

### Cop shot dead in Khyber

#### F.P. Report

BARA: A police constable was killed when an unknown assailant entered his house and fired at him in Kanday Wirankhel area in Bara tehsil of Khyber district on Wednesday. Police said the constable was at home when someone knocked at the door adding that when the cop opened the door, the assailant instantly shot him dead and fled the scene.

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### CIA Police officer killed

DASKA (INP): A Crimes Investigation Agency (CIA) police officer was killed in a crossfire with criminals in Daska early on Wednesday. According to police, the officer, identified as ASI Shahzad Cheema, was part of a CIA police team that raided a hideout near Sukkur canal. The suspects opened fire on the police team, triggering a cross-fire. ASI Cheema was fatally wounded in the crossfire.

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# SIFC to continue working: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said that the recently-instituted Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) would continue to work as before to lay the foundations to fast-track foreign investments, particularly from Saudi Arabia.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki, who called on him, highlighted energy, infrastructure, agriculture, IT and manpower as potential sectors of cooperation. The Saudi ambassador congratulated the prime minister on assuming office and conveyed the best wishes and greetings on behalf of the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques, as well as Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, and the people of Saudi Arabia.

The prime minister said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoyed historic and deep-rooted ties. He thanked the Saudi government for its consistent support for Pakistan's economic stability and development. He particularly mentioned the large number of Pakistanis working in Saudi Arabia and requested the Saudi side to continue to extend all possible facilitation to them.

Prime Minister Kakar lauded the vision of the Saudi leadership and said that Saudi Arabia could always count on Pakistan as its trusted and reliable partner. Ambassador Nawaf reiterated that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan were bound together in a fraternal relationship, which was characterized by mutual trust and understanding, and close cooperation on all bilateral and regional issues of common interest.

**Looking forward to advancing trade, investment ties with UAE:** Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said that he looked forward to working with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on advancing bilateral cooperation in various fields, especially trade, invest-

ment and energy.

The prime minister, in a meeting with the UAE Ambassador Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, who called on him here, expressed gratitude for the UAE's support for Pakistan's economic and financial stability. The ambassador conveyed the greetings of the UAE leadership to the prime minister on his assumption of office.

Prime Minister Kakar thanked the UAE government for the warm congratulatory messages and said that Pakistan and UAE enjoyed historic and deep-rooted fraternal ties. He also wished the UAE success in hosting the COP28 Summit later this year. The prime minister also emphasized the important role played by the Pakistani diaspora in the UAE and sought the UAE government's continued support to them.

**Ex-Senator Saif Magsi calls on PM:** Former Senator Saif Magsi on Wednesday called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. Saif Magsi congratulated the prime minister on assuming the office and expressed good wishes. The prime minister thanked Saif Magsi for the good wishes.

Meanwhile, former Provincial Minister Mir Sarfraz Chakar Domki and Agha Shakeel Durrani called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

The two leaders congratulated the Caretaker PM on assuming the office and extended best wishes to him, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The caretaker prime minister thanked both the leaders for their best wishes.

Moreover, Nawab Jangayz Khan Marri, former provincial minister of Balochistan, called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. During a meeting, Nawab Jangayz Marri congratulated the prime minister on assuming his office and expressed his good wishes, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The caretaker prime minister thanked Nawab Marri for his good wishes.

## PPP demands ECP to announce election date

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has demanded the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to announce the general election.

As per details, the PPP leader Faisal Karim Kundi said that his party wants free and fair elections across Pakistan on same day. He said that ECP should not delay the announcement of election date and the election schedule must be issued immediately.

The PPP leader said that transfer and posting before the election schedule and delimitation process is beyond their understanding. The caretaker government should hold free, fair and transparent elections so that no one can question their credibility, he added.

**“General elections cannot be held in 90 days after census approval”:** National Assembly (NA) Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said on Wednesday that the general elections cannot be held in 90 days after the 2023 census approval.

NA Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf in a statement said that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) would announce the election schedule after completing the new delimitation under the 2023 census data. Regarding the recent Supreme Court ruling, Ashraf clarified that the Review of Judgments and Orders law was not against the top court and it had not curtailed the apex court's powers. “It would be better if the Supreme Court (SC) reviewed the law.”

He said that the president had returned universities' bills unsigned. He added that the PDM-led assembly carried out better legislature in a short period. He urged the stakeholders to find possible solutions to the issues via political dialogues after fresh elections. A day earlier, PML-N leader and former interior minister Rana Sanaullah said that the upcoming general elections will be held in February 2024.

The former interior minister said that the nation will listen only to what PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif says. The date of his return will be either by the party or Nawaz Sharif himself, he added.

## SCBA challenges CCI's decision

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) on Wednesday challenged in the Supreme Court (SC) the Council of Common Interests' (CCI) decision to hold next general elections under new delimitations.

In its petition, the SCBA sought annulment of the CCI's decision. Making the federal government, the CCI, four provincial governments and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) respondents in its petition, the SCBA prayed to the apex court to order the ECP to announce the election date immediately. The CCI had approved the results of the 2023 digital census 11 days ago, making it almost certain that general elections may not be held this year as fresh delimitations, which may take months, have now become compulsory.

Although some of the ruling allies, including the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), earlier opposed holding the next general elections under the fresh census, it remained silent at the CCI meeting. Besides that, although Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar had claimed the new census results were “unanimously” approved, the government-allied Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) did not attend the CCI meeting.

It is feared that the passage of the new census could delay elections due to new delimitations, which require an amendment to the constitution.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, Nawaf Bin Saeed Al-Maliki meeting with Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

# 100 held after several churches, homes vandalised in Jaranwala

FAISALABAD (Agencies): More than 100 people have been arrested for their involvement in riots over alleged blasphemy in Faisalabad's Jaranwala during which members of the Christian community were targeted, the Punjab interim government's spokesperson confirmed.

In a statement, Punjab government spokesperson said that the provincial government has also ordered a high-level inquiry into the incident. Earlier, interim Punjab Information Minister Amir Mir had said that “dozens of people who disturbed peace” in the area were detained.

In a statement, the minister said that the violence in Jaranwala was done under a “well-thought-out conspiracy”. “There was a plan to disturb the peace by inciting public sentiments. After the desecration of the Holy Quran, the angry protesters reacted strongly,” Mir said, adding that the situation in Faisalabad is fully under control now.

The provincial info minister also said that the investigation into the tragic incident of the desecration of the holy book is underway at a fast pace, adding that anyone who tries to take the law into his hands would be arrested immediately.

The security of churches, he said, has been tightened and a large num-

ber of law enforcers have been deployed. More than 6,000 policemen and Rangers personnel are present in the affected areas, he added. The minister also shared that in today's incidents, no one was injured nor was there any loss of life.

Mir went on to say that the Punjab chief secretary and Inspector General of Punjab Police have reached Jaranwala on the instructions of caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi. A crowd vandalised several churches and setting scores of houses on fire after accusing the Christian community of its members over alleged blasphemy.

The incident took place in Jaranwala town of the industrial district of Faisalabad, police spokesman Naveed Ahmad said. A mob had attacked the community after two Christians were accused of blasphemy, he said. Dozens of people were blocking a nearby highway. The local administration has called in paramilitary troops to handle the violent crowd and bring the situation under control, according to a government order seen by media.

A Christian leader, Akmal Bhatti, said the crowd had torched at least five churches and looted valuables from houses that had been abandoned

by their owners after clerics made announcements in mosques inciting the mob. Several social media posts showed some churches on fire as well as houses and belongings.

Former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif also slammed the incident, saying: “What is happening in Jaranwala is sad and disturbing.” “There is no place for violence in any religion. All religious places, Books and personages are sacred and deserve our highest level of respect. I urge the government to take action against the culprits,” the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president added. The former premier also appealed to the “religious scholars from all schools of thought to come forward and condemn the reprehensible actions”. “Such madness can't be allowed. Pakistan belongs to all religious minorities,” Shehbaz said on X.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari also condemned the incident. “Horried to hear about the attack on Churches in Jaranwala, Faisalabad, violating the sanctity of places of worship is absolutely unacceptable. The administration must ensure the safety of the Christian community and their Churches,” Bilawal said on X.

# US assures caretaker govt of full support

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, while congratulating Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on his appointment as caretaker prime minister, assured that Washington will continue to advance with Islamabad its “shared commitment to economic prosperity”.

“Congratulations to new Pakistan Interim Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar,” the top American diplomat said in a post on X — formerly known as Twitter — while tagging the caretaker premier.

Blinken said that as Pakistan readies itself for “free and fair elections, in accordance with its Constitution and the rights to freedom of speech and assembly”, the US would “continue to advance” both the countries’ “shared commitment to economic prosperity”. The X post is similar to what State Department's Principal

Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel had said in a regular press briefing yesterday (Tuesday).

The US said it is looking forward to working with the Kakar-led interim government, which will see the country through to an election due in months. “We look forward to working with the interim prime minister and his team as they prepare to hold elections,” Patel said during a press briefing.

He also acknowledged that the United States is aware of the allied government's dissolution and the appointment of Kakar as the caretaker prime minister. “We, of course, will continue to partner with Pakistan on areas of mutual interest, including our interest on Pakistan's economic stability, prosperity, and security, and the conduct of free and fair elections and the respect for democracy and the rule of law.”

Politicians from both

sides — the former government and opposition — had welcomed the appointment and hoped that the interim PM would ensure free and fair polls in the country. Kakar's first task — as he takes charge of a country that has been wracked by political and economic instability for months — is to choose a cabinet to run the country as it heads into an election period that could last for months. Parliament was officially dissolved last week, with elections due within 90 days according to the constitution.

But data from the latest census was finally published earlier this month, and the outgoing government said the election commission needed time to redraw constituency boundaries. There has been speculation for months that the vote would be delayed as the authorities struggle to stabilise a country facing overlapping security, economic and political crises.

# IHC to hear Imran's appeal

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday fixed an appeal against the sentence of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case for hearing on August 22. A two-member IHC bench, comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangir, will hear the case.

The court has also issued notices to the respondents over the appeal against the sentence. The court had already sought a complete record of the Toshakhana case. It is to be noted here that a sessions court of Islamabad had sentenced the PTI chairman to three years in prison and fined him Rs100,000 in the Toshakhana case. After the court verdict, the PTI chairman was arrested from Lahore and transferred to Attock Jail.

# LHC ordered to decide Elahi's appeals

LAHORE (PPI): Ordering the Lahore High Court (LHC) to give decisions on the appeals filed by former Punjab chief minister and PTI President Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi by August 21, the Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday made it clear that in case the high court failed to decide the fate of these appeals, the order to arrest Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi would be deemed to be suspended.

A three-member bench, headed by Justice Ijazul Ahsan, heard PTI president's bail plea. The court adjourned the case's hearing for an indefinite time period. Four days ago, on August 12, 2023, the SC had fixed for hearing the bail application of former Punjab chief minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi on August 16.

# Court allows Afridi, Shandana to go home

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday allowed PTI leaders Shehryar Afridi and Shandana Gulzar to go home and announced that it would indict the city deputy commissioner and a senior superintendent of police (SSP) for contempt of court.

Shehryar and Shandana were arrested in connection with the May 9 violence. Shehryar was in detention under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) ordinance while Shandana was allegedly kidnapped by police. The decision comes a day after the IHC had issued show-cause notices to DC Irfan Nawaz Memon, Inspector General Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, the city chief commissioner and other police officials for “criminal contempt of court for abuse of authority to obstruct dispensation of justice and cause diversion to the course of justice”.

The court had sought written replies from the officials “as to why they

should not be punished for obstruction of justice”. Shehryar was arrested on May 16 from his Islamabad residence under Section 3 of the MPO Ordinance, 1960. He was rearrested on May 30 under the same section soon after his release from prison.

On Aug 3, Afridi was granted bail by the Lahore High Court's Rawalpindi bench but was again arrested by the Rawalpindi police from Adiala jail. A petition was subsequently filed by his lawyer in the IHC calling for his release and for the MPO order to be set aside.

Shandana was “allegedly” abducted by the Islamabad police on Aug 9. Her mother filed a petition in the IHC for “illegal arrest” and violation of Articles 4, 9, 10A and 14 of the Constitution, calling for police to produce her daughter in court. IHC's Justice Babar Sattar took up pleas and sought responses from various officials who were summoned.

DC Memon appeared in

the court to represent the district magistrate while IG Khan and the chief commissioner were also present. The PTI leaders were presented in the court as well along with their counsel Sher Afzal Marwat. Justice Sattar found the replies of DC and the SSP “unsatisfactory” and decided to indict both officials for contempt of court in the next hearing.

He also asked the IG to submit the names of the station house officer (SHO) and the district police officer (DPO) concerned and ordered show-cause notices to be issued to both police officials. Suspending the MPO orders, Justice Sattar barred the PTI leaders from going outside the limits of the capital and issuing statements on media till the finalising of the case. “If anything happens to any of them, then the IG and the chief commissioner will be responsible for it,” Justice Sattar observed. Subsequently, the hearing was adjourned for two weeks.

# Violent extremism is a struggle for power: Sherry

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Federal Minister and Senior PPP leader Senator Sherry Rehman has said that violent extremism was a struggle for power, and that many red lines had been crossed by the proliferation of hateful narratives.

Senator Rehman stated this at the launch of the research report ‘Beyond the Red Line: Contemporary Trends in Conflict Discourse in Pakistan’ by Communications Research Strategies (CRS) here at a local hotel (Marriott).

The report was prepared under the ‘Conflict Discourse Mapping’, a project by CRS, with support from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). Experts from various sectors attended the event. Senator Sherry Rehman was the chief guest, while the panelists included Dr Adnan Rafiq, Member - Planning Commission of Pakistan, Amber Shamsi, Director - Center for Excellence in

Journalism IBA and Fasi Zaka, a senior development expert.

In his welcome note Aniq Zafar, CEO - CRS, while thanking the chief guest commented, ‘We harbor the sincere hope that the insights gleaned from this meticulous investigation will serve as the bedrock for evidence-informed policymaking, effective interventions, and strategies designed to counteract violence and extremism. In this endeavor, we stand united, knowing that the path forward requires collective determination and shared vision’.

Commenting on the report, Senator Rehman said that hateful narratives had gone beyond extremist and violent groups, and are instead being shaped by political forces as well through currency of anger and hate as can be seen in online trolling. She lamented the weaponization of fake news for personal interests.

While speaking to the

audience, Imran Khan, Resident Director - USIP said, “The report has explored the intricate dynamics and complexities of violence and extremism in Pakistan, while touching upon underlying causes, catalysts, and far-reaching consequences of extremist discourse by scrutinizing critical data and associated developments”.

The report, authored by communication and digital experts Usman Zafar and Fatima Yamin, analyses various trends in religious, political and social discourse on various conflicts in Pakistan, and forecasts an onset of extremist violence leading up to the next General Elections due to heightening violent rhetoric. It further states that unless the Pakistani state generates a uniform narrative against terrorism and extremism, targeted and planned attacks may occur against political parties and members of the public, with the online space becoming weaponized.



## Two of robbers gang held

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Rangers Sindh and police in a joint intelligence based operation have arrested two allegedly of a robbers gang from Orangi Town and recovered snatched mobile phones and motorcycle from their possession. According to spokesman for Rangers on Wednesday, arrested were identified as Salman and Ahmed alias Umi.

The accused in July this year had snatched motorcycle on gun point in Zainab Mobile Market, Orangi Town. The CCTV footage of the incident had also went viral over social media in which the accused could be seen committing the crime.

During initial interrogation, the arrested confessed their involvement in more than 50 robberies in which they snatched 170 mobile phones and cash about Rs. 0.1 million. Raids were being conducted to apprehend their other accomplices. The accused had been handed over to police for further legal proceedings.

## 10 dead, 1281 injured in 1225 accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least 10 people were killed and 1,281 injured in 1,225 accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

According to the Rescue 1122, 600 drivers, 58 underage drivers, 159 pedestrians and 532 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes. The statistics showed that 325 accidents were reported in Lahore which affected 334 people, placing the provincial capital at top of the list followed by 79 in Multan with 81 victims and at third Faisalabad with 68 accidents and 78 victims.

According to data, 1048 motorcycles, 81 rickshaws, 103 cars, 33 vans, 13 buses, 28 trucks and 111 other vehicles besides slow-moving carts were involved in the accidents.

## Lahore police arrest 64 people on various violations

LAHORE (APP): Lahore police arrested 64 people between August 13 and 14 on various violations and registered 62 cases of aerial firing and six cases of fireworks violations and arrested seven others in this regard. Similarly, 388 accused were apprehended in 367 cases of one-wheeling and 22 individuals were arrested in six cases of rowdiness. In a press statement issued here on Wednesday, CCPO Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamiyana revealed that the arrest of accused involved in aerial firing led to the recovery of 2 Kalashnikovs, a gun, a 7MM rifle, 45 pistols, 30 pistol magazines, two pistols and 158 bullets.

He further said that in the City Division, 22 cases of aerial firing were registered, 12 in Cantt Division, 8 in Civil Lines, 7 in Sadr Division, 9 in Iqbal Town Division, and 4 in Model Town Division.

For fireworks, a case was registered in Cantt Division, 2 in Saddar Division, 2 in Iqbal Town Division, and one in Model Town Division.

## PFA stops working of water filtration plant

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has stopped the working of a water filtration plant over an excessive quantity of arsenic in water.

PFA Director General Raja Jahangir Anwar said on Wednesday that the authority took action against Crystal Water Filtration Plant on Sui Gas Road Shahdara due to quality parameters and failing to present the record of filter change to the raiding team on the spot.

He said that high level of arsenic in water could be extremely harmful to human health because micro-biologically contaminated drinking water causes diseases such as hepatitis, diarrhea, dysentery and cholera. Raja Jahangir said that strict legal action would be taken against adulterators involved in food adulteration.

# Free, responsible media, public friendly politics key to development of country: Pervez Ashraf

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf has said that the role of media community to further the cause of democracy is pivotal for socio-economic development of country.

He also said that both journalism and politics are intertwined and it is incumbent upon both stakeholders to cooperate with one another for country's progress.

He also said that the real power of Media is Journalists and reporter as these are foot soldiers. He expressed these views while addressing members of Parliamentary Reporters Association (PRA) in Parliament House Islamabad Wednesday. National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf also said, "PRA role is to bring Parliament and people closer." He also said that maintaining sanctity of parliament is a collective responsibility and PRA members have utmost importance in this regard. He said that media representatives and journalist community have central role to highlight positive image of Parliamentarians and Parliament.

While mentioning about record legislation in the best public interest, he said, "as per FAFEN report I have the honour for supervising record sittings of National Assembly and for record legislation during last fifteen months."

He stressed on the need to emphasize highlighting positive images by media. He congratulated Media community and said that successful passage of PEMRA amendment bill is indicative of proactive role of present parliament for welfare of journalists and media representatives.

Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf also said "Parliament is the place which represents each one of us, maintaining its sanctity is a collective responsibility." He also said that Parliament since one and half years focused on legislating for common people." While talking about the significance of journalists services, he said that Parliamentary Reporters has always highlighted positive image of Parliament.

Sadique Sajid President PRA expressed gratitude to Speaker National Assembly for extended cooperation with Media especially with PRA. He expressed gratitude on behalf of members PRA for affectively cooperating especially on the successful passage of Pemra Amendment Act for welfare of journalists community.

He also said that welfare of PRA members has been always priority of Speaker National Assembly. He said, "the cooperation extended by Director General Media Mr.Zafar Sultan to resolve issues of PRA on priority basis is commendable." Later on, Speaker National Assembly distributed commemoration shields regarding golden jubilee celebration of constitution of appreciation to President PRA Siddique Sajid, Ex- President PRA, Ex President Behzad Saleemi Mr. Quran Baloch And Naib President PRA Ahmed Nawaz for enhancing Parliamentary reporting. The Senior media Representatives, Journalist community members and senior officers of National Assembly Secretariat attended the conference.

## DCs directed to launch operation against encroachments, illegal occupation of state land

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman, on Wednesday ordered all the deputy commissioners to launch an operation against encroachments and illegal occupation of state land in the province.

Presiding over a video link meeting of the deputy commissioners at the Civil Secretariat, the Chief Secretary directed that indiscriminate action should be taken in all districts.

He said that for the convenience of the people, hardworking and dutiful staff should be posted in the registration branch of DC office.

The Chief Secretary said that 'Ab Gaon Chamkein Gay' is a revolutionary program to provide facilities to the rural population on the pattern of cities. He said that the deputy commissioners should monitor the implementation of

this program themselves.

Local Government Secretary Dr. Irshad Ahmed gave a detailed briefing in the meeting.

He said that under the 'Ab Gaon Chamkein Gay' program, cleanliness, easy issuance of birth, death and other certificates would be ensured in every village.

He said that management committees would be established under the supervision of the Assistant Commissioner for the implementation of the program. He further said that PITB would provide training to the staff of the Local Government department.

The meeting was attended by Senior Member Board of Revenue, Law Secretary and relevant officials while all the deputy commissioners participated through video link.

## IGP distributes ownership documents of plots to families of police martyrs

LAHORE (APP): IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has continued provision of plots to the families of police martyrs before 2017. In this sequence, families of 32 more martyrs of Sargodha police, Lodhran, Layyah, and Gujrat have been provided with plots.

During a ceremony held at the Central Police Office, here on Wednesday, IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar distributed ownership papers of plots to 15 families of Lodhran, 08 of Sargodha, 07 of Layyah, 02 of Gujrat.

Recently, IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar had provided plot ownership documents to 04 martyrs' families. The IG Punjab said that with the support of good people, plots

have been ensured for the families of more than 100 martyrs before 2017, while financial assistance is also being provided to the heirs of the martyrs for the construction of houses on these plots from the Punjab Police Endowment Fund.

Dr. Usman Anwar has announced to give certificates of appreciation to RPOs, DPOs who ensured the provision of plots to the families of police martyrs. The IG Punjab expressed gratitude to private estate developers for their cooperation in providing plots to the families of martyrs.

Additional IG Welfare Riaz Nazir Gara, DIG Headquarters Humayun

Bashir Tarar, RPO DG Khan Capt (Retd) Sajjad Hasan Khan, RPO Multan Capt (Retd) Sohail Chaudhry, RPO Sargodha Shariq Kamal Siddiqui, DIG Welfare Ghazi Muhammad Salahuddin, AIG Welfare Naveed Ajmal attended the function while other officers including DPOs of Sargodha, Gujrat, Lodhran and Layyah were also present in the function.

## OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT KING ABDULLAH TEACHING HOSPITAL MANSEHRA

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### 03rd time TENDER NOTICE

- Sealed tenders are invited for Direct Contracting through the Tender of following items for the financial year 2023-2024 for King Abdullah Teaching Hospital Mansehra on Single Stage-Single Envelope bidding method i.e 01 envelope counting only financial bid from the firms reputed and financially sound.
  - The quotations must reach this office on before 07.09.2023 at 10.00 am through registered post or courier service and the quotations will be opened on the same day at 11.00 am in the presence of representatives of the firms if they desire.
  - The quotation will be valid upto 30.06.2024.
- | S.No | NAME OF ITEMS/OUT SOURCE INVESTIGATION                        | CALL DEPOSIT |
|------|---|--------------|
| 01.  | Local Purchase (Medicine) for Admitted Patient under SSP      | 100,000/-    |
| 02.  | Complete Digital X-for Admitted Patient under SSP             | 20,000/-     |
| 03.  | Complete Ultrasound for Admitted Patient under SSP            | 20,000/-     |
| 04.  | MRI/CT Scan for Admitted Patient under SSP                    | 20,000/-     |
| 05.  | Surgical Implant with Assembly for Admitted Patient under SSP | 50,000/-     |
- Each & every tender must be in separate envelope, item/investigation for which tender is submitted should be clear mentioned.
  - Quotation must be computer printed and rate must be written in words and figures. Hand written and over writing/cutting in rates is strictly prohibited and such Quotation will not be entertained
  - List of items and detail of call deposit/terms & conditions may be obtained from the Office of the undersigned during office hours i.e. 9.00 AM to 2.30 PM till the last date on the payment of Rs.500/- per items as stationary /printing charges non-refundable.
  - For Sr. 1, tenders are invited from registered chemists and druggists having retail license. Who are financially sound and reputed for patients of King Abdullah Teaching Hospital Mansehra on the basis of maximum discount on retail price. The Chemist/druggist nearest the hospital will be preferred 24/7. (Discount rate should be Separately mentioned).
  - The firms must be registered with income tax & sale tax department and should be on ATL maintained by FBR. Last year returns must be attached with quotations.
  - All the taxes applicable by the Govt: will be deducted from payment.
  - Without call deposit no quotation will be entertained.
  - The competent authority can reject single or all tenders under KPRA2014 Rules.47.

**Dr. Shahzad Ali Khan**  
Medical Superintendent King Abdullah Teaching Hospital Mansehra



ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman (Wafaqi Mohtasib ) inspection committee members meeting with the customers during their inspection visit of FGEHA.

## Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman): Building upon the public trust

Abdul Majeed Niazi

Provision of free and expeditious relief against any injustice done to a common man through maladministration is the hallmark of the Wafaqi Mohtasib's performance. It has over the years perfected its complaint handling mechanism and taken many steps to enhance its outreach to the general public and dispensing justice closer to their homes. It is truly a poorman's court as the complainants are not required to hire the services of an advocate or wait endlessly for conclusion of the litigation process.

