

**Nurse ‘raped’ by cops**

FAISALABAD (INP): In yet another rape incident in Pakistan, two policemen reportedly sexually molested a nurse in Faisalabad on Friday. Two cops intercepted a nurse at Kanal Road in Samundari, Faisalabad, who was waiting with her friend. Cops of the city police station named Shujaat and Suhaib ‘raped’ the nurse and fled. Getting the information, the police swung into action and arrested both the accused.

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**JIT reaches Attock Jail**

ATTOCK (INP): a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) tasked with probing the May 9 riots and the attack on the Corps Commander’s house in Lahore reached Attock Jail to interrogate PTI Chairman Imran Khan, says in media reports. This move follows the green light granted by an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) to investigate and potentially arrest Imran Khan in connection with the violent events that transpired on May 9.

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# PPP demands holding of polls within 90 days

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: Pakistan People’s Party has demanded holding of the general elections in the country within 90 days as required by the constitution, urging that pushing the country towards a constitutional and political crisis should be avoided through unjustified delay in the election.

PPP Vice President Sherry Rehman has said that her party will make its future strategy, in the light of the situation arising from the meeting of the party delegation with the top officials of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), in its next meeting of the Central Executive Committee due in Lahore.

PPP Vice President Sherry Rehman, Secretary General Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari, former Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, Shazia Mari and Faisal Karim Kundi held a presser at Media Cell Bilawal House to inform about the deliberations taken during the CEC meeting in Bilawal House. Mir Changez Khan Jamali, Syed Hassan Murtaza, Ali Madad Jatak, Sardar Muhammad Yaqub Khan, Amjad Advocate and other leaders were also present.

Sherry Rehman told that the meeting of the CEC under the joint chair of Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari is still going on, adding that the representatives of all the provinces including the central leaders are present in the meeting.

She said that the focus of the meeting was on the country’s ongoing economic crisis, increasing poverty, increase in petrol and electricity tariff, and unchecked inflation as well as the solution to these problems. She said that the meeting also formulated a strategy for relief activities in view of the flood situation in Punjab.

Former federal minister said that the CEC meeting also reviewed the situation regarding the general elections in the country and the party has a clear stand in this regard that the constitution is clear regarding holding elections in 90 days, hence, there should be no ambiguity about

it. “A delegation of the party will go to the Election Commission on August 29 and place the party’s position before the Election Commission. The future course of action will be made in the light of the reply received from the Chief Election Commissioner,” she added.

Ms Rehman said that the PPP has serious reservations about the digital census, adding that elections cannot be delayed on the basis of delimitation of constituencies as numbers of seats remain unchanged in provinces according to the census. She said that the CEC has decided that the party’s membership campaign will be launched across the country from next month. “The party is preparing its election manifesto,” adding that the party wants that the way the people’s government of Sindh has given relief to the flood victims and given land ownership rights to the people, this example should be followed in other provinces including Punjab. PPP’s Vice President said that her party is also focusing on the rights of women and minorities. “Everyone has seen that our leaders visited Jaranwala to show solidarity. PPP’s manifesto is to give equal rights to all,” she continued.

In response to a question, former Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said: “Our aim was that the elections should be held on time, so we approved the census (in CCI),” adding that the recent census is not going to change the number of seats in assemblies. He pointed out that it is clearly written in the constitution that elections will be held in 90 days. “This is not issue who will announce the election date, but the ECP is bound to hold general elections within 90 days,” he contended.

Meanwhile, Syed Nayyar Bukhari said that the constitution mentions holding general elections for 90 days, but delimitation of the constituencies are not mentioned. Faisal Karim Kundi said that if the ECP can manage holding the by-election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it means that the general elections in the country can also be held on time.

## Nawaz to return to in Oct

LONDON (Agencies): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif will return to Pakistan in October, confirmed party President Shehbaz Sharif after holding a huddle in London.

“Nawaz Sharif will return to Pakistan in October and lead the election campaign,” the former prime minister told the media alongside his elder brother. However he did not confirm a specific date of Nawaz’s return. On the other hand, family sources, told media ahead of the meeting, that Nawaz is expected to return to

Pakistan on October 15 of this year as per the family discussions.

According to the sources, the date was discussed between Nawaz, Shehbaz and close family members in London to decide that the PML-N supremo will return to Pakistan in mid-October. Previously, media reported that Nawaz will return to Pakistan by mid-September; however, there has been a change of plan in the last few days after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced that elections are not possible within 90 days.

The sources said that Nawaz’s return has been delayed till mid-October, not because of the ECP announcement but over the advice of party loyalists that September is too hot and severe for large-scale political gatherings, making mid-October a better time for return.

The decision to return around mid-October was taken after Shehbaz held two meetings with the PML-N supremo in London. Shehbaz arrived in London last Sunday after handing over the reins to Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

## Imran’s legal team ‘harassed’ in IHC’s elevator: PTI

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Friday accused that its Chairman Imran Khan’s legal team was “harassed” by confining them in an elevator for 45 minutes at the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

According to details, Senior lawyer Latif Khosa and Naeem Haider Panjotha — who are representing the former prime minister in the Toshakhana case — and other members of his legal team got trapped in a malfunctioning elevator of the high court.

The incident took place when Khosa along with other lawyers were on their way back after giving their arguments on a plea seeking suspension of the deposed premier’s punishment, who was removed from office in April last year via a no-confidence motion, three-year jail term in the case. A total of 19 people, including a media person, were onboard the lift when it stopped functioning abruptly.

After a span of over 30 minutes, a fire and rescue team reached the spot and rescued the lawyers safely from the lift stuck on the second floor of the IHC. The people entered the elevator at 12 noon on the third floor at the Islamabad High Court and were rescued at 12:45pm. Condemning the incident, the former ruling party urged President Arif Alvi and Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial to launch a probe into the incident immediately.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) also expressed concerns over the incident saying, “Surprisingly, IHC staff did nothing for immediate help.” Senior lawyer Latif Khosa and others got stuck in the elevator for almost one hour at the IHC

## Judge Humayun made OSD

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Additional District and Sessions Judge Humayun Dilawar, who convicted Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan and handed him down a three-year jail term in the Toshakhana case, was made an officer on special duty (OSD) on Friday.

The development came hours after Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamer Farooq observed that the trial court, which sentenced the former prime minister in the Toshakhana case, “did wrong”.

According to a notification issued by the Islamabad High Court additional registrar, “The honourable chief justice of this court has been pleased to make following transfer/posting of ADSJ working in the Islamabad Judicial Service, in the public interest.” Sources privy to the matter, however, claimed that ADSJ Dilawar was appointed as the OSD against a “newly-created post” at the IHC due to “security concerns”.



ISLAMABAD: US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome called on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

## PM reaffirms govt’s desire to further strengthen ties with US

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday reaffirmed the government’s desire to further strengthening bilateral cooperation with the United States in the key areas including trade and investment, energy, security, and climate change.

He was talking to the US Ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Blome who called on him here. Ambassador Blome congratulated the prime minister on assuming office and reaffirmed the United States’ desire for supporting Pakistan’s economic and development agenda.

The prime minister said that Pakistan and the US enjoyed longstanding and broad-based relations, rooted in mutual respect, common interests and shared values. He emphasized that the caretaker government’s main responsibility was to assist the Election Commission of Pakistan in the electoral process and provide constitutional continuity during the period of democratic transition.

He expressed satisfaction over the current positive trajectory of bilateral ties and appreciated the United States’ role in helping Pakistan to stabilize its economy and reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to continue the reform agenda for achieving sustainable growth. Noting the role that the U.S. private sector had traditionally played in supporting Pakistan’s economic growth, he hoped that that more U.S. companies would explore the investment opportunities, particularly to tap the vast potential for investment in Pakistan’s information

## Progress of Balochistan main priority

**F.P. Report**

QUETTA: Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Friday said progress of Balochistan was the main priority of his government. He made the remarks in a meeting with Caretaker Balochistan Chief Minister Ali Mardan Domki here at the Chief Minister House.

The chief minister briefed the PM on the administrative affairs of the province. The prime minister directed that a detailed briefing should be presented regarding the administrative affairs and development and infrastructure projects of Balochistan. He said progress of Pakistan was not possible without progress of Balochistan. The province was not only rich in natural resources but its real strength was its capable human resources, he added. Earlier on his arrival at the Chief Minister House, the prime minister was presented a guard of honour.

technology sector.

Lauding the important contributions of the Pakistani-American community towards strengthening ties between the two countries, the prime minister called for increasing people-to-people contacts between the two countries.

**JUI-F delegation calls on PM:** A 14-member delegation of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) led by Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidri called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

The delegation congratulated the prime minister on assuming the charge of his office and expressed best wishes for him. The JUI-F leaders also paid tributes to the prime minister for promptly initiating effective actions to successfully evacuate the people stranded in a chairlift in Battagram. PM Kakar directed the relevant authorities to ensure safety arrangements and strict monitoring of all the chairlifts across the country.

**Pakistan’s envoy to UK calls on**

**prime minister:** Pakistan’s High Commissioner to UK Dr Muhammad Faisal called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar here.

He congratulated the prime minister on assuming the office and expressed good wishes for him. The envoy got instructions from the prime minister on the improvement of relations between Pakistan and the UK.

**Federal & provincial govts to cooperate with KMC for issues’ resolution:** Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that the federal and provincial governments would extend their cooperation to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) to help resolve the issues confronting the Karachi city.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab, said that being an industrial and commercial hub, Karachi had a significant role in Pakistan’s economic development. In the meeting, the Karachi Mayor briefed the prime minister about the administrative affairs of Karachi.

## Toshakhana case: ‘What trial court did was wrong,’ observes IHC CJ

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamer Farooq on Friday observed that the trial court, which convicted former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan in Toshakhana case, “did wrong”.

The judge’s remarks came during the hearing of the PTI chief’s appeal challenging the Toshakhana verdict, which sentenced him to three-year in prison and imposed a fine of Rs100,000 earlier this month. Two-member IHC bench comprising CJ Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri heard the plea seeking suspension of Khan’s conviction by the trial court’s Additional District and Sessions Judge (ADSJ) Humayun Dilawar.

During the hearing on Friday, the Election Commission of Pakistan’s (ECP) legal counsel Amjad Parvez did not appear before the bench, citing ill health. His assistant advocate asked the bench for an adjournment saying: “For the last eight months, we never sought adjournment.” He said that doctors had suggested Parvez bed rest.

At this, the IHC chief justice said: “The request for suspension of sen-

tence is now at a critical stage.” He added that arguments would have been completed in fifteen to twenty minutes. He further said: “We can also do what the trial court did, but we will not.” The PTI has criticised the trial court’s verdict saying that the decision was announced in haste in the absence of the party chief and his lawyer.

The court then adjourned the hearing till Monday. “We adjourn the case till Monday, and even if no one comes, we will announce our decision,” Justice Farooq said, adding that what the trial court had done was wrong. At this, the PTI counsel Latif Khosa remarked: “One person has been in jail for twenty days. Will [you] keep the PTI chairman in jail for another three days?”

“We will not appear in court, do what you have to do.” He requested the bench to suspend the sentence today. “If you are satisfied with their arguments on Monday, then send them back to jail,” he requested. Besides the sentence of incarceration, the additional district and sessions judge also imposed a fine of Rs100,000 after finding Khan guilty of graft in the Toshakhana case.

Following the PTI chief’s arrest, it

is the third petition the party had filed. It is pertinent to mention here that the Supreme Court (SC) Wednesday heard a petition challenging IHC’s decision to remand the case back to the trial court judge who had convicted him, and observed that the trial court had hastened Toshakhana’s verdict. It acknowledged the “procedural defects” in Khan’s conviction but opted to wait for the IHC’s decision on the former premier’s plea seeking suspension of the three-year sentence.

Under the rules governing Toshakhana — a Persian word meaning “treasure house” — government officials can keep gifts if they have a low worth, while they must pay a dramatically reduced fee to the government for extravagant items. The Toshakhana has been under a microscope ever since the emergence of the allegations that Khan purchased the gifts he received as prime minister at throwaway rates and sold them off in the open market for staggering profits. The 70-year-old cricketer-turned-politician was accused of misusing his 2018 to 2022 premiership to buy and sell gifts in state possession that were received during visits abroad and worth more than Rs140 million (\$635,000).



ISLAMABAD: Senior leader of PML-N Ahsan Iqbal talking to media persons outside Election Commission.

## Georgia mugshots: Trump and all 18 co-defendants surrender

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Former US President Donald Trump and all 18 of his co-defendants in Georgia’s election interference case have turned themselves in to face charges, meeting a deadline for their surrender.

Each of the nineteen defendants, including Trump, presented themselves to the Fulton County Jail in Atlanta by the noon deadline on Friday (16:00 GMT). Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, who filed the indictment against the ex-president and his allies earlier this month, had said an arrest warrant would have been issued for anyone who did not comply.

Georgia prosecutors have accused Trump and his co-defendants of joining a conspiracy to “unlawfully change the outcome” of the 2020 United States election in the state. They have denied wrongdoing. All except one of those charged had previously negotiated a bond agreement before arriving at the jail this week

and were immediately released after paying a percentage of their bond, and having their fingerprints and mugshots taken.

Willis has requested that arraignments — the court hearings where the accused will formally hear the charges against them and enter a plea — in the case take place on the week of September 5. Trump, the frontrunner in the Republican Party’s 2024 presidential nomination race, turned himself in at the Fulton County jail at approximately 7:30pm (23:30 GMT) on Thursday.

He spent about 20 minutes inside the facility — becoming the first former president in US history to have his mugshot taken — before being released on \$200,000 bond. He faces 13 charges in the case, including racketeering, soliciting a public official to violate their oath of office, filing false statements, conspiracy to commit forgery and conspiracy to impersonate a public officer. Trump

has denied any wrongdoing and accused Georgia prosecutors of seeking to derail his re-election campaign.

The former mayor of New York City, who also previously served as Trump’s personal lawyer, Giuliani faces the same number of charges as Trump — more than any other co-defendant. Prosecutors have accused Giuliani of spearheading the effort in Georgia by making false statements and soliciting false testimony, conspiring to create phony paperwork, and asking state lawmakers to violate their oath of office. He has denied any wrongdoing. He surrendered on Wednesday and was released on \$150,000 bond.

Trump’s former White House chief of staff, Meadows — like all the co-defendants — has been charged under Georgia’s Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations law, also known as RICO. He also has been charged with soliciting a public officer to violate

their oath of office. Meadows surrendered on Thursday and was released on \$100,000 bond.

Eastman, a conservative lawyer, was widely considered the legal architect of the nationwide effort to keep Trump in power after the 2020 election that he lost to President Joe Biden. The former dean of Chapman University Law School in Southern California turned himself in on Tuesday and was booked on nine charges. “I am here today to surrender to an indictment that should never have been brought,” Eastman said in a statement released through his lawyers before his surrender. “I am confident that, when the law is faithfully applied in this proceeding, all of my co-defendants and I will be fully vindicated.”

He was released on \$100,000 bond. A lawyer who worked with the Trump campaign, Chesebro is accused of supporting a plan in Georgia and other states to manipu-

late the election process in order to delay the certification of Biden’s 2020 victory.

So far, Chesebro has been the only defendant to ask for a “speedy trial” and a judge approved that request this week, setting an October 23 start date. Several defendants have since sought to “sever” their case from Chesebro’s, saying the timing was too soon. Chesebro surrendered on Wednesday and was released on \$100,000 bond.

The former US Department of Justice official is accused of trying to use his position to shepherd through a plan to overturn the 2020 election results. He surrendered on Friday on two charges — racketeering and committing false statements and writings — and was released on \$100,000 bond. The Trump lawyer was charged with racketeering and soliciting a public official to violate their oath of office.

She turned herself in on Wednesday and released on \$100,000



bond. The Georgia trial lawyer participated in public hearings with state legislators, where he pushed the false election fraud narrative and presented false evidence to support the claims, prosecutors have alleged. Cheeley was hit with 10 charges, including perjury.









**PESHAWAR:** Residents of Paharipura Sethi Town burning the electricity bills during a protest against hike in power rate. — F.P. photo

# NAB KP announces to hold Open Kacheri for public

F.P. Report

**PESHAWAR:** The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced an Open Kacheri aimed at fostering transparency, accountability, and public participation in the fight against corruption. This initiative underscores NAB's commitment to engage public and address their concerns effectively.

The open Kacheri will be held on Wednesday the 30th August 2023 at NAB office Hayatabad Peshawar from 02:00 PM to 04:00 PM. During this event, individuals from all walks of life have been invited to come forward and share their grievances, complaints, and concerns related to corruption, malpractices, and misuse of public resources. NAB officers and officials will be present to listen to the public's concerns, offer guidance on filing complaints, and provide information on the investigation

and accountability process.

According to the statement released by Mian Muhammad Waqar Director NAB KP ,if a government official is found to have intentionally facilitated unlawful benefits from the public treasury, caused harm to the public treasury, or amassed assets disproportionate to their income, actions will be taken. Likewise, instances where government project contracts are not awarded in adherence to prevailing laws, or cases involving public deception and embezzlement, will be subject to scrutiny.

Furthermore, any other entity, organization, or society planning to allocate plots to the public and collecting funds illicitly will be subject to complaints processed in the Open Kacheri against those responsible for such offenses.

The complainants have been requested to submit their grievances in written form during the Open

Kacheri, along with a copy of their identity card and any preliminary evidence. Additionally, individuals with complaints against NAB officers are also encouraged to bring forward their concerns in the open court. The Director General of NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Waqar Ahmad Chohan, assured that all complaints will undergo transparent investigations, and appropriate legal actions will be taken against the accused parties. He expressed enthusiasm for the event, stating, "The open Kacheri is a platform for citizens to interact directly with NAB officials, enabling a collaborative effort in eradicating corruption from our society."

It's important to note that the initiative to hold Open Kacheri sessions aligns with the directives of Chairman NAB Lt. Gen. Nazir Ahmed, aims to establish direct communication between the public and NAB regional offices, ensuring prompt grievance resolution.

