material meets standards for ocean discharge," South Korea's minister in the Office for Government

Policy Coordination, Bang Moon-kyu, told a briefing in Seoul.

"Therefore the plan meets international standards including those of the IAEA," he said. Bang said South Korea's assessment by two of its nuclear watchdog agencies was based on independent reviews of Japan's plan, site visits by its experts and a review of a report by the UN International Atomic Energy Administration, which said the water would have a "negligible radiological impact to people and the environment". Bang said South Korea respected the IAEA findings, based on a task force of experts from 11 countries including South Korea, China and the United States. The plan to discharge the treated water from the Fukushima plant is also expected to "not have any meaningful impact on our ocean areas," Bang said.

The South Korean administration has walked a fine line in its stance to Japan's discharge proposal, as it tries to improve ties with Tokyo even though the plan stirred anger and concern among South

Koreans. Opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung said the plan and take the case to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Japan is also expected to face sustained opposition to its plan from China. IAEA chief Rafael Grossi told Reuters that one or two international experts who participated in its review may have had concerns. China's state-run Global Times newspaper said a Chinese expert in the group was disappointed with the "hasty" report.

Yoo Guk-hee, head of South Korea's Nuclear Safety and Security Commission, said its expert on the panel did not have specific concerns. Despite the assent for the plan, Bang said a South Korean ban on food and seafood products from the Fukushima region would remain in place. IAEA chief Grossi is due to fly to South Korea for a three-day visit to explain the agency's findings. He will meet with the Foreign Minister Park Jin and Yoo, head of the main nuclear regulator that assessed Japan's plan.

## IAEA chief nods to discord among its Fukushima report

TOKYO (Reuters): The head of the UN's nuclear watchdog said that one or two of the team of international experts behind its report greenlighting Japan's release of treated radioactive water from the crippled Fukushima plant may have had concerns. Asked whether there was any disagreement among the experts behind the report, which included participants from 11 countries including China, the fiercest critic of Japan's plan, Rafael Grossi told Reuters:

"I heard that being said ... but again, what we have published is scientifically impeccable." In his first interview since releasing the report, Grossi said none of the experts had raised concerns with him directly and he did not elaborate on how he had heard of the issue. China's state-run Global Times newspaper said Liu Senlin, a Chinese expert in the IAEA's technical working group, was disappointed with the "hasty" report and had said the input from experts was limited and only used for reference. Liu did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The taskforce estab-

lished by the IAEA in 2021 to review the safety of Japan's plan to release some 500 Olympic size swimming pools worth of water from the plant wrecked by a tsunami more than a decade ago, also include members from Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, Marshall Islands, South Korea, Russia, Britain, the US and Vietnam, according to the watchdog. Beijing has blasted the IAEA's report saying the body should not be endorsing a plan which poses risks to marine life and human health, despite assurances from Japan and the IAEA that it will have a negligible environmental impact. Grossi said the IAEA's report did not amount to an endorsement of the plan and that Tokyo must take the final decision to release the water due to start later this summer. "We do not endorse the plan or recommend this to be done. We say this plan is consistent with the standards," Grossi said.

"We do not take sides. I'm not on the side of Japan or on the side of China or on the side of Korea. The standards apply to all the

same way," he added. Some Japanese officials are worried that China, the biggest buyer of its seafood exports, may halt purchases of those items after Tokyo begins the water discharge, expected to take up to 40 years to complete. South Korea, which has previously expressed concerns about the release, said it respected the IAEA's review. Before the water is released into the ocean, Japan says it will be filtered to remove most radioactive elements except for tritium, an isotope of hydrogen that is difficult to separate from water. The treated water will then be diluted to well below internationally approved levels, Japan says.

As well as varying degrees of international criticism, the plan has also met resistance at home, especially among the fishing community concerned about demand for their produce. Grossi said he understood the concerns because "nothing identical" to this release had happened before. He added, however, there were also "certain political agendas" attached to criticisms of the plan, without elaborating.



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## Afghanistan economic gains and regional perspective

**R**ECENTLY, the global World Food Organization revealed in its report that the stability of the Afghan currency began to take hold between January and March 2022 when UN cash shipments began, and the de facto authorities exerted strong controls on the illegal export of foreign currency, strengthening the Afghani. The report said, the Afghani strength against foreign currencies can be seen as a positive development for the economy, which helps stabilize prices and improves household purchasing power and cut high cost of living. According to the Afghan Central Bank, implementing some national and international stories, export development, prevention of extra expenses in government affairs, transparency, and implementation of monetary policies caused the stability of the Afghani currency against foreign banknotes.

Multiple surveys and reports by the World Bank, Afghan National Statistics and Information Society (NISA) as well as World Food Program revealed that the Afghan currency had got appreciation while year-on-year (y-o-y) headline inflation has de-accelerated during the first three quarters of the previous fiscal year, due a downward trend in fuel and commodity prices in the global market, a stable currency exchange rate and winter induced economic slowdown in the country. Similarly, reports suggest that Afghan currency significantly strengthened against the US dollar, Pakistan rupee, UK sterling, and Iranian Rial during the past months. Afghanistan's exports had increased many folds that mostly comprise coal, food, and textile items shipped to neighboring Pakistan (60%), India (24), Iran, and Gulf nations. There had been a rise in Afghanistan's imports during this period largely consisting of oil products, machinery, food, and textile items from Iran (22%), China (18%), Pakistan (17%) and UAE (12%) respectively.

The Republic of Afghanistan and its people had witnessed unprecedented destructions, miseries, and deprivations over the past four decades, while unceasing wars and civil insurgencies completely destroyed the essential road infrastructure, seriously undermined industrial growth, agriculture, and economic activities in the war-torn nation. At the same time, COVID-19 Pandemic, the global energy crisis, the war in Ukraine, natural disasters, and continuous droughts coupled with global economic and trade restrictions against the ruling Taliban regime pushed over one-third of Afghanistan's population into a serious humanitarian crisis in the past year. Historically, Afghanistan mostly depends on foreign aid which constitutes about half of Afghanistan's budget that had been stopped in the aftermath of the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in late 2021. Despite all these challenges and handicaps, the Afghan economy has revived over the past year, Afghan currency got appreciation against its regional competitors and international currencies including the US dollar, Saudi Riyal, and UK Sterling, which is surely astonishing for the entire world while it is alarming and thoughtful for Pakistani leaders who sunk a growing economy through politicized policies and reckless decisions. As of yesterday, one Afghani was traded for 3.21 Pakistani rupees, and one US dollar had been bartered with 86 Afghani bank notes.

Currently, the Afghan interim government faces multiple legal, economic, and monetary challenges such as no diplomatic recognition, imposition of economic, trade, and travel sanctions, freezing of Afghan's assets abroad, lack of financial resources, the nonexistence of a regular political setup, continued civil insurgency and terrorism, and a lingering humanitarian crisis, and irregular tax collection mechanism etc. However, an upward trend has been observed in economic indicators of the Afghan economy because of transparency, reduction in government expenditures, strict implementation of law, and accountability. Presently, there is utmost recognition across the border for the Taliban rulers, who performed unbelievably against corruption, poppy cultivation, and crimes, while putting the Afghan economy in an upward direction with sincerity and devotion. The Afghan interim government is eager to join China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the construction of various multilateral energy and connectivity projects such as the TAPI gas pipeline, the CASA-1000 electricity transmission project, and the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Railway project that will connect the Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul with Pakistani port cities of Karachi and Gawadar.

Apparently, the Afghan economy will grow more rapidly if regional nations succeed in implementing those plans into reality, and the current diplomatic, political, and economic impediments remove in some time in future. Meanwhile, there are genuine concerns from the global community regarding the Taliban government's policy on girls' education and employment, human rights, absence of political inclusion, and terrorist safe havens, which are persistent challenges to Afghan peace, political stability, and economic revival. The Taliban government must work to bring back its people living refuge in other countries including Pakistan, Iran, and CARs because millions of Afghan refugees caused serious economic constraints, security issues, and social problems in the host nations. The interim rulers must lesson domestic and global voices against their controversial policies and review their course which will surely strengthen their rule, benefit the Aghan people and bring peace and prosperity to the country.

In fact, nations succeed with integrity, honesty, and hard work, while corruption, nepotism, and no implementation of the law had swamped the gigantic economies in the world. There is a great lesson for Afghanistan's neighbors particularly Pakistan, which has turned into a paralyzed nation despite plenty of resources, vast infrastructure, fertile land, a solid industrial base, and a skilled workforce, only due to a lack of sincerity and dedication. Multiple events regularly happen around us that change peoples' lives and turned course of history, if the nation and it's leaders owe will to build their fate.

### 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.



## How France's Muslims and migrants can cast off victim's role

Khaled Abou Zahr

**F**RANCE is in a state of turmoil, experiencing a deep division. Amid the gravity of the situation, two perspectives emerge to interpret these events. The first is that of the pessimists. Among them, two distinct groups can be identified. The first group believes that the youth taking to the streets have been alienated from their French identity, fueling their revolt against a nation they feel they can never fully integrate into. The second group of pessimists argues that the youth, who are predominantly Muslim and of Arab and African heritage, refuse to embrace France and are looking to destroy the country and its history.

I believe in the optimistic perspective, which asserts that France has the capacity to adapt and reconcile with all its citizens. Let us delve into this realm of optimism. France will surmount these challenges, emerging even stronger than before. It will find a way to transform this nightmarish scenario into one of empowerment. The country will recognize the untapped potential within its youth, who, with their dual cultural backgrounds, can contribute to the growth and prosperity of both France and its global role and mission.

Indeed, these young individuals are unequivocally French. They are not migrants; they belong to the third or even fourth generation of French citizens. Their ancestral homelands hold little significance for them; it is France that defines their identity. Therefore, it is unjust to tell these young individuals to "go back to their country" if they express discontent with France. France is their country; there is no disputing that fact.

While some voices on the left decry oppression and a structurally racist and violent state, history reveals that Italians, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish and later Chinese and Vietnamese migrants faced prejudice when they settled in France but went on to become integral parts of the nation. Furthermore, even during the Second World War, when the Jewish community faced betrayal by its

own state in the most horrific and violent way, it remained attached to France, standing steadfast as the occupation and oppression was lifted and ultimately giving back to

and shows how solidarity among children of the same region developed businesses and interests. The Bretons, the Alsatians and the Aveyronnais each built up solidarity within their

*The 'business' history of Paris reveals this and shows how solidarity among children of the same region developed businesses and interests. The Bretons, the Alsatians and the Aveyronnais each built up solidarity within their community while making Paris and France shine. In reality, a confluence of factors has contributed to the current situation of the French of Arab or African heritage, including the state's negligence, but mostly political manipulation and bribery. Negligence has led, even prior to the eruption of these latest tensions, to areas where the police do not intervene, fearing being attacked if they were to enter. It is easy to blame the police, but one must consider the risks they face in such volatile areas.*

the country even though it had taken everything.

The truth is that, for migrants, through generations anywhere in the world, the journey is arduous. It requires relentless effort, hard work and perseverance for a community to carve out its place in society. It necessitates sacrifice and demands solidarity. Consequently, the reality remains that individuals can either strive to secure their place or adopt a victim mentality and choose voluntary isolation. I chose the optimist way of adding value and being an integral part of France. Nothing, not even Islam - as some claim - stands in the way of this opportunity.

Does racism exist in France? Undoubtedly. Is there preferential treatment for the native French population? Certainly. Yet, in no way, shape or form is this a state of institutionalized racism. Racism exists everywhere. It is true that having a purely "Gallic" name may confer certain advantages in the job market. One might even argue that preferential treatment can extend among individuals from the same French region. The "business" history of Paris reveals this

community while making Paris and France shine. In reality, a confluence of factors has contributed to the current situation of the French of Arab or African heritage, including the state's negligence, but mostly political manipulation and bribery. Negligence has led, even prior to the eruption of these latest tensions, to areas where the police do not intervene, fearing being attacked if they were to enter. It is easy to blame the police, but one must consider the risks they face in such volatile areas. Heightened tensions and frequent acts of violence only amplify the potential for terrible mistakes. Unfortunately, in the present circumstances, the police force is the scapegoat for all the negligence and incompetence of the politicians and leaders of local communities.

The Muslim community has been spoken for by thugs, submissive and religious leaders, successful entertainers and sportsmen. Yes, I am intentionally caricatural. Each one of these existing stereotypes has been used by all political movements. How come no

successful lawyers, bankers or entrepreneurs have a voice within the community, as is the case with other groups? In reality, divisions among French Muslims, as well as Arabs and Africans, are deeper than those with the rest of society. This needs to change now. And so, if we focus on the political views of the community, we notice they have predominantly supported left-wing ideologies, much like how Black Americans often vote for Democrats. The left has skillfully crafted a narrative that portrays conservative politics as inherently racist. Consequently, French Muslims or individuals of African or Arab heritage who align with conservative views or even reject the victim narrative are unjustly labeled as sell-outs and traitors to their own community.

For example, in the first round of voting in last year's presidential election, about 70 percent of French Muslims voted for the leftist candidate, Jean-Luc Melenchon. Historically, the left has been generous in providing support to these communities through housing, subsidies and more. Some 10 billion (\$10.8 billion) per year has been allocated to these areas. Consequently, the community is often confined to the role of the victim. Once again, I do not deny the presence of injustice. However, there are more opportunities than injustices. This is why the time has come for France to reassess its system of subsidies. It is also worth considering how Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Polish and Jewish migrants were subjected to similar prejudices, yet they persevered and fought to secure their rightful place within society and give back to the country. This is precisely what these communities must strive for.

It is now imperative for French Muslims and individuals of Arab and African heritage to disassociate themselves from the left, which has failed to unlock their true potential, instead providing only morsels of what they are truly capable of achieving. We are not victims. We have the power to contribute to our country, to build for it. The time is now.

## Orkney Islands: Brexit's divisive effects reach far north of Scotland

Mohamed Chebaro

**M**IDSUMMER nights are not yet upon us, but that does not mean some parts of the UK cannot dream. The population of a few remote islands in the far north of the country could soon have the chance to vote on whether they want to rejoin Norway, as they are becoming increasingly fed up with being part of the UK.