A series of reports that one comes across frequently highlighting redressal of grievances following the intervention of the Wafaqi Mohtasib such as: the payment of compensation amount of Rs.800 million to the affectees of Basima-Hoshaab road, refund of Rs.70000/- excess charged in electricity bill to a resident of Gujranwala, directing NBP to pay savings of an old school teacher amounting to Rs.3 million, directing AGPR to pay Rs.9.4 million of pensionary entitlements to a teacher after 9 years of his retirement, reinforce the public trust in the efficiency and efficacy of this institution. The ombudsmanship has taken firm roots in Pakistan. The year 2023 marks the

successful completion of 40 years of service by the Wafaqi Mohtasib institution since its inception on 24 January 1983. More than 1.9 million households have benefited from its services over the years. It was able to process the record number of complaints during the year 2022. The receipts rose from 110,405 to the highest ever number of 164,174 (49% increase) and disposal reached an all-time high of 157,770 marking an increase of 47.7% over the figures of the year 2021. During the first six months of the current year (January – June 2023), receipt of complaints has crossed 90,660 while disposal including the backlog has touched the figure of 92,387. Complaints worth over Rs.3.2 billion were addressed in 2022. During the first six months of the current year (1st January – 30 June), complaints worth Rs.1.55 billion have already been addressed.

Implementation of the decisions, orders, recommendations and findings of Wafaqi Mohtasib has always remained in sharp focus of the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat (WMS) to ensure that the public trust in the effectiveness of the institution is fully sustained. The rate of implementation during 2023 remained almost 80%.

In last two financial

years (2021-23), Regional Offices in far flung areas such as Khuzdar (Balochistan), Mirpur Khas (Sindh), Sargodha (Punjab), Swat (KP) and Complaint Collection Centres in Sada (Kurram Agency) and Wana (South Waziristan Agency) have been opened to enhance outreach. A litmus test for the accuracy and trustworthiness of the decisions of the Wafaqi Mohtasib is the minimal number of Review Petitions as well as Representations to the President. Only 1,348 Review Petitions were filed either by the complainants or the Agencies concerned against the findings of the WM during the year 2022 which constituted only 0.8% of the total complaints decided. Similarly, only 668 representations were filed to the President either by the complainants or the Agencies concerned against the decisions of the WM which is only 0.42% of total complaints disposed of during the year.


Under the Outreach Complaint Resolution (OCR) program, 8,211 complaints were disposed of in the year 2022 by the Advisors of the WMS during their visits to tehsil / district headquarters on pre-advertised dates to resolve public complaints closer to their doorsteps. So far, in 2023

(till 30 June), 4520 cases have been disposed of under this mechanism.

Inspection Teams constituted by the Wafaqi Mohtasib carried out inspection of various agencies including CDA, Health Institutions, NADRA, NPF, Passport Office, EOBI, USC, BISP, PBM, Islamabad Airport, gas companies etc.; and suggested measures to improve the functioning of these agencies. The reports were forwarded to the concerned agencies for implementation of the recommendations contained therein and are being regularly followed up.

At Islamabad Head office a full time Grievance Commissioner is working to redress the complaints of overseas Pakistanis. One Window Facilitation Desks have been established at all international airports in Pakistan to instantly address the complaints of overseas Pakistani passengers. Uptill 30 June, 2023 a total of 88,150 complainants have been facilitated at OWFDs.

Functioning of these desks is monitored through surprise visits by Grievance Commissioner. During the year 2022 a total of 1, 37,647 complaints/queries showing 133% increase from the last year, were received by WMS Grievance Commissioner Cell.



**PESCO TENDER NOTICE**

The following tenders for the disposal of under mentioned disposal material on "as is where is basis" will be received on dated 04.09.2023 upto 10:30 A.M and will open publically at 11:00 AM in the office of the Disposal Directorate office of Chief Executive Officer PESCO Shami Road Peshawar.

Location of Material: Xen Civil Division PESCO H/Q Peshawar

Cost of each tender is Rs.1000/-

**Tender No. 3(Civil)- 2023**

SR. NO.	Description	Unit of measurement	Quantity	weight per unit	total weight
1.	GI Sheet	kg	20	10	200
2.	Chowkat	kg	4	34	136
3.	Indoor light box	kg	38	4	152
4.	Cooking Range	kg	148	5	740
5.	Dist board	kg	20	4	80
6.	Aluminum	kg	150		150
7.	Steel window 6x4	kg	35	32	1120
8.	4x5	kg	15	30	450
9.	3x4	kg	13	24	312
10.	2x4	kg	5	19	95
11.	8x4	kg	5	14	70
12.	6x3	kg	6	24	144
13.	6x8	kg	1	63	63
14.	6x5	kg	4	40	160
15.	Geyzer	NO	66		
16.	Gas burner	NO	45		
17.	Single burner	NO	16		
18.	Street light body	kg	52		182
19.	Steel reinforcement	kg	1000		1000
20.	Ceiling Fan	NO	124		
21.	Gas heater	NO	6		
22.	Exhaust fan	NO	17		
23.	Flushing tank	NO	6		
24.	Door closer	NO	3		
25.	Water pump	NO	2		
26.	Main board	kg	6	10	60
27.	Computer unserviceable	NO	1		
28.	Printer	NO	1		
29.	Filter	NO	2		
30.	Globe	NO	11		
31.	GI WI pipes L/S	kg	60		

- Earnest Money will be 10% of the Bid Amount.
- Rights to accept or reject any or all offers are reserved.
- Taxes will be according to Govt. Rules & Regulations.
- Tender Forms can be purchased on any day during banking hours. Form will not be sold on the opening date of tender.
- No tender will be accepted without earnest money.
- Place of tender opening, PESCO Committee Room office of the Chief Executive Officer PESCO H/Q, Shami Road Peshawar.
- Bidders who are registered tax payers must include their respective NTN & STRN Number and proof of registration with FBR in order to avail tax bracket assigned to register tax payers otherwise the bidder will be treated as non-tax filer.

DGPR-19/23-24

**Manager (Disposal)**  
**PESCO Peshawar**

ORIENTMCCANN





# Landlords donate more land for university

PESHAWAR (APP): Nawabzada Sadruddin and Nawabzada Qutbuddin donated 20 kanal more land for Timergara University. Both landlords have already donated 88 kanal land for the establishment of the university and on the request of the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali announced donation of 20 kanal more land for the purpose. Nawabzada Sadruddin and Nawabzada Qutbuddin called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali here in on Wednesday. Besides, Asfandyar Khan, Inayatullah, Dr. Zahoor Jan, Secretary

Higher Education Department Anila Durrani and Principal Secretary to Governor Mazhar Arshad, Ishaq Ali Qazi was also present on this occasion. The governor thanked Nawabzada Sadruddin and Qutbuddin and others for this unprecedented generosity and termed a huge donation for the youths of remote and backward areas. He said that the step will not only increase the rate of higher education in the area rather will also open the doors of progress and development. On this occasion, the Governor gave commemorative gifts and shields to Nawabzada Sadruddin and

Qutbuddin and the participants of the delegation. Meanwhile, a high-level meeting regarding the distribution of land between Agricultural University Peshawar and the University of Engineering and Technology Mardan was also held at the Governor's House with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali in the chair. Besides, Vice Chancellor Agricultural University Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Jahan Bakht, Dean UET Mardan, Professor Dr. Imran Khan, Secretary of Higher Education Department Anila Durrani, and Principal Secretary to

Governor Mazhar Irshad and relevant officials also attended the meeting and discussed all matters related to land distribution in detail. On this occasion, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali directed the two universities to identify the required land and prepare a comprehensive map related to the total 400 kanal land so as to know which place is suitable for which university. He also directed the committee set up by the higher education department to look into all the issues related to the distribution and to resolve the issues in the committee meeting in the next 7 days.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali presiding over a meeting regarding distribution of land between Agricultural University of Peshawar and University of Engineering & Technology of Mardan at Governor's House.

## Edu Dept decides to initiate action

PESHAWAR (APP): The Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, following complaints from the general public, has decided to initiate action over non-compliance of the orders and instructions issued to the officers and officials of the department. In a notification issued here on Wednesday, the Education Department said that it has been observed that the heads of the subordinate offices, educational institutions, principals and headmasters often create hurdles in implementation of the orders, notifications issued by the competent authority which is misconduct under the E&D Rules 2011. It said that henceforth if information regarding non-compliance of orders or instructions of the department by any officer or official of subordinate offices, educational institution is received, then strict disciplinary action shall be taken against the delinquent officer or official under E&D Rules 2011.

## Kidnapped man safely recovered

PESHAWAR (APP): In a successful action the Shahpur police of Rural Division on Wednesday safely recovered a man, kidnapped for ransom from OPF Colony here. SP Rural, Zafar Ahmad Khan told media that a man named Tafseerullah was kidnapped from OPF Colony near Ring Road and the kidnappers were demanding US Dollars 0.2 million for his safe release. During the abduction, the accused had locked the other family members in a washroom and kidnapped Tafseerullah at gunpoint. The Shahpur police during investigation find out that four accused including an Afghan National were involved in the kidnapping of Tafseerullah. After arresting all the four accused, police safely recovered the kidnapped man from a house in Baghban area of Urmer police station. Police said when recovered, the abductee was tied in chains in a vacant house. The four accused identified as Rahimullah, Habibullah, Imran alias Shehbaz and their ring leader, Ashiq Ullah were shifted to police station for interrogation and further legal procedure.

## SHO suspended

PESHAWAR (APP): The CCO Peshawar Syed Ashfaq Anwar on Wednesday taking notice of the death of an accused in alleged police custody suspended SHO Machni Gate and ordered an inquiry. The CCO said that no one would be allowed to take the law into their hands and assured justice to the relatives of the deceased. Earlier, the relatives of the deceased accused including women and children put the dead body on the GT road under Suripul and blocked it for traffic. They said that the Machni gate police picked up the deceased along with his brother from his village on Saturday night and allegedly tortured him to death in police custody which was evident from the signs of violence on the body, they added. The family members of the victim refused to unblock the road, however on the directives of CCO, a police team negotiated with the protesters and convinced them to bury the dead body and end the protest. On the assurance of the police, the protesters dispersed peacefully and unblocked the road.

# KP govt bans public servants using social media

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government bars all government servants from using social media to discuss or share information on issues relating to government business, except with prior approval of the administrative secretary, head of the attached department or commission. The decision was taken under Rule-34(A) of the KP government servant (conduct) rules, 1987, after the competent authority took cognizance of the various

instances wherein the government and civil servants were found participating in discussions on different social media platforms regarding matters about political issues, sectarianism and anti-state activities. The notification also said that rules 23, 24, 25, 28 and 29 of the KP government servants (conduct) rules, 1987 bar the government servants from expressing their views against the ideology and security of the country and from taking part in any

public demonstration directed against a government decision or policy. The notification further said that under rule 21 of the government servants' rules, no public servant is authorized to communicate directly or indirectly any official information or the contents of any official document to any unauthorized person or government servant, or the press. The notification directed strict observance of the mentioned rules to avoid any legal action.

# Advocate General calls meeting of focal persons KPBC annoys petroleum price-hike

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advocate General (AG) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javeed has summoned a meeting today (Thursday) of focal persons of provincial departments regarding the status and proceeding of cases in courts, on Wednesday. According to sources, during the meeting the proceedings and status of cases should be discussed in details while critical decisions will be taken for submission records before courts. The meeting has summoned against delay in sub-

mission of reply/comments/record in courts despite judicial orders. It is worthy to mention that thousands of cases are pending against different provincial departments at different forums. Moreover, AG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javeed directed all focal persons to present record of cases against their departments. Meanwhile, KP Bar Council (KPBC) has announced price hike in petroleum prices and argued government to cut non-developmental expenditures. KPBC further demanded

withdrawal of perks and privileges from elite as well as public servants. KPBC vice chairman Zar Badshah and chairman Executive Committee Syed Mubashir Shah issued press statement in this regard while condemned recent price hike in petroleum products which will impact livelihood of majority of the populace across the Pakistan. KPBC argued to take concrete steps for socio-economic development of nation on longer terms which will cope inflation and unemployment in future.



PESHAWAR: Secretary Agriculture Muhammad Javed Marwat addressing during Baseline Validation Workshop for Livelihood & Food Security Activity.

# Pesco notifies power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) on Wednesday informed that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Rahman Baba Grid Station on 17th August from 7 a.m to 12 p.m. Consequently, it said that consumers of 11 KV Kachori, Shalozan, Sharif Abad, Khan Mast, Hazar Khwani, Surizai, Pandu Baba, Urmar, Yakatoot, Chamkani, Phando, Ring Road, Chairman Daftar, Beri Bagh, Rashid Garhi, Surizi Bala, Pakhoon Abad and Ring Road-2 feeders will face inconvenience. It said that power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Industrial Kohat Road Grid Station on 17th August from 7 a.m to 12 p.m due to which consumers of 11 KV Sunehri

Masjid, Banamari, Audit Colony, Civil Quarter, Nauthia, Murshid Abad, Abasin, Deh Bahadar, Kohat Road, Amin Colony, Bara, Nodeh Payan, Dora Road, Landi Arbab, Sheikh Muhammadi, Pishtakhara, Swati Gate, Gul Berg and Scheme Chowk feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Peshawar City Grid Station on 17th August from 7 a.m to 12 p.m resultantly consumers of 11 KV Ahmad Abad, Sikananagar Pura, Lala, Hashnaghari, Chugulpura, Chamkani, Jaghra, Radio Pakistan, Sethi Town, Gulbahar, Zaryab, Pandho Road, City Homes, Baghbanan, Urmar, Islamabad, Faqir Abad, Shiekh Abad, Molve Je, Nishtar Abad and NHA, feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, the power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Mardan Grid Station on 17th August from 9 a.m to 3 p.m, resultantly consumers of 11 KV Dang Baba, Misri Abad, Jan Abad, Shankar, Saleem Khan, Malakand Road, Ring Road feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 220 KV Mardan Grid Station on 17th August from 9 a.m to 3 p.m, resultantly consumers of 11 KV Ahmad Abad, Gujjar Garhi, Muhabat Abad feeders will face inconvenience. Power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Nowshera City Grid Station on 17th August from 9 a.m to 3 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Rashakai feeders will face inconvenience.

# Bid to smuggle drug foiled

PESHAWAR (APP): The Excise police on Wednesday foiled a bid to smuggle a huge quantity of hashish to Punjab on Mardan Nowshera road. The truck driver managed to escape from the scene while leaving the vehicle on the side of the

road. During the checking of the vehicle, the excise police recovered 18000 grams of hashish from the spare tire of the truck. The excise police registered a case and started an investigation.

## No increase in BRT fares

PESHAWAR (APP): The Spokesperson of Trans Peshawar on Wednesday rejected the rumors of an increase in fares of bus rapid transit (BRT) service. She said that there was no change in fares from one station to another and one time ticket price also remained the same, adding that the minimum fare of BRT Peshawar is Rs15 while the maximum fare is Rs55. The one-time ticket price is Rs50 while the card and mobile app must have a minimum balance of Rs55. The spokesperson said that the minimum balance limit and ticket price were fixed last year.



PESHAWAR: Peoples offering funeral prayers of martyred CTD Constable Inamullah at Malik Saad Shaheed Police Line.

# PHC grants stay, protecting mining operations in emerald mine dispute

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar High Court Wednesday granted stay by restraining DG Mines and Minerals and a private company from interfering, and creating obstacles in mining operations of petitioner in 500 acres Emerald Mine in District Shangla. A division bench of Justice Arshad Ali and Justice Fazal Subhan heard a writ petition filed by M/S Malik Minerals and Mining Company against judgement of KP Appellate Tribunal Mines and Minerals wherein it had allowed another company to have a prospective licence for emeralds over a 5 acres area adjacent to 500 acres mine of petitioner

company in blatant violation of the mines & minerals Act 2017. Advocate Nouman Muhib Kakakhel represented the petitioner company. The counsel argued that an appeal was filed by the another company for refusal of the Department to grant prospecting licence, however, they preferred an appeal and it was shown that the area was only to be given on Auction instead of prospective licence hence the then appellate dismissed the appeal and also declared other PLs in the area as illegal. The private respondent moved PHC, which ordered the newly established tribunal to give an

opportunity of hearing to the respondent company and decide the case afresh, however, the tribunal instead of a fresh decision disposed the appeal of without deciding the case and allowed the respondent company to have a Prospective Licence in a place reserved for auction. The counsel argued that in a place where a mineral had been explored and was being mined, a prospective licence could not be granted rather a mining lease was to be given through an auction, hence the PL was illegal. The counsel argued that the 5 acres as given through PL was not following the 20 meter distance as pro-

vided for by the law. The counsel argued that tunnels were being dug near the mines of petitioner company which was creating hindrance with their access to the mine and the waste was being thrown to the private lands of the partners of the petitioners whereas the labour was constantly being harassed and threatened by the authorities and the private respondent. The court after hearing counsel for the petitioner, restrained the mines and mineral authorities and the private company to interfere in mining operations of the petitioner and creating hindrance in their work till final decision of the case.

# 86 shopkeepers arrested in crackdown on profiteers

PESHAWAR (APP): District administration Peshawar arrested 86 shopkeepers for profiteering, lack of official price-list and unhygienic conditions on Wednesday. The arrested shopkeepers include bakers (nan-bais), milkmen, grocers and fruit & vegetable vendors. On the directives of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shah Fahad, the officers of the district administration car-

ried out crackdown against profiteers, lack of official price-list, sale of under-weight roti and poor cleanliness conditions. The shopkeepers have been during the last three days from various localities on Ring Road, G.T. Road, Dalzak Road, Charsadda Road, Kohat Road, Warsak Road, Gulbahar, Nishterabad, Haystabad, Mathani, Board Bazaar, Tehkal and interior city.

During the crackdown, the officers of the district administration inspected 188 shops and arrested 86 shopkeepers for profiteering, lack of official price-list, selling of under-weight roti and poor cleanliness conditions while 35 others were warned to bring improvement in their businesses. According to the Deputy Commissioner, the administrative officers in the provincial capital issue the

official price list in the vegetable and fruit markets on a daily basis and later the implementation of the official price list is ensured throughout the district. He has directed the officers of district administration for conducting random visits to bazaars and markets of the direct to keep check on the prices of the essential food items and taking action against the violators of the official price-list.

# Chairman congratulates Ajab Gul for Pride of Performance award

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The founding chairman Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Hospital and Blood services Ijaz Ali Khan congratulated "Ajab Gul" an international figure, genuinely self-made and magical artist of times who worked almost in all genres of performing art is awarded with the most prestigious recognition award titled "Presidential Pride of Performance Award" By the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Always give credit when it's due to sincere hard work in the field of Art. It's a matter of pride and joy that our fine friend and brother is getting this award in his life to feel happy and proud with ". The journey behind this turbulent career to which I am the witness as friend & brother comprises dreams, struggles, hard times,

twists, episodes, migration, travels, efforts, patience, and with more many national and regional awards finally today you the lovely supportive audience took him to this national and official platform and will be getting

this honorable award on your behalf in March 23rd, 2024, Ijaz Ali Khan said. Ajab Gul has contributed a lot for Thalassemia patients of Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Hospital and Blood services Peshawar

KP Pakistan and also served his audience and entertained them for decades, viewed by generations, and these stories, events, happenings, and past become history that make him hero and supernatural.



PESHAWAR: Worker making traditional musical instrument at his workplace.





## In brief

### Mentally disable man kidnapped F.P. Report

LARKANA: The dacoits gang has abducted mentally disabled person named Talib Hussain for Rs3 million ransom while the relatives arranged protest in front of Larkana press club for his recovery. According to details, Talib Hussain Kahchi, Jani Kahchi, Imtiaz Khatoun and others, the heirs of Waqar Kahchi, abducted intellectually disabled youth of Mahalla Murad Wahan, a suburb of Larkana, said that they held a protest in front of the press club for the recovery of the abductee. He said that our mentally challenged young man used to come back within a couple of days after leaving the house many times, but after a month has passed, we have not been able to find any trace of him, so we suspect that he was kidnapped. The ransom has been paid, he allegedly said that a month ago, the bandits kidnapped Waqar Khachi from Larkana and transferred him to the rural areas of Shikarpur, from where the bandits called and asked for a ransom of three lakhs for the recovery of the kidnapped youth. Even though we have given such a report to SSP Larkana DSP and SHO of the concerned police station, even though our son is not being recovered, we are afraid that the dacoits may kill him. He has appealed to IG Police Sindh to save his son's life.

### Shopkeeper killed, two hurt F.P. Report

ATTOCK: A shopkeeper was murdered and two others wounded over a dispute involving a Rs. 500 Easyload in Attock city on Wednesday. According to the police, the dispute over money transfer led to a heated argument between the shopkeeper and the customer. After exchanging harsh words, the customer pulled out a pistol and started firing, killing the shopkeeper on-the-spot and injuring his son and nephew. The killer managed to escape the scene following the shooting. The body of the deceased and the injured were shifted to the district headquarters hospital while the Attock city police have started a search for the killer after registering a case.

### Real estate function held F.P. Report

MARDAN: President Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) Zahir Shah has said that the real estate sector gets the most recovery from the government and due to the recent high rates, this sector is suffering from many problems it has been done and the government is also at a loss. MCCI spoke as a special guest at City Housing and Bahria Peshawar Mardan On Wednesday. On this occasion, MCCI President Zahir Shah officially cut the ribbon and inaugurated the office. Along with him Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Head Arshad Amir, MD Naeem Anwar, Inayat Bacha Advocate, Taj Ghani, Naveed Akhtar, Tahir Hoti, Elahi Dad and others were also present. Zahir Shah said that the construction industry related to real estate and many related sectors will also suffer in which cement, steel, electric, electronics, hardware and wood etc. so the government should review its decision keeping in mind all these issues demanding that he immediately review the decision and roll back the exorbitant price hike immediately.

# Goods transporters demand withdrawal petroleum price hike

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: All Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Goods Transport Association (AKPGTA) has rejected the increase in Petroleum products followed by their demand from the government to tack back its decision of increase in the best interests of the countrymen, on Wednesday.

The All Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Goods Transport Association provincial chairman Liaqat Ali Khan accompanied by general secretary Sikandar Khan, Mir Ahmad and others expressed these views in a press conference. On the occasion, the provincial chairman told journalists that the in term government had no mandate to increase the prices of Petroleum products.

He deplored that the in term of government should not put further burden of price-hike on masses if it was unable to provide any relief to them. Other office-bearers and members of the said association who also spoke on the occasion, lamented that the interim cabinet had yet to be form but the government had fallen the bomb on public in shape of making a big increase in Petroleum items.

AKPGTA stated that firstly the Imran Khan's government then the Shahbaz Sharif's regime and now the interim government was making lives of general public as miserable by increasing the prices of petroleum products and other items of daily use. They also alleged it showed that a mafia in the country was constantly targeting masses.

The speakers claimed that seventy-five percent business of people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was linked with transport who were paying their differences in advance to government. They categorically rejected the increase in Petroleum products while giving 10-days ultimatum to government to take its decision back in this connection, otherwise, they would be forced to launch an aggressive agitation against the government meant to resist the said cruel decision. They also claimed that they would continue their anti-government agitation till fulfillment of their demand.

**DC inspected official procedure:** Deputy Commissioner Mardan Abdul Rehman along with Additional Deputy Commissioner Samiur

Rehman and Assistant Commissioner Ayesha Tahir paid a surprise visit to Divisional Secretariat Mardan. He inspected revenue courts and other offices.

Deputy Commissioner reviewed the staff attendance at the offices and the services provided to the people. On the occasion he asked the visitors about the service provided in the revenue courts and offices as well as the attitude of the staff.

DC directed the administration Officers that prohibit the entry of unrelated persons and touts in the Revenue Courts and other offices and said that the Administration Officers and Offices-in-charge should ensure that the office staff ensure timely attendance and not leave the office without any reason before the stipulated time otherwise strict disciplinary action will be taken against them.

The concerned staff should ensure that people's grievances be redressed in time and adopt a good attitude towards them. The Deputy Commissioner also discussed the problems faced by the government staff and assured to solve them immediately.

# Villages uplift program kicks off in Hafizabad

## F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: On the directions of Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi, 'Ab Gaon Chamkenge Programme' has been launched in the district Hafizabad. Deputy Commissioner Umer Farooq Warriach inaugurated 'Ab Gaon Chamkenge programme' in village Peer Kot. Deputy Director Local government Asad Bhatti, AC Hafizabad Munawar Hussain and prominent personalities of the area attended the inaugural ceremony.

Addressing the ceremony, Deputy Commissioner Umer Farooq Warriach said that Chief Minister of the Punjab has launched this revolutionary and people friendly programme to provide diseases free and pleasant environment to rural people beside urban people. He said that under this programme, cleanliness of streets and drainage would be ensured in all villages of 42 union councils of the district on daily basis.