# Political stability vital for putting the country's economy on track

F.P. Report

**PESHAWAR:** Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) chairman Muhammad Faiq Shah stressed political stability is imperative for putting the country's economy on track. Shah while talking to a local traders' delegation and manufacturers, and real estate sector here Friday voiced his concern over the present state of the country's economy, saying that the dollar rate has touched a new peak while industries and business growth become sluggish.

Similarly, he said the country's exports and trade have also drastically declined. He said export-oriented sectors must be incentivized. He said almost all segments of the society,

including traders, working class, labourers, daily wagers are in great trouble under the prevailing circumstances. No is paying heed to miseries of the business community and ordinary citizens, he noted.

The ATP chairman asked the government to consult with the business community to put the ailing economy on the right track. He said a record hike in electricity and gas tariffs has jacked up exponentially that increased the cost of industrial production and brought historic inflation in the country. Faiq suggested special investment facilitation zones should be set up across the country.

He called for bringing reforms in the present taxation system. Commenting

on the current political scenario, Shah urged the caretaker government, all institutions and stakeholders to frame a joint strategy to pave way for holding timely general elections instead of indulging in non-issues and "Let come together and to fight against rising inflation, poverty, unemployment, and remove increasing miseries of people".

He said the caretaker government should focus on the public's problems rather than indulging in politics of vendetta and personal interests. Otherwise, he warned the situation will further get worse. He said his party has already proposed a holistic plan/roadmap to steer the country from the present economic and political crisis.



**PESHAWAR:** Caretaker Minister for merged areas Sayed Amir Abdullah chairing a meeting regarding developmental works.

# Mushroom growth of social media platforms fading away cinema culture in KP

**PESHAWAR (APP):** The mushroom growth of social media platforms have negatively impacted cinema culture in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The increase of number of internet users to a record 87.35 million and internet penetration rate at 36.7 percent of the total population of Pakistan in January this year indicated people overwhelming inclinations towards social media platforms.

"The numbers of internet users had increased by 4.4 million (+5.4 percent) between 2022 and 2023 which magnified overwhelming inclinations of users to social media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter," said Zalakat Malik, former Chairman, Economics Department, University of Peshawar while talking to APP. He said that dying cinema culture have negatively impacted on employment, trade and economic opportunities in Peshawar.

He recalled that when a Pashto film was finally released in the city in the past, thousands of film lovers with beat drums gathered outside the cinema houses and cheered for their favourite hero that was "now hardly seen today" in Peshawar. Arshad Khan, a noted Pashto film director, producer and artist said that one decade ago cinema was flourishing

earning maximum capital while the in recent years its growth was affected by mushroom growth of social media platforms.

He said Peshawar has started losing the decades-old cinema houses, which have been converted into trade and commercial plazas depriving thousands of film lovers from entertainment. Peshawar had produced many international legendary artists including Bollywood superstars Yousaf Khan alias Dalip Kumar, Raj Kapoor, Lollywood famous actors Qavi Khan and Firdous Jamal.

Despite rich culture heritage, Peshawar had lost seven cinemas due to mushroom growth of social media, lack of production of new films in Urdu and Pashto, high property taxes on cinemas, security concerns and commercialization. Out of 15 cinemas in Peshawar, the seven oldest cinema houses including Shabistan (Firdus), Palwasha, Capital, Falak Sair, Novelty, Metro, Sabrina and Ihsrat were demolished and converted into trade and commercial centres and hotels for monetary gains.

The remaining few cinemas in Peshawar City including Arshad Cinema, Sabreena, Aaena, Naz and Shama also seemed mostly deserted

due to the unavailability of new films, high-production film cost, pathetic seating facilities and unsatisfactory approach of the provincial government towards the film industry. "I came to Peshawar to watch my favorite Pashto film 'Badmashee Na Manum' at Arshad Cinema after the closure of two cinemas including 'Taj' in Mardan and was very disappointed after seeing limited numbers of movies fans," said Nasir Khan (35), a Pashto film lover and resident of Katlang Mardan City told APP.

He said his friends were seen using social media while sitting in cinema to watch their favorite movie. Gohar Khan, Manager Sabrina Cinema, told APP that he was screening two shows a day of Pashto movie 'Badmashi Na Manum' at Rs. 200 per ticket and there were hardly 50 people in the cinema hall which was "highly discouraging".

Besides social media, he said the rising monthly energy bills, staff salaries and property taxes had added to the financial difficulties of cinema owners in KP. He expressed the hope of "earning handsome profit" from a new Pashto film 'Gulfam', that would be released next month at Arshad Cinema, wherein noted Pashto artists Jahngir Khan and Nelo would play a key

## PTV to begin programmes in Kohar language

F.P. Report

**PESHAWAR:** General Manager (GM) Pakistan Television Aurangzeb Afridi said that apart from news in PTV National Peshawar, PTV will also start telecasting programmes in Kohar language soon.

He said that beside Chitral and Gilgit-Baltistan, there are people who speak and understand Kohar in Central Asia and telecasting programmes in the language will promote the culture of those people. He was talking to Coordinator of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Sartaj Ahmed Khan, who called on him along with eminent businessman Haji Mehboob Azam regarding programmes in Kohar language here on Friday.

They thanked Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting, Ghulam Murtaza Solangi, Managing Director (MD) PTV for accepting the standing demand of giving space to Kohar language in the television programmes.

Talking on the occasion, Coordinator FPCCI, Sartaj Ahmed Khan said that Chitral has a unique place in terms of its unique culture, literature and beauty, which has not been explored yet by anyone, now the business community along with PTV will jointly work for its exploration. On this occasion, the eminent businessman Haji Mehboob Azam also assured to play his full role for the promotion of Kohar language.

## Hot, humid weather likely in KP

F.P. Report

**PESHAWAR:** The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Friday predicted that mainly hot, humid and partly cloudy weather is expected over most districts of the province.

However, it said that scattered shower rain and thunderstorms associated with gusty winds is likely to occur over Abbottabad, Haripur, Mansehra, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Shangla, Upper & lower Dir, Swat, Malakand, Buner, Mardan, Swabi, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Hangu, Kohat, Karak and Kurram districts.

Isolated shower rain-thunderstorms associated with gusty winds are also likely to occur over Chitral, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, DI Khan, Tank, North & South Waziristan districts.

During the last 24 hours hot, humid and partly cloudy weather prevailed in most districts of the province. However, rain-thunderstorms with gusty winds occurred in Upper Dir, Swat, Abbottabad, Kohistan, Bannu, Kohat, Mardan, Nowshera, Buner, Bajaur and Khyber districts.

Rain recorded (in mm): Takht Bhai 29, Upper Dir 28, Kakul 20, Pattan 10, Saidu Sharif 07, Bajaur (Pashat 06, Khaar 04), Malam Jabba 04, Kalam, Risalpur & Kohat Airbase 02 (each), DI Khan City 01, Bannu.

# Focus on to develop merged areas: Minister

F.P. Report

**PESHAWAR:** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Tribal Affairs of the Merged Districts Syed Aamir Abdullah Friday said that efforts will be made for the accelerated development of all districts, merged in the province.

He added that in order to bring these districts equally mainstream, the relevant forums will be contacted for the release of funds required for the ongoing developmental projects here so that these areas can be brought at par with the rest of the province in terms of provision of basic facilities.

He expressed these views during a briefing held here at Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) of Planning and Development Department in Peshawar. Director General SDU Inayat Waseem briefed the caretaker minister regarding the ongoing development projects and programs for the

development of the merged districts which have started through provincial annual development programs, federal government projects, donor funded projects and other schemes.

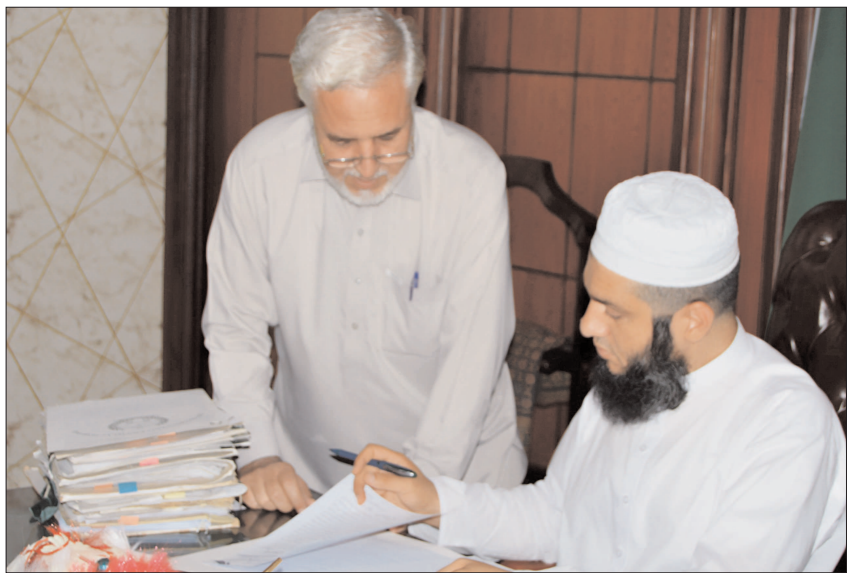
The Caretaker Minister was informed that the merger of tribal agencies and frontier regions in the province was made so that to eliminate the deprivations of the tribal areas, include these backward areas in the mainstream and to resolve the public problems of these areas in fast track.

He was further informed that after conducting a comprehensive field survey, several comprehensive programs have been launched to initiate development projects in various sectors, including the Three-Years Accelerated Implementation Program (AIP), Provincial Annual Development Program (ADP) for merged districts, federal government-funded Projects, Special Forum Projects and many other

development projects are included.

The caretaker minister was told that about 686 projects have been included for the merged districts in the province Annual Development Program in financial year 2023-24, with a total cost of 583 billion rupees. Similarly, at least 29 projects have been initiated under Special Forum projects in these areas.

On this occasion, the provincial minister said that he will make every effort on his behalf in supporting funds provision for the development projects of merged areas so that the jury of development could run without any interruption in these areas. He said that concentration will be given to the development of tribal districts, improvement in service delivery there and good governance so that these areas can benefit from all the required facilities like other districts in letter and spirit.



**PESHAWAR:** Mayor Haji Zubair Ali discussing official matters with officer at his office.

# PkMAP concern over transfer of power companies

F.P. Report

**PESHAWAR:** Dr. Mohammad Ali, President Pakhtunkhwa Mili Awami Party Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has voiced profound apprehension in response to the recent decision taken by the caretaker government.

This pivotal decision revolves around the transfer of control over electricity distribution companies from federal governance to provincial authority, a move that has ignited a contentious constitutional debate.

Dr. Ali asserted firmly that the caretaker government, possesses constitutional authority solely for overseeing elections and managing day-to-day governmental functions. Making far-reaching decisions of national significance falls beyond the scope of its mandate. He underlined the severe financial implications of transferring power distribution companies to provinces, particularly when these companies (PESCO, Tesco) are

already grappling with financial losses. Such a move places an onerous financial burden on provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which lacks the fiscal resilience to absorb these losses.

PkMAP's stance is unequivocal and in accordance with the 18th amendment, the federal government should authorize power generation and establish a provincial grid and provincial transmission for Pakhtunkhwa, he clarified. Furthermore, he advocates the transfer of responsibility for hydroelectric dams, including Warsak, Tarbela, Khanpur, and Mangla, to Pakhtunkhwa Province.

KP has the potential to generate more than 7,000 megawatts of electricity, surpassing its actual requirement of 2,500 megawatts. Additionally, hydroelectricity production in the province is a cost-effective option. He highlighted the disparity where the federal government purchases a unit for 80 paisa and resells it to

the province for 55 rupees per unit, underscoring the need for rectification.

Empowering Pakhtunkhwa to autonomously generate its electricity and transferring the hydroelectric dams, along with the associated 650 billion rupee debt, from the federal government represents a pivotal step in achieving energy self-sufficiency. Ali went further to assert that decisions made during the Council of Common Interests meeting, where the transfer of electricity distribution companies was endorsed, are constitutionally and legally questionable. This stems from the fact that two participating provinces, Punjab and Pakhtunkhwa, were represented by caretaker governments instead of elected representatives, as mandated by the constitution. Dr. Ali emphasized that caretaker governments lack the authority to make arbitrary decisions that contravene constitutional and legal norms.





## In brief

### Locally built chairlifts sealed F.P. Report

BATTAGRAM (INP): In the aftermath of the chairlift accident in Battagram, swift administrative measures have been initiated to enhance safety. Local authorities have embarked on a mission to seal locally constructed chairlifts in the upper regions, aiming to prevent potential hazards. The process of shutting down the local defective chairlifts in the elevated areas is currently in progress. Responding to the urgent need for safety, authorities have undertaken this initiative to mitigate risks associated with such transportation systems. In light of the incident, the Besham assistant commissioner issued directives to close down the sole chairlift that facilitated traffic across the Indus River. This decision has, unfortunately, disrupted the transportation routes for inhabitants of multiple villages in Battagram. Some residents believe that instead of outright closure, the government should concentrate efforts on enhancing the safety and reliability of the chairlifts (Dolly lift), which serve as a vital transportation link in the region.

### One killed, three injured

SARGODHA (INP): A man was killed and three others were injured in a shooting in Sargodha on Friday. The incident took place in the Jhal Chakian police jurisdiction. Police said that Bilal Hassan (35), a resident of Chak 55 NB, was traveling towards the city with his friends Irfan, Nouman, and Asad in a car when they were attacked by Shamsher. Shamsher opened fire on the car near Luk morr, killing Bilal and injuring the other three men. The injured men were taken to a local hospital, where they are undergoing treatment. Shamsher is still at large and police are conducting raids to arrest him. The motive behind the shooting is not yet known, but police believe that it may be the result of an old enmity.

### 5 suspects held in Kohat Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: As many as five suspects and 10 alleged wanted accused in different crimes were arrested by the Kohat Police during search and strike operation in Kohat, Jangal Khel and Afghan refugee camps, District Police Officer Farhan Khan said here Friday. He disclosed that five suspects and 10 accused were arrested during the search operation. During the operation, weapons and drugs were recovered from the possession of the arrested persons. Among the weapons and drugs seized are a klakow, 4 pistols, 475 grams of ice and hundreds of cartridges. The operation was carried out under the leadership of DSP Headquarters Muhammad Nawab Khan and SHO Jangal Khel Ruman Khan along with a Police Force. All the persons arrested in the search and strike operation have been shifted to Jangal Khel Police Station for investigation. Cases have been registered in Jangal Khel police station against the arrested criminals.

### Sugar price hike up

QUETTA (INP): Sudden record high increase in sugar price up to Rs170 per kilogram in retail market of Balochistan has increased the miseries of people of province who were already in grip of inflation.



**HYDERABAD:** Women are busy in filling of canes to store water from a nearby well as there is no any source of drinking water in flooded area.

## Admn for timely completion of uplift plans

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: District administration is committed to ensure timely and according to specification completion of people welfare development projects worth billions of rupees so that benefits of government expenditure could reach to people of the district earliest.

These views were expressed by Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umer Farooq Warraich while visiting under construction buildings of University of Hafizabad, District Headquarter Hospital Hafizabad and Museum on ongoing projects and standard of martial being used in the projects. Deputy Director Development Tassawar Abbas, Deputy Director Colleges Muhammad Azhar Junjua, CEO Health Dr. Umer Sharif Rathor and officers of buildings department were also accompanied by him.

DC directed the officers

concerned and construction companies to ensure timely completion of ongoing projects while delay completion of mega projects and use of substandard material would not be tolerated at all. He directed the DO Colleges to submit details report regarding proviso of furniture for class rooms and admin block of the University of Hafizabad.

Later, he visited under construction building of first ever museum of Hafizabad. On this occasion, he said that with the completion of this project, local and national culture would be promoted while rare information about history of Pakistan would be available to students and recreational opportunities would also be available to people at local level. He said that three big art galleries and adman block would be constructed for the museum.

**DEC kicks-off plantation drive:** In order to combat climate change and to

make the country green and pollution free, tree plantation on foot in need of the hour and every individual should plant at least one sapling and look after it till become a strong tree.

This was stated by the District Election Commissioner Hafizabad Khalid Rasheed while planting saplings at Government Associate College for Women Hafizabad with cooperation of Sangat foundation, and Dehi Traqqiati Council (members NGOs Shah Hussain Regional Net Work). Principal Madam Nasreen Akhtar, Deputy Director Social Welfare Aamina Ashraf, prominent social workers Rasheed Ahmad Bhatti, Dr. Nazar Muhammad were also take part in tree plantation.

Election Commissioner said that it was good omen that students of colleges were taking keen interest in tree plantation and special seminar would be arranged to highlight importance of vote among people especially the youth.

## Section 144 imposed in Khyber F.P. Report

KHYBER: On the eve of local bodies by-election in two village councils (VC) in Landi Kotal and Bara scheduled on August 27, 2023, the district administration has imposed section 144 in the two councils for two days aimed to retain law and order in the area.

Section 144 will be enforced in Dilkhad(Chargh) VC of Landi Kotal and VC Meri Khel(07) of Bara and it will be effective for two days i.e. August 26 and 27. A notification issued by the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Khyber stated that pillion riding, aerial firing; display of weapons will be completely banned in the two VCs.

Entry of unconcerned persons in the polling station beside jubilation and fireworks of a candidate after winning will be restricted, it stated. The notification further read that the District Police Officer (DPO) and Assistant Commissioners of Landi Kotal and Bara had been directed to appropriate action to ensure implementation of the law. It is worth mentioning here that the district election commissioner has finalized preparation to conduct by-election in the two VCs in Khyber.

Meanwhile, DPO Khyber Saleem Abbas Kulachvi visited two CVs of Landi Kotal and Bara where By-election will be conducted and examined security measures to be provided in polling stations. He directed local police officials to adopt all necessary initiatives to make sure peacefull election as per Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) chalked out by the district election commission.

## Civil society hold protest against high electricity bills

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Civil society protested against high electricity bills in front of Swat Press Club, shouted slogans against Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) while threatened that if free electricity and petrol shouldn't stopped to public's servant at high positions including judiciary and civil bureaucracy then they will compel to stop submission of bills, on Friday.