It seems that the appetite for independence is hitting Britain from all sides. Since the UK voted by a slim majority seven years ago to leave the EU and regain its lost sovereignty, Scotland has been arguing that it has the right to repeat its 2014 referendum that saw its people opt to stay in the union. Now, a fresh independence row is brewing within Scotland itself and, if successful, it could spark an unexpected new alliance for the residents of the remote Orkney Islands. The Orkney Islands is an archipelago located about 16 km off the north coast of Scotland. It is made up of 70 islands, with a total population of 22,000. The Orkney Islands Council's search for "alternative methods of governance" is maybe an exercise born of desperation as a result of central government's failures, which are being felt across the UK as a result of the ruling Conservative Party's 13 years of harsh austerity and the lack of leadership shown by the four successive right-leaning Conservative prime ministers since 2019 to meet the aspirations of ordinary people everywhere.

A row over funding for new ferries between the islands and Scotland has brought Orkney's situation to a head and could prove to be the straw that broke the camel's back. Orkney is seeking £100 million (\$127 million) in funding to try and replace the fleet of aging boats that carry goods and people to and from the Scottish mainland. Council leader James Stockan said the council had proposed a motion for the members to "explore options for alternative models of governance that provide greater fiscal security, and economic opportunity." Among the options, as well as rejoining Norway, are other British arrangements, like becoming a crown dependency, the system of government at work on Jersey and Guernsey in the Channel Islands, or a model like the Faroe Islands, a self-governing part of Denmark.

This North Sea archipelago was controlled by Norway and Denmark until 1472, when it was handed over to Scotland along with the Shetland Islands as part of the dowry for a dynastic marriage between the Scandinavian king's daughter and Scotland's King James III. London's defense - "together we are stronger" - does not stand anymore, as the people and country have been,

over the past three years, counting the cost of the Brexit divorce deal that was not properly thought through by the political leadership of the Conservative Party in London, as well as, to a lesser extent, the other national political parties. The broken promises of Brexit and the problems it has created multiply every single day and the people of Orkney are no different to those in the rest of the UK. They feel that Brexiters, for pure Conservative Party vanity, have stolen their future and devastated the country's economy. During the referendum campaign, we were told the British would be £350 million a week richer from no longer having to pay for EU membership. That was the lie that drove millions to vote for Brexit. Later, those people woke up to find that they were actually thousands of pounds poorer. Now, one in five small exporters are unable to trade with the EU and Brexit has shrunk the UK's economic output by about 4 percent, reducing tax revenues by £40 billion a year. That means there is £40 billion less for the government to spend on doctors, nurses, teachers, police and other services, such as replacing Orkney's ferries.

Orkney's historic Nordic connections give it options, since its leaders have complained of neglect by both London and Edinburgh, and the council aims to see what alternatives are available. Since the late 1970s, large volumes of Britain's North Sea oil have been processed on Orkney, but the islands have not seen sufficient benefits. It is hoped that, with a change of rules and governance, the islands could capitalize on new opportunities from offshore wind farms, as the harsh climate, which has always been seen as a handicap for the islanders, stands to become a commodity used to generate green power. Stockan was not clear how a return to control by Norway, 400 km across the North Sea, would work or how it could solve the problems of the islands and their inhabitants. And Norway is unlikely to interfere in what it considers a domestic and constitutional British matter.

Opening up discussions based on a 500-year-old marriage dowry is a long shot. But what is interesting to see is how ill-thought-out the UK's divorce from the EU was, particularly as it is a country that is made up of many nations. With Scotland rejecting the chance to end its 300-year-old union with England in a referendum in 2014, Orkney is now feeling emboldened to try to strengthen its autonomy, especially as the UK central government has been showing weaker leadership and weaker control. However, it looks to me like no more than a midsummer night's dream.

## The dangers of conflict in Sudan should not be underestimated

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

**T**HE risks and threats that a protracted and heightened conflict in Sudan can pose, not only for this African nation but also for the Horn of Africa region and beyond, should not be underestimated.

First of all, it is important to point out that increased violence and conflict in Sudan can provide a ripe environment for terror groups to emerge, mobilize, recruit, grow and gain power. The modus operandi of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda is generally anchored in efforts to further destabilize a country or region and create chaos, providing a good space that the terror groups can exploit and prosper in. We have witnessed this phenomenon in the Middle East, where some terror groups have attempted to use conflict in order to divide communities, pursue a sectarian agenda, capitalize on people's fears and sow discord between Shiite and Sunni communities in order to gain

power and control.

A second problem is that terrorist groups might be capable of finding some state or nonstate allies that are willing to provide finances, military assistance and advice, intelligence and training. This further increases the threat they pose in the region and on the global level. Through the prism of the realist school of thought in political science, whenever a conflict erupts in a country, states react in one of a number of ways. Some may view the conflict and instability from the perspective of political opportunism. As a result, they may support some specific groups and intervene directly or indirectly through financial, military, advisory, intelligence or political support to shift the balance of power and use the conflict for their own geopolitical, strategic and geoeconomic interests.

Some other countries will attempt to resolve the conflict diplomatically, such as Saudi Arabia's initiative in Sudan - the

Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan. Other states may only try to prevent the spillover of the conflict into their own territory. After gaining power and momentum, terrorist groups can push to take over or have a significant say in any new political establishments in the country.

Other possible objectives include establishing supremacy, the advancement of hegemonic ambitions, achieving specific ideological and foreign policy objectives, and exporting their ideology to other countries. In addition, some terror groups are used for asymmetrical warfare. Having found a safe harbor, terror groups can also create complex networks in order to facilitate their operations in more than one country, as well as to use cyberterrorism to conduct attacks on various governmental, nongovernmental and private sector entities. They will also likely attempt to

find more allies, regardless of their religious nature, as long as the allies share the group's ideology and objectives. Examples include some terror groups that were operating not only in Iraq, but also in Syria and other countries.

The other vital issue is that the number of terror and militia groups will continue to increase as conflicts escalate. The world witnessed in the last decade how the protracted conflicts in Syria and Iraq led to the rise and prominence of terrorist groups such as Daesh, which made remarkable advances and controlled a significant amount of territory. Sudan, in particular, is in a very vulnerable position when it comes to being exploited by terror groups due to the country's socioeconomic status, its lack of powerful security apparatuses, its widespread poverty and its location and geography. In addition, Sudan also lacks effective counterterrorism

strategies, such as the productive policies that are implemented in the Gulf nations, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE. As a 2020 report by the Rand Organization explained: "Sudan's location makes it a potential gateway for linking hubs of militant activity in north, central, and east Africa. This is particularly true given that movement across the country's borders is not difficult.

Most land crossings are highly informal, or, due to their sheer length, unmonitored. Where official posts do exist, they are generally poorly staffed and underequipped, relying mostly on paper ledgers to record the details of those who enter and exit the country. Militant groups could exploit these dynamics to establish rear bases that are used to support and facilitate the movement of operatives across various theaters of conflict." Besides terrorism, a second threat is linked to the humanitarian facet of the Sudan conflict, which

includes the deprivation and hunger it has inflicted on people of all ages.

The third important issue and risk is the massive displacement that such conflicts cause. The escalation of the conflict in Sudan is already having severe repercussions not only for the Sudanese people, but also for the stability and security of several other nations in the region. In a nutshell, the threats that the Sudan conflict can create should not be underestimated. One of the biggest threats is that it could create a ripe environment for terror groups to gain power and inflict damage not only on Sudan but also beyond its borders.

This is why it is crucial for the international community to immediately act in order to find a permanent resolution to the crisis in Sudan. The longer a conflict continues, the more difficult it becomes to chart a path that will bring peace, stability and security back to the affected nation.

Arab News



# Lessons from DRC: Africa should not reward Russian expansionism

Tafi Mhaka

ON June 16, seven African leaders - from South Africa, Zambia, Senegal, Egypt, Comoros Islands, Uganda and the Republic of Congo - met with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv in an attempt to negotiate a "roadmap" to a long-term peace deal between Russia and Ukraine. The next day, they held similar discussions with Russian President Vladimir Putin in St Petersburg, Russia.

Many commended the African states for their efforts to end a conflict that has already claimed thousands of lives. Soon, however, it became clear that this was not a selfless humanitarian affair but one driven largely by domestic socioeconomic and political imperatives.

Since Russia launched its brutal all-out invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Africa has experienced rising commodity prices and food inflation, igniting fears of widespread social unrest. Countries such as Eritrea, Egypt, Benin, Sudan, Djibouti, and Tanzania, which import 70 percent of their wheat from Russia and Ukraine, have been hit especially hard by spiralling shipping costs and disruptions to Black Sea shipment routes. And the proposal African leaders put on the table during their visits to Ukraine and Russia, regrettably, demonstrated that they are putting these immediate domestic concerns over the fundamental rights of Ukraine, and the survival of the rules-based international order.

Indeed, the 10-point peace plan presented to Zelenskyy and Putin by the delegation alluded to recognising the "sovereignty of countries" and respecting international law, but fell short of affirming and defending Ukraine's territorial integrity in the face of an illegal and indefensible invasion. Russia has repeatedly bombed Ukrainian cities, towns and villages, displacing more than eight million people and killing more than 9000 civilians. Russian forces stand accused of myriad war crimes and crimes against humanity. Torture chambers and mass graves are still being discovered in liberated Ukrainian cities. Russia also unlawfully annexed the regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhia in September 2022. Russia must not be presented with the opportunity to retain the blood-soaked spoils of its imperial actions. To have a chance at bringing lasting

peace to the region and gaining the backing of the international community, any peace proposal must require Russia to respect the UN Charter, established international law, and thus, Ukraine's 1991 borders. So it is no surprise that Zelenskyy outright rejected the weak and poorly thought-out African proposal and stressed that peace talks can only begin in earnest after Russia withdraws its forces from occupied Ukrainian territory. It did not have to be this way. Rather than trying to placate Russia with a proposal that could literally let it get away with murder, African leaders could have used their experience in bringing fair and lasting solutions to regional problems to help end the conflict in Ukraine.

Prior to the delegation's visits, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni had said Africa's leaders could "share" their experiences from "solving disputes, like that of South Africa, Congo, Somalia" with Russia and Ukraine. One look at African leaders' approach to the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where they have shown commitment to providing a just solution, is enough to recognise that they have the ability to do the same for Ukraine - if they choose to do so. For over a decade, DRC's east has been plagued by conflict with the signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region leading the African efforts to bring peace and stability to the country. Today, the DRC has reason to believe one of its neighbours is actively fuelling the turmoil and bloodshed. On May 23, it filed a complaint - the second one - against the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and M23 rebel group at the International Criminal Court for the alleged systematic pillaging of its natural resources in the country's eastern region.

Last August, a report by United Nations security experts determined that Rwanda had indeed provided weapons and support to the M23 rebels, as well as carried out military operations inside the DRC from at least November 2021. Rwanda has long denied that it is actively undermining peace and stability in eastern DRC. Despite its flimsy rebuttals, however, there are telltale signs that its leadership views the DRC's estab-

lished sovereignty over its eastern territories as a grave historical aberration. On April 16, Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, speaking at a news conference in Cotonou, Benin, said, "The borders that were drawn during colonial times had our countries divided." "A big part of Rwanda was left outside, in eastern [DRC], in southwestern Uganda and so forth and so forth," he added.

He claimed that people of Rwandese heritage, who are citizens of countries other than Rwanda in the Great Lakes region, have long been denied their "rights". On May 6, the PSC and representatives of the United Nations, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and the Southern African Development Community firmly dispelled any notion that the DRC's borders might ever be altered for any reason. Following the 11th high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism for the PSC in Bujumbura, Burundi, the parties affirmed their "respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, notably intangibility of borders, and the political independence of all countries in the region". They condemned the actions of "foreign and local armed groups operating in eastern DRC", and called for the prosecution of the actors behind the massacres perpetrated against the peaceful civilian population in Kizimba in May. Africa, most admirably, firmly upheld the rule of international law and rejected Rwanda's dubious military designs and revisionist history. If Kagame's violent and subversive game plan appears familiar, it's because Putin has long used a similar modus operandi to destabilise Ukraine.

In February 2014 - several weeks before Russia illegally annexed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol - Putin declared he reserved the right to protect Russian-speaking people in Ukraine. Since then, Russia has been covertly sponsoring pro-Russian separatist militia in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine was based on a contrived need to save "Russians" in Ukraine from "genocide". Still, despite these and countless other transgressions, many African states have refused to condemn Russia. They have firmly backed the "sover-

eignty, territorial integrity and intangibility" of the DRC's borders, as they rightly should, but refused to do the same for Ukraine. On October 12, 2022, 15 African nations - including three mediators from the African peace mission - South Africa, Uganda and the Republic of Congo - abstained from the UN General Assembly vote to condemn Russia's "attempted illegal annexations" of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhia. It goes without saying that any trustworthy assessment of Ukraine's plight must always be centred on international laws and not old fraternal ties. This, however, has not been the case with some of the African peace mission facilitators. In a June 2022 meeting held in Sochi, Senegalese President Macky Sall told Putin, "Despite heavy pressure, many countries still did not denounce Russia's position."

Later that same month, Museveni met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Kampala and publicly declared he saw no reason to condemn Russia's land theft and murderous actions. And at this year's Africa Day celebrations in Johannesburg, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, in a thinly veiled reference to Ukraine, said African countries are "being dragged into conflicts far beyond our own borders". These leaders have certainly mastered the art of diplomatic hypocrisy. For starters, Russia invaded Ukraine, so it's not a "conflict" or a "dispute", as the Africans (and their Russian friends) love to claim; It's a bloody and disastrous invasion. As members of the global community, African states have an obligation to help protect besieged populations. They should not seek to establish peace and stability in Ukraine only to protect their fragile and dwindling economies. The embattled Ukrainians deserve the same genuine support African nations have long been offering to the people of eastern DRC. Africa must insist on a complete and unqualified withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukraine. And if African leaders really want to "silence the guns" in Ukraine, they must fight to preserve its 1991 borders. Anything less cannot be considered an attempt at honest mediation and would serve to do nothing but damage African powers' reputations in the eyes of its peers.

# Russia's war on Ukraine has forced us in Germany to think differently about our role

Annalena Baerbock

AN ability to surprise is not, perhaps, the first thing people typically associate with Germans. But looking at the direction our country has taken since Russia launched its war of aggression against Ukraine, maybe we Germans have managed to surprise even ourselves. Only two years ago, billions of cubic metres of gas arrived from Russia to Germany through Nord Stream 1 and other pipelines. Russian fossil fuels made up a large share of our energy consumption. Today, we've cut this down to zero.