DC said that the Punjab

government would appoint tree sanitary workers and a loader rickshaw at union council level for cleanliness and lifting of garbage from villages whereas management committees would also be constituted at Tehsil and Union Council level for monitoring cleanliness. He said that Rs. 100 from every home, Rs. 200 from every shop and Rs. 1000 from petrol pumps would be received and this fund would be spent through management committees for cleanliness purpose.

# Jishn-e-Azadi festival concluded at Kohat

## Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Jishn-e-Azadi Sports Festival concludes at Kohat. Like other parts of the country, the 76th Independence Day was also celebrated with great pomp and show and national enthusiasm in Kohat.

In this regard, the Regional and District Sports Office Kohat also organized the Jishn-e-Azadi Sports Festival side by side the traditional Independence Day programs. The Independence Day celebrations were formally started under the supervision of Regional Sports Officer Kohat Sajid Afridi on the night of August 13 at 12 o'clock at the Kohat Sports Complex with fireworks which was largely attended by the patriotic fans.

Similarly, on August 14, the Sports Department also organized a special program for the inmates of Kohat Jail on this day, beside various sports events including Football, Badminton, Volleyball, Athletics, Men's Archery, Women's Archery,

Tug of War and Musical Chairs games. Football and Badminton matches were won by Kohat, Athletics 800 Meters Race by Arshad, Men Archery by Abdul Ghaffar, Women Archery by Aareeba while Tug of War competition was won by the District Administration by defeating Kohat Police.

Deputy Commissioner Kohat Azmatullah Wazir was the chief guest of the Sports Festival, while District Police Officer Kohat Farhan Khan and Additional Deputy Commissioners Shahryar Qamar and Reena Suhrawardy were the guests of honour. The guests distributed prizes among the winners. On this occasion, cash prizes were also given to the players of Street Child Football Norway from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on behalf of the Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Regional Sports Officer Sajid Afridi gave away honorary shields to all participating officers of the district administration and

police force. DC Kohat paid tribute to Sajid Afridi for organizing a successful Jishan Azadi Sports Festival and hoped that he will play his role on such important occasions in the future as well.

## Two labors of Shangla killed F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Two mine workers of Shangla were killed in mines of Mach and Dargai on Wednesday.

According to details, a miner, Shah Rehman of Basi Tehsil Alpuri was electrocuted in coal mine situated in Mach area of Balochistan. Another, mine worker, Ziauddin lost his life in gas explosion occurred in chromite mine of Dargai. The miner was resident of remote Tehsil Pagorai of Shangla. It is worth mentioning that 123 miners of Shangla have lost lives and dozens have maimed in various mishaps occurred in mines so far.



QUETTA: Activists of BCS Officers Action Committee holding a protest in front of Chief Secretary Office.

## Alleged beggar kills man at bazaar F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A man identified as Shatir Lala resident of Mayar Jandol and a hotelier, was stabbed to death when an alleged beggar attacked him at Mayar bazaar, residents and police said.

The sources claimed that the accused was arrested by traffic police officials Munawar Shah and Jan Hussain on the spot. The Lower Dir district police officer Ziaud Din and SP investigation Zahoore Khan awarded the officials with cash and appreciation certificates.

The Rah e Haq party district leader, Ziaul Haq Haidari awarded Rs 10,000 and village council chairman Mayar Ikram Khan Rs 5000 as cash award to the traffic officials. The local residents lauded the police constables for their bravery and courage. The Mayar police registered a case against the accused and sent him to the lock-up. Later the deceased was laid to rest at Mayar in Jandol.

## BHU operationalized in Mohmand F.P. Report

GHALANAI: Frontier Corps North has successfully operationalized Basic Health Unit (BHU) in Had Ambar, Mohmand after completion of the renovation and re-activation, on Wednesday.

This crucial initiative was undertaken to address the healthcare needs of the local community. The health facility had previously remained non-functional due to the unavailability of medical personnel, including doctors and nursing staff. The health facility has also been renamed from Community Health Centre to Basic Health Unit.

Working in close collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department, the Frontier Corps North has taken another significant step by appointing a dedicated doctor for the newly renovated health unit. This appointment has been made official through a formal notification process.

The response from the local populace has been overwhelmingly positive. Residents have expressed their joy and satisfaction with the revitalized health unit, highlighting that they no longer need to travel to distant places for medical treatment.

# Jirga demands arrest of youth's killers

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Lower Dir Youth Jirga has demanded immediate arrest of the persons involved in the killing of a local youth and injuring his two friends at a scenic spot on July 30. The demand was made during a protest rally in front of the Timergara press club and later at a news conference held here on Wednesday.

The jirga members Imran Takur, Shuihan Ahmad, Sadiqur Rehman Durrani, Ziaullah, Qazi Hanifullah and others told local journalists that three friends; Wiqas Khan, Rohullah and Asad Khan from Jagabai village of Balambat had gone to the Sky Land, a scenic spot in Upper Dir on second day of Eid ul Azha (July 30th). They said that one of the friends Wiqas Khan, a 1st year student was killed while his two friends were injured when one of the rival parties opened fire on

them at the Sky Land.

The jirga members said that police had failed to arrest the accused despite the passage of 18 days. They said the victims had nothing with the land dispute between two parties to which they had fallen prey. The jirga threatened to observe complete wheel jam and shutter down strike if the concerned authorities failed to arrest the accused soon.

**Opposition members' demand:** The opposition members of the Balambat tehsil council on Wednesday demanded of the chief election commissioner and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister to take notice of the council's chairman forced disappearance.

The demand was made during a meeting of the opposition members held at Balambat which was attended by Saiful Islam and Naik Dar of the JJ, Sahibullah and Asghar Khan of the PPP, Islamud

Din and Gul Badshah of the ANP and other village councils' chairmen.

The meeting was informed that the PTI tehsil council chairman Asim Shuihan had been missing since May 10 as he had gone into hiding to avoid arrest. The participants said the missing chairman was wanted to police in his involvement in the May 9 and 10 riots.

They said that both the council members and the public were suffering due to the absence of the council chairman. They said that developmental activities had stopped while the council was unable to pay its utility bills. They said the council chairman should face the court proceedings and prove him not guilty or the government and its relevant institution should take legal action. They said the council should be allowed to elect its leader if the chairman was not ready to ensure his presence soon.

# Demo held against merger of BSS cadre in BCS cadre

QUETTA (PPI): BCS (Executive) Officers Action Committee staged a protest demonstration outside the office of Chief Secretary Balochistan against the merger of BSS cadre in BCS cadre.

According to detail, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, Tehsildars and Patwaris of BCS (Executive) Officers Action Committee staged a peaceful protest demonstration outside the office of Chief Secretary Balochistan against the merger of Balochistan Civil Service (Executive) into Balochistan Secretariat Services (BSS) cadre.

Representatives of BCS (Executive) Officers Action Committee, including Ayesha Zehri, Deputy Commissioner, Ismail Naseerabad, Deputy Commissioner, Chaman, Tariq Mengal, Deputy Commissioner, Pishin, Abdul Jabbar Baloch, Administrator, Quetta Metropolitan Corporation, Ali Durrani, Assistant Commissioner, had a detailed meeting with Secretary, Services and General Administration

Department, Balochistan, Babar Khan, apprising him of the reservations of BCS cadre officers with regard to the merger of BSS cadre with BCS cadre.

The said that merger of BSS cadre officers into BCS cadre was not only illegal but also unconstitutional, adding that report of twenty-two-member parliamentary committee had been signed only by four members, adding that signature of Chairman, twenty-two-member parliamentary committee was also missing. They said it was not known as to why a summary regarding merger of BSS into BCS cadre was moved for approval of the Chief Minister Balochistan when there existed deficiency in the report of twenty-two-member parliamentary committee constituted for recommendations with regard to the service structure of BCS and BSS cadre. They said that merger of BSS cadre into BCS (Executive) cadre was not acceptable to BCS (Executive) Officers Action Committee.

On the other hand, a peaceful protest demonstration under the aegis of Balochistan Civil Secretariat Officers Welfare

Association was staged in the lawn of Balochistan Civil Secretariat, Quetta outside the office of Chief Secretary, Balochistan, demanding the authorities to issue notification as merger of BSS cadre into BCS cadre had been approved by the competent authority, that is, Chief Minister Balochistan.

Protest demonstration was addressed by Abdul Malik Kakar, President, Balochistan Civil Secretariat Officers Welfare Association, Zaheer Baloch, General Secretary, Muhammad Amin Badini, Secretary Finance, Balochistan Civil Secretariat Officers Welfare Association and others.

## Man killed

SARGODHA (INP): A man was killed when an over speeding truck hit a motorcycle near Zamzam Chowk in jurisdiction of Urban Area police station on Wednesday.

Rescue sources said that a motorcyclist heading to Sargodha city was knocked down by a reckless driven dumper. Bike rider Sabir Maseeh was killed on the spot and dumper driver fled the scene.

# Residents demand shifting of water supply pipe

## F.P. Report

CHITRAL: In order to provide clean drinking water to fifty thousand people of Chitral town, potable water was brought from a natural spring through a pipeline from Golain at a cost of Rs440 Million twelve years ago. At that time the road was only twelve feet wide, this pipeline was carried to Chitral town on the side of mountains because at that time it was safe one, but now this road has been handed over to the National Highway Authority who widen it to 34 feet as a result the pipe came in the middle of road and now they start its blacktopping on it.

According to local experts, if the contractor metted the road and puts coal tar on it before shifting the pipe to a safe place, then in case of leaking water from the pipe, it will be cause a lot of damage to the blacktopped road. Even if the pipeline is to be repaired, the road PHE staff

have to broke the road and the contractor will claim for payment from the public health engineering department officials.

Safeerullah belongs to Golain valley but now he settled at Chitral town due to threat of flood. He said that half of population of Chitral town using this water for drinking purposes in case the pipe damaged during construction of road these people will be deprived from drinking water. He suggested that first the pipe should be shifted to safe side then construction of road should be started. And NHA contractor can work at this road where 50 KM road is empty without any pipeline in the middle of road.

Social and political personality Sharif Hussain Chairman says that twelve years ago, the provincial government had given 440 M rupees for this pipeline, which provides clean drinking water to fifty thousand

people of Chitral town. He said that the work of the NHA contractor is still delayed for two years and the 75 km road from Chitral to Booni is under construction which responsibility of the contractor. He said that the contractor is now pouring concrete on the road at Ragh where the pipeline has passed in the middle of road, although there is still 50 km of road ahead of it, he can work there as well and anyway by taking out the pipeline. 290 Million fund have been approved for shifting of pipe to a safe place and the tender has also been offered.

Sharif Hussain said that we have raised objections on the work of this contractor many times, but it seems that he has very long hands and nobody can ask from him. He further said that now he tries to blackmail the Public Health Engineering Department by blacktopping the road before taking out his pipeline from the middle of the

road, he started the concrete work at the same place where pipe came in the middle of road. If the public health demolish the road for carrying out of their people the contractor will demand for compensation from them.

Ejaz Ahmed, also is an elected councillor, he says that clean and cold water is carried from a natural spring in Golain to Chitral town and Jaghur Bakarabad. Due to the wideness of the road, that pipeline came in the middle of the road. This road was earlier twelve feet blacktopped, now it will be 24 feet blacktop with 10 feet shoulders i.e. footpath.

First of all, this pipe should be removed from the middle of the road to a safe place and then the work should be started on the road surface. He said that the road from Goleen towards Booni has been widened and the cutting of the mountain is also complete. The contractor should first

start the work from Booni side, until then the pipeline will be taken out from the middle of the road to safe side in 3 months.

Fakhr Azam, who is also the chairman of a village council, says that almost half of the population of Chitral Town is getting clean drinking water from the Golaom goal Water Supply Scheme.

When the pipeline was brought from Golain, the road was narrow and because of its shortness, it was passed through the foot of the mountain. They were demolished by blasting in the mountains to widen the road as a result of which the pipeline is now in the middle of the road. He suggested that Golain Pipeline which is 22 km long and Boni road is 75 km, except for this 22 km section, the contractor can work beyond that portion and when the pipeline is removed from the middle of the road within three months then the road should be constructed

otherwise fifty thousand people will be deprived of clean drinking water.

In this regard, the office of the Public Health Engineering Department was also contacted, whose spokesman said that when the pipeline was being brought from Golain, the road was only 12 feet mettle and it was brought through a safe place, i.e. at the outskirts of the mountain, now the road is wide.

The pipe came in the middle of it. We have offered proper tender for its shifting and 290 million have been sanctioned for this purpose we will try to remove it from the middle of the road within three months and carry to a safe place. After that in case of leaking of water from the pipe, it will not cause damage to the blacktopped road and in case of any fault in the pipe if we need to repair it, we will not have to break the road again.





## UN appeal for peace and aid at 4-month mark of Sudan's war

GENEVA (AP): Twenty United Nations agencies and other international organizations called for peace, access to humanitarian support and respect for human rights in Sudan, where a war that has led to deaths, sexual violence and food shortages reached the four-month mark. Sudan was plunged into chaos in April when months of simmering tensions between the military, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, exploded into open fighting in Khartoum and elsewhere.

Since then, the U.N and rights groups have accused both the military and the RSF of numerous human rights violations. The warring parties have rejected the accusations. World Health Organization spokesperson Margaret Harris appealed to the global community to do more to ease the suffering of Darfur's people, saying at a UN briefing in Geneva: "The world is ignoring the dire needs." In western Sudan's Darfur region, the scene of a genocidal war in the early 2000s, the latest fighting has also morphed into ethnic violence, with the RSF and allied Arab militias targeting African communities, UN officials say. Sudan's capital, Khartoum, has been

reduced to an urban battlefield. Across the city, RSF forces have commandeered homes and turned them into operational bases, residents and doctors' groups say. The army, in turn, has struck residential areas from the air and ground with artillery fire. UN agencies specializing in health, migration, refugees, human rights and food were among the organizations highlighting the crisis in Sudan, saying their two appeals for financial support totaling more than \$3 billion were less than 27% funded. The war is estimated to have killed at least 4,000 people, according to Liz Throssell, a spokesperson for the UN human rights office. Activists and doctors on the ground say the death toll is likely far higher. The war has displaced more than 4.3 million people, including some 3.2 million within the country, said William Spindler, a spokesperson for the UNHCR refugee agency.

The UN has documented at least 28 incidents of rape, Throssell said, but that is believed to be fewer than the actual number. Earlier this month, Amnesty International accused both sides of committing extensive war crimes, including deliberate killings of civilians and mass sexual assault. The group said almost all rape cases were blamed on the RSF and its allied Arab

militias. The UN humanitarian aid coordinator said its appeal for \$2.57 billion for aid into Sudan has received only \$651 million, while UNHCR said its appeal for \$566 million has brought in just under \$175 million. "For four gruesome months, the people of Sudan have been engulfed in a war that is destroying their lives and their homeland and violating their basic human rights," leaders of the organizations said in a joint statement. "People are dying because they cannot access health care services and medicine. And now, because of the war, Sudan's children are wasting away for lack of food and nutrition," it said. A recent uptick in violence in South Darfur state has made aid deliveries to the remote area difficult, said David MacDonald, aid group Care International's regional director for east and southern Africa.

Dozens were killed in the Kumbur area of the state last week during a raid by Arab tribesmen in RSF vehicles, a Sudanese legal group said. Previous attempts to halt the violence failed. There have been at least nine ceasefire agreements between the warring parties, brokered largely by Washington and Riyadh in the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah during May and June, but all foundered.

## Russian drones threaten Ukraine's key ports

MOSCOW (Agencies): Ukraine's air force said a wave of Russian military drones had entered the mouth of the Danube River and were headed towards the country's Izmail river port near the border with Romania. Social media groups monitoring the war reported hearing air defence systems firing in the area near Ukraine's Danube ports of Izmail and Reni early on Wednesday morning.

The governor of southern Odesa region, Oleh Kiper, asked residents of Izmail district to take shelter at around 1:30 a.m. (22:30 GMT) and cancelled the air raid alert one hour later. Ukraine's Danube River ports accounted for around a quarter of all grain exports from Ukraine before Russia recently pulled out of a deal allowing safe passage for the export of Ukrainian grain via the country's Black Sea ports. Danube River ports have now become the main export route, with grain shipments sent on barges from Ukraine across the Danube to Romania and its Black Sea port of Constanta for onward shipment. A Russian attack on the Izmail port in early August sent global food prices higher. The attack on by Russian drones on Ukraine's Izmail port earlier this month was so intense that it reportedly shattered windows in Romanian villagers located across the Danube, according to an Al Jazeera reporter. Russia's defence ministry also said on Wednesday that air defence systems had destroyed three Ukrainian drones early over the country's Kaluga region. There were no casualties and no damage in the attempted attack which took place at around 5 am Moscow time (02:00 GMT), the ministry added. The Kaluga region is located southwest of Moscow.

## Three Bulgarians arrested

LONDON (Agencies): Three Bulgarian citizens living in the United Kingdom who were arrested in February on suspicion of espionage offences on behalf of Russia have been charged with possessing false identity documents, police said. London's Metropolitan Police confirmed that Orlin Roussev, 45, Bizer Dzhambazov, 42, and Katrin Ivanova, 32, were taken into custody after they appeared late last month in the Central Criminal Court in London, according to news reports.

The trio is suspected of working for Russian security services, the BBC and other UK media have reported. The charges allege the three had false documents among 34 pieces of identification in their possession. The BBC reported that the documents, including passports and identity cards, were from the UK, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Spain, Croatia, Slovenia, Greece and the Czech Republic.

According to the BBC, the three were detained by "counter-terrorism detectives from the Metropolitan Police, which has national policing responsibility for espionage, and are due to answer police bail in September".

But there was no immediate confirmation by authorities of reports the arrests were made because of suspicion of links to the Russian security services. The other two arrested, a 31-year-old man and 29-year-old woman, both from London, were released on bail and are due in court next month. No pleas have been entered for the three people charged. Their next court date has not been set. The BBC said the three had been living in the UK for years.

The Metropolitan Police is the UK's biggest police force and has national responsibility for matters involving espionage. Online news site Balkan Insight said one of the suspects had a history of business dealings with Russia and previously had a role as an adviser in Bulgaria's energy ministry in 2008-09 when it was led by a pro-Kremlin Bulgarian minister.

## NK claims 'abuse, racism' drove US soldier to defect

SEOUL (AFP): Travis King defected to North Korea to escape "mistreatment and racial discrimination in the US Army", state media said Wednesday. Pyongyang's first official confirmation they are holding the American soldier. A private second class with a checkered disciplinary record, King was due to fly back to America in July but instead slipped out of the airport, joined a tourist trip to the DMZ and ran across the border into the North.

The United States has previously said that King crossed the border intentionally and without authorisation, and Pyongyang said Wednesday that King "admitted that he illegally intruded", the Korean Central News Agency reported. "Travis King confessed that he had decided to come over to the DPRK as he harbored ill feeling against inhuman maltreatment and racial discrimination within the US Army," KCNA added.

King "came to be kept under control by soldiers of the Korean People's Army" after he crossed the border, KCNA said. "He also expressed his willingness to seek refugee in the DPRK or a third country, saying that he was disillusioned at the unequal American society," KCNA said, adding that a government investigation was still ongoing. The United Nations Command, which oversees the armistice that ended fighting in the Korean War, confirmed last month it had begun a conversation with the North over King.

But US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said at the time that while contact had been made with the North Koreans, Washington still had no idea where King was or in what condition. - Propaganda opportunity - North Korea's first official comment on King is pure propaganda, Soo Kim, policy practice area lead at LMI Consulting and former CIA analyst, told AFP. King's crossing into North



Korea provided the Kim regime an opportunity in several ways, the first of which is, of course, the potential for negotiations with the US over King's release," she said, adding that Pyongyang were "tough negotiators", so it would not be easy for Washington to secure his release. Pyongyang has a long history of detaining Americans and using them as bargaining chips in bilateral negotiations. "It's also an opportunity for the regime propaganda to do its thing -- to spin the situation in such a way as to criticise the US and express Pyongyang's deep-rooted hostility towards Washington," she added.

Just before they issued their comments on King, KCNA put out a statement criticising discussion of Pyongyang's rights record at the United Nations, in which it described America as "the anti-people empire of evils, totally depraved due to all sorts of social evils". "Not content with conniving at and fostering racial discrimination, gun-related crimes, child maltreatment and forced labor rampant in its society, the US has imposed unethical human rights standards on other countries and fomented internal unrest and confusion," the

statement reads. Vladimir Tikhonov, professor of Korean studies at the University of Oslo, told AFP that because King "is Black, I would imagine that he possesses certain propaganda value for North Koreans". "The white racism and mistreatment of Blacks is a point North Korean propaganda traditionally emphasises, all the time since the Korean War, so King may be used to amplify this message," he said.

King crossing the border comes as relations between the two Koreas are at one of their lowest points ever, with diplomacy stalled and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un calling for increased weapons development, including of tactical nuclear warheads. Seoul, Tokyo and Washington are set to hold a trilateral summit at the US presidential retreat in Maryland, during which the leaders are expected to announce plans for expanding military cooperation against Pyongyang's nuclear threats. The summit "will set a new milestone in trilateral cooperation contributing to peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and in the Indo-Pacific region," South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol said.

## Poland holds huge military parade as war rages in neighbouring Ukraine

WARSAW (Agencies): NATO member Poland held its biggest military parade since the Cold War in an event that marked victory over Soviet forces in 1920 and showcased the country's state-of-the-art weaponry as war rages in neighbouring Ukraine and defence takes centre-stage ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for October.

The Armed Forces Day parade marked the 103rd anniversary of Poland's victory over the Soviet Union's Red Army in the Battle of Warsaw in 1920, during which Polish troops defeated Bolshevik forces advancing on Europe. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has made boosting the Polish armed forces a priority for the country's ruling nationalists Law and Justice (PiS). With the country's election campaign in full swing, the immense display of military hardware provided a chance for the government to promote its security credentials.

"The defence of our eastern border, the border of the European Union and of NATO is today a key element of Poland's state interest," Poland's President Andrzej Duda, the chief

commander of the armed forces, said in his opening speech at the event. Crowds, waving national white-and-red flags, gathered in scorching temperatures that reached 35C (95F) to see United States-made Abrams tanks, HIMARS mobile artillery systems and Patriot missile systems on parade through the streets of the capital. Also on display were F-16 fighter planes, South Korean FA-50 fighters and K9 howitzers. A US Air Force F-35 roared overhead in a sign Poland was also buying these advanced fighter planes. Polish-made equipment including Krab tracked gun howitzers and Rosomak armoured transporters were also featured.

Some 2,000 troops from Poland and other NATO countries took part in the parade as well as 200 military vehicles and other equipment and almost 100 aircraft. "August 15 is not only an opportunity to pay homage to the heroes of the victorious Battle of Warsaw and to thank contemporary soldiers for defending our homeland," Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak told troops and onlookers who had gathered near the Vistula River. "It is also a perfect day to

show our strength, to show that we have built powerful armed forces that will effectively defend our borders without hesitation," he said.

Poland's army has more than 175,000 troops, an increase from approximately 100,000 eight years ago, Duda said. He also said Poland's defence budget this year will be a record 137 billion zlotys (\$34bn) or some 4 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), the highest proportion in all of NATO. "The goal of this huge modernisation is to equip Poland's armed forces and create such a defence system that no one ever dares attack us, that Polish soldiers will never need to fight," Duda said, while voicing his respect for the military. Responding to criticism that Poland, a nation of some 37 million, was taking out huge loans to make the purchases, Duda said: "We cannot afford to be idle. This is why we are strengthening our armed forces here and now." "The security of Poles is priceless," he added.

Al Jazeera's Osama Bin Javadi, reporting from Warsaw, said that more than 100 years since the war with Soviet forces, "a

shadow of war" looms once again on Poland's borders. "And that is why the government continues to tell its people that it needs a strong, powerful army," he said. Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Poland's conservative government has focused on strengthening the armed forces and spent more than \$16bn on tanks, missile interceptor systems and fighter jets, many bought from the US and South Korea. Poland has a border to the east with the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad; with Lithuania, a fellow NATO member; and with Russia's key ally Belarus as well as with Ukraine. Military upgrades have bolstered Poland's defence capabilities and some items replaced Soviet- and Russian-made equipment that Poland provided to Ukraine in its fight against Russia.

Poland is building one of Europe's strongest armies to beef up deterrence against potential aggressors and has increased the number of troops to some 10,000 along its border with Belarus, where it has also built a wall to stop migrants arriving from that direction.

## Argentina primary results reflect frustrations, desire for change

BUENOS AIRES (Agencies): Argentina's open presidential primaries are often criticised as a waste of money and time, but this week they gave the economically struggling South American nation a striking look in the mirror. Acting as a litmus test in the run-up to general elections in October, the vote clearly showed just how much Argentines want change - and how many of them are ready to shake up the wider political system to get it, analysts said.

Javier Milei, a far-right libertarian candidate who has taken the country by storm, drew in the most support - 30 percent - and far more than any poll had predicted, raising questions around his appeal and what his rise means for the country. They are not right-wing votes. They are votes that are free of politics," said Carlos Fara, a political analyst in the capital, Buenos Aires, who told Al Jazeera that support for Milei is not ideologically driven. Instead, the candidate has drawn support from both ends of the political spectrum and held a strong appeal among young voters, especially young men. "This voter is looking for a hope

for the future, and they have found that in Milei," Fara said. An economist and legislator, Milei burst into Argentinian national politics two years ago when he founded his Libertad Avanza (Liberty Advances) party to support his first campaign for Congress.