According to details, A large number of people from Mingora and adjoining areas participated in the demonstration. The protesters raised slogans against WAPDA by high electricity bills in their hands.

On this occasion, Abdul Rahim, President of Malakand Division Traders Federation, AlHaj Zahid Khan, President of All Swat hotels Association, Irfan Chhattan, Irshad Khan, Iqbal Hussain Bale, Muhammad Ejaz Khan, Dr. Khalid Mahmood Khalid, Akhtar Ali Khan, President of



Swat Bar Association Muhammad Saeed Khan and speakers from different sections said that the inflation imposed by the government from the beginning.

The people have been suppressed while WAPDA has blown their senses by sending huge bills to the people. On the one hand, unannounced load shedding is going on, while on the other hand, the sharp increase in electricity prices has increased the misery of the masses.

They said that people cannot afford expensive electricity, gangster tax is being collected from the people in the form of vari-

ous taxes in electricity bills, people has run out of patience and cannot afford more expensive electricity.

President of Malakand division trader federation Abdul Rahim Khan said that if the heavy taxes mentioned in the electricity bills are not withdrawn by the due date, then we will not collect the electricity bills, ad announced a social boycott of the electricity bills. He warned that if the matter is not resolved amicably and there is further delay in this regard, then the shutdown strike will be forced across the division. And this scope of the strike will be extended to the entire province.

## Hike in electricity rate: Residents block road

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The residents of Gulibagh area on Friday held protest demonstration on Shamsi road against the price hike of electricity which has caused an unprecedented burden on the pocket of common man. They blocked the main Shamsi road for all kind of traffic for several hours and were chanting slogans against the WAPDA officials and government.

Raising electricity bills in their hands, the protestors who were mostly belonged to poor and meddle class, blamed that the WAPDA officials had charged them about 300 to 400 extra units in their electricity bills. Besides, the protesters also alleged that the government had made a big increase in prices of electricity per unit, while on the other hand their financial condition was going down by each passing day due to skyrocketing price-high which had made them unable to evey pay their genuine electricity bills.

The protestors stressed the government and authorities concerned to not only stop sending overbilling but also take immediate to reduce prices of per unit to a great extent. Also, in the day, the city Mayor Himayatullah Mayar held a meeting with the top officials of Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) to discuss the

issues related to overbilling and excessive electricity bills.

On the occasion, Mr. Himayatullah Mayar expressed that the sudden increase in electricity prices has further exacerbated the issues of the people, and the electricity bills, whether for households or businesses, had gone beyond the affordability of the public. He stated that the excessive load shedding during the severe heat had greatly troubled the people and had caused them sorrow and anger.

He urged the WAPDA authorities to bring about a reduction in the unplanned load shedding and also mentioned the difficulty for the poor people to afford two meals a day during this inflationary period, along with the added burden of high electricity bills.

Mayor Mardan stressed on the occasion to eliminate load shedding and resolve the issues of low voltage in various areas. He also called for initiatives to improve transformers. He mentioned that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa produces more electricity than needed but does not have the authority over its distribution.

Similarly, the province does not have control over gas distribution, and despite this, the province is provided with insufficient gas, causing more pressure. "Electricity is purchased at 1 rupee per unit From Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa and sold at 50 rupees per unit, which is entirely unjust and unfair" he added. He also mentioned as per Article 158 of the Constitution, the province that generates resources should have the first right over those resources. However, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has no control over electricity or gas.

During the meeting, WAPDA officials expressed their views that where electricity theft is high and recovery is low, less electricity is provided. They requested full cooperation from the police and the public in curbing electricity theft and improving recovery.

**Workshop on technical education held:** Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, (MCCI) German Institute for International Cooperation (GIZ) and Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority organized a joint workshop.

In which (GIZ) Miss Ning-Yi-Mar of Germany, Miss Sabrina-gible, Faiz Muhammad, Engineer Abdul Maqsood of Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority, besides members of the Executive Committee of Mardan Chamber, Marble Association, Light Engineering, Flour Mills Association, Tobacco A large number of representatives attended.

## Jirga resolves old enmity in Dir lower

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: The Jirg turned long-standing enmity into friendship in Hayasiri Maidan and the parties came together and thanked each other. Later, the leaders of the area, former members of the national assembly, Sahibzada Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, Saeed Gul, Maulana Nabi, Shah Hussain, DSP Maidan Lal Qila, Sher Bahadur Khan, Jamshed Lala, Chairman Bashir Ahmad, Shah Hassan Khan and others made efforts for a compromise

between the parties.

After a few months of intensive efforts, the parties were ready to sign a memorandum of understanding, and on Thursday, peace was reached between the families of Bacha Azim and Riaz Muhammad in a big ceremony, and the parties hugged each other and thanked each other for the future as brothers. The ceremony was attended by leaders of various parties, scholars, police officials and representatives of local bodies.

**Hotels inspected:** Under the special instructions of

Secretary Food Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Peshawar Abid Khan Minister and Director Food Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Yasir Hasan and under the supervision of District Food Controller Kashif Ehsan, Shabir Ahmed (Food Inspector) inspected various hotels at Gurgori Chowk Timergara and Hospital Road. Sanitation and government rates and price lists were checked while taking action and heavy fines will be levied on several hoteliers for poor sanitation and charging high rates.

## Corruption's dilemma and NAB

Zia ur Rahman Tajik

**CORRUPTION is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, it also means dishonest conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery, corruption weakens the economic growth of a country, deters investment, undermines competitiveness, and affects all developments, quality education and healthcare. Increases inequality, decreases popular accountability, and undermines democracy and good governance. Corruption affects political stability and the rule of law.**

In corruption, there are no apparent victims but it affects society as a whole, corruption can be stopped by exposing corrupt activities, stopping dishonest practices and strict implementation of laws in their letter and spirit without any favourites and discrimination. Corrupt persons are not properly groomed by their parents and teachers and they can be equally blamed for the corruption of their children and students and role of fathers, mothers and teachers cannot be ignored because well and properly groom children and students would not resort to corruption and corrupt practices and maximum gain and benefit for their interest.

Laws are for justice, for maintaining order, for the protection of rights and liberty, for settlement of disputes, and for redressal of grievances of the wrong dower. The law promotes justice, and equity and protects individuals from government, organisations and even from individuals. For a citizen, the law is a set of rules which he must obey and for a judge, the law is a guide and principle for making decisions and for a legis-

lator law is something created by him. Without Law survival of human society is not possible, different kinds of problems, situations, issues and crimes are impossible to cover by one law and due to that reason different Laws are promulgated by the parliament.

In 1999 Martial Law was imposed by the then Chiefs of the Army Staff on 14.10. 1999 where after for the eradication of corruption, corrupt practices and making accountable all those persons accused of corruption and matter ancillary thereto, On 16. 11. 1999 National Accountability Ordinance was promulgated with retrospective effect from 1.1.1985 and section 2 of the ordinance is clear on its retrospective effect. The main consideration of the ordinance was to recover the amount and assets misappropriated by the accused being the holder of a public office. Under the said ordinance

National Accountability Bureau was established for the eradication of corruption and corrupt practices. The said Ordinance under Section 4 is made applicable to all persons, citizens of Pakistan and holders of public offices. Even a private person can be prosecuted under the said ordinance when he cannot account for the wealth which is beyond his source and means. The said ordinance u/a 16(a) also provides the expeditious disposal of cases within one month on a day-to-day basis. Under section 9(a) different kinds of corruption have been mentioned and explained with further restrictions that the accused shall not be released on bail u/s9(b). The courts were further authorised to

keep the accused in custody for a period of not exceeding 90 days and not exceeding 14 days at a time with the sole object is to recover the misappropriated amount and assets misappropriated by the accused persons.

National Accountability Ordinance created awareness in the society against corruption and conferred extraordinary power on the NAB to eradicate corruption from society. NAB is further made responsible for prosecuting cases of corruption and financial crime in the country by following due process along with the right to a fair trial. NAB was established as a prime anti-corruption and preventive agency against white colour crime and criminals, corrupt elements, bribery, illegal gratification and gain.

In 2022 and 2023 National Accountability Ordinance was amended several times by the previous Government and rendered the NAB into a toothless organization and made it an amnesty scheme. The said amendments further empower the chairman of NAB to transfer graft cases involving corruption of less than 500 million to the relevant agency, department or authority and also close the pending enquiry and investigation where he thinks no case is made out. The said amendment affected pending cases, investigations and enquiries and has ended up, benefiting over 80% of cases including high-profile cases.

The amendment paves the way for public office holders to remain unpunished for white colour crimes. The applicability of the said ordinance has been restricted to graft cases involv-

ing more than 50 million and Section 5 ensures that only offences of 500 million or more are to be prosecuted by the NAB. The said amendment has further provided a clean chit to those accused who are involved in corruption cases where the amount is less than 500 million. Because the trial of such accused in another court would not be that much effective due to much complicated reasons. Under the new amendment applicability of Section 4 has been curtailed and Limited and has also curtailed the power and jurisdiction of the National Accountability Bureau and the Accountability Courts. The said amendments also legalise the property owned by a person through corrupt practices in the name of his spouse, relative or Associates because the assets u/a 5(1) have been confined to all kinds of properties owned by an accused person or hold as benamidar.

The power of appointment of chairman is delegated to the Federal government by amending Section 5(F) and Section 6 of the ordinance. The appointment process has been made more complicated time-consuming and politicised. The chairman of NAB can be removed through Supreme Judicial Council hence his appointment may also be made through the judicial commission of Pakistan because members of the judicial commission of Pakistan are impartial persons and appointment through the commission, would be based on competency, impartiality, honesty and non-political basis. An impartial, honest and non-political person as chairman of NAB can play an effective role in the eradication of corrup-

tion by applying the provision of the Ordinance to all the accused persons without any discrimination, dictation, directions and its true letters and spirit.

Through the said amendment S-9(7) has been omitted and under the said omitted section any direction, policy or SRO or action for undue concession in tax matters or other laws for himself, relative or associate has been made punishable. Now due to the Said amendment under the garb of any policy, SRO or direction benefit in taxation and other laws can be given to the near and dear ones by the public office holders and politicians.

Under the new amendments, Civil and commercial disputes, and investment schemes between private parties are placed outside the domain of the NAB. In the said amendment U/S 9(b) the trial court is empowered with jurisdiction to grant bail to the accused person, said amendments had also provided benefit under section 382-B of Cr. P.C. Such benefit is usually not available to those accused persons who are involved in high treason, Narcotics, Terrorism and corruption cases. The period of 30 days for the decision of cases u/s 16(a) has been extended to a period of 1 year and now the trial will be concluded within the said period, which is against the principle of expeditions justice. (Justice delayed is justice denied), Section 23 has also been omitted from the said ordinance and under the said omitted section transfer of property by the accused to a third person was prohibited during pregnancy of trial and investigation and now the accused is at liberty to transfer his property during the inves-

tigation and trial. Under section 26(a) now an accomplice shall be disqualified from the date of termination of trial for 10 years from contesting election, appointment, or representation in a public or government sector. But before the Said amendment, there was no restriction and disqualification on an accomplice. The period of appeal from a judgement of the Accountability Court has been extended from 10 days to 30 days by amending Section 32 of the ordinance as well as the Appellate Court is further empowered to suspend the sentence of the accused person during pregnancy of the appeal.

For eradication of corruption from the roots level we need a strong system of checks and balances and strict implementation of the laws. We as a nation are also required to pinpoint the corruption of everyone irrespective of his status and position in society. No one owns Pakistan, everyone is working for getting the maximum benefits for himself at the cost of public interest. Even one scrupulous honest person on the top brings a lot of change in his depth, organisation or authority.

In small provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa there would hardly be a project of 500 million and thus the people of such provinces would be affected by corruption due to a deficiency of an effective accountability system to monitor the corruption. The corrupt people would be at liberty to gain maximum benefits for themselves through corrupt practices. The small cases of corruption would go unchecked.

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# Nearly 2 m excess deaths followed China’s sudden end of COVID curbs

BEIJING (Reuters): China's abrupt move to dismantle its strict COVID-19 regime, which unleashed the virus onto its 1.4 billion residents, could have led to nearly 2 million excess deaths in the following two months, a new US study shows. The study by the federally funded Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Seattle was taken from a sample of mortality data published by some universities in China and internet searches.

It found an estimated 1.87 million excess deaths from all causes occurred among people over 30 years of age between December 2022 and January 2023, and were observed in all provinces in mainland China except Tibet. China's decision last December to end the three-year zero-COVID policy, which included mass-testing and stringent and persistent quarantine lockdowns, led to a massive surge in hospitalisations and deaths that health experts say were largely unreported by the government. The study, published in JAMA Network Open, said the number of excess deaths

far exceeded official Chinese government estimates in January that 60,000 people with COVID-19 had died in hospital since the zero-COVID policy was abandoned a month earlier.

In the study, researchers performed statistical analysis using information from published obituaries and data from searches on Baidu, a popular Chinese internet search engine. "Our study of excess deaths related to the lifting of the zero-COVID policy in China sets an empirically derived benchmark estimate. These findings are important for understanding how the sudden propagation of COVID-19 across a population may impact population mortality," researchers wrote. China's National Health Commission did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the report. Global health experts repeatedly called on China to reveal more data as reports of rising hospitalisations and deaths started to surface, and especially as the threat of new variants became a concern.

China stopped reporting official daily death

results at the end of 2022. The World Health Organization says there have been 121,628 COVID deaths in China, out of a total global toll of almost 7 million. In a rare move, one Chinese province briefly published data on its website in July showing cremations jumped 70% in the first quarter of this year that was later taken down. In February, China's top leaders declared a "decisive victory" over COVID. But the virus is still making its rounds in the country, Beijing health officials said COVID is still the number one infectious disease in the capital, according to Chinese state media.

Officials cited a new Omicron variant, called EG.5 or "Eris" nicknamed after the Greek Goddess of strife and discord, as the current dominant strain across China. "The National Bureau of Disease Control and Prevention said the proportion of the new variant EG.5 increased from 0.6% in April to 71.6% in August, becoming the dominant strain in most provinces in China," the Global Times reported.

# Norway rebuilding reindeer fence on border

COPENHAGEN (AP): Norway is rebuilding a dilapidated reindeer fence along its border with Russia in the Arctic to stop the animals from wandering into the neighboring country - costly strolls for which Oslo has to compensate Moscow over loss of grassland. Norwegian officials said that so far this year, 42 reindeer have crossed into Russia seeking better pastures and grazing land.

The reindeer barrier along the Norway-Russia border spans 150 kilometers (93 miles) and dates back to 1954. The Norwegian Agriculture Agency said a stretch of about 7 kilometers (4 miles) between the Norwegian towns of Hamborgvatnet and Storskog would be replaced. The construction, with a price tag of 3.7 million kroner (\$348,000), is to be completed by Oct. 1, the agency said. The work is a challenge, however, as

the workers have to stay on the Norwegian side of the border "at all times" during construction, "which makes the work extra demanding," said Magnar Evertsen of the agency. If a worker crossed into Russian territory, without a Russian visa, that would amount to illegal entry.

The reindeer crossings bring on a lot of additional bureaucracy. Russia has sent two compensation claims, the agency said. One claims is for nearly 50,000 kroner (\$4,700) per reindeer that crossed into Russia to graze in the sprawling Pasvik Zapovednik natural reserve in the Russian Murmansk region. The other claim is asking for a lump sum of nearly 47 million kroner (\$4.4 million) in total for the days the animals grazed in the park, which consists mostly of lakes, rivers, forests and marshland. The agency said that of the 42 animals that entered Russia

this year, 40 have been brought back to Norway and the remaining two are expected to come back soon.

The returned animals have since been slaughtered out of fear that they may wander back to Russia, Evertsen said. The Norwegian Food Safety Authority may demand the carcasses be destroyed for safety reasons, the government body said in a statement. The reindeer are herded by the Indigenous Sami people in central and Arctic Norway. Formerly known as the Lapps, the Sami are believed to have originated in Central Asia and settled with their reindeer herds in Arctic Europe around 9,000 years ago. They traditionally live in Lapland, which stretches from northern parts of Norway through Sweden and Finland to Russia. Across the Arctic region, the majority live on the Norwegian side of the border.

# Turkish drones kill 7 PKK members

ANKARA (AFP): Twin Turkish drone strikes killed seven members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, authorities said, as Ankara's foreign minister visited the northern region. Both strikes hit the mountainous Sidakan sub-district, north of the regional capital Arbil, where the PKK maintains rear bases in its nearly four-decade-long insurgency against the Turkish military.

"A Turkish army drone struck a PKK vehicle, killing an official and two fighters," the Kurdish counterterrorism services said in a statement on the earlier strike.

In the second attack, just hours later, "two PKK officials and two PKK emergency personnel were killed," the counterterrorism services said. The strikes came as Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan was in the Iraqi Kurdish regional capital Arbil after he began his first official trip to Iraq. Fidan met the Kurdish region's president Nechirvan Barzani and prime minister Masrour Barzani, amid calls by Ankara for Baghdad to label the PKK a "terrorist" organisation.

"We have settled this question in Turkey once and for all. Now the PKK is hiding in Iraqi territory. We are working with Baghdad and Arbil to protect Iraq from the PKK," Fidan told a joint news conference with Masrour Barzani. Fidan had urged the federal government in Baghdad to brand the PKK a "terrorist" organisation. Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region has long been a target of Turkish air and ground operations

against the PKK.

Turkey's military rarely comments on individual strikes. Both the Kurdish authorities in Arbil and the federal government in Baghdad have been accused repeatedly of not doing enough to stop Turkey's frequent resort to military action on Iraqi soil in its nearly four-decade struggle against the PKK. Statements condemning the violation of Iraqi sovereignty are periodically issued, particularly when there are civilian casualties. But critics say both Arbil and Baghdad are more concerned with protecting trade and investment ties with Ankara.

On July 25, the office of Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani announced a forthcoming visit to Iraq by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, but a date has yet to be set.

# Niger allows Mali, Burkina Faso troops

BAMAKO (Reuters): Niger has authorised Mali and Burkina Faso's armed forces to intervene on its territory in case of an attack, the countries said in a joint statement, a possible sign the junta in Niger plans to keep resisting regional pressure to stand down. The main West African bloc ECOWAS has been trying to negotiate with the coup leaders but warned it is ready to send troops into Niger to restore constitutional order if diplomatic efforts fail.