Only two years ago, the idea of Germany delivering tanks, air-defence systems and howitzers to a war zone would have seemed far-fetched, to say the least. Today, Germany is one of the leading arms suppliers for Ukraine's self-defence. Not only is there a sea change in how my country perceives the threats to its own security, but also in how we understand our responsibility in today's world: as a leader our partners can rely on. After the horrors of the second world war, unleashed by Germans, our country's foreign policy was driven by the premise that war should never again emanate from German soil. In a first phase of foreign policy, after 1945, my country sought to regain former enemies' trust. We are forever grateful that they extended their hand to us, readmitting us into the global fold.

The following decades' developments are too complex for justice to be done to them here. Certain mark-

ers stand out for me, however. For decades, German governments pursued what came to be known as "chequebook diplomacy" - the belief that our cash rather than our soldiers should help resolve conflicts. The 1990s brought a third phase, gradually first through participation in UN-led missions and then - driven by the unbearable images of the Balkan wars - much more robustly through Germany's active involvement in the Nato-led force in Kosovo. It was not despite our country's history that this decision was important, but because of it. As the then foreign minister Joschka Fischer pointed out: Germany's responsibility for the Shoah meant not only a commitment to "never again war", but to "never again Auschwitz, never again genocide". A commitment to the values of the UN charter, as well as to international criminal law, meant that Germany has supported its partners in UN missions across the globe. After 9/11, Germany stood with the US and its partners as it deployed the Bundeswehr to Afghanistan. What I believe has fundamentally changed in the face of Russia's onslaught on Ukraine, however, leading to a fourth phase of foreign policy, is the way we perceive threats to our own security, at the heart of Europe. Our security is not a given. For too long, we did not listen to the warnings of our eastern neighbours who urged us to take the threats emanating from Russia seriously. We learned that "hoping for the

best" is not enough when dealing with an increasingly autocratic leader. Besides all our efforts to construct a European security architecture with Russia, our economic and political interaction also did not sway the Russian regime toward democracy. Just after the outbreak of the war, a schoolgirl in Vilnius, Lithuania, who lives only a short drive from the Russian and Belarussian borders, asked me: "Can we count on you?" I wholeheartedly answer: you can. We Germans will never forget that we owe our freedom in a reunited country also to our allies and our eastern neighbours. Just as they were there for us, we will be there for them now, because the security of eastern Europe is Germany's security. We know that for the foreseeable future, President Putin's Russia will remain a threat to peace and security on our continent and that we have to organise our security against Putin's Russia, not with it. In Germany's first-ever national security strategy, we lay out how we seek to assume our responsibility in this new phase of foreign policy, in Europe and beyond, through an integrated security policy.

First of all, that means stepping up our commitment to our Euro-Atlantic family. We are strengthening Nato as the guarantor of our collective security. We are beefing up our military capacity with an unprecedented 100bn (€86bn) package and committing to Nato's defence spending target. We are building a geopolitical

European Union that is opening its doors to new members, such as Ukraine, Moldova, the western Balkan countries and, in the long term, Georgia. We learned painfully that security means not only protection from war and crises, but also from economic vulnerabilities. Decisions on where we buy our gas, oil, or technology carry security implications. We therefore prepare not to repeat past mistakes. Systemic rivals are seeking to expand their spheres of interest by using their economic clout. While we believe that decoupling from China is not an option in a globalised world, we strive to de-risk and to reduce our vulnerabilities. Diversification is an investment in security. We are therefore strengthening our strategic global partnerships. And if we want our common rules - based on the UN charter - to govern our world in the future, we have to prove their worth, advancing solutions that serve our partners' needs - on questions of security, trade and the fight against the climate crisis. If we fail in that, others, who do not share our firm commitment to international law and human rights, will step in. Russia's war of aggression has marked a rupture in the world. For my country, it has opened a new chapter, redefining how we seek to promote peace, freedom and sustainability in this world: as a partner that embraces its leadership. To some, that may be surprising. More importantly, I believe, it is a question of responsibility.

The Guardian

# I thought fossil fuel firms could change

Christiana Figueres

MORE than most members of the climate community, I have for years held space for the oil and gas industry to finally wake up and stand up to its critical responsibility in history. I have done so because I was convinced the global economy could not be decarbonised without their constructive participation and I was therefore willing to support the transformation of their business model.

But what the industry is doing with its unprecedented profits over the past 12 months has changed my mind. Let's remember what the industry could and should be doing with those trillions of dollars: stepping away from any new oil and gas exploration, investing heavily into renewable energies and accelerating carbon capture and storage technologies to clean up existing fossil fuel use. Also, cutting methane emissions from the entire production line, abating emissions along their value chain and facilitating access to renewable energy for those still without electricity who number in their millions.

Instead, what we see is international oil companies cutting back, slowing down or, at best, painfully maintaining their decarbonisation commitments, paying higher dividends to shareholders, buying back more shares and - in some countries

- lobbying governments to reverse clean energy policies while paying lip service to change. On top of that, the industry as a whole is making plans to explore new sources of polluting fossil fuels and, in the United States, intimidating stakeholders who have been moving towards environmental, social and governance responsibility.

Of course, there are some exceptions to these sweeping generalisations, but the trend is clear. What are the leaders of the fossil industry thinking? As we evolve the global economy, we have one way forward: decarbonise quickly enough to avert the worst of climate impacts, especially the impacts upon the most vulnerable. When asked about their irresponsible decisions, executives often cite some version of the prisoner's dilemma, showing unwillingness to step out of the pack and leading the way forward in fear of diminishing their gains vis a vis their peers. They occasionally also cite their own version of climate justice, which is that less fossil fuel energy produced would mean more expensive energy, including for the poorest. What they seem to have forgotten is that we are way beyond strategy games. Let's get real. We have reached the point where decarbonisation will happen

with the fossil fuel industry or without them.

As a recent Rocky Mountain Institute report points out, renewables are simply a superior technology. "The energy transition is a shift from a concentrated, expensive, polluting commodity-based system with no learning curve, to an efficient, manufactured, technology-driven system that offers continuously falling costs and is available everywhere," the report argues. "It is moving from heavy, fiery molecules to light, obedient electrons; from hunting fossil fuels to farming the sun."

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the world will add a record 440GW of new renewable capacity this year. That is more than double what we added in 2019, double what the IEA predicted in 2020, and 24 percent more than the IEA foresaw just six months ago. Exponential growth of renewables is the new reality. Today, for every \$1 invested in fossil fuels, \$1.7 is going to clean energy. This year, the world will invest more than \$1.7 trillion into clean energy. Despite growth in energy generation worldwide, greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector will fall for the first time this year. That is in part due to demand for fossil fuel energy already having

peaked, and renewables eating into the energy market share. This year, for the first time, solar will attract more capital than oil production. At the same time, consumers are benefitting from enormous savings. In the European Union alone, newly installed wind and solar saved consumers 100 billion euros (\$108bn) between 2021 and 2023, and it has helped keep the price of wholesale electricity prices down.

The fossil fuel industry is facing decline, no matter what. It is D-Day for them. The powerful state-owned companies as well as international firms have to decide whether they transition to the energies of the 21st century and thereby by accelerate the exponential curve of the energy transition, or if their flame dies out while they remain blind and in pernicious resistance. Do they want to gain some public license (if any is left for them) by speeding the winds of change or do they want to be the last men standing? If they choose the latter, the transition to clean energies will occur despite them, but it will likely be too late for humanity. The fossil fuel industry will have powered human development in the 20th century and then destroyed it in the 21st. Their moment to decide is now.

Aljazeera

# Whatever happened to mutually assured destruction?

David A. Andelman

THE last time there was a single nuclear weapon outside of Russia, in the swath of Europe dominated by the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies, was on June 1, 1996. That's when the final nuclear warhead, deployed in Ukraine by the now-dismantled Soviet Union, was transferred to back to Russia - which, in theory, owned and controlled all of them.

This transfer was the product of an agreement between presidents Bill Clinton, Boris Yeltsin and Ukraine's Leonid Kuchma, that all such weapons would be transferred to Russia for elimination, and in return, Ukraine would receive iron-clad assurances of security and compensation. That agreement was clearly breached the moment Russian troops rolled across Ukraine's frontiers in February 2022, if not by the seizure of Crimea by Russia in March 2014.

Now, there is a new breach, a new threat and a new risk of destabilization. On June 14, Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko announced that his country had taken delivery of the first of a collection of tactical nuclear weapons from Russia. While designed only for limited use on local battlefields, he said some are three times more powerful than the atomic bombs the US dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, devastating both cities in 1945. Far be it for me to shout, "Chicken Little, the sky is falling." But consider the scenario. Belarus has both a nuclear arsenal and a president who for decades has quietly played the role of Putin's lap dog. And indeed, in a press conference Thursday in Minsk, he did claim to being in lockstep with Putin - adding that the nuclear weapons were for defensive purposes only. At the same time, there is still broad fear in the West and in Ukraine that this purpose could shift on a dime. The weapons themselves certainly have both defensive and offensive capabilities, depending on how their masters make use of them.

In the same press conference, Lukashenko nodded to the fact that those nuclear weapons were under Russia's control. He said that were Russia to use nuclear weapons, "I am sure that it would consult with its closest ally," adding that the weapons "are under reliable protection." In other words, the button is not Lukashenko's to push. Meanwhile, the nuclear threat is expected to be high on the agenda of

the summit of NATO leaders, including President Joe Biden, which will convene next week in Vilnius, capital of Lithuania, barely 20 miles from the tense 420-mile border this NATO member shares with Belarus. The agenda could also include the potentially explosive issue of NATO membership for Ukraine. In a joint news conference in Brussels with NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg last month, Estonia's prime minister Kaja Kallas called Belarus "unpredictable and dangerous." In turn, with a preview of the NATO summit, Stoltenberg added, "We must keep our defenses strong to send a clear message to Moscow and Minsk that NATO protects every inch of allied territory."

Especially with nukes now deployed right next door. There are, functionally, few remaining restraints on the arsenals of any nuclear power - not least the US and Russia, which together account for 90% of the nuclear weapons on earth. But above all, what seems to be in a degree of jeopardy is a concept that kept the nuclear peace for a half century or more - throughout the Cold War and a host of regional conflicts - a concept called Mutually Assured Destruction or MAD. Now largely forgotten or ignored, it was during the Cold War that the concept of MAD came into broad use to define the precarious balance between the then two, paired superpowers - the US and the Soviet Union. This concept held that the fear of certain retaliation and utter destruction of their nation, if not all life on earth, would inevitably follow the use of any such weapons. This clear and present fear would preclude their use and was the ultimate guarantor of peace. The question today is whether the growing pace of threats from Russia of the possible use of devastating nuclear weapons against Ukraine could mean the end of such a concept's viability.

With the transfer of the weapons to Belarus, the UN's disarmament chief, Izumi Nakamitsu, warned the Security Council that the risk of nuclear weapons use was "higher than at any time since the Cold War." So whatever happened to MAD? It hasn't exactly gone away, but many of the restraints may be coming undone. There are, for instance, no more nuclear arms control treaties still extant and functioning between the US and Russia. Former President Donald Trump pulled out of the

Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in August 2019. In February 2021, at the start of the Biden administration, the only other remaining treaty between the two powers, known as New START, was extended for five years until 2026. In February 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced he was "suspending" his country's participation. Secretary of State Antony Blinken promptly calling this action "deeply unfortunate and irresponsible."

Indeed, about the only real agreement remaining is MAD - then and now unwritten but still viable, though depending on the perhaps elusive good sense of the leaders of the two nuclear superpowers. So, are we returning to the days of duck-and-cover, when, as I still recall as though it were yesterday, an air-raid drill sounded, we would crouch beneath our little wooden desks in kindergarten and cover our heads? As though that would preserve us from the inferno of a nuclear blast? "The condition of MAD still exists between the US and Russia, the consequence of all the nukes each side has," Michael Mandelbaum, professor emeritus of American foreign policy at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, one of the leading experts on MAD told me in an email.

"In the early '60s American officials worried that the Soviet Union would launch a less-than-all-out attack, reasoning that the US would not respond in a way that might trigger Armageddon," he said. Today, Mandelbaum, author of "The Four Ages of American Foreign Policy: Weak Power, Great Power, Superpower, Hyperpower," continued, "It's conceivable that Putin might calculate that he could use a nuke against Ukraine and get away with it. I have the impression that the US government is well aware of this possibility and has communicated to the Russian side the various non-nuclear steps NATO could take in retaliation." So much depends on the view of one man - Vladimir Putin. But he has more to gain for himself, not to mention his people or humanity (for which he seems to have less regard) by heaving to the spirit, if not the letter, of MAD. Keeping the nuclear genie contained, rather than unleashing it on a wing and a prayer, is truly the best, indeed, the only path. Somehow, he must be convinced this is also in his own best interest.

CNN

# Wagner's 'coup' was just the first act in its plot to destroy Putin

Lisa Haseldine

YEVGENY Prigozhin's march on Moscow may have been aborted, but two weeks on the Kremlin is still reeling from his overt challenge to Vladimir Putin's power. According to reports, the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) has gone so far as to run an initial inquiry into levels of public support, gauged by monitoring social media posts and internet searches by ordinary Russians.

Its findings, intercepted and leaked by Ukrainian intelligence, suggests that 17 of Russia's 46 regions sided with Prigozhin. Putin had support from just 21 regions, while the remaining eight remained split. Moscow apparently backed the Russian President, but his home city of St Petersburg was ready to throw its support behind the Wagner chief. Public support for Prigozhin in the republic of Dagestan was reportedly as high as 97 per cent.

If the report is accurate - any wartime leak should be taken with a pinch of salt - surely the only conclusion is that Putin is not only in an extremely precarious position, but that the country may be on the edge of civil war. It's not just wishful thinking: the country has a history of failed

coups leading to political upheaval. Speaking to the Kremlin-opposed Russian news outlet Meduza, two regional government sources said that Putin's officials had called a crisis meeting with regional leaders and Russian embassies to shore up support. These are not the actions of a comfortable administration. Perhaps Putin is finally waking up, realising that the nation he thought he'd had in his palm could soon scatter. During the Covid lockdowns and in the months since the invasion, he became a near-recluse, seldom photographed outside the Kremlin. But in recent days he has been popping up across the country for meet and greets with the public. Dagestan was one of the first places he visited. And earlier this week, Putin announced that the region would be given £40 million in local infrastructure investment. If it looks like a panicked response to public unrest, then it probably is.