Before that, he was a media pundit known for his eccentric look - with a mop of hair that earned the nickname "the wig" - and tirades against socialism, which he said has "infected" society and government. His approach has earned him comparisons to former US President Donald Trump and former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, the latter of whom published a video last week declaring his support of Milei. Most recently, his long-standing message that a "useless, parasitic, [and] criminal political caste" is to blame for all of Argentina's woes has resonated with voters. "Society has found a vehicle that allows it to find a solution to the failure of politics," the 52-year-old said - referring to himself - in a radio interview, admitting that even he was surprised by his strong showing in the primaries. "We are the force with the most votes because we are

the true opposition, the only ones who want true change," he said.

His best-known campaign promises include using the United States dollar as official currency in Argentina and abolishing the country's central bank, but he also has proposed dramatically cutting taxes, slashing public spending, eliminating various ministries, imposing user fees in public health, and making fundamental changes to public education. Milei has also expressed support for loosening gun laws, said he would hold a referendum on whether legalised abortion should be abolished, and said he believes the sale of organs should be legal. His proposals represent a radical departure for Argentina, a country with robust public institutions, strong worker protections, and some of the most socially progressive policies in Latin America - and that's exactly what many are saying the country needs. Struggling to pay off a \$44bn debt to the International Monetary Fund, and with dwindling reserves, a peso that has plummeted in value, 40 percent of people living under the poverty line and skyrocketing inflation,

Argentina has been stuck in a series of economic crises that have driven many to chronic states of desperation.

The government devalued the official currency by 22 percent, suggesting that prices - which have jumped 115 percent in the last year - are sure to keep escalating. Valeria Brusco, a political scientist based in the province of Cordoba who studies Milei, said the results of the primaries in Argentina are evidence of a larger trend in which people have lost all patience and are opting for more radical solutions. "We are in times of ephemeral support, of urgent demands for better results in public policies and of great economic concentration that seems to have translated into this enormous frustration," she told Al Jazeera.

"Yesterday someone told me, 'I feel disgusted by the usual politicians because what they have always done is what has brought us here.'" Brusco added that when she asks Argentines about Milei's specific proposals, the response she most often gets is: "Well, I don't know, they may be bad, but at least I don't know them."

## HRs commission denounces murder of politician

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has condemned the assassination of a third Ecuadorian politician in less than a month, calling for an end to the bloodshed. In a social media post, the organisation wrote that it "urges the state [of Ecuador] to diligently investigate and strengthen measures to prevent political violence".

The latest shooting took place, outside the coastal city of Esmeraldas. Pedro Briones, a local leader for the left-wing Citizen Revolution Movement, was gunned down outside his home in the rural San Mateo parish, according to the newspaper El Universo. Two suspects reportedly approached Briones on a motorcycle, shooting him in the neck. He was pronounced dead at a nearby hospital. Ecuador is days away from holding snap elections on August 20, after President Guillermo Lasso used his constitutional power to dissolve the National Assembly and end his presidency in May. But the country has recently seen a spike in homicide and drug crime as drug cartels increasingly take advantage of Ecuador's prime location, on the coast between cocaine-producing

regions in Peru and Colombia.

Briones hailed from the same political party as the frontrunner for the presidency, Luisa González. In the wake of his death, she and other party leaders took to social media to remember the political organiser. "Ecuador is living through its bloodiest era," González wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. "We owe this to the total abandonment of an inept government and a state taken over by mafias." She called for "urgent" change, promising a "strong hand against crime". "Mano dura" or "strong hand" anti-crime tactics have found renewed popularity in certain parts of Latin America, including El Salvador, where President Nayib Bukele has suspended civil liberties to orchestrate a mass crackdown on gang violence. In Ecuador, other leading presidential candidates like the conservative businessman Jan Topi? - whom critics call the "Ecuadorian Bukele" - have likewise campaigned with tough-on-crime platforms, particularly in the wake of the recent violence. "How many more leaders, how many more citizens must fall for this violence that we're living through to cease?" Topi? wrote on X. "This has to

change! We are going to apply a strong hand to criminals to restore peace to our country."

Briones's death occurred less than a week after a presidential candidate was killed in a separate shooting. National Assembly member Fernando Villavicencio was concluding a presidential campaign stop in the capital Quito when he was shot in the head on August 9. And on July 23, Agustín Intriago, who had recently been reelected as mayor of the port city Manta, was killed when a gunman allegedly drove by in a stolen pick-up truck. A local football player, Ariana Estefanía Chancay, was also killed in the attack. Police continue to investigate the shootings and six Colombian suspects have been arrested so far for Villavicencio's assassination. A seventh reportedly died during the shooting when Villavicencio's security detail responded to the attack with gunfire.

Villavicencio, a former journalist, had been an outspoken critic of corruption, particularly during the administration of former President Rafael Correa. His death featured prominently in a debate between the remaining candidates, who touted their solutions to the rise in violent crime.

## Taiwan VP on China military action

BANGKOK (Agencies): Taiwan's Vice President William Lai has said any Chinese military action in response to his stopovers in the United States as part of a visit to Paraguay would be China's attempt to interfere in the island's forthcoming presidential elections. Lai, who will be the ruling party's candidate in January, made the comments in Paraguay where he attended the inauguration of President Santiago Peña.

He travelled to Paraguay, one of Taiwan's few remaining formal diplomatic allies, via New York and is expected to return via San Francisco. Lai told reporters such stopovers were routine and China had no cause to use them as an excuse to "verbally and militarily intimidate Taiwan", the island's official Central News Agency reported. "If China uses the transits as an excuse to again launch verbal and military intimidation or other threatening methods, it just confirms international media reports that China is

attempting to intervene in Taiwan's election with military threats," the news agency cited Lai as saying. Beijing claims the self-ruled island as its own territory and has not ruled out the use of force to achieve its goal.

Taiwanese officials have said China could launch military drills as soon as this week. In the week leading up to Lai's departure for Paraguay, incursions by the Chinese military around the island's waters and airspace - which have been happening nearly every day in the past year - were larger than usual. Lai, who is the frontrunner for the January election, has in the past described himself as a "practical worker for Taiwan independence" and says it is up to the people of Taiwan to decide their future. Taiwan's defence ministry said it had yet to see any large-scale Chinese manoeuvres near the island. In April, China began war games around Taiwan after President Tsai Ing-wen met with US House of Representatives

Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California on her way back from Central America. It also held large-scale military exercises after McCarthy's predecessor, Nancy Pelosi, visited Taipei. China has condemned Lai's New York stop and described him as a separatist "troublemaker". Taiwan and the US have sought to keep Lai's US stopovers low key and Lai said there were "no special arrangements" to meet US officials. "There is no reason to over-torque this transit into anything escalatory," US State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel told reporters.

He said it was the 11th time in 20 years that a Taiwanese vice president had travelled through the US, which maintains formal ties with Beijing as well as a strong relationship with Taiwan. "This is consistent with our One China policy. We are not interested in deviating from the status quo," Patel said. It should not be "any kind of pretext or coercion or provocative activity", he added.



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# Two years of Afghanistan ruled Taliban

THE Taliban government marked the second anniversary of its sovereign takeover of the country on Tuesday. The interim Afghan government, its barely armed military and common supporters celebrated this occasion by arranging military parades in the national capital Kabul, and other major cities including Kandhar, the cradle of the Taliban movement, from where Taliban Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada ruled the country by decree. The flags of Islamic Emirate flew at full mast across the capital, official ceremonies, and political rallies were held to commemorate the revival of Islamic Emirate and reconquest of the Taliban rule for the second time in the country's history.

The Afghan nation has marked two full years of its liberation from foreign occupation and Taliban rulers have successfully completed two calendar years in power after the last American soldier left the country on a dark summer night of August 2021. In fact, it was a great victory for the Taliban movement who fought back against the US-led global coalition for nearly two decades and regained its rule in Afghanistan. Although, it came in the result of months long political negotiations, yet Taliban's unceasing and prolonged armed resistances was the vital force behind politically engineered unilateral withdrawal of Foreign forces from the country. There had been a mixed reaction from the Afghan populus regarding the pros and cons of Country's liberation, because that transpose could not bring any change for the common Afghan and those economic woes and social problems increased many folds after the Cleric regime took the ruins of the government in Afghanistan.

Historically, Taliban assumed the charge of the government with futile economic and humanitarian conditions, the US-backed government collapsed and its leaders fled into exile with bags full of US dollars, Pound Sterling and gold. The international community continues to grapple with the prospects for their dealing with the Taliban authorities, however the US led western nations restored to punitive measures including reimposition of the global sanctions against Islamic Emirate and freeze of Afghan assets abroad, that unleashed unprecedented economic challenges to interim rulers and inflicted a heavy price on the people of Afghanistan. Although, Pakistan and other Muslim nations including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE played an adorable role in mobilizing the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to timely channelize economic, legal and technical assistance to Afghanistan that remained crucial in avoiding an humanitarian disaster and reinstating the Afghan banking system in the country. However, all those sincere efforts were insufficient for bringing a revolution in an aid-ridden economy of Afghanistan.

Onset of those monetary, economic and diplomatic challenges, the Taliban interim authorities failed to focus on national issues including the need for political inclusiveness, economic revival, maintenance of law and order, improvement of foreign relations, and fulfillment of obligations under the Doha agreement that paved the way for restoration of the Taliban rule in the country. There had been some efforts by the Afghan rulers for construction of several multilateral trans-Afghan connectivity and energy transportation projects that needed bulk investment which was not possible in Taliban ruled Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the cleric regime resorted to cosmetary political measures by putting a curb on women's rights, squeezing civil liberties, imposing a ban on girls education and work that attracted worldwide outrage from civil society, human rights defenders and nations around the globe. Realistically, those policies had multiplied the political and economic cost for a common Afghan instead of bringing a positive change in their lives. Meanwhile, Taliban reunion and hosting of foreign banned terrorist outfits strained their relations with neighboring countries including Pakistan and caused serious security, political and diplomatic challenges for crises hit Afghanistan.

As of today, the Afghan nation is embattled with chronic issues relating to its social and civic life, livelihood and access to fundamental rights, while an all time high sense of insecurity and deprived ness overwhelmed their lives. Change of government and system could not improve their condition, failed to end their sufferings and stopped halfmst away from visualizing peace and economic growth. The Afghan nation has suffered utmost over the past four decades, now it deserves peace, and prosperity. The Taliban rulers must review their policies and governance style so they can bring a fundamental change in their nation, that is not only a desire of the Afghan public but a quest of all well wishers of Afghanistan.

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# As Ukraine uses cluster munitions, a 50-year-old lesson it must remember

Jim Laurie

**I**n a very clear day, 12 years after the United States war was over, the Khmer Rouge had been deposed and the "killing fields" murders had ended, I flew in a small plane over eastern Cambodia. One, two, three... 10, 11, 12... I kept counting. I lost count of the number of water-filled B-52 bomb craters I could see. Fifty years ago, on August 15, after pressure from the US Congress, then-President Richard Nixon agreed to end all bombing of Cambodia. The bombardment of neighbouring Laos had ended a few months earlier.

In October 2006, a macabre competition developed. Scholars at Yale University reviewing wartime US Air Force archives revealed that Cambodia had been attacked even more extensively than originally thought. From bases in Thailand and Guam, B-52 Stratofortress's as well as smaller aircraft flew more than 230,000 sorties dropping 2,756,941 tonnes of deadly explosives on 113,716 targets in Cambodia. Previously, Laos had claimed the dubious distinction of "most-bombed nation". US planes rained down 2,093,100 tonnes there. Those numbers, of course, must be compared with the tonnes of all kinds of air-delivered explosives and incendiaries striking North and South Vietnam during 20 years of war - a number estimated at more than 5 million.

The air raids began against Laos in 1964 and Cambodia in 1965, at a time both were technically "neutral" in the war next door. Bombing sharply escalated in 1969-70 and continued until 1973. In the early stages, both Presidents Johnson and Nixon carried the campaigns out "secretly". While clearly not a secret to those being attacked, both US administrations denied information to Congress and the media and claimed the attacks were on targets in Vietnam. The deadliest single B-52 strike in Cambodia occurred only a week before the bombing halt. In what was described

at the time as a "targeting accident", 20 tonnes of explosives were dropped on the Mekong River town of Neak Luong, killing or critically wounding 405 civilians.

Mistakes came as no surprise to the Yale data analysts. The intent, of course, was to cripple Communist forces to preserve US allies - the governments of Cambodia in Phnom Penh and South Vietnam in Saigon. In the race to bomb as much as possible in the final weeks, the US Air

used in Operation Desert Storm in Iraq in 1991, the M117 has been retired from use.

Arguably more deadly then and in the long term, were the CBU-58 cluster-type munitions that the US still stockpiles today. The Lao and Khmer people called them "bombies". Then and now, a single warhead can contain 500 or more small bomblets. What the military calls "submunitions" average about six inches (15cm) long and weigh under four pounds

bomblets look like and know who to call if they find anything". The 2010 Convention on Cluster Munitions signed by 123 nations was supposed to prohibit the use, development, acquisition, stockpiling or transfer of cluster munitions. The biggest manufacturers, Russia and the US, as well as other countries like China and Ukraine, however, refused to sign the convention.

Whether US- or Russian-sourced, cluster bombs have been used since 2010 in Afghanistan, Libya, Sudan, Yemen and Syria. And that is but a partial listing. When US President Joe Biden approved the transfer of cluster munitions to Ukraine last month, he described it as a "very difficult decision" but that "it was needed". The Ukrainians say the munitions will be highly effective against infantry, artillery and truck convoys. Yet, it is probably not what is actually needed now but rather what is available. Cluster weapon stockpiles are there. Stocks of other weapons are low, depleted by the supply to Ukraine to fight Russian aggression. A Pentagon announcement says that Ukraine will receive artillery-delivered cluster munitions, indicating the US will not provide air-delivered cluster bombs. Still, the provision of these weapons will no doubt encourage the Russians to use more of their cluster bombs in an escalation of airstrikes that have already hit civilian-occupied Ukrainian apartment buildings.

Russia and Ukraine are focused on the immediate battles and the inches of territory they can occupy or free, respectively. But history tells us that the continuing proliferation of these munitions may well leave an impact lasting long after the current war is over. The governments giving and using "bombies" are setting up the next generation for unnecessary deaths. At a minimum, there will need to be a dangerous munitions cleanup when the war is over. The same governments supplying Ukraine with these weapons will need to help it then, again.

(1.8kg). They burst from their warheads and fall in clusters over wide areas. The horrific post-war danger is that the bombies have a high dud rate. Up to 40 percent of the munitions fail to explode. It's estimated somewhere between 9 and 27 million submunitions in Indochina remain unexploded today. The populations of Cambodia and Laos grew significantly as peace prevailed and post-war recovery gained slow progress in the early 2000s. Looking for land to farm, people began moving into the regions most bombed. The number of accidental deaths soared into the tens of thousands as more civilians began to discover the deadly unexploded ordnance (UXOs).

Since 1995, from his base in Hanoi, US Army veteran Chuck Searcy has been working on efforts, mainly in Quang Tri, Vietnam, to eradicate UXOs. "Across the region", Searcy told me, "the most tragic cases occur when children pick up 50-year-old bomblets, use them as toys, and lose life or limbs". Searcy says he is now involved in primary school education projects to ensure that "children know what

***They drove many civilians to support the Communists. And most enduringly, the bombing has continued to kill people for the 50 years that have passed since the air assaults ended. Two types of ordnance were most often used.***

Force found itself with too many assets in Thailand and too few targets in Cambodia. The Yale study found that 10 percent of all raids were indiscriminate, designated in the official records as "target unknown". The Americans concentrated much of their firepower on relatively underpopulated areas of Cambodia and Laos, which were being used as staging areas for North Vietnamese forces.

No definitive accounting of those killed - military or civilian - is available but the Yale scholars put the civilian casualties at a minimum of 150,000 dead over eight years in Cambodia. In Laos, perhaps half that. The US munitions, dropped often at night from 32,000 feet, accomplished three things. They delayed by perhaps two years the victories of the North Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge. They drove many civilians to support the Communists. And most enduringly, the bombing has continued to kill people for the 50 years that have passed since the air assaults ended. Two types of ordnance were most often used. The 750-pound M117 Iron bomb caused many of those craters I saw. Last

# US president bets on 'Bidenomics' in reelection bid

Kerry Boyd Anderson

**T**HIS summer, US President Joe Biden and his advisers have started promoting "Bidenomics" as a key message in his reelection campaign. It is unclear if the concept will gain traction among voters; if it does, it presents both opportunity and risk for Biden.

Bidenomics is a relatively new term that few Americans so far understand. To some extent, it is a grab bag of economic goodies - Biden's efforts to claim credit for anything good in the economy. That is hardly unusual, as most presidents try to claim credit for economic progress while trying to avoid blame for economic problems.

However, the concept of Bidenomics is starting to take shape. Biden and his team have repeatedly emphasized building the economy "from the middle out and the bottom up." This is a direct and intentional rejection of the classic Republican idea of trickle-down economics.

Republican economic policy has often assumed that easing regulations and taxes on wealthy Americans and large corporations will help drive investment in the broader economy and thus eventually benefit the middle and lower classes. The Trump administration's major legislative achievement - reforming the tax system - is an example, as the largest and most permanent tax cuts went to corporations and wealthy individuals.

Democrats have long criticized this economic approach and Bidenomics explicitly takes a different approach. It is focused on using government investment in infrastructure, research and development, and expanding the social safety net in order to boost economic growth, including both public and private investment. Biden is willing to increase taxes on large corporations and the wealthy to help fund public investment, while avoiding tax increases for the middle class.

Bidenomics focuses public investment on areas that the president sees as crucial to generating economic growth that benefits most Americans. Key areas include infrastructure, semiconductors and clean energy. The White House has taken steps to try to ensure that much of that investment stays within the US, hoping to increase manufacturing jobs for Americans and reduce the country's dependence on foreign supply chains.

Other key elements of Bidenomics include "empowering workers" through public investment in various types of education and strengthening unions, as well as steps to boost competition, including boosting efforts to enforce antitrust rules.

Biden also took a lesson from his time as vice president, when the US was trying to recover from the Great Recession. He believes that the government should have acted more quickly and with more money to fuel the recovery. In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, he preferred to go big, including additional stimulus through the American Rescue Plan. Despite warnings that such measures could contribute to inflation, Biden chose to use fiscal tools to fuel

recovery while leaving monetary measures to control inflation to the Fed. Biden and his team believe that Bidenomics worked. Since the pandemic, the US has experienced faster economic recovery than its peer economies. In the second quarter of this year, gross domestic product growth was 2.4 percent, exceeding many expectations. The inflation rate has declined and core inflation is lower than in most other advanced economies. Unemployment is about 3.5 percent, a historically low rate. The economy continues to create new jobs. Crucially, wages began to rise faster than prices in the spring for the first time in two years. The White House argues that key legislative accomplishments - notably, the 2021 American Rescue Plan, the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act - have played major roles in driving economic and job growth.

There is a lot of truth in Biden's claims about economic progress, but there is also exaggeration and selective use of data, as is typical. Republicans criticize Biden's claims and economic policies, arguing that his policies expand government's role in the economy and fuel inflation. However, what will really shape the 2024 election is how voters feel about the economy. The accuracy of statistics and economic claims has little to do with electoral outcomes, while public perceptions play a major role. Voters are not as driven by their wallets as many political analysts claim, but it is one important factor. Inflation is often the most poignant economic problem for voters; although the annual inflation rate has declined to 3.2 percent, Americans were shocked by the highest inflation in decades - hitting 9.1 percent in 2022 - and still feel the effects of higher prices.

The experience of inflation and other factors has led to very low approval ratings for Biden's management of the economy. Some polls have shown a gradual improvement in public perceptions of the economy, but approval of Biden's economic management remained around 37 percent in recent polls. A recent CNN poll also found that 51 percent of Americans believe the economy is getting worse. While economic indicators clearly suggest an improving economy with many positive elements, some of that improvement is recent and many Americans are not yet feeling it. Democrats also have to fight against a long-standing perception among many Americans that Republicans perform better on economic issues. By promoting Bidenomics, the president is placing a big bet on economic outcomes, even though any president has limited control over the economy. If Americans feel significantly better about the economy by November 2024, Bidenomics could play a major role in helping Biden win reelection. However, if Americans' attitudes toward the economy do not improve - let alone if they worsen - the Republican Party will be sure to benefit.

Arab News

# Western media's Africa narrative is distorted

Ramzy Baroud

**R**ACISM goes beyond the use of certain words or the discriminatory practices of everyday life. It is also about political perceptions, intellectual depictions, and collective relationships. Consider the way that Africa is currently portrayed in the news. From a political viewpoint, Africa is seen as a totality, and not in a positive way, as in a united Africa.

For example, mainstream Western media coverage of the US-Africa Summit, held in Washington last December, presented all of Africa as poor and desperate. The continent, one can glean from headlines, was also willing to pawn its political position in the Russia-Nato conflict, in exchange for money and food. "Biden tells African leaders US is 'all in' on the continent," an Associated Press headline announced on December 15. The

phrase 'all in' - a lingo used in Poker when someone is willing to risk it all - was cited many times in the US and Western media. Biden offered unconditional US commitment "to supporting every aspect of Africa's growth," AP reported. Biden is actually trying to outbid Russia's support for Africa. When a Russia-Africa Summit took place on July 27-28, US-western media lashed out.

A CNN headline began with "Isolated Putin ..." while a Reuters headline read "Putin promises African leaders free grain." Very little mention was made of African leaders spending much time discussing a possible role in finding a peaceful resolution to the war underway in Ukraine. Indeed, several African leaders articulated a sincere political discourse, rejecting imperialism, neo-colonialism and military interventions. Moreover, there was little media dis-

cussion that Africa, like Europe, can negotiate a stronger political position in world affairs.

Instead, the coverage seemed to centre around the Black Sea Grains Initiative - brokered in July 2022 - insinuating that Russia is threatening food security in an already impoverished continent. But this was hardly the case. In a speech at the Economic Forum in Vladivostok last September, Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that, of the 87 grain-loaded ships, only 60,000 tons out of two million reached the United Nations' World Food Program.

Though Putin's overall figures were contested, the UN's Joint Coordination Centre (JCC) said in a statement published in Euronews that "Putin is correct to say only a small amount has been shipped under the World Food Program." Even

though Western countries have been the largest recipients of grains shipped through the Black Sea, no mainstream media has made it a mission to depict Europeans as starving populations, or worse. Additionally, the blame is never on Europe, its colonialism, arms, and political meddling. Yet, the blame is readily assigned elsewhere.

This headline in 'The Conversation' is a good illustration: "Putin offers unconvincing giveaways in a desperate bid to make up for killing the Ukraine grain deal." The bias is astonishing. The truth is that African leaders were not looking for 'giveaways' but were hoping to negotiate a stronger geopolitical position in a vastly changing global political map. Just like everybody else. Whether Putin's "bid" in Africa was "desperate" or not, matters little. The bias, however, becomes

clear when the alleged Russian desperation is compared to the outcome of the US-Africa summit last year. Biden's 'bid' was presented as an attempt at building bridges and creating opportunities for future cooperation.

The mischaracterisation of Africa can also be viewed independently from the Russia-Ukraine war. Take, for example, the way Western media dealt with the Niger military coup on July 26. Niger is part of the Sahel countries in Africa, a stretch of nations that have all been colonised by France. Decades after these countries gained nominal independence, Paris continued to exert political influence and economic control. This is called neocolonialism. It ensures the wealth of former colonies continues to be exploited.

In fact, Niger's wealth of uranium ore has helped fuel more than a fourth of the EU's nuclear energy plants,

and much of France's. A decade ago, France returned to the Sahel region as a military force, in the name of fighting Jihadists. Yet, violence grew, with coups in Central African Republic, then Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, and, finally, Niger. Little of that context features in the coverage of Western media. Instead, like Mali and the others, Niger is depicted in negative light. The West's problematic relationship with Africa is complex, rooted in colonialism and economic exploitation. Africans are good 'allies' when they toe the Western line but become 'easily manipulated' when they reject the West's conditions. It is time to rethink and confront this demeaning perception. Africa, like all other political spaces, is a complicated, complex region, deserving of deep understanding and appreciation, beyond West's self-serving agendas.

Gulf News



# Niger coup: Will the West change its security approach to Sahel?

Ismail Numan Telci & Fuat Emir Sefkatli

UNTIL the recent military takeover in July 2023, Niger had played a key role in the security architecture of the West, particularly the United States and France, in the Sahel region. Niger hosts US and French military bases, while international support in different fields has increased exponentially in recent years. For example, take the 500 million euros (\$546m) provided by the European Union in 2021, 120 million euros (\$131m) of aid from France in 2022 or \$150m of direct aid announced during US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Niamey in March 2023.