Any escalation risks further destabilising the insurgency-torn region as Niger's junta-led neighbours, Mali and Burkina Faso, have said they would back Niger in any conflict with ECOWAS. The three allies' foreign ministers said they had met in the Nigerian capital Niamey to discuss boosting cooperation on security and other joint issues. The statement said the ministers welcomed the signing by Niger junta leader General Abdourahmane Tiani of two orders "authorising the Defense and Security Forces of Burkina Faso and Mali to intervene on Nigerian territory in the event of an attack." "The Burkinabe and Malian Ministers ... reiterated their rejection of an armed intervention against the people of Niger which will be considered as a declaration of war," it said.

# Burhan appears to leave army HQ

KHARTOUM (Reuters): Sudan's army chief, Gen-eral Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, appeared in a video circulated by the army outside of the army command compound in Khartoum for the first time since the beginning of a war more than four months ago.

The army has been fighting the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) for control of the capital and several major cities since April 15. Attempts to mediate have proven fruitless as diplomats say both sides still believe they can win. The fighting, during which neither side has gained a clear advantage, has inflicted high civilian casualties and displaced more than 4.5 million according to the United Nations.

In the video, which the army said was taken in the Wadi Sayidna air force base in Omdurman, across the Nile from the capital, Burhan greeted cheering soldiers. "The work you are doing should reassure people that the army has men and that Sudan is being protected by the army," he said in the video. The video appearance comes after the RSF's multi-day attack on the Armored Corps base in southern Khartoum, the army's only remaining stronghold in the capital outside its headquarters. It was not clear how Burhan was able to leave Khartoum, but analyst Cameron Hudson of the Center for Strategic and International Studies said it suggests the RSF may have taken a hit in costly battles, allowing the army greater movement. The Wadi Sayidna base in Omdurman where Burhan appeared remains well protected despite RSF attacks. Clashes between the forces continued in the city as the army works to cut off a key RSF supply route on the Shambat bridge to Bahri. General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, head of the RSF, has often mocked Burhan for what he termed hiding in a bunker, although Dagalo has only been seen in video once since the beginning of the war, speaking to soldiers outside a house in an unidentified location last month.

# Top US general says Ukraine to get F16 jets soon

AMMAN (Reuters): The United States' top general said that Ukraine was likely to get F-16 fighter jets soon, and said its counter-offensive against the Russian invasion has been going slowly and had partial success. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley said it was too early to say whether the counter-offensive had failed.

"F-16s. That is moving forward, actually. So there's a training program in place and they'll likely receive F-16s ... in the not-too-distant future," Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley said in an exclusive interview with Jordan's Al-Mamlaka public service TV news channel. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy recently said he had received pledges from Denmark and the Netherlands to deliver F-16s, saying they would strengthen Ukraine's air defences and help its counter-offensive against Russian forces.

Milley said the counter-offensive faced heavy Russian reinforcements with many months to prepare minefields, tank ditches and dragon's teeth tank obstacles "in a very complex set of defensive preparations that the Ukrainians are fighting through ... "The Ukrainians have a significant amount of combat power remaining; this is not over yet," he said. "So I think it's frankly too early to say whether it (has) succeeded or failed." "Clearly it's had partial success to date. Now the speed at which the offensive has been undertaking is slower than the planners had thought," Milley added in the interview in Amman.

Ukrainian forces were being



trained intensively in various parts of Europe on "command and control of offensive formations and combined arms maneuver and to break complex obstacles that will bolster its capabilities," the four-star US Army general said. "Again, it's bloody, it's long and it's slow. And we had predicted that several months ago," he said. Washington was still deliberating providing long-range Army Tactical Missile Systems known as ATACMS that Ukraine wants and which reach behind enemy lines, including Russia, Milley told Al-Mamlaka. "They've gotten long-range artillery with the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) and the Brits have provided other types of capabilities that other countries have as well. So they've gotten a lot of artillery," he said. "But the ATACMS

is a controversial topic. "And for a lot of reasons, they haven't received those yet. They're still on the table. President Biden has not said no or yes at this time," Milley said.

Milley, who is slated to retire later this year, again cautioned against the likelihood of an outright Ukrainian military victory in the near term while highlighting the possibility of a political solution to end the fighting. "It's an offensive that is being going on for about, I guess, eight weeks or so. It's very bloody, slow, high casualty-producing and its very difficult. So the idea of militarily kicking out two or three hundred thousand Russian troops is going to be very difficult and challenging. "A different way of getting out of this is through negotiations and may be that will happen too."

# Zimbabwe votes in uphill election for defiant opposition

HARARE (AFP): Zimbabweans began voting in closely-watched presidential and legislative elections after a crackdown tainted by a crackdown on the opposition, fears of vote rigging and public anger at the economic crisis. President Emmerson Mnangagwa, 80, who came to power after a coup that deposed late ruler Robert Mugabe in 2017 is seeking re-election.

His main challenger is Nelson Chamisa, 45, who leads the yellow-coloured Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) party. The opposition, traditionally stronger in urban areas, is hoping to ride a wave of discontent over the southern African country's economic woes that include high inflation, unemployment and widespread poverty. Voting stations will close at 7:00 pm (1700 GMT). The final results should be declared within five days. In Harare's oldest suburb Mbare, voters started to queue early in the morning outside more than a dozen large green tents set up as polling stations on a dusty field facing run-

down apartment blocks and empty wooden market stands.

As the sun rose, some used light from their mobile phones to search for their name on voters' rolls hanging outside the tents to make sure they were at the right polling stations. Diana Office, a woman in her thirties, said she arrived two hours before polls were due to open to avoid queues. "It's important for me to vote," she said. Asked if she was hopeful things would improve after the elections, she laughed, resting her head on the back of a friend queuing in front of her. "No," she said. "I'm just here to exercise my right only."

Talk of change or a better tomorrow are often associated with support for Chamisa, the opposition leader, who few would openly say they support. But the odds are stacked against the opposition. Chamisa, a lawyer and pastor has promised a new Zimbabwe "for everyone" and pledged to tackle corruption, relaunch the economy and pull the country out of international isolation.

tion. Yet, in a nation with a history of tainted elections, few believe he will emerge the outright winner. His party has complained about being unfairly targeted by authorities, its members have been arrested, dozens of its events blocked and little or no air time has been allotted to it on national television. But the deputy chairman of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), Rodney Kiwa, dismissed concerns about irregularities in the voters roll as "the product of creative imagination".

Chamisa is used to disputed elections. He narrowly lost to Mnangagwa in 2018, in a poll he condemned as fraudulent. It was tainted by a deadly crackdown on post-election protests. Government spokesman Nick Mangwana said authorities had confidence in the electoral process and believed things would go peacefully. "I just wish every Zimbabwean would accept the choice of the Zimbabwean people," he told AFP. The former British colony, then named Rhodesia, broke away from

London in 1965 under white-minority rule. After a long guerrilla war, it gained independence in 1980 and was renamed Zimbabwe. But under Mugabe, the fledgling democracy spiralled into authoritarianism and economic decline.

Things have hardly improved since Mnangagwa came to power, although his supporters think he is doing a good job, pointing at infrastructural projects such as roads. The agriculturally- and mineral-rich country is burdened by "unsustainable" debt levels, according to the World Bank. Inflation officially stood at 101 percent in July but some economists say the real figure is higher. Stable jobs are hard to come by for its more than 15 million people, about two-thirds of whom are under 25. At least 6.6 million people are registered to vote. To clinch re-election, Mnangagwa, nicknamed "the crocodile" for his ruthlessness, must win an absolute majority of votes. If he doesn't garner at least 50 percent plus one of the votes, he will face a run-off.

# Saudi Arabia eyes world stage after BRICS invitation

DUBAI (Reuters): Oil power Saudi Arabia's entry to the BRICS group of nations highlights its ambitious drive to become a heavyweight on the global stage, creating a counter to its decades-old alliance with the United States, once seen as ironclad. The kingdom anticipates more cooperation with BRICS nations, its foreign minister said, after the group invited Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Iran, Egypt and Argentina to join.

"We look forward to develop this cooperation to create new developmental and economic opportunities and elevate our relationship to the aspired level," Prince

Faisal bin Farhan told a BRICS summit. Saudi Arabia, one of the most powerful and influential Arab states, and its neighbour the UAE, have increasingly pursued their own paths after concerns that the US is less committed to the strategic region's security. "We're seeing Saudi disregarding US interests in several areas: the Saudi-Russian oil market partnership, in Riyadh's tightening relationship with China, and in the kingdom's spate of refusals to crank up oil production when Washington asks," said Jim Krane, research fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute in Houston. "It's

been a long time now since Saudi Arabia emerged from under the US shadow and the kingdom has been charting an increasingly non-aligned path that puts it at odds with US interests."

China, Saudi Arabia's biggest oil customer, has led calls to expand the emerging market powers bloc - until now made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - to become a counterweight to the West. Underscoring shifting geopolitics, Saudi Arabia hosted Chinese President Xi Jinping for a visit in December after US President Joe Biden failed on a trip to the kingdom to convince it to boost oil out-

put to tame high US gasoline prices. Krane said pricing oil in non-dollar currencies was Washington's biggest worry. "China has been pressing Saudi Arabia to price oil in renminbi for some time," he said. "The Biden administration is pursuing this issue within the Abraham Accords framework. So the kingdom appears to be in the enviable position of "balancing" between Beijing and Washington, going with whichever side offers the biggest prize."

The Abraham Accords were US-brokered deals that normalised ties between Israel and Gulf states the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

# US sanctions 11 Russians and 2 re-education facilities

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The United States announced sanctions against 11 Russians and two re-education facilities reportedly involved in the forced transfer of thousands of Ukrainian children, accusing Moscow of war crimes and crimes against humanity. US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield made the announcement at a UN Security Council meeting that the US organized on Ukraine's national day to put a spotlight on the transfer or deportation of its children as young as four months old, not only to Russia but to its ally Belarus and Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine's east.

"Children are literally being ripped from their homes in the year 2023," she said. "Russia and its proxies have detained children fleeing violence. They have forced children out of schools and orphanages. And local proxies have tricked or coerced par-

ents into sending their children to so-called 'summer camps' only to be cut off from communication and refused to have their children returned to them." Deportations of Ukrainian children have been a concern since Russia's Feb. 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine. The International Criminal Court increased pressure on Russia when it issued arrest warrants on March 17 for President Vladimir Putin and Russian children's rights commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova, accusing them of abducting children from Ukraine. Estimates vary of the number of children taken from Ukraine, but Thomas-Greenfield said the United States knows that since February 2022 there have been thousands.

She said the US is also aware of reports that Belarus leaders have supported moving Ukrainian children to camps in their country. She quoted

the National Anti-Crisis Management Group saying at least 2,100 Ukrainian youngsters were taken to Belarus from Russian-occupied territory in Ukraine between September 2022 and May 2023. Ukraine's UN ambassador, Sergiy Kyslytsya told the council that "Ukraine has strong grounds to believe that several hundred thousand Ukrainian children were forcibly and unlawfully taken by Russia, with many still being held against their will." He likened Russia's actions against children to crimes the Nazis committed against children during World War II saying: "Our children are exposed to aggressive brainwashing aimed at changing their consciousness, erasing their Ukrainian identity, and preparing obedient soldiers for the Russian army in the future."

Thomas-Greenfield, who announced the new US sanctions,

told the council they target individuals who have reportedly facilitated the forcible transfer and deportation of children to camps. In addition, she said, the US put visa restrictions on three Russia for their reported involvement in human rights abuses against Ukrainian minors. The US State Department later released a list of those subject to a freeze of any US assets including the commissioners for children's rights in the Russian regions of Belgorod, Kaluga and Rostov and officials in the Chechen Republic for their reported involvement in child deportations. It also imposed sanctions on a Russian-owned "summer camp" called Artek in Russian-occupied Crimea which received Ukrainian children who were placed in "patriotic" re-education programs and prevented from returning to their families and the Akhmat Kadyrov

Foundation which the US said is used by the Kadyrov family to oversee re-education of Ukrainian children in camps outside Grozny in the Chechen Republic.

Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused the US of launching a proxy war against Russia, backed by Britain and the European Union, to "gain experience in modern day methods of engaging in armed hostilities," risking nothing but weapons supplied to Ukraine. He said Russia was "compelled" to come to the defense of women, children and the elderly and dismissed what he called a host of lies about Russia's actions including "the lie about our alleged abductions of Ukrainian children, who we are actually saving." A significant number of council nations made no mention of the issue of deported children, including China. Instead, they focused on the need to

end the conflict and to restore the initiative that allowed Ukraine to ship grain from Black Sea ports. Russia suspended the deal in mid-July until its demands to ensure Russian food and fertilizer can get to world markets are met, sparking food price increases and fears of a global food crisis.

But France's deputy UN ambassador Nathalie Broadhurst Estival said Russia's addition to the UN "blacklist of infamy" in June for violating children's rights bears out the gravity of its crimes against children. "France urges the Russian Federation to respect international law and to immediately end these atrocities," she said. Britain's deputy ambassador James Kariuki said the forced transfers and deportations of children have "devastating and life changing consequences that will be felt for generations."



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## BRICS expansion, prospects and fallacies

**T**HE three-day annual summit of the BRICS nations concluded on Thursday in the historic city of Johannesburg with formal approval of Johannesburg declaration-II and admission of six new members to the bloc that would shore up its regular membership to 11 countries from across three continents of the globe. During the session, the BRICS leaders decided to invite six countries including Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to their club and those nations will formally join the bloc at the beginning of the new year on January 1, 2024.

The first-ever expansion of the five-member BRICS family of developing economies marked a historic milestone that not only underscored the solidarity of the developing nations but also categorically expressed their commitments to work together and achieve a shared and better future through unity and multilateral cooperation among their nations. Today's world is rapidly galloping from a unipolar system to multi-polarization and South-Eastern multilateralism is currently replacing Western hegemonism in the world. Interestingly, the quest for multilateralism and drive for cooperation among the developing nations largely emerged as a response to decadeslong Western cartels that controlled the world economy, global politics and international trade in the aftermath of World War II. Meanwhile, the collapse of the former Soviet Union and US-led global order further shattered the geostrategic balance and exposed the Western monopoly over the rest of the world.

Historically, the family of five comprising Russia, China, South Africa, India and Brazil formed a bloc about a decade ago to enhance their cooperation to strengthen their voice and autonomy in global issues to ultimately forge an equitable, diverse and multi-polar world order that protects political, economic and security interests of developing nations. Being home to about 40% of the world population and about one-fourth of global GDP, the BRICS nations had performed exceptionally well over the past 13 years in multiple domains besides emerging as a counterweight to the US-led Western bloc and European economic cartels.

Historically, trade blocs, economic partnerships and security alliances have always been of great importance for political stability, economic growth, trade and investment activities of the member nations, because those bilateral and multilateral arrangements enhance cooperation and remove trade barriers between the member nations that equally benefit all partnering nations. Due to these reasons, a large number of countries are currently intending to join the BRICS to strengthen their bonds with five major developing economies and boost their trade, economic and security cooperation with the leading nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

At the same time, BRICS has emerged as an anti-US and anti-west club, because a majority of American rivals except for South Africa and India had assembled at BRICS forum while the admission of Iran, KSA and UAE would further deepen those impressions whose interests are currently well aligned with Russia and China. The BRICS family is also leading the efforts for the de-dollarization of the global economy by taking steps to conduct bloc trade in local currencies. Apparently, BRICS members such as Iran, KSA, Brazil and Russia's decision to trade oil in local currencies, Russian ruble or Chinese yuan would be a real blow to the American greenback. Amid all pro-poor manifesto and anti-west rehotic, the BRICS club has largely divided into two groups based on their political and economic interests in the contemporary world. New Delhi has extensively used the forum against its regional opponents while the Russo-China alliance intends to use the BRICS forum to achieve their global agenda. Thus, every hegemon is blatantly using the group to its advantage, but every developing nation has filed its candidature to benefit from the so-called liberal consortium. Although BRICS is expanding its role, size and manifesto gradually, the success of this privileged club of developing nations will be judged by the time.

## Little things matter

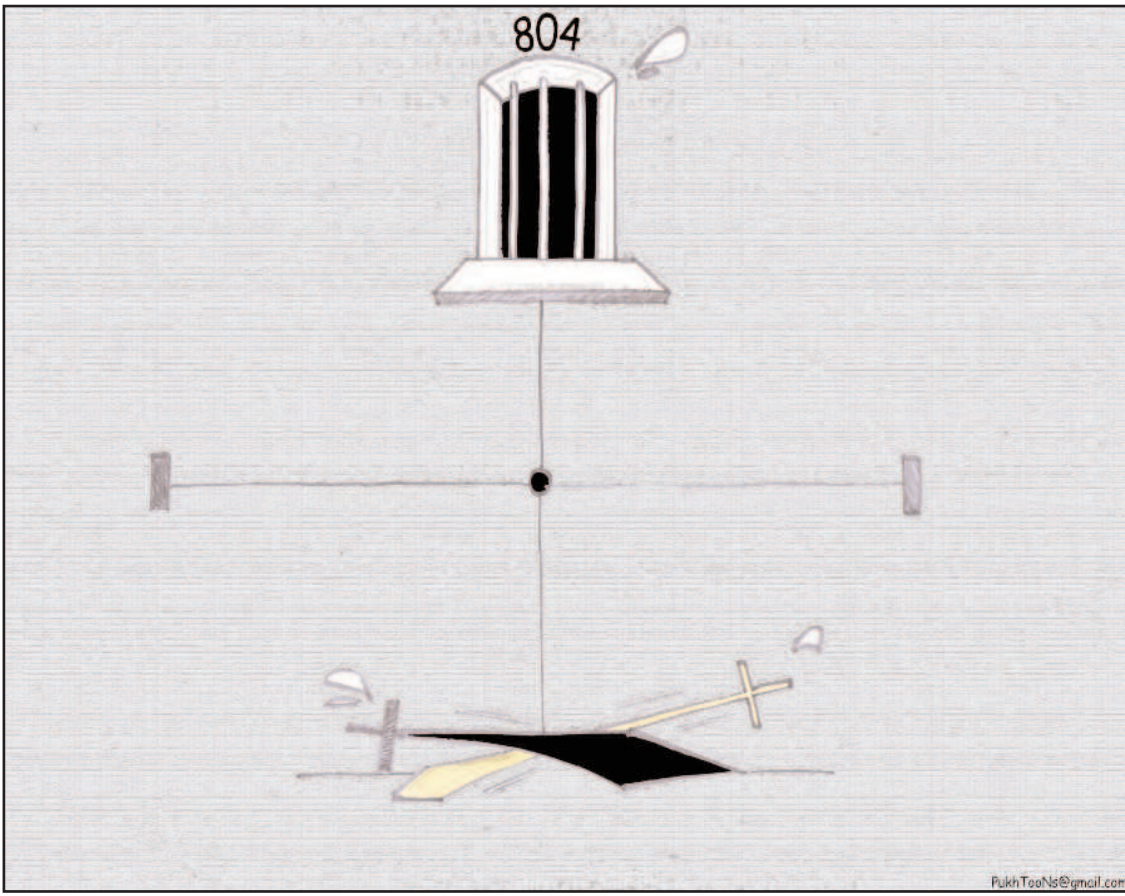
**C**ARETAKER Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday commended heroes who rescued eight trapped passengers including six schoolchildren and two adults, of a dangling cable car in Battagram, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. While speaking at a commemoration ceremony held at the PM Office in honour of those who participated in the Battagram rescue operation, PM Kakar categorically recognized the courage and expertise of every individual involved, who exhibited remarkable prowess in orchestrating the mission to a triumphant conclusion.

