

#### Haleem Adil rearrested

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Police in Karachi rearrested PTI Sindh President and former leader of the opposition in the Sindh Assembly Haleem Adil Sheikh immediately after his release was ordered by an anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday. As soon as the ATC rejected the police's request for Sheikh's remand, Preedy police were waiting outside the court to take him into custody again.



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# Nine soldiers martyred in Bannu suicide attack: ISPR

#### F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: A Motorcycle borne suicide bomber exploded himself on a military convoy in general area Jani Khel, Bannu District.

Resultantly, nine soldiers including Naib Subedar Sanobar Ali embraced shahadat, while five soldiers were injured.

The area has been cordoned by security forces and sanitization is

being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area. Security forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve.

## SC disposes of ECP's review petition against Punjab election order

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Supreme Court of Pakistan Thursday disposed of a review petition filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) against the apex court's order to hold elections in Punjab on May 14, 2023.

"The Supreme Court will take action whenever the Constitution is violated," Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Atta Bandial remarked during the hearing of the case.

"The Election Act has been amended. After the amendment, the ECP can now give the date of the elections," ECP lawyer Sajel Swati said while presenting his arguments before the Supreme Court three-judge bench comprising CJP Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Muneeb Akhtar.

"The most important question was the authority to give the date of elections. After amendments to Sections 57 and 58, the ECP has the authority to give the date of elections," the ECP lawyer added.

"You must keep in mind that this is a review case.

The main case was separate," Justice Muneeb Akhtar said to the ECP lawyer. "Two weeks ago, the Supreme Court's detailed verdict regarding Punjab elections was received. In the light of the

Supreme Court's decision, we want to submit some additional documents," the ECP lawyer told the court. "You read your answer right now in the court," the CJP said to the ECP lawyer.

"We have heard the ECP lawyer. Thanks to all the people in the courtroom. Whenever there is a constitutional violation, the Supreme Court will intervene," he remarked.

"Constitution is nobody's property. No one can deviate from or negate the Constitution. If there is difficulty in implementing the Constitution, a court should be approached," Justice Muneeb Akhtar said.

"It was asked several times whether the ECP will conduct elections or not if it is given funds and security for the Punjab elections," he added. "The ECP said it can hold elections if funds and security are provided," he stated.

It is worth mentioning here that the Supreme Court had ordered the ECP to hold elections in Punjab on May 14, 2023.

The ECP, however, expressed its inability to hold elections due to the lack of requisite funds and security and filed a review petition in the Supreme Court.

In a unanimous verdict on April 4 last, the Supreme Court bench had quashed the electoral body's decision to extend the date for polls in the province from April 10 to Oct 8 and fixed May 14 as the new date. It had also directed the government to release Rs21 billion for the elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and provide a security plan to the ECP regarding the polls. Moreover, the court had instructed relevant authorities to keep it in the loop.

However, in reports submitted to the apex court in subsequent days, the ECP had said the then ruling coalition was reluctant in releasing the funds.

It had contended that staggering polls by holding them in Punjab and KP separately, before elsewhere, was not feasible since it would incur significantly more expenses compared to holding the exercise on one day.

It had further said that an already depleted security apparatus would require weeks in advance for its mobilization.

On May 3, with fewer than two weeks to the May 14 election date ordered by the court, the ECP had filed its plea seeking a review of the court's April 4 order.

### CTD foils terror bid, kills two terrorists

PESHAWAR (NNI): The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) on Thursday foiled a major terrorism bid in Peshawar's Model Town area and killed two terrorists. The CTD conducted an IBO in Peshawar's Model Town area and killed two terrorists belonging to banned outfit. During the operation, six terrorists escaped from the crime scene. STC spokesperson said. They recovered four SMGs with ammunition, bandoliers, and various other items from the possession of the dead terrorists, the spokesperson concluded. Earlier on August 27, the CTD arrested three terrorists who were allegedly involved in attack on former MPA Liaquat Ali.

## Imran Khan moves LHC against cancellation of his seven bails

LAHORE (NNI): Former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan on Thursday challenged the cancellation of his bails by anti-terrorism courts (ATCs) in the Lahore High Court (LHC).

In this regard, PTI chairman filed seven separate in seven cases in which he made ATC judge, Gulberg police station and Sarwar Road police station respondents.

However, the court refused to hear his applications today and said these would be heard on September 4.

Sher Afzal Marwat, counsel for former prime

minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan, told the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday that the relevant court to hear cases registered under the Official Secrets Act was that of a magistrate, and not anti-terrorism court (ATC).

Marwat made these remarks during the hearing of PTI chairman's petition against hearing of the cipher case inside Attack Jail.

Sher Afzal Marwat, counsel for former prime

minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan, told the Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice (CJ) Aamer Farooq that two objections had been raised to his client's petition.

"One of the objections is that we have made several requests to the court in a single application," he said.

Chief Justice (CJ) replied that he would remove these objections.

"But you should give arguments on merit," he said.

After the arguments were over, the Islamabad High Court (IHC), on the request of Imran's lawyer, adjourned the case's hearing until next week.

## Foreign minister stresses safe, secure environment for UN peacekeepers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on Thursday said ensuring a safe and secure environment for United Nations peacekeepers who tirelessly maintain peace around the globe should be the foremost priority.

Addressing the 2023 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Preparatory Meeting on "Safety and Security of Peacekeepers" here, the foreign minister said Pakistan's participation in UN peacekeeping, spanning over six decades, was a tangible manifestation of its contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, in line with the UN Charter.

He said legal frameworks and adequate accountability mechanisms were paramount for peacekeeper safety. "We must stand firm in holding accountable the perpetrators – individuals and groups that harm or threaten UN peacekeepers."

Medical care for peacekeepers is also essential, he said adding "Our peacekeepers deserve the best care including mental health support. Standardized training, first aid provisions, and enhanced medical facilities are crucial for that."

The FM mentioned that addressing challenges, including language barriers and administrative obstacles, should also be one of our top priorities. He said the spectre of the threat posed by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) to peacekeepers' security needs a commensurate response. "We must intensify pre-deployment training; equip our peacekeepers with cutting-edge technology; and augment their capabilities for countering the IED threat."

The minister highlighted that leveraging technology was vital to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers. "The Strategy for the Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping underscores the need to enhance situational awareness, counter disinformation, and optimise the use of technology. By doing so, we empower our peacekeepers to make informed decisions and fulfil their mandates more effectively."

Jalil Abbas Jilani said while Pakistan was proudly contributing over 4,000 troops to various ongoing UN peacekeeping missions, the attention should also be focused on the realm of peacebuilding.

"Just as we have established a state-of-the-art facility for the training of peacekeepers – the Centre of International Peace and Stability (CIPS), where we are gathered for this meeting – we also hope to collaborate with the UN Secretariat and our international partners to create an Institute for Peacebuilding," he remarked. He also urged the finance contributing partners to embrace a more equitable distribution of the burdens associated with peacekeeping missions.

The challenges faced by peacekeepers, he said were universal in their impact, and it was imperative that the financial responsibilities reflected this shared endeavour for global peace and security.

"Open and constructive dialogue between TCCs and FCCs is essential to harmonize our efforts, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and fairly. Transparency in financial commitments and decision-making processes is key to

building trust and enhancing mission efficacy," he added. Emphasizing the significance of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), a pioneering peacekeeping mission established in 1949, the foreign minister said it held a distinctive place in peacekeeping history as one of the earliest initiatives to monitor and investigate ceasefire violations in the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

"UNMOGIP personnel encounter unprecedented adversities due to the non-cooperation of one party. We must proactively address the safety and security gaps, as identified in the recent report on UNMOGIP by the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services, he added.

He also acknowledged the indispensable and rightful role of women peacekeepers saying Pakistan was constantly endeavouring to further enhance the presence of female peacekeepers in its contingents. He said women bring unique perspectives and skills that were instrumental in fostering trust and building relationships with local communities. Their presence not only promotes gender equality but also strengthens our peacekeeping efforts. "We must create an environment that empowers women peacekeepers and ensures their safety and security."

The minister also eulogized the profound sacrifices by the dedicated peacekeepers in the line of duty. "These brave men and women leave behind the comfort of their homes, risking their lives to bring stability to war-torn regions", he added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting on Pakistan's Economy.

## PM directs maximum facilitation of overseas Pakistanis at airports

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday directed the Immigration and Customs authorities to extend maximum facilities to overseas Pakistanis at airports.

"The overseas Pakistanis are a valuable asset for the country and their services for economic stability are laudable," the prime minister said chairing a meeting to discuss the matters related to the national economy.

In the meeting, the prime minister was apprised of the current economic indicators as well as the present situation. The meeting held consultation to devise a strategy to curb smuggling of different items besides reviewing the progress in the barter trade with Iran.

The representatives of the business community assured the government of their all-out support for revival of the national economy. A detailed discussion was also held regarding the dollar appreciation as well as the steps to curb the illegal business of the foreign exchange.

Caretaker Ministers Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Gohar Ejaz, Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti and Murtaza Solangi, Advisor to PM Ahad Cheema, State Bank Governor Jameel Ahmed, Federal Board of

Revenue Chairman Malik Amjad Zubair Tiwana, federal secretaries and senior officials attended the meeting. The prominent industrialists of the country were also present.

**Govt to come up with solution for inflated electricity bills: PM:** Prime Minister Anwaar-Haq Kakar Thursday said the government minutely looked into the problem of inflated electricity bills and would come up with a solution within next 48 hours.

Talking to senior journalists and news anchors here on the current challenging economic conditions, he said the government was considering various options to provide relief to the people.

The people had protested against increased electricity bills and the government realized their problems, he added. To a question, he clarified that the Pakistan army, navy and air force were not using a single free unit of electricity and their bills were paid from the allocated financial budget.

While employees of WAPDA were using free electricity units and their usage would be rationalized, especially of the higher grade officers some of them were getting huge quantity of free electricity, he added. He said percep-

tion should not be that the government would take any strict measures causing difficulties for the people.

He pointed out that the power sector had been a very challenging issue since the 1990s and the governments of that time signed agreements with independent power producers to overcome loadshedding which proved costly for consumers.

Over the years, he said, the generation and transmission system of electricity was flawed and the government had to deal with serious issues of line losses, power theft, high circular debt, use of expensive imported fuel and capacity payments to electricity companies. "These issues cannot be ignored by just closing eyes. We need to diagnose treatment for the disease,"

He made it clear that the government would fulfill its agreements with the international financial institutions. He lamented that the country was faced with economic stagnation and there was less investment in sectors like manufacturing, real estate and stock exchange, and the trend was to only take up profit from certain businesses. He said the caretaker government was formed for the continuity of constitutional order, and

was dealing with economic and security challenges.

The prime minister said Pakistan had security concerns on its western borders. The abrupt withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan was not responsible as it created problems and now the weapons and equipment left behind there were being used by terrorists and non-state actors in Pakistan, he added. He stressed that no terrorist organization had the capacity to overtake any territory in Pakistan but they could sabotage and create terror. Pakistan was in capable hands and every sacrifice would be rendered to defend every inch of the country's territory and steps would be taken for elimination of terrorism, he remarked.

He said the government was determined to hold transparent, free and fair elections and transfer power to the next elected government. He was of the view that according to current legal status, the Election Commission had to decide about the date of elections. He said recently formed Special Investment Facilitation Council had huge potential to attract investment in sectors of information technology, defence production, mining and agriculture, and Pakistan had a bright future due to such initiatives.

### PPP CEC to meet 'next week' to decide on elections

KARACHI (NNI): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has decided to call next meeting of its Central Executive Committee in Lahore next week to further deliberate on general elections, delimitations and the country's overall political situation. Sources privy to the development stated that PPP CEC summit is likely to be held in the first week of September. However, the final date of the CEC meeting was yet to be finalised by the party leadership.

The meeting will be attended by the top leadership of the party including former president Asif Ali Zardari, party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. The meeting would be briefed on party's recent meeting with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding elections, say sources. The CEC will mull over various options including organising All Parties Conference (APC) and engaging with other political parties on delay in polls matter, they say. In its CEC meeting held in Karachi recently, the PPP formed a 5-member committee comprising Syed Nayyar Bukhari, Sherry Rehman, Faisal Karim Kundi, and two others on early polls.

PPP reiterates call for timely elections Earlier, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) on Tuesday reiterated its demand for holding of next general elections within the constitutionally mandated 90-day period in a meeting with Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) officials.

## Russia, Ukraine carry out drone strikes in each other's cities

MOSCOW (AA/APP): The Russian and Ukrainian governments on Wednesday made conflicting claims about drone attacks on each other's cities.

Moscow claimed that overnight attacks on the airport in the Pskov region damaged four planes, two of which were burned, while Kyiv claimed that the Russian intense attack killed two civilians and injured another.

Pskov Governor Mikhail Vedernikov and Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyenin both stated on X, formerly known as Twitter, that the Ukraine drone attack on Pskov airport is being investigated. However, there were no casualties in the overnight strike, they added. According to Russia's Tass news agency,

emergency services confirmed that four Il-76-type aircraft were damaged and two were burned.

In a separate statement, the Russian Defense Ministry said three Ukrainian drones were shot down by air defense systems at 2 a.m. local time (2300GMT Monday) in the Bryansk, Oryol, and Kaluga regions.

It also stated that the air defense systems prevented Kyiv's attack via unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) at about 2.00 a.m. (2300GMT Monday) in the Ryazan region, another at 3.30 a.m. (0030GMT) in Moscow's Ruzskiy district, and another at 4.00 a.m. (0100GMT) in the Ryazan region.

Another statement from the ministry claimed that the Russian Black Sea Fleet

naval aviation aircraft destroyed four Ukrainian fast military boats carrying 50 special operations soldiers. Meanwhile, the head of the Kyiv City Military Administration, Sergey Popko, stated on X that Russia launched an intense airstrike overnight. "Kyiv has not seen such a powerful attack since the spring. The enemy carried out a massive attack using UAVs and missiles," he added.

According to him, Ukrainian forces responded by destroying Russian drones. However, two people were killed and another was injured as a result of UAV and missile fragments falling into non-residential buildings and starting fires, which the crews extinguished.

## China's Xi likely to skip G20 summit in India

NEW DELHI/BEIJING (Reuters): Chinese President Xi Jinping is likely to skip a summit of G20 leaders in India next week, sources familiar with the matter in India and China told Reuters.

Two Indian officials, one diplomat based in China and one official working for the government of another G20 country said Premier Li Qiang is expected to represent Beijing at the Sept. 9-10 meeting in New Delhi. Spokespersons for the Indian and Chinese foreign ministries did not respond to requests for comment.

Li is also likely to attend a summit of East and Southeast Asian leaders in Jakarta, Indonesia on Sept. 5-7, according

to a report from Kyodo.

The summit in India had been viewed as a venue for a possible meeting between Xi and U.S. President Joe Biden, who has confirmed his attendance, as the two superpowers seek to stabilise relations soured by trade and geopolitical tensions.

Xi last met Biden on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia last November. Russian President Vladimir Putin has already said he will not be travelling to New Delhi and will send Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov instead. One senior government official from host India told Reuters that "we are aware that the premier will come", in place of Xi.



### 3 day orientation and training workshop

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: 3 day Orientation and training workshop for Data Entry Operators of Election Commission of Pakistan from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regarding use of Election Management System (EMS) software app in the upcoming general elections commences here in Peshawar.

During the workshop DEOs were briefed regarding technical aspects & knowledge about this app. The training/Workshop which will be concluded on Saturday. The orientation session has been organized by the Information System Wing of ECP with the collaboration of Sapphire (soft ware House).At the concluding session participants will be awarded certificates.

### CCPO Lahore visits PS South Cantt

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana on Wednesday late night visited South Cantt Police Station and expressed his displeasure over inadequate cleanliness and poor lighting arrangements. He carefully assessed the front desk operations and scrutinized the progress made on citizens' applications. He engaged with individuals under custody at the lock-up.

He conducted a thorough inspection of the SHO Office, Investigation Office, and various other departments within the station. Speaking on the occasion, the CCPO Lahore remarked that efforts were underway to enhance the fundamental facilities at the front desk, including the implementation of improved sanitation measures across all police stations. He emphasized Lahore Police's steadfast commitment to providing enhanced facilities within the stations and providing a more positive and conducive police station culture.

### CEO of Islamic Relief meets Chairman Senate

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani Thursday appreciated Islamic Relief's unwavering commitment to humanitarian efforts in Pakistan, particularly in the wake of the floods that wreaked havoc across the country. Chairman Senate during a meeting with CEO of Islamic Relief Raja Waseem Ahmed emphasized the need for collaborative initiatives that address the unique challenges faced by these regions. The chairman highlighted importance of focusing on the most vulnerable regions of Pakistan, urging a concentrated effort in impoverished areas such as Balochistan, said a news release issued here.

The meeting underscored the shared commitment of both Islamic Relief and the Chairman Senate to alleviate the suffering of those in need and work towards sustainable solutions for affected communities.

## US Consul General calls on Governor Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Newly-appointed United States (US) Consul General in Lahore Kristin K. Hawkins called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman and discussed education, trade, climate change and Jaranwala incident during a meeting at the Governor's House here on Thursday.

The Punjab Governor welcomed the incumbent Consul General Ms. Hawkins to Lahore and expressed his best wishes for her successful tenure. US Consulate Lahore's Political and Economic Chief Nickolas Katsakis was also present during the meeting. Muhammad Balighur Rehman hailed the role of former Consul General William K. Makaneole in the passage of legislation to declare Punjab and California as sister states.

He stressed the need for enhancing cooperation in the trade, agriculture and climate sectors between both the countries. He also condemned the incidents of torching of houses of the Christian community and desecration of the holy Quran in Jaranwala. He said that Muslims embraced their Christian brethren after the incident and opened doors of their houses and mosques for them.

He said the Punjab government restored the damaged churches and handed them over in a better condition than before, adding the government gave compensation to the effectees to repair their homes.

Balighur Rehman said the whole nation was unanimous that there was no place for such incidents of intolerance and hatred in the society, adding that people from all walks of life have condemned these despicable happenings. He further said that he, as chancellor of public sector universities, had formed seven consortia at the universities including one on climate change, adding US and Pakistani universities could work on common projects to fight challenges of climate change. The Punjab Governor also informed the US diplomat of the problems faced by the businessmen and students in getting the US visa and sought her role in redressal of the problem.

The incumbent US Consul General in Lahore Kristin K. Hawkins evinced keen interest in consortium on climate change at the public sector universities. She said that Punjab and the US government could work together to defeat climate change challenges. Kristin Hawkins said strengthening people to people contacts was her priority.

## Citizen empowered to check vehicle's fitness through "Go Punjab" app

LAHORE (APP): In a determined effort to combat smog in the province, now citizen will be able to check vehicles' fitness certificates and lodge complain through "Go Punjab" application, announced by Punjab Transport Minister Ibrahim Murad.

In a meeting held here on Thursday, provincial Minister Ibrahim Murad said that citizens can now independently assess the fitness of vehicles in public transport, details of the vehicles can be checked before urban travel through this app, adding that proactive approach would ultimately encourage the citizen to actively participate in ensuring the quality and compliance of public transportation vehicles. He revealed that Transport Department, recognizing the importance of its role in addressing smog, had been given clear instructions to take extensive measures while revolutionary changes were being brought through effective and

comprehensive technology utilization.

He said that without fitness certificates vehicles, rickshaws, buses and other sources emitting smoke contribute to environmental pollution, would not be tolerated on roads. "Public health comes first, prepare for strict lockdown if necessary," the Minister passed clear directives and said that comprehensive action plans were being arranged for smog control across the province. The meeting also featured a detailed discussion regarding the administrative matters of the Pakistan Metro Bus Service in Rawalpindi-Islamabad. Attendees included key officials such as Secretary Transport Dr. Ahmed Javed Qazi, CEO Punjab Transport Company, Secretary Punjab Transport Authority, and others.

A thorough review of private company contracts, escalators, buses, roads, and related matters were also reviewed.

## FIA ACC team conducted raid on ice factory

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Today FIA ACC team comprising of Insp Muhammad Bilal, SI Philmoon and other upon the information along with Mohammad Shakeel Director S&I Pesco conducted raid on ice factory located at Main Charsadda Road near Rehmat floor Mill, Shah Alam Peshawar and arrested Aurangzeb Khan son of Wali Muahmmad, CNIC 17301-1362539-5.

The accused was working as an operator in the Ice Factory, which was using direct and illegal electricity connection. During raid, the various items used for the direct and illegal electricity connection were recovered consisting of 1 transformer, 1 electricity meter, an underground cable, Change-Over circuit, and other. FIR has been registered against accused under 462 K, 109 PPC. Further investigation is underway.

The investigation is



entrusted to SI Philmoon, be ascertained during the investigation and the role of others will be ascertained during the investigation.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi chairing a meeting with vice chancellors of public sector universities of Sindh at HEC's Regional Office.

## DG NAB KP Waqar Ahmad held an open public hearing

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Director General NAB KP Mr. Waqar Ahmad Chauhan held an open public hearing on 30th August, 2023 in NAB KP Peshawar accompanied by concerned officers. About 150 x complainants were heard and appropriate orders on complaints were issued on the spot. According to the statement issued by Mian Muhammad Waqar, Director NAB KP. The complaints pertaining to Bribery, criminal breach of trust, cheating public at large and abatement were lodged.

Most of the complaints were related to various housing schemes who are not delivering their promises despite lapse of many years / decades. 69 x complaints were regarding Regi Model Town. The DG ordered OI/CVC to put up the complaint in upcoming Complaint



Scrutiny Meeting for appropriate action and taking of matter with PDA, Commissioner Peshawar Division, DC Peshawar, DC Khyber, CCPO, FC, Home Department & Local Govt Department of Govt of KP. 30 x complaints were about Zarak Garden Mardan, Zohaib Garden Mardan, City Residencia Peshawar & other housing societies. The DG ordered the CIT & Prosecution Wing to look into the mater, so

that cognizance of the matter is taken as per Amended National Accountability Act 2022. Complaints were also registered regarding online scam. The DG ordered on spot the CIT to look into grievances of the complainants. The DG also instructed the Directors of NAB KP to hold a meeting with all regulatory departments relating to housing societies. Later on NAB will also seek intervention of Chief Secretary KP to

safeguard the interest of common citizen.

The DG urged the general public to invest their hard earned money cautiously and ask for NOC etc from regulators in housing sector, online scam, Modarba & Musharka. The DG also informed the general public that NAB takes cognizance of cheating public at large in which affectees are 100 and having minimum, value of Rs. 500 million.