This is one of the reasons why Niger had a relatively secure environment that did not allow violent armed activities to a large extent. Even though casualties from "terrorist attacks" increased worldwide after 2021, the loss of civilians in Niger decreased by 80 percent in 2022. However, the military coups in Mali (2020, 2021), Guinea (2021), Burkina Faso (2022) and most recently in Niger (2023) in the last three years have raised questions about the strategy behind the large-scale military engagements of the US and France in the region. These military interventions have helped solidify anti-Westernism in the region and gave room for Russia and China, perceived by the West as strategic rivals, to expand their influence. On the other hand, non-state armed groups (NSAGs) - whether state-sponsored civil defence units, militia groups or organisations such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in

the Greater Sahara (ISGS) - have spread their reach. They have morphed into de facto sovereign authority or "proto-states" in the regions they control.

All of this may force Western decision-makers to rethink their security policies in the Sahel. The US has a drone base in Agadez, Niger, affiliated with its Africa Command or AFRICOM. It is responsible for conducting surveillance and intelligence gathering in the Sahel. The base's location has been contingent on a stable government and secure environment in the country. As that equation changes, the US might reconsider its policy. Nonetheless, the US might come to depend even more on AFRICOM than on its 1,000-strong force in Niger - as it did in Libya after 2012. After the death of then-US Ambassador Chris Stevens as a result of the attack in Benghazi, the US changed its security policies in Libya, reduced its military engagements to a minimum, and let AFRICOM oversee its interests in the country. A similar scenario could materialise in Niger.

For US decision-makers, Vietnam and Afghanistan are examples of "protracted wars" that they will not want to repeat in regions that are not a priority for US foreign policy. In this respect, the US might view the costs of positioning itself as a dominant security enforcer against violent extremism in the region as outweighing benefits, at least in the short-to-middle term. This approach would lay the groundwork for realist policies that move away from the rhetoric that rival states such as

Russia or China threaten Western interests and political values by expanding their sphere of influence. If the US views developments in Niger from this perspective, it would be surprising if it shifts its focus to the more democratic and economically prosperous West African states such as Ghana and Senegal. Limiting its activities in the region to remote intelligence and support in the form of consultations could be a rational and prudent choice for the US. France is another conventional security actor in the Sahel region. After the coup in Mali, France withdrew the soldiers deployed there and shifted a significant part of them to Niger.

Unlike the US, the presence of France in Niger is predicated on more concrete reasons. Safely accessing Niger's uranium resources for its own energy needs is one of France's economic interests in the country, while preserving its political hegemony rooted in its former colonial role remains a factor in the background.

However, the last three years have seen the emergence of a Pan-Africanism wave, centred around anti-Westernism, that has mobilised sections of the military and political elites in the Sahel countries and has highlighted anti-French sentiment as the most legitimate tool to seize power.

The inadequacy of France in the fight against armed violent groups despite seemingly having the means at its disposal has been an important argument in the overthrow of leaders who had close relations with France. After

the new military elites excluded France from local politics and the balance of power, the weakness of their militaries led them to seek out alternatives for the security provider role vacated by France. Russia's Wagner private military company has tried to in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Wagner, as a paramilitary group that is not liable to any legal procedure, approaches conflicts and crises with economic motivations and in compliance with the political agenda of those leaders who have hired it. At the same time, French efforts against armed groups in the Sahel, have also focused on only the military capacities of these groups, ignoring the equally important local networks, ethnic bases and socioeconomic connections that fuel their success. It is this that allows groups in the Sahel such as JNIM and ISGS to survive and thrive despite military operations that involve regional and international actors.

Due to their rapid decision-making abilities, they adapt quickly to the conditions, become embedded among the local people, and take advantage of opportunities by evaluating security vulnerabilities. All of this raises questions about a possible ECOWAS intervention in Niger in the coming days. The military administration in Niger has the support of Burkina Faso and Mali, so any international intervention is unlikely to materialise without support from France and the US. But will France and the US be ready to incur the costs of getting involved in Niger militarily? Or will they look to cut their losses and retreat from their approach to the Sahel?

# Why the Georgia indictment is hugely damaging to Trump

Jennifer Rodgers

**AFTER each criminal indictment of former President Donald Trump, pundits have said something to the effect of "this is the worst indictment yet." However, Trump's fourth indictment may, in fact, pose the greatest legal risk to him - both in terms of the nature of the charges and the jurisdiction in which those charges have been brought.**

On Monday, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis announced the fourth indictment against Trump - as well as 18 others - for alleged attempts to overturn the 2020 presidential election results in Georgia. The indictment paints an incredibly damning picture, alleging an organized attempt by the former president and his allies to undermine the fabric of American democracy - something even the most sympathetic defendant will not easily be able to fight. Trump has denied wrongdoing, as have the other defendants who have made public statements to date. The indictment is sweeping, invoking Georgia's version of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) and 40 other counts. Georgia's RICO law is a vehicle by which prosecutors can charge those committing crimes with acting as part of a larger criminal enterprise - and is the most important difference from special counsel Jack Smith's federal election interference case.

In the distant past, RICO was used primarily in mafia cases or against drug organizations, but more recently, prosecutors have used it to charge street gangs, political organizations and even more loosely aligned groups of people who organize themselves for the purpose of committing crimes. While this Georgia indictment does not provide the easy-to-read narrative that Smith gave us in the federal election interference case, the evidence here was exhaustively collected over more than two years. Willis and her team then laid it out in painstaking detail, noting which of the 19 defendants participated in the 161 charged actions under RICO.

The indictment describes eight ways in which the enterprise intended to achieve its criminal goals, including: making false

statements to state legislators; making false statements to state officials; the fake electors scheme; the harassment and intimidation of election workers like Ruby Freeman and her daughter, Shaye Moss; soliciting the Justice Department to make false statements; soliciting the vice president to unlawfully reject Electoral College votes; the unlawful breach of election equipment in Coffee County; and obstruction of justice to cover up the conspiracy. In both Georgia and under federal law, RICO requires prosecutors to prove the existence of and defendants' membership in an enterprise with criminal goals and a pattern of racketeering activity, defined by reference to a lengthy list of criminal statutes, which are called "predicate acts." To be convicted, each defendant must participate in two or more predicate acts, and Willis has charged that all 19 defendants committed two or more of the predicate acts as listed in the first count of the indictment.

The non-RICO charges, counts two through 41, mirror the predicate acts underlying the RICO offense and include soliciting a violation of oath by a public officer, false statements and writings, impersonating a public officer, forgery, perjury and conspiracies to defraud the state and to commit election fraud. Georgia's RICO statute differs from the federal version, however, in ways that made it applicable to the defendants' conduct in Georgia, when it would not have been applicable in the federal system. In Georgia, the list of predicate acts that comprise racketeering activity is lengthy, and includes the offenses listed above, which were a fit for the defendants' conduct. In the federal RICO statute, the definition of racketeering activity does not include crimes that are a good fit for the defendants' conduct, with the exception of one: obstruction of justice.

The use of RICO carries various benefits for prosecutors, including the ability to bring in evidence that otherwise might not be admissible in terms of geographic scope and timeframe, and the ability to tell a coherent and comprehensive story about the actions of all members of the enter-

prise, even if defendants exit the case before trial. For example, Willis charged dozens of overt acts that were committed in Washington, DC, Arizona, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Nevada and elsewhere. Importantly, even if the defendants to whom these and other acts are linked drop out of the case, Willis will be entitled to put in evidence of these incidents as part of the racketeering activity. RICO also carries sentencing benefits. A conviction under Georgia's RICO law would carry a mandatory minimum prison sentence of five years, and most of the other 40 charges in the indictment likewise involve mandatory minimum sentences of one year.

None of the other charged cases include a mandatory minimum, upping the stakes for a Georgia conviction not only for Trump, but his co-conspirators, who will be deciding in the coming weeks and months whether they want to take a plea deal that might help them avoid this consequence by allowing them to plead to a count without mandatory minimum penalties.

But charging a RICO case isn't the only benefit afforded to Willis. Since these charges have been brought in Georgia state court - and not federal court - neither Trump, should he win in 2024, nor any another Republican president can issue a pardon. Under Georgia law, a state pardon can only be given by a state pardon board - not the governor - and only after five years have passed following completion of the sentence.

In other words, unlike the federal indictments obtained by Smith, Trump winning the presidency again is not the death knell for Willis' case, just like it is not for Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's case. Still, though a 2024 Trump presidency would not categorically end prosecution in either state's jurisdiction, there are a variety of unsettled constitutional questions about whether a sitting presidency can be put on trial during his presidency and whether it would violate the separations of power for the judiciary branch - rather than the legislative branch - to effectively remove from him office by way of imprisonment.

CNN

# US hegemony and China's peace-building approach

Kamal Uddin Majumder

THE 15th of August will likely be remembered as the formal day that the "American Century" came to an end and the "Asian Century" began. On that day, the US-backed Kabul regime fell, with its leader escaping with some \$169 million in cash, and the Afghan Taliban returned to power.

Regrettably, the US granted itself permission to attack any nation as part of their War on Terror. It started by attacking Afghanistan and toppling the Taliban regime. The White House imposed a war for 20 years rather than working out a political solution. Afghanistan's people were consequently thrown into the worst humanitarian crisis, and they are still struggling and paying a high price for what the US mishandled. The US invasion of Afghanistan was based on utterly false presumptions and an incorrect perception of the true nature of a poor tribal nation. It came as little surprise when US General Douglas Lute claimed that the Afghan War was not justified.

To think that a superpower like the US, with its good system of governance and abundant resources, could make such a mistake of judgment and pay a horrible price in blood and treasure to pursue aims that have no relevance to the facts on the ground is unbelievable. However, this is not the first time that a misjudgment has guided US policy. The Iraq War in the 2000s and the Vietnam

War in the 1950s are actually where the US's legacy of errors in judgment began. So, the Afghan war demonstrates, as noted by historian Toynbee many years ago, that the only lesson mankind has taken from history is that it has not learned any lessons.

More significantly, this proves that the US has erroneously intervened in many parts of the world in order to advance its own hegemonic goals. On the eve of the second anniversary of the Afghan debacle, the question of who can be held accountable for such an epochal blunder that destroyed infrastructure, ruined social stability and resulted in fatalities inevitably emerges. The narrative goes much deeper than the military setback. Ineffective decision-making, the arrogance of believing one is the world's defender and intolerance of others are all deadly components of a policy that aims to dominate the globe.

Most probably, the US made the finest choice in recent decades when it decided to withdraw its military from Afghanistan. However, more strategic actions should have been taken after the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan to give the Taliban an opportunity to set up a stable government that could maintain peace and guarantee citizens a healthy life. Instead, it appears that the Americans are adamant about finding a means to undermine the Taliban. Prior to the Taliban taking power, 80% of Afghanistan's budget was sup-

ported by foreign aid, which abruptly stopped the day the Americans left. Moreover, having failed to defeat them militarily, the US is now playing another dirty game to bring the Taliban government to its knees and portray them as a failing state or a home of terrorists before the international community. Americans and other western allies are increasingly expressing serious worries about Afghan women's rights. Isn't it a parody of justice and ethics to speak up for women's education and other human rights while depriving that nation of its economic resources and then cutting off all aid?

It is evident that the Afghan crisis was created by the Americans. They never wanted Afghanistan to be a stable and affluent country. That's why they first destroyed the nation with an unjustified war, and they then made every effort to keep this nation's economy in shambles. The US spent over \$2 trillion killing Afghans but can't spare a few billion to help them rebuild their country.

China's role in fostering peace in Afghanistan is of great significance following America's two-decade-long war that failed to deliver peace. For its post-war reconstruction, Afghanistan currently has a critical need for financial resources, international assistance and technology. In these areas, China can offer valuable assistance. Suhail Shaheen, a Taliban spokesman who is aware of China's potential, warmly

"welcomed" China's assistance in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, referring to China as "a friend to Afghanistan".

China has stayed steadfast in its commitment to addressing the challenges that Afghan people face. China was one of the first countries to announce investments in Afghanistan and to send aid, particularly during the severe winters and the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to help the country address terrorism, humanitarian crises and instability, China has long strived to develop regional support. To fully realize Afghanistan's potential as a regional economic and connectivity hub, China decided to expand the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a centerpiece of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), into Afghanistan. Projects under the BRI would boost Afghanistan's exports, fostering the country's war-torn economy and prosperity.

China has a very clear position on Afghanistan. Based on the strategy of "Afghan owned, Afghan led", China will continue to advocate for Afghanistan's independence and territorial integrity. It will also act as a responsible neighbor and friend to the Afghan people and contribute positively to promoting peace and stability in the country. We expect China's continued positive interaction and practical partnership with the Afghan government, as well as a greater contribution to Afghan peacemaking.

The China Daily

# Italy kowtowing to Washington to exit BRI will sacrifice itself

Jiang Yin'an

IN 2019, Italy became the first and only G7 member country to sign a memorandum of understanding on bilateral cooperation with China under the Belt and Road Initiative framework. Since then some anti-China forces have been pressuring Italy to withdraw from the initiative or else be seen as a betrayer by the US-led West.

They have even spread lies about the Belt and Road Initiative in the media, belittling its achievements and falsely claiming that Italy's cooperation with China is harmful for the European country. What these Western propagandists do not accept is that Sino-Italian cooperation under the framework of the initiative is based on bilateral political, economic and cultural exchanges, which benefits the peoples and serves the interests of both countries.

Italy has benefited much from the Belt and Road Initiative in fields such as infrastructure, finance, and third-party market cooperation. Chinese enterprises engaged in the construction of some Italian ports and railways have provided more diversified capital and technological choices for the country, with some Italian financial institutions jointly establishing investment funds in China, and working with Chinese companies to finance Italian small and medium-sized enterprises.

China and Italy have also been cooperating on agricultural projects and water treatment and supply facilities in Africa, and Central

and Eastern Europe. And Italian industrial parks in Tianjin and Ningbo, Zhejiang province, are performing well, attracting Italian investment and expanding their overseas market. The Belt and Road Initiative has also promoted Sino-Italian cultural exchanges during the past four years. For example, under the Belt and Road framework, Italy was accorded priority at important Chinese expos and was the only guest of honor at the third China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou, Hainan province, in April.

Also, Italy has signed the largest number of agreements among European Union countries on exporting agricultural products to China, and high-quality Italian agricultural and other food products such as rice, beef and kiwi have gained a foothold in China's vast market. In fact, from 2019 to 2021, Italy's exports to China increased by 42 percent, and bilateral trade in 2022 reached nearly \$78 billion. China is also Italy's largest trading partner in Asia. Besides, the China-Italy Year of Culture and Tourism was celebrated in 2022. And about 29,000 Chinese students are studying in Italy, while about 6,000 Italian students are studying in China.

This shows Italy has benefited from the Belt and Road Initiative despite some Western media outlets claiming China is the sole beneficiary of the special bilateral rela-

tionship. Some politicians in Italy have been misled by such propaganda and are ready to kowtow to the United States in the false belief that Italy would be compensated by the US-led West for quitting the initiative. But the US doesn't have the capability or intention to compensate Italy since its "Build Back Better World Initiative" is developing at a slow pace and it has invested most of its capital in its own global projects, such as the "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity".

However, some US enterprises will be pleased that Italy is thinking of pulling out of the initiative, because they cannot compete with their Italian counterparts in the Chinese market. As a matter of fact, Italy's industries will suffer a serious blow if Italy quits the initiative and their market share in China would be grabbed by the US competitors. The US' opposition to Sino-Italian collaboration under the Belt and Road framework is based on geopolitics rather than Italy's interests. In recent years, the US has adopted a negative attitude toward China and has been using Cold War-style rhetoric to isolate China from the global market. The US has always seen the Belt and Road Initiative as a challenge to its hegemony and therefore is pressuring Italy to exit the initiative.

The US will sacrifice Italy's interests to form an anti-China bloc in Europe and erect barriers for

China's trade and industries in the name of "de-risking". So Italy should overcome the challenges posed by the US-led West because as two ancient civilizations, China and Italy are comprehensive strategic partners that share broad common interests and have enough reasons to continue their special cooperation, not least because the initiative's high-quality development will help Italy to transition to low-carbon production and digitalization, which is in line with its green and digital transformation agenda. Italy can take advantage of big data and artificial intelligence, among other technologies, offered by the Belt and Road Initiative to strengthen its own digital and information technologies. Since Italy's advanced sectors such as industrial design and biological medicine have a market in China, the two countries can unleash their cooperation potential in cutting-edge technologies such as high-end manufacturing, green energy and aerospace to realize win-win results.

Next year will mark the fifth anniversary of the China-Italy agreement on the initiative and the 20th anniversary of the two countries' comprehensive strategic partnership. They should take the opportunities to boost their cooperation under the Belt and Road framework, further strengthen their relations, and avoid strategic misjudgments, because many experts believe China-Italy relations have a brighter future under the Belt and Road framework.

**YOU can't separate Britain's parlous state and Rishi Sunak's latest bungled attempt to escalate the "stop the boats" campaign. No British government in democratic history has presided over such an acute period of national decline. The average Briton is set to be no better off in 2026 than they were in 2008, and the poorest fifth are more than 20% poorer than their French and German counterparts.**

Economic growth has been weak, and there has been an unprecedented slowdown in the nation's productivity levels. Hospital waiting lists are at record highs, multiple housing crises chew at our living standards and security, and privatised infrastructure - from our creaking trains to our leaking water pipes - offers a service you'd expect from a much poorer country, all at rip-off prices.

The social hubs that rescue us from isolation are being wiped off the map, from libraries - nearly 800 closed in the 2010s - to nightclubs - a third have vanished in the past three years alone. Our town centres are becoming deserts of shuttered windows, pound shops and US candy stores. In these circumstances, it is perhaps understandable that a Conservative prime minister will desperately reach for a big red button labelled "immigration".

Having manufactured the phenomenon of refugees arriving in small boats by closing down safe and legal routes, the Tories believe the sight of desperate, dishevelled foreigners clambering on to British shores will deflect public anger away from the country's multiplying crises. And that, in large part, is why we're in such a grave

Owen Jones

mess in the first place.

Throughout their ruinous turn in power, the Tories have sought to blame migrants for problems directly caused by government policy. When David Cameron was prime minister, he endorsed the claim that immigration was a "constant drain" on public services. His home secretary, Theresa May, moulded her political career around scapegoating migrants, falsely claiming she couldn't deport one "illegal migrant" because he owned a cat, and arguing that new arrivals had "put pressure on public services, like schools, stretched our infrastructure, especially housing".

Given her government's slashing of public services - including per pupil funding in schools - and failure to build housing, this conveniently turned migrants into the Tories' human shields. But the Conservatives did succeed in inflaming popular passions against a demonised foreigner blamed for sapping public services, making immigration a top priority for 44% of voters by 2015. By doing so, they ensured a victory for leave in the referendum of 2016, paving the way for a Brexit that has achieved nothing other than further reducing growth and living standards, leaving 63% of Britons to conclude Brexit was more of a failure than a success, with just 12% suggesting the opposite. The historical moment underlines a political truism: it is politicians seeking to blame foreigners and minorities for society's ills who pose the greatest danger to a nation.

This tragic historical fact was most devastatingly illustrated in 1930s Germany, culminating as it did in genocide, but it doesn't need to be taken to such an extreme conclusion to

inflict harm. Donald Trump rose to power, in part, by demonising Muslims, but no minority in the US represents any sort of threat to a now embattled democracy, unlike the far-right movement he stirred up. Witness the decline of Hungary and Poland into autocracy, pioneered by political parties that built popular support, in significant part, by demonising migrants. Rational, factually grounded fears shouldn't be directed at migrants and minorities, but at politicians who seek to gain power by blaming them for the ills and injustices they caused.

There are reasons to doubt that Sunak's morally debased campaign will succeed: attitudes towards immigration have improved, with only 9% of voters regarding reducing it as a top priority, and the country's crises are too calamitous to shift the blame from the ruling party. But as we witness Britain's decline to the status of a poor country with a few rich people in it, we must surely conclude that the Tory scapegoating of migrants played a pivotal role in our nation's social and economic descent.

For many years, a significant chunk of the electorate were convinced by claims that migrants really were responsible for soaring NHS waiting lists, strained local schools, the absence of affordable housing, and all manner of other social disorders. That deflected scrutiny away from the real causes, leaving the sickness untreated. Will we finally learn, I wonder, that it's those who demonise fellow humans from foreign lands who pose the greatest danger, not those who flock to our shores and enrich our communities, culture and lives.

The Guardian





# Pakistan attends 7th China-South Asia Expo

BEIJING (INP): As many as 40 delegates from Pakistan participated in the 7th China-South Asia Expo that kicked off on Wednesday in Kunming, Southwest China's Yunnan province. It will continue till August 20, with the theme of "Solidarity and Coordination for Common Development". Addressing the Expo, Pakistan Ambassador to China Moin ul Haque said it will serve as a bridge for uniting China-Pakistan to enhance bilateral cooperation in various sectors. He noted that Pakistan, recognizing the importance of science and technology,

has embarked on the transformative journey of Digital Pakistan by harnessing our vibrant youth, constituting 60% of our populace, and tapping into their innovative prowess, China Economic Net (CEN) reported. We aim to reshape our trajectory. The burgeoning number of Pakistani startups attracting international venture capital attests to our untapped potential. Through the establishment of a Special Technological Zone Authority, we are nurturing an ecosystem of innovation, entrepreneurship, and research, he added. Moin ul Haque said that Pakistan

and China are close friends and All-Weather Strategic Partners. In recent years two countries have placed and added focus on science and technology cooperation. We have also created two dedicated working groups on science and technology and IT cooperation under the CPEC framework. Currently, 30 joint research projects are in advanced stages, a testament to our shared commitment to innovation. As we usher in the second phase of CPEC, poised for industrial and agricultural transformation, our partnership with China will underpin our technological

aspirations, laying a robust foundation for a modern economy. Ambassador emphasized that the theme of the forum Innovation Creates the Future, Cooperation Leads to Win-Win Development resonates deeply with our pursuit of moving towards a digital era through scientific excellence, achievements, and cooperation. I am delighted to share that tomorrow we would be signing an MoU on the establishment of its sub-center in Pakistan which we hope could serve as a bridge for uniting governments, private sector, and academia for collaboration in digital fields.



MULTAN: Labourers packing mangoes in wooden boxes at their workplace.

## New linear accelerator with advanced radiotherapy inaugurated



F.P. Report

LAHORE: A top-of-the-line Varian Halcyon linear accelerator with advanced radiotherapy capability was inaugurated on Wednesday in the Department of Clinical & Radiation Oncology at Shaikat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research

Centre (SKMCH&RC). The ribbon cutting and plaque unveiling was performed by a young cancer patient, Eeza Fatima, along with CEO of SKMCH&RC, Dr Faisal Sultan, CMO Muhammed Aasim Yusuf and other members of the senior management. On this occasion, Dr Aasim Yusuf said, "At

SKMCH&RC, we aim to continuously upgrade our equipment and technology, so as to be able to provide the best possible treatment to all our patients. The addition of this new technology at our hospital in Lahore will cater to the ever-increasing number of cancer patients needing radiation therapy with a

high degree of accuracy, precision and speed." He further said that with 5 linear accelerators, this is the largest such department in the country, delivering more than 50,000 radiation therapy sessions each year. This latest machine will allow us to treat our deserving cancer patients with more targeted radiotherapy, resulting in greater precision and reducing the risk of side effects. The Halcyon is six times faster than conventional LINACs, meaning that each treatment lasts only about a minute, so that more patients can be treated in the same amount of time. The shorter time spent on the machine, its wider bore and integrated ambient lighting all result in a more comfortable and satisfying patient experience. The Halcyon's state-of-the-art six-point safety system allows closer monitoring of the patient throughout treatment, enhancing patient safety.

## Two-day 8th Color & Chem Expo to open on Saturday

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan's largest exhibition of dyes, chemicals & allied industry, the two-day 8th Color & Chem Expo will be opened here at Lahore International Expo Centre on August 19 (Saturday). This year's theme is "Transforming Challenges into Opportunities." Pakistan chapter of the American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists (AATCC) will also be launched during the event which will be a milestone for the industry. AATCC connects the global textile community to empower a more innovative, informed, and sustainable future.

The event organizer Rashid-ul-Haq told media here Wednesday that the event was also incorporating digital printing, textile printing & screen printing, equipment and machinery exhibition as well as a concurrent event. He added that this year more than 200 local and foreign companies from China, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Germany, Turkey, UAE and UK are also participating in this two-day expo. He mentioned that Abdul Rahim Chughtai has been appointed as President Pakistan Chapter comprises of 25 members committee from various sectors, such as NED University,

National Textile University, Event and Conference International and other relevant business enterprises. American Association of Textile Chemist and Colorists, he explained, worked closely with other industry organizations to provide members with the most current information, user-friendly resources, and relevant services. Rashid-ul-Haq said that AATCC provided special-interest conferences, workshops, and meetings to bring together leading industry and academic experts on a range of relevant topics. Exhibition is being organized by the Event and Conference International

(Pvt.) Limited and Rainbow Group in collaboration with Asia Dyestuff Industry Federation. China Dyestuff Industry Association and BLGE Expo Shanghai Co. Ltd are the international partners. The event is supported by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) and Punjab Dyes & Chemicals Merchants Association (PDCMA). Consul General of China in Lahore Mr. Zhao Shiren, business community leaders, faculty members and academicians would join the event, he mentioned.