And what are we to make of Prigozhin's walkabout? Under the terms of the Belarus-brokered truce with Moscow, he is supposed to have self-exiled in Minsk, but he is now said to be at large in St Petersburg. The Kremlin said that it doesn't know or

care; that it doesn't have the capabilities to keep tabs on him. Some might argue it's an attempt to avoid legitimising him - but failing to punish Prigozhin exposes Putin's weakness and the fragility of his power. As for the Wagner group itself: in theory, it is being folded into the Russian army, but in practice, it's actively recruiting from its new base in Belarus and isn't shy about branching out once again to Russia. Telegram channels have called on subscribers to gather in St Petersburg this weekend at an event. "We will distribute t-shirts, patches, badges, stickers," they promise. They don't say that Prigozhin himself will show up, but he could.

Alexander Lukashenko, the Belarusian president, is still posing as the peacemaker, saying Prigozhin's survival is proof not of Putin's weakness but his magnanimity.

"You think that Putin is so malicious and vindictive that he [Prigozhin] will be killed somewhere tomorrow?" he said this week. "No, this will not happen." But with Prigozhin supposedly at large in Russia and Wagner re-organising, it may be that the coup was merely a first attempt. And that the final blow is yet to come.

The Telegraph





# Weekly inflation up by 0.70 pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.70 per cent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on July 06, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 257.79 points as compared to 256.00 points during the past week, according to the PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 28.55 per cent.

The weekly SPI with

the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732, increased by 1.08 per cent and went up to 265.88 points from last week's 263.03 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517, Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 1.02 per cent, 0.91 per cent, 0.83 per cent and 0.51 per cent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 24 (47.06%) items increased, 10 (19.61%) items decreased and 17 (33.33%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW), included bananas (7.51%), chicken (2.80%), eggs (1.17%), LPG (0.96%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.74%), cooking oil 5 litre (0.72%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (0.71%), pulse masoor (0.47%), pulse moong (0.31%) and pulse gram (0.24%).

The items that recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis, included tomatoes (42.25%), onions (8.70%), potatoes (4.79%), wheat flour (4.05%), gur (4.01%), sugar (3.48%), shirting (3.02%) and diesel (2.95%).

The commodities that witnessed a decrease in

price on a Year-on-Year (YOY) basis, included onions (23.94%), electricity for Q1 (14.58%), tomatoes (13.26%), pulse masoor (7.17%), diesel (5.82%) and vegetable ghee 1 kg (0.81%).

On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices included wheat flour (121.69%), cigarettes (112.94%), gas charges for Q1 (108.38%), tea lipton (102.86%), rice basmati broken (77.40%), rice irri-6/9 (74.61%), potatoes (69.06%), chicken (63.22%), gents sponge chappal (58.05%), salt powdered (51.61%), sugar (50.08%), bananas (48.96%) and bread (46.86%).

## Sharjeel assures business community of solving their issues on priority

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: A delegation from the Karachi Chamber of Commerce, led by President Tariq Yusuf, met with Sharjeel Inam Memon, Minister of Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, at his office in the Archives Complex, Clifton Karachi.

Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon assured the businessmen that he would work towards resolving their issues. He emphasized that a collaborative approach involving all stakeholders would be adopted to address the concerns of the traders.

He emphasized that the businessmen of Karachi hold a significant position in the country's economy. The Sindh government prioritizes addressing the issues faced by Karachi's business community.

In the meeting, Tariq



Yousaf, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, along with Senior Vice President Tauseef Ahmed, Vice President Haris Asghar,

Aamir Ali Khan, the President of Automotive Traders and Importers Association, Muhammad Akbar, the General Secretary, Abdul Rahim,

the Finance Secretary, Amjad Aqil, the Vice President, and Ijaz Ahmed, the Chief Coordinator, were also present.

## Sindh Bank selects PTCL to implement cutting edge SD-WAN Infrastructure

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) and Sindh Bank have signed an agreement for deployment of SD-WAN at 200 branches of Sindh Bank.

Zarrar Hasham Khan, Group Chief Business Solutions Officer, PTCL & Ufone 4G and Syed Ata Hussain Jafri, EVP Head of IT, Sindh Bank, signed the agreement at a ceremony recently held at Sindh Bank Head Office in Karachi. The ceremony was witnessed by Hatem Bamatraf, President

and Group CEO PTCL, Imran Samad President & CEO Sindh Bank and their teams. PTCL is providing Sindh Bank with its state-of-the-art infrastructure and platform solutions that are equipped with latest technology & managed security.

Hatem Bamatraf, President and Group CEO, PTCL & Ufone 4G, expressed his satisfaction during the signing ceremony regarding the agreement

with Sindh Bank, emphasizing PTCL Group's commitment to assisting the bank in meeting its digital connectivity requirements. As a national carrier, PTCL is at the forefront of driving digitalization throughout the nation. By forging such alliances, PTCL remains dedicated to its pivotal role in advancing both telecommunications infrastructure and delivering cutting-edge, reliable solutions to the banking

industry. These endeavors are poised to foster the overall economic growth of the country."

Imran Samad, President & CEO of Sindh Bank, stated, "We are pleased to partner with PTCL for infrastructure platform solutions, as we focus on adopting state-of-the-art and secure technology for connectivity and digitalization. As Sindh Bank aims to achieve an enhanced operating leverage, this transformative partnership will not only enhance our operations, but also improve security and time-to-market for products and services, offering a digitally enabled financial setup for our customers and partners."

PTCL and Sindh Bank place the highest level of commitment to provide best-in-class services to their customers across various industries in Pakistan. This agreement is part of the growth momentum in the diverse areas of ICT and Security Solutions, which is key to a digital banking eco-system in Pakistan.



## FPCCI, Chambers of Commerce's greets Kazakhstan-Pakistan direct flight

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federation Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and various federal and provincial chambers of commerce and industry of the country greeted the Kazakhstan-Pakistan direct flight to be inaugurated on July 8th of current months and called it an important step in promoting mutual economic cooperation and business between the two countries.

Direct air between Kazakhstan and Pakistan is a milestone in promoting mutual business and economic integration with Kazakhstan and Central Asia, President FPCCI, Irfan Iqbal Malik said while talking to APP here Friday. Pakistan Federation Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Karachi

Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Peshawar and Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry called the direct flights between Kazakhstan and Pakistan an important development for the promotion of economic and trade relations between the two countries and economic integration with the Central Asian states.

President of Pakistan Federation Chamber of Commerce and Industry Irfan Shaikh while talking to APP said that the direct

flight between Kazakhstan and Pakistan which will be inaugurated on July 8 will increase the possibilities of economic cooperation between the two countries and the economic and trade relations between the two countries will increase.

He said that the coming of two flights a week from Almaty, the industrial centre of Kazakhstan, to Lahore, will give an opportunity to local businesses and businessmen to increase economic activities.

He said that the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, Yerzan Kistafin, deserves to be commended for playing an important role in the launch of a direct flight between Lahore and Almaty for promoting mutual trade.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Service Long March Tyres and Chaoyang Long March Tyres led by their Chairman Mr Li Qingwen calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Financial system's performance and resilience remained firm

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has issued its annual flagship publication, the Financial Stability Review (FSR) for CY22. The Review is being published in terms of requirements prescribed in Section 39(3) of the State Bank of Pakistan Act, 1956. It presents the performance and risk assessment of various segments of the financial sector including banks, non-bank financial institutions, financial markets, financial market infrastructures and non-financial corporates.

Pakistan's economy experienced a turbulent year as the existing economic imbalances were compounded by the unfavorable external environment. The domestic headwinds including the twin deficits, high inflation, catastrophic flooding, delay in the completion of IMF program reviews as well as the global challenges such as fast paced increase in commodity prices and monetary tightening by major central banks in advanced economies, manifested in the deteriorating macroeconomic conditions. Nonetheless, financial sector showed resilience against these stresses and posted steady performance. The financial sector's asset base grew by 18.3 percent in CY22-mainly supported by the banking sector.

The FSR notes that the SBP and the government

took various policy steps to address widening imbalances, which included further increase in policy rate and macro-prudential policies pertaining to consumer financing and administrative measures to contain external imbalance. Resultantly, current account deficit improved towards the year end while economic momentum weakened. In this backdrop, the GDP grew only by a meager 0.29 percent in FY23.

The FSR highlights that notwithstanding the increased volatility of financial markets in CY22, the banking sector witnessed a strong growth of 19.1 percent in its assets. This expansion was mainly driven by investments while advances decelerated. Since deposits observed notable slowdown, banks' reliance on borrowings remained substantial. Encouragingly, the credit risk remained contained as gross NPLs ratio lowered to 7.3 percent by end CY22 from 7.9 percent at end CY21, while the net NPLs ratio slightly inched up to 0.8 percent from 0.7 percent a year earlier, remaining at one of the lowest levels of last two decades. Bank's after-tax earnings improved during CY22, primarily due to rise in interest income. As a result, (ROE) improved to 16.9 percent in CY22 from 14.0 percent in last year. The contained delinquencies and higher profitability

supported banks' solvency as Capital Adequacy Ratio stood at 17.0 percent - well above the minimum regulatory requirement of 11.5 percent. The Islamic banking segment also observed robust growth of 29.6 percent during CY22. The asset quality indicators improved and earnings rebounded from previous year. Microfinance banks, however, remained under stress as the asset quality indicators deteriorated along with after-tax losses.

The FSR reveals that non-financial corporate sector posted a moderate decline in earnings due to the elevated economic stress and an increase in taxation and financing costs. Nevertheless, the overall financial standing of top 100 listed companies remained steady and corporate sector in general continued to serve its obligations to financial institutions. Financial Market Infrastructures (FMIs) remained resilient during CY22. Importantly, SBP implemented the second phase of Raast during CY22, enabling an instant and free Person-to-Person (P2P) funds transfer. At the same time, a comprehensive licensing and regulatory framework for digital banks was also issued with a view to promote digital financial services (DFS) in a prudent manner.

The FSR highlights that a comprehensive supervisory and safety net framework

is also in place to preserve the general confidence in banking system and safeguard the soundness of regulated institutions. SBP's supervisory framework proactively monitors and assess both firm-specific and system-wide risks to financial stability and takes proactive actions to address these risks. During the year under review, SBP took a number of measures to further strengthen the framework in line with market conditions and emerging best practices.

Going forward, the dynamics of financial stability would be contingent upon evolving conditions both at international and domestic fronts. The results of the latest macro stress tests suggest that the banking sector, in general, and the large systemically important banks, in particular, are expected to show resilience to withstand assumed severe macroeconomic shocks. SBP is, however, cognizant of the prevailing risks. With the toolkit and capabilities at its disposal, SBP stands prepared to take necessary and timely measures to preserve financial stability and support economic growth by ensuring a smooth supply of credit and financial services in the economy.

The Financial Stability Review 2022 can be accessed at: <https://www.sbp.org.pk/FSR/2022/index.htm>

## Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships named, Seaspan Beacon, Singapore, and Atrotos Heracle Containers carrying Canola and Palm oil, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Grain & Fertilizer Terminal, and Liquid Cargo Terminal respectively. Meanwhile, two more ships, Kition-M and Perth-I with Mogas and Coal also arrived at the outer anchorage of the Port Qasim. A total of 05 ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Seaspan Beacon, Yankul Silver, and Milaha Ras Laffan sailed out to sea on Friday. Cargo volume of 49,557 tonnes, comprising 30,670 tonnes of imports Cargo and 18,887 tonnes of export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,191 Containers (1,080 TEUs Imports and 1,111 TEUs export) was handled at the port.

## Ahsan Iqbal inaugurates 200kv solar PV system

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Prof Ahsan Iqbal on Friday inaugurated the installation of a 200kv solar PV system at the ministry to promote environment-friendly electricity.

The ceremony was held at the Ministry's auditorium which was attended by the Secretary, Ministry of Planning Syed Zafar Ali Shah, Additional Secretary (AS) and officials of the ministry, said a press release issued here.

Speaking at the occasion, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said, "The provision of affordable, reliable and clean energy has always remained a priority of the government."

"Pillar IV of Vision 2025 outlines the

approach towards achieving energy, water, and food security," the minister said.

"The recent 5E framework provides a short to medium-term strategy to achieve economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability in the coming years," he remarked.

"The recently launched 5Es framework and energy is one of the important E, he highlighted.

"z'Plan House will be established soon."

He said, "This generation will also reduce the annual energy bill for the Ministry from Rs 26.746m per annum to Rs14.09m resulting in annual savings of Rs 12.66m.

At the existing prices, the project is expected to recover its capital cost

within four years." "The project will augment already installed 178 KW solar PV based alternative and renewable energy by adding approximately 200 KW of solar power."

"The production of this renewable energy will be designed as a hybrid system with an IESCO supply source, he added.

Speaking at the occasion, Syed Zafar Ali Shah said that this initiative was taken last year and today the ministry succeeded in installing a 200mw solar plant.

He said, "Several initiatives have been taken to revamp the ministry's cafeteria, library and other attached departments of the ministry."

"Moreover, the gym will be established in the ministry for its employees," he added.

## Stocks sink on higher interest rate fears

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Global stocks tumbled on Thursday as investors fretted over the prospect of more US interest-rate hikes and the risk of recession.

Following surprisingly strong US economic data, Wall Street stocks spent the entire day in the red, with the S&P 500 finishing down 0.8 percent.

European markets had their worst session since March 15, with London closing 2.2 percent lower while Frankfurt shed 2.6 and Paris dropped 3.1 percent as the prospect of more rate hikes sent government bond yields higher.

Hong Kong led Asian losses, falling by three percent. Analysts noted that

the release Wednesday of the US Federal Reserve's meeting minutes set the stage for more interest rate hikes in the months to come. "The clear hawkish guidance spooked markets," said Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets UK.

"This apparent willingness by central banks to crush demand, and risk pushing the economy into a recession to get inflation under control, is prompting investors to pare down their exposure to equity markets, hence today's sell-off," Hewson said. The latest round of US economic data was much better than expected.

Thursday's reports

included releases from payroll firm ADP estimating the US economy added 497,000 jobs last month, more than double the expected amount.

Also, a survey by the Institute for Supply Management pointed to solid growth in the services sector in June, again suggestive of a growing economy. The ADP figures in particular were "clearly eye opening" and a "bit of a shock to markets," said Interactive Brokers' Steve Sosnick, noting hopes that the Fed's earlier interest rate increases will bring down inflation.

While growth remains healthy for now, the prospect of more rate hikes

has stoked worries that the Fed could tip the economy into recession, weighing on risk sentiment.

"If a rate hike this month wasn't already nailed on, it probably is now," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at trading platform OANDA. "It's no longer a question of if the Fed hikes this month but how many more after that?"