## Home secretary for gender sensitive training of jail staff

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Secretary for Home Syed Aijaz Ali Shah on Thursday directed the Inspector General of Prisons to put up a proposal for gender-sensitive training to jail staff in the training curriculum in all Sindh prisons to ensure better conduct with the

women prisoners in jails. "There is an exigent need to make genders sensitive training available in all the prisons as the females go through more serious issues including physical, mental, and above-all family issues including children born in jails".

## Tahir Bhatti takes charge as ZTBL President

ISLAMABAD (APP): Tahir Yaqoob Bhatti on Thursday took over as President/Chief Executive Officer of Zarai Taraqati Bank Ltd (ZTBL). Tahir Bhatti is a high profile banker with experience of over 35 years in almost all major areas of banking with large and mid-tier financial institutions, according to news release. He has been part of senior management teams of Askari Bank, Allied Bank Ltd and Faysal Bank.

Prior to joining ZTBL, Bhatti served as President/CEO of Punjab Provincial Cooperative Bank Ltd, the oldest financial institution in country dealing in agriculture. Bhatti is an MBA from Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Lahore and M.Com from Hailey College of Commerce Lahore. He is also a qualified DCMA (Gold Medalist) and Fellow of Institute of Bankers in Pakistan (IBP).

## Lost & Found

It is to inform that I have lost my allotment letter of house number 109 E Askari 10 Lahore cantonment. If found please return it on below mentioned address Lt. Col. Omar Khan CMH, Peshawar Cantonment

**استقبال وراثت**  
شیخ زبیا گل بیوہ اور شاہ سکنہ شادی منسل بنگو خانگیان و تصدیق کرتی ہوں کہ میرا خاندان اور شاہ ولد ان کی شادی شادی کی حکومت ہو چکا ہے۔ میں نے شادی کی تو فی وارغان میں آجی بی بی والدہ محترمہ کی سہ ماہی زبیا گل بیوہ اول مجرا اور قاطر اور عائشہ اور فہیمہ اور شاہ وکتران اور سنب اور شاہ عابدہ اور رابعہ اور جویریہ اور شاہ وکتران اور شہناز بیگم بیوہ دم حمرا خان بیوہ سوئم کو اور شاہ وکتر اور شاہ برائے کوئی کوی کوی شاہ محمد یونس بردران کوئی سہ ماہی شادی بی بی سمیت بی بی وکتران کوئی زندہ و حیات میں ہیں ان کے علاوہ اور کوئی وارث موجود نہیں لہذا انتقال وارثہ مقصود ہے اگر کسی کو عذر و اعتراض ہو تو سات یم کے اندر اندر منتقل ہو کر یا کسی سے رجوع کریں۔

**اشہار نیلام**  
اجلادت جناب جاگیر عثمان بیگ کنگ کوٹ الہ آباد فیڈرل جودیش پبلکس ٹرڈ 77 نواحی کی حیثیت آباد پشاور HBLKPK 872855 روپے اجراء بالا میں جائیداد قرضہ داری برطانیہ کی سہ ماہی 0129953 قرضہ داری 19 سالہ 3 سرکاری 10.87 کوٹ داغ خطہ ہر مرمر کی تحصیل پشاور ہر مرمر 03-10-2023 کو ایلام کیا جا رہا ہے۔ ایلام سچ سے شروع ہو کر اجراء دیر کو تم ہوگی جس میں برعکس و عا م سکل سے سب سے زیادہ دینی دینے والے کو کامیاب قرار دیا جائے گا بشرطیکہ عدالت کی توفیق کرے۔ عدالت کوئی دینی امور کو نہ کرنے دینے کے لئے اختیار حاصل ہے۔ کامیاب ہونے والے کو زینما 14/4 حصہ منوع پر کھنجر کے پاس اور ہالڈ اندر 15 یم میں عدالت میں بیٹھ کر کامیاب کر کے ایلام ادا کرے گا پشاور کوٹ داغ کی بلایا جات ہوئی ایلام سے قبل عدالت کے کٹش میں لا کر آج تا 22-08-2023 پہ بیٹھ کرے و حاکم عدالت کے پاس کیا گیا۔  
بیگ بیٹنگ کوٹ II صوبہ خیبر پختونخواہ

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA PAKHTUNKHWA HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY (PKHA) Tele#: 091-9223541, Fax#: 091-9210434, E-mail: info@pkha.gov.pk Attach Department Complex, Near Treasury Office, Khyber Road Peshawar			
Sr.#	Name of Firm	Sr.#	Name of Firm
1	M/S Associated Consulting Engineers ACE Ltd	26	M/S Technical Associates
2	M/S Associated Consultancy Center (Pvt) Ltd.	27	M/S GSK Engineerz
3	M/S ABM Engineers	28	M/S Engineering General Consultants EGC (Pvt)
4	M/S AAA Engineering Consultants (Pvt) Ltd Lahore	29	M/S A A Associates Karachi
5	M/S APEX Consulting Engineering	30	M/S G3 Engineering Consultants (Pvt) Ltd.
6	M/S Consulting Associates	31	M/S Planners Consultants Engineers
7	M/S CAMEOS Architects & Consultants	32	M/S Global Engineering System
8	M/S New Vision Engineering Consultants	33	M/S Engineering & Technical Associates.
9	M/S Development & Management Consultants (DMC)	34	M/S Exponent Engineers (Pvt) Ltd.
10	M/S Engineering Consultancy Services Punjab (Pvt) Ltd.	35	M/S TurkPak International (Pvt) Limited
11	M/S MAC Engineering Services	36	M/S Pavron
12	M/S Engineers' Grid	37	M/S Perfect Engineering & Management
13	M/S ES Consultants (Pvt) Ltd.	38	M/S Allied Engineering Consultants (Pvt) Ltd.
14	M/S SAK Consultant	39	M/S ESS-I-AAR
15	M/S H&B Consulting Engineers International	40	M/S Partners-in-Development
16	M/S Halcrow Pakistan (Pvt) Ltd.	41	M/S MAK Consultants
17	M/S Hi-ways Engineering Consultants Karachi	42	M/S Mountain Infrastructure & Engg Services
18	M/S Indus Associated Consultants (Pvt) Ltd.	43	M/S BK Consultant (SMC Pvt) Ltd.
19	M/S NESPAK	44	M/S IGES International
20	M/S Creative Engineering Consultants Peshawar	45	M/S Creative Structural Engineering Solutions
21	M/S AZ Engineering Associates	46	M/S Global Consultants
22	M/S SAMPAP International (Pvt) Ltd.	47	M/S EA Consultant (Engineering Advisory)
23	M/S Vista Engineering Consultants & Designers	48	M/S Sea Consulting (Pvt) Ltd.
24	M/S Spectra Engineering Solution (Pvt) Ltd.	49	M/S East Asian Consultants
25	M/S Umar Munshi Associates	50	M/S HA Consulting

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority Peshawar intends to engage the PKHA shortlisted consultants for Construction Supervision of following PKHA work:  
**CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISION OF ADP SCHEME NO. 1443/220943 - F/S & DETAILED ENGINEERING DESIGN FOR CONSTRUCTION OF INTER-DISTRICT ROAD FROM TORGHAR TO BUNER DISTRICT (LENGTH=25 KM)**

I. The firms should have valid registration of PEC having relevant codes and with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA).

II. A firm/joint venture will be selected for the services under quality-cum-cost-based selection (QCBS) method as per procedure / criteria described in the request for proposal (RFP) documents.

III. You are invited to submit a comprehensive technical proposal in English (Original + one copy) and a financial proposal (Original + one copy) separately for work mentioned above for the services required under the terms of references (TOR's) latest by 18/09/2023 till 12:00 Noon which will be opened on the same day at 12:30 PM. The original & copy of the proposal shall be sealed in separate envelopes and marked as original copy. Both these envelopes shall be put in one sealed envelope and addressed to Managing Director PKHA.

IV. RFP documents/TOR's are available in the office of the undersigned and can be obtained on any working day during office hours. RFP documents can also be downloaded from the official web site of PKHA.

V. The successful firm shall be subjected to all admissible taxes including stamp duty, service charges, sale tax and any other at prevailing rate.

INF(P): 2145/2023

DIRECTOR - II



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister of Religious Affairs and Information Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah inaugurate Kakakhail City Tour Bus.





## Inflated electricity bills: Legal fraternity observes strike

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The legal fraternity observed a strike from court proceedings in protest against inflated electricity bills and high price rises of edible items which has impacted every segment especially marginalized communities across the country, on Thursday.

The strike was observed on call of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council (KPBC) and Peshawar High Court Bar Association (PHCBA) across the province while

no lawyer appeared before courts which has caused the returning of applicants hopelessly without proceedings in the cases.

The lawyer representatives named Syed Mubashir Shah, Tariq Afridi, Babar Khan Yousafzai, Amjad Tanoli, Ishfaq Khalil, Nauman Kakakhel, Ishaq Ali Qazi and Yasir Khattak claimed that inflated electricity bills had affected every segment of society. They claimed current bills had compelled the public to protest despite class differ-

ences at large.

The legal fraternity claimed that laborer obtaining Rs20 thousand has obtained Rs30 thousand electricity bill, how would a daily wageer can manage livelihood for his family which sought impossible in the current situation because rich becoming richer while the poor becoming more poorer due to imposed elite on the country.

The lawyers also condemned provision of free electricity and petrol to

public servants and added that the public is facing high inflation in every sphere from edible items to powers bills while on the other hand government had increased perks and privileges of the elite class.

The legal fraternity demanded end to provision of free electricity and petrol to public servants as well as royal perks and privileges to the elite which has cannied the national economy as well as production.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Chairman Quami Watan Party Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao leading a protest against against inflated electricity bills.

## Governor condoles over demise of Hafeez Ulfat

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali on Thursday expressed profound grief and sorrow over the demise of senior journalist, founder and Chief Editor of Daily Sarhad, Hafeez Ulfat.

In his condolence message, the governor expressed sympathy and solidarity with members of the bereaved family.

The Governor prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul and courage for the bereaved family to bear the irreparable loss with fortitude.

He said services of the late senior journalist, Hafeez Ulfat for the promotion of journalism would long be remembered.

## Health Dept issues dengue alert

PESHAWAR (APP): In the wake of a fall in temperature, the Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has issued an alert for sensitive districts of the province with regard to possible spread of dengue fever.

A statistical figure on Thursday said the numbers of dengue cases in Peshawar were 22 while in Mardan 13 such cases were reported, followed by Swabi with 9 cases and Chitral Lower with 7 cases.

In Bajaur the number of dengue fever cases was 6, in Kohat 4, Nowshera 3, Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber, Abbottabad, and Lower Dir each 2 cases and Battagram, Hangu, Tor Ghar, Mansehra, Lakki Marwat and Bannu each with one case.

According to a report, with regard to dengue fever, most of the cases were being reported from Peshawar and Mardan districts. The report said that the dengue situation was being vigilantly monitored in all the districts of KP including in the tribal districts.

The Health Department has issued a letter to the district health officers of all the districts of KP to take pre-emptive measures for the control of dengue virus in their respective jurisdictions.

## Farewell ceremony organized

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Prof. Dr. Rooh-ul-Muqim retired on 31st August 2023, whose farewell ceremony was held under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Mah Munir, Chairperson of the Surgery Department. Professor Dr. Mahmud Aurangzeb Dean of Khyber Medical College, professors of other departments, associate professors and assistant professors, students and other staff participated in the ceremony.

He said that Prof. Dr. Rooh-ul-Muqim professional services, his skills, passion and commitment to excellence have not only raised the quality of education and healthcare within our institution, but also set an example for all. He said that Rooh-ul-Muqim is not only a good doctor and professor but also a very good administrator.

Prof. Dr. Rooh-ul-Muqim said that in 1982 he joined KMC as a student and today saying goodbye to this institution on 31st August 2023. A journey of almost 41 years has come to an end today, according to him from Junior Registrar to Professor of Surgery, Hospital Director, Medical Director, Dean KMC and other positions in this institution.

## Minister launches tour packages for families

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Caretaker Minister for Tourism, Museum and Archaeology, Syed Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel here Thursday launched tour packages under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority for families and females.

Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), Barkatullah Marwat, General Manager Planning KPCTA, Hayat Ali Shah, GM Culture, Sajjad Hameed and Commandant Tourism Police were also present in the inaugurating ceremony. The tour packages include City Tour that would cost Rs 3000 per person, Takht Bahi that would cost Rs. 1000 per person and

Khanpur Lake Tour would cost Rs. 3500 per person.

Addressing the ceremony, caretaker minister said that KPCTA would also start a bus service enabling tourists to visit and enjoy beauty of famous tourist destinations of KP and historic places of Peshawar City. He said that city tour would include visit of Sethi House, Namak Mandi, Museum, Ghor Ghatrri and other famous places.

He said that KPCTA has also arranged various recreational events including para gliding, boating and jet skiing for visitors on Khanpur Lake.

He appreciated efforts of KPCTA to promote tourism and facilitate visitors and said that hospitality of KP people in well known in the

world. He also highlighted steps of KPCTA to boost tourism and said that government would provide all the needed assistance and cooperation to visitors.

Caretaker Minister said that government is also working to improve law and order situation in the province that would also help attracting foreign tourists in the province. He said that work is also underway on historic places of Buddhism.

He said that Nathia Gali tour for blind children would start from tomorrow and they would be provided all the needed help. He said that tourism department is working to boost tourism in KP and to promote its soft image and natural beauty in the world.

## Board Chairman visited KTH for meeting

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The warm reception was hosted by Chairman BOG, KTH KMC KCD Prof. Dr. Nadeem Khawar focusing on an engaging discussion about the institution's current Infrastructural and Human Resource Development.

Esteemed KTH - Management Dean KMC, Prof. Dr. Mahmud Aurangzeb, Dean KCD Prof. Dr. Syed Nasir Shah, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ayaz Khan, Medical Director and Dr. Zafar Afridi Hospital Director, Nursing Director, Mr. Asmat Pasha, and Director Finance - Mr. Abdul Waheed was also part of the today's meeting.

During the dialogue, Chairman BOG, KTH - KMC- KCD gave a briefing regarding key milestones which include a Strategic Plan of five years from 2021 to 2025. Employee Service Regulation 2022, Grading Structure, Clinical and Non-Clinical Department Policies, Faculty Rationalization, Development of Sub-Specialties, Renovation of 7 Stories Building at Khyber College of Dentistry.

Prof. Nadeem Khawar also shed light on the enhancement of the Research and Learning cul-

ture of KMC and KCD. The Research department has successfully implemented a viable research program in KMC and KCD and trained a large number of students, in addition to promoting research projects and publi-

cations by staff members. Further, he mentioned the remarkable projects that were completed under the slogan of 'Journey towards Development' which include - ISO Certificate KTH and KMC and KCD in-process, KP's First #Modular OTs, State-of-the-art Dialysis Unit, CCTV rooms, CSSD, ICU Complex, MRI, CT-Scan, and Digital X-ray, Cath Lab, and fluoroscopy machines and renovation of Wards that provide a modern, comprehensive treatment to the patients.



Moreover, Prof. Nadeem said we have developed a New OPD Building, which

aims to facilitate Approx. 3000 patients on a daily basis in a safe and comfortable environment.

MTI Policy Board Chairman appreciates the role and efforts of KTH - Management and said the

integration of technology and Infrastructure at KTH. This cutting-edge advancement will pave the way for elevating the quality of our services and improving patient care to new heights. KTH has experienced exponential growth in such a short time, and the Chairman BOG and Management are incredibly appreciative.

At last vote of thanks by Dr. Zafar Afridi, he thanked Prof. Dr. Ziaul Islam and Prof. Dr. Azar Rasheed who visited Khyber Teaching Hospital and gave their useful suggestions for further development.

## RTS orders DPO Lower Dir to conduct inquiry against SHO

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Right to Public Services Commission (RTPSC/RTS) ordered District Police Officer Lower Dir to conducted inquiry against Station House Officer (SHO) Khal on two different complaint registered against him including torturing citizen for fake witness, on Thursday.

Chief Commissioner RTS Muhammad Salim Khan along with Commissioners Muhammad Asim Imam and Zakir Hussain Afridi heard seven complaints while issued orders to concerned officials for action.

An applicant named Yasir Khan filed complaint against SHO Khal to com-

pel for fake witness while on demand, the officer tortured him while DPO Lower Dir didn't act on his grievance in this regard.

Moreover, an Afghan citizen has also filed complaint against SHO Khal for torturing him while RTS ordered DPO Lower Dir to conducted inquiry in this regard on both complaints and submit before the commission within 30 days.

RTS ordered District Monitoring Officer (DMO) Battagram to confirm mental status of complainant named Muhammad Jan as DPO him as mentally abnormal while Yesterday (on Thursday) a political leader appeared before the commission and assured

that applicant is mentally fit but his children propagation as mentally-ill to sold his land.

The commission ordered applicant from Mardan named Noor Muhammad to submit new complaint for demarcation with Khasra numbers along with evidence of ownership. Moreover, RTS summoned settlement officer Chitral to appear before the commission on complaint of Asad seeking provision of Fard (land documents).

The commission ordered DPO Battagram to hear applicant named Sanobar personally seeking registration FIR within fortnights while annoyed Inspector and Sub Inspector appeared before RTS. DPO has sub-

mitted that Sanobar was heard but the applicant informed RTS that he no one has called him for redressal of grievances regarding FIR registration.

RTS ordered DPO Battagram to hear applicant personally within 15 days otherwise legal proceeding should initiated against him while annoying Sub Inspector and Inspector appeared in the complaint.

Moreover, RTS directed an applicant Shah Hussain to make appeal before Commissioner Kohat against Deputy Commissioner Kurram decision regarding demarcation. The commission dispose of complaint of Moin-u-Din because the matter is pending before court for decision.

## CISNR UET Peshawar holds seminar

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A one-day seminar on "The Role of AIoT in Municipal Energy Management" organized by the Center for Intelligence System Network Research (CISNR) UET Peshawar and GIZ through its REEE SCALE project held the other day.

The seminar was aimed to explore the potential of using the AI to perform intelligent tasks with the help of artificial intelligence in municipal energy management.

Prof. Dr. Gul Muhammad Khan, Director CISNR while giving the project background said, CISNR is actively working with UNICEF, Google and GIZ since its inception and addressing 14 SDGs under the UN Agenda 2030.

He said, by leveraging AI as a tool to analyze the vast amount of IoT data available through SCADA system installed in various municipalities, it will offer new opportunities.

"Started with the digitization, we may use AIoT to accurately determine energy demand on transmission grid and distribution lines that greatly helps in proper management of electricity", adding, "It will also open



up new opportunities to effectively design the signature product, "Smart Meters" developed by CISNR which has provided the smart meters to the Power ministry at a very low cost, unmatched as compared to other countries.

He further said, if this system is implemented across the country, the unit cost for electricity will reduce up to Rs. 25. This will not only help in cost efficiency, it will also help in reducing the cost in peak hours to reduce the financial impact.

Qazi M. Naeem, CEO PEDO addressed the audience as chief guest. He said, CISNR is a success story of UET Peshawar in developing stronger academia - government linkage. He appreciated Dr. Gul

Muhammad's efforts in bridging the gap by enhancing the knowledge and experience of government professionals.

He further informed that PEDO is not in loss, added, PEDO has got the approval of significant projects for the next ten years to generate upto 10k mega watt power projects to be added to the national grid in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with having surplus electricity in the coming few years.

He said, PEDO is working on energy projects for the production of cheap hydropower in the province and has already contributed to the national grid would prove as a game changer for the stability of the economy of the province.

## Faiq vows to raise voice for rights

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chairman ATP Muhammad Faiq Shah said his party is raising voice for public rights and authorities at every forum, because of which, it is gaining popular support with passage of time. Faiq while talking to the party's central and provincial office bearers and members of organization committees on Thursday said an organized awareness and political campaign is carrying out from KP to Karachi and GB to Azad Kashmir, resultantly and a large number of people have become part of this campaign.

He said people must realize the power and sanctity of their vote and elect those people who will be capable of resolving their issues. He vowed they will continue to raise their voice for provision of speedy justice, all basic rights, facilities and authorities to people at every forum.

Someone deceived masses in the name of 'Roti', 'Kapra' and 'Makaan' and others people's rights and real change for several decades, even 2 mainstream political parties remained in power for three to four decades and failed to deliver people, again are flexing muscle to form government for next term, the ATP remarks.





## In brief

### Solar system installs in jail F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: A huge solar system has been installed in the sub-jail, Landi Kotal to ensure power supply to the prisoners round the clock. Due to unscheduled load shedding and power off in the on-going summer season, the prisoners faced hardships in the scorching heat that was highlighted by the local media. The high-up took notice of the news and the provincial government immediately set up a solar system to provide relief to the prisoners. Bilal Khan, superintendent sub-jail, Landi Kotal said that the solar system was in immense need of the jail because excessive power off, multiplied miseries of the prisoners. Installation of solar system resolved electricity problems in the sub-jail, he added. The locals lauded the provincial government for supplying solar system to the sub-jail, Landi Kotal.

### Man stabs brother to death

FAISALABAD (INP): A man stabbed his younger brother to death for forbidding to misbehaving with mother in Madina Town area of Faisalabad on Thursday, police said. According to details, accused Zain used to abuse his mother and his younger brother Shamoon asked him to mend his attitude towards mother. The culprit got furious over repeated advises of younger brother and stabbed him to death with sharp edged knife. The culprit fled the scene and body was shifted to hospital for post-mortem. Police said that the accused was drug addict and hairdresser by profession. A case was registered against the murderer at respective police station and raids were being conducted for his arrest.

### DPO visits PAL Hungu F.P. Report

HANGU: District Police Officer (DPO) Hungu, Nisar Ahmad on Thursday visited Police Assistance Lines (PAL) Hungu and inspected its various sections. He witnessed working of various sections and stressed for utilizing all available resources for facilitation of complainants. He also highlighted the significance of developing a harmony and cohesion in information sharing system to control and prevent crimes. Speaking on the occasion, DPO directed police force to remain vigilant, perform duties with professional exuberance to come up to expectations of people.

### One killed in road accident

MUZAFFARGARH (INP): A laborer was crushed to death by a tractor inside a factory in Muzaffargarh early morning on Thursday. According to rescue authorities, the victim, Ghulam Farid, 45, was a resident of Alipur tehsil. He was working at Barat factory located on Karachi road when the accident happened. Rescue workers shifted the body to the hospital. Police have registered an FIR against the driver of the tractor, who escaped from the scene.