## PCJCCI urges world to reconsider energy policies

LAHORE (APP): Pak-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki said on Wednesday that ever since the Russia-Ukraine war, global warming and the gradual depletion of non-renewable sources of energy such as oil, gas and coal are compelling nation-state including most of the European states to reconsider their energy policies. Sharing his views in a

think-tank session held here at PCJCCI Secretariat, he added that many of them were opting for energy production through nuclear power plants, which was not only safer, cheaper and effective but also supports self-reliance. Ghurki said that Pakistan too turned its focus on producing energy through its nuclear power plants (NPPs) - such as Karachi Nuclear Power Plants (having the capacity of

1100MW each), the Chasma-1 (325MW), the Chasma-2 (325MW), the Chasma-3 (350MW), and the Chasma-4 (350MW) - under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. "Recently our government has signed MoU for the 1200 MW unit 5 of the Chashma nuclear power plant, which is being built by China National Nuclear Corporation. These NPPs would not only increase the

country's electricity production but also help save billions of US dollars that Pakistan was currently spending for running other sources of energy. There is a need for both educating the government on such feasible, reliable and cheaper options, and also increasing awareness amongst the common masses. PCJCCI Senior Vice President Fang Yulong was of the view that energy played a significant role in running the economic engine of a country. "The more energy Pakistan produces and effectively uses, the more it protects its economy from fragility and the more it has the chances to prosper. Thus, with national awareness and consistent functioning of Pakistan's NPPs, the country can surely save more money and energy," he observed.



FAISALABAD: Labourers unloading sacks of onion from delivery truck at vegetable market.

## 100-index of PSX loses 419 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 419.31 points, a negative change of 0.86 per cent, closing at 48,146.44 points against 48,565.75 points the previous trading day. A total of 194,576,873 shares were traded during the day as compared to 251,692,333 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs7.670 billion against Rs9.038 billion on the last trading day. As many as 339 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 88 of them recorded gains and 227 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 24 companies remained unchanged. The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 19,296,096 shares at Rs2.28 per share; Dewan Motors with 14,109,099 shares at Rs15.14 per share and Oil and Gas Dev with 10,957,134 shares at Rs98.28 per share. Bata (Pak) witnessed a maximum increase of Rs44.00 per share price, closing at Rs1,770.00, whereas the runner-up was Reliance Cotton with an Rs25.79 rise in its per share price to Rs488.29. Allawasaya Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs140.00 per share closing at Rs1,760.00; followed by Rafhan Maize with Rs100.00 decline to close at Rs8,500.00.

## Gold rates up by Rs900 to Rs223,800

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs900 and was sold at Rs223,800 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs222,900 on the previous day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs771 to Rs191,872 from Rs191,101 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 Karat gold went up to Rs175,883 from Rs175,176, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs2750 and Rs2357.68 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$2 to \$1,905 from \$1,903, the association reported.

## Pakistani companies invited to benefit from Saudi Vision 2030

LAHORE (APP): Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 offers immense opportunities for Pakistani construction, infrastructure development, engineering, food, information technology and various other sectors that must be availed with vigorous efforts. These views were expressed by Trade Development Officer of Pakistani Consulate in Jeddah Fahad Chaudhry while talking to the Acting President of Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry here at LCCI on Wednesday. Fahad Chaudhry said that Saudi Arabia had started a vast range of developmental project worth US \$ 3 trillion under the Vision 2030 that would be completed by the year 2030. "It is a unique opportunity for Pakistani entrepreneurs to become a part of Saudi Arabia's booming economy," he remarked. He invited the Lahore

Chamber of Commerce & Industry to arrange a delegation for Saudi Arabia to have a deep knowledge about the opportunities under Vision 2030. LCCI Acting President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry said that Lahore Chamber would arrange a sector-specific delegation for Saudi Arabia soon. He said that there existed enormous scope to expand the economic relations between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Saudi businessmen should come and invest in Pakistan in various industries which have lucrative opportunities. He said that Saudi Arabia was an important trading partner of Pakistan. It is worth noticing that Saudi Arabia had the largest economy in the Arab world. He called for solid measures to expand and promote trade between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry said that petroleum oils consist of almost half of the total imports

made from Saudi Arabia. Pakistan mainly imports oil and oil products from Saudi Arabia, which accounts for 90 percent of our total import bill for the Kingdom. In turn, Pakistan supplies rice, meat, meat products, spices and fruit, textile products, chemicals, footwear and leather goods. He said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia needed to find new avenues for the expansion of bilateral trade. "We consider exchange of trade delegations is one of the most effective ways of enhancing trade," he said, adding, "We have to identify areas of joint ventures. Pakistan has manpower, land and technology. There can be a win-win situation for both the countries if Saudi investors team up with our local industrialists." He said that workers remittances from this brotherly Islamic country played a substantial role in strengthening the balance of payment of Pakistan.

## Sindh Bank establish partnership with IBP — to deliver training to officers



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Riaz Nazarali Chanara, Chief Executive of the Institute of Bankers Pakistan (IBP) along with Muhammad Anwaar Sheikh, COO/Acting President of Sindh Bank, presented certificates to the highest achievers of the Certified Cash Officers and General Banking Officers Program at Sindh Bank's Head Office, Karachi. Heads of Human Resource & Development, Operations, Compliance, Training and Group Business were also part of the event. Sindh Bank has established a collaborative partnership with the Institute of Bankers Pakistan (IBP) to deliver comprehensive professional training to its Officers at every level, started with Cash Officers (COs) and General Banking Officers (GBOs). This initiative aims to enhance the capabilities of these personnel by offering them a comprehensive certified program, similar to those offered by other leading financial institutions in the country. Through this collaboration, Sindh Bank intends to equip its officers with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their roles, contribute effectively to the bank's opera-

tions, and provide exceptional service to clients and customers. The bank is being transformed to position itself as the preferred choice for customers seeking reliable banking services. This transformation emphasizes human resource development, stability, innovation, and personalized relationships. By ensuring a stable outlook, adopting modern technologies, and tailoring services to individual needs, the bank aims to provide an exceptional and trustworthy banking experience, standing out as "The Preferred Bank in Pakistan".

## Senator assures support to ICCI in land acquisition for project

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senator Ch. Tanveer Khan on Wednesday assured that he would support Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) in land acquisition for its industrial estate project. He said that ICCI should target industrial estate on the CPEC route or identify any other suitable place and he would cooperate in land acquisition for this project, said a press release issued here. Senator said that the business community is the backbone of an economy and its facilitation would help in strengthening the economy. He said this while addressing the business

community during his visit to the ICCI, his son Barrister Danial Chaudhry also accompanied by him. Ch. Tanveer Khan said that he would try to arrange a meeting of the ICCI delegation with Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani for ICCI representation in business-related standing committees of the Senate. He said that the outgoing PM Mian Shehbaz Sharif has inaugurated the Rawalpindi Ring Road, which is very vital to ease the traffic issues of the twin cities. He said that ICCI should play a role in skills development of youth to prepare skilled manpower for industries.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhawari, President, ICCI said that chamber has been making efforts for a long for the establishment of a state-of-the-art industrial zone in the region to boost industrialization, create jobs, attract investment, increase exports and said that Senator Ch. Tanveer Khan should cooperate in acquiring land for this important project. He said that Pakistan needs long-term economic policies to revive the economy and said that Senator Ch. Tanveer Khan should patronize the efforts of ICCI for convincing all major political parties to sign a charter of the econo-

my to set the country in the direction of sustainable growth. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that the Chamber is making efforts for its representation as an Observer in business-related Standing Committees of the Senate to present the voice of the business community in the policy-making process and Senator Ch. Tanveer Khan should cooperate with ICCI in this regard. Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Leader ICCI emphasized that the government should focus on the better development of agriculture and tourism sectors to revive the economy.



**In brief****Baseball Team to leave for China**

PESHAWAR (APP): The National Under-15 Baseball Team will leave Islamabad for China on August 17 to participate in the forthcoming Asia Cup. According to the General Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Baseball Association, Jahangir Jamal, the players include Muhammad Qasim, Shah Fahad, Abdul Rehman, Muazullah, Muhammad Yahya, Sanaullah, Hamza, Shahzad, Abbas, Waqas and Abuzar. Among the 15 players, 11 belong to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that the players were undergoing training at the Yousafzai Baseball academy under the supervision of Pakistan Archery Federation Secretary Wasal Muhammad Khan.

**Qamar Ikram Hockey Club wins championship**

FAISALABAD (APP): Qamar Ikram Hockey Club won the final match of four-day Deputy Commissioner Inter-Hockey Club Championship by defeating Faisalabad Hockey Club by 2-1 goals played at the Technical High school College D-Ground under the aegis of district sports department on Wednesday. A total 10 teams participated in the event. Additional Deputy Commissioner (Headquarters) Kashif Raza Awan and Chairman Faisalabad Futsal Association Naseem Ahmed as a chief guest gave trophy and cash prize of Rs 30,000 to the winning team. A trophy and a cash prize of Rs 20,000 was given to the runner-up. Trophies were also distributed to the best player, best goalkeeper and emerging players. District Sports Officer Sajida Latif, Babay Sports Haji Muhammad Rafi, Muhammad Bilal, Hamza Ali, Masood Elahi and Hamza and others were present on the occasion.

**Tickets for Asia Cup**

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) as hosts of the ACC Men's Asia Cup 2023 is pleased to announce the sale of match tickets for the Sri Lanka leg of the event. Tickets for the first phase of the Sri Lanka leg will go on sale from 17 pm (noon) PST on 12 August. The tickets will be available at pcb.bookme.pk. The announcement will be made through the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official social media channels. The second phase of ticket sales for the Sri Lanka leg will commence at 6:30 pm PST on 17 August. This second phase of ticket sales will include the much awaited fixture between Pakistan and India on 2 September. Nine matches will be held in Sri Lanka, including the final. The Sri Lanka leg will begin with the home side taking on Bangladesh at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium on 31 August.

**US Masters T10 League to kick off**

LAUDERHILL (INP): The US Masters T10 League has announced the schedule for the inaugural edition of the tournament. The competition will kick off with Atlanta Fire taking on Texas Chargers in the opening match at the Broward County Stadium in Lauderhill, Florida on Friday, 18 August 2023. A total of six teams - Atlanta Fire, California Knights, Morrisville Unity, New Jersey Tritons, New York Warriors and Texas Chargers - are all set to mesmerize cricket fans in the United States in the power-packed ten-day competition from 18 August 2023 to 27 August 2023.

## Wahab Riaz announces retirement from int'l cricket

LAHORE (INP): Legend Pakistani pacer Wahab Riaz on Wednesday announced his retirement from international cricket saying he wants to continue his journey at the highest level of cricket but in the present scenario it is impossible to get back a place in the national team. He said here that for him the retirement brings an end to his "incredible journey" as he enjoyed playing cricket and earn respect.

Addressing a news conference here, Wahab Riaz said, "It's not an emotional decision (retirement) and it is reality that I can't deliver to a high level in the presence of present day pace battery of Pakistan team. I have no regrets on calling it a day as I have always tried to give my best."

He further said in the presence of Shaheen Shah Afridi and other top notch fast bowlers he does not see a place for himself in the team and he has decided to part his way with the game except the T20 format. The left armed 38-year-old said he will continue his association with the

game by playing T20 leagues around the world.

"Stepping off the international pitch. After an incredible journey, I've decided to retire from international cricket. Big thank you to PCB, my family, coaches, mentors, teammates, fans, and everyone who supported me," he said. Wahab Riaz who made his ODI and T20I debut in 2008 and his first Test appearance came in 2010 said "Exciting times ahead in the world of franchise cricket". Wahab Riaz played 27 Tests, 91 ODIs, and 36 T20Is for Pakistan and claimed more than 200 wickets in international cricket.

During his Test debut against England at The Oval in 2010, Riaz bagged figures of 5 for 63, becoming the ninth Pakistan bowler to claim five wickets on debut. Wahab Riaz said he has enjoyed playing cricket from Pakistan and achieved a lot from the game and in his career he met success as well as failure. "When I started playing cricket long ago it was my dream to rep-

resent the country at the highest level of the game and finally achieved it" said Wahab Riaz. His best performance in ODI cricket was against arch-rivals India, when he took 5 for 46 during the World Cup semi-final in Mohali. His scalps included the likes of Virender Sehwag, Virat Kohli, Yuvraj Singh and MS Dhoni.

Riaz also bowled one of the most memorable spells in Pakistan cricket history, when he bamboozled Australia's Shane Watson with his pace and bounce during the 2015 World Cup clash in Adelaide. The pacer played his last international game in December 2020, which was a T20I match against New Zealand in Hamilton. Wahab Riaz who is the Sports Minister of Punjab said it is hard to say goodbye to cricket at a time when he has focused to play the 2023 World Cup. "I am thankful to my family, the Pakistan Cricket Board for their all out support to me and I am leaving the arena with pride and respect", he added.

## Pak tennis sensation Huzaifa shines in USA



ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's tennis sensation Huzaifa Abdul Rehman continues shining at the international level as he has annexed another title in Florida, US.

The 20-year-old, outwitted his rivals in the quarterfinal and semifinal before getting a walkover in the final, according to information received here on Tuesday.

The Smackdown Sarasota \$6,000 event was

held at Palm Aire Country Club. This is Huzaifa's third title in his recent outings.

In the round of 16, Huzaifa defeated USA's L. Conner in a one-sided affair 6-0, 6-0. In the quarterfinal, he edged passed USA's R. Olsen 6-2, 6-2.

In the semifinal, he overpowered H. Fidler of Aruba 6-1, 6-3. In the final, he got a walkover against Germany's Flix Fellann as he remained unable to

appear in the match.

Huzaifa, who is training at Florida's Next Generation Tennis Academy told APP on the phone that the win had given him confidence.

"My aim is to play in the Grand Slam events. Each win is leading me towards my ultimate destination."

I've set a target for myself. But I know I'll have to move step by step as there are no shortcuts.

"First, I am aiming to appear in the ATP Challenger Tour to move into 1,000 rankings in a year. Then I'll be trying to join the list of top 500 players in the next two years."

Finally, of course, I will be trying to break into the top 200 to be able to contest in Grand Slam tournaments," he added.

## Independence Celebration Junior Tennis, Tug of War, Table Tennis, Kabaddi events concludes

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Junior Tennis, Table Tennis, Tug of War, Kabaddi and Weightlifting events organized by District sports Officer Peshawar with the collaboration of the Regional Sports Officer Peshawar Region concluded here at Tehmas Khan Football Stadium on Wednesday.

The Tennis event was organized by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Association at Quid-e-Azam Club, Shahi Bagh and Peshawar Sports Complex Synthetic Courts in which in the U8 semi-final, Faizan defeated Ryan Khalil by 6-0 and 7-5 (6-6). Salar Khalil defeated Samar Gul by 6-2 and 6-2. In the final, Faizan Afridi won the title by defeating Salar Khan Khalil by 6-4 and 6-4.

In the U-14 final, Junaid won the title by defeating Zohaib Amjad by 6-2, 3-6 and 7-5 (6-6). Earlier, in the semi-final, Junaid defeated Zain by 6-3 and 6-3 while Zohaib Amjad qualified for the final by defeating Ehsanullah by 6-2 and 6-3.

Senior Vice President of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Association Prof. Dr. Farhat Abbas was the chief guest at the closing ceremony who also awarded Rs. 25,000 as cash prizes from his own pocket to the position holder's players.

District Sports Officer Miss Gul Rukh and Regional Sports Officer Zakir Ullah Khan, Secretary KP Tennis Association Umar Ayaz Khalil, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association Secretary Zulfikar Butt, Coach Zakirullah, Nauman, Shehryar Khan, Roman, Wakil, Amjad, Shahid Afridi, Jahanzeb, Janan and Inam Gul were also present. In the Independence Day Table Tennis U12

event, Afan won the first position, Obeid the second position and Qasim got third position. In Boys Junior Usman won first, Areeb second, Haroon third, Gulalai took first position in Girls U-12, Halima Shahzai second, Sawira third, Alishba first, Umm Halima second and Houria third in Girls Junior. In the Independence Day Inter-District Tug-of-War competition organized, teams from Malakand, Dargai, Mandini Bangla, Mardan, Charsadda and Peshawar participated. In the final, Dargai won the trophy by defeating the Tangi team by 2-1. On this occasion, the chief guests of Provincial Tug of War Association, Taj Muhammad Khan, Secretary of District Charsadda Association, Khursheed Shabab, distributed prizes among the players.

Ikramullah, Shabbir Hussain, Anwarul Haq and Hameed Gul, the coaches also participated while Uzair Muhammad, Ali Muhammad, Aslam Shah and Muhammad Ali performed duties in the technical committee.

Like this year too, the Independence Day tug-of-war competitions were organized in which teams from different districts took part. In the first semi-final, Dargai beat Charsadda by 2-1, while in the second semi-final, Tangi defeated Mandani Bangla by 2-0 in the final.

In the final, Dargaia's team won the trophy by defeating Tangi two to one after a sensational match, Charsadda won the third position by defeating Mandani.

To commemorate, the 76th Independence Day of Pakistan, the Azadi Cup Weightlifting event was organized at the Peshawar

Sports Complex under the aegis of the Regional Sports Office Peshawar, in which all the famous and emerging sportsmen from all over Peshawar participated and showed excellent performance on this occasion.

DG Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Khalid Mehmood was the chief guest on this occasion. Regional Sports Officer Peshawar Zakirullah, Director Admin Imran Khan, Head Coach Muhammad Amir, Miss Gul Rukh, District Sports Officer were also present.

According to the results, Shujaullah won first place in the 61 kg competition. Khursheed was second in 81 kg and Rahim Khan was first in 102 kg. Wasiullah won in 109 kg weight. Qasim Tareen was the winner in 67 kg weight. At the end, the guests distributed the trophies and cash prizes among the position holders players.

In the Tug of War organized by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Kabaddi Association with international kabaddi player and official Syed Sultan Bacha with teams from different villages participated. In the match at Bannu, Lakki Bachakay defeated Bannu by 40-33, in the Swabi and Charsadda, Swabi won the match by 41-38 match, and in the Haripur Pania, Haripur defeated Peshawar by 45-41 in a tough fight and in a match played at Hayatabad Sports Complex Dawoodzai village defeated Sarozai village by 34-31 and in the Tug of War Village Sorazai defeated Dawoodzai by 2-1 in the final.

At the end, DSO Miss Gul Rukh and Regional Sports Officer Zakir Ullah and Syed Sultan Bacha gave away trophies and cash prizes to the winners and runners-up teams.



**SYDNEY:** the players of England celebrate after winning the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023 Semi Final match between Australia and England at Stadium Australia.

## England reach first Women's World Cup final

SYDNEY (Agencies): England reached the Women's World Cup final for the first time as they spoiled co-hosts Australia's party on a historic evening in Sydney.

Silencing a sell-out crowd at Stadium Australia with their 3-1 victory, the Lionesses became the first England football team since 1966 to reach a senior final on the world stage.

It caps a sensational two years under manager Sarina Wiegman as England, crowned European champions for the first time last year on home soil, showed their superiority and know-how to see off an Australia side spurred on by a nation who have been inspired by the Matildas' success.

Ella Toone gave England the lead in the first half with a superb first-time strike which sailed into the top corner. The Lionesses controlled proceedings until the second half when Australia threw everything at them and star striker Sam Kerr - starting her first match of the tournament - struck a 25-yard stunner over goalkeeper Mary Earps' head to make it 1-1.

But England, as they so often do, found a way back into the game when Lauren Hemp pounced on a defensive error to restore their lead, before Alessia Russo made sure of victory late on to set up a final with Spain on Sunday.

England chase glory

after silencing 'Matildas Mania'

Build-up to this semi-final has dominated every aspect of Australian life this week as cities across the country became absorbed in 'Matildas Mania'.

Fans were queueing outside fan parks in Sydney five hours before kick-off, train stations were decorated in yellow and green balloons, shops sold out of merchandise, and newspapers had the players' faces plastered over their front and back pages.

All focus was on the co-hosts' attempts to create history, but England quietly went about their business and arrived in Sydney ready to compete in their third successive Women's World Cup semi-final.

Their experience of handling big occasions was evident from the first minute as they disrupted Australia's rhythm and made every attempt to frustrate the crowd, taking their time over throw-ins and breaking down dangerous counter-attacks. It worked for large parts, but when Australia fought their way back into the game through Kerr, England had to find another way - and they did.

Backs against the wall, England's defence, who have been magnificent throughout the tournament, stepped up to make blocks, tackles and head away relentless balls into the box. "My thought was 'we're

not going to give this away now," said Wiegman, reflecting on Australia's equaliser. "You are never sure. But it was later in the game so we got through."

Hemp and Russo's flourishing partnership up front ultimately decided the game when they combined late on - Manchester City winger Hemp with a superb no-look pass to set-up Russo. "That was just an incredible pass," added Wiegman. "The finish was really good too. I'm really happy with the performance and the players themselves are happy too." England's celebrations at full-time were initially subdued. They have created history but this is a team of winners and they have not finished yet.

Australia leave lasting impression as England show ruthlessness

England's plan to stifle Australia's intensity and quick counter-attacking football worked a treat. From the first minute they showed they were not afraid to play with physicality, going in hard in 50-50 challenges and doing all it took to bring down Kerr and prevent her getting a run at England's defence.

Keira Walsh set the tone with a crunching tackle on Kerr within two minutes and Alex Greenwood later came sliding in on the Chelsea striker, earning herself a yellow card, to prevent a dangerous break.

With each tackle came a ripple of boos from the home fans, while Earps was in no rush to get things going again on goal-kicks. It was England who controlled things early on - although both teams created a few chances - as they had 70% of the ball in the opening 15 minutes.

Their control did not really waver as the first half wore on and the crowd became increasingly frustrated, whistling as England enjoyed prolonged periods of possession and passed through Australia's press.

By the time the break arrived with England leading, the deafening roar which had greeted the players on their entrance had turned to polite applause as the Australians were still processing Toone's superb strike. The second half was a different story, however. Kerr's sensational equaliser was followed by a dangerous strike from Cortnee Vine which called Earps into action.

Kerr headed another two chances over the bar, while Russo and Lucy Bronze came close at the other end for England.

However, it was the Lionesses who were more ruthless, keeping their composure in the big moments and delivering when it mattered. "Knowing Sam, she will think that goal means nothing. She is a winner," said Australia manager Tony Gustavsson.

## First-ever domestic contracts for women cricketers announced by PCB

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for promotion of women's cricket in Pakistan has awarded 11-month domestic contracts to 74 talented women cricketers. Among the 74 players, 59 players belong to emerging and U19 categories, while 14 players have already represented Pakistan women's team at the senior level.

This important advancement is set to provide a substantial boost to the confidence of women cricketers, as an action-packed women's cricket season is all set to resume from September 01. These domestic contracts have been conferred upon individuals who have displayed remarkable performances across various cricketing platforms, including domestic cricket tournaments, emerging tournaments, U19 domestic tournament, and the ICC U19 Women's World Cup.

The players have been selected by the national women's selection committee led by former Test cricketer Saleem Jaffar, with recommendations from national and academy coaches. The initiative aims not only to acknowledge their hard work and dedication but also elevate the standard of women's cricket within the country. The decision to offer these contracts underscores the commitment of the Pakistan Cricket Board led by the Management Committee Chairperson Zaka Ashraf to foster the growth of women's cricket, provide a viable career path, and motivate more women to participate and excel in the sport. This step will have a ripple effect on women's cricket, encouraging more players to aspire to play at the highest level.

PCB Management Committee Head Zaka Ashraf said on Wednesday: "I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the 74 women cricketers who have earned these contracts through their sheer talent and dedication. Today marks a significant and joyous occasion for the Pakistan Cricket Board as we take a historic step towards uplifting women's cricket in our nation. "This

initiative isn't just about signing contracts; it's about investing in the dreams and aspirations of these extraordinary athletes. Our women cricketers have consistently showcased exceptional skills and dedication on the field and it is high time we provide them with the platform they deserve. "It is our firm belief that empowering these athletes will not only elevate the standard of our women's cricket but also inspire a new generation of girls to take up the sport."

Head of Women's Cricket Tania Mallick said: "We are thrilled to announce the awarding of domestic contracts to 74 of our finest women cricketers. This historic moment not only recognises their extraordinary skills but also aims to instill confidence and determination among our women athletes. As we approach a busy women's cricket season, we are committed to providing the necessary support and resources to ensure their success." In addition to the domestic contracts, the PCB has also resumed facilities for women cricketers to train in eight cricket academies across the country, seven of which are operational.

The operational academies include National Cricket Academy in Lahore, Hanif Mohammad High Performance Centre in Karachi, Inzamam-ul-Haq High Performance Centre in Multan, Qayyum Stadium in Peshawar, Abbottabad Cricket Stadium in Abbottabad, Bugti Stadium in Quetta and Women's Sports Stadium in Bahawalpur. Players who have been offered domestic contracts will not be a part of the women's central contracts 2023-24, which will be announced in due course. The players in the domestic contracts, in addition to receiving monthly retainers, will also receive match fee, daily allowance, and a share in prize money.