The yield on the 10-year US Treasury note, seen as a proxy for Fed expectations, pushed above four percent as futures markets predict another rate increase at the July 26 meeting. The UK government's borrowing costs also rose as the yield on five- and 10-year bonds reached 15-year peaks.

### Court Notice

IN the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal No. 19/13. Institution 13/2/2023. Date of hearing. 21/8/2023. Pera Khan etc VS Sher Aman etc. Notice to No. 12. Zaren Zada s/o Mst Bakhtu.13.Said Rawan. 15.Abdul Qahar.16. Bakht Qabab sons of Bakht Zara.17.Mst Bakhtmala d/o Mst Bakht Zara.18. Zora Amn Khan s/o Nadar Khan.19.Diyar Khan.20. Bakht Nazera. 21.Nazer sons of Mst Shadgasy.24.Habibur Rehman s/o Attaullah.28. Mst Zeba d/o Attaullah. 29. RiazAhmed.30. Amjad Ali.31.Mohamad Zada. 32.Mohamad Alam. 33. Zafar.34.Salem Ullah sons of Said Ghawas. 36.Momin Khan s/o Suhbat. 37.Roydad s/o Hamed residents of Krapa tehseel Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.am dated 21/8/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.





In brief

Squad for Blind Games announced

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) on Friday, announced a 17-member squad for the upcoming IBSF Blind World Games, scheduled to take place from 17th to 27th August in Birmingham this year. The 17-member Pakistan contingent will be led by Nisar Ali (B2) while Badar Munir (B2) will serve as his deputy. Staged after every four years, the IBSA World Games, in a first, will host 11 sports competitions after World Blind Cricket Ltd and IBSA agreed to add Cricket for the Visually impaired men and women in this year's mega event. PBCC Chairman Syed Sultan Shah, also World Blind Cricket Ltd Chairman, approved the national squad and also deputed three team officials. Complete squad B1 category: Zafar Iqbal, Riyasat Khan, Mohammad Shahzaib, Fakhar Abbas, Mohammad Salman, Mohammad Asif B2 category: Nasir Ali (c), Badar Munir (vc) B3 category: Matullah, Mohsin Khan, Kamran Akhtar, Akmal Hayat, Israr Hasan Team management: Mohammad Jameel (head coach), Maher Mohammad Younus (coach), Tahir Mahmood Butt (trainer).

Saliba signs new contract at Arsenal

LONDON (Agencies): William Saliba has committed his future to Arsenal after signing a new long-term deal with the Gunners on Friday. The French centre-back, who was an integral part of Arsenal's unexpected challenge for the Premier League title last season, has reportedly agreed a four-year deal worth £10 million (\$13 million) a season. Indeed, it was a back injury to the 22-year-old that played a major role in a dip in form for Mikel Arteta's men towards the end of the campaign that allowed Manchester City to retain their title. "To have William extend his contract with us was something we have wanted to do for a long time," said Arteta. "William proved last season just how good and how important he is to our squad. "The ability he has at his young age of just 22 is exciting, and there is of course so much more room for development with any player at this stage of their career." Saliba had just one year left on the contract he signed when joining from Saint-Etienne in 2019 for £27 million. However, he spent most of the next three seasons back in France on loan spells to Saint-Etienne, Nice and Marseille. His form at Marseille earned him international recognition with France for the first time and he was part of the squad that reached the World Cup final last year in Qatar. Saliba follows teammates Bukayo Saka, Gabriel Martinelli and Aaron Ramsdale in recently signing new deals. Arsenal are also reportedly close to strengthening their squad significantly in a bid to become champions of England for the first time in 20 years.

Cavendish denied new record by Philipsen

BORDEAUX (Agencies): Jasper Philipsen denied Mark Cavendish a record 35th stage win at the Tour de France with victory in Bordeaux. Britain's Cavendish took the lead in the final sprint before Philipsen surged past him in sight of the line on stage seven on Friday. Cavendish jointly holds the record for most Tour stage wins on 34 with Belgian legend Eddy Merckx. The victory saw Belgian Philipsen secure his third stage win in the Tour this year.

## Wimbledon 2023 Sabalenka avoids upset to beat Gracheva; Kvitova advances

LONDON (Agencies): Second seed Aryna Sabalenka fought back to beat France's Varvara Gracheva and reach the Wimbledon third round. The Belarusian, among the tournament favourites, struggled in the early stages against the world number 41 on a stiflingly hot Court One. She hit five double faults in the first set but regrouped to avoid an upset, winning 2-6 7-5 6-2. World number one Iga Swiatek and last year's runner-up Ons Jabeur both play later on Friday. Australian Open champion Sabalenka looked out of sorts in the opening exchanges against Gracheva, making 16 unforced errors and giving away her serve three times. She seemed somewhat affected by the sun beating down on the SW19 turf, using bags of ice to cool down at each change of ends. Unsurprisingly, Sabalenka left the court to regroup after hitting eight

unforced errors in a row and failing to take three break points as she gifted the opening set to Gracheva. She kept the second set on serve before letting out a guttural scream of frustration when she set up a chance to counter Gracheva's serve but blazed it well wide. She didn't have to wait long for the breakthrough, though, and began peppering Gracheva - who switched her allegiance from Russia to France in June - with thunderous forehands to level the match at 1-1. A double-break in the third set saw the world number two return to somewhere near her usual level of performance as she won the match and set up a third-round tie against world number 40 Anna Blinkova with a final roaring ace. What else has happened on day five? Elsewhere, two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova cruised into the third round of this year's tournament with a compre-

hensive 6-2 6-2 win over Aliaksandra Sasnovich. The Czech ninth seed, who won the grass-court title in Berlin in the lead up to the Championships, took just 74 minutes to wrap up victory on a stiflingly hot morning. Despite trading early breaks, Belarusian Sasnovich struggled in an error-strewn performance before Kvitova, 33, raced away with the second set. Meanwhile, former world number two Paula Badosa was forced to retire from her second-round match against Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk with a back problem that had kept her out of the French Open. Following an awkward exchange with a reporter in her press conference, the Spaniard confirmed afterwards she would not compete in the mixed doubles alongside partner Stefanos Tsitsipas. American 25th seed Madison Keys also advanced with a 7-5 6-3 win over Swiss player Viktorija Golubic.



LONDON: Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka celebrates winning her second round match against France's Varvara Gracheva.

## Dominant Sri Lanka thump West Indies in CWC Qualifier

HARARE (Agencies): Maheesh Theekshana's astonishing figures of 4/34, followed by Pathum Nissanka's century powered Sri Lanka to crush West Indies by eight wickets in the Cricket World Cup (CWC) Qualifier. Set to chase a modest 244-run target, Pathum Nissanka's anchoring century knock paved the way for Sri Lanka to complete the pursuit for the loss of just two wickets with 34 balls to spare. Sri Lankan openers Nissanka and Dimuth Karunaratne scripted a solid start to the run chase with a sensible 193-run partnership which lasted with the latter's dismissal in the 34th over. Nissanka struck 14 boundaries on his way to a 113-ball 104. Karunaratne soon followed his opening partner's footsteps in the

37th over when he also walked back to the pavilion when Sri Lanka needed 40 more runs. He scored 83 off 92 deliveries with the help of seven boundaries. With both openers back in the pavilion, wicketkeeper batter Kusal Mendis and Sadeera Samarawickrama made sure there were no more hiccups in the run chase and put on an unbeaten partnership. Mendis scored 34 not out off 43 deliveries, hitting three boundaries while Samarawickrama scored an unbeaten 17. Kevin Sinclair and Akeal Hosein could pick a wicket apiece for West Indies. Put into bat first in their last CWC Qualifier fixture, the West Indies batting lineup once again faltered and thus the two-time champions, already knocked out of the World

Cup qualification race, could only pile 243 runs on the scoreboard. The Caribbean side after a cautious start, kept losing wickets at an alarming rate before eventually bowling out for a meagre total. Their partnership came for the ninth wicket when Keacy Carty and Kevin Sinclair added 63 runs to the total. Carty waged a lone battle for West Indies amid their dismal show with the bat with a gutsy 87-run knock from 96 deliveries, hitting six boundaries and a six. Opening batter Johnson Charles (39), Romario Shepherd (25) and Sinclair (25) were the other significant contributor for the West Indies. Maheesh Theekshana spearheaded Sri Lanka's bowling attack with 4/35, followed by debutant Dushan Hemantha's 2/49.

## Shandur Polo Festival begins at World Rooftop in colourful ceremony

CHITRAL (APP): Shandur Polo Festival at the world rooftop got underway in a colourful opening ceremony with hundreds and thousands of vociferous spectators with their cheering hands and shouting. The Shandur Polo is being played between the teams of Chitral and Gilgit-Baltistan, under freestyle rules. Polo in Shandur has been played between Chitral and Gilgit since the 1930s but at the government level, it was first organized in 1982. The event is since then organized by District administrations of Upper Chitral and Lower Chitral, and is financed by KP govt. Polo at Shandur top, which is the world's highest polo ground at an altitude of 3,700 meters. The festival also includes folk music, dancing, and a camping village set up. The polo tournament is featured in the first episode of Himalaya with Michael Plain. Since 1982 the Polo has

been won 13 times by Gilgit-Baltistan and 16 times by Chitral. Shahzada Sikandar Ul Mulk (Captain of Chitral Polo team) has won a staggering 13 times while lagging as a captain of his team. He is thus the most successful captain ever followed by Raji Rehmat of Gilgit who has won it 7 times for his team. The world's highest polo ground is in the small village of Shandur, located at an altitude of 12,000 feet above sea level, the ground sits in the shadow of the towering Hindu Kush mountain range. The unique location of the polo ground makes it a popular destination for adventure seekers and polo enthusiasts. Polo at world's 'rooftop' readies for polo festival wherein teams of Chitral and arch-rival Gilgit-Baltistan looked enthusiastically, stamping their superiorities on each other when they will be in the field free for all rules. Foolproof security arrangements have also

been taken to make the event a success. A special village has been set up for the festivities and to accommodate the large number of visitors. The Shandur ground lies midway between Chitral and Gilgit. The pitch was first used when the reigning royalty decided to have a polo match in the 1920s. It is often called the 'Rooftop of the World'. The top is flat, a plateau and can be crossed between late April and early Nov. The annual traditional sporting event has become a global attraction and brings in a large number of tourists as well as revenue for the provincial government of KP and the Chitral district administration. Special flights are operating to and from Chitral, especially for the foreign tourists expected to visit the festival. Pakistan's national flag carrier, PIA will operate two special flights from Islamabad to Chitral, taking tourists there. Facilitation desks have been set up at

## Zaka Ashraf 'offers' chief selector role to M Hafeez

LAHORE (Web Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Management Committee chairman Zaka Ashraf has offered former captain Mohammad Hafeez to work together for the betterment of cricket. Reports said Mr Hafeez had been offered the role of advisor, chief selector or the National Cricket Academy, adding that the all-rounder had expressed his willingness and asked for time to take a final decision. Meanwhile, Mohammad Hafeez has confirmed that he had received the offer. He said Mr Ashraf is respectable person for him, adding that he was ready to take cricket in the right direction in the true sense, but not at all eager to take up a job in the board. The offer comes as Mr Ashraf assumed charge as chairman of the PCB Management Committee after Najam Sethi stepped down. In the first meeting with board members, the PCB said that his prime focus will be on the improvement of cricket and cricketers. He also emphasised on bringing transparency in the affairs of the cricket board. He provided reassurance to the members that grievances regarding the elections of the Regions and Associations will be redressed and he guaranteed transparent elections for the Regions and Associations. Mr Zaka Ashraf mentioned that they will give full attention on the improvement of cricket and on the upcoming matters related to ACC Asia Cup and ICC World Cup.

## SBP summer camps being held to trace fresh sports talent

LAHORE (APP): The Sports board Punjab (SBP) Summer Camps are underway in all divisions of the province in which thousands of male and female athletes are getting top class training in different games under the supervision of expert coaches and trainers. The SBP expert coaches imparted training to male and female athletes in four games - table tennis, badminton, taekwondo and karate in Faisalabad on Friday. Similarly, the summer camps of table tennis, badminton and karate were held in Bahawalpur and Dera Ghazi Khan divisions, table tennis, badminton and taekwondo in Multan, badminton and taekwondo in Rawalpindi and summer camp of gymnastic was conducted in Sialhiwal division. Meanwhile, Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail said that the mega summer camp activity was being organised with an aim to trace fresh sports talent at grassroots level from all divisions. "The holding of summer camps in dozens of games is the best way to incline our talented youth towards healthy sports activities during their free time of summer vacations". He said that it is the best usage of this free time and we are quite upbeat that thousands of young boys and girls will not only polish their sports skills but also learn valuable games techniques from qualified coaches. "Besides this, the healthy activity of summer camps will play a key role in the promotion of sports culture among the younger generation of the province". Sports Board Punjab, is organising summer camps of 14 games including Athletics, Archery, Badminton, cricket, Football, Hockey, Table Tennis, Lawn Tennis, Self-Defense, Taekwondo, Wushu and Karate, Gymnastics and Swimming.

The Chitral, Peshawar and Islamabad airports as well. Chitral teams are always challenged by the neighbouring Gilgit teams and the traditional rivalry spices up the matches during the tournament. This version of the game played at Shandur-top has attained legendary status and is of great interest to international and domestic adventure tourists alike. There are no umpires and there are no holds barred. The KPCTA has made all arrangements to hold the festival in a befitting manner to attract domestic and foreign tourists to the scenic region and traditional game in large numbers.

### South Asian Bodybuilding Championship in Male

# Pakistan won one gold and two bronze medals



### F.P. Report

MALE: Pakistan won one gold and two bronze medals in the South Asian Bodybuilding Championship in Male, Maldives Shahzad Qureshi of Pakistan won the gold medal in the 80 kg category & beating the 2 strong Indian body builders.

Pakistan's National Anthem and Green Flag fly high in Maldives when Shehzas gets his Medal. Shahzad Qureshi had also won the gold medal in the previous event. Ibrahim Khan of Pakistan won the bronze medal in the 75 kg category of the junior category. Shahidullah of Pakistan

won the bronze medal in the 75 kg category. Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation Secretary Sohail Anwar congratulated the three bodybuilders on their performance. The High Commissioner of Pakistan in Maldives and Sports Minister of Maldives were also present on the occasion of the event.