The dreadful incident of cable car in Battagram has not only pushed the Pakistani nation into halphas and panic but also attracted the attention of the global media, governments and the common public from across the globe. The scene was a replica of a terrible incident of a football team's trap in a Thailand's cave a few years ago. At the Battagram incident, young students faced the tragedy with courage, fought till the end and came out of the tragic incident as heroes. Local villagers not only provided food, water and moral support to entrapped students but also worked shoulder-to-shoulder with Pakistani military men and rescue workers during the hours-long rescue operation at Battagram. Interestingly, the people around the world and Pakistanis living in the country and abroad were glued to their screens as Pakistan Army's special unit and zipline experts conducted a successful rescue mission to save the people stuck inside a broken gondola for more than 15 hours after two of its cables snapped. Historically, the residents took the lead on the occasion by informing the concerned authorities about the incident, providing food, water, and giving a hope of life amid serious challenges and risks to their own lives. The entire world witnessed the scenes where the local youths endangered their lives and practically worked alongside Pakistani soldiers in safely rescuing the school boys out of those dreadful situations. It not only attracted global admiration for themselves but tremendously added to the country's prestige at the global level.

Historically, the Pakistani nation has always excelled after every disaster, emerged victorious after each massacre, appeared as champion at the end of the challenges throughout history. Pakistani youth do not face any scarcity of talent, knowledge, capability, but unfortunately confront unique challenges of disgrace of their talent, disrespect of their knowledge and dishonor of their expertise on the hands of nepotism, corruption and bribes, that spread everywhere and lead to brain drain and talent wastage. The caretaker Prime Minister has rightly acknowledged and valued the services of Pakistani youth and other individuals who took part in that magnificent operation which would be remembered in history. Such little things merit a lot, appreciation brings great revolutions in the life of individuals as well as the nation. Acknowledgement of the achievements and appreciation of heroes build the nations and lead to greater triumphs and fruition in life of the nations.

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# Why European Parliament elections matter beyond the EU

Andrew Hammond

**FOR much of the globe, the upcoming election cycle will be dominated by next year's US presidential and congressional ballots. However, going under the radar is a hugely important ballot in Europe, for which campaigning has now kicked off, that will determine the direction of the 27-member EU.**

The European Parliament elections in June next year are not just important for the future of the continent, but also the rest of the world, as the EU remains an economic superpower. It is also the world's biggest exporter, with scores of nations having Europe as their leading trade partner, ranging from key emerging markets like China in Asia to Brazil in Latin America. These will be the 10th European Parliament elections since the first direct ballot in 1979. Symbolically, they will be the first in which there are no candidates from the UK in the wake of that country formally leaving the EU.

Another reason the elections might be particularly consequential is the potential application of the so-called Spitzenkandidat (top candidate) system to select the next European Commission president. In the run-up to the 2014 European Parliament elections, this new system was unveiled by legislators. It means that the choice of candidate for president should be nominated by the voter bloc that secures the most seats. In 2014, Jean-Claude Juncker, the candidate of the largest group at the time, which was the right-of-center European People's Party, was eventually nominated and elected as European Commission president. European party leaders aimed to reassert the system in 2019, with them selecting lead candidates and organizing a debate. However, in the aftermath of the ballot, another German conservative - Ursula von der Leyen, who was defense minister in former Chancellor Angela Merkel's last government - was chosen as president, even though she had not

been a declared candidate prior to the election. Meanwhile, Manfred Weber, the declared lead candidate for the EPP, which had again gained the most seats, was not nominated after objections from key national leaders.

The experience of 2019 showed that, ultimately, national governments have final power over the appointment of the European Commission president. However, the legislature's voice has

European Parliament is generally not trusted by many around the continent, for whom Brussels seems very remote to their lives. Voter turnout at European Parliament elections has declined, slipping from 62 percent in 1979 to a record low of 42 percent in 2014. In some countries, turnout only just got into the double digits last time around. This apathy comes despite the steadily growing powers enjoyed by the legislature, including veto power over

far-right Brothers of Italy and Poland's ruling nationalist Law and Justice party. The far-right Identity and Democracy group, which includes Alternative for Germany, is also on course to make sizable gains. This shift would replicate a trend in European national politics in recent elections. In nations from Greece and Italy in the south to Finland and Sweden in the north, politics has moved in a conservative direction. Yet, while the right is set for gains, a traditional grand coalition of the EPP, the center-left Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats and the centrist Renew Europe will probably keep a clear majority over any new right-leaning alliance. The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats looks set to retain its place as the second-largest group, while Renew is forecast to broadly match the European Conservatives and Reformists in terms of seats won. That said, this grand coalition has recently been shaken by the EPP's willingness to partner with the European Conservatives and Reformists to oppose the European Commission's Green Deal legislation. The growing controversy of this agenda is also reflected in the possibility that the election's biggest losers in terms of seat numbers might be the Greens.

As much as the biggest winners could be the right, the election takes place in a different context to 2019. Then, there were worries that the traditional center ground of moderate European politics could lose the preponderance of power in the legislature, with the ballot becoming a de facto referendum on the six-decade-plus integration project of the Brussels-based club. This is why the election matters not just for Europe, but also the wider world. While a potential Joe Biden-Donald Trump US presidential race will steal the headlines, the European Parliament vote matters too, including for its influence in the choice of the next European Commission president.

That would be a big shift from the 2019 elections for the European Conservatives and Reformists, whose supporters include Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's

**However, in the aftermath of the ballot, another German conservative - Ursula von der Leyen, who was defense minister in former Chancellor Angela Merkel's last government - was chosen as president, even though she had not been a declared candidate prior to the election. Meanwhile, Manfred Weber, the declared lead candidate for the EPP, which had again gained the most seats, was not nominated after objections from key national leaders. The experience of 2019 showed that, ultimately, national governments have final power over the appointment of the European Commission president.**

become louder. To this end, a wide number of EU stakeholders have called for the Spitzenkandidat system to be revived. The EPP and other parties, including the European Greens and the Party of the European Left, have announced their intention to nominate such a main candidate in 2024. The EPP is widely forecast to again win the most seats (albeit potentially a lower number than it has now). If this comes to pass, it may increase the prospects for a second Von der Leyen presidency. However, the precise balance of power in the next parliament is highly uncertain.

In part, this is because the election takes place in the context of voter discontent and apathy. This is fueled by the fact that the

# Prigozhin's death will not fix Putin's miscalculation

Maximilian Hess

**ASKED about the future of Wagner Group chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, who had just carried out a mutiny in Russia, CIA Director William Burns warned that "[Russian President Vladimir] Putin is someone who generally thinks that revenge is a dish best served cold". On August 23, exactly two months after his short-lived revolt, a private jet crashed in Russia, with Prigozhin reportedly on board.**

Some have already credited Burns with predicting Prigozhin's demise, but for many Russia observers, it hardly came as a surprise. Putin has a long history of taking out those he perceives as traitors. Throughout his political career, he has made clear that he values loyalty above all else. In the 1990s, when he was deputy mayor of Saint Petersburg and his then-boss Mayor Anatoly Sobchak lost a re-election bid, he supposedly turned down an offer to work for Sobchak's rival by stating: "It's better to be hanged for loyalty than be rewarded for betrayal." In a 2016 interview, he was asked what "cannot be forgiven"; his answer was immediate: "treason".

Since he took power in 2000, many who have fallen afoul of him have mysteriously died: from General Alexander Lebed, a widely popular governor who was seen as a possible challenger to Putin, who died in a 2002 helicopter crash, to oligarch Boris Berezovsky who funded opposition efforts after going into exile in London, where he died in suspicious circumstances in 2013. The targeting of former spies Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006 and Sergei Skripal in Salisbury in 2018 highlighted how Putin is even willing to evoke international ire to enact revenge. One of the men suspected of Litvinenko's murder by the British authorities was granted state honours for his "services to the motherland".

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine that Putin launched in February 2022 has prompted more score-settling. There has been a string of suspicious deaths of former Russian officials and business people over the past year and a half, not just in Russia but also abroad. From people falling from windows and ships to whole families being killed - the morbid trail of mysterious high-profile people found dead has even become the subject of a podcast. Prigozhin's mutiny not only put the crosshairs on his back but also triggered a wave of dismissals of military officials. General Sergei Surovovkin, who Prigozhin had publicly praised in contrast to other Russian commanders and defence officials, disappeared after the mutiny. On the morning of August 23, reports surfaced of his official dismissal as head of the air force.

Another sacked general, Ivan Popov, has also not been seen since an audio

recording of him criticising the military was shared publicly by a Russian legislator. While what happened with the private jet reportedly carrying Prigozhin is still unclear - and we may never know the truth - what is apparent is that the Kremlin does not mind the public talking about it.

While Russian state media and institutions have often shied away from reporting on suspicious deaths and assassinations, the plane crash that reportedly killed Prigozhin was well covered. The Russian aviation authorities quickly published the list of passengers on the jet, while onlookers were allowed close to the crash site. The Kremlin clearly is trying to send a message to the rest of the Russian elite, which over the past year and a half has seen tensions and even open dissent over the war in Ukraine. Instilling fear is Putin's way of ensuring internal cohesion and obedience, but it can go only that far.

Discontent within the ranks of the army is rising and Prigozhin's killing is unlikely to suppress that. The economic elite is also unhappy as Western sanctions are biting and there seems to be no end in sight for the war in Ukraine. Capital flight has forced the Kremlin to resort to heavy-handed measures to rein in Russian oligarchs, confiscating some of their property and pressuring them to transfer their wealth back into the country. Most recently, the plunge of the rouble has forced the Russian government to undertake unpopular economic measures, increasing the interest rate and soft capital controls. It has asked exporters to sell foreign currency to support the rouble, and the Kremlin has indicated that it would go after those seen as non-compliant.

The economic crisis is affecting not only Russia's rich, but also the middle class and poor. The support of mobilised troops and their families is draining billions from the state coffers, while social support measures extended for the poor temporarily may not be sustained for long. Part of Putin's bargain with the Russian population was to provide security, stability and a minimum level of socio-economic comfort. All of these are now quickly evaporating.

The bloody score-settling and growing feeling of insecurity brought about by constant Ukrainian drone strikes and sabotage operations on Russian territory are bringing back bad memories of the chaotic 1990s, when organised crime and terror attacks terrified ordinary Russians. Putin's bargain is breaking down. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine was a major miscalculation. Putin may be blind to this reality, but many around him are not. Prigozhin's fate reveals how the war he unleashed can turn the closest of allies into the deadliest of enemies.

Aljazeera

## UN has responsibility to try to resolve Sudan crisis

Dr. Majid Raffizadeh

**T**HE conflict in Sudan continues to escalate, spreading to more cities. The capital Khartoum has also become an urban battleground, making it extremely urgent to reach a resolution and bring an end to the devastating war. One of the most important issues to address is how the war is affecting ordinary people.

The escalation of the conflict is significantly exacerbating the humanitarian situation, particularly in El-Obeid in North Kordofan, Khartoum and other nearby cities, as well as some areas of the Darfur region, especially in the western part of Darfur. This has led UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk to warn that the "disastrous, senseless war in Sudan, born out of a wanton drive for power, has resulted in thousands of deaths, the destruction of family homes, schools, hospitals and other essential services, massive

displacement, as well as sexual violence, in acts which may amount to war crimes."

To put it in perspective, since the conflict erupted between the Sudanese Army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, more than 4 million people have been forced to flee their homes. Nearly 1 million refugees and asylum seekers have fled to neighboring countries, while about 3 million people are currently internally displaced. Another alarming fact is that the brutal war has significantly damaged the healthcare system in Sudan. In a war, hospitals and doctors are often targeted as a military strategy - a tool to carry out political retaliation, to impose fear on society and punish doctors and health workers for protecting and treating casualties of war.

Healthcare workers are risking their safety to save patients' lives and treat various medical issues, including bullet wounds, all kinds of injuries and women giv-

ing birth. A nurse with Doctors Without Borders reflected on her experience working in a hospital in Khartoum, writing: "The entire time we were working we could hear the sounds of war outside. There were planes circling. They would fly over and within a few minutes or within an hour, the bombing would start. Between the explosions, there were sounds of gunshots from the streets. If it was very close, you could feel the walls shake, the windows too. There was smoke all around the hospital. Several times, members of the team lost family members in the bombing. We didn't sleep a lot. Some nights we didn't know what was real and what wasn't because our dreams and reality started to blur." Without a resolution or intervention by the international community, the continuation of the conflict could cause the total collapse of the healthcare sys-

tem in Sudan. Nearly two-thirds of hospitals are currently out of service in areas that have been affected by the conflict, with less than 20 percent of hospitals in Khartoum being operational.

It is worth noting that attacking hospitals, schools and healthcare workers in a conflict zone is considered to be a violation of international law. It is one of the six grave violations identified by the UN Security Council in its resolution 1998, which was passed in 2011. The UN has a responsibility to act in such a crisis. Unfortunately, no concrete action has been taken in spite of the severity of the situation. Before the spread of social media and 24-hour news outlets, the UN could argue that it was unaware of human rights violations in the country. But there is currently no excuse for the UN not to act forcefully. While some parties in the war may not give much significance to the UN and

its resolutions, any action taken by the international organization to hold the perpetrators accountable would be a blow to their global image and prestige.

The international community can take several steps, most importantly to set up an investigative mechanism. It ought to prioritize and reveal to the world the deteriorating human rights situation in Sudan and how some parties are committing crimes against humanity. The UN must also pressure both sides to cooperate with its Human Rights Council investigation. This includes allowing investigators to enter Sudan, interview people and witness the situation on the ground. If the warring parties refuse to work with the UN Human Rights Council, its case ought to be immediately referred to the UNSC. This would be a significant warning due to the fact that the council can trigger the rule of "responsibility to protect." This "embed-

ies a political commitment to end the worst forms of violence and persecution ... It seeks to narrow the gap between member states' pre-existing obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and the reality faced by populations at risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity." The responsibility to protect has previously been invoked in more than 80 UNSC resolutions. A second solution would be to urgently bring both sides of the conflict to the negotiating table. In order to accomplish this objective, the international community can use its political leverage in order to impose diplomatic and economic pressure on the parties involved. In a nutshell, the UN must act immediately and establish a credible mechanism to investigate the situation in Sudan in order to address the humanitarian crisis and protect people who have been impacted by the civil war.



# Rohingya youth long for a future beyond the barbed wire

SIX years have now elapsed since the world watched 700,000 Rohingya flee from Myanmar to Bangladesh in search of safety. About half of them were children and young people. What was expected to be a short-term refuge has become another protracted crisis. Those who fled as children have now reached the age of adolescence; those who were teenagers are now adults.

Like most children, they aspire to become doctors, engineers, teachers, sports stars, and artists - a stark contrast to their reality. Living in the world's biggest refugee camp, surrounded by barbed-wire fences, Rohingya refugees are blocked from accessing formal education, earning an income, and moving freely through or beyond the camp. In such conditions, what hope they can have to build the kind of future they dream of? There should be scope for them to improve their lives, be it through education or paid work.

Many of the young Rohingya I have met as part of my work at these camps tell me they feel forgotten by the world. They tell me the barriers between them and the life they want for themselves engulf them with a sense of despair. They say their voices go unheard and that they have lost the right to dream. This sense of helplessness has a visceral impact on their mental health. A 2022 survey of 317 refugee youth and adolescents across 11 camps conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) found that 96 percent of the respondents were unemployed and that they constantly feel anxious and stressed.

Amin is a young Rohingya I know well. Six years ago, he was a high-school student in his home country. He planned to go to university and become a lawyer. Then one day, his village was burned down, and his relatives were killed before his eyes. Scared for their lives, he and his family walked for 10 days before crossing the border to reach safety in Bangladesh. Like many others, Amin assumed he would only be in Bangladesh for a short time. But the vastly different

reality has struck him hard. Now, with every passing year, little by little, his aspiration to become a lawyer is drifting away and he feels ever more helpless. He does not even know if he will ever be able to resume his education.