### Woman dies of fake injection

SIALKOT (INP): A pregnant woman died after being injected with fake injection by a quack. The accused hid the body in wooden box was police held him and recovered body. According to details, a 7-month pregnant woman hailing from Sambrial after feeling health issue visited a local clinic in neighbourhood. The quack running clinic injected the woman with fake injection which resulted in her instant death.

# Civil society, traders hold protests against inflated bills

F.P. Report

SHAHADADKOT: A protest demonstration was held in front of the press club by the business community in Mirokhan against the excessive electricity bills and the collection of these illegal taxes. Speaking on the occasion, Behzad Anwar Arain, Raja Asad Ali, Gulzar Ali Memon and others protested and said that on the one hand the public has been handed over to the mill of inflation and on the other hand a tax has been imposed in the additional electricity bills which there is complete injustice and abuse with the people, the poor people have been forced to commit suicide, while due to the increase in electricity rates, the prices of common house-

hold items have been artificially increased by the so-called traders, he demanded.

The announcement should be made to give relief to the people by reducing electricity rates, excess bills and tax rates so that no one is unable to pay the bills.

Meanwhile, the representatives of the business community and civil society of Warah staged a sit-in protest at Fazil Rahu Chowk for the fourth day against the continuous unrest and lawlessness in Warah of District Qamber Shahdadkot.

Speaking on this occasion, Sartaj Ahmed Chandio, Niaz Hydari, Shahabuddin Depar and others protested and said that day by day the crime incidents are increasing in

taluka Warah, while due to the increase in lawlessness, it is becoming difficult for the noble residents to live, while the nepotism and nepotism of the Warh police. Because of this, shopkeepers and noble citizens are considering themselves insecure.

There is no law for criminals. Shopkeepers are being robbed during the day, while it is sunset time. While taking notice of the protest sit-in by traders in Warh, SSP Qamber Shahdadkot issued instructions to CIA district in-charge Manzoor Ahmed and DSP Riaz Abbasi to direct the protesters to mobile shopkeeper Imran Shabrani and others. The sit-in was ended by taking a week's respite for the export of the looted goods.

## Seed bombing method to mitigate climate impacts

F.P. Report

UPPER DIR: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the International Committee of the Red Cross, have concluded the Global Climate Week activities in the Kamrat Valley of Upper Dir district. This initiative aimed at mitigating the effects of Climate Change on the valley and raising awareness.

For the first time in Pakistan, seed bombing method was conducted to increase the number of trees in Kumrat forests with the Support of District administration Upper Dir. While various efforts were undertaken including planting 5000 trees, establishing kitchen gardens in homes, harnessing rainwater for usability, teaching basic First Aid live saving methods to the local population, and organizing sports Gala for the people of Kumrat as

positive change in youth.

In this regard, Chairman PRCS Habib Malik Orakzai stated, that these initiatives are being undertaken to provide assistance and awareness to areas most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, we are conducting such activities with support from ICRC, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the German Red Cross.

Muhammad Iqbal, Deputy Secretary Operations for Pakistan Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who led the Global Climate Week activities, shared that the we conducted seed bombing methodology for the very first time in Pakistan. The goal is to reach areas inaccessible by conventional means and plant seeds in the soil in a form that resembles a ball. This method has achieved an 80% success rate in tree planting worldwide.

Similarly, in the severely affected Kamrat Valley, demonstrations were carried out, including planting all essential vegetables in limited spaces at homes, making rainwater usable as installing Rain Water Management system in local available resources, teaching the local population on live saving hacks First aid, raising awareness about the impacts of climate change, placing bins at shops and other public places for waste disposal, and conducting cleanliness campaigns in tourist spots.

Throughout the week-long activities, a cricket tournament was also organized between teams comprising local population, tourists, staff and volunteers of the PRCS KP, in collaboration with IFCR. By the help of conducting such activities PRCS KP has manage to Funds rise for humanitarian service in the Dir district.

## Balochistan govt distressed over politicizing missing persons' issue

QUETTA (INP): The Balochistan government on Thursday expressed deep disappointment over the continued politicization of the issue of missing persons.

"The government firmly advises against exploiting this sensitive matter for political gains", a statement issued here said. The government's statement comes in response to certain political parties who have raised the issue of missing persons in the lead-up to elections campaigning, accusing the government of being responsible for these disappearances.

The government in its statement vehemently denied these allegations, asserting its unwavering commitment to locating and rescuing all missing individuals.

Furthermore, the government emphasized its

zero-tolerance policy towards the politicization of this issue.

The government, in the statement, highlighted that the missing persons issue was often exploited as a "vote gainer" by political parties, becoming a contentious topic during election periods.

However, the government clarifies that it has not received any substantial complaints regarding missing persons thus far, it added.

Moreover, the government exposed the propaganda surrounding the missing persons' issue, attributing it to India, the human rights industry, left-wing factions, and ethnic nationalists.

The government, in its statement, asserted that this propaganda merely aimed to exert pressure on the current caretaker government and law enforce-

ment agencies. The government said that the last report of the Balochistan Missing Persons Commission (BMPC) found that a total of 9,231 complaints of missing persons had been received by the Commission.

Of these complaints, 5,574 cases had been solved and 3,743 missing persons had been recovered, it added. According to the statement, the BMPC also found that 241 bodies of missing persons had been received, while 974 people were in custody and 616 people who had been declared missing were currently jailed. As of November 30, 2022, there were 2,207 cases of missing persons pending with the BMPC. These cases included multiple types of cases, including voluntary disappearances, personal enmity, and abductors.

## Big rally in Muzaffarabad today

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): A big rally will be held in Muzaffarabad on Friday, to mark the 2nd martyrdom anniversary of veteran Kashmiri Hurriyat leader, Syed Ali Gilani. The rally 'Jehd-e-Musalsal' is being organized by Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir at Burhan Wani Shaheed Chowk to pay homage to Syed Ali Gilani, the icon of Kashmir freedom move-

ment.

Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir Chairman, Uzair Ahmed Ghazali, in a statement in Muzaffarabad said all arrangement for the rally have been finalized.

He said that Syed Ali Gilani fought unprecedentedly and tirelessly for the freedom and right of self-determination of people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir

throughout his life. He said the veteran leader's contribution and sacrifices for the Kashmir freedom movement will always be remembered. He appealed to the Kashmiri people to pay homage to the resistance leader on his martyrdom anniversary. Syed Ali Gilani passed away on September 01 in 2021 during his house detention at his Hyderpora residence in Srinagar.

## Restoring hope: Urgent need for psychological assistance of refugees

Noor Zia

THE psychological impacts of migration on Afghan refugees can be significant and multifaceted. Separation from the homeland, forced displacement, and living in uncertain conditions can lead to stress, depression, anxiety, and sometimes post-traumatic stress disorder. Language barriers, cultural differences, and limited access to education and other resources can exacerbate psychological issues.

Living in a foreign country is

not an easy job. It affects mental well-being. Language differences can hinder effective communication and lead to frustration and alienation. Not only that, cultural differences can create a sense of marginalization. For instance, an Afghan refugee girl says, "We wear long frocks; sometimes people laugh at our dressing sense. It creates an inferiority complex in us. We usually avoid meeting someone or going to their home."

Another Afghan refugee girl, Asma, says: "In our village, the way we talk, people used to laugh at us. They used to make

fun of the sentence structure or the vocabulary we used. Due to these factors, our language has changed." When you are mentally triggered to change your dressing style, language, or taste for food, it affects your overall mental well-being.

Moreover, the uncertain status adds another layer of stress to Afghan refugees' lives. Their inability to plan for the future or live a stable life can lead to anxiety. Those who have experienced injustice, violence, and barbarism in their homeland may suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress disorder. All the mental

health issues can be exacerbated by the challenges of refugee life.

Separation from dear and near ones during the migration process can lead to feelings of loss and loneliness. Due to passport and visa system, Afghan refugees are not able to join their relatives' wedding ceremonies and funerals. People can compromise on not joining the wedding ceremony but not on funeral duties. Everyone wants to see their loved ones for the last time. It also results in a life-long trauma of wishing to would have seen their beloved people.

It hits mental well-being.

Either they are daily wage workers or do jobs in the private sector. Due to illiteracy, only the heads of the family do work, and sometimes unmanageable to feed their families. They can't even provide the basic necessities of life: food, clothes, and shelter. Also, living in an overcrowded camp leads to a lack of privacy, dignity, and feelings of insecurity. They think of themselves as people of no value.

Hence, good mental health is as necessary as good physical health. If you get injured, it is easily curable, but if you start suffering from mental health

issues, then it is difficult to cure. Even after consulting a psychiatrist or psychologist, treatment takes a prolonged period. Mental or emotional conflicts are difficult to understand or handle. Also, finding the cause of what is happening to the patient is difficult. It is a plea to the government of Pakistan and other foreign organizations to provide psychological support programs to the Afghan refugee camps.

Because it can provide a safe space for refugees to share their experiences, express their emotions, and build a sense of community.



MUZAFFERABAD: A view of closed shops and markets during a protest against unjust price hike of electricity and unbearable inflation.

## Rana Tanveer flays PTI leadership

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Former federal education minister Rana Tanveer Hussain has alleged that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) subjected its political opponents to worst political revenge during its tenure.

He stated this while talking to media during visit to provincial assembly constituency PP-138 on Thursday. Former MPA Pir Ashraf Rasool and senior PML-N leader and party candidate from the constituency, Haji Tariq Mehmood Dogar were also present on the occasion.

Rana Tanveer said that the PTI government engaged PML-N supreme and three-times prime minister Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Mariyam Nawaz in fake cases putting them behind the bars. "No doubt PTI's tenure was worst era of the country's history during which nothing was done for welfare of masses," he added. He held PTI responsible for ongoing wave of inflation in the country and inflated electricity bills. Rana Tanveer also termed suspension of PTI chief's punishment in Toshkhana case as unjustified and against legal norms. Stability in country not possible till attitude of "Good to see you" towards Imran Khan was not ended, he added.

## Prizes among students distributed F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Government High School Khongi Dir Lower held prestigious ceremony in honor of the position holders of the recent matriculation examination.

Speaking at the ceremony, Jan Muhammad, principal of Government High School Khongi, Syed Jahan Badshah, Haji Hidayatullah, Iqbal Hayat, senior journalist Muhabbat Shah, Haji Amir Azam, chairman Javed Iqbal, Wakeel Khan and others said that without education, no society can progress on the path of development and prosperity.

But the nations that have made fun of education are the same nations that are in decline today. Pay attention to and create such a place in the educational field so that in the future you will become responsible people of the society and serve the country and the nation. Don't waste your valuable time on useless things and pay special attention to your studies. The students presents speeches, anthems on this occasion Cash prizes and shields were distributed among the students.

## Proposed privatization

# Hafizabad teachers announce protest

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Muttahida Mahaz Aastiza Hafizabad chairman Riaz Ahmad Tarar, President Elementary Teachers Association Hafizabad Ameer Hamza condemned privatization policy of the Punjab government and announced protest against decision of the Punjab government to handed over the best 20 schools of the district to Danish School Authority which are competing private schools of the district.

They said that anti-Islamic forces and European countries who desired to promote European agenda and change theory of Pakistan and syllabus for eliminating Islamic values and tradition. He warned that in case

of implementation on European agenda, the teacher's community would not accept this unwise policy of the government.

**District Emergency Board meeting held:** A meeting of District Emergency Board was held while Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warraich presided over the meeting. Security and other arrangements were reviewed in the meeting made in connection of 'Chahlum' Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA).

ADCR Intiaz Alli Baig, AC Munawar Hussain, District Emergency Officer Rescue 1122 Engineer Muhammad Adnan Nawaz, district heads of law enforcement agencies and other departments attended the meeting. DC directed the concerned officers to

ensure foolproof security arrangements, cleanliness of all routes of processions whereas health departed and rescue 1122 established medical camps to provide first aid to mourners participating in processions and Majalis.

He directed the officers of GEPCO, Sui gas to repair leakage of Sui gas pipes and to keep in order nets of electricity wires on the way of processions while traffic police would be responsible to ensure smooth flow of traffic on alternate routes. He also appealed the Ulama and other religious leaders to refrain from provoking speeches and play their vital role for promoting interfaith harmony, brotherhood, unity and tolerance to maintain peace in the district.

## ADA student publishes book on English grammar

F.P. Report

ZHOB: The launching ceremony of the 'Treasure of English Grammar' book pinned by an ADA (Associate Degree in Arts) student Ali Khan Sherani held at Government Boys' Degree college Zhob here. Commissioner Zhob Division Saeed Ahmed Umrani presided over the book launching ceremony while Chairman District Council Haji Muhammad Khan Kibzai was the chief guest on the occasion.

Director BUITEMS Dr. Abdul Salam Lodhi, principal Degree college Syed Amin Shah Akhundzada, DSP Zhob, ex tehsil Nazim Sardar Amirullah Kibzai, Deputy Divisional Director Education Abdul Latif Mandokhail, journalist Rafiullah Mandokhail, professors, lecturers and college students in a large number attended the cere-

mony.

Addressing the participants, Chairman Haji Muhammad Kibzai congratulated the young writer for his efforts. Principal College Syed Amin Shah Akhundzada in his speech described the book as comprehensive as well as informative for English learners. He asked the students to focus on their studies instead of the political slogans. He said over two thousand students are studying in different disciplines in the institution.

"The foundation stone of Degree College Zhob was laid in 1962 and the institution got the status of Degree College in 1973, but despite the passage of half a century, problems of the college have not been addressed." He demanded the authorities another degree college in the city and upgrade the Degree college to post-graduate

college keeping in mind the increasing population.

Director BUITEMS Dr. Abdul Salam Lodhi while speaking at the ceremony appreciated the efforts of the author's hard work. He shed light on the importance of education on modern lines and said the developed nations made progress as they gave priority to modern education.

The guests gave away prizes and appreciation certificates among the graduating students of ADA, ADS first semester. The young writer Ali Khan Sherani, president college unit Balochistan Professors and Lecturers' Association Saleem Jan Mandokhail, prof. Abdul Ghaffar Sherani, prof. Wahid Khan Hariphal, prof. Allaullah and prof. Sheikh Ajmal Mandokhail also spoke on the occasion and thanked all the guests for their participation.

## First PhD SHO in Punjab Police leaves people dumbfounded

PHOOLNAGAR (INP): Despite the fact that people in Pakistan usually complain about the police's conduct and it is due to the presence of black sheep in the Force that even honest and dedicated police officers remain deprived of people's appreciation, still there are some police personnel who still manage to make a name for themselves and earn praise not only from their family members and friends but also from the people

who are hostile towards them.

Dr. Zulfiqar is one such police official who completed his PhD while he was serving as an SHO at Phoolnagar's Saddar police station. He has now become the first SHO in Punjab who has done PhD.

Zulfiqar has proved that if a person remains committed to his or her passion, he or she could win laurels no matter how difficult the circumstances are. And even

service at police department, with which lot of negativity is associated, cannot dampen his or her spirits. Not only Zulfiqar is a highly educated police official, but he is also honest and dedicated to his duty.

He treats complainants with extreme respect due to which he has won their hearts and minds. So much so that people are stunned when they meet him and wonder whether he is from police department.





# France flays Gabon coup as another African ally falls

PARIS (AFP): France condemned the toppling of Gabonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba which could represent another setback for Paris in Africa where friendly governments have been falling in an "epidemic" of coups. France "condemns the military coup that is under way in Gabon", government spokesman Olivier Veran told reporters in Paris after military officers announced on television that they had overturned the government.

Veran said that France was following events "with a lot of attention" and that it "reiterates its desire to see the results of the election respected," referring to disputed presidential polls in the West African country. Gabon's electoral authority had announced that Bongo, a French ally whose family has ruled oil-rich Gabon for 55 years, had won a third term with 64.27 of the vote. France has around 400 soldiers permanently deployed in the country for training and military support, including at a base in the capital, and has extensive economic ties to the country in the mining and oil sectors.

The political demise of Bongo -- who has been placed under house arrest along with other top officials, according to the new military regime -- fits a pattern of coups in French-speaking Africa in recent years. In Mali, Burkino Faso and latterly Niger in the northwest Sahel region, new military governments have taken openly hostile positions towards France, tapping into resentment felt by many locals about the former colonial power and its ongoing influence. "Official France -- its army, its diplomatic representatives -- are being literally chased out of countries in the Sahel," Jean-Herve Jezequel, an expert on the region at think tank the International Crisis Group told AFP.

In Gabon, the views and politics of the new military regime remain unknown, with the head of the Republican Guard, General Brice Oligui Nguema, thought to be at its head. Paris has maintained a strong military presence in many of its former colonies in West Africa, as well as close business links which were promoted as part of a discredited post-colonial policy known as "Francafricque". Its past support for corrupt and authoritarian leaders has tarnished its image, while China and most recently Russia have worked to

undercut its influence in an area where it was once the undisputed foreign power.

French President Emmanuel Macron lamented an "epidemic of putsches" during a speech to ambassadors. The 45-year-old French leader visited Gabon in March for a forestry summit in a move that was interpreted by some opposition figures as signalling support for Bongo ahead of disputed presidential elections. During a speech in the capital Libreville, Macron denied any French ambitions to interfere in Africa, saying that the age of "Francafricque" was "well over."

But a coup in Niger last month which overthrew President Mohamed Bazoum, a close French ally, has led Macron to take a hard line with the new military regime which he has refused to recognise. France has 1,500 troops stationed there and was banking on the country to serve as a cornerstone of its new military strategy for the Sahel region, where it is fighting against a growing jihadist insurgency by groups aligned with Al-Qaeda and Islamic State. France intervened militarily to beat back advancing extremists in Mali in 2013 at the request of the country's then government. "France will not benefit from continuing to deny the turning-point that we are seeing in the Sahel and perhaps more widely in West Africa," Jezequel told AFP. Bongo's father Omar was one of France's closest African allies in the immediate post-colonial era and Ali has long been a regular in Paris, where his family owns an extensive real estate portfolio that is being investigated by anti-corruption magistrates. He was last welcomed at the presidential palace in June. Former French president Francois Hollande, a regular critic of the government, said Macron had initially failed to take a sufficiently hard line with coup leaders in Mali in 2020 and had endorsed the results of a military-enforced power change in Chad in 2021. "There was a form of acceptance of military coups by force," he told Franceinfo radio.

He also highlighted the ongoing struggle for influence in Africa. "Is it possible that there are foreign influences, notably autocratic regimes -- Russia and China -- that are trying to destabilise these (coup-hit) countries and reduce Western influence? It's obvious," he added.

## North Korea stages nuclear strike drill

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea conducted a simulated "scorched-earth" nuclear strike on targets across South Korea, state media reported on Thursday, in reaction to allied exercises that it said amounted to plans for a preemptive nuclear attack by the United States. The state media reports spelled out in unusual detail how the North envisions a potential war, including countering any attack by striking the South with nuclear weapons, then sweeping in to occupy its territory.

"The KPA staged a tactical nuclear strike drill simulating scorched-earth strikes at major command centers and operational airfields of the 'ROK' military gangsters," the general staff of the North's Korean People's Army (KPA) said in a statement carried by KCNA news agency. ROK is the initials of South Korea's official name, the Republic of Korea. North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea, South Korea's military said, hours after the US deployed B-1B bombers for allied air drills. South Korea's presidential office convened a security meeting after North Korea's late-night launch, which followed its second failed

attempt last week to put its first spy satellite into orbit. "These conducts pose threats to peace and stability of not only our country, but of the region and international community, and cannot be tolerated," Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters.

Japan will intercept North Korea's missiles if they fly over Japan's territory, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said. Pyongyang has vowed to try launching a satellite again in October. The United States, South Korea and Japan have condemned the space launch as a provocation and violation of UN Security Council resolutions banning the North's use of ballistic missile technology. The launches came a day before South Korea and the US were set to wrap up 11 days of combined military drills, which Pyongyang has long denounced as a war rehearsal. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed part of a drill that involved the commanding officers and staff sections of the entire army, aimed at preparing them for an all-out war with the South, KCNA reported.

The drill simulated repelling a sudden inva-

sion, then launching a counter-attack to occupy "the whole territory of the southern half", the report said. The simulation included frontline and strategic reserve artillery forces, plans for forming a front behind the enemy lines, disrupting the entrance of "outside armed forces" into the conflict, and "making simultaneous super-intense strikes at the pivotal military command centers, military ports, operational airfields and other important enemy military targets," KCNA said. "We strongly condemn Kim Jong Un explicitly revealing his intention for a military attack on us using the annual defensive South Korea-US combined drills as a pretext," Seoul's unification ministry handling inter-Korean affairs said in a statement. Kim has been urging his military to step up war preparedness, criticising leaders of the United States, South Korea and Japan as "gang bosses" who increase the risk of a nuclear war in the region. The North's first missile reached an altitude of 50 km (31 miles) and flew 350 km, while the second one rose as high as 50 km and flew 400 km, Japan's defence ministry said.

## North Korea to convene parliament this month

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly, will convene on Sept. 26 to discuss organisational matters and other issues, state media said on Thursday, as the country slowly reopens after years of pandemic lockdowns. The North's parliament rarely meets and usually serves to approve decisions on issues such as governing structures and budgets that have been created by the state's ruling Workers' Party, members of which form the vast majority of the assembly.

The planned meeting comes after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un blasted top officials last week for their "irresponsible" response to flood damage, saying they had "spoiled" the national economy. Kim has said such irresponsibility and lack of discipline from officials were "mainly attributable to the feeble war attitude and wrong viewpoint of the premier of the cabinet," raising speculation over a personnel reshuffle. The North has suffered serious food shortages in recent decades, including famine in the 1990s, often as a result of natural disasters. International experts have warned that border closures during the COVID-19 pandemic worsened matters, while international sanctions and the North's focus on developing its missile and nuclear programmes have also contributed.

The agenda of the upcoming parliamentary session will include laws on the irrigation, public servants, people with disabilities, and the law enforcement in the financial sector, news agency KCNA said. The decision was made at a Plenary Meeting of the parliament's Standing Committee, where members also discussed a law for "revitalizing domestic tourism and expanding international tourism simultaneously." North Korea has recently approved the return of its citizens who were abroad after years of strict border restrictions, state media reported as the isolated country cracks open its border to passenger travel.

## Indonesian presidential candidates neck-and-neck

JAKARTA (Reuters): Indonesia's upcoming presidential election will be a close contest between two popular candidates, the country's defence minister and a governor of one of its most populous provinces, an opinion survey showed.

Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto and Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo have dominated opinion polls in the run up to the Feb. 14, 2024 election, while former Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan trails in third place. The candidates are expected to formally register between October and November. A Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI) poll found that 37% of 1,220 respondents polled in early August would vote for Ganjar, a 1.3-point advantage over Prabowo. About a fifth would vote for Anies, the poll showed.

But in a two-way runoff, Prabowo would win 47.3% support versus Ganjar's 42.2%, the poll found. The margin of error was 2.9%. With roughly six months to go before the election, more than 30% of respondents said they could still change their choice, meaning the race remains "dynamic," said LSI's Djayadi Hanan. Analysts are closely watching which candidate will receive the backing of President Joko Widodo, who, as the first leader to hail from outside the country's political and military elite, has built great cachet with voters during his 10 years in office.

A recent poll by Indikator Politik Indonesia put Jokowi's approval rating above 80%. As a member of the ruling Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), Jokowi, as the president is known, has said he backs the party's candidate, Ganjar. But in recent months, he has also hinted at support for Prabowo, an ex-special forces general whom he defeated in the last two presidential elections in 2014 and 2019.

# Kremlin says Prigozhin plane may have been downed on purpose

MOSCOW (Reuters): The Kremlin said that investigators were considering the possibility that the plane carrying mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin was downed on purpose, the first explicit acknowledgement that he may have been assassinated.

"It is obvious that different versions are being considered, including the version - you know what we are talking about - let's say, a deliberate atrocity," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked about the investigation. Asked if the International Civil Aviation Organization would investigate the crash, Peskov said that the circumstances made it different, though he cautioned that investigators had made no formal conclusions yet about what exactly took place.

"Let's wait for the results of our Russian investigation," Peskov said. The private Embraer jet on which Prigozhin was travelling to St Petersburg from Moscow crashed north of Moscow killing all 10 people on board on Aug. 23, including two other top Wagner figures, Prigozhin's four bodyguards and a crew of three. The cause is still unclear, but villagers near the scene told Reuters they heard a bang and then saw the jet plummet to the ground. The plane crashed exactly two months since Prigozhin took control of the southern city of Rostov in late June, the opening salvo of a mutiny which shook the foundations of President Vladimir Putin's Russia.

Russia has informed Brazil's aircraft investigation authority that it will not probe the crash of the Brazilian-made Embraer jet under international rules "at the moment", the Brazilian agency told Reuters. Asked about that report, Peskov said: "First of all, the investigation is under way, the Investigative Committee is



engaged in this." "In this case there can be no talk of any international aspect," Peskov said. In an unusual move, the Interstate Aviation Committee (IAC), which oversees aviation accident investigations in a grouping of former Soviet republics including Russia, said it was not investigating the crash, adding that it would not be commenting on the "circumstances of the incident". The day after the crash, Putin sent his condolences to the families of those killed and said he had known Prigozhin for a very long time, since the chaotic years of the early 1990s.

"He was a man with a difficult fate, and he made serious mistakes in life," Putin said, while describing him as a talented businessman. The Kremlin has rejected as an "absolute lie" the suggestion by some Western politicians and commentators - for which they have not provided evidence - that Putin ordered Prigozhin to be killed in revenge. US President Joe Biden has said he was not sur-

prised by the death and that not much happened in Russia that Putin was not behind. After Prigozhin's death, Putin ordered Wagner fighters to sign an oath of allegiance to the Russian state - a step that Prigozhin had opposed due to his anger at the defence ministry that he said risked losing the Ukraine war.

Followers of Prigozhin laid flowers, messages and poetry at his grave, hailing him as a fearless warrior. In life, Prigozhin liked to brag that he was one of the world's most feared mercenaries with the best fighting force. Opponents such as the United States cast Prigozhin as a brutal commander who plundered African states and meted out sleddhammer deaths to those who crossed him. Though he won the bloodiest battle yet of the Ukraine war for Putin by capturing Bakhmut, Prigozhin became enraged with what he said were the treacherous failings of Putin's military - and warned that Russia could lose the entire Ukraine war.

# NY says Trump should be found liable for fraud, even before a trial

NEW YORK (Reuters): New York's attorney general asked a state judge to declare, even before the start of a trial, that Donald Trump committed fraud by submitting false statements to bankers and insurers and overstating his net worth by up to \$2.23 billion. In filings with a state court in Manhattan, Attorney General Letitia James said evidence in her civil case showed "repeated and persistent fraudulent use" by Trump and his family business of false and misleading financial statements from 2011 to 2021.

James said inflating values of more than a dozen assets by hundreds of millions of dollars established the defendants' liability for fraud under the state's Executive Law. "The cumulative effect of these numerous deceptive schemes to inflate Mr. Trump's assets, and hence his net worth, is staggering," and is "just the tip of a much larger iceberg of

deception (the state) is prepared to expose at trial," James said. Less than an hour after James' filing, lawyers for Trump and the other defendants filed their own papers seeking to end what they called James' "crusade against President Trump" and dismiss the entire case. Citing a recent appellate court decision, they said that many of the transactions James challenged took place too long ago to be reviewed in court, and said the attorney general offered no proof that anyone was harmed by the remainder.

"What she seeks to do here [is] become the post hoc arbiter of the marketplace by interjecting her own judgment into strictly private, profitable transactions," the defendants' lawyers said. "The record evidence now undermines fully her purported claims." James filed her lawsuit last September, accusing Trump of lying about property values, including for his Mar-

a-Lago estate in Florida and Trump Tower penthouse apartment in Manhattan, and his own net worth. She said Trump did this to fraudulently obtain better terms on loans and insurance, and that his fraud hurt honest participants in banking, insurance and real estate markets. The attorney general is seeking at least \$250 million from Trump, his adult sons Donald Jr. and Eric, the Trump Organization and others, and to stop the Trumps from running businesses in New York.

A trial before state Supreme Court Justice Arthur Engoron is scheduled for Oct. 2. The case is separate from four criminal indictments that Trump, 77, faces as he seeks a second White House term, including two for attempting to reverse his 2020 election loss. Trump, a Republican front-runner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, has denied wrongdoing in all of

the cases, calling them part of a Democratic witch hunt against him. James is a Democrat. In her filing, James said correcting Trump's suspect valuations would have reduced his net worth by 17% to 39% each year between 2011 and 2021.

The filing said Trump's reported net worth peaked at \$6.1 billion in both 2018 and 2019, when he was US president, but would have been no more than \$4.2 billion had he arranged for "full blown professional appraisals" of his properties. James said Trump should have valued his penthouse triplex in 2016 at \$119.9 million instead of \$327 million, and valued Mar-a-Lago in 2018 at \$25.4 million, based on its restricted use as a social club, instead of \$739.5 million. The New York civil case is New York v Trump et al, New York State Supreme Court, New York County, No. 452564/2022.

# Mexico opposition picks Galvez as presidential candidate

MEXICO CITY (AFP): Mexico's opposition coalition named Xochitl Galvez, an outspoken senator with Indigenous roots who hopes to be the country's first woman president, as its candidate for next year's election. Her nomination increases the probability of an all-woman battle for the presidency -- between Galvez and former Mexico City mayor Claudia Sheinbaum, seen as the favorite to represent the ruling party in June 2024.

Galvez, a 60-year-old computer engineer and self-made businesswoman, secured the support of the opposition bloc after an internal contest decided by public opinion polling. "We have made the decision to support the sole candidacy of Xochitl Galvez to head the Broad Front for Mexico," announced Alejandro Moreno, leader of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), one of the three parties in the opposition alliance. Galvez, who was backed by the conservative National Action Party (PAN), edged

out another woman senator, Beatriz Paredes of the PRI.

Galvez has repeatedly crossed swords with outgoing President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, a self-styled champion of the underprivileged. She has criticized the leftwing populist's security strategy and said that "ovaries are needed" to confront organized crime in the violence-wracked country. Galvez, who says that as a child she sold candy to help her family, talks with an informal, frank language peppered with swear words. "Nobody controls me -- not even my husband," she says to underline her independence. Galvez accused Lopez Obrador of machismo after he branded her the "candidate of the power mafia" -- a reference to the opposition.

Lopez Obrador's frequent attacks on Galvez had a "counterproductive result," boosting her profile, said analyst Luis Estrada, chief executive of political consultancy firm Spin. Born to an Indigenous Otomi father

and mixed-race mother, Galvez wears Indigenous clothing, uses colloquial language and is known for traveling around Mexico City by bicycle. The opposition politician, who formerly headed a foundation to support Indigenous children and women, speaks openly of her family problems. Her father was an alcoholic and one of her sisters has been in preventive detention in prison for 11 years for allegedly belonging to a gang of kidnappers.

Galvez studied computer engineering at the prestigious National Autonomous University of Mexico. She specialized in robotics, artificial intelligence and sustainability, and later set up a successful company related to technology in so-called intelligent buildings. Galvez's first name means "flower" in the Nahuatl Indigenous language, and her background sets her apart from the traditional conservative opposition. Galvez is "charismatic, fresh and spontaneous," said political ana-

lyst Hernan Gomez Bruera.

But, due to the popularity of Lopez Obrador's Morena party, she appears unlikely to beat Sheinbaum, a 61-year-old scientist by training, he added. In a survey by the Reforma newspaper published, 46 percent of respondents said they would vote for Sheinbaum in a two-way contest, compared with 31 percent for Galvez. The Broad Front for Mexico is made up of the PRI -- which ruled the country for more than 70 years until 2000 -- PAN and the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution.

Morena is also carrying out opinion polling to decide its presidential candidate, with the result expected to be announced on September 6. Sheinbaum's main internal rival is former foreign minister Marcelo Ebrard. Both are close allies of Lopez Obrador, who enjoys an approval rating of more than 60 percent but is required by the constitution to leave office after a single six-year term.

## Indonesia arrests 88 Chinese nationals over love scams

JAKARTA (AFP): Dozens of Chinese nationals were arrested in Indonesia on suspicion of running an online love scam syndicate that ensnared hundreds of victims in China, police said. Acting on a tip-off from their Chinese counterparts, Indonesian police arrested 83 men and five women at an industrial park in Batam city in Riau Islands province.

Police said the syndicate blackmailed hundreds of victims in China, many of whom were public officials. "We are investigating if there are any

Indonesians among the victims. If there are none, the scammers will be deported immediately," Riau Islands police spokesman Zahwani Pandora Arsyad told AFP. The alleged scammers pretended to have romantic feelings for their victims during video calls.

The women scammers are accused of seducing the victims before asking them to engage in sexual acts during the calls while other suspects recorded the videos. The suspects then allegedly blackmailed their victims, threatening to

release the videos on social media if they refused to send them money. It is unclear how long the group had been operating and how much they had earned. Police had previously said many scammers had moved to Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries after China cracked down on domestic networks.

In 2019, police arrested 85 Chinese nationals and six Indonesians over an online scam that tricked victims out of millions of dollars.

BANGKOK (AP): At least 11 people are suspected to be involved with a loan scam that allegedly drove a man to kill his wife and two young boys before trying to take his own life in their family home. Thai police said, Sanit Dokmai has been charged with premeditated murder after police found the bodies of his wife and two sons, who were 9 and 13, with slash wounds inside a house in Samut Prakan province, Bangkok's eastern suburb, said local police chief Rangsang Kamsook.

Rangsang said Sanit was conscious but in critical condition and unable to speak nor eat due to severe wounds at his throat. Police believe Sanit's motive came from a huge debt the family was in. Police said Sanit is a debt guarantor for his friend in an amount of 400,000 baht (\$11,400). The friend ran away and left Sanit to pay off the

debt, then his wife tried to take out a loan to help and got scammed, said provincial police chief Pallop Araemlah. Rangsang said the investigation of the money trail has allowed the police to obtain an arrest warrant on fraud and a violation of the Computer Crime Act for nine Thais and two Cambodians. According to the police, Sanit's wife applied for a loan online and was tricked into transferring money that scammers claimed to be for different processing fees. Local chief Rangsang said she filed a complaint to police last week saying she lost over 1.7 million baht (\$48,000).

Thailand has struggled to cope with a recent explosion of cybercrime and scam cases. In 2022, the Thai police said they received over 200,000 online reports of scam totaling an estimated 30 billion baht (\$855 million) or

more. A new report from the United Nations said criminal gangs have forced hundreds of thousands of people in Southeast Asia into participating in unlawful online scam operations involving billions of dollars worth of revenues, especially in Myanmar and Cambodia. Laos, the Philippines and Thailand were also cited among the main countries of destination or transit for victims of false recruitment. In an attempt to tackle the problem, Thailand enacted a new law earlier this year that allows banks to immediately freeze suspicious accounts for 72 hours without requiring victims of scams to submit their police report. Once a victim transfers money to a scammer, that sum usually is quickly transferred to several other accounts, making it extremely difficult for the authorities to track and retrieve it.



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## Country’s needs stringent reforms not subsidies

THE state and people of Pakistan are embattled with an awkward situation and ignominy, that deluges and troubles come in sequence one after another and leaders' lack the capacity to sail the nation through those upheavals. A well groomed economy and prosperous nation fell victim to bad governance of its rulers, who had further created problems for the nation through their business oriented strategies and politically motivated development projects throughout history. Recently, the caretaker Finance Minister has briefed the Upper House Standing Committee on Finance that Pakistan's economic situation was worse than anticipated and the government did not have fiscal space to provide subsidies. According to her, the interim set-up had inherited the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, which is non-negotiable. While commenting on the current situation, the interim Minister said that government institutions were suffering unbearable losses and over 70 percent of Pakistan's tax revenue was being spent on debt relief. Low inflows and high outflows of dollars undermine the local currency and add to the inflated cost of living in the country.

Besides considering pros and cons of the situation, it is high time that the nation must deliberate on the conduct of its leaders, style of governance and reasons leading to recurrent economic downfall of the country, poor performance of national institutions and persistent degradation of each sector of the national economy. Historically, after the death of Quaid-e-Azam and assassination of Qaid-e-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan, no leader ever ruled the country with honesty and good faith, their governance and growth was fundamentally constituency based, area or ethnicity centric that ultimately ended up in failure and nonproduction. Meanwhile, no government or institutions including Planning Commission of Pakistan ever assessed the future needs of the country, emerging challenges, and interest of the society that serious negligence has resulted in irregularized growth, uncontrolled population, ungoverned construction, scarcity of energy and abundance of consumers, high power tariffs, and public weakness in paying off utilities bills. The current situation clearly presents that our nation had mostly been wandering for which progress and comforts over the past decades was genuinely an eye syndrome that ended up empty handed.

As far as available options are concerned the nation still has a variety of alternatives that would not only smoothly sail the country through the current fiasco but can fix this issue on a permanent basis in the future. Subsidies are surgery poison that hurt the national economy in the long term but improve the public rating of the politicians. Realistically, operating business entities and colossal manufacturing giants is not state responsibility, the government should have a regulatory control over provision of essential items including electricity, gas, telecommunication and other services. All state owned entities including the WAPDA, PIA, Pakistan Steel, PNSC and others must be privatized without any delay so billions of rupee annual circular debt could be eliminated and that huge amount could be spent on development and welfare projects. Afterall, mismanagement and corruption of the leaders are the pavitol in bringing the nation to this day. The public must censure the rulers for the bad governance and poor performance through the legitimate electoral process, that will not only remove corruption and nepotism from politics but will bring resilience and tolerance in this field. Otherwise, no one can guarantee the economic survival and dignified existence of this nation during the crucial times ahead.

## Making of a new brawl

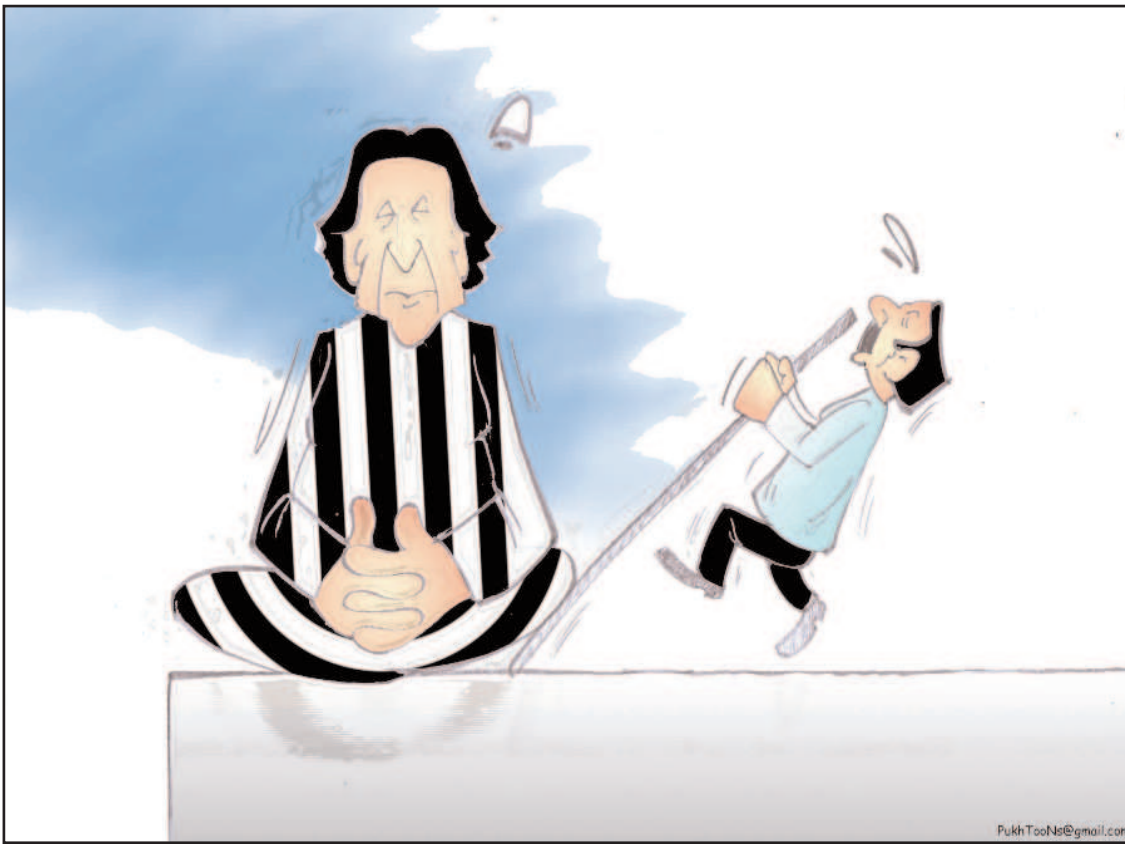
BRICS, a five member club of Brazil, Russia India, China and South Africa has recently announced its expansion by admitting six more nations to its family. In the current scenario, the five member bloc of major developing nations has become a highly lucrative landing place for over 153 developing countries across five continents because BRICS membership can open up massive economic, trade, fiscal and technological opportunities for them. Previously, the powerful western bloc has banned modern technology, cost effective nuclear energy and exclusive economic and trade concessions for poor and developing nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America, which are currently offered by the BRICS nations to its potential members.

The massive fame and expansion of BRICS in the world has been viewed in the western capitals with serious concerns, while western Strategists, think tanks, and intelligentsia have started a comprehensive study to launch a counter narrative and disrupt that emerging alliance of nations that is likely to challenge western monopoly in the future. However, Washington played down the BRICS expansion publicly by advocating countries freedom to choose their own partners and allies but Biden's administration has ramped up its efforts and promises to step up funding for the developing world through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Meanwhile, other western nations including the UK, France and Germany are preparing to engage their former Asian and African colonies through investment in development projects, educational grants and aid, to timely neutralize BRICS ingress in those regions.

In fact, global power competition and politics of alliance and multilateralisms are at its peak, while diverse forums are being used as traps to engage weak nations. The crucial political support and strategic resources are used by powerful admins who steer the bloc for fulfillment of their secret agenda. Currently, the BRICS has attracted global attention because oil rich Arab nations and Cleric ruled Iran simultaneously joining the club of five that would not only empower anti-Washington alliance but it will weaken the US's grip over OPEC Consortium which controls production and trade of black gold in the world. Secret Conspiracy and Open diplomacy are the major weapons in this global contest, whatever title be given to this enterprise, weak nations would be fuel to this fire and any positivity is less likely to come. Hence, neutrality would be the best choice during this age of chaos and alteration.

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## Russia paints itself as the enemy of ‘Western colonialism’

Samuel Ramani

THE 11th Moscow Conference on International Security brought together leading figures of the Russian security apparatus with the defense ministers of Moscow's non-Western partners, and an increasingly scarce array of international allies.

After discussing the emerging multipolar world order, the conference agenda pivoted to in-depth examinations of events in the Middle East, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region. Russian officials derided what it sees as the West's role in destabilizing the international order through unilateral wars, unjust sanctions, and the creation of hostile blocs. For seasoned watchers of Russia's foreign and security policy, these narratives cover familiar ground. But they also encapsulated Russia's campaign to blame the West for instigating the Ukraine war as well as its efforts to align with China against the threat of US unilateralism in the Asia-Pacific region and pander to popular narratives about Western misconduct in the Middle East and North Africa.

During his subdued video address, President Vladimir Putin repeated his long-standing claim that the Ukraine war was triggered and perpetuated by Western recklessness. He justified this dubious argument by claiming that the West pumped billions of dollars into Ukraine's "neo-Nazi regime" and continued to escalate the conflict with arms supplies and the deployment of military advisers and mercenaries. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who was in attendance at the conference, elaborated further by claiming that the West approved of Ukraine's crackdown on the Russian language and of its alleged pre-war plans to seize the Donbas by force. He also took a pointed jab at Zelensky's conditions for peace, equating the restoration of Ukraine's 1991 borders with "destroying everything Russian in the territories that are currently beyond its control." In stark contrast to the West's support of Ukraine's defensive efforts, Lavrov praised the mediation attempts by China, Brazil, and South Africa, which have instead focused on freezing the war via a ceasefire agreement.

Russia's revisionist narratives about the conflict are underpinned by two rationales. First, Russia wants to strengthen its ideological

bonds with China over the Ukraine war. Russia's rhetoric on how the West obstructed peace in Ukraine likely resonated strongly with Chinese attendees: after the May 2023 G7 Summit in Hiroshima, China's People's Daily published an article stating that the US was using the Ukraine "crisis" as a tool to grab huge profits, and accused Washington of sabotaging peace talks. The Chinese Foreign Ministry has repeatedly argued that US arms supplies to Ukraine are incompatible with peace and claimed that a pledge for Ukraine to not join NATO could end the war. But Lavrov's praise of China's peace plan - which contrasted with his unwillingness to discuss it with Foreign Minister Wang Yi in February - was appreciated even more in Beijing. Shangfu's speech at the Moscow International Security Conference pushed China's 12-point peace plan for Ukraine and framed it within the context of its broader Global Security Initiative. Sheena Chestnut Grietens, director of the Asia Policy Program at the University of Texas at Austin, argues the initiative marks a "significant shift" in China's foreign policy, continuing its domestic strategy onto the world stage. This could see China offering security assistance to countries who would not want the guarantees of democratic accountability and human rights protection that the West might have demanded in return.