## Tamim Iqbal reverses retirement decision

DHAKA (Agencies): Tamim Iqbal has withdrawn his retirement a day after announcing it in emotional circumstances in Chattogram, following an intervention by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Their meeting took place on Friday afternoon at her residence in Dhaka. Tamim, accompanied by his wife, met Hasina alongside former captain Mashrafe Mortaza and BCB president Nazmul Hassan. The turnaround ultimately came on Friday afternoon but ESPNcricinfo learned of the meeting as early as Thursday evening. It is understood that Mashrafe, a member of parliament, started the process around that time when he spoke to the prime minister to possibly intervene in this situation. Tamim had, until then, refused to discuss his retirement with Hassan. Tamim made the retirement announcement on Thursday afternoon. In a live TV broadcast, he broke down several times while delivering a 13-minute

monologue about his decision. It captured the airwaves and social media for the rest of the day. A different Tamim spoke to the media on Friday evening outside the Prime Minister's residence. He revealed that he had been given a break of six weeks to recuperate from his injuries. "The honourable Prime Minister invited me to her residence this afternoon," Tamim said. "We had a long discussion after which she instructed me to return to cricket. I am withdrawing from my retirement. "I can say no to anyone but it is impossible to say no to the most important person in the country. Mashrafe bhai called me while Papon bhai [Hassan] was here. They were big factors [in the reversal]. The Prime Minister has also given me a break of a month and a half. I will complete my treatment and return to playing cricket." BCB chief Hassan said he knew a solution was around the corner, and was

relieved to have been able to sit with Tamim and convince him to reverse his decision. "Having seen his press conference [on Thursday], I knew that he was being emotional about his decision," Hassan said. "I knew that if we could sit face-to-face, I could find a solution. "We sat with him through the Prime Minister, and he just told you that he is withdrawing the retirement letter. He is not retired. He has taken a break of six weeks when he will undergo rehab and get ready physically and mentally. He will return to cricket soon." Asked if he is relieved, Hassan said: "Of course we are relieved. How can we play without our captain?" Tamim, who made his retirement announcement a day after leading Bangladesh in the first ODI against Afghanistan, will not feature in the rest of the series. Litton Das has been appointed captain for the remaining matches on July 8 and 11.

## British Grand Prix Max Verstappen tops first practice

LONDON (Agencies): Max Verstappen led team-mate Sergio Perez in a Red Bull one-two in first practice at the British Grand Prix. Williams driver Alex Albon was an unexpected third fastest, 0.253 seconds off the pace, an indication that other teams have not reached their ultimate potential this weekend. Fernando Alonso's Aston Martin was the first established front-runner behind the Red Bulls in fourth. He headed Ferrari's Charles Leclerc in fifth place by just 0.012 seconds. Alonso was 0.668secs slower than Verstappen, who is looking for a sixth consecutive victory this weekend, with Perez 0.448secs off the benchmark set by his team-mate. Verstappen's pace, despite complaints from the Dutchman about a lack of grip that he said felt "like driving on ice", confirmed the expectation pre-race that Silverstone's high-speed

swerves would emphasise the Red Bull's advantages over the rest of the field. Esteban Ocon put in a promising showing and set the sixth fastest time in the upgraded Alpine, which has a new front wing, ahead of Ferrari's Carlos Sainz and the McLaren of Lando Norris. Norris, too, has a new front wing in addition to the major upgrade that improved the performance of the McLaren at the Austrian Grand Prix last weekend. Mercedes had a difficult session. Lewis Hamilton and George Russell were only 12th and 14th fastest, despite both cars being fitted with yet another new front wing as Mercedes continue to deliver upgrades aimed at returning them to a competitive position. Russell complained that the car was "all over the place in Turns Six and Seven" as both drivers seemed to be battling with a lack of rear grip, a perennial problem for Mercedes

since the start of 2022. Mercedes did not run the soft tyre, which will have affected their positions. The teams were having their first experience of the new Pirelli tyre, introduced for the rest of the season with a stronger construction to reduce chances of failure. The session took place under blue skies in temperatures of close to 25C and in front of packed grandstands, with a total of 480,000 expected at Silverstone over the three days of the race meeting. Unsettled weather with the chance of rain is expected over the weekend. Those there will have the chance to see Hollywood superstar Brad Pitt driving in a modified Formula 2 car as filming starts for the new Apple F1 movie. The Oscar winner, who has been practising at Silverstone in the lead up to the race, is playing a veteran racer who returns to the sport to mentor a rising young star.







## In brief

### IRSA releases 302,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released water measuring 302,800 cusecs from multiple rim stations. The inflow into the river system was recorded at 390,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1515.24 feet and was 117.24 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 215,500 cusecs and 170,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1189.50 feet, which was 139.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 52,000 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 204,600, 184,200, 146,100 and 80,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 58,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 41,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday notified 2-day power suspension programme for Saturday and Sunday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period on Saturday from 06:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Islamabad Feed Mill, Jhta Hatial, Bisali, Pind Jatla, Lab.I & II, Reliance Weaving Mill, Bhal, Jarrar Comp Feeders, From 08:00 AM to 1:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, COMST, Chhata Bakhtawar, Park Enclave, Lahtrar, Tramiree, ISI, Rahara, PHA, Kuri Road, CM Pak Zong, Isolation Hospital Feeders, From 07:00 AM to 12:00 PM Islamabad Circle, I - 11/I, I-11/3, Metro Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Nogzi, Bajnail, New Milpur Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Old Rawat, New Rawat, CWO, AOWHS, SPARCO, Parkview, Pindi Board, Jail Park.I, Car Chowk, Morgah, Fuji Foundation, Mehboob Shaheed Feeders, Attock Circle, Taxila-2, Taxila-1, Sher Shah Suri Feeders, On Sunday from 07:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Park View, Pindi Board, Jail Park-1, Car Chowk, Morgah, Fuji Foundation, Mehboob Shaheed Feeders and surrounding areas.

### DC, CPO visit Nullah Lai

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, Hasan Waqar Cheema along with City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani here on Friday visited Nullah Lai and reviewed arrangements finalized to cope with flooding. The DC inspected the water flow in Nullah Lai and also checked the dumping of garbage and solid waste in the nullah. He said that Section-144 was enforced around Nullah Lai to prevent the dumping of garbage and solid waste in Nullah Lai. He directed the officers to strictly implement Section-144 and take action in accordance with the law against the rules violators. The administration was making efforts to protect people from flood situation caused by rains during the monsoon season, the DC said.



ISLAMABAD: Security forces standing alert position during Quran Sanctification Day outside Islamabad press club.

## Hasanabdal cadet college's students visit ECP for briefing on electoral processes

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of students from Cadet College Hasanabdal, accompanied by faculty members Friday paid a visit to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Secretariat. The purpose of their visit was to receive a comprehensive briefing on the ECP's initiatives and mechanisms for promoting transparent and inclusive elections, said a news release issued here.

The interactive session, chaired by Secretary ECP Omar Hamid Khan, provided the students with valuable insights into the role of the ECP and its significance in the democratic process. Secretary ECP Omar Hamid Khan emphasized that the students held the potential to bring about positive change in the society. He encouraged them to actively participate in the electoral process and shared his expertise by addressing their queries.

The session served as an excellent platform for the students to gain a deeper understanding of the ECP's efforts in ensuring fair and transparent elections throughout Pakistan.

During the meeting, the students received comprehensive briefings on various key aspects, including electoral processes, the integration of technology in the electoral process, voter education, and initiatives aimed at fostering youth participation in elections.

The faculty members appreciated the ECP's initiatives and suggested organizing youth voter awareness sessions at Cadet College Hasanabdal to further promote electoral awareness among the students. In addition to the informative sessions, a mock-poll exercise was conducted to familiarize the youth with the entire polling process.

This practical activity aimed to enhance their understanding of the democratic process and their future roles as responsible citizens. To acknowledge the participation and enthusiasm of the students, the secretary ECP presented certificates to all the participants and honored the faculty members of the cadet college with a shield.

The gesture recognized the college's commitment to educating students about the significance of elections and their active participation in the democratic process. The visit of the cadet college's delegation to the ECP Secretariat provided an invaluable opportunity for the students to engage directly with the electoral authority.

Such initiatives contribute to building a well-informed and engaged citizenry, ensuring the continued success of democratic practices in the country.

### LIMS to promote, revolutionize agriculture sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Land Information and Management System (LIMS) is an unprecedented project of the government of Pakistan and the Pakistan Army to promote modern agriculture, whereas the establishment of LIMS will help revolutionize the agriculture sector in the country.

LIMS is the first comprehensive government initiative for the development of the agricultural sector in the country's history, an official source said.

The main objective of LIMS is to reduce domestic agricultural imports, increase exports and meet the food needs of the growing population.

Land Information Management System will also be helpful in enhancing food security of the country. The establishment of LIMS will provide farmers with simultaneous access to information on climate change, satellite crop monitoring, water, fertilizer and spray focus areas and direct access to markets. Under Land Information Management System, it will be possible to increase agricultural production by using modern technology on uninhabited and low-yielding agricultural lands. This revolutionary institute will work on land, crops, weather, water resources and pest control under one roof.

## Shortage of Climate resources holding Pakistan back: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, Senator Sherry Rehman on Friday said Climate Finance was uncharted territory for many developing countries due to a significant knowledge and capacity gap on this critical issue.

Pakistan faces dual challenges of limited accessibility to climate finance and a lack of technical capacity, impeding its progress in achieving crucial climate adaptation and mitigation goals.

The minister was delivering her key note address at the launch event of the Climate Finance Accelerator (CFA) organized by the UK Government, where she emphasized the significant role that programs like CFA could play in knowledge-creating, building capacity and new pathways within both the public and private sectors, a news release said.

She underlined the challenge of prioritizing climate change in both sectors and highlighted the potential of such initiatives to elevate the government's narrative on climate finance.

By creating awareness and aligning public interests with government objectives, these programs can effectively enhance the discourse on climate finance.

The minister highlighted Pakistan's commitment to exploring Carbon Markets as part of its efforts under the Paris Agreement. She mentioned that the country was in the process of developing an interim framework for a voluntary carbon market and we had officially signed on a collaboration with Verra, a global standard-setting body, to share knowledge and educate stakeholders on carbon markets and the certification process for generating carbon credits.

She spoke about the Delta Blue Carbon Project by the Sindh Government as a

flagship in voluntary carbon markets, which was the world's largest blue carbon project, with a 60-year lifespan and aim of restoring 350,000 hectares of land in the Districts of Thatta and Sujawal in Sindh.

She said that the restoration of the mangrove forests has the potential to increase Pakistan's mitigation capacity by reduction in emissions worth 27 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e over the life cycle of the project.

Most of the resources from that carbon trade will go into regenerating mangroves, and enhancing water conservation projects, as well as for building climate-smart agriculture opportunities for small farmers. The minister highlighted that Pakistan was an extremely climate-stressed country and drew attention to the increasing frequency of extreme weather events in the country and stressed that these events were no longer isolated or random occurrences but were a direct result of climate change.

She emphasized that climate inaction had disrupted nature's ability to maintain its natural weather patterns, and it was crucial for society to take responsibility for creating an environment where nature could thrive and preserve its existing balance. She continued, "We need promises made at COP27 to materialize, but clearly the financial challenges faced by the international public sector in meeting the massive funding requirements of the developing world, which have gone to trillions from billions, fall far short of the quantum of funding now needed. The world is not only missing its emissions reduction targets but is also failing to fulfill the promised funding pledges made by the global community. The Paris goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C is no longer alive and we are hurtling towards a 2.8°C where countries like Pakistan will feel the burn first."

## PDM Govt put national honour, assets & foreign policy on sale: Rasheed

RAWALPINDI (INP): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed said on Friday the "illegal" government had put the national honour, assets and foreign policy on sale to stay in power.

Hitting out at the ruling coalition in a tweet, the former interior minister quipped that burial should be declared free for poor people at least to give them relief at this stage.

He said the observers from across the world were asking whether elections will be held in Pakistan on time, if so, then how it

will happen. He asked against whom will the PPP and PML-N, which are coalition partners in centre, would contest elections.

Holding the general elections the way witnessed in Karachi and Azad Kashmir would carry more disadvantages. He also took aim at Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, saying he had completed fifty of foreign trips and now had reached in the US.

He said the US tour was a fourth failed attempt of the secret political activities, adding that

Bilawal Bhutto would return empty handed.

Saying the politics of horse-trading will not prevail, Mr Ahmed predicted trouble in the formation of the caretaker setup in the centre.

The former minister said the "real impact" of the IMF loan deal would surface after July 12 when the executive board's meeting is scheduled. He feared that the way stock exchange and rupee were making rebound, the situation would be other way around after July 12. He also lashed out at the government for increasing the price of 20kg flour bag by Rs100.

## Speakers stress for capacity building of provincial EMISs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The speakers at a training session have stressed the need for capacity building of provincial/area Education Management Information Systems (EMISs) and education managers on SDG-4 data collection, analysis, reporting and use for planning & monitoring besides collaboration among stakeholders for better use of education statistics.

The opening session was chaired by Salman Mufti, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training and Zafar Malik, Head of Education, UNESCO here on the other day.

Dr. Muhammad Shahid Soroya, DG, Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) welcomed the participants and apprised them about various projects, initiatives and interventions implemented/initiated by PIE during the last few months including development of training manual for these workshops, providing technical input for SDG-4 Mid-Term review.

An exhaustive training needs

assessment was conducted to assess the capacity of the provincial/area EMIS teams and a customized training manual has been developed for knowledge/skills enhancement of the EMIS teams on the SDG-4 benchmarking, data collection, analysis, and reporting. The workshop sensitized the education managers and policy-makers on the SDG-4 data production and utilization through advocacy workshops. Hands-on exercises, case studies, and scenario exercises based on real-data were also conducted during the three days of the workshop.

The training was also imparted on producing education indicators from various sources including administrative data, household surveys, monitoring, censuses, etc.

The aspects of data quality, ethics, analysis and utilization were also discussed at length. The closing session was chaired by Youssef Filali-Meknassi, Representative and Director UNESCO Islamabad.

He highlighted the importance of

data especially after COVID-19 and Floods to identify the areas where the resources are needed the most.

He also stressed upon need of active collaboration among stakeholders for better produce and use education data/statistics.

Dr. Shahid Soroya in the concluding remarks shared the efforts made by stakeholders for producing quality data based on standardized methodologies and interpretation.

It was hoped that the skills and knowledge gained in the workshop would be applied by participants in their official work in producing quality data and its use in effective policy and planning. It may be mentioned here that the federal government, by merging its two subordinate departments, established Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) as a premier entity of Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training to produce reliable and qualitative education statistics for guiding policy, planning, management, and monitoring at various administrative levels.