***They spend most of their time within the four walls of congested bamboo homes. Learning centres, providing limited non-formal education, work as a safe space for women and girls. There they can learn to read and build friendships and bonds with other young people. However, many girls are not allowed by their families to attend. Instead, it's very common for girls to get married before they turn 18 due to social pressure and safety concerns. Fifteen-year-old Ayesha told me she misses her life before she fled. Back then, she had the freedom to spend time with her friends in the garden outside their home. Now she says her home is too crowded and she barely has any privacy. She has to spend the entire day at home. It feels like a prison to her. Sadly, there are thousands of stories like those of Amin and Ayesha. At the age of energy and enthusiasm, young Rohingya spend their days by roadside shops or inside their shelters. With nowhere to channel their energy, they are growing weary and restless. The recent cuts that reduced food rations to just 27 cents a day have become a bitter cherry on top of their situation.***

Life for girls and young Rohingya women is even more challenging. They spend most of their time within the four walls of congested bamboo homes. Learning centres, providing limited non-formal education, work as a safe space for women and girls.

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Sadly, there are thousands of stories like those of Amin and Ayesha. At the age of energy and enthusiasm, young Rohingya spend their days by roadside shops or inside their shelters. With nowhere to channel their energy, they are growing weary and restless. The recent cuts that reduced food rations to just 27 cents a day have become a bitter cherry on top of their situation. The community, especially the young generation, is even more desperate for employment than before.

"How long are we going to be aid-dependent like this?" one young refugee asked me. "We do not enjoy being totally aid dependent. This is our age of working and earning. This latest ration cut is an indication that it is high time we start earning our own money." It is critical that donors and decision-makers listen to these young people. They have the right to determine their own future, and to influence how aid dollars are invested in programmes to support them. A recent assessment conducted by NRC found that Rohingya youth and adolescents are eager to receive vocational training and build technical knowledge, which will help them earn money to support themselves and their families. Some of this training is available, but much more must be provided, and existing initiatives expanded.

For example, some Rohingya youth are being trained on how to repair solar panels while others are trained in tailoring. Alongside this training, the youth now need opportunities to use their new-found skills to earn a living for themselves. And to do that donors, governments and private institutions must put their hands in their pockets and invest further in these initiatives. Given the opportunity, these young people will be a huge asset to their community and Bangladesh. But the government and donor community must work to provide the tools. Only that way, can young Rohingya have a real chance to take charge of their own futures.

## Prigozhin seemed to be living on borrowed time

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

Within the span of a few hours, Russian President Vladimir Putin switched from accusing Prigozhin of "treason," and labeling his mutiny "a stab in the back of our troops and the people," to allowing Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko to promise Prigozhin amnesty and a base for his fighters. To those familiar with Putin's vindictive streak, something did not add up. (Others who challenged Putin have wound up poisoned, imprisoned or falling out of windows).

The details of Wednesday's plane crash are still murky. Video of the plane debris taken at the purported crash site in the western Tver region of Russia matches the plane registered to Prigozhin. Meanwhile, some are even speculating that the warlord might have faked his death in order to disappear. The true cause may not be known for some time, if ever. In his first public comments on the plane crash, Putin expressed his condolences to the families of the victims on Thursday and called Prigozhin "a man of difficult fate" who had "made serious mistakes in life."

Whatever official version is announced, many Russians are likely to believe Prigozhin's demise was punishment for his disloyalty. To those who suspect foul play, the real puzzle will be why it took so long. Putin's tough image had taken a hit when he let the Wagner mutineers off with little more than a reprimand. Will the mercenary leader's fiery end now restore the president's reputation?

Perhaps, To some well-schooled observers, the delay made sense. In July, CIA Director William Burns told attendees at a national security conference, "I think Putin is someone who generally thinks revenge is a dish best served cold..." If Putin had a role in Prigozhin's fate - and that's far from proven - there was an argument for carefully laying the groundwork before dealing with the Wagner leader himself. The Kremlin had three urgent tasks to complete before that.

First, Putin's investigators would want to carefully assess the extent to which members of the armed forces and security services supported Prigozhin. Few local troops did anything to resist the mercenaries' advance on Moscow. Then, to avoid turning Prigozhin into a martyr, the Kremlin - if it were involved - would need to discredit and embarrass him, cutting into his popularity in right-wing nationalist circles, before acting to punish him.

Perhaps most important, Putin's men needed to gather up the control networks of the Wagner opera-

tion in Africa. From Mali and the Central African Republic to Mozambique and Sudan, Prigozhin's agents were providing security to dictators, guarding oil wells and diamond mines, and shaping public opinion through propaganda outlets. Russia's covert presence in Africa - largely a Wagner venture - was one of Moscow's few recent foreign policy successes. Yet, if the plan all along was to strip Prigozhin of his reputation, armed supporters, and African assets before holding him to account, the actual course of events still looks dysfunctional.

Investigations were started within the armed forces, and probably within the security forces as well. A few generals have been relieved of their commands. Even General Sergei Surovikin, aka "General Armageddon," the commander of Russian aerospace forces, who was known to be on good terms with Prigozhin, was dismissed in recent days. Still, there is little evidence of any systematic purge to root out those unhappy with the military leadership. In the midst of the ongoing war in Ukraine, such a purge would be dangerous. But so is not conducting one.

Although Surovikin disappeared from public view right after the mutiny, it took the Kremlin two months to make the actual announcement that he had been removed. And rather than bring in a loyal outsider, the authorities replaced Surovikin with his own chief of staff, Viktor

Daniel Treisman

## Putin has signed his name on the wrong piece of paper this time

Hamish De Bretton-Gordon

**AS Vladimir Putin sits thinking in his bomb-proof office, he may come to regret the fact that the entire world is sure that he ordered the death of the notorious mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin. The Kremlin is a Camorra, a mafia style parliament, running a gangster operation to fill Putin's pockets and those of his oligarchs and elites. But as the Japanese found in Burma in 1944, if you prosecute a war with terror you will likely come unstuck against a well led, motivated and moral organisation like General 'Bill' Slim's 'Forgotten Army'.**

Putin may in fact have signed his own death warrant. His fingerprints may not have been on the firing button when Prigozhin's jet was brought down, and may not have been on the Polonium or Novichok which killed some of his other opponents, but his DNA is all over the orders. He now has two very powerful groups to worry about - quite apart from the International Criminal Court, which no doubt has so much evi-

dence that if he ever gets to the Hague he will never leave.

Firstly, Putin must worry about his oligarchs who have now been holed up in their dachas in Moscow for over 18 months, unable to use their superyachts or villas in the Mediterranean. As their leader is further vilified around the globe over this latest murder, the oligarchs may come to see that their only chance to break out of Russia, now so diminished economically and socially, is to dispose of Putin. Secondly, the Wagner Group might have lost their 'cowboy' leader and his deputy, but they remain a large force of thugs and murderers. Prigozhin was no military commander, but the Wagner Group is the most successful military outfit that Russia has managed to put into the field, no matter that they are paid mercenaries, many of them recruited out of Russian jails. To control such a rabble, you need some very hard 'lieutenants' running the show and these men will now be considering the future in

Belarus and Africa. How ironic it would be if somebody showered them with riches to go and create mayhem within Russia. My experience of mercenaries is that they are not too picky about whose money they take.

It's unlikely to be a coincidence that the final dismissal of 'General Armageddon' Sergei Surovikin was announced on the same day as Prigozhin was taken out. Putin has now disposed of his most effective military commanders and is left with desk jockeys like Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov to run the battles in Ukraine and the defence of Moscow.

These men might have chests full of medals, but these medals are for 'needle work and cookery', not for fighting as Surovikin's, not for fighting as Surovikin's, Prigozhin's were. A poorly led army is a rabble which will likely turn and run, and this is now what Putin has created. I imagine that over the next few days we are also likely to be treated to a flood of

"kompromat" which the late Yevgeny Vitorovich will have gathered on Putin and his baleful regime, for release in the event of his death. This could mean further pressure on an increasingly beleaguered Kremlin.

In the cold light of day, when Muscovites yet again have to dive for their shelters as Ukrainian drones approach, and reflect that their young men are coming home in boxes rather than in triumph, they will surely start to realise that Putin's 'special military operation' is a complete disaster. But I expect it will be the oligarchs and Wagner who finish Putin before he completely destroys the Russian state. What comes next cannot be worse or more evil; we've seen hell on earth in the last 18 months. What is certain is that the next Russian leader will not have a useable army or effective generals to command it for a generation. Things are likely to get messier before they get better, but after the demise of Surovikin and Prigozhin, Putin's coffin won't require many more nails.

The Telegraph

# Republican debate highlights future of US aid to Ukraine

Rob Garver

**THE future of US aid to Ukraine under a potential Republican White House remains very much in doubt, one day after eight candidates for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination clashed over the subject in the party's first presidential primary debate.**

On stage in Milwaukee on Wednesday, the candidates displayed a range of attitudes toward US support for Ukraine's effort to fend off the full-scale Russian invasion that began in February 2022. Some called for the elimination or reduction of US support, while others spoke forcefully in favor of extending it.

The dispute highlights a sharp divergence of opinion within the broader Republican Party over the war in Ukraine, one that has been reflected in public opinion polls since last year. Recent polling by CNN has indicated that a large segment of the Republican electorate wants to cut or eliminate US funding, with 71% saying that Congress should not authorize new funding, and 59% saying they believe the US has already done enough to support Kyiv. The Republicans on the debate stage did not include former President Donald Trump, who is currently leading the field by a wide margin in public polling. Trump, instead, recorded an interview that aired at the same time as the debate.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who early in his campaign stumbled over his position on Ukraine, was first among the candidates to address the issue on Wednesday, saying immediately that he would make additional US aid "contingent" on an increase in aid from European countries. "Europe needs to step up," DeSantis said. "I'm going to have Europe step up and do their job."

Statistical data on aid to Ukraine show that while the US has sent the most to Ukraine in total dollars, European countries have given the most on a GDP basis. The candidate most adamant about restricting US aid to Ukraine was Vivek Ramaswamy, a tech businessman who has no experience in public office. Asked if he would support increased funding to Ukraine, Ramaswamy said, "I would not, and I think that is disastrous, that we are protecting against an invasion across somebody else's border, when we should use those same military resources to prevent ... the invasion of our own southern border here in the United States of America."

He went on to contend that US support for Ukraine is "driving Russia further into China's hands," and he accused politicians in favor of maintaining support for Ukraine - including some on stage with him - of placing that country's concerns above the needs of the US. He also appeared to ridicule their support for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "I find it offensive that we have professional politicians on the stage that will make a pilgrimage to Kyiv - to their pope, Zelenskyy - without doing the same thing for people in Maui or the South Side of Chicago."

Several other contenders - former Vice President Mike Pence, former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley and former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie - sharply criticized Ramaswamy's position, defending continued US support for Kyiv and arguing that US interests are at stake in Ukraine.

Christie, who recently traveled to Ukraine, reminded the audience of the atrocities committed by Russian troops in Ukraine, and of the many thousands of Ukrainian children who

only briefly addressed the conflict in Ukraine. While criticizing President Joe Biden for going on vacation, he said, "He's supposed to be working. He's supposed to be getting us out of that horrible, horrible war that we're very much involved in with Russia and Ukraine." Trump went on to call for an end to the war. He also claimed that he could stop it "easily," and that Russia never would have invaded Ukraine if he had been president. He offered no evidence for either claim.

Politics aside, experts told VOA that continued

***"I find it offensive that we have professional politicians on the stage that will make a pilgrimage to Kyiv - to their pope, Zelenskyy - without doing the same thing for people in Maui or the South Side of Chicago." Several other contenders - former Vice President Mike Pence, former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley and former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie - sharply criticized Ramaswamy's position, defending continued US support for Kyiv and arguing that US interests are at stake in Ukraine.***

have been taken from Ukraine and resettled in Russia. "If we don't stand up against this type of autocratic killing in the world, we will be next," Christie said.

Pence rebutted Ramaswamy's claim that US aid to Ukraine is detracting from the country's ability to address its own problems, saying, "Anybody that thinks that we can't solve the problems here in the United States and be the leader of the free world has a pretty small view of the greatest nation on Earth. We can do both." Haley, who also served as US ambassador to the United Nations during the Trump administration, noted that aid to Ukraine has totaled only about 3.5% of the overall US military budget. She also attacked Ramaswamy for a number of his stated positions on foreign policy, including his public statement that he would not object to China's hostile takeover of Taiwan after 2028.

"He wants to hand Ukraine to Russia," Haley said. "He wants to let China eat Taiwan. He wants to go and stop funding Israel. You don't do that to friends. What you do instead is, you have the backs of your friends. Ukraine is the front line of defense." Ramaswamy retorted by suggesting that Haley is hoping to join the boards of US military contractors Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, who manufacture much of the equipment the US has sent to Ukraine. Haley pointed out that she has no affiliation with either company and added, "You have no foreign policy experience, and it shows."

In an interview with conservative commentator Tucker Carlson that was released on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, Trump

US aid to Ukraine is essential to the country's struggle against Russia, and that cutting it off would have major consequences. In an email exchange, Nicholas Lokker, a research associate in the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, told VOA that US support is "critical" to Ukraine's continued defense. "Washington has so far provided the most military aid of any country by a wide margin. And without this aid, it is quite likely that Ukrainian forces would be in much worse shape than they are now," he said.

"The United States has also had a very important role in coordinating aid deliveries from more than 40 countries through its leadership of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, without which Kyiv would be less likely to receive the type of support that it needs most," he added. Gian Gentile, a retired US Army colonel who now serves as associate director of the RAND Corporation's Army Research Division, told VOA that a withdrawal of US support would be "a disaster" for Ukraine. He said it could entail cutting off not just money and materiel, but training for Ukrainian forces. "The whole Ukrainian offensive would stop," he said. "They would have to try to consolidate what they have and move into a defensive standpoint across the board."

But the damage might not stop there, he said. "If Russia knows that there's no US support, that might be enough for them to begin their own major counteroffensive or offensive operations to retake what they've lost," Gentile said. "And without US support [for Ukraine], [Russia] could be pretty damned successful."

## US should refrain from meddling in internal affairs

Li Yang

**YEVGENY Prigozhin, the head of Russian mercenary group Wagner who staged a short-lived mutiny against Russia's military leadership in June, was killed when the plane he was on crashed northwest of Moscow on Wednesday, the Russian Federal Air Transport Agency said. Washington delayed imposing new sanctions on Wagner immediately after the mutiny broke out hoping it would lead to more troubles for Moscow. It will not want to waste the opportunity to take advantage of Prigozhin's death to reopen the wounds between Wagner and Moscow.**

Although US President Joe Biden told reporters he did not know what had happened, he said, "I'm not surprised," and pointed the finger of blame at the

Russian leader, "There is not much that happens in Russia that Putin is not behind".

By trying to drive the wedge between the Putin regime and the Wagner Group deeper, the US will hope to help its proxies in the Ukraine conflict, and intensify the volatility in Russia's "internal affairs" through stoking Prigozhin's death into a "backyard fire" of Moscow, if not a fuse of systemic crisis in Russia, while claiming a high moral ground to justify its move as an effort to end the Ukraine crisis early.

Those sharing a similar view of Washington, with a certain sense of Schadenfreude over the incident, should realize that it is nothing but a miscalculation as that will serve no parties' interests, including

those of the US, if the situation is allowed to be orchestrated according to the US' wishes. The Ukraine crisis can only be settled through peaceful means with a lasting security mechanism being founded in Europe rather than by the fall of either Russia or Ukraine.

As such, the world should be alert to Washington trying to manipulate the incident by inciting Wagner to respond, even before the facts are clear, as that will only further complicate the situation. All peace-loving nations that hope to see a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine crisis should not meddle in the "internal affairs" of Russia. Any country trying to exploit the incident so as to steer the crisis in a particular direction is only displaying its strategic myopia.

The China Daily





## Weekly inflation slightly up by 0.05 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a nominal increase of 0.05 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on August 24, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 275.71 points as compared to 271.57 points during the past week, according to the PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 25.34 percent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is

covering 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732, increased by 0.19 percent and went up to 281.19 points from last week's 280.67 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517, Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 increased nominally by 0.12 percent, 0.10 percent, 0.08 and 0.01 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 22 (43.14%) items increased, 12 (25.53%) items decreased and 17 (33.33%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a

week-on-week (WoW) included tomatoes (22.16%), chicken (5.44%), rice irri6/9 (1.70%), potatoes (1.43%), bananas (1.22%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.97%), mustard oil (0.87%), cooking oil 5 litre (0.67%), pulse gram (0.49%), LPG (0.43%) and wheat flour (0.25%). The items that recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis, included onions (23.56%), pulse masoor (3.66%), sugar (3.43%), garlic (2.17%), eggs (2.13%), cooked daal (2.04%) and pulse mash (1.52%), non-food items, energy saver (1.89%) and long cloth (1.51%).

The commodities that

witnessed a decrease in price on a Year-on-Year (YOY) basis, included tomatoes (39.96%), onions (37.70%), electricity for Q1 (21.96%), pulse masoor (10.68%) and vegetable ghee 1 kg (0.40%).

On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices included wheat flour (129.38%), gas charges for q1 (108.38%), cigarettes (102.31%), tea packet (93.94%), rice basmati broken (89.56%), chilies powder (86.05%), sugar (81.21%), rice irri-6/9 (80.54%), gur (63.59%), gents sponge chappal (58.05%), salt powdered (49.09%), chicken (48.58%) and bread (46.37%).

## The Bank of Punjab's balance sheet surpasses Rs. 2 trillion mark in 1st half of 2023

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Board of Directors of The Bank of Punjab convened on August 24, 2023, to review and approve the un-audited Financial Statements for the 1st Half of the year ending on June 30, 2023.

During the meeting, the Board assessed the bank's performance and expressed satisfaction with the overall financial results achieved amidst the current operating landscape. They particularly appreciated the performance with respect to capital enhancement and building core revenues of the bank during the first half of the year, and being number one mid-sized bank in Agricultural Financing and number one bank across the industry in Banking on Equality, as per the evaluation criteria of SBP.

Throughout this period, the bank effectively executed chosen strategies to ensure consistent growth and stable earning streams.

As of June 30, 2023, the bank's Balance Sheet Size exceeded the Rs. 2.0 Trillion milestone, positioning it as one of the newest entrants into the industry's Large Banks. Consequently, Total Assets exhibited a year-on-year (YOY) growth of 64%.