### The 74 players along with their cities in alphabetical order are:

Aima Saleem (Rawalpindi), Aimen Anwar (Karachi), Aisha Javed (Lahore), Aleena Shah (Peshawar),

Aliza Khan (Karachi), Amber Kainat (Lahore), Anam Amin (Lahore), Areesha Noor Bhatti (Lahore), Arijah Haseeb (Karachi), Asma Sharief (Faisalabad), Asma Shareef (Arifwala), Ayesha Asim (Quetta), Ayesha Bilal (Lahore), Ayesha Zafar (Lahore), Dina Razvi (Karachi), Dua Majid (Lahore), Fajr Naveed (Rawalpindi), Fareeha Mehmood (Lahore), Fatima Khan (Lahore), Fatima Shahid (Lahore), Fatima Zehra (Rawalpindi), Gul-e-Uswa (Multan), Gull Feroza (Multan), Gull Rukh (Dera Ghazi Khan), Haleema Azeem Dar (Lahore), Haniha Ahmer (Karachi), Humna Bilal (Rawalpindi), Huraina Sajjad (Karachi), Iram Javed (Lahore), Jannat Rasheed (Quetta), Javeria Khan (Karachi), Jaweria Rauf (Karachi), Kainat Imtiaz (Karachi), Kaynat Hafeez (Lahore), Khadija Chishty (Lahore), Kinza Wahab (Karachi), Laiba Mansoor (Rawalpindi), Laiba Nasir (Lahore), Lubna Behram (Hunza), Maham Anees (Islamabad), Maham Manzoor (Hyderabad), Maham Tariq (Karachi), Mahnoor Aftab (Peshawar), Masooma Zehra (Karachi), Momina Riasat (Abbottabad), Natalia Parvaiz (Bhimber), Neha Sharmeen Sheikh (Karachi), Noor-Ul-Eman (Bahawalpur), Noreen Yaqoob (Lahore), Quratulain Ahsen (Lahore), Rameen Shamim (Karachi), Rida Aslam (Lahore), Saba Nazir (Muridke), Saima Malik (Quetta), Saiqa Riaz (Lahore), Saira Jabeen (Chitral), Sana Talib (Rahim Yar Khan), Sania Rasheed (Rawalpindi), Shabnam Hayat (Karachi), Soha Fatima (Lahore), Subhana Tariq (Karachi), Syeda Taskyn Fatima (Karachi), Tasmia Rubab (Lahore), Tayyaba Imdad (Abbottabad), Tahzeeb Shah (Swabi), Waheeda Akhter (Lahore), Wajeeta Muneer (Multan), Warda Yousaf (Okara), Wasifa Hussain (Karachi), Yusra Amir (Karachi), Zaib-un-Nisa (Charsadda), Zamina Tahir (Lahore), Zunaira Shah (Karachi) and Zunash Abdul Sattar (Lahore).





## In brief

### Police to take firm action

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have intensified efforts to clamp down on non-registered and smuggled vehicles operating within the city. In line with the directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, this campaign has been intensified to ensure road safety and proper vehicle documentation. The citizens have been strongly urged to adhere to travel regulations by possessing valid car papers and prominently displaying number plates sanctioned by the Excise and Taxation Department. Chief Traffic Officer of Islamabad reiterated that strict compliance with this mandate is paramount, and those found violating it will be subjected to appropriate consequences. Underlining the importance of these measures, the Chief Traffic Officer emphasized, "Our unwavering commitment to enforcing traffic rules and establishing an effective traffic management system remains steadfast. We prioritize the safety and convenience of our residents and commuters." Additionally, the Chief Traffic Officer appealed to all citizens to promptly complete the registration of their cars and motorcycles and to exclusively affix the number plates that are officially provided by the Excise and Taxation Department.

### 4 held for carrying illegal weapons

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested four illegal arms holders and recovered arms, and ammunition from their possessions during a crackdown here on Wednesday. According to the police spokesman, Rata Amaral police held Mukhtar Khan and recovered a 30-bore pistol from his possession. Similarly, Racecourse police recovered a 30-bore pistol from Muhammad Babar. While Airport Police nabbed Shahid Khan and recovered a 30-bore pistol from his custody. Following the operation, Chontra police recovered 12-bore from Muhammad Tahir Ayub. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. SSP Operations appreciated the performance of the police team adding that strict action will be taken against those carrying illegal weapons.

### Anti-smog awareness drive conducted

RAWALPINDI (APP): The communication teams of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) have carried out its cleanliness and anti-smog awareness campaign in the area of Union Council-16 Mohalla Raja Sultan here on Wednesday. According to RWMC spokesman, the teams asked the residents of the area to play their part in educating the people about the importance of cleanliness. He said the objective of the activity was to reach out to a maximum number of people, to educate the general public about the precautionary measures to avoid smog. The teams also distributed waste bags and leaflets among the people to educate them about the importance of cleanliness. In a message, RWMC has appealed to the people to not burn waste and chemicals in the open as they were the major cause of smog, adding burning garbage was a legal offence as smoke and dust contributed to smog which was harmful to the environment and human health. The teams also asked the resident to ensure the spraying of water to prevent dust and use masks and glasses.



ISLAMABAD: Former Senator Saif Magsi calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

## Samina Alvi for creating awareness to ensure special person's rights

ISLAMABAD (APP): First Lady Begum Samina Alvi on Wednesday urged the relevant officials authorities, media, civil society, health institutions and welfare organizations to organize awareness campaigns to ensure basic rights of the persons with disabilities. She also called upon the government institutions to increase facilities to address the social and health issues being faced by the special persons, besides improving the primary healthcare system.

"I also appeal to people from all walks of life to work collectively for safeguarding the rights of differently-abled persons and their welfare, and ensuring a healthier, comprehensive and equality-based society," the first lady said in a message.

She said the persons

with disabilities, who accounted for around 10 to 12% of the country's population, were facing difficulties to live a normal life and move around easily.

However, now people were more aware about their problems and that was because of the campaign conducted through seminars, conferences, walks and ceremonies, and messages sent to millions of mobile phone consumers, she added.

Similarly, she said, the welfare organizations and hospitals had also extended facilities to them. She appreciated the role of electronic media, newspapers, social media, NGOs and civil society that supported their efforts in creating public awareness about the health issues.

She regretted that the persons with disabilities were facing multiple barriers in their access to health, education and employment opportunities.

"We have to make them financially empowered by providing skilled-based education and health facilities," she added.

Samina Alvi said an ignored segment of society were the people suffering from psychological issues, who hesitated to talk about their problems or go to a psychiatrist for treatment because of 'social stigma'.

Around 24% of the country's population was suffering from various psychological issues, she added. The first lady also asked the women to spare five minutes every month for self-examination for early detection of breast cancer. A number of women died in Pakistan every year due to breast cancer, she added.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed honoured with Hilal-e-Imtiaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has conferred Hilal-e-Imtiaz upon Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC), Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed for his outstanding services in the field of higher education.

Every year, the government confers civil awards to people from different walks of life for their exemplary contributions to their respective fields. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, who has been associated with the higher education sector for the last three decades, has played a key role to formulate and implement reforms in the higher education, be it increase in the access to university education, strengthening quality assurance systems, development of infrastructure, and promoting national and international collaborations.

His experience at national and international level includes teaching, research, administration, policy development, linking educational research to industry / commercialisation, introducing entrepreneurial approaches to education and a diverse range of educational development programmes. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed has also served as Deputy Director General, Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) based in Rabat, Morocco, where he was responsible for Directorates of Education, Science, Culture and Communication, ICPSP, CPID (Planning and Strategic Division) and ISESCO Regional Centres.

NHMP foils effort to smuggle ice

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Highways and Motorway Police have foiled an attempt to smuggle into Punjab huge quantity of ice worth tens of millions of rupees on Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway. A spokesperson of NHMP said on Wednesday that near Rashkai Service Area, Motorway Police patrolling Sector Commander M-1 Shafiqur Rahman signaled to stop a suspicious vehicle. The driver fled from the spot and the Sector Commander M1 issued an instruction to stop the suspicious vehicle and also chased it himself. Seeing the Motorway Police from behind, the accused pulled the vehicle off the road and left the vehicle and fled from the spot.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Chairman, Senate Mirza Muhammad Afridi Wednesday said climate change had cast its shadow on Pakistan, and it was collective responsibility to transform our attitudes and behaviours to avert the impending disasters.

He was addressing the inaugural ceremony of the first ever Pakistan Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR 2023) held here at Pak-China Friendship Center. This is Pakistan's first ever Expo on disaster risk reduction which provides an opportunity to all stakeholders to Collaborate and Innovate for a resilient Pakistan. The Expo was inaugurated by the deputy chairman as chief guest on the occasion. The event will continue till 18th August and provide an opportunity for collaboration amongst National, International, Governmental and Non-Governmental organizations to pave way for a disaster resilient Pakistan.

The Expo convened a gathering of experts, officials, and stakeholders converged at the heart of Pakistan's capital city for the "Disaster Risk Reduction" Expo, organized by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF). In his keynote address at the opening ceremony, Mirza Afridi lauded the collective efforts to engage universities in disaster risk reduction measures. He underscored the pressing need for concrete and advanced technological measures to combat the ever-growing challenges posed by climate change and natural disasters.

"Our response to the calamities that have shaken the world in recent years demands innovative solutions," he emphasized. "The youth possess invaluable ideas that can guide our path towards disaster resilience, and it is imperative that we adapt and integrate their insights."

Acknowledging the essential role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Pakistan, the deputy chairman expressed his gratitude for their unyielding commitment to aiding calamity victims. "The tireless efforts of these NGOs provide a beacon of hope and support to those affected by various catastrophes," he stated. The deputy chairman recognized the indomitable spirit of the NDMA team, praising their unwavering dedication even in the face of adversity.

He reiterated the importance of collective support, asserting, "Every sector of society must rally behind the NDMA to fortify our nation against the impact of disasters."

Offering the expertise and guidance of the parliamentary body, Mirza Afridi affirmed, "The Senate is ready to provide the necessary guidance and collaboration that the NDMA requires."

He applauded the accomplishments of Chairman NDMA and his team, highlighting their commitment to safeguarding lives and communities. The deputy chairman drew attention to the cascading effects of disasters on infrastructure, citing the breakdown of roads, bridges, and communication channels. He paid tributes to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice while aiding others during natural calamities. He underscored the necessity to prepare for and mitigate the challenges posed by climate-induced disasters.

The "Disaster Risk Reduction" Expo, organized by NDMA and graced by the presence of Deputy Chairman Senate Mirza Muhammad Afridi, stands as a resolute testament to Pakistan's commitment to forge a path of resilience, adaptability, and unity in the face of mounting challenges. Chairman National Disaster Management, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik, CEO NDRMF, Bilal Anwar, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, Julien Harnais and others participated in the inaugural session.

## Ashrafi condemns Quran's desecration, attacks on Christian worship places

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulama Council (PUC) Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Wednesday unequivocally denounced the desecration of the Holy Quran, and the attacks on Christian worship places and residences in Jaranwala.

Condemning the recent acts of violence and disregard of religious sentiments, he announced the formation of a joint delegation of prominent figures from the PUC and International Interfaith Harmony Council (IIHC) to redress and pacify the situation in Jaranwala.

Ashrafi, who is also IIHC President, said the incident of the Holy Book's desecration, which was highly regrettable and condemnable, had evoked a strong reaction, eventually causing heightened tensions in the area.

He underlined the principles of Islam

that laid full emphasis on social peace, cohesion and security. The Muslim majority and the State owed absolute responsibility to safeguard the rights and safety of non-Muslims.

In a passionate call for unity and mutual cooperation, Ashrafi urged local religious leaders and authorities to have an effective collaboration and liaison to usher in positive changes in the society.

Ashrafi called for establishing a high-level committee to investigate the incident and ensure a comprehensive and impartial inquiry in that regard.

He urged the government to ascertain the losses of the Christian community and take a decisive action against the culprits. Similarly, those involved in the Holy Book's desecration must be brought to the book, he added.

## Amid impacting climate crisis, collective responsibility important to avert impending disasters: Afridi

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ISLAMABAD (APP): German Ambassador to Pakistan Alfred Grannas called on Federal Secretary Health Iftikhar Ali Shalwani on Wednesday.

The two sides discussed in detail mutual collaboration between Pakistan and Germany in the health sector. The meeting reviewed the installation process of MRI machine at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) hospital Islamabad.

It was assured by PIMS and German supplier Siemens that MRI machine in PIMS will start functioning from 6th September 2023. On this occasion representative of German Siemens company Zahid Ali was also present.

Federal Secretary Health expressed his gratitude to the German Ambassador. He said PIMS was the largest hospital in the federal capital which caters to 12 to 15 thousands patients every day.

He said that patients were facing problems as the MRI machine was out of order for some time.

The secretary said that he took notice of the situation and asked for installation of machine within August to mitigate suffering of the patients. The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination remains committed to taking practical steps for facilitation of patients and provision of healthcare to the masses, he said.

## Railways retrieve 1,007 acres land from illegal occupants

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has retrieved as many as 1,007 acres of its land worth millions of rupees from illegal occupants during various anti-encroachment operations across the country.

"Around 491 acres retrieved in Punjab, 145 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 339 acres in Sindh and only 32 acres in Balochistan," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said that about 3,287 acres in Punjab, 832 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,180 acres in Sindh, and 687 acres of land in Balochistan were being encroached.

The official said that in light of the directives of the Supreme Court, the anti-encroachment operations for retrieval of encroached railway land all over the Railway network were initiated and a joint procedure order was issued to all divisional superintendents for retrieval of Railways land from encroachment.

"The anti-encroachment schedules, on a three months basis, are being prepared and sent to all concerned in line with the joint procedure order," the official added.

He said Pakistan Railways had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grab-

bers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations who were using it for residential, commercial, and agriculture purposes for decades.

"The encroachment operation will be launched with the assistance of Railway Police and district administrations of the relevant provincial governments," he added. He said the organization was taking several steps to retrieve encroached land from the land grabbers including a detailed survey being carried out to identify the encroached land, occupied by the individuals and under illegal occupation by various government departments.

The official said that First Information Reports (FIRs) were being lodged and cases were registered and sent to PR Judicial Magistrates for expeditious trial. The issue regarding illegal occupation and possession of Pakistan Railways' land by government departments and institutions has also been taken up with the concerned departments, he added. The official said PR owned 167,690 acres of land across the country, of which 90,326 acre was in Punjab, 39,428 acres in Sindh, 28,228 acres in Balochistan, and 9,708 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



ISLAMABAD: German Ambassador to Pakistan Alfred Grannas calls on Federal Secretary Health Iftikhar Ali Shalwani, Pak-German health collaboration discussed.



### 3 killed in traffic accident

BAGHLAN (TOLOnews): At least three people were killed, and another was injured in an accident in the Baghlan province of Afghanistan, according to officials on Wednesday. The deadly incident occurred in the Khawja Alwan district, just outside the provincial capital of Pul-e-Khumri; according to Mawlawi Shir Ahmad Burhani, the spokesperson for the provincial police, the accident took place due to reckless driving.

## The Frontier Post

Muharram 29, 1445 — Thursday, August 17, 2023

### IEA trying to rebuild economy

KABUL (Pajhwok): In control of entire Afghanistan, the interim government is trying to overcome the economic crisis inherited from the previous regimes, said Russian ambassador. Dmitry Zhirmov acknowledged the IEA had also succeeded in the fight against the Islamic State besides planning to banish the drug industry. He said Russia was working with its partners to ensure the US and its allies shoulder the burden of rebuilding Afghanistan's economy.

## Watch Afghan activist challenge Taliban spokesman on girls' education

KABUL (Al Jazeera): Afghan women's rights activist Mahbouba Seraj has described the Taliban's ban on girls' education and other restrictions on women as a "crime" and an "apartheid" in a behind-the-scenes documentary released as the group marks two years since it returned to power in Afghanistan. Seraj, a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, confronts Taliban spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid during a meeting in Taliban Palace, an Al Jazeera Witness documentary released.

"For God's sake, please open the girls' schools," she says. "It is not possible to have a generation that doesn't go to school."

Mujahid tells Seraj that her concerns for girls' education are "justified" but says that "if schoolgirls go against the government" then that could "destabilise the Afghan society". "If we don't agree with the solution that the scholars advise for us, and if they think we are going in the wrong direction, it could cause division and bring down the government." According to UNESCO, more than 2.5 million, nearly 80 percent of school-aged Afghan girls and young women, have been out of school since 2021. The Taliban's decision to keep girls' schools shuttered has reversed significant gains in female education in the past 20 years.

The Taliban says it respects rights in line with its interpretation of Islamic law. The group has imposed a slew of restrictions on women, stopping most women from working with aid agencies, closing beauty salons, banning women from parks and limiting their ability to travel without a male guardian. Many Western and Muslim-majority countries have rejected the Taliban's policies on women's rights. Seraj warned Mujahid that if the Taliban's policies on women are not reversed, the world would stand against them. "The people of Afghanistan will suffer," she said.

## UN women chief calls for urgent action against Taliban's gender 'apartheid' in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): On Tuesday, the UN's lead organization for promoting gender equality urged the international community to advocate for change in Afghanistan persistently. The agency emphasized the urgent need to address the extensive and unprecedented restrictions imposed on the rights of women and girls throughout the country. Sima Bahous, the Executive Director of UN Women, issued the plea in a statement commemorating the second anniversary of the Taliban's resurgence to power in the country. "It is now two years since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, during which time it has imposed the most comprehensive, systematic, and unparalleled assault on the rights of women and

girls, Sima Bahous said. She continued, "Through over 50 edicts, orders, and restrictions, the Taliban has left no aspect of women's lives untouched, no freedom spared. They have created a system founded on the mass oppression of women that is rightly and widely considered gender apartheid." "I urge the Taliban to reconsider and to weigh the cost of these acts for Afghanistan's present and future," Bahous added. Bahous emphasized UN Women's solid and unwavering commitment to the betterment and empowerment of women and girls within the nation. She said the agency's work there is anchored in its fundamental relationships with women, who have described how these "misguided, cruel and ultimately self-defeating" measures have affected their lives. "Despite these challenges, Afghan women

also tell me they will not give up or give in. They will continue to lead the struggle against their oppression," she said. "In the face of the most hostile circumstances, they speak out against the violations, deliver lifesaving services, own and operate businesses, and run women's organizations. Their bravery must inspire us to greater action, their example to renewed determination," Bahous said. "I urge the international community to continue to apply every pressure and employ every means at their disposal to press for change, including by answering the call of the humanitarian community and fully funding the humanitarian appeal for Afghanistan," she said. During the occasion, Volker Turk, the UN Human Rights High Commissioner, took the opportunity to underscore the responsibility of the de facto authorities in upholding the rights of all individuals, including women and girls. UN human rights personnel remain in Afghanistan, actively supervising, documenting, and advocating for various human rights concerns. These span from fundamental freedoms to the protection of civilians during conflicts and the preservation of the rights of detainees.



Liz Throssell, a spokesperson for the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) in Geneva, stated, "We are engaging with the de facto authorities on these issues and remind them of their obligations under international human rights law." The High Commissioner strongly emphasized the necessity for the international community to sustain its awareness of the difficulties confronting the Afghanistan people.

## Tobias repeats call for Britain to rethink Afghanistan strategy

KABUL (Agencies): British MP Tobias Ellwood has again urged the government to rethink its strategy on Afghanistan, two years on from the fall of Kabul to the Islamic Emirate. The senior Conservative said the UK should not abandon the people of

Afghanistan, as he reiterated his call for ministers to reconsider engagement with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), PA news agency reported. The chairman of the British parliament's Commons Defence Select Committee was the keynote speaker at

an event in Feltham in west London organized by the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association. His appearance at the event, two years on from the IEA's return to power in the summer of 2021, comes after his recent comments on the country sparked con-

trovery and criticism from his fellow MPs. Ellwood alluded to the row during his speech, stressing that he was speaking in a purely personal capacity, while also claiming that many do not want to "confront the toughest of questions" on Afghanistan. The evacuation and plight of the country, he said, has been "conveniently forgotten" amid the war in Ukraine and growing tensions with China. "As I found out after my own visit, no-one it seems right now is ready to confront the toughest of questions of whether our current strategy of shouting from afar... is actually working. Or do we dare to consider leveraging greater influence through engagement," he said.

The former defense minister is facing a no-confidence motion as committee chairman after publishing a video claiming that Afghanistan has improved since the IEA regained power. Ellwood, following a visit to the nation, called for Britain to reopen its embassy in Kabul, following on from the European Union re-establishing a physical presence in the territory last year. He later removed his video from social media and expressed regret over its recording. The MP referred repeatedly to his recent visit, as well as previous trips, to Afghanistan during his address. "An economic, humanitarian or terrorism crisis is looming. Let's make sure Afghanistan and its people are not forgotten. It's time for a new strategy," Ellwood said.

KABUL (Pajhwok): Security has been tighter across Afghanistan after the political change, but analysts say the Islamic Emirate (IE) must bring changes to some of its policies to maintain stability and should soften stance on some issues, interact with the nation and create a professional government. The previous government (republic) collapsed on August 15, 2021 and replaced by the current acting government and Tuesday marked the completion of two years of the Islamic Emirate government. Analysts' views on security situation Military analyst Asadullah Nadeem says: "The security situation of Afghanistan has changed significantly, we can even say it is better compared to all previous regimes after President Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan." Nadeem about the reasons of security said: "The first reason is that Taliban are an inclusive, powerful group and a nationwide movement, they act brutally some extent against rivals, secondly Pakistan intelligence has always breached Afghanistan security, but now this movement is a friend to that country, thirdly, all the people are tired of fighting, no party or group is ready to fight and finally no rebellion against the incumbent rulers has external support to fight them". However, relations

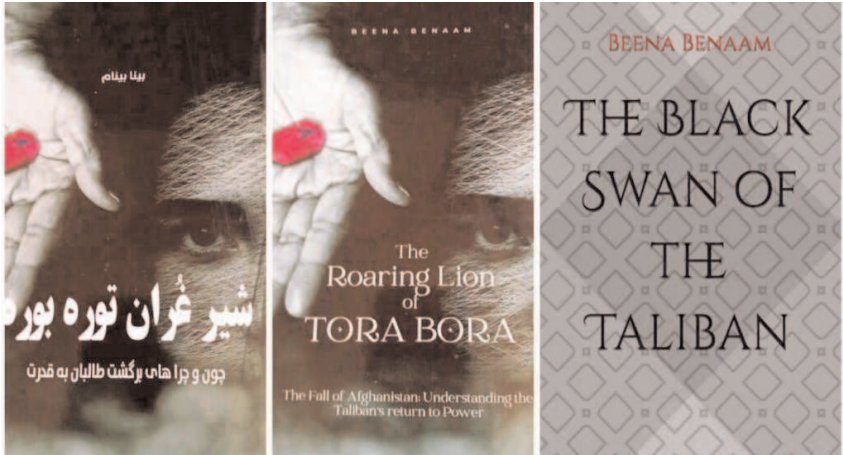
between Kabul and Islamabad seem tense as Pakistani officials have repeatedly said Afghans are involved in insecurity of that country, but the officials of acting government of Afghanistan have rejected their claims as baseless and advised Pakistan to look for internal solutions to its problems instead of blaming Afghanistan. Asadullah Nadeem said it was important for the acting government to continue its efforts for durable security. According to him, it is possible that the current security proves not permanent because some policies of the current caretaker government can possibly result in gaining foreign support by its opponents. "If the Taliban want comprehensive and permanent security, stability, economic development in the country, they need to attract foreign investors for investment in the country, should gain domestic and international legitimacy, bring changes to the government structure, all such changes must be technical not ethnical and the government must not act like a partnership company or appoint officials as representatives of bigger tribes," he added. He said: "The Taliban must form a professional and technical government, employ professional scholars forgoing international legitimacy, attract international funds for investment, or else the current available

security can be more precarious in the future". Torkyalai Himmat, another analyst, thinks security is the Islamic Emirate's huge achievement. He said: "It is not about security only, Afghanistan had previously first position in production of drugs in the world, but now it is the last one in the list of countries that produce drugs, up to 600 Afghans were being killed every day in the past, that level has decreased to only two or three murder incidents". The Islamic Emirate has many achievements besides security in the fields of economy, mining and intelligence, he added. Himmat said: "However, in some cases jobs are not given on merit, this issue will be solved, they will prepare a constitution too, the reopening of schools for girls has been delayed, but they will be reopened. No one from Amirul Momineen (supreme leader) to me as a smaller Talib, no one is opposed to girls' education, all the schools will be opened according to Islamic Sharia and Afghan culture soon, God willing". Himmat said the government was expected to make announcements about the national flag and the reopening of girls' schools on the second anniversary of the Islamic Emirate's return to power, which would add to the joys of the freedom day. About the continuity of

security in the country, he said "There is no imminent threat to the security of the country I do not see anything like that because every war has a cause and the cause of the war in Afghanistan has been achieved, we fought for 14 years against the Russians because the fight was against invasion of the country and its destruction, we fought for 20 years against the US forces, we had a motive as our country was invaded by 52 countries". He said the Afghans could tolerate everything, but they could not tolerate threat to religion of Islam and their nationality. "If someone dares to fight Afghans, their fate will be like the Russians or Americans". He said: "It is important for the Islamic Emirate to accept reasonable demands of the nation, such re-opening of girls' schools according to Islamic values and Afghan culture, the work of courts is going slowly which needs to be expedited, officials should be hired based on merit instead of relationships. The people had tasted the sour experience of wars, they do not want such thing to happen again, the IE also does not want war."