## High to very high flood likely in river Chenab, associated Nullahs of Ravi

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Flood Commission (FFC) has said that high to very high-level flooding is expected in River Chenab and associated Nullahs of rivers Ravi and Chenab during Saturday and Sunday.

According to daily FFC report on Friday, flash flooding is also expected in the Hill Torrents of D.G Khan Division and local Nullahs of Northern Balochistan including small rivers in Bannu, Kohat and D.I Khan Divisions during the next 48-hours.

At present, all major rivers of the Indus River System (IRS) are flowing with "Normal Discharges". The combined live storage of Tarbela, Mangla & Chashma reservoirs is 7.80 Maf (58.02 % of Total Live Storage, Capacity of 13.443 MAF).

As per present meteorological situation, deep trough of Westerly Wave earlier over Northeastern Afghanistan and adjoining areas lies over Northern parts of Pakistan whereas seasonal low continues to prevail over Balochistan with its

trough extending northwards.

Upper Air Cyclonic circulation over West Bengal (India) has now moved westwards and is currently prevailing over central parts of Madhya Pradesh (India). Resultantly moderate to strong monsoon currents from Bay of Bengal are penetrating into upper parts of Pakistan up to 7000 feet.

For the ensuing 24 hours FFD, Lahore has predicted scattered to widespread wind thunderstorm/rain of moderate intensity with isolated heavy falls over Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Sargodha, D.G Khan & Lahore Divisions of Punjab, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu & D.I. Khan Divisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa besides over the upper catchments of all the major rivers of IRS.

Scattered Wind Thunderstorm/ Rain over Punjab (Faisalabad, Multan & Bahawalpur Divisions), Balochistan (Kalat, Naseerabad, Loralai, Sibi & Zhob Divisions) and Southern & Southeastern Sindh.



ISLAMABAD: Vehicles on the way being driven through flooded streets at Ghouri Town.



Traffic accident in Parwan kills 1

PARWAN (Agencies): Taliban's provincial official in Parwan province said as a result of a traffic accident one person died and three others sustained injuries. The Islamic Emirates' security command in Parwan province on Friday in a news release said the incident took place around 10:00 am in the morning, resulting in the death of one person and injury of three others. A Toyota Corolla car collided with a motorcycle in the Sar-e-Khwaja Sayaran area of Charikar city in Parwan province, the statement said.

500 women accused of various crimes

KABUL (TOLOnews): Officials at the Prisons Administration of Afghanistan said that more than 500 women who were charged with various crimes are imprisoned in the country's prisons. According to the officials, in total, over 17,000 prisoners are in the country's prisons across the country. The deputy head of the Office of the Prisons Administration, Habibullah Badar, said based on the decree of the Islamic Emirate's leader, the officials in the prisons have been instructed to not punish the prisoners.

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

# WFP Afghanistan received aid from over 12 countries in 2023: Spokesman



KABUL (TOLOnews): The spokesman for the World Food Program (WFP) in Afghanistan, Philip Kropf, said that they received contributions from more than 12 countries this year, but warned that the limited funding is threatening the "lifesaving" operation of the organization.

The donors include, Kropf said, "New Zealand as well from the European

Union, Islamic Development Bank, the United Nations and private donors." "Two countries, India and the Republic of Korea, have supported our work with in kind donations of wheat and rice," Kropf said. He said that the WFP was forced to reduce rations and cut 8 million people from assistance across the country in recent weeks. "Millions

of families in Afghanistan are at risk of going hungry ... This year and this winter is as important as it was last year and before," Kropf said.

He also stressed that WFP in Afghanistan "urgently needs \$1 billion" to continue emergency operations and help the families to survive the coming winter.

Meanwhile, the acting Minister of Economy, Din

Mohammad Hanif, met with the two UN officials and they discussed the projects in education, food, livelihood and health sectors. "All humanitarian assistance of the international community has been beneficial for countering the food insecurity and rotation of economic infrastructure. Support for development projects by the international community and focusing on sectors that create jobs causes a reduction in poverty, and economic enhancement," said Abdul Rahman Habib, a spokesman for the MoE.

This comes as the residents of Kabul say that poverty and unemployment increases the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance.

"The poor people should be helped. The poor people should be reached in the villages, districts and cities," said Talib, a resident of Kabul. "90 percent of the people are living under the poverty line and a basic problem is the unfair distribution of assistance to the people, and secondly unemployment," said Fakhruddin, a resident of Kabul.

# Chinese Mining company to invest \$350 million in Afghanistan

Fan China Afghan Mining Processing and Trading Company (FAMPTC) stated on Thursday that it would spend \$350 million in Afghanistan over the next months in several industries, including electricity generation, the building of a cement factory, and healthcare.

In a meeting with Maulwi Abdul Kabir, the political deputy and acting prime minister, the FAMPTC representative discussed their investment intentions. According to a statement issued by the prime minister's office, the company's representatives said they have professionals and specialists working on the projects and operational plans that will soon be executed in Afghanistan.

In response to "Fan China Afghan's" investment proposal, Maulvi Abdul Kabir urged domestic and foreign investors to recognise and seize Afghanistan's numerous economic opportunities.

The strong interest

shown in recent years by Chinese corporations, particularly in the mining industry, demonstrates the government's willingness to welcome investors from various industries.

According to the report, the Fan China Afghan Mining Processing and Trading Company (FAMPTC) is a partnership between Afghanistan's Watan Group and China's

Xinjiang Central Asia Petroleum and Gas Co (CAPEIC). According to officials, the Chinese Company was reportedly interested in investing in Afghanistan's lithium deposits. "Several countries and investors have expressed interest in the lithium deposits in addition to the Chinese, The Chinese even said they are prepared to invest \$10 billion," the

Ministry of Mine and Petroleum said.

Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, China has influenced the country through economic and investment in the mine deposits in the country.

According to reports, the Chinese company have long wished to invest in the country's lithium mines, which are worth more than \$3 trillion.



# Taliban summon beauty salon owners' family members in Ghazni



KABUL (Agencies): The Director of Promotion of Virtue and Prohibition of the Taliban in Ghazni Province reportedly summoned the family members of several owners of women's beauty salons on Thursday and warned them to end their activities by the end of the month.

The Department's officials have threatened to prosecute and punish the husbands of the owners of

these beauty parlours or other family members in case of violation.

According to the decree issued by the Taliban's Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, women's beauty parlours in Afghanistan will no longer be allowed to operate after July 23, 2023.

According to a report, more than 60,000 women will lose their jobs due to

the closure of women's beauty salons across the country.

According to the Khaama Press report, there are over 12,000 women's beauty salons throughout the country, with an average of five women employed by each. There are 3,100 women-only beauty salons in Kabul.

It is also important to note that most women support their families

solely through employment. Since August 2021, the de facto authorities issued some suppressive policies and practices which restricted women's rights, including banning women from attending schools and universities and working with aid agencies.

Human rights activists and the international community have massively criticized the recent decree by the Taliban.

# UK committed to 'supporting a positive future for all Afghans'

KABUL (TOLOnews): Robert Chatterton Dickson, chargé d'affaires ad interim of the UK Mission to Afghanistan, said in a series of tweets that his visit to Afghanistan demonstrated the UK's commitment to supporting a positive future for all Afghans, including women and girls.

Afghanistan continues to experience one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, reflecting half a century of conflict and a drought worsened by climate change, Dickson said, adding that over "28M Afghans are in need of humanitarian assistance and the economic situation looks bleak."

"The UK support for Afghanistan totals over \$650M in humanitarian assistance since August 2021," he added.

Aziz Maarji, a political analyst, said that the UK can help with the situation in Afghanistan.

"Due to its influence at the international level, Britain can both directly and indirectly help the Taliban and people of Afghanistan," he said.

Dickson said that he had



a "wide range of candid discussions with the Taliban leadership."

"They told me they had made progress with counter-narcotics, improving security and reducing corruption. I made clear our deep concern about edicts that erode the rights of women and girls."

Dickson said: "We will continue to press for Afghan women and girls to

be able to reach their full potential, and work with everyone, including the Taliban, to help deliver a secure and prosperous Afghanistan."

Political analysts said that such meetings will be beneficial if the interim government accepts the wishes of the international community.

"Such meetings will be beneficial when the wishes of the international commu-

nity about Afghanistan are responded to positively and these wishes include respect for human rights, respect for minorities and the formation of an inclusive government," said Wahid Faqiri, a political analyst. After his appointment as Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the UK Mission to Afghanistan in early June 2023, Dickson visited Afghanistan for the first time.

# 60% of primary school aged girls, 46% boys deprived of education

KABUL (TOLOnews): The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund said in a report that 60 percent of girls and 46 percent of boys of primary school age are currently not getting any level of education in Afghanistan.

UNICEF said that Japan has provided \$10 million to support the "continuity of children's learning amidst a learning crisis in Afghanistan."

With this contribution, UNICEF said, "71,500 children are expected to continue their education."

"The Islamic Emirate should have a proper solution so that the international community also makes efforts in the fields of education and higher education, so that it can bring a beneficial result," said Janat Fahim Chakari, a political analyst.

According to UNICEF, this contribution from the Government of Japan will allow UNICEF to:

- Improve learning environments for 55,000 children in public hub schools by constructing and rehabilitating classrooms, or build handwashing facilities and toilets, based on the needs of specific schools.
- Ensure 16,500 children



can continue their education for another two years at the community level.

- Provide in-service training for 990 female and male teachers, school heads and academic supervisors in public schools.

Meanwhile, some of the girl students called on the leader of the Islamic Emirate to allow them access to education.

"Let the girls who are at

home today and cannot go to the school, return to their schools," said Hussna Rahimi, a student.

"Let's not take away the rights of reading and writing of females because they are girls or women. There is no right to deprive them of their education," said Zainab Shirzad, a student.

The Japanese ambassador in Kabul, Takashi Okada, met with acting Foreign

Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and "explained the international efforts to assist the people of Afghanistan," Japan's embassy in Kabul said on Twitter. "He underlined the importance of better governance, including girls' education and employment for women, and of mutual confidence building between Afghanistan and the international community," the embassy said.

# Children in Kabul malnourished due to poverty

KABUL (Agencies): Some families in Kabul said that due to poverty and a lack of food, their children have become malnourished.

The father of a malnourished child, Khan Zada, said that he is the family's sole breadwinner and that his three-year-old child is malnourished as a result of his inability to provide adequate food for them.

"My last child had malnutrition because of a lack of food for him and his mother," he said.

"Every day, my husband makes between 50 and 60 Afs. He sometimes arrives empty-handed. We don't have anything to eat for lunch or at night," said Freshta, the mother of a malnourished child.

Meanwhile, the Save the Children Fund said in a report that Afghanistan is among the fifteen countries in the world that face food insecurity.

"Millions of children around the world are facing hunger. In the 15 worst-affected countries, like South Sudan, Afghanistan or Burkina Faso, one child is pushed into severe acute malnutrition every minute.

That's why we urgently need your help. You can give hungry families the support they need to survive, and stop children dying from hunger." Save the Children tweeted.

In the meantime, Fouzia Shafique, UNICEF's health lead in Afghanistan, said that this organization will continue its health emergency response project with

the aim of providing health services in 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

"This is a crucial project for the country right now. And the reason is, we are all aware of the economic crisis that Afghanistan has faced over the last one year. We know that more and more Afghans are living in poverty. We know there is

loss of livelihoods. People have lost their jobs, their work. Some displacements in the country, last year alone we had a couple of disease outbreaks."

This comes as, based on the statistics of the Ministry of Public Health in 2022, nearly three million people in Afghanistan have suffered from malnutrition.





# Young people shining stars of Youth Programme

Resolution of journalists' problems topmost  
priority of present government: Marriyum

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Friday that several young people had become shining stars of the success of the Youth Programme of PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif.

In a tweet sharing a video clip of an icon of the programme, she said this was not only the success story of the enviable and proud Muhammad Mohsin Ali, but also an excellent example of success of the inspiring vision and thinking of bringing change in the lives of the youth and society through education. This capable and hardworking young man Mohsin Ali of Mian Rahima village of Hafizabad, who won five gold medals, has explained the secret of success of Pakistan's youth. The minister said as Chief Minister of Punjab, Shehbaz Sharif mentored hundreds of intelligent but poor young boys and girls like Mohsin Ali.

"Shehbaz Sharif encouraged and patronized them by giving educational scholarships and opportunities to pursue higher education abroad", said Marriyum Aurangzeb. The minister said these young people were witnessing the

success of the vision of Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif. She said today Mohsin Ali presently had been serving as a lecturer in the same MAO College, Lahore near which he was earning livelihood for his family by working on a "Tandoor".

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif congratulated Mohsin Ali today in front of millions of Pakistanis, she said adding that kudos should also be given to Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif, whose vision helped Mohsin Ali and hundreds of other poor students like him to reach this level of success and make their dreams come true. "This is the vision, this is the elected leadership of the people", she said.

Meanwhile, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb also said that the government fully believed in freedom of the press and addressing the problems of journalists was the topmost priority of the government.

This she said during a meeting with a delegation of journalists led by Abbottabad Press Club President Raja Haroon and Secretary General Raja Munir. Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi was

also present during the meeting.

The Ministry of Information, she said would continue to play its key role to equip the press clubs across the country with modern requirements. Abbottabad Press Club, she added, was one of the most important and responsible press clubs in the country. The minister issued directives to immediately set up a computer lab and studio at the Abbottabad Press Club.

She assured that Abbottabad Press Club would also be provided with a grant already announced. Murtaza Javed Abbasi thanked the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for the announcement of the establishment of a computer lab, studio, and grant for the Abbottabad Press Club. Abbottabad's journalistic community was doing its professional work despite limited resources, Murtaza Javed Abbasi said. The delegation apprised Marriyum Aurangzeb about the difficulties faced by the media persons in Abbottabad. The delegation expressed their gratitude to Information Minister Maryam Aurangzeb and Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi for their support.

## PM directs steps to curb smuggling of tyres, spare parts

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities concerned for the early formulation of a comprehensive policy to do away with the smuggling of tyres and spare parts.

The prime minister, in a meeting with a delegation of Service Long March Tyres and Chaoyang Long March Tyres led by their Chairman Li Qingwen, also instructed the relevant authorities to take effective measures to curb the smuggling of tyres. He told the delegation that being a time-tested friend, China always supported Pakistan like a brother in every hour of need.

He also assured the delegation that the government would extend all possible support to the Chinese investors to facilitate their investment in Pakistan. The prime minister appreciated the delegation for their company's investment through a joint venture with Pakistan's renowned tyre manufacturing company. The prime minister was told that tyres being manufactured by the plant established by Chinese investment were also being exported to the international market.