Secondly, Russia sought to dilute the impact of the Aug. 5-6 Ukraine talks in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. These negotiations, which excluded Russia, saw non-Western powers such as China and India find common ground with the US and the EU over supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity. Ukraine framed these limited expressions of synergy between Western and non-Western powers as proof of Russia's international isolation, and viewed the Jeddah talks as a launchpad for a global Ukraine peace summit. By highlighting the perils of accepting this peace formula, Lavrov sought to rekindle polarizations between the West and Global South on Ukraine. Additionally, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu sought to convince attendees that a Ukrainian victory was impossible, boasting of the destruction of German tanks, American armored vehicles and British

missiles. When discussing Asia-Pacific affairs, Russian officials reiterated China's warnings that the US is sowing the seeds for a superpower confrontation over Taiwan. Putin claimed that Western neocolonialism required "vassal obedience" from countries in the region and warned that "military-political associations controlled by Washington" could soon appear. Putin declared this could transpire through an eventual integration of NATO with the Australia-Britain-US AUKUS security pact. These remarks dovetailed with Chinese President Xi Jinping's past condemnations of the West's alleged Cold War mentality and "promotion of bloc confrontation," and Shangfu's warning that the US was playing with fire in its failed attempts to "use Taiwan to contain China." Shangfu and Shoigu contrasted the US's anti-Chinese alliance-building efforts with the Russia-China strategic partnership, which is not officially aimed at targeting any great power.

Admiral Kostyukov, head of Russia's foreign military intelligence agency, the GRU, launched blistering criticisms of US policy in the Asia-Pacific region, aiming to strengthen links between Russian hardliners and hawks in the Chinese Communist Party. Kostyukov accused the US of looping South Korea into its "nuclear planning" and defended North Korea's retention of nuclear weapons as a security guarantee. He also claimed that the US was pressuring Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand to supply ammunition and Soviet-made armored vehicles to Ukraine, and chastised South Korea's handover of 500,000 155 mm artillery shells to Kyiv. These incendiary remarks reaffirmed the strength of the Russia-China-North Korea axis, which was illustrated by Shoigu and Chinese Politburo member Li Hongzhong's July 2023 visits to Pyongyang. The axis shows Russia and China have identified a common cause in opposing US coercion in their self-perceived spheres of influence. On Middle Eastern and African issues, Putin highlighted NATO's 2011 military intervention in Libya as the root cause of extremism in the Sahara-Sahel region. Russia has regularly sounded the alarm about the destabilizing consequences of Libyan dictator Muammar al-Gaddafi's

overthrow for Mali. Small arms proliferation from Libya to the Sahel aided the 2012 Malian coup d'etat, which ignited Mali's persistent cycle of extremist violence and military takeovers. Putin extended the geographical scope of Libya-fueled instability all the way to the Central African Republic. Lavrov used the conference to reprimand Western racism in the region, reinforcing narratives that the Kremlin advanced at the July 27-28 Russia-Africa Summit in St. Petersburg. These views received some pushback in Africa, as South Africa's Daily Maverick newspaper condemned Modise's attendance as a shocking display of support for Russian aggression, but were unchallenged by the summit's attendees.

To contrast itself with the West's allegedly destabilizing conduct in the Global South, Russia tried to frame itself as a supporter of de-escalation between Saudi Arabia and Iran. (Since the conference, both countries announced their intentions to become BRICS members). On the conference's sidelines, Saudi Defense Ministry official Talal al-Otaibi met with the deputy chief of Iran's armed forces Aziz Nasirzadeh. This meeting built on Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian's pledge to expand economic ties with Saudi Arabia and offer to visit Riyadh. By hosting these defense negotiations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Russia injected new life into its 2019 collective security plan in the Persian Gulf, which focused on dialogue between conflicting regional powers. It also underscored Russia's desire to complement China's mediation between Saudi Arabia and Iran and ensure that its hard-won diplomatic clout in the region was not completely eclipsed by Beijing's rising profile. While Russian officials largely reiterated age-old tropes at the Moscow International Security Conference, their narratives were astutely tailored to the event, which shunned Western countries and embraced the Global South. In the months ahead, Russia will likely continue championing Global South-led peace initiatives in Ukraine, condemning US efforts to contain China, and promoting itself as an opponent of Western neocolonialism. All while relentlessly continuing to pursue a neo-imperial war of aggression in Ukraine.

The Moscow Times

## All is not quiet on Jordan’s northern front

Osama Al-Sharif

JORDAN is facing an unusual threat with at least one pundit labeling it a full-fledged, "open war." During this month alone, the Jordanian Armed Forces have thwarted several narcotic-smuggling operations from Syria, at least two of which saw drones being used. And it is not drugs alone that Jordan is fighting to stop, but an alignment between drug cartels in Syria and terrorist organizations that could see the latter use the proceeds garnered to finance operations, not only against the kingdom but beyond.

Furthermore, Jordan is frustrated with the Syrian regime's failure to curtail what has been described as an "organized" smuggling network that extends from Lebanon to southern Syria. So organized, that Syria has been dubbed a major narcostate with a multibillion-dollar drug-smuggling network. A top export is the synthetic and highly-addictive stimulant, Captagon, called "the poor man's cocaine" selling for about \$3 a pill. Millions of pills, made in labs in southern Syria, find their way through Jordan to Gulf states and also Europe.

The Jordanian army altered its rules of engagement two years ago to give its soldiers on the border a free hand in dealing with smugglers. In January 2022, the army killed 27 smugglers trying to cross the 375 km border with Syria. Last May, the Jordanian air force is said to have carried out a raid hitting an alleged Iran-linked drugs factory and killing a smuggler behind big hauls across the two countries' shared border. Jordan's government has not officially acknowledged the raid. The issue has become a major security challenge for Jordan. When Jordan re-opened its land borders with Syria - after Syrian government forces retook the Daraa border crossing in 2018 - Amman hoped a deal could be reached with Damascus to end all drug-smuggling operations. Jordan's leaders held high-level meetings with Bashar Assad and were instrumental in urging other nations to normalize ties with the regime, culminating in Assad attending the Arab Summit in Jeddah last May. Jordan, Saudi Arabia and others had called for a political solution to the Syrian crisis but Assad never responded.

Of concern is the relationship between the Syrian regime and the cartels. Facing biting Western sanctions, the regime - for economic and political reasons - is believed to have allowed, and benefitted from, drug networks. Jordan has accused Syrian army officers of being part of these smuggling operations. But its concerns were never addressed. Now there are fears that terrorist networks, including Daesh, are regrouping in southern Syria and may benefit financially from the drug-smuggling operations. Katrina Sammour, a Jordanian security analyst, wrote in her blog this week that there has been a resurgence of Daesh's Wilayat Houran - the name of the south Syria branch of Daesh. Since the beginning of 2022, this extremist group has been methodically enhancing its presence,

particularly in areas surrounding Daraa, Badiyat As-Suwaida, and Syria's Badia. She adds, however, that there is no evidence connecting Wilayat Houran to any drug trafficking in the south, which is primarily monopolized by Iran-backed groups and armed forces tied to the Assad regime. There is also no evidence so far of outside funding.

Sammour said that the kingdom has been allocating resources to counter armed groups that may attempt to cross the border and launch attacks. While there is no evidence linking some armed groups to drug-smuggling operations, it may well become a reality. This could see weapons and fighters crossing the border, posing another significant threat and burden for Jordan. Meanwhile, two prominent Jordanian newspaper columnists have hinted at the need to give the Jordanian military a free hand. Writing in Al-Ghad daily, Maher Abu Tair said that Jordan is "angry with Damascus" because the latter has done nothing to address the country's concerns. He said that Jordan has not yet created a buffer zone in southern Syria, similar to Turkiye's in the north, because it was hoping that the Syrian government would take action.

Abu Tair said that this was a security file that had to be taken away from politicians, but added that a buffer zone cannot be created without the participation of the region's nations and the US. On the same day, Malek Athamneh, a Jordanian commentator also writing in Al-Ghad, said that this was an "open war" and blamed Jordanian diplomacy for seeking to avoid any embarrassment that may arise from taking it up with Syria. He referred to US plans to back Jordan in its war against drugs coming from Syria and blamed Damascus for not honoring its promises.

Both were probably referring to statements made by US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark Milley, who told a Jordanian news channel that drug-smuggling groups pose a significant danger, especially if they are linked to terrorist organizations. He said there were several terrorist organizations that have ties to drug-trafficking gangs. So where does Jordan go from here? Imposing a buffer zone inside Syria will serve two main immediate objectives: stem drug smuggling and cripple terrorist organizations from coming close to Jordan's borders. However, such an operation requires international backing and will be costly to maintain. It will not be welcomed by the Syrian regime, which has to choose between backing the drug cartels and normalizing ties with Jordan and other Arab countries. But it is important to note that Jordan is mainly a transit country for drugs coming from Syria, which are aimed at markets in the GCC and Europe. The smuggling network and labs in southern Syria have to be eradicated. Critically, whatever Jordan chooses to do must be supported by countries in the region as well as the US. It is vital to ensure that there is no funding from this source for terrorist groups.

Arab News

## The EU is too selfish to make Ukraine a member

Richard Kemp

“Enlargement [of the European Union] is no longer a dream,” said Charles Michel, president of the European Council, in Slovenia this week. “It is time to move forward.” It is rare I find myself agreeing with a Brussels bureaucrat, but on this he is absolutely right: the EU should be bold and accept new members by 2030. And Ukraine should be chief among them.

Yet, as Mr Michel must know, it is a false hope. The chances of the EU admitting a country the size of Ukraine or any of the other candidates further east, such as Moldova, is a fantasy, and for two reasons: the consequences for France and Germany's power within the bloc, and the sheer financial cost for an organisation not known for its open-hearted charity. Let's consider the economic impact first. Were it to join, Ukraine would be the poorest member of the EU by some margin, with a per capita income half of that

of Bulgaria. Taking into account the economic damage sustained from Putin's war and the astronomical costs of post-war reconstruction, Ukraine would suck in eye-watering quantities of the EU's development aid spending, already around one quarter of the total budget.

Then there is the EU's largest budgetary item: agricultural subsidies. With 55 per cent of its land used for arable farming, Ukraine has one of the largest agricultural sectors in Europe and its farmers would be entitled to a huge slice of Common Agricultural Policy cash - all presumably at the expense of France, which receives the largest share of all member states. Ukrainian membership would also very likely deprive funds from other poorer members: Romania, Hungary, Greece and Poland chief among them. Some current net beneficiaries like Czechia and Portugal would likely become net contributors overnight. To reduce some of the impact, the

richest countries, such as France and Germany, would have no choice other than to dramatically step up their budget contributions - a daunting prospect at a time of such great economic turmoil and with anti-EU movements growing among some electorates.

More fatal than that, however, is that the admission of Ukraine would also shift the traditional balance of power in the EU, which Germany and France have effectively ruled since the beginning. Ukraine would become the fifth largest member of the EU by population, giving it immense power in the qualified majority system within the bloc, which takes account both of the number of states voting and their population size. There is already friction within the EU between Western and Eastern members, not least over social issues, on which the former Soviet countries are more culturally conservative and

resistant to growing Western liberalism. The addition of another numerically powerful Eastern European member, which Western leaders fear could gang up with Poland and other countries against the status quo, would add to concerns in Berlin, Paris and Brussels.

The reality is that none of these fundamental tensions stands a chance of being resolved without serious reform of the EU's budget and decision-making processes, including removal of national vetoes over key issues such as security, foreign policy and social reform. Treaty changes are always notoriously hard to accomplish within the EU. With some existing members standing to lose so much both in terms of economic benefits and national sovereignty, the far-reaching changes necessary to admit Ukraine would certainly take many years and perhaps ultimately prove unachievable. Emmanuel

Macron, the French president, and Olaf Scholz, the German chancellor, have both made it clear that Ukraine's accession could take decades. All of the leaders that granted candidate status to Kyiv last June likely think the same, recognising that this would be an issue for their successors and not for them.

But there is probably another, equally selfish, reason why the EU has been holding out the false hope of membership. It may be a carrot to lure Ukraine into ceding territory to Russia, along the same lines as suggested by the Nato Secretary General's chief of staff, who recently said membership of the alliance could be granted in exchange for a peace deal with Putin. This ridiculous thinking shows how desperate some within Nato and the EU are to see an end to this conflict, even if it means handing victory to Moscow. The idea that Ukraine can be bought off by an offer of EU membership, which Kyiv will

privately recognise is unlikely to materialise for many years, if at all, is delusional.

In any case, whatever he says to the contrary, Putin is not going to countenance Ukraine as an EU member, any more than as a member of Nato, even if he holds on to a chunk of its eastern territory. His greatest fear is not a defensive military alliance but democracy and prosperity, which his totalitarian regime cannot offer to the Russian people, especially on his own doorstep. His acceptance of such terms would be about as reliable as his undertakings of safe passage to Prigozhin. The greatest service the EU can do for the people of Ukraine is not to hold out the vain hope of membership at some undefined point in the future, but to make it clear to Putin that it will stand with Ukraine until he is driven out of the country, and provide the finance and weaponry Kyiv needs to finish the job. So far Europe has fallen well short.

The Telegraph



# Panama’s doomsday warning is not about holiday shopping

THE Panama Canal is in dire straits. A severe drought is impeding navigation of the United States-dominated trade artery that bisects the isthmus of Panama in Central America. As of mid-August, more than 200 ships were stuck at the canal. On August 26, CNN warned that the situation is "not a good sign for supply chains - or your holiday shopping". To be sure, even before the onset of accelerated anthropogenic climate change, the Panama Canal was never enormously environmentally compatible. The construction of the waterway, which began as a French undertaking in the late 1800s before being appropriated by the US and completed in 1914, encapsulated the recklessness and hubris of man's efforts to dominate nature.

Thousands upon thousands of workers perished in the quest to bend the earth to imperial will. But at least they enabled future "holiday shopping". As historian David McCullough notes in his book The Path Between the Seas, US President Theodore Roosevelt (1901-09) viewed the Panama Canal as "indispensable" to the "global destiny" of the United States. Roosevelt's vision featured the US "as the commanding power on two oceans, and these joined by a canal built, owned, operated, policed, and fortified by his country".

To that end, the US acquired its very own de facto colony in the form of the Panama Canal Zone, over which it exercised unfettered rule from 1903 to 1979; it was not until 1999 that Panama assumed control over the canal itself, although the US remains the waterway's primary user. During the Cold War, the Canal Zone served as an

invaluable base from which the US was able to wreak regional right-wing havoc under the guise of fighting communism. The notorious School of the Americas, established in the Canal Zone in 1946 and later relocated to the US state of Georgia, became the go-to institution for Latin American dictators, death squad leaders and torturers who quite literally made a killing off of toeing the US line. My own family, as it so happens, had a hand in the colonial enterprise in Panama: My grandfather Col Joe Fernandez, born in Florida to Spanish-speaking parents, was appointed director of military intelligence for the US Southern Command in the Canal Zone in the 1970s. In that capacity, he used to attend meetings in a hill-side bunker with impending dictator of Panama Manuel Noriega, a Cold War lackey who ultimately overestimated his own imperial utility.

The bunker is now sealed off but reportedly remains air-conditioned to this day, an appropriately tragicomic colonial legacy if there ever was one. Noriega, for his part, was overthrown by the US military and hauled off to Florida in 1990 to face drug trafficking charges - never mind the United States' own lengthy history of involvement in the international drug trade or the fact that Noriega's drug ties had not imperilled his decades of service as a CIA asset. The removal of Noriega entailed the pulverisation of the poor Panama City neighbourhood of El Chorrillo along with many of its inhabitants, a spectacularly lethal show of firepower that the US charmingly dubbed Operation Just Cause. The area never fully recovered. I drove through El Chorrillo in February 2023 with a friend of mine and my friend's Canadian acquaint-

ance who had lived in Panama City for 12 years, worked in the lucrative mining sector, and spoke no Spanish - a sort of caricature of the North American "expat" who descends on the Global South in a form of modern-day conquest.

This acquaintance resided in a luxury condo tower that is still referred to locally as "the Trump" despite being no longer affiliated with the former US president. Back in 2017, NBC News reported that The Trump Organization had licensed its name to the 70-storey monstrosity that was "riddled with ties to drug money and international organised crime". In 2018, the Trump name was eliminated from the tower's sign with a hammer and crowbar. The Canadian had never entered El Chorrillo, somehow convinced that non-residents of the neighbourhood were banned from visiting. Indeed, the dystopian contrast between the luxury buildings that saturate the Panama City skyline and the ground-level squalor that reigns in certain areas should be enough to convince any moderately ethical person that there are far graver concerns in Panama than the present pileup in the Panama Canal and potential "holiday shopping" complications in the US. Meanwhile, the recent sentencing to 10 years in prison for money laundering of former right-wing Panamanian president and current 2024 presidential hopeful Ricardo Martinelli only serves to obscure the reality that his is not isolated criminality and that capitalism is itself one big money laundering operation.

I had returned to Panama in February just in time for the release of the septuagenarian Martinelli's single Yo Soy El Guru (I am the

Guru), a collaboration with the Panamanian rapper DJ Black and various scantily-clad women in a boat off of Panama City. It was doomsday-level absurdity and constituted a sufficiently disturbing juxtaposition to my subsequent excursion to the Panamanian province of Darien, where I spoke with refugees who had just risked their lives to traverse the stretch of jungle known as the Darien Gap as they headed north in the hopes of eventually reaching the US. Young children from Venezuela told me of encountering the cadavers of other refugees in the jungle - a morbid wakeup call, perhaps, as to the negligible value assigned to their lives by the powers that be.

Of course, the US has more than a little to do with making many people refugees in the first place with its penchant for political and economic meddling in the hemisphere and beyond. The US is also a driving force behind the regional militarisation and border fortification schemes that ensure that deadly dangers continue unabated even after refugees exit the Darien Gap. As of July, a record 250,000 migrants and asylum seekers had made the jungle crossing this year, already surpassing the total for 2022.

And with the Panama Canal now threatening to dry up, the country is playing host to an intersection of the global climate crisis, the global refugee crisis and the inequalities of a global economic model of exploitation championed by the US. It remains to be seen whether Panama is a microcosm of capitalist self-combustion. But for the moment, at least, the potential climate-related demise of a canal that never should have been constructed seems an apt metaphor for an entire system that never should have been.

**SINCE Russia’s full-fledged invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the geopolitics of the Middle East and North Africa region have been undergoing an upheaval. Most recently, Palestine has applied to join the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) bloc alongside seven Arab countries: Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait and Morocco. At the Johannesburg summit in August, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt - along with Iran, Ethiopia and Argentina - were formally declared as the next entrants into BRICS.**

Yet while Palestine wasn't invited to the summit, and is not among those who will join the grouping soon, BRICS could help bring - and in some ways already is bringing - the issue of Palestinian statehood to the international centre stage. After years of hiatus due to the abandonment of the peace process by the United States and Israel, and Washington's emphasis instead on brokering peace normalisation deals between Israel and Arab states, this is welcome. For while BRICS's support for Palestine is not new, the recent context is. The Johannesburg summit concluded with a declaration calling for direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine based on international law and the Arab Peace Initiative, towards a two-state solution, leading to the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine. The text echoed that of the Palestinian-Chinese Strategic Partnership signed in June. Days before the summit, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa emphasised support for Palestine's liberation.

The Palestinian leadership has expressed support for the BRICS's call to start direct negotiations with Israel and without US involvement. The message to the US? The era of American unilateralism is ceasing. Signifying the revival of the issue through the Arab Peace Initiative and backing the BRICS' steps, Saudi Arabia appointed its first-ever non-resident ambassador to Palestine and consul general in Jerusalem without consultation with Israel. On the Israeli side, Prime Minister Benjamin

## Is BRICS really the lifeline Palestine needs?

Ahmed Alqarout

Netanyahu is expected to visit China in the coming few months partly to discuss a China and Russia-led negotiation process with the Palestinians. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas visited China in June where he met Chinese President Xi Jinping who iterated China's commitment to supporting Palestinian statehood. Netanyahu also visited China in May.

In effect, BRICS countries are tacitly rejecting the US Abraham Accords-driven stance on Palestine. This is not to say they do not support the accords, but rather that they believe that the absence of a clear and sustainable position on resolving the Palestinian issue will end the possibility of the two-state solution. Second, Palestine's warmer ties with BRICS come amid a growing domestic crisis engulfing the very existence of the Palestinian Authority (PA). The Palestinian decision to drop the US as a mediator is a demonstration of worsening ties with Washington and Israel. It reveals a belief by the Palestinian leadership that Washington and Israel's newly elected far-right government have decided to weaken or dismantle the PA and abandon the peace process in pursuit of annexing the occupied West Bank. Over the past few years, the US has cut aid to the PA substantially. Israel continues to withhold tax revenues and the imposition of other sanctions that have negatively affected the PA's ability to spend its budget leading to salary payment delays and reductions for public servants and reduced public services. This has resulted in deteriorating public support for the PA and growing discontent with the status quo.

The lack of a political horizon coupled with economic pressures and a domestic legitimacy crisis are increasing the internal tensions for the PA. Young Palestinian fighters are increasingly confronting what they see as excessive settler violence and encroachment on their communities in the occupied West Bank. This has led to clashes between them and the PA, which under the Oslo Accords, conducts extensive security coordination with Israel, including preventing armed attacks. All of this is forcing the PA to seek in BRICS a vehicle for negotiations that can help it restore lost domes-

tic support. Given the continuing Russian influence in Syria, and the central Chinese role in mediating a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Palestine is also seeking to capitalise on the intensifying great power competition in its neighbourhood to kickstart a new, non-aligned peace process.

That is easier said than done. For the moment, BRICS support for Palestine remains mostly rhetorical. BRICS, collectively or as individual nations, has not declared any increase in aid for the PA. Nor has the grouping given Israel any financial incentive to Israel to entice it to join negotiations. There is no question of the BRICS nations involving themselves militarily in the conflict. The BRICS bloc appears, for the most part, unwilling to tackle the key cause of the Palestinian crisis - Israel's illegal occupation and policies that global human rights groups have described as apartheid. Against that backdrop, it is natural to wonder if the solidarity extended by the BRICS to Palestine will stay symbolic and on paper. Israel's overwhelming military and economic power, coupled with the unwavering support of the US that it has, mean that it will not be under any serious pressure to engage in direct negotiations. Israel also has strong ties with individual BRICS members - especially China, India and Russia. And there is no evidence to suggest that they will risk those ties to push Israel into talks.