To maintain security and preserve stability in the country, he said, the Islamic Emirate should implement economic schemes and interact with the nation the way it wanted interaction with the world.

## Mangal's books on Afghanistan published



KABUL (Pajhwok): Foreign-based female Afghan journalist, Zarghona Mangal, has written two books on the past and current situation in Afghanistan during her trip to the country last year. Zarghona Mangal, a former audio media who is currently journalist living in Sweden, says she wanted to gather information to prepare a proposal for her studies last year during her trip to Afghanistan. In the process, her plan changed and she started

writing about the unrest in Afghanistan. Mangal's first book — The Roaring Lion of Tora Bora — was published despite technical problems. According to her, the book was written based on stories of a number of Afghans who fled Kabul on one charter flights in August 2021. Her second book — The Black Swan of the Taliban — is focused on life stories of drug addicts in Afghanistan. Both books published under the title of

"Bina-i-Be Naam" (Nameless Seer). Mangal said she published the books with unusual names to tell the stories of neutral Afghans and spotlight previous and current problems of the country to the outside world. She promised to author two more books about Afghanistan's beggars and natural resources. She believes the country's mineral wealth is the reason for the continued interest and involvement of major powers in Afghanistan.

## Experts on corruption under IEA, previous govt

KABUL (Pajhwok): In the past two years, administrative corruption has declined during the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) regime comparing to the level of corruption that existed in the Republic regime, according to residents and experts. Stressing over the introduction of a legal mechanism in the country to fight corruption they asked the acting IEA government to allow international anti-corruption watchdogs so that government institutions could be properly monitored. Zabiullah Mujahid, spokesperson of the IEA, said administrative corruption had reduced to zero, adding that if corruption is noted in some organisations than immediate steps are taken for its removal. In addition, some anti-corruption watchdogs had been established as well. Consequences of administrative corruption Administrative corruption has consequences for people in every country especially in underdeveloped countries such as Afghanistan, it has negative impact on the progress and development of a country. Corruption hamper the

legitimacy of a government and pose grave threat to the security and stability of a country, it also have negative impact on the economic progress and development of a country. Administrative corruption threatened public trust on government and political institutions as well as it cut public hop for the bright future. The spread of corruption halt the way of several economic and social developments and ultimately people finally suffer the worst consequences of corruption which is the creation of classes in the society. Administrative corruption in Afghanistan existed from the past which causes several other problems such as violence, ethnic issues and several other problems. In the past 20 years, Afghanistan was always existed in the list of administrative corrupt countries, but after the takeover of the IEA the incumbent government claimed curtailing corruption in government institutions. Some circles, however, rejected the claim. According to the Transparency International (TI) last year report,

Afghanistan made 24 points progress on anti-corruption index. Administrative corruption declined, not eradicated Some experts believed that administrative corruption has declined to some extent but not fully eradicated. According to experts it was expected that IEA would fully restore transparency but it did not happen and administrative corruption still existed in government institutions. Najibullah Jamai, with the return of the IEA and political change administrative corruption had been curtailed to the greater extent. He believed there was need for a legal system and introducing mechanisms to fully eradicate corruption. The system should support accountability, media should have greater access to information and legal platforms should be introduced where corrupt elements are investigated in the legal framework. He said the current government was fully committed to eradicate corruption, adding that this determination should be transformed in a legal framework based on modern day principles.

Jami said the caretaker government should be accountable not only to the people of Afghanistan, but also to the international institutions that work in the fight against corruption, and allow them to visit and supervise the government departments. Referring to the country's progress on the TI index, he said Afghanistan could not make progress until a legal system of governance and political legitimacy of the system is not defined. He, however, said the acting government's anti-corruption efforts were admirable considering the situation in which Afghanistan is going through. Referring to the comparison with the past regime he said: "Commitment against corruption that existed in the IEA government never existed in the Republic regime." He recommended that digital based governance was the best option for the eradication of administrative corruption. All equal before the law in Islamic system Jannat Fahim Chakari, a university teacher, said good things happened in the past two years in fight

against corruption but the way it was expected from the IEA to fully eradicate corruption but it did not happened and still corruption existed in the government institutions and not fully eradicated. He said administrative corruption persisted in all government institutions and the government should introduced legal and effective mechanisms to eradicate corruption. He added the current government anti-corruption performance was good and now people are satisfied with their daily affairs in the government institutions. Referring to the previous regime in which around 10 anti-corruption watchdogs were operating, he asked the current government to allow international organisations to monitor the government institutions. He also asked the acting government to provide key government posts to deserving and professional people, did not relay on slogans and officials should visit government institutions themselves and inquire that government performances is in line with the Sharia Law or not.

Azizullah Maarej, another political affairs expert, said corruption has declined now compared to the previous regime. In the past, robbery, theft, corruption, bribes and other illicit activities were on its peak. "In general, we cannot say that administrative corruption has been completely curbed and eliminated; Corruption still exists, there are reports and videos are available, people complain about corruption in offices, and there is still coercion and bribery, but not to the extent it was in the past." Public views: Public also shared views on administrative corruption in government offices in the past two years and demanded the government to completely eradicate corruption. Sher Agha Shahyan, the resident of Baghlan province, said: "administrative corruption was on its peak in the past but now it has been reduced." He asked the acting government to allow international anti-corruption watchdogs to monitor government institutions. Bahadur, the resident of Jalalabad City, said he

offered bribes in the traffic department in the past government to perform his activities but during current regime he recently went to the traffic department and without wasting time and money he finished his work. Syed Mobin Hashami, the resident of Kabul, said: "Corruption reduced but not full eradicated, in Afghanistan it is not possible to eliminate corruption, during republic regime several people were involved while in the current regime fewer hands are involved in corruption." An official of the past government who is now in Germany and did not want to be named, asked the government to introduced mechanisms on the bases of which corruption is fully eradicated from the system. He said he lost his job after the takeover of IEA and he had to pay 3,600 to get passport for himself and his three family members. Administrative corruption almost zero in Afghanistan Zabiullah Mujahid, spokesperson of the IEA, said administrative corruption had reduced to zero, adding that if corruption is

noted in some organisations than immediate steps are taken for its removal. In addition, some anti-corruption watchdogs had been established as well. He said in the past corruption was at its peak and currently the situations different and the IEA was committed to eliminate corruption. Referring to the monitoring of foreign anti-corruption watchdogs, he said: "We still do not trust them because the first thing is that they have not recognized the IEA, secondly, they are related to countries that once had a war or occupation in Afghanistan, common trust is needed and maybe we will cooperate with them later, but now it is too early." He said bringing corruption to the zero level was not possible in developed countries as well but efforts had been made to stop corruption from becoming a common thing and culturally acceptable. According a report five months earlier, Afghanistan scored 24 points and ranked 150th out of total 180 countries in the world on the Transparency International (TI) corruption perception index for 2022.



# President stresses adopting preventive steps to avoid diseases

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said adopting preventive measures could help people avoiding or minimizing intensity of diseases, and improving the overall health condition of population of the country.

Health and education were two basic sectors which needed to be put on top priority because nations always build on these two areas, he said while addressing the "Med-Health Expo 2023 and Summit" here. The president said the people specially those with limited resources could easily avoid the chronic diseases such as breast cancer, hepatitis, and communicable diseases by adopting preventive measures.

With regard to deteriorating health sector in the country, he highlighted that lack of decision-making, avoidance of merit and corruption in the past were the main reason behind limited health facilities in the country. The health sector exhibition was organized by Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) aimed at information exchange, learning, and cooperation opportunities for health professionals.

The two-day event will showcase the latest research and developments in various medical fields through a series of sessions. President Alvi stressed universities and academia to promote research in the health sector that would bring tremendous

improvement in human health. He urged the medical professionals to move along with the world that was doing advance research on human DNA to predict the disease in people.

He also called upon the industrialists to produce affordable medical devices to ensure access of people especially from all walks of society to the quality medical facilities. President Alvi said the industrialists and the exporters should explore big potential markets such as Africa to increase their exports of pharmaceutical and surgical instruments.

He informed that some 9 million pregnancies occurred annually in the country out of which 50% were unwanted which could easily be avoided by providing contraceptive facilities to the people. Similarly, he said doctors and hospitals should also use the latest technology to provide online healthcare facilities to save resources of both patients and the hospitals.

This would also help reaching out to the maximum number of people, he added. The president also stressed the need to provide first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training to common people from school levels to save lives of the people in emergencies. President RCCI Saqib Rafiq said President Dr Arif Alvi and First Lady Samina Alvi played vital role in creating awareness about different diseases especially breast cancer in the country.

He said Pakistan's health sector

was facing challenges which needed to be addressed. He said due to lack of awareness and health facilities, 10% of total population was suffering from hepatitis and 34% from stress. Similarly, he said maternal mortality was very high in the country.

Chairman of the event Usman Shoukat called upon the government to focus on health sector and take special measures for uplift of the sector. Group Leader RCCI Sohail Altaf maintained that the government should provide subsidized land and equipments to the private sector to ensure affordable healthcare facilities to the masses. On the occasion, President Alvi also awarded shields to pharmaceutical companies, private hospitals, and medical laboratories for their services in health sector.

**Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed pays farewell call on President:** Secretary of Foreign Affairs Dr Asad Majeed Khan paid a farewell call on President Dr Arif Alvi here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. The president congratulated Dr Asad Majeed Khan on the successful completion of his term as the 31st foreign secretary.

He appreciated the services of the outgoing foreign secretary for promoting Pakistan's stance on different matters. President Alvi also lauded the foreign secretary's professional competence and initiatives on the diplomatic fronts. He also expressed good wishes for Dr Asad Majeed Khan for his post-retirement life.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Foreign Affairs, Asad Majeed Khan, paid a farewell call on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## 10 names 'cleared' for caretaker KP cabinet

PESHAWAR (INP): Names of 10 people have been cleared for their inclusion as ministers in the caretaker cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it has been learnt on Wednesday. The cabinet members are expected to take oath this week, sources said, as efforts for the formation of the caretaker cabinet for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa accelerate.

The 10 names cleared for inclusion in the new caretaker cabinet include four of those who resigned from the previous cabinet, as per sources. The list of the ministers set to join the new caretaker cabinet includes former bureaucrats and technocrats.

Five more people are currently being screened for the purpose. The sources said it has been decided to include neutral people in the cabinet. They further said the caretaker cabinet will take oath this week. Contacts have been underway with various personalities for their possible inclusion as caretaker ministers in the KP caretaker cabinet. A search for completely non-political people has been underway to fill the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet.

Advisers and special assistants will not be part of the caretaker cabinet, it has been heard. As per the 18th Constitutional Amendment, there will be only 15 ministers in the caretaker cabinet.

## Rupee extends losses for 4th session

KARACHI (Agencies): Pakistani rupee extended losses against the US dollar for the fourth straight session and weakened by Rs3.42 (-1.16 percent) in the interbank market on Wednesday.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said in a tweet that the rupee opened at 291.51 against the dollar in the interbank market and closed at 294.93. The rupee depreciated by Rs7.47 against the US dollar during the last four sessions. During the current fiscal year 2023-24, Pakistani rupee has shed Rs8.94 against the US dollar in the interbank market, while it plummeted by Rs67.50 against the greenback in the current year.

Similarly, the local unit depreciated against the greenback in the open market by Rs2 (-1.01 percent). The rupee was quoted in the range of 300-303 against the dollar in the open market as compared to 298-301 a session earlier.

In the black market/Hundi, the dollar was traded at Rs318 against Rs315 a session earlier. According to currency experts, the dollar saw the rise as imports are opening up gradually. They said the rupee's decline can be attributed to the removal of restrictions on letters of credit (LCs), which has led to an increased demand for dollars and subsequently weakened the rupee. They said that the price of oil going up in the international market could also be cited as a reason for the dollar price to spike. They also said that there is a shortage of greenbacks in the market.

They said the rupee's depreciation was expected, as under the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the difference between the open market and the interbank market should be one percent.

## Libya fighting leaves 55 dead, dozens injured

TRIPOLI (Agencies): Tripoli's worst armed clashes in a year have killed 55 people and wounded 146, Libyan media outlets have reported, as a truce took hold. Fighting erupted on Monday night and raged through Tuesday between the influential 444 Brigade and the Special Deterrence Force, two of the many armed groups that have vied for power since the overthrow of longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Libya's Al-Ahrar TV reported the new casualty toll on Wednesday, citing Malek Mersit, spokesman for the Emergency Medical Centre. Medics had previously reported 27 dead and 106 wounded over the two days of fighting in the capital. In August last year, 32 people were killed and 159 wounded in Tripoli during battles between divided Libya's two rival administrations that compete for power through shifting alliances with the fighting groups on the ground.

Libya has seen more than a decade of stop-start conflict since the NATO-backed revolt that toppled Gaddafi. A period of relative stability had led the United Nations to express hope for delayed elections to take place this year, and the latest fighting triggered international calls for calm. The clashes started after the detention of the head of the 444 Brigade, Colonel Mahmoud Hamza, by the rival Special Deterrence Force on Monday, an interior ministry official said.

Late Tuesday, the social council in the eastern suburb of Souq al-Jumaa, a stronghold of the Special Deterrence Force, announced that an agreement had been reached with Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, head of the UN-recognised government based in the capital, for Hamza to be handed over to a "neutral party". In a televised announcement, the council said a ceasefire would follow the transfer of the force's commander, and late on Tuesday the fighting abated. Both armed groups are aligned with Dbeibah's government.

A total of 234 families were evacuated from front-line areas in the capital's southern suburbs, along with dozens of doctors and paramedics trapped by the fighting while caring for the wounded, the Emergency Medical Centre said. Late on Tuesday and into the early hours of Wednesday, Dbeibah visited the southeastern suburb of Ain Zara, which saw some of the heaviest fighting on Tuesday, accom-

panied by Interior Minister Emad Trabelsi. Dbeibah "saw for himself the severity of the damage" as he toured the densely populated neighbourhood's unlit streets, his government's press office said on its Facebook page. He gave instructions for a survey of the damage to be carried out so that residents could be compensated, it added.

The interior ministry put in place a security plan to deploy officers to battle-ground districts to oversee the truce announced between the two sides. The Libyan capital's only civilian airport, Mitiga, which lies in an area under Special Deterrence Force control, reopened to commercial flights on Wednesday, officials said. Flights had been diverted to Misrata, about 180km (112 miles) to the east.

In May, the two armed groups had clashed for hours in Tripoli, also after the arrest of a 444 Brigade member. The UN mission in Libya said it was "following with concern" the security deterioration in Tripoli and its impact on civilians. Human Rights Watch Libya researcher Hanan Salah expressed outrage that the capital's armed groups continued to settle their differences with heavy weaponry in residential areas without being held accountable.

"Surely, Libyans at risk of such violent incidents deserve more? Nothing will change unless there are consequences," she said. Libya specialist Jalel Harchaoui said the latest clashes highlighted the failure of the international community to address the problem of the fighting groups. "However events unfold, the past three years have been wasted by diplomats, politicians, the security planners and peace-building specialists. Tripoli is a territory even more dominated by the militias than before," Harchaoui said.

The 444 Brigade is affiliated with Libya's defence ministry and is reputed to be the North African country's most disciplined. It controls the southern suburbs of Tripoli and other areas. The Special Deterrence Force, commanded by Abdel Rauf Karah, is a powerful ultra-conservative group that acts as the capital's police force and controls central and eastern Tripoli, Mitiga air base, the civilian airport and a prison. Libya is split between Dbeibah's UN-backed government in the west and another in the east backed by renegade general Khalifa Haftar.

## Sana, Riaz indicate elections in February 2024

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former interior minister Rana Sanaullah and opposition leader Raja Riaz have indicated that elections are likely to be held in February of the upcoming year.

Rana Sanaullah, representing the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), also revealed that Nawaz Sharif, the party's leader, is anticipated to return to Pakistan ahead of the elections to lead the electoral campaign. Sanaullah said that the establishment also appears inclined towards holding elections within a 90-day window. However, he

acknowledged that the elections are expected to be scheduled for February due to the ongoing delimitation of Constituencies, a process that will conclude by December. It is anticipated that Nawaz Sharif will arrive in Pakistan in October to spearhead the electoral campaign.

Sanaullah expressed confidence that Nawaz Sharif will be vindicated of the alleged charges, similar to PML-N Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz and her spouse Captain (ret'd) Safdar. Raja Riaz echoed the sentiment that elections are likely to occur in proximity to February 15, either

one week before or after. He noted the possibility of a slight delay in the election schedule to address the current economic challenges and steer the country towards stability.

Raja Riaz alluded to the decision made by senior figures to hold the elections in February 2024, without providing further details. Former Prime Minister and PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif expressed optimism that Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, who was sworn in on August 14, will ensure a transparent, free, and impartial election process.

## India releases more water in River Sutlej

B A H A W A L N A G A R (INP): India has released surplus water from its water reservoirs in Sutlej River on Wednesday. India had also discharged 2,08,597 cusecs water from Harike and 1,10,568 cusecs from Ferozepur in River Sutlej in July. The water level being surged in Pakistan with discharge of water from India in Sutlej, officials said.

Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Punjab had issued flood alert in rivers on Tuesday. The PDMA had issued instructions to the deputy commissioners of Bahawalnagar, Kasur, Okara, Pakpattan and Vehari for preparations to tackle emergency situation. All dams on Sutlej and Beas in India have been filled to the capacity and more rainfall expected in upper

catchment areas of Sutlej and Beas rivers, PDMA spokesman said. "India could release surplus water from its water reservoirs".

Heavy rainfall with thunderstorm is likely in catchment areas of major rivers in next 24 hours, according to the alert. "The monsoon rain spell will likely to continue till August 23," according to the PDMA. "Flooding is expected in Sutlej River at Ganda Singh Wala and low-lying areas," PDMA stated.

Met Office has forecast more monsoon rains in upper parts of the country. Moderate to heavy falls may increase the water flows in local Nullahs/streams of Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Mansehra, Abbottabad,

Rawalpindi and Islamabad, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD).

**Mangla Dam one foot shy of full capacity:** The water level in Mangla Dam has risen to 1,241 feet which is only one foot lower than its maximum capacity of 1,242 feet on Wednesday. The Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) has alerted the local administration about the release of 75,000 cusecs of water into the Jhelum River from August 17.

The Jhelum administration has also put the departments concerned on high alert. It also advised the people living along the banks of the Jhelum River to move to safe places. "There is no flooding threat in the Jhelum River.

## FIA opens inquiries in cases of mega corruption

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Wednesday initiated inquiries in four cases of mega corruption. The Agency has started inquiries against several banks for opening LCs at a US dollar rate higher than what it is in the interbank.

It has emerged that eight banks minted over 65 billion only in this fashion. Similarly, the FIA has also started an inquiry into alleged embezzlement of Rs32 billion in the purchase of land for M-6 of the motorway by the concerned district administration. Likewise, the Agency has also started probe into alleged corruption in the distribution of relief goods dispatched to the flood-affected areas for their distribution among victims of the calamity.

The department has sought from the concerned departments an audit report of the relief items handed to flood-affected people in different districts of Sindh, including Sanghar and Dadu. Similarly, alleged embezzlement of 1.8 million bags of flour in the 'Muft Aata Scheme' has also prompted an inquiry. The FIA has started these inquiries when Senator Saifullah Abro pointed out alleged corruption in these cases.

## Train, bus fares go up

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Pakistan Railways and transporters have jacked up fares after the caretaker government increased petroleum prices by up to Rs20 per litre, it emerged Wednesday.

A notification issued by the railways said the train fare had been increased by ten percent, adding that it will be applicable to all passenger trains operations across the country. The train fare for Karachi to Shikarpur has been increased by Rs200 to Rs1,600, it said, adding that the new prices will be applicable from August 17.

Meanwhile, the All Pakistan Public Transport Owners Federation has also decided to increase fares by up to Rs150 due to recent hike in petroleum prices. An official of the body said that the new prices will be implemented from August 17 after consultation with transporters.

The association has decided to increase the fare for Lahore to Rawalpindi bus service by Rs100 to Rs2,650 while Lahore to Peshawar fare will be hiked by Rs150 to Rs3,350. Furthermore, Lahore to Faisalabad fare, which is currently Rs1,180, will be increased to Rs1,300. The caretaker government on Tuesday increased the price of petrol by Rs17.50 per litre, taking the price to record high of Rs290.45 per litre.

## Shifting of Hassan to unknown location PHC orders govt for submission of reply

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued notice to government for submission reply for transferring Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) worker and former Prime Minister Imran Khan nephew Hassan Niazi to an unknown place, on Wednesday.

PHC's divisional bench comprised Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Fazal Subhan heard the petition while Barrister Sarwar Shah argued that Hassan Niazi was arrested from Abbottabad on 13th August while no one is aware of that whom took him in custody and place.

The counsel argued that competent authorities changing claiming one time stated that Hassan Niazi transferred Lahore and other time with new claims. However, Additional Advocate General argued

that Hassan Niazi took into custody after registration First Information Report against him. PHC has issued notice to government along with other respondents for submission of reply while adjourned further hearing till 18th August after initial arguments.

Meanwhile, PHC order Inspector General of Police (IGP) KP and Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dera Ismail Khan in writ against ignoring in departmental promotions while adjourn further hearing.

The counsel Qadr Ullah Gandapur and Sheikh Inam Ullah argued that Azghar Khan along with two other petitioners were recruited in 2007-9 in South Waziristan Levies while incorporated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police following 21st constitutional amendment and the applicants assumed charge as

Head Constables.

The counsel further argued that District Police Officer (DPO) South Waziristan has constituted promotion committee in 2021 but RPO DI Khan has promoted junior personnel Sub Inspector while Asghar Khan was promoted to Assistant Sub Inspector while other two were ignored in the promotion.

It is illegal because neglecting senior officials in promotions to make the process on nepotism is unconstitutional, the counsel argued. The counsel requested for promotion of petitioners to sub-inspectors as they are eligible for the position. PHC's divisional bench constituted of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Fazal Subhan issued notices to IGP& RPO while transferred the case to DI Khan bench for further proceedings and adjourned further hearing.

## JI to hold countrywide protest on Friday

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sirajul Haq has announced to hold countrywide protest on Friday against recent price hike in petroleum products. In a statement issued from Mansoorah on Wednesday, he not only condemned increase in price but also asked caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar to take the decision back.

"There has been no cabinet yet, but the killing decision has been taken at the direction of the IMF," Sirajul Haq said the nation just celebrated 76th Independence Day and the very next date, when even the cabinet has not yet been sworn in, the caretaker government has announced

massive price hike in all petroleum products, sending multiplier waves through the economy.

The Jamaat-e-Islami, he said, was expecting the caretakers would provide some relief to the inflation-hit masses rather they endorsed the policies of the predecessors. He said over half of the country's population lives below poverty line, having no access to even basis needs of life. The two percent ruling elite on the other side, he added, captured the wealth and resources of the 98 percent population. There was need to undo injustice, cruelty and unfair distribution of resources, he said, adding the only way to achieve these objectives was a peaceful democratic struggle. People, he said, must

vote for honest and dedicated leadership to bring about real change.

The JI chief demanded reversal of petrol price hike, rejecting the raise. "The Jamaat-e-Islami invites the entire nation to come out and join hands with it coming Friday to protest against this decision."

The JI would take out protest rallies on all district headquarters in the country against atrocious act by the government," he warned. Siraj also condemned violence in Jaranwala and demanded transparent inquiry into the incidents. He said no one should be allowed to take law into hands. He said enemies were hatching conspiracies to create peace and order situation in the country.

## ATC stops arrest of former MPA Zahir Shah Toru

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Mardan and the court of additional session judge Mardan on Wednesday stopped relevant officials from the arrest of ex-MPA and Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf Party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial president Zahir Shah Khan Toru in two cases that were registered against him.

The PTI legal team led by Riaz Khan Paidakheil advocate and comprised of other counsels including Abdur Rahim, Sajjad, Manzoor and Alamgir argued the cases in the two courts for their client Zahir Shah Khan Toru. The counsel told the Anti-terrorism court judge Khalid Khan that their client belonged to

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf Party.

The counsel argued that the court that the officials of City Police Station booked their client under different sections including 7-ATA and 3-MPO concerning to the countrywide protest against the arrest of PTI chairman Imran Khan on May 9. Neither their client was present on that occasion nor he had any relation to the violent incidents took place on May 9.

The counsel informed the court that Mr. Zahir Shah Khan Toru was a noble citizen that was why he wanted to present himself before the court to face the cases that were registered against him. However, he asked the court to grant him interim bail as he

feared of arrest by the police. ATC court accepted his application and granted him interim bail till September 7 and asked him to produce himself before the court after that.

Similarly, Zahir Shah Khan Toru also submitted the same application in the court of session judge Mardan that he wanted to produce himself before the court in another case but he feared of his arrest by the police. Thus, the additional session judge Amir Riaz also accepted the application and granted him item bail till August 29, in the case registered against him by the officials of anti-corruption department concerning to alleged illegal recruitments in the fisheries department.