The Bank's Deposits also surged to Rs. 1,370 billion, reflecting a noteworthy YOY growth of 33%. Moreover, the bank's CASA Deposits reached Rs. 889 billion, marking a YOY growth of 22%. Loans & Advances stood at Rs. 907 billion, indicating a substantial YOY growth of 59%. Similarly, Investments & Lending to FIs surged to Rs. 923 billion, displaying a significant YOY growth of 65%. The bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) exhibited significant improvement, rising to 15.09% from 12.62% as of June 30, 2022. This confirms the bank's compliance with regulatory capital require-

ments with a substantial margin over stipulated minimum requirements.

During the 1st Half of 2023, Non-Markup/Interest Income escalated to Rs. 5.73 billion, up from Rs. 3.60 billion in the 1st Half of 2022, signifying a notable growth of 59%. The Net Interest Margin (NIM) also improved, reaching Rs. 17.42 billion compared to Rs. 15.86 billion in the same period of 2022. The bank's investment portfolio holds the potential to further enhance the NIM through the repricing of investments and Government Securities. A significant portion of this optimization has recently been achieved, with the remaining improvements expected to materialize in due course, starting from the third quarter of 2023.

In the 1st Half of the year, the bank continued to successfully recovered/regularized a Non-performing Portfolio amounting to Rs. 3.3 Billion, achieved without

relying on substantial one-off gains. Diligent efforts are ongoing to drive substantial recovery in the upcoming periods. The bank's pre-tax profit for the 1st Half of the year reached Rs. 4.0 billion, with Earnings per Share (EPS) for the 1st Half of 2023 standing at Rs. 1.05 per share.

M/s PACRA has assigned a long-term entity rating of "AA+" to the bank, coupled with the highest short-term rating of "A1+-. The bank's extensive network comprises 780 online branches, including 140 Taqwa Islamic Banking Branches and 16 sub-branches. Additionally, the bank operates a network of 744 ATMs, providing round-the-clock banking services to its customers. The bank takes pride in offering a diverse array of products and services to its esteemed clientele, encompassing Branchless Banking, Mobile Banking, Internet Banking, Credit Card, and Cash Management services.

## Asian investors resume selloff on rate fears as Powell speech looms

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets sank Friday as a mini rally came to a juddering halt ahead of a keenly awaited speech by Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell later in the day, with traders increasingly worried the bank will hike interest rates further. The losses tracked a sell-off on Wall Street, where tech titans including Amazon and Apple were among the big losers as Treasury yields rose and data indicated the US jobs market was still resilient in the face of tighter financial conditions.

The Fed's insistence that decision-making would be data-dependent has seen traders react to most economic indicators in a "good news is bad news" fashion, with healthy data seen as likely pressuring officials to hike to temper inflation.

A string of positive readings on the economy and jobs have weighed on equities this month, while policymakers appear split on the best way forward as they try to tame prices while looking to avoid causing a recession.

Markets enjoyed a strong end to July on optimism that that month's rate hike would be the last, with inflation continuing to ease and other data showing a softening in the economy. Some observers even suggested a cut could be on the cards at the end of the year or early 2024.

But that has given way to the realisation that more work is needed to get inflation down to -- and held at -- the Fed's two percent target. Analysts said Powell must tread a fine line in his Friday speech at the annual symposium of central bankers and business leaders in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. "He will caution against easing too soon. I think that's going to be a theme here," former Fed vice chair Donald Kohn said. "It would be actually helpful for him to spell out what he means by data-dependence, tamping down the very strong reaction of markets to each piece of data."

And Krishna Guha, of Evercore ISI, added the Fed chief would likely avoid saying when rates would be at an

ideal level when they are neither boosting nor restricting the economy.

"Expect a balanced assessment with no abrupt hawkishness, but no 'Mission Accomplished,'" he said. "The Fed has not come this far to let inflation slip out of its grasp."

A hawkish speech at last year's Jackson Hole gathering sent shivers through world markets. European Central Bank head Christine Lagarde is due to speak later in the day as well. Data showing fewer jobless claims last week dented sentiment in New York, while profit-taking after a Nvidia-fuelled tech surge added to the selling pressure.

Meanwhile, differing views from Fed officials provided little help.

Boston Fed boss Susan Collins told Yahoo! Finance she thought more increases were needed, while Philadelphia head Patrick Harker thought they would stay where they are now -- at a two-decade high -- telling CNBC that "we've probably done enough".

In early Asian trade, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tokyo, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Wellington, Taipei and Manila were all in the red. China's economic woes continue to drag on sentiment, and in an attempt to staunch losses in markets, Beijing officials urged the country's pension fund as well as some large banks and insurers to buy up equities.

The call follows similar calls for funds and big institutions to stop offloading shares and companies to buy their own stock.

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: DOWN 1.9 percent at 31,666.36 (break)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: DOWN 1.0 percent at 18,024.32

Shanghai - Composite: DOWN 0.2 percent at 3,074.92

Dollar/yen: UP at 146.15 from 145.80 yen on Thursday

Euro/dollar: DOWN at \$1.0784 from \$1.0811

Pound/dollar: DOWN at \$1.2574 from \$1.2596

Euro/pound: UP at 85.76 pence from 85.81 pence



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displays Dates to attract the customers at his roadside setup at Police Line Road.

## PSX loses 79 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) shed 79.55 points on Friday, showing negative change of 0.17 percent, closing at 47,671.22 points against 47,750.77 points the previous trading day.

A total of 192,036,691 shares were traded during the day as compared to 251,691,469 shares, where-

as the trading value of shares was recorded at Rs.6,528 billion against Rs 12,798 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 329 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 100 of them recorded gains and 204 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 25 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 17,969,683 shares at Rs 1.25 per share; JS Bank Ltd with 16,138,500 shares at Rs 6.20 per share and BankIslami Pak with 12,489,876 shares at Rs 14.85 per share.

Excide (Pak)XD witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 26.02 per share price,

closing at Rs 372.99, whereas the runner-up was Atlas Battery with an Rs 20.54 rise in its per share price to Rs294.47.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 1,100.00 per share closing at Rs 22,900.00; followed by Bata (Pak) with Rs 30.00 decline to close at Rs 1,730.00.

## Gold rates up by Rs.2,900 to Rs 235,500 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.2,900 and was sold at Rs.235,500 as compared to its sale at Rs.232,600 the previous day. The price of 10 grams

of 24 karat gold also increase by Rs.2,486 to Rs.201,903 from Rs 199,417 whereas the rates of 10 gram 22 karat went up to Rs185,078 from Rs 182,799, the All Sindh

Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price per tola silver increased by Rs.50 and was sold at Rs1,850 against its sale at Rs 2,800 whereas that of ten gram silver went

up by Rs.42.87 to Rs.2,443.41 from Rs 2,400.54. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$4 to \$1,919 from \$1,915, the Association reported.

### Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where two ships namely, No.2 Ocean Pioneer and Central Park, carrying Palm oil and Chemicals, berthed at Liquid Cargo Terminal and Engro Vopak Terminal, respectively on Thursday.

A total of 08 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Cosco America and Central Park sailed out to sea on Friday (today) morning, while two more ships, Big Breezy and Maran-gas Asclepius are expected to sail on same day afternoon. Cargo throughput during the last 24 hours stood at 112,906 tonnes, comprising 43,376 tonnes imports Cargo and 69,530 tonnes export cargo.

## PIAF greets Mian Misbah for unopposed election as Founders Group Chairman

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has greeted the noted businessman and LCCI former president Mian Misbahur Rehman to get this slot of so importance and becoming the head of such prestigious of business community, which has been the partner of the PIAF for the long time in LCCI elections.

The leadership of PIAF said that Mian Misbahur Rehman is a famous industrialist and social personality of Lahore city and was playing his role in eliminating the problems of the industry through the plat-

form of Founders Group and PIAF Founders Alliance. Being elected as the Chairman of the Founders Group was a testament to his hard work

Fahim Ur Rehman Sehgal said that Misbahur Rehman was a successful and experienced businessman, as he has been performing his duties well as the former president of Lahore Chamber and Lahore Gymkhana. Tributes were also paid to him for his 50 years of services for the development and uplift of the business community.

## DIG Operations meets LCCI president, discusses law, order initiatives

LAHORE (APP): DIG Operations Ali Nasir Rizvi held a meeting with Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Kashif Anwar, Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry and executive committee members.

The LCCI president lauded commendable efforts of the Punjab Police in upholding law and order. He underscored the critical importance of a strong liaison between the business community and the police force to ensure a secure environment for economic activities. He emphasised that the Punjab Police's consistent cooperation with the business sector had been instrumental in main-

taining a conducive atmosphere for growth.

DIG Operations Ali Nasir Rizvi shed light on the multifaceted purpose of his visit. Firstly, he highlighted the Punjab government's vigorous campaign against drug usage in educational institutions. Disturbing reports from intelligence agencies and the Special Branch had necessitated this initiative, focusing on schools and universities. Another critical aspect of their efforts involved launching a comprehensive campaign against the proliferation of illicit weapons.

He said that the Punjab Police has initiated to turn the existing police stations

into special initiative police stations (SIPSS). In this regard, he said, the Punjab Police wants a proactive role of the business community in terms of sponsoring those SIPSS and in return we will make sure that the community that has contributed in the maintenance and upgradation of the police station will be included in the governing body of that police station.

Ali Rizvi acknowledged the formidable task of overseeing a population exceeding 20 million residents with a police force comprising just 21,000 personnel. He pointed out that hard cash transactions in markets had contributed to increased incidents of

crime and theft. He urged the LCCI to assume a proactive role in tackling this issue, recognizing the potential for collective efforts to make a substantial impact.

President LCCI Kashif Anwar shared the sentiment of collaboration and synergy between Punjab Police and the LCCI recognized the need for sustained cooperation to effectively address the evolving challenges faced by Lahore's dynamic urban landscape. The commitment to ensuring a secure and prosperous environment for businesses and residents alike remained at the forefront of discussions.

## Sialkot's leather industry; major contributor in Pakistan's exports: DC

SIALKOT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Adnan Mehmood Awan has said that Sialkot's leather industry has a major contribution in Pakistan's exports.

An annual foreign exchange earner of one billion dollars, the leather industries in Pakistan had the potential for immense growth due to the abundant availability of raw materials and skilled manpower.

For this, it was necessary to promote the leather industry in accordance with international environmental laws and standards.

Punjab Environment Protection Department provided Rs 300 million for

the purchase of 400 acres of land in Sialkot Tannery Zone (STZ), Punjab Small Industry Corporation provided Rs 500 million for grid station, natural gas, while Ministry of Commerce Pakistan provided soft loan of Rs 1.17 billion for civil works and infrastructure. So far, an amount of Rs 2 billion had been spent by the government for the establishment of tannery zone, the aim of which was to shift more than 280 tanneries causing pollution in Sialkot city.

He expressed these views while addressing a meeting organized to review the Sialkot tannery zone project and the shifting of tanneries working in Sialkot to the tannery zone here on Friday.

Project Manager STZ Muhammad Atif, Deputy Director (DD) Environment Protection Waseem Cheema and Inspector Environment Shahid Ali Dogar were also present.

Project Manager Mohammad Atif while giving a briefing about the construction work on Sialkot Tannery Zone Project said that boundary wall of the project, main gate, site office, stores, flood protection embankment, increasing and clean-

ing the capacity of Dogri Naullah II and work of plotting internal electrification of the zone had been completed 100%, while work was on progress on the construction of the road, 21 megawatt grid station, poles for high tension and low tension transmission, civil work of grid station control room and transmission yard.

Project Manager STZ said that the most important part of the project was the establishment of a common effluent treatment plant for the chemically contaminated water coming out of the tannery, on which civil work was in progress.



LAHORE: Vendor busy in cleaning and displaying grams for customers at his roadside setup.





## In brief

## Babar Azam sets new record

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan skipper Babar Azam continues to make history as on Thursday in the second fixture of the three-match ODI series against Afghanistan he made another record in One Day International (ODI) cricket. Afghanistan is hosting Pakistan in Sri Lanka for the series between August 22 and 26. During the match in Hambantota, which Pakistan won after a nail-biting contest, Babar achieved the milestone of scoring the most number of runs (5142) after the first 100 innings. This is a remarkable feat as the previous record-holder of this record, Hashim Amla, scored 4946 runs in his first 100 ODI innings, website Cricket Pakistan reported. Babar now holds the top spot among batters with the most runs after 100 ODI innings, followed by Hashim Amla (4946), Viv Richards (4607), Shai Hope (4436), and Joe Root (4428).

## WWE champion dies aged 36

BROOKSVILLE (Agencies): Three-time WWE world champion Bray Wyatt has died at the age of 36. The wrestler had been dealing with an undisclosed health issue that had kept him out of the ring since February, but his death was characterised as sudden by his family. The news was announced by WWE content officer Triple H, who posted on social media that Wyatt, real name Windham Rotunda, had "unexpectedly passed". Dwayne Johnson, aka The Rock, was among those paying tribute to the star. Writing on X, formerly Twitter, Johnson said he was "heartbroken" and had "always had tremendous respect and love" for the wrestler. "Loved his presence, promos, in ring work and connection with @WWE universe," he wrote. "Very unique, cool and rare character, which is hard to create in our crazy world of pro wrestling." WWE commentator Mick Foley added: "I thought so highly of Bray Wyatt... He was a true visionary; one of the most compelling presences that wrestling has ever seen." Wyatt came from a family of wrestlers, including his grandfather Blackjack Mulligan, his father Mike Rotunda and his younger brother Bo Dallas. Rotunda was a famous wrestling legend in his own right, known as IRS due to his gimmick as being a tax collector from Washington DC who harassed wrestlers and fans as "tax cheats". Born in Brooksville, Florida on 23 May, 1987, Wyatt was a state wrestling champion in high school and earned a football scholarship to Troy University. However, he left his course before graduating to become a professional wrestler, making his professional debut in 2009. He fought under several names including Husky Harris, Alex Rotunda, Duke Rotundo and The Fiend. As Bray Wyatt, he portrayed the villainous leader of a cult faction named The Wyatt family with Erick Rowan, Braun Strowman, and the late Luke Harper (aka Brodie Lee). After being released from WWE in 2021, he made a long-awaited comeback at the pay-per-view Extreme Rules event last October, where he debuted a new version of his character. He had recently missed several months due to illness but was close to returning to the WWE before his death, according to Wrestling News.

# Nasir, Farhan, Israr, Waqar in Squash semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nasir Iqbal, Farhan Mehboob, Israr Ahmed and Waqar Mehboob have moved to the semifinals of the 2nd CNS All Pakistan Men & Women Squash Championship 2023, to be played at Pakistan Navy Roshan Khan Jahangir Khan Squash Complex, Fleet Club, Saddar Karachi on Saturday.

The Quarterfinal of 2nd CNS All Pakistan Men & Women Squash Championship 2023, were played on Friday.

In Men's Quarter Final Round Top Half Nasir Iqbal (WAPDA) beat Mehmoob

Mehboob (PB) 11-7, 11-3, 11-7 (24 mins) Q2 Farhan Mehboob (WAPDA) beat Khushal Riaz (KP) 11-9, 11-4, 11-5 (23 mins).

In Bottom Half, Israr Ahmed (SNGPL) beat M. Azlan Khawar (PB) 11-9, 11-7, 11-7 (25 mins); Waqar Mehboob (KP) beat Anas Khan (Navy) 9-11, 11-7, 12-10, 13-11 (45 mins) In Women' Quarter Final Round Top Half: Noor ul Ain (WAPDA) beat Saima Shukat (WAPDA) 8-11, 11-8, 2-11, 11-6, 11-6 (27 mins); Mehwish Ali (WAPDA) beat Komal Khan

(WAPDA) 11-9, 11-7, 11-7 (20mins).

Bottom Half: Mariam Malik (Army) beat Roshna Mehboob (PB) 11-5, 11-9, 8-11, 8-11, 11-9 (38 mins); Zaynab Khan (Army) beat Anam Mustafa (Sindh) 11-8, 11-3, 11-2 (13 mins).

Men's semi final: Nasir Iqbal (WAPDA) Vs Farhan Mehboob (WAPDA); Israr Ahmed (SNGPL) Vs Waqar Mehboob (KP).

Women's Semi Final: Noor ul Ain (WAPDA) Vs Mehwish Ali (WAPDA); Mariam Malik (Army) Vs Zaynab Khan (Army).

## ICC, BCCI officials likely to visit Pakistan during Asia Cup

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The President of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Roger Binny, and vice president, Rajeev Shukla, are likely to visit Pakistan during the upcoming Asia Cup, according to sources.

The development comes after the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) sent invitations for the event to ACC and ICC members.

BCCI Secretary and President of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Jay Shah has also been invited by the PCB.

Apart from all the ACC board members, ICC

Chairman Greg Barclay, ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice and General Manager Cricket Wasim Khan have also been invited by the PCB.

The 2023 Asia Cup will be held in Pakistan and Sri Lanka between August 30 and September 17.

Pakistan are in Group A alongside Nepal and India. Meanwhile, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka are in Group B. Pakistan cricket team will play the tournament's opener against Nepal, who will be playing their first Asia Cup, on August 30 in Multan.

Top two teams from

each group will qualify for the Super 4 stage of Asia Cup 2023.

Pakistan will remain A1 and India will remain A2. If either of them (India and Pakistan) don't qualify for Super 4s, then Nepal will take their position.

Sri Lanka will remain B1 and Bangladesh will remain B2. If either of them (Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) don't qualify for Super 4s, then Afghanistan will take their position.

Four matches will be played in Pakistan, while nine, including the final, will be played in Sri Lanka.

## Pakistan outplay England in World Blind Games

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan downed England by six wickets in the cricket event of the IBSA World Blind Games at Birmingham, United Kingdom (UK).

England won the toss and decided to bat first. Pakistan's bowlers displayed exceptional skill, preventing the English batsmen from finding their rhythm and accumulating runs freely.

England's batting lineup was dismantled, leading to their dismissal at a total of 103 runs in 18 overs. Among the top contributors, Luke Sugg managed 25 runs

while Matt Dean secured 13 runs. Notably, Shahzaib Haider stood out as the standout bowler, clinching four wickets, supported by Muhammad Shahzeb and Mohsin Khan with two and one wickets, respectively.