The Palestinian national divide will also hinder the potential success of any negotiations even if they do occur. Still, it is important to remember that BRICS's commitment to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in its nascent stage. Now, the bloc must be ready to deploy hard or soft power tools if it is to meaningfully emerge as a player capable of prodding Israel into direct negotiations. Without that, BRICS will not be able to prevent Israel from annexing the West Bank and abandoning the two-state vision. And a test could arrive for the grouping before too long. Hamas and Israel have been preparing for a multifront war which both claim will change the regional balance of power. In such a scenario, BRICS could play a greater and more meaningful role in ending the conflict. The question is: Does it really want to?

Aljazeera

# The Windsors are all about forgiving and forgetting - when it comes to Prince Andrew

DO all "fusses" die down Eventually, permitting the fussee to return to life largely as they knew it, while the public scratches its head and tries to recall precisely which scandal/multimillion dollar out-of-court settlement/Pizza Express branch it remembers them from? The question arises after the return of Prince Andrew to the royal tableau, driven last weekend by Prince William to church near Balmoral, where the Windsors are currently all gathered (with just the two notable exceptions). I must say I do think that William and Andrew missed a trick not doing carpool karaoke as they rocked up to Crathie Kirk, either to Take That's Back for Good, or the Gary Puckett and the Union Gap's jailbait classic Young Girl.

Even so, how fitting that this staged sighting should occur on the very weekend crowds of people descended on Scotland in the hope of spying the Loch Ness monster. You can imagine being there when the cry went up. Oh my God - there it is! Look - you can see its head and neck in the front seat, right next to Prince William! Quick, get a photo, even if "friends" will later claim it's fake because its fingers aren't chubby enough. Anyhow: welcome back, Uncle Andy. Typically, royal rehab efforts move at a more glacial pace. For example, the plan to make the British public fall back in love with Prince Charles after his divorce from

Princess Diana and her tragic death was slated by courtiers to take years of slow and painstaking image work. But the picture of Andrew being driven last Sunday by William and Kate, the family's biggest current stars, comes merely one year after the Duke of York finally settled a civil claim against him by Virginia Giuffre. Giuffre was treated as a sex slave by Andrew's friend, the late international paedo trafficker Jeffrey Epstein, and long alleged that she was sexually assaulted by Andrew three times when she was 17. The duke denies everything, and his reported £12m settlement did not contain an admission of guilt.

And there he was on Sunday, next to William up front, with Kate relegated to creasing her outfit on the back seat. As indicated, these royal stagings are so often wordless scenes, so we don't know the full story behind this picture. I suppose it's remotely possible that when the family were having breakfast that morning, Prince William clocked the presence of Prince Andrew and hissed: "You need to spend a very long time in church indeed. In fact, you know what? I'll drive you there myself." Possible, but vanishingly unlikely. Andrew was, after all, pictured exiting the church at the same time as the others, instead of lingering for two or three hundred years after. So this is not some accident, some last-minute instance of Andrew calling shotgun, or of the

Waleses suddenly sighing: "OK, fine, jump in the front and we'll give you a lift." Please remember that we are dealing with a family widely held to telegraph fantastically complex and significant messages merely by their choice of brooch or jacket colour, which the public is duly invited to parse for meaning. So sticking a disgraced dimwit in the front seat of your car is not just some random thing that happens of a Sunday morning. This is a planned and choreographed moment, with William as the designated driver.

Even so, doing Andrew's reintegration at Balmoral does feel particularly on the nose. Attendance here connotes the most particular closeness to the royal family's wellspring of ineffable majesty and authority - which is perhaps why Epstein himself jumped at an invitation to Balmoral back in 1999, when Andrew had him and Ghislaine Maxwell come and visit the castle. This is the version of staying somewhere at Her Majesty's pleasure that doesn't involve sewage in your cell or being allowed to take your own life because it would be better all round for your Famous Men WhatsApp group. (And yes, I do know that Jeffrey and Ghislaine were in New York jails so not technically Her Maj's guests, but you get the point.) There were probably 500 things Epstein would have objectively preferred doing than yomping round Balmoral, even if 499 of

them were illegal. But the frisson of tightness with the royal family was worth journeying to the deck of the famously spartan log cabin on the estate, and posing with Maxwell on the same bench on which the late Queen Elizabeth II was frequently pictured (even if she wasn't in residence at the castle at the time). Epstein kept the photo of him and Ghislaine at this cabin in his Manhattan mansion, which was eventually raided by police. Thereafter it was presented as evidence in Maxwell's trial, as part of prosecutors' attempts to show that she and Epstein were "partners in crime".

The third wheel on that trip was Prince Andrew himself. Presumably he took the photo? That's a typical question with those three, with the notorious picture of Andrew with his arm round the hip of the then 17-year-old Virginia Roberts - while Ghislaine smirks in the background - often believed to have been taken by Epstein himself. Quite why the Prince and Princess of Wales wish to form a new photo trio with Uncle Andy is a mystery. But it comes across as the clearest signal that Andrew's "banishment" from the family is the type we could all live with: one where you get a free mansion, don't have to work, and all your significant relties appear to believe your side of the story and are happy enough to give you a helping hand. The comeback will be greater than the setback - or at least of commensurate size.

The Guardian

Daniel Treisman

announced, many Russians are likely to believe Prigozhin's demise was punishment for his disloyalty. To those who suspect foul play, the real puzzle will be why it took so long.

Putin's tough image had taken a hit when he let the Wagner mutineers off with little more than a reprimand. Will the mercenary leader's fiery end now restore the president's reputation? Perhaps. To some well-schooled observers, the delay made sense. In July, CIA Director William Burns told attendees at a national security conference, "I think Putin is someone who generally thinks revenge is a dish best served cold..."

If Putin had a role in Prigozhin's fate - and that's far from proven - there was an argument for carefully laying the groundwork before dealing with the Wagner leader himself. The Kremlin had three urgent tasks to complete before that. First, Putin's investigators would want to carefully assess the extent to which members of the armed forces and security services supported Prigozhin. Few local troops did anything to resist the mercenaries' advance on Moscow.

Then, to avoid turning Prigozhin into a martyr, the Kremlin - if it were involved - would need to discredit and embarrass him, cutting into his popularity in right-wing nationalist circles, before acting to punish him. Perhaps most important, Putin's men needed to gather up the control networks of the Wagner operation in Africa. From

Mali and the Central African Republic to Mozambique and Sudan, Prigozhin's agents were providing security to dictators, guarding oil wells and diamond mines, and shaping public opinion through propaganda outlets. Russia's covert presence in Africa - largely a Wagner venture - was one of Moscow's few recent foreign policy successes.

Yet, if the plan all along was to strip Prigozhin of his reputation, armed supporters, and African assets before holding him to account, the actual course of events still looks dysfunctional. Investigations were started within the armed forces, and probably within the security forces as well. A few generals have been relieved of their commands. Even General Sergei Surovikin, aka "General Armageddon," the commander of the Russian aerospace forces, who was known to be on good terms with Prigozhin, was dismissed in recent days.

Still, there is little evidence of any systematic purge to root out those unhappy with the military leadership. In the midst of the ongoing war in Ukraine, such a purge would be dangerous. But so is not conducting one. Although Surovikin disappeared from public view right after the mutiny, it took the Kremlin two months to make the actual announcement that he had been removed. And rather than bring in a loyal outsider, the authorities replaced Surovikin with his own chief of staff, Viktor Afzalov.

# Prigozhin seemed to be living on borrowed time

AGNER chief Yevgeny Prigozhin - who the Russian aviation agency confirmed was a passenger on board a plane that crashed on Wednesday evening - seemed to be living on borrowed time. Ever since June, when the warlord led his Wagner mercenaries in an uprising against his country's military commanders, the Kremlin's soft response had bewildered longtime Russia watchers.

Within the span of a few hours, Russian President Vladimir Putin switched from accusing Prigozhin of "treason," and labeling his mutiny "a stab in the back of our troops and the people," to allowing Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko to promise Prigozhin amnesty and a base for his fighters. To those familiar with Putin's vindictive streak, something did not add up. (Others who challenged Putin have wound up poisoned, imprisoned or falling out of windows.) The details of Wednesday's plane crash are still murky. Video of the plane debris taken at the purported crash site in the western Tver region of Russia matches the plane registered to Prigozhin. Meanwhile, some are even speculating that the warlord might have faked his death in order to disappear. The true cause may not be known for some time, if ever.

In his first public comments on the plane crash, Putin expressed his condolences to the families of the victims on Thursday and called Prigozhin "a man of difficult fate" who had "made serious mistakes in life." Whatever official version is

The effort to discredit Prigozhin got off to a colorful start with pictures of Prigozhin's opulent St Petersburg mansion broadcast on state TV. Besides gold bars and millions of dollars worth of cash, the photographs showed a bizarre collection of wigs and other disguises that seemed better fitted to a "two-bit criminal" than to a selfless patriot. But that was it. Any effort to paint Prigozhin as wealthy and corrupt stopped almost immediately, and no new financial investigations were announced. Much of the money and weapons seized from his house by police were even reportedly returned to him, according to the Washington Post, citing an anonymous St. Petersburg businessman.

As for unwinding Prigozhin's control over his Africa networks, the warlord was even allowed to mingle with political and media contacts from the Sahel at the Russia-Africa summit in St. Petersburg in July. And in what might have been the last straw for Putin, Prigozhin released a video on Monday of himself standing in what looked like an African desert, boasting of his men's exploits. He claimed to be "making Africa even freer." If the goal was to destroy Prigozhin systematically while taking over his assets, the results look mixed at best. It would not be surprising if many in the Kremlin felt frustrated at the mercenary leader's seeming ability to wriggle free from any constraint. That was the context in which he apparently took his last flight on Wednesday.

CNN

# Why Nepal’s SC wrong on child marriages

**IN a recently released judgement, the Supreme Court of Nepal held that an adult man who had married a minor female and engaged in sexual intercourse was not guilty of rape or kidnapping, but only of child marriage. The top court overturned a high court verdict that had imposed an 11-year jail term on the man. Instead, the Supreme Court reduced his prison term to six months with a fine of 10,000 Nepali rupees (\$75).**

This is a dangerous decision because it dramatically dilutes the concept of statutory rape, under which an adult indulging in sexual intercourse with a minor is guilty of rape, irrespective of whether the act was carried out with consent. The court decided that statutory rape, which is a part of Nepal's criminal code, wouldn't apply in this case because the couple were married. The woman, who was not even 16 years old at the time of the marriage, has insisted in her testimony that she and the man were in love, and hence got married. The couple belong to different castes, and the girl has alleged that this was the reason why her mother had complained about the child marriage. The court appears to have accepted this argument, holding that the man was not guilty of kidnapping, hostage-taking or rape. Some have called this a progressive judgement - a

triumph of love over law - that's a worrying reading of the implications of this ruling. By proclaiming that sexual intercourse between the couple would not be considered rape, the court has erased the distinction between a child and an adult - just because they are married.

Not only is that ironic, since child marriage itself is illegal, but worse, such a judgement could encourage more child marriages in Nepal if the message goes out that this would reduce the punishment for other offences such as statutory rape. In a country where 38 percent of women in the age group of 20-49 were married before the age of 18, this could be disastrous. There is a reason why children are not allowed to vote, sign contracts, work, enlist in the military, use alcohol or tobacco, or indeed, get married - a lack of mental maturity and authority over their lives to take such decisions with the full awareness of the consequences and the readiness to face them. It's a reason that Nepal itself recognises in its statutory rape as a crime in section 219(2) of its Criminal Code, 2017, and by the fact that in Nepal, the legal age for marriage is 20, higher than the 18 that is usual in many other countries.

It is the reason why a minor girl's adult partner should not be exempted from statutory rape charges solely based on the child's

consent to marriage and sexual activity. While Nepal should be lauded for having a higher age for marriage than many others, the Supreme Court judgement underscores a difficult reality: in Nepalese society, child marriage is not really considered a serious issue. Nepal's government has endorsed several international instruments including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its two optional protocols, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which prohibit early marriages and make the state responsible for acting against the practice.

The country's National Strategy to End Child Marriage, 2015, aims to eliminate child marriage by the year 2030. The National Child Policy, 2012 has a long-term goal of creating an environment in which children of all classes and communities can fully enjoy their rights. In light of this, the marriage, in this case, should have been declared void, and relying on Nepal's criminal code, the case should have been treated as one of statutory rape due to the victim's age. The legal system can serve as a potent tool for influencing children's lives for the better. Judgements like this risk doing the opposite, and could lead to children's rights being infringed upon - rather than being protected. Nepal's children deserve better.





# ICCI calls for focusing on agriculture sector

## — to boost its exports to over USD 10 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari on Thursday said that despite being an agricultural country, Pakistan had to import agricultural commodities worth over USD 5 billion per annum.

However, by focusing on better development of the sector, Pakistan can increase the exports of the agricultural sector by over USD 10 billion per annum, which will help revive the economy.

He said that the Fruits & Vegetable Market of Islamabad was located at an important place as it supplied fruits & vegetables to twin cities, KPK, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and many other areas.

The president urged to develop the market on modern lines that would

help promote business activities and exports of this sector.

He said this while talking to a delegation of the Market Committee of I-11/4 Fruits and Vegetables Market that visited ICCI led by its Chairman Sajid Abbasi.

Safdar Siddique Vice Chairman, Naeem Azam Khan, Agha Siraj Durrani, Ch. Ilyas, Sohail Chaudhry and others were in the delegation.

Ahsan Bakhtawari briefed the Chairman Market Committee about the key issues of the traders of Fruits & Vegetable Market, I-11/4, Islamabad and stressed for their early solution.

Speaking on the occasion, Sajid Abbasi, Chairman, Market Committee, Fruits & Vegetables Market said that he was a public

representative and the Market Committee would be used in the best interests of the people and the traders.

He said that all possible efforts would be made for the better development of the fruits & vegetable market.

He said that encroachment of sabzi mandi would be removed soon and the sanitation system would also be further improved.

He said that providing fruits and vegetables and other commodities to the citizens of Islamabad at reasonable prices was a key priority for him.

He said that for the convenience of the citizens, he would try to arrange fruit, vegetable and meat shops in every market of the Capital on the pattern of flower shops in collaboration with ICCI.

He said that he would solve the problems of the sabzi mandi in collaboration with ICCI.

Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Leader ICCI stressed that the auction platform in the sabzi mandi needs better development, sanitation system needs further improvement and cold storages need reduced power tariffs and hoped that the Market Committee would address these issues.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that Sajid Abbasi is a public representative and hoped that he would deliver up to the expectations of the people.

He said that the Market Committee should take ICCI in the loop on important matters of traders to resolve issues with mutual consensus.



**PESHAWAR:** Vice president PCCI Amin Ullah Baig talking regarding electricity bills and problems of business community.

## US dollar keeps making records

ISLAMABAD (INP): The US dollar made another record against Pakistani rupee in the interbank market on Thursday with the local currency continuously sinking with no help in sight to arrest its slide.

According to the information collected from forex traders, the local currency shed 59 paisas against the greenback, taking it to a historic high of Rs305.04 in the morning session.

On Wednesday, the Pakistani rupee had closed at a record low of Rs304.45 against the US dollar in the interbank market.

Caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamshad Akhtar had told the Senate Standing Committee on Finance meeting presided over by Senator Saleem Mandviwalla that the caretaker government does not have the fiscal space for subsidies but added that the proposal was under consideration to withdraw electricity to privileged ones.

The Senate committee expressed concerns over the growing exchange rate fluctuations, unprecedented electricity cost, and 22 percent interest rate that are making it challenging for current businesses to survive and thrive.

## PFC team left for Russia

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level delegation of Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) led by its Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq Thursday left for Russia with the primary objective of exploring investment opportunities, fostering joint ventures and collaboration within the furniture industry.

In a press statement CEO PFC said that the council is a representative body of the country's vibrant furniture sector, and has taken this initiative with the intention of promoting economic collaboration and mutual growth between two great nations.

Recognizing the strengths and potential of both the Russian and Pakistani furniture industries, this delegation seeks to facilitate partnerships that will not only enhance trade but also foster cultural exchange and strengthen the diplomatic ties that bind both countries, he added.

He said as we move forward, he believes that such collaborative efforts will not only contribute to the economic well-being of both countries but will also act as a testament to the enduring friendship between Pakistan and Russia.

## ‘Rupee depreciation fuels inflation concerns’

LAHORE (INP): Senior Vice President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) Dr. Hanif Mughal said on Thursday that continuous depreciation of the rupee was leading to rise in inflation.

The State Bank of Pakistan will have to increase the interest rate soon in an effort to stop the fall of the rupee, which will further affect the public and businesses, he said.

In a statement issued here, Dr. Hanif Mughal said that the rupee has gone down from the limit that was demanded by the IMF, the effects of which can be seen in every sector, including electricity bills.

If the fall of the rupee was not stopped, businesses will suffer, inflation will flood the country, and poverty will increase, he added.

The SVP PEW said that the IMF wants to reduce the value of the rupee by 20% in 2024, but the situation is worsening beyond that, which is worrying.

The business community's confidence is currently at its lowest ebb, while negative statements from top officials are fueling the fire.

He noted that interest rates are already at record levels, which have tripled banks' profits. And if it is increased further, industry and trade will suffer tremendously.

This will increase unemployment, and the investment, which is already very low, will completely disappear.

Due to the depreciation of the rupee, people are buying dollars, which further increases demand for US currency and has a negative

impact on the overall situation.

Dr. Hanif Mughal said that electricity rates have been increased by 90% in four years, while people are now paying 32% of the bill as taxes, but no action is being taken against those who brought the country to this state.

At the moment, the government is reporting inflation up to 25%, but according to Steve H. Hanke, an American economist and professor of applied economics at Johns Hopkins University, it is actually 50%, which is increasing rapidly.

In these conditions, when the industrial sector is falling rapidly and other businesses are struggling to survive, increasing exports to eighty billion dollars is nothing but a political slogan.

## South, Southeast Asian mango cooperation highlighted at meeting

BEIJING (APP): In an aim to deepen collaboration and share technological advancements, experts from nine countries including China and Pakistan, along with one international organisation, participated in the Second Annual Meeting of the South and Southeast Asia Mango Network held on August 29 and 30 in Baoshan city in China's southwest province of Yunnan.

At the meeting, experts shared the latest developments in mango research and industry practices and presented their latest research findings and shared experiences from their respective countries.

Certificates of membership were presented by Gong Jiashun, the Vice President of the Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Sciences (YASS), to the members of the network, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Thursday.

He acknowledged the contributions of the network to the regional mango industry and expressed hope for a brighter future for mango enterprises through continued collaboration.

Experts at the meeting agreed to expand cooperation, emphasising the importance of joint research projects, capacity

building, and joint publication of scientific results. This collaboration aims to address common challenges in the mango industry, such as the lack of superior varieties and quarantine pests.

Organised by the Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Sciences (YASS), the “Belt and Road” South and Southeast Asia Crop Regional Science and Technology Innovation Institute, and the South and Southeast Asia Agricultural Science and Technology Joint Research Centre, the two-day conference focused on “Exchange and Cooperation for Green

Development”. The event was aimed to promote steady advancements in technological innovation, talent cultivation, and green development.

Established on September 29, 2021, the Network comprises 21 member units from countries including China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Iran, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam etc. The establishment of this regional mango research organisation in South and Southeast Asia marks a significant step in collaborative mango research and development.

## EFU Life wins ‘Brand of the Year Award 2022’

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: EFU Life Assurance Limited, the leading private life insurance provider in the country, has been conferred with ‘Brand of the Year Award 2022’ for the Best Life Insurance Company by The Brands Foundation. The Company has been awarded this title 11 times. The award was received by Mr. Mohammed Ali Ahmed - Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, EFU Life.

The ‘Brand of the Year Award’ is a distinctive and premier recognition for the brand recognized as a champion in the industry on current market position and consumer preference. It honors a single brand in each category every year which has excelled across



all selection criteria.

The Company is committed to building the brand and is actively working

towards increasing the insurance penetration in Pakistan, in line with its vision of ‘no household

should remain uninsured’, by offering comprehensive and affordable financial planning solutions.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Six ships namely, MSC Madeleine, Maersk Pelepas, Maroudio, Sea Hazel, Nymph and Southern Robin scheduled to load/offload Container, Cement, Fuel oil, Palm oil and Chemicals, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Oil Terminal and Engro Terminal, respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile four more ships, TRF Kirkenes,

Banglar Agragoti, N-Orhan and Lusail carrying Palm oil, LPG and LNG also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

A total of 10 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of a containers ship, MSC Madeleine sailed out to sea on Thursday (today) morning, while five more ships, Okyroo, Calypso Gas, Cetus Cachalot, Maersk Pelepas and Southern

Robin are expected to sail on same day afternoon.

Cargo throughput of 151,471 tonnes, comprising 104,009 tones imports Cargo and 47,462 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 4,701 Containers (2,776 TEUs Imports and 1,925 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are twelve ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five

ships, Sea Hazel, New Liberty, Bochém Pegasus, N-Orhan and Lusail & another ship, Frankfurt Express scheduled to load/offload Fuel oil, Corn, Chemicals, LPG and LNG are expected to take berths at Grain Terminal, Oil Terminal, Engro Terminal, Gas Terminal and Elengy Terminal respectively on today. While another containers ship, SSL Mumbai is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Friday.

## Tokyo shares close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks advanced Thursday on the back of Wall Street gains.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 0.88 percent, or 285.88 points, to 32,619.34, making the four-day winning streak. The broader Topix index rose 0.80 percent, or 18.62 points, to 2,332.00, drawing closer to renewing the high for the year.

Investor sentiment improved after US stocks rose while fresh Chinese data also came out slightly better than expected, IwaiCosmo Securities said in a note.

The Nikkei's rise above the psychologically important 32,500 mark also encouraged more buyers to

push the index higher, the brokerage said.

“Recent strength of Tokyo buying has encouraged buying particularly from foreign investors,” Chihiro Ota of SMBC Nikko Securities.

China's production activity data slightly contracted but showed an improvement from the past and came out better than the market's expectation.

“It improved the market's spirit,” IwaiCosmo said. Overnight, Wall Street closed higher as US private sector hiring data came in softer than expected, while second-quarter GDP growth was revised down to 2.1% on an annual measure.