It was told that within a short span of a year, the company's tyres have created their space in the world markets. The prime minister was told that the company would enhance tyres manufacturing to boost its exports to \$200 million annually.

The prime minister instructed the authorities to extend all-out support to the Chinese investors to uplift the tyre industry in Pakistan. Special Assistant to Prime Minister Tariq Pasha and other relevant officers attended the meeting.

## ATC extends bail of 16 PTI workers

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Special Anti-terrorism Court Peshawar has extended bail of 16 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) activists from Mohmand district in 9th May vandalism and hooliganism till 17th July, on Friday.

According to prosecution, as many as 16 workers including Ajmal, Akbar Ali, Maqsood, Nasrullah, Riaz, Abdullah, Javed, Jubair and Jahangir were allegedly involved in vandalism while booked in First Information Report registered at Ghalanai police station.

The accused has blocked the road on 9th May and clamored against security forces as well as state's institution while police has registered First Information Report (FIR) under Anti-terrorism Act and other charges.

However, the accused has approached court against their arrest while special ATC has extended bail till 17th July and ordered police to submit record in this regard. Moreover, Anti-terrorism Court Peshawar has granted three days physical remand to alleged financial facilitator of terrorists to Counter CTD for investigation. During hearing, ATC informed that alleged facilitator Sajjad has booked in terror financing case registered at CTD police station while requested for provision physical remand for further investigation.



ISLAMABAD: Police personnel stopping protestors in front of Sweden Embassy during a protest against desecration of Holy Quran.

# Toshakhana case: Imran gets exemption from court appearance

## Qureshi gets interim bail

ISLAMABAD (PPI): A district and sessions court in the federal capital on Friday approved Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) chairman's plea seeking exemption from personal appearance in the Toshakhana case.

Advocate Gohar Ali Khan appeared before the court on behalf of the PTI chief while Amjad Parvez represented the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Advocate Gohar filed a request for exemption from the appearance of the PTI chief, to which Advocate Amjad objected saying that party was wasting time as four lawyers have been representing the ex-premier.

The petitioner requested the court to adjourn the hearing till July 10. "The PTI lawyers did not want to argue the case. Khawaja Haris has no court engagements today," he added. The court accepted the request of PTI chairman and adjourned the hearing till July 8 with a direction to Khawaja Haris to appear before the court in next hearing. The reference, which alleges that Imran failed to share details of the gifts he retained from the Toshakhana (during his time as the prime minister) was filed by law-makers from the ruling coalition last year.

The Toshakhana issue became a major sticking point in national politics after the Election Commission of Pakistan disqualified the PTI chief for making "false statements and

incorrect declaration" last month. The judgement added that the former premier was found to be indulged in corrupt practices under sections 167 and 173 of the constitution. "A criminal proceeding will be initiated against him over filing a false statement."

"His disqualification under Article 63, 1(P) has been for his current parliamentary membership", the ECP said in its 36-page detailed judgment of the reference. "The amount in his bank account was around half of the value of the state gifts. PTI chief was bound to declare the cash and bank details in his returns but he didn't declare it," ECP decision read.

"Imran Khan being declared dis-

qualified and unseated from his National Assembly seat," the ECP said, adding: "He has been disqualified under Article 63, 1(P), over submitting a false statement and declaration". Following this, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had launched probe against former prime minister Imran Khan in Toshakhana case on March 9.

The NAB action comes after Dubai-based businessman Umar Farooq Zahoar claimed that the PTI government sold an expensive Graff wristwatch — gifted to former premier Imran Khan by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman — for \$2 million, worth approximately Rs280m at the time of sale in 2019.

# Three Palestinians killed in West Bank violence

WEST BANK (Agencies): Three Palestinians were killed on Friday in the occupied West Bank, a day after the United Nations urged a "meaningful political process" to stem renewed violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israeli forces killed two Palestinian fighters during an Israeli raid on the northern West Bank city of Nablus, Israeli and Palestinian officials said.

The Palestinian health ministry announced "two martyrs and three injured as a result of the occupation [Israeli] aggression on Nablus". The Israeli army reported no injuries among its forces. The army said it had entered Nablus to arrest two individuals wanted over a shooting earlier this month targeting Israeli police at a West Bank settlement that resulted in no casualties.

The Palestinian health ministry in a statement identified the two dead as Khairi Shaheen, 34, and Hamza Maqbul, 32. The army claimed they "were killed following an exchange of fire with security forces". "During the activity, weapons which were used by the terrorists were confiscated," the army

added. Witnesses told AFP Israeli troops entered Nablus on Friday morning and surrounded a house in the Old City, a stronghold of Palestinian groups, before calling on those inside to turn themselves in. The Abu Ali Mustapha Brigades, a wing of the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), claimed Shaheen and Maqbul as its members. Later on Friday a third Palestinian, 24-year-old Abdel Jawad Hamdan Saleh, was killed during a demonstration against settlements in the village of Umm Safa north of Ramallah, the Palestinian health ministry said.

The village has been a flashpoint for frequent clashes between its residents and Israeli settlers. When asked by AFP, the Israeli army did not immediately comment on the incident. Friday's deaths come amid a rising tide of violence in the region. On Thursday, an Israeli soldier was shot dead near Nablus. The Israeli army said the assailant had been shot, but his condition remained unclear. The Palestinian movement Hamas claimed the shoot-

ing, calling it a "reaction" to an Israeli raid on Jenin refugee camp days earlier. Israel launched on Monday its largest operation in years in the West Bank, which it has occupied since 1967.

Twelve Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were killed during the large-scale raid on Jenin refugee camp, which lasted more than 48 hours and ended on Wednesday. Some Arab countries have announced aid for the Jenin camp after the offensive which included air strikes and armoured bulldozers ripping up streets. Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has decided to donate \$30 million to "help rebuild the Palestinian city of Jenin after the barbaric and criminal attack" by Israel, he said in a statement Thursday reported by local media.

The United Arab Emirates, which normalised ties with Israel in 2020, announced Wednesday it "will provide \$15 million" to the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA. The funds are "intended to rehabilitate the losses ... after the recent Israeli attacks that have had repercussions on thousands of people", the official news agency WAM said.

## Martyrdom anniversary of Hav Lalkak Jan observed

ISLAMABAD (INP): The 24th Martyrdom anniversary of Kargil Hero Havildar Lalkak Jan Nishan-e-Haider is being observed on Friday. According to the ISPR Havildar Lalkak Jan laid down his life while valiantly defending the motherland during Kargil wars in 1999.

The armed forces, Chairman Joint Staff Committee and services chief have paid rich tribute to Havildar Lalkak Jan on his martyrdom anniversary. The ISPR statement said these brave heroes of Pakistan offered supreme sacrifices for the defense of the motherland and nation will forever remain inducted to the valiant sons for their sacrifices. During the Kargil war Havildar Lalkak Jan was surrounded by troops of the enemy and got injured, but kept fighting to defend the motherland. He ambushed the bunker of the enemy and destroyed it along with weapons.

The Armed Forces of Pakistan, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS) and Services Chiefs on Friday paid rich tribute to Havildar Lalkak Jan, Nishan-e-Haider, on his 24th Shahadat Anniversary.

# 50 dead in monsoon floods since June 25

ISLAMABAD (INP): At least 50 people, including eight children, have been killed by floods and landslides triggered by monsoon rains that have lashed Pakistan since last month, officials said on Friday. The summer monsoon brings South Asia 70-80 per cent of its annual rainfall between June and September every year.

It is vital for the livelihoods of millions of farmers and food security in a region of around two billion people — but it also brings landslides and floods. "Fifty deaths have been reported in different rain-related incidents all over Pakistan since the start of the monsoon on June 25," a national disaster management official told reporters, adding that 87 people were injured during this period.

The majority of the

deaths were in Punjab, and were mainly due to electrocution and building collapses, the NDMA said in a report.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the bodies of eight children were recovered from a landslide in the Shangla district on Thursday, according to the emergency service Rescue 1122's spokesman Bilal Ahmed Faizi. He said rescuers were still searching for other children trapped in the debris.

Officials in Lahore said it had received record-breaking rainfall on Wednesday, turning roads into rivers and leaving almost 35pc without electricity and water this week. The Meteorological Department has predicted more heavy rainfall nationwide in the days ahead and warned of potential flooding in the catchment areas of Punjab's major rivers.

The province's disaster management authority said on Friday that it is working to relocate people living along the waterways.

Scientists have said climate change is making seasonal rains heavier and more unpredictable. Last summer, unprecedented monsoon rains put a third of Pakistan under water, damaging two million homes and killing more than 1,700 people. Storms killed at least 27 people, including eight children, in the country's northwest early last month.

Pakistan, which has the world's fifth largest population, is responsible for less than 1pc of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to officials. However, it is one of the most vulnerable nations to the extreme weather caused by global warming.

# WB okays \$46m for KP's child healthcare services

ISLAMABAD (APP): The World (WB) has approved \$46 million to help increase access to child healthcare services and enhance citizen-centered service delivery in selected districts of khyber pakhtunkhwa province.

The WB's Board of Executive Directors approved the financing under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Citizen Centered Service Delivery Project. According to WB press statement, the project would support both supply and demand side interventions to improve health service delivery in the

province, as well as the operations of citizen-centric administrative facilitation centers in the Newly Merged Districts.

"The Project will support the government in expanding the provision of Child Wellness Grants targeted at mothers, provided they attend health awareness sessions", said Najy Benhassine, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan. "It will also help improve access to quality child health-related services," Benhassine added. Nearly 300,000 children under the age of two will benefit from Child Welfare

Grants (CWGs), the statement said.

To mitigate the financial barriers associated with the use of these services, families of these children will receive Rs.12,500 (approximately US\$45), spread over five visits, for attending the health awareness sessions and growth monitoring of their child. The project will also support the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in the adoption of the one-window operation model of the Citizen Facilitation Centers (CFC) to promote essential service delivery to the local population.

# PM launches ‘Benazir Social Protection Account’

(Continued from Page 1)

out any hassle, besides ensuring transparency in the system.

He recalled that last summer when the government was facing an intense economic crisis, massive floods caused heavy destruction in most parts of the country. Through the BISP, the Federal Government distributed Rs 70 billion among the affectess in all the provinces in the most transparent manner, he said, adding the amount was apart from the aid money sent by the friendly countries, and local and international donor agencies. PM Shehbaz Sharif said former prime minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed, who had a great vision of poverty alleviation, introduced the Programme which was successfully continuing.

With regards to standby loan arrangements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), he thanked all the friendly countries who helped Pakistan get through with the IMF and sign a staff-level agreement. He expresses the hope that the programme would successfully complete and Pakistan would be able to bring

in reforms and restructure its economy in the nine months period.

Shazia Marri said the BISP had achieved a significant milestone today with the formal launch of Benazir Social Protection Accounts under the esteemed patronage of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. She also acknowledged the visionary role played by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who had dreamt the social protection programme, and former president Asif Ali Zardari, who established it in 2008.

She said the BISP, a non-political programme, was committed to providing financial support to deserving women on an equal basis. Over the past 15 years, it had achieved numerous milestones: transforming the lives of countless families across the nation. Ms Marri said last year, the BISP's budget was increased from Rs 235 billion to Rs 404.2 billion, with an overall increase of 72% taking the number of beneficiaries from 7.2 million to 9 million, which was a testament of current government's commitment to protect the most vulnerable and marginalized segment of society.

Furthermore, the number of families eligible for the BISP had risen from 7.6 million to 9 million, she added. The minister also highlighted the enhancements made in stipends and educational scholarships. In 2022, she said, the quarterly stipend under the Benazir Kafaalat Programme was Rs 7,000 per family, and after a 25% increase, it was now Rs 8,750.

Similarly, the number of children benefiting from the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif rose from 2.6 million in 2022 to 7.52 million in 2023, she added. Ms Marri said the Benazir Undergraduate Scholarship Programme awarded 82,000 scholarships in 2022, which increased to 92,003 scholarships during the current year. Additionally, 770,000 mothers and their children were currently benefiting from the Benazir Nashonuma Programme, while under the Fuel Subsidy Programme Rs.16.3 billion was distributed among 8.3 million households, she added.

The minister said an important step forward in inclusivity was witnessed as the BISP extended its support to the transgender community for the

first time in the country's history. Moreover, the poverty cut-off score for differently-abled persons had been lowered from 32 to 37, enabling greater assistance for the vulnerable segment of society, she added. A book titled "15 Years of Benazir Income Support Programme" encompassing 15-year journey of the Benazir Income Support Programme was also launched during the ceremony.

**Shehbaz directs for promoting literacy rate through BISP:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) authorities to place a condition for the programme beneficiaries to get their children enrolled in schools to promote the education culture in the country.

He said after a certain period, a condition should be placed for the beneficiaries that they will only be able to get their stipends if they send their children to schools. "We will not be promoting the army of beggars but promoting the army of doers who will build Pakistan with their mental and physical capacity and a time will come soon when Pakistan will stand on its own feet and will generate our

resources," Shehbaz Sharif said after launching the Social Protection Account under BISP here.

He appreciated Minister for BISP Shazia Marri who with her hard work, expanded the programme and ensure transparency in it. He recalled that during the devastating floods last summer when the government was also facing intense economic crisis, the flood caused heavy destruction in most parts of the country.

He said under BISP, the federal government distributed Rs 70 billion in all the provinces in the most transparent manner. This amount, he said was apart from the aid money sent by the friendly countries, and local and international donor agencies. PM Shehbaz Sharif said former prime minister Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed had a great vision of poverty alleviation and she introduced the programme which was successfully continued.

With regards to Pakistan's programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), he thanked all the friendly countries who helped to get through with the IMF and sign a

staff-level agreement. He hoped that this programme would succeed and the nine-month insurance will be available to Pakistan to bring in reforms and restructure the country's economy. Shazia Marri said the number of enrolled children under the programme was 2.6 million in 2022 while the coalition government had increased the number to 7.52 million in one year.

Under BISP, she said a targeted subsidy of Rs 16.3 billion was also provided to the 8.6 million families (Rs 2000 each) to mitigate the effects of petroleum products. She said under the direction of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the quarterly stipend for the BISP beneficiaries was increased by 25% from Rs 7000 a year ago to Rs 8,750 now. On the occasion, the prime minister also distributed the Social Protection Accounts kits among the beneficiaries who came from different parts of the country. Minister for Information Marriyum Aurangzeb and Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation Faisal Kareem Kundi were also present on the occasion.