This reinforced hopes that the US Federal Reserve

may take its foot off the pedal with interest rates.

Among major shares, Toyota rose 2.38 percent to 2,515 yen after a report said the automaker set an annual production target of its Toyota Lexus brand at around 1,020 vehicles for this year, a record high number.

Nissan added 0.75 percent to 620.8 yen. Honda rose 1.12 percent to 4,703.

Seven & i Holdings was up 0.88 percent at 5,981 yen as it sold its department store business to a US fund. The union at Seibu Ikebukoro store in Tokyo staged a rare strike in response to the sale.

Nintendo rose 0.77 percent to 6,267 yen. Sony Group added 0.91 percent

to 12,145 yen. Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing added 1.39 percent at 33,480 yen.

The dollar fetched 145.84 yen, against 146.23 yen in New York last Wednesday.

**European stock markets steady, euro down on inflation data**

Europe's main stock markets mostly steadied on Thursday as traders focused on European and US inflation data and what it means for future central bank policy on interest rates.

The annual rate of inflation in the eurozone remained unchanged in August as there was a smaller drop in energy prices, the EU's official sta-

tistics agency said.

Consumer prices reached 5.3 percent this month, although there was also a slowdown in the rise of food and drinks costs.

Analysts said the data increased the chance of the European Central Bank deciding against a further hike to interest rates in the eurozone next month.

That in turn weighed on the euro.

Later Thursday sees the release of the Federal Reserve's preferred gauge of inflation, the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, which will be followed by readings on factory activity and non-farm payrolls for August.

## Exports to Afghanistan increase 32.79% in July

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to Afghanistan witnessed an increase of 32.79 per cent during the first month of the current financial year (2023-24) as compared to the exports of the corresponding month of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

The overall exports to Afghanistan were recorded at US \$42.173 million during July 2023 against exports of US \$31.757 million during 2022, showing growth of 32.79 per cent, SBP data

revealed. Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to Afghanistan went down by 3.39 per cent during the month under review as compared to the exports of \$43.657 million in June 2023, the SBP data revealed.

Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed a decrease of 4.55 per cent in the first month, from US \$ 2217.049 million to US \$ 2116.030 million, the SBP data revealed.

On the other hand, the imports from Afghanistan

into the country during the month under review were recorded at US \$ 0.905 million against US \$3.822 million last year, showing a decline of 76.32 per cent in July 2023.

On a month-on-month basis, the imports from Afghanistan into the country surged by 100 per cent as compared to zero imports during June 2023, according to the data.

The overall imports into the country witnessed a decrease of 23.50 per cent, from \$5516.960 billion to US \$ 4219.969 billion, according to the data.



**KARACHI:** Raja Nabeel Kayani, Mian Muhammad Anwar Pasha, Shafiq Malik and Rana Irshad Ali in a group during visit to Grace Wellness Center.









## In brief

### Dengue tally reaches 202 cases

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi's dengue total tally had reached 202 cases with the arrival of 16 more patients during the last 24 hours. District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control (DCEPC), Dr Sajjad Mehmood, said that eight patients had arrived from the Potohar town Urban, five from Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi, and one of each from Chaklala Cantonment and Kahutta areas. He informed that 149 patients had been discharged after recovery while 66 patients were admitted to the district's health facilities out of which 36 confirmed cases. During the last 24 hours, he said that the district administration had registered 99 FIRs, issued tickets to eight, sealed two premises, and a fine of Rs 39,000 was imposed against the violations of dengue SOPs. The health officer asked the residents to adopt precautionary measures as September was crucial for dengue spread. He said that the number of dengue patients had increased gradually in Rawalpindi during the week, adding five to six patients were admitted daily last week which had increased to 15 to 18 patients daily this week.

### Australian HC calls on Jilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins Thursday called on Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani and discussed matters relating to mutual interests. During the meeting the high commissioner briefed the foreign minister on Pakistan-Australia ties in multiple domains. The foreign minister emphasized importance of regular dialogue under existing mechanisms & high-level visits to give impetus to bilateral ties.

### EU Ambassador calls on Ahmed Irfan

ISLAMABAD (APP): European Union Ambassador Dr. Riina Kionka on Thursday called on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Ahmed Irfan Aslam and discussed mutual interest issues. The ambassador felicitated Ahmed Irfan Aslam on assuming the charge of the federal minister, said a news release. The minister said that Pakistan had always given importance to its bilateral relations with the European Union and GSP Plus status.

### AIOU announces admissions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Thursday announced to initiate admissions for the second phase of semester Autumn 2023 from Friday (Sept 1). Programs offered in this phase included Associate degree in Arts (BA General), Associate degree in Commerce (B.Com), Associate degree in Education, BS (ODL) programmes, 1.5, 2.5 and 4-year B.Ed programme, Postgraduate diploma and certificate courses, said a news release. The admission forms and prospectus of all the programmes are available on the university website. Admission forms for the Associate Degree programs (BA, B.Com) and B.Ed program are now available at the University's Regional Offices and SWIFT Centers throughout the country. All the necessary information is available in the prospectus and the deadline for admissions is October 17. Candidates may call the university helpline at 051-111 112 468 for further information.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi chairing the 23rd meeting of the Board of Governors of the National School of Public Policy, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Ethiopian Envoy receives National Peace Award

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Peace and Justice Council (NPJC) has honoured the Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to Pakistan, Jemal Beker Abdula, with the National Peace Award for his dedicated efforts in laying the foundation and fostering closer ties between the two brotherly nations.

The award ceremony took place during the National Peace Seminar which was held at the Islamabad Club, said a news release on Thursday.

NPJC Chairman Mian Abdul Waheed presented the award to Ambassador Jemal Beker, lauding his commitment to strengthening the bilateral relations between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and Pakistan by bridging the gap between people, institutions, and

business communities. He said Ambassador Jemal Beker played a crucial role in advancing fraternity and brotherhood between the two heirs of civilizations. Addressing the ceremony, Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula extended gratitude to the NPJC for acknowledging his endeavours to enhance friendship and partnership between the two countries. He emphasized peace as a shared value between Ethiopia and Pakistan while highlighting their significant role as major contributors to the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission to ensure peace, stability and prosperity across the globe.

Both nations, he noted, played pivotal roles in preserving global peace and security, with their people working hand in hand to save lives worldwide.

The ambassador also paid tribute to Pakistan's

brave sacrifices in the pursuit of international peace and security, stating that the nation's unwavering commitment to this cause would forever be remembered. He also noted Ethiopia's own contributions, with a considerable number of Ethiopian soldiers sacrificing their lives for international peace and security under the blue helmet of UN peacekeeping missions in different countries. Jemal Beker underlined the historical importance of Ethiopia as a land of justice, referring to the teachings of the Holy Prophet (SAW) in this regard, as well as the refuge provided by King Nejaishi to Muslims in the past. Stressing the significance of peace for human prosperity and development, he emphasized that in the fast-changing global landscape, peace and security were more crucial than ever.

## ANF seizes 37 kg drugs in five operations; arrests three

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 37 kg drugs and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He informed that in an operation at a courier office in Rawalpindi, ANF recovered 25 grams weed from a parcel sent from UK.

In another operation at a courier office in Hyderabad, 10 kg hashish concealed in water coolers and hotpots, was recovered. Hashish was smuggled from Peshawar.

In third operation, 17.5 kg opium, con-

cealed in secret cavities of a vehicle was recovered near Panni. During the operation, two accused residents of Turbat were also arrested.

The spokesman informed that in fourth operation, 450 grams Ice drug was recovered from a local resident arrested near Charsadda Road Peshawar.

ANF while conducting fifth operation recovered 9 kg hashish concealed in Zakha Khel area of Khyber for smuggling.

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

## Islamabad police to address security issues in markets, parks

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad police would address critical security concerns in markets as well as public parks and review the proposal for the installation of surveillance cameras there. In a recent gathering, CPO Safe City/Traffic Shoaib Janbaz met with IT experts from the Islamabad Capital Police and officials from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to address critical security concerns in public parks and markets.

The primary focus was on the efficient identification of stolen or lost mobile phones using IMEI numbers. According to the police spokesperson, the

meeting's objectives encompassed devising robust strategies to trace mobile phones linked to thefts and criminal activities through IMEI numbers, alongside revamping outdated recording systems.

Notably, the IT experts emphasized their ability to differentiate between original and altered IMEI numbers, even if an individual attempts to change it and use the device elsewhere.

During the meeting, CDA officials underscored the necessity of collaboration with Islamabad Capital Police to modernize public parks. Suggestions included the installation of surveil-

lance cameras in public parks, market areas, and both internal and external roads. Monitoring would be conducted through the Safe City Command and Control Center. Furthermore, there was a proposal to place emergency buttons in poorly lit areas.

Additionally, CPO Safe City/Traffic proposed the incorporation of identification card records for individuals visiting public parks into the new system.

CPO Safe City/Traffic conveyed unwavering cooperation with the officers and organized a visit to the Safe City Command and Control Center to further solidify these initiatives.

### SP Potohar holds 'Khuli Kutcheri'

RAWALPINDI (APP): Superintendent of Police (SP) Potohar, Muhammad Waqas Khan on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani held a 'Khuli Kutcheri' here on Thursday in Police Lines Headquarters to address grievances of the people.

According to a Police spokesman, Police Officers under Punjab's open door policy were holding 'Khuli Kutcheries' to provide relief to the citizens.

He informed that the SP issued directives to the officers concerned to take action and submit a report on the complaint submitted by the citizens in 'Khuli Kutcheri'. The SP on the occasion said, the 'Khuli Kutcheries' were being held to provide the citizens immediate relief and addressed their complaints besides it also helped improve standards of policing. The SP issued orders to the officers concerned to complete inquiries and send reports within given time frame.

He said, all-out efforts were being made to ensure dispensation of speedy justice purely on merit to the people and improve service delivery standard. The spokesman informed that the SPs were holding 'Khuli Kutcheries' to provide relief to the citizens.

### CTP launch operation against parking rules violators

RAWALPINDI (APP): The City Traffic Police (CTP) Thursday launched an operation against parking rules violators and issued 83 challan tickets to vehicles and motorcycles.

The tickets were issued following the directions of the Chief Traffic Officer, Tamoor Khan to ensure a smooth flow of traffic in the city. According to the CTP spokesperson, the grand operation against encroachments was launched on various thoroughfares particularly in the New Town circle including Rehmanabad, Sixth Road and adjoining areas under the supervision of Incharge New Town Circle. The CTO issued orders to take strict action against the encroachment mafia, violators of no parking, and those obstructing the flow of traffic in the city. He said the encroachments and no parking violations cause traffic jams and affect the beauty of the city.

## Health minister calls on President

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, Dr Nadeem Jan called on President Dr Arif Alvi here on Thursday and discussed matters relating to national health in the country.

The president emphasized special focus on issues of breast cancer, growing population and mental health in the country.

President Alvi and the minister discussed the proposals regarding nutrition, rehabilitation of differently abled persons, and mental and physical weakness among

the children.

The president stressed the need to provide consultation facilities to improve mental health in the country.

He said the basic treatment of mental health could be provided with the help of modern technology, Artificial Intelligence and Chatbot. The minister commended the president's special focus and guidance for eradication of polio in the country.

President Alvi appreciated the overall services of the Dr Nadeem Jan in the health sector.

## Swiss Government announces Excellence Scholarship for Pakistani Students

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Swiss Government has announced the "Excellence Scholarship for Pakistani students" for the academic year 2024-25, according to the Higher Education Commission. Each year, the Swiss Confederation awards Excellence Scholarships to promote international exchange and research cooperation between Switzerland and over 180 other countries.

The research scholarship (research fellowship, PhD, Postdoc) is available to post-graduate researchers in any discipline (who hold a master's degree is the minimum qualification required) who are planning to come to Switzerland to pursue research or further studies at doctoral or post-doctoral level.

The Swiss Government

Excellence Scholarships are aimed at providing education opportunities to the young researchers from abroad who have completed a master's degree or PhD and foreign artists holding a bachelor's degree. The recipients are selected by the awarding body, the Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS).

The prospective applicants can study in the categories including one-year Research after Masters, 03-year PhD after Masters, one-year Post Doctorate.

The interested candidates may also request for all necessary information and requirement regarding the scholarship by sending an email to [Islamabad.scholarship@eda.admin.ch](mailto:Islamabad.scholarship@eda.admin.ch).

The deadline for submit-

ting the application to the embassy is September 30 while more information is available through the [web link](https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/education/scholarships-and-grants/swiss-government-excellence-scholarships.html) : <https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/education/scholarships-and-grants/swiss-government-excellence-scholarships.html>.

The applications are subject to preliminary selection by the relevant national authorities and/or the Swiss diplomatic representation.

The short-listed applications are then assessed by the Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS), which takes the final decision.

The FCS assesses scholarship applications according to three criteria including candidate profile, quality of the research project or artistic work and synergies and potential for future research cooperation.

## NA Speaker pays rich tribute to Syed Ali Shah Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Thursday paid rich tribute to Syed Ali Shah Gilani, Kashmiri Hurriyat Leader on his 2nd death anniversary, which is being observed on 1st September every year.

In a message resounding with solemnity and admiration, the Speaker underlined that Syed Ali Shah Gilani remained an icon of unwavering dedication to Kashmiri freedom. He also said that he had been a steadfast advocate for the inalienable right to self-determination for his compatriots. He also applauded the unmatched sacrifices

he offered in the pursuit of Kashmir's freedom. He also said Gilani has become a model of exemplified fearlessness and unflinching commitment to championing the rights of the Kashmiri people. The Speaker said that his legacy transcended the constraints of time and would continue to kindle the fervor of succeeding Kashmiri generations, inciting them to relentlessly strive for their birthright of freedom. Furthermore, the Speaker also urged the United Nations to play a proactive role in resolving the longstanding Kashmir issue in accordance with its resolutions.

## Pakistan's climate paradox: low emissions, high vulnerability to climate effects

ISLAMABAD (APP): Country Coordinator of the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF), Syed Shahid Kazmi emphasized that Pakistan's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is minimal, but the country ranks among the top 10 nations that have been severely impacted by climate change.

Talking to APP here on Thursday, Kazmi pointed out that due to the changing climate, Pakistan frequently faces natural disasters, including devastating floods. In times of crisis, he said non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide substantial support to the Pakistani government.

He said that in 2022, the social sector extended a helping hand by contributing \$350 million, with \$270 million allocated for

regions affected by floods. Kazmi highlighted the vital role played by the social sector in assisting 15 million flood-affected individuals through provisions like food, non-food items, shelters, healthcare, and education. He mentioned that when the Pakistani government advocated for climate justice on the global stage, the social sector echoed this message through International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) situated in various countries' capitals. "This stance received backing from INGOs during the Geneva Donors Conference as well", he added.

In the year 2022 alone, he said that PHF had been engaged in 400 projects, with 250 of those projects focused on flood responses.

He said that ongoing development work continues in districts of Sindh, Balochistan, and Punjab, encompassing areas like health, education, and food security. He said that INGOs not only foster global knowledge and expertise but also empower local communities through financial aid and service delivery. Kazmi also highlighted that as of 2023, INGOs have generated over ten thousand jobs. He said that tireless efforts of the social sector have benefited approximately fifteen million recipients of humanitarian aid. He said that funds from the social sector positively impact fifteen to twenty million individuals annually, covering various demographics such as children, women, and transgender individuals.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior, Sarfraz Ahmad Bugti chairing meeting regarding anti smuggling measures.



### Afghan boy saves three lives

KABUL (Agencies): A neurologist from the Khatam Al-Anbia Hospital in Iranshahr, Iran, said a five-year-old Afghan boy, living in Iranshahr, has saved the lives of three Iranians after his family agreed to donate his organs. According to Iranian media, the neurologist, Dr. Nasirzada, said: "This child suffered brain death due to falling from a height (from a tree) and was hospitalized in Khatam Al-Anbia Hospital in Iranshahr for five days and nights.

### Water supply projects started

PAISA (Xinhua/APP): Work on two water supply networks has begun in east Kapisa province, and the networks will provide clean drinking water to over 415 households, a statement of the Provincial Department for Rural Rehabilitation said Thursday. The statement added that the investment in the projects totals 5.79 million Afghanis (about 73,300 U.S. dollars), and people in the Nijrab district of Kapisa province will have access to hygienic water.

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

## Large gathering of scholars, elders held



KABUL (Agencies): A large gathering of religious scholars and influential people from Kabul province was held in the Loya Jirga tent, with senior officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) also attending.

Addressing the gathering, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi said that the opponents of the Islamic Emirate should take lessons from the past because uniting with the enemies of the country and asking them for help is not in anyone's interest.

"We should learn from the past that foreigners do not build our homeland, invaders do not build our homeland," Amir Khan Muttaqi said.

Abdul Salam Hanafi, the administrative deputy of the prime minister, said: "More than 70 percent of the government's budget

and expenses used to be provided by foreigners. Alhamdulillah, after the end of the occupation in the hands of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, all government institutions were reorganized."

The Acting Minister of Interior said that after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, violence in the country has disappeared and there is one leadership in all of Afghanistan. Sirajuddin Haqqani considered maintaining unity important for the survival of the existing system.

"If we think the truth, Afghanistan spent 43 years or half a century in crisis and jihad. We are now thinking about celebrating Eid right away. Eid cannot be celebrated right away... The work of war and jihad was easy, it brought sorrows, but rebuilding requires a lot of

patience and great interaction," Haqqani said.

Din Mohammad, the head of the Ulema Council of Kabul province, said: "I ask you to make a pledge that we will be sincere with our leaders and if someone rebels against them, are we all ready to confront him or not?... We will defend this system with our lives and property."

In conclusion, the Ulema Council of Kabul Province issued a 12-point declaration and called for people's support for the Islamic system and asked the Islamic Emirate to engage with the international community within the framework of national and Islamic interests.

The declaration also called on the international community to recognize the ground realities and engage responsibility with the IEA.

### 50,000 Afghan refugees return home

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation of Afghanistan has announced that around 50,000 Afghan refugees returned from Iran in the past month.

The Ministry said on its social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, that these refugees came to the country through the Silk Road and Islam Qala border crossing.

According to the Ministry's officials, 46,838 refugees returned via the Silk Road and 2,652 through the Islam Qala border crossing.

The Ministry said that 569 returnees have been introduced to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) office for assistance.

According to the report, the trend of expulsion and return of Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan has recently increased.

The Ministry officials claimed that hundreds of Afghan migrants return from Iran daily, and in the past two years, this number has exceeded two million refugees.

Moreover, the Ministry has announced that over 800,000 Afghan refugees returned from Iran in the past year.

Following the Taliban's resurgence, numerous migrants leave Afghanistan due to economic hardships, persecution, security risks, and discrimination.

As reported, approximately six million Afghan refugees are in Iran through legal channels and unauthorized means.

## Union: Medicines still being smuggled into Afghanistan

HERAT (Agencies): The Pharmaceutical Services Union in Herat says that medicines are still being smuggled into Afghanistan despite efforts made to clamp down on the practise.

According to union officials, these drugs are identifiable, so the price difference is noticeable in the markets. Consumers meanwhile have complained that some pharmacies are charging exorbitant prices for medicines.

"Instead of cooperating with the people, it is noticed that the price of medicine has increased in pharmacies, or companies supply the same medicine under their own name," Ahmad Fardin Jami, a resident of Herat, says.

"The Directorate of

Public Health should have a regular plan to monitor pharmacies," Abdul Wahid Mufaker, a resident of Herat, says.

The Union of Pharmaceutical Services in the western zone believes that the pharmaceutical market is still not fully controlled, that drug smuggling continues, and different companies import drugs with special marks, so the price difference in the drug market is noticeable.

"The laws are still not implemented 100%. The facilities of the relevant bodies are not so extensive to control fully. There are pharmaceutical unions all over Afghanistan, and this chain of unions controls the market to some extent, but the unions are not executive

offices," Abdul Karim Shirzad, the head of the Pharmaceutical Services Union in western zone, says.

However, the Public Health Directorate emphasized that serious actions have been taken against those who overcharged or had license issues.

"The Public Health Directorate has always matched the documents that the drug company bought with the price it sells in its monitoring programs, but we also witnessed cases where violations indicating instances of overcharging have taken place," Mohammad Asif Kabir, Deputy Director of Public Health in Herat, says.

Some medicine sellers say that prices in the global markets are changing.

"Currently, the drugs that are sold in the market are original and high-quality drugs from reputable international companies," Fereydoun Tokhi, the lawyer of the Pharmacists Association of Herat city, says.

"There are two arguments here, one is that people say that the drug has become expensive. The next is that if we consider globally, raw materials have become expensive all over the world," Khalid Ahmad Ghafouri, a drug importer, says.

There are hundreds of pharmacies and drug importing companies in Herat, and the issue of price difference has always been a serious problem for the people.

## ARA meets with Iranian team over uplift of Afghan network

KABUL (Agencies): The General Director of the Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA) has met with the heads of various Iranian companies to discuss the development of Afghanistan's railway network, ARA said Thursday.

The railway authority said the meeting took place and detailed discussions around the collective investment by the companies were held.

Bakht ul-Rahman Sharafat, the head of ARA said at the meeting that the organization was hoping to attract foreign investment.

"Afghanistan Railway Department invites all companies to invest in railway projects, in which the department cooperates with them and makes the necessary coordination," he said.



At the same time, Sharafat stated that work on the second phase of the fourth section of the Khaf-Herat railway line is a priority for ARA and a priority.

During the meeting, representatives of the consortium of companies presented information about their companies, services and expertise. The companies

represented covered a wide spectrum of supply and services for the railway sector, from construction through to line maintenance and management.

## MoHE 'clustering, revising' 22 master's degrees



KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) announced the clustering and revision of twenty-two master's degrees in the fields of engineering and agriculture.

According to Abdul Rauf Farahi, the head of curriculum at the Ministry

of Higher Education, the review was carried out in collaboration with ministerial authorities and professors.

"In these curricula, we have used what is needed for our society and that progress has been made in those fields in other world societies, and we also used

what can be adapted in our country," Farahi noted.

"With our cooperation, we were able to include many cases that are really important in this cluster," said Azim Jan, a representative of sectorial ministries.

Some academics who were present when these

programs were clustered and revised said that some of these programs had been removed and other programs had been added to the academic curriculum.

"They added an important subject which is hydrogeology," said Aminullah Faqiri, university professor.

Meanwhile, Neda Mohammad Nadim, the acting minister of higher education, promised to address all problems in the educational field.

"We have told the chancellors of the universities in all zones to specify your needs, and whatever your needs are in the laboratory and book department, we are ready to cooperate," Nadim continued.

This comes as the Ministry of Higher Education said that all this ministry's curriculum would be revised, and that master's and doctoral programs have begun at the nation's institutions.

## Khoram Sarbagh residents complain limited telecom service

AIBAK (Pajhwok): Some residents of the Khoram Sarbagh district in northern Samangan province say without the district centre telecommunication service is not functional in other areas.

Khoram Sarbagh district is situated 37 kilometres from Aibak, the provincial capital, and according to local sources nearly 50,000 people lived there who have limited access to telecommunication service.

Abdul Ghafoor, one of the teachers and local elders, told Pajhwok Afghan news the lack of access to telecommunication service in some villages of the district created problems for the people.

He said: "During the

previous regime, we asked the local government to solve this problem several times through petitions, but they did not pay attention at all".

He said thousands of families are deprived of access to telecommunication services in the villages of Dakhelzo, Chaharnag, Kende Kalan, Pas Hesar, Zir Meng Pas Hesar, Sar Meng Pas Hesar.

Samaruddin a young boy also complained the limited access to telecommunication services in villages for many years.

He considers lack of access to telecommunication services as the biggest problem.

Mouluddin another resident complain about lack of

access to telecommunication services for many years and have been more problems.

They ask the local government to solve this problem and provide them full access to telecommunication and internet services.

District Chief Maulvi Muhammad Feroz Farooqi, Khoram Sarbagh District chief, confirms to Pajhwok Afghan News that more than 6,000 families are completely deprived of access to telecommunication services.

Afghanistan Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (ATRA) administration officials said that two sites of MTN Telecommunication Company were working

and Salam Telecommunication Company also activated in the district.

Atra Administration Director Gulbuddin Younsi said after the establishment of the IEA government Salam Telecommunication Company site which was burned, has been reactivated.

He said that they have received the residents' complaints and the office has sent a written letter to central office for problem solution.

He said with growing population there was increase in the demand for improved telecommunication service, adding that efforts were underway to address these problems.

## Resilient Afghan women's voice: Echoes of empowerment amid adversity

KABUL (Khaama Press): The resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan has raised significant concerns about the future of women and their rights. During its previous rule (1996-2001), the Taliban administration brutally suppressed women's freedoms, depriving them of their rights entirely in the 1990s. Though this oppression did not last more than five years, two decades were insufficient to rectify it. With the Taliban's return, women are again facing severe restrictions. The question is: If this situation persists, how many years and generations of Afghan women will suffer, and will there be an opportunity for recovery?

Nadia Anjuman, a poet who lived in Herat during the 1990s, described her life and fellow citizens under the prevailing ideology:

"I am an Afghan girl, and I forever lament." While her life did not provide equal opportunities, her enduring poems left a significant impact. Among these verses, one that has become a beacon for women over the past two decades and has shifted the discourse towards gender equality in

Afghanistan is: "Though I am silent for long, the melody does not fade from my memory. Because every moment, through whispers, I express the words from my heart. I remember that cherished day when I broke open the cage; I'll raise my head from this isolation and sing joyously. I am not a weak willow that shakes from every wind. I am an Afghan girl, and I forever lament."

While Nadia was a victim of the ignorance that engulfed Afghanistan, her poetry continued to thrive after her passing, becoming a guiding light for women and men who defined their mission as "gender equality" and "democracy" over the last two decades.

Not only Nadia but many other girls and women sacrificed themselves to pursue justice through this path. Ultimately, the achievements of these twenty years carry the essence of their firm determination.

The return of an Islamic regime of the Taliban's kind to Afghanistan (the same ideology that victimized Nadia and countless others like her) has become dire for all women

and men. The twenty-year accomplishments across all domains essential to human life and civilization have been almost destroyed.

It is unbelievable, however, that women have been banned from work, education, and leisure. Women are prevented from travelling without male companions. Recreational parks, attractive natural spots, educational and learning centres, baths, and beauty salons are closed to women. Afghanistan's geography has become profoundly male-oriented, yet despite the inhumane environment and promotion of misogyny, women are challenging all imposed restrictions. For instance, a 26-year-old girl's effort to establish a restaurant in the heart of Kabul echoes Nadia's verse: "I am not the weak willow that shakes from every wind."

Samia Bahari, a 26-year-old girl living in Kabul, recently founded a restaurant in the New Kabul City square and has helped several girls who have been deprived of work and education to work in the restaurant. The interesting point about the

restaurant is that Samia named it "Shama" (Candle) and designed its environment as "exclusive for women and girls." In this safe environment initiated by Samia, women and girls can gather and, for a brief period, distance themselves from the humiliation and pain imposed upon them.

Samia is among the employed girls in a restaurant where men are not allowed and only women and girls are served. Millions of women and girls have become confined to their homes due to various dangers that threaten their lives outside.

In a corner of this restaurant, a young lady named Saadiyah welcomes and serves customers with a happy demeanour but an unsettled spirit. Saadiyah says, "My father is an addict. He lives on the streets. I have no brothers but five sisters; two sisters and I work at the candlelit restaurant to support our family financially."

Saadiyah worries about her sister's future. She is concerned that her sister's fate might follow a similar path. She prays for her sister to have the opportunity to pursue education and

live in better circumstances. Her younger sister is in fifth grade; half of her day is spent at school and the other half, alongside Saadiyah, at the restaurant. Saadiyah needs more supporters to encourage her sister's education, provide her with books, and celebrate her successes in her educational journey. Nevertheless, she does not let her sister face these challenges alone.

On the other hand, some young girls are busy serving the restaurant's guests on the other side. Each has either dropped out of university or been deprived of continuing their studies for various reasons. They have been away from pen and paper for a long time, and instead, they work with plates and utensils daily.

Samia Bahar, the restaurant manager, says, "People always grow within restrictions. Without limitations, there is no pressure, and it is this pressure that shapes a person." She describes the purpose of starting this restaurant as assisting girls and women who need places like "Shama" (candle).

In addition to the dishes customers order, the restaurant serves cold and



hot beverages (tea and coffee) to make the patrons self-sufficient in not having to go elsewhere.

Samia states, "The main goal of creating this women-exclusive restaurant was to find a way to help women and girls who have faced psychological and emotional challenges after recent restrictions." On the other hand, the women who visit this restaurant are happy and content with its atmosphere.

A young lady enjoys a coffee with her friend and

speaks about her interest in the restaurant, saying, "I was surprised when I came to this restaurant and realized that from the manager to all the employees, they are all women." According to her, "This is truly excellent. In times when restrictions have encompassed everywhere for women, a young lady, by establishing this restaurant, demonstrates that women can work and contribute in society just like men."

The restaurant is equipped with computers

embedded with valuable and exquisite books. Patrons can utilize the advantages of being in the restaurant. Samia states that the "Shama" restaurant's environment is designed to empower anyone who enters there. It is as if no force is superior to the individual, and only they can make decisions. This space, which instils a sense of autonomy in the minds and behaviours of the visitors, is entirely contrary to the atmosphere imposed on women outside.



# President for imparting quality training, problem solving skills to civil servants

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday underscored the need to impart quality training to civil servants and equipping them with essential skills such as problem-solving, fast decision-making, and efficient management of resources to ensure good governance and improve service delivery.

He said that bureaucracy must be more responsive to people's needs and focus on solving problems being faced by the country in different sectors, particularly health, education, and community services.

The president expressed these views while chairing 23rd meeting of the Board of Governors (BOG) of the National School of Public Policy (NSPP) here at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary Establishment Division, Inamullah Khan Dharejo, Rector NSPP, Dr Ijaz Munir, and other members of the BOG. During the meeting, the president urged the need for making collaborative efforts with different national and international organizations and educational institutions to conduct research and provide

quality training to civil servants.

He said that NSPP should consider providing short-term training courses and updating its training modules along modern lines to equip bureaucrats with the latest skills and improve their efficiency and performance.

The president further stated that NSPP should deal with cases of inefficiency and misconduct as per rules, besides taking steps to ensure transparency and accountability within NSPP and its subsidiary institutions. The meeting was briefed about the implementation status of the decisions taken in the 22nd meeting of the BOG, besides discussing various administrative and financial matters of NSPP.

It was informed that the National Development Internship Program (Policy) had been adopted and the process of hiring the internees would be finalized with the assistance of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives.

The meeting also agreed to expedite the process of appointment of Dean of the National Institute of Public Policy.

## Pakistan Polio Programme launches next phase of female polio worker initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): Women healthcare workers from the Pakistan Polio Programme met Melinda French Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in a virtual roundtable to share updates and launch the next phase of the 'Female Frontline Worker Co-Design Initiative'.

Participants shared their experiences from this initiative, which aims to systematically listen to and learn from female frontline workers to help solve final barriers to ending polio in Pakistan. They also shared their ideas and aspirations for the future, after Pakistan has successfully achieved this national goal, a news release on Thursday said.

"My self-confidence has grown from participating in this initiative because it is so meaningful that the Polio Programme has taken the time to listen to our experiences and ideas, and that some of the solutions we proposed are being adopted to improve campaigns as well as our work experience," said one frontline worker.

"I'm so motivated to hear that we'll be supported by the programme in building up other skill sets so we

can be ready for other opportunities after polio is gone." Pakistan's National Emergency Operations Centre for Polio Eradication (NEOC) has approved select co-designed solutions from this process and will incorporate them into upcoming immunization campaigns, community engagement efforts, and other day-to-day operations this year.

Examples of approved recommendations include a revitalized training package on key topics requested by frontline workers, improved campaign tools and materials, and communications strategies that highlight the value of female polio workers.

In addition to implementing co-designed solutions to accelerate programmatic progress, the Pakistan Polio Programme will begin the next phase of this initiative by "upskilling" female polio workers in other capacities and helping them prepare for potential future opportunities after polio eradication. The Minister of National Health Services Regulation & Coordination, Dr Nadeem Jan, also expressed the

Government of Pakistan's commitment to supporting female polio health workers, including in exploring future livelihood pathways for a post-polio world.

"Polio health workers have served Pakistan with incomparable dedication. Whether braving extreme weather conditions or navigating volatile security situations, they have remained steadfast in their commitment," Dr. Jan said, adding, "It is our duty to not only appreciate their invaluable services but also ensure that this excellent workforce continues to contribute to the country after polio ends.

This is why the new phase of the Female Frontline Workers Initiative is very important for us to build their capacities in different areas and ensure they have good job opportunities in the future."

French Gates praised the initiative's progress and the programme's commitment to supporting female workers through the next phase of this work. "These women are the heart of the polio eradication programme and ensuring their expertise and solutions are at the centre of eradication efforts is critical," she said.

## PTI chairman allowed to speak to his sons on phone

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A special court on Thursday granted permission to former prime minister to talk to his sons on phone.

Former premier Imran Khan, who is in judicial custody till September 13 in cipher case, has been incarcerated in Attock prison since his arrest on August 05. The PTI chief, through his lawyers Umair Niazi and Shiraz Ahmed approached special court seeking permission to talk to his sons Qasim and Sulaiman on the telephone.

"I want to talk to my sons Qasim and Sulaiman Khan on the telephone or WhatsApp," he pleaded, which was approved by the court.

A special court on Wednesday extended the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman's judicial remand till September 13 in the cipher case. Judge Abual Hasnat Zulqarnain, who heard the case at the Attock District Jail under Official Secrets Act 2023, issued the decision in the case of the missing cipher, a classified state document.

Hearing of the case took place at the Attock Jail following approval by the Law Ministry amid security concerns expressed by the Interior Ministry. Former premier Imran Khan has been imprisoned in Attock jail since his conviction in the Toshakhana case on August 5.

The first information report (FIR) was registered on August 15 under the Official Secrets Act. It was registered on the complaint of Home Secretary. Former prime minister Imran Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi were named in the report, while names of former principal secretary Azam Khan and former planning minister Asad Umar were also mentioned.

According to the report, action also will be taken against Azam Khan and Asad Umar after the authorities reached the conclusion that they were also involved in misusing the classified documents.

### Protests against inflated bills continue in Pakistani, Azad Kashmir cities

ISLAMABAD (PPI): People organised protests and observed shutdowns and wheeljam strikes on Thursday against the hike in electricity bills in different areas of the country including Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

In Jhelum Valley, AJK, people observed a complete shutdown and wheel-jam strike against the hike in electricity bills. The business centres remained closed, and the people threatened to march on Islamabad in case their demands were not met.

A shutdown, along with a wheel-jam strike, was observed in Neelum Valley too. Protest rallies were organised in different areas of the valley. In Okara, traders observed a complete shutdown on the call of Anjuman-e-Tajiran Oraka. The traders, along with the civil society members, set up a protest camp at Gol Chowk against the hike in electricity bills.

In Sialkot, traders and civil society members staged a protest outside the Geppo City Circle office. The protesters shouted slogans against the government and set electricity bills on fire.

In Lalumasa, people protested on GT Road on the appeal of Anjuman-e-Tajiran and raised slogans against the government over the hike in electricity bills. In Kharian, people's protest against the inflated electricity bills entered the sixth day.

Women, traders and civil society members participated in the protest and demanded that the government withdraw the increase in electricity bills.

### Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia reject China's latest South China Sea map

MANILA (Reuters): The Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam have rejected as baseless a map released by China that denotes its claims to sovereignty including in the South China Sea and which Beijing said on Thursday should be viewed rationally and objectively.

China released the map on Monday of its famous U-shaped line covering about 90% of the South China Sea, a source of many of the disputes in one of the world's most contested waterways, where more than \$3 trillion of trade passes each year. The Philippines called on China on Thursday "to act responsibly and abide by its obligations" under international law and a 2016 arbitral ruling that had declared the line had no legal grounds. Malaysia said it had filed a diplomatic protest over the map.

China says the line is based on its historic maps. It was not immediately clear whether the latest map denotes any new claim to territory. China's U-shaped line loops as far as 1,500 km (932 miles) south of its Hainan island and cuts into the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. "This latest attempt to legitimise China's purported sovereignty and jurisdiction over Philippine features and maritime zones has no basis under international law," the Philippine Foreign Ministry said.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, Dr Nadeem Jan, calls on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## ECP holds consultative meetings with TLP & PML-Q

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday held separate consultative meetings with delegations of two major political parties including Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) and Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q). Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Mr. Sikandar Sultan Raja chaired the meetings attended by members of the Election Commission, Secretary ECP and other senior officers.

From Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, Chaudhry Rizwan, Muhammad Qasim, Zia ur Rahman, and Chaudhry Azhar attended the meeting. Meanwhile, from Pakistan Muslim League (Q), Muhammad Tariq Hussain, Ms. Farukh Khan, Ghulam Mustafa, Rizwan Sadiq, and Hafiz Aqeel Jalil were present.

The TLP delegation briefed the Election Commission that in Islamabad's Local Government elections, the government increased the number of Union Councils from 50 to 101, and later to 125. They viewed this as a negative move, which leads to the cancellation of elections, and expressed their reluctance to grant such authority to the government. They suggested that union councils in Pakistan should be empowered for a better local government system. They also emphasized the need for removal of deceased voters from voter list and opposed the appointing of Returning Officers from Judiciary due to their limited focus on elec-

tion affairs.

They further said that the media covers major political parties extensively during elections, but Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan does not receive equal coverage. They proposed improvements in election monitoring to ensure transparency and expressed their willingness to complete elections within 90 days, even if constituency delimitation is required. They stressed the need to enhance peace and stability before the elections. The Chief Election Commissioner stated that under Article 140-A, the Election Commission has the responsibility to conduct elections in accordance with the local government laws of the provinces. Provincial governments are not willing to hold elections. When the Election Commission completes the arrangements for holding elections, changes are made to the laws. The same happened in Islamabad. Furthermore, the Election Commission ensured the removal of deceased and duplicate voters from electoral rolls by obtaining data from NADRA and the Union Council, making the process more accurate. This process is ongoing on a permanent basis.

The Election Commission will also monitor electoral campaigns and expenditures systematically. For this purpose, all arrangements have been completed.

The Chief Election Commissioner mentioned that to

ensure peace and security, the services of the police, along with the armed forces and other law enforcement agencies, will be obtained. The Election Commission will also consult with parties on the code of conduct. The draft of this will be sent to political parties before the consultation for feedback so that a better code of conduct can be established for future elections. The Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner stated that legislation is needed on some party proposals, and the Election Commission will play its role in this regard, expecting political parties to do the same.

The Pakistan Muslim League (Q) delegation endorsed the Election Commission's decision on the new constituency delimitation. They emphasized that a new delimitation was necessary based on the released census results to ensure fairness.

Both parties expressed confidence in the Election Commission's capabilities and commitment to transparent elections. The Chief Election Commissioner assured that the ongoing schedule for delimitation are supposed to be completed within 120 days by December 14, 2023 however ECP is trying to squeeze the duration of process and after that would immediately announce election schedule. The Chief Election Commissioner also reiterated the Commission's dedication to transparent and lawful constituency delimitations and elections.

## CJ expresses concern over release of persons involved in Rs 49 Crore corruption

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial expressed concern over the release of Rs49 crore corruption cases by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

A three-member bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, headed by the Chief Justice, heard the case regarding the NAB amendments on Thursday.

During the hearing, advocate Makhdoom Ali Khan argued that there were issues regarding the retrospective application of the NAB amendments.

He pointed out that there is no prohibition in the Constitution against the retrospective application of legislation, and Justice Muneeb had previously declared in his ruling that existing laws cannot be declared null and void.

The Chief Justice of Pakistan questioned why the amnesty scheme was exempted from the NAB Ordinance. Furthermore, he requested arguments related to the NAB amendments concerning benamidar (unnamed) references.

The definition of benamidar has been changed in the NAB amendments, and now it is mandatory for the prosecution to prove whether benami property was created through corruption.

Makhdoom Ali Khan, referring to Justice Mansoor Ali Shah's decision in the Khurshid Shah case, emphasised that not every unnamed (benamidar) transaction is a corrupt transaction. He stated that if allegations of corruption are being made, the prosecution must provide evidence to prove the corruption. Accusing the benamidar is not

enough; the prosecution must prove whether the person is a benamidar or not. The Chief Justice of Pakistan added that it is essential to determine whether the accused's source of income is consistent with his assets. If the source of income is unknown, it cannot be proven as a crime. Another concern raised during the hearing was the transparency of the plea bargain process for cases involving amounts less than Rs50 crores. The Chief Justice remarked that it is alarming that individuals involved in Rs49 crore corruption cases can escape punishment from the NAB.

Makhdoom Ali Khan explained that the limit of Rs50 crore was set for NAB cases based on observations from various superior courts. The hearing was adjourned until tomorrow.

## Aneeq condemns any individual distorting to essence of faith

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed has condemned anyone who distorts the essence of faith, stressing the need for unity among all religions.

"We are brothers, and in our presence, any attack on a place of worship is a grave injustice," said the Minister while addressing an Interfaith Harmony Conference organized by the Ministry at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, here, the other day. He shed light on the recent incident in Jaranwala, saying such incidents should never have occurred.

However, he pointed out that there had been even worse atrocities against various communities in neighbouring India. "Those who lost their lives in India among the Christian brethren are not just Christians but also our brothers," he passionately expressed.

He further reiterated that Pakistan was not merely a 'State' but an Islamic

Republic. "We are the people of the book, and we are supplicants of the One God," he proclaimed.

Aneeq extended his message of inclusivity by highlighting the divine nature of all scriptures, including the Torah, Psalms, Bible, and the Holy Quran. "These are all divine revelations, the final one being the Quran," he affirmed.

Turning his attention to the tragic incident in Manipur, India, where over 150 Christians lost their lives, the minister clarified that no Christians had been harmed in Pakistan. "We believe that what happened in Jaranwala should never have happened," he stated emphatically.

He applauded the collective stance of the nation alongside their Christian brethren in the face of the Jaranwala tragedy. "We are a resilient nation, and our protest speaks volumes," he declared. In his closing remarks, Aneeq urged that while any incident should be prevented, it must be handled through legal

means. "We must not take the law into our own hands," he emphasized, leaving the audience inspired and reflective.

Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, promoting the values of peace, tolerance, and unity, shed light on the pivotal message of Islam for a harmonious world. Ashrafi who is also the President of the International Interfaith Harmony Council, emphasises the importance of religious cohesion, stressed that the teachings of Islam inherently advocate for peaceful coexistence among all communities.

The people allegedly involved in the Jaranwala incident were not representative of anyone but extremism and terrorism, he maintained. He highlighted the noble character of Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him, underscoring how his life served as a beacon of guidance for individuals from all walks of life.

## Pakistani rupee plummets to new record low

KARACHI (NNI): The US dollar made another record against Pakistani rupee in the interbank market on Thursday with the local currency continuously sinking with no help in sight to arrest its slide.

According to the State Bank of Pakistan, the local currency plunged by Rs1.09 against the greenback, taking the dollar to a historic high of Rs305.54 at the end of the day. On Wednesday, the Pakistani rupee had closed at a record low of Rs304.45 against the US dollar in the interbank market.

Caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamshad Akhtar had told the Senate Standing Committee on Finance meeting presided over by Senator Saleem Mandviwalla that the caretaker government does not have the fiscal space for subsidies but added that the proposal was under consideration to withdraw electricity to privileged ones.

## Royal Navy Ship visits Pakistan for bilateral exercise

KARACHI (APP): The Royal Navy Ship HMS LANCASTER with embarked helicopter, visited Karachi and conducted bilateral exercise WHITE STAR IV with Pakistan Navy on Thursday.

Upon arrival at Karachi Port, Royal Navy Ship was warmly received by senior officials of Pakistan Navy and British High Commission, a Pakistan Navy news release said.

On completion of the port visit, Pakistan Navy Ships TAIMUR, ASLAT, Pakistan Navy Maritime Patrol Aircraft, helicopters and Pakistan Air Force (PAF) fighters carried out two-day bilateral exercise with Royal Navy Ship and helicopter.

The bilateral exercise covered a range of advanced operational drills encompassing major facets of maritime warfare, operations, live gunnery firing and defence against asymmetric threats.

The exercise is aimed to further enhance collaboration through mutual exchange of experience and improve interoperability between the two navies.



Exercise WHITE STAR is a testimony of PN's resolve to contribute towards regional peace and stability and enhance interoperability. The visit of Royal Navy Ship and conduct of exercise has further strengthened the ties between two navies.

Concurrent to ship's visit,

Deputy Commander Combined Maritime Forces Commodore Philip Edward Dennis RN also visited Pakistan and called-on senior Pakistan Navy officials. During the calls, matters of mutual interest and avenues of future collaboration to enhance regional maritime security were discussed.