In response, Pakistan achieved the required target within 9.4 overs, for four wickets. Nisar Ali shone as the top scorer with an impressive 35 runs off 17 balls, while Matiuallah contributed 22 runs.

Ed Hossell, Jones, and Ahmed each managed to claim a wicket a piece for the English side.

This victory marked Pakistan's success in all four league games, positioning them at the forefront of the points table and guaranteeing their spot in the final.

The upcoming eliminator match was anticipated to be between the second-ranked India and the third-ranked team, the latter to be determined following the outcome of the Australia-Bangladesh game.

The grand finale was scheduled to take place at the prestigious Edgbaston Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

## Salah still '100% committed' to Liverpool: Klopp



LONDON (Agencies): Mohamed Salah will stay at Liverpool despite fresh speculation linking him with a move to the Saudi Pro League, says manager Jurgen Klopp.

Al-Itihad are reported to be interested in the Egypt forward, 31, who joined the Reds from Roma in 2017.

Speaking before Liverpool's Premier League game with Newcastle on Sunday, Klopp said Salah is "100% committed" to the club. "There is nothing to talk about, he is a Liverpool player," said Klopp.

"He is essential and will be. There is nothing there. My life philosophy [is] I think about a problem when I have it."

It is believed Liverpool do not want to sell a player who only signed a new three-year deal last summer and with the transfer window closing on 1 September. Salah's agent has also previously played down talk of a move to Saudi Arabia.

"Mohamed remains committed to Liverpool,"

said Salah's agent Ramy Abbas Issa in a social media post on 7 August.

"If we considered leaving Liverpool this year, we wouldn't have renewed the contract last summer."

Salah has started both of Liverpool's games this season, although he showed frustration at being substituted in the draw at Chelsea before knocking in the rebound from his saved penalty in the win against Bournemouth.

He has scored 187 goals in 307 games for Liverpool and has won the Champions League, Premier League, FA Cup, League Cup, FIFA Club World Cup and UEFA Super Cup during his time at Anfield.

'Konate a doubt for Newcastle'

Klopp says Ibrahima Konate is a doubt for the trip to Newcastle after picking up a muscle injury, but fellow defender Trent Alexander-Arnold and midfielder Curtis Jones are fit.

The Liverpool boss also described his relief at Alexis Mac Allister's red

card being overturned after the Argentina midfielder was sent off in the 3-1 win over Bournemouth last week. "Very good news on Alexis Mac Allister, massive [relief]," said Klopp.

"I was pretty sure it wasn't a red card, but that does not mean our people were going to be successful. "The picture was pretty clear it should not have been a red card, harsh tackles should always be punished but it was not a harsh tackle in a situation, it was fast."

Klopp praised the job Eddie Howe has done at Newcastle since taking over in 2021. Last season the club finished fourth to secure Champions League football for the first time in 20 years. "Incredibly strong team, it's super development under Eddie Howe and smart business," said Klopp.

"[New signings] Sandro Tonali and Harvey Barnes are really good business; they have a super intense style and massive atmosphere there so this is a tough one for sure."

## World Athletics Championships Arshad Nadeem seals spot in Paris Olympics



BUDAPEST (Agencies): In a stunning display of skill, Pakistan's premier javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem not only secured a spot in the final of the ongoing World Athletics Championship in Hungary but also guaranteed his participation in the 2024 Paris Olympics with a remarkable 86.79-meter throw on Friday.

Amidst a gathering of top international athletes, Nadeem commenced with a throw spanning 70.63 meters. However, he swiftly rebounded in a remarkable display of resilience and surged past the 81-meter mark on his second attempt.

He also crossed the Olympic qualifying benchmark of 83 meters,

pushing his way into the group of top 12 international javelin throwers that will compete with one another in France in the coming year.

"WAPDA Sports Board athlete Arshad Nadeem, representing Pakistan in World Athletics Championship in Budapest, Hungary, qualified for Javelin Finals with 86.79 meter throw," announced Pakistan's state-owned public utility company, WAPDA, in a social media post while sharing a video of Nadeem's latest throw. "He also qualified for Paris Olympic Games 2024."

The star Pakistani sportsman hails from a small town, Khanawal, located in Punjab province.

He is one of the nine children of a daily wage laborer who showed great versatility as an athlete from a young age while dabbling in all kinds of sports at school.

Although his family lacked financial means to encourage Nadeem's enthusiasm for sports, his spirit earned him the support he needed, with his elder brothers working to help him build a career in athletics.

Last year, he won the top medal at the Commonwealth Games in a fifth-round throw of 90.18 meters, making a new record at the games where he currently holds the title of the biggest throw recorded by a South Asian athlete.

## Reception held in honor of two KP players selected in Pakistan Davis Cup Squad

PESHAWAR (APP): A special ceremony was held here on Friday in honor of Shoaib Khan and Barkatullah of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who were selected in the Pakistan Tennis Team for Davis Cup Zone One to be played in September this year against Indonesia in Pakistan sports board Tennis Club.

Both Shoaib Khan and Barkat Ullah selected purely on the performance looking after the excellent matches in the trials matches wherein top eight players participated.

Senior Vice President of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Association Dr. Farhat Abbas, Secretary Umar Ayaz Khalil, coaches, Roman Gul, Nouman Khan, Zakir Khan, Shaharyar and largely num-

ber of players and officials were also present. Both Shoaib Khan and Barkat Ullah, the Pakistan No. 3 and Fourth were garlanded soon after arrival at the Qayyum Sports Complex Synthetic Tennis Courts.

The two players have previously achieved success for the country and the nation in many important national and international competitions and it is hoped that they will be successful in the future. Shoaib Khan belongs to Pakistan Air Force and Barkatullah is representing Pakistan from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police. Dr. Farhat Abbas, a known cardiac surgeon, General Secretary Umar Ayaz Khan Khalil appreciated both Shoaib Khan and Barkat Ullah for giving excellent performances in the trials

matches and selected in the national team to represent Pakistan in the forthcoming Davis Cup Zone-I to be played against Indonesia in Islamabad on September 16 and 17, 2023.

Umar Ayaz said that both KP players were in the national team for the Davis Cup. "It is a great honor to make a place. I hope that both players will perform well in the Davis Cup," Umar Ayaz said. Aisam Ul Haq and Aqeel Khan are the other members of the national team.

Earlier, Pakistan's top 8 players participated in the trials, including Shoaib Khan, Yousaf Khalil, Barkatullah, Hira Ashiq, M. Abid, Mudassar, Abdullah Adnan, Mustafa Ali Khan. Under the auspices of Pakistan Tennis Federation, Shoaib Khan and

Barkatullah of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa showed their best game and won first and second positions in the trials.

Pakistan Tennis stars Aqeel Khan will also be part of the team. Davis Cup Zone One matches between Pakistan and Indonesia team will be held on September 16 and 17 at Pakistan Sports Board Grass Court, President of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Olympic Association Syed Aqil Shah, Chairman of Provincial Tennis Association Prof. Dr. Mohammad Tahir, President DIG Saleem Marwat, Senior Vice President Dr. Farhat Abbas and Secretary Umar Ayaz Khalil expressed the hope that both the players will repeat their excellent performance in the Davis Cup as well.

## Spanish federation chief refuses to resign over kiss scandal

MADRID (Reuters): Spanish soccer boss Luis Rubiales refused to quit on Friday for kissing World Cup star Jenni Hermoso on the lips after Spain's World Cup victory, fuelling anger among players and government ministers who decried his actions as unacceptable macho behaviour.

Speaking at an emergency meeting of the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF), Rubiales complained that "false feminists" were "trying to kill me".

He described the kiss as a "little peck" that was "spontaneous, mutual, euphoric and consensual". "Is a consensual peck going to take me out of here? I won't resign. I will fight until the end," Rubiales said, drawing applause from the predominantly male audience. Criticism of Rubiales's behaviour has built throughout the week. The incident occurred while the players were being handed their medals after they beat England 1-0 in the World Cup final in Sydney, Australia, on Sunday.

As players filed past, Rubiales grabbed Hermoso by the head and planted a kiss on her mouth. The government confirmed on Friday it will take the incident before a sport tribunal where, if it can be proven the kiss was non-consensual, he could be tried under a sexual violence law introduced by the ruling Socialists last year. Rubiales' speech at the RFEF assembly drew immediate condemnation from acting Labour Minister Yolanda Diaz, who described it as "unacceptable".

## Bhutan-bound Pakistan U-16 football team honoured at a reception

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan U-16 Football team, set to compete in Bhutan, was honoured here on Friday at a reception.

The reception was organized by Candyland, a valued coalition partner of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF).

The recognition ceremony took place at a local hotel, where the young athletes were celebrated for their dedication and potential. PFF Normalisation Committee Chairman Haroon Malik graced the occasion as chief guest, while other notables present on the occasion were former PFF senior official Col (R) Mujahid Tareen, cricket coach Manzoor Elahi, PCB executive committee member Amir Nawab, Ajmal Sabir, Basalat Mirza from Candyland, players, football lovers and a good number of media persons.

Speaking on the occasion, PFF NC Chairman Haroon Malik said, "Football possesses the remarkable ability to unite the world. This power of football has gathered immensely talented U-16 players from every nook and cranny of our nation. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Candyland for their remarkable joint initiative. It's heartening to see their dedication not for personal publicity, but purely for the advancement of grassroots football in Pakistan.

This will undoubtedly

benefit Pakistani football for years to come." Malik continued, "Pakistan's sporting landscape, particularly in football, is profoundly blessed to have individuals and organizations like Candyland. Their earnest desire to elevate Pakistan's standing on the international football stage reflects a genuine passion for the sport.

With their unwavering support, we have the opportunity to enhance our grassroots football and propel it to unprecedented heights. Strengthening grassroots football serves as the bedrock for flourishing at higher levels. Once again, I extend my gratitude to Ismail Industries and its proprietors, Muhammad Ismail and Miftah Ismail, for their magnanimous commitment to the advancement of football in Pakistan.

"Offering guidance to the young football prodigies, Haroon Malik said, "The diligent efforts undertaken by PFF and Candyland to unearth talents like yours are truly commendable. We've identified you as gems, and we are committed to nurturing your potential. Now, you stand as ambassadors of Pakistan, and for the honor of your nation, it's essential to toil with unyielding passion, unwavering dedication, and boundless self-belief.

With these qualities, you will undoubtedly soar to great heights." Former

PFF senior official Col (R) Mujahid Tareen shared his insights, saying, "The collaborative initiative of PFF and Candyland is praiseworthy and much-needed.

This is the essence required in every sport, particularly in football. The talent has been successfully unearthed, and Candyland's diligent care is commendable.

It is now the responsibility of these players to channel all their energies into preparing for upcoming events and striving to bring glory to their nation." Candyland, in its steadfast commitment to fostering football from the grassroots, not only facilitated nationwide trials in collaboration with the PFF Normalization Committee but also meticulously curated a well-balanced U-16 squad for the Bhutan event.

These comprehensive trials drew participants from every corner of Pakistan, including remote areas brimming with untapped talent, leading to the identification of 200 remarkably gifted players.

Out of this pool, 50 players were selected for the national U-16 training camp in Abbottabad. As August draws to a close, the team is set to embark on their journey to Bhutan. Comprising 23 players and 7 officials, the Pakistan U-16 football squad, nurtured through dedication and strategic collaboration, stands prepared to make their mark.





## In brief

### Three bike lifters arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested three bike lifters and robbers, and recovered 10 stolen motorcycles, a Mehran car, Rs 130,000 cash, and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, a team under the supervision of SHO, New Town Police Station managed to net three bike lifters and robbers named Muhammad Imran, the ringleader, Ali Haider, and Sabahat Shah, and recovered valuable items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused, while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police Rawal Faisal Saleem said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind bars. He said that the operations against the lawbreakers would be accelerated further.

### Crackdown against professional beggars

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad capital police have initiated a massive crackdown against professional beggars and their handlers in the city to curb this menace. Police spokesperson told on Friday that Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan has ordered the all zonal DPOs to take action against professional beggars and handlers in their respective areas adding that cases should be registered against them. He reiterated that the parents who send their children with these criminals will also face action according to the law, adding that criminals in the guise of begging were found involved in different criminal activities. During the ongoing crackdown, the spokesperson said that police teams of Kohsar police station arrested 17 professional baggers and registered cases against them. Police have urged the citizens to discourage these professional beggars and give their charity to the needy persons. They have been also appealed to inform police about any suspicious activity through Pucar-15 and join hands with police to eradicate this menace from the city.

### Anti-drug awareness campaign in ICT

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (PEIRA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Professional Training is set to launch an anti-drug awareness campaign next week in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). This was revealed during a briefing by Chairperson PEIRA, Dr. Sayeda Zia Batool with the Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindh on Friday. This initiative emphasizes not only the commitment of the Ministry and PEIRA to educational excellence but also to the overall well-being and safety of the community. The campaign will serve as a comprehensive effort to educate the masses about the dangers of drug abuse, reinforcing the collective responsibility to create a healthier society. In alignment with the directives of Madad Ali Sindh, a concerted focus was placed on the importance of a drug-free Pakistan. This significant meeting marked a shared commitment to reinforce the educational landscape within the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), underscoring both parties' dedication to advancing educational standards in the region. During the visit, a comprehensive discussion was held on the importance of needs-based scholarships for the deserving and needy in private schools.



ISLAMABAD: Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab called on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

## HEC sends off 50 students to study in China

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) held a send-off ceremony for the scholars of the Chinese Government Scholarship Programme here on Friday. As many as 50 Pakistani students have secured scholarships for undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate studies in a diverse array of subjects, including Science, Engineering, Agriculture, Medicine, Economics, Legal Studies, Management, Education, History, Literature, Philosophy and Fine Arts. Twenty-six per cent of the scholarship awardees this year are female students.

Chairman HEC Dr Mukhtar Ahmed, Chinese Charge d'Affaires, Ms Pang Chunxue, Executive Director HEC Dr Shaista Sohail, and Cultural Counsellor Embassy of China in Islamabad Zhang Heqing and Mrs. Aayesha Ikram, DG (Scholarships) HEC attended the ceremony alongside the programme alumni and schol-

arship awardees.

Addressing the ceremony, Dr Mukhtar Ahmed said, "This is not just an opportunity to study but to also learn how this country in our neighbourhood emerged as a global leader in a matter of only a few decades. This is a wholesome opportunity that will not only lead you to a great career but will also develop you into a commendable human being."

He also appreciated the diversity of the batch and shared the dos and don'ts of the journey, along with tidbits from his experience of visiting China and studying abroad. Ms Pang Chunxue thanked HEC for sending best of the best nominations every year and ensuring that the scholarships are distributed on merit.

She said, "These scholarships are an effort of the Chinese government to deepen the relations between two countries and help Pakistan elevate and polish its youth. I hope that these scholars do not only strive to achieve academic

excellence during their stay but also experience the real China, through its culture, food and people."

Earlier in her welcome address, Dr Shaista Sohail shared the background of HEC's Chinese Government Scholarship Programme and said, "HEC has been entrusted with the distribution of the Chinese Government Scholarships since 2019. So far, we have sent 163 students in four years and the number will rise to 243 this year."

She also advised the scholars to consider themselves as the ambassador of Pakistan in China and make sure to earn a good name for the country. Mrs. Aayesha Ikram said, "HEC works hard every year to pick the best nominees for Chinese Government Scholarships with a focus on making the process more robust for the next batch. We are glad to see more and more students competing for such bright opportunities and are committed to ensuring that our students get rewarded for their hard work."

## Death anniversary of Ahmed Faraz observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 15th death anniversary of renowned and progressive Urdu poet Ahmed Faraz was observed on Friday.

Born on January 12, 1931 in Kohat, as Syed Ahmed Shah, he adopted pen name of Faraz. He moved to Peshawar with his family, where he received Masters's in Urdu and Persian from Peshawar University. He started his career as a scriptwriter with Radio Pakistan Peshawar and later joined Peshawar University as a lecturer.

"Tanha Tanha", "Janan Janan", "Be-awaz Gali Kuchon main", "Sab Awazain Meri" and "Shab-e-Khoon" are among his literary works. He was a member of the Progressive Writers Movement. The great Urdu poet was decorated with a number of national and international awards including the Nigar Award, Sitara-e-Imtiaz and Hilal-e-Imtiaz. Ahmed Faraz died on August 24, 2008, due to kidney failure and was buried in Islamabad.

## Seven more dengue cases reported

RAWALPINDI (APP): The number of confirmed cases in Rawalpindi has increased to 131 as a result of seven more dengue cases reported in the last 24 hours. District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control (DCEPC), Dr Sajjad Mahmood said on Friday that, among the new cases, two of each patient had arrived from Chaklala Cantonment, Potohar town urban area, and Rawalpindi Cantonment while one patient reported from Municipal Corporation area.

He said 36 patients were admitted to the City's allied hospitals, out of which 22 were confirmed cases while 113 were discharged after treatment. Dr Sajjad informed that the district administration had registered 71 FIRs, issued tickets to 17, sealed 16 premises, and a fine of Rs 163,000 was imposed against the violations of dengue SOPs during the last 24 hours.

The health officer said that prevailing weather was most suitable for dengue larvae breeding and the recent rains had increased the threat of mosquito upbringing.

# UK Health Security Agency team calls on Health Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA) Chief Executive Officer, Professor Dame Jenny Harries along with her team called on Caretaker Federal Health Minister Dr Nadeem Jan to discuss strengthening collaboration.

The focus of the partnership between the Ministry and UKSHA was to promote efficient choices, especially in light of the lessons learned from COVID-19. Other objectives, including mutual learning and capacity-building of the healthcare workforce in Pakistan through the sharing and implementation of systems with the support of UKSHA.

The Global Health Security Agenda is the top-most priority of the Government of Pakistan. In this regard, Pakistan will soon host a GHSA Summit in which all top leaders and stakeholders from across the world will be invited, said the minister.

With the support of the UKSHA,

Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) has been implemented in 134 districts of Pakistan, and within the next 2-3 months, it will be implemented in all the districts of the country, the meeting was informed.

The UKSHA is also supporting the development and implementation of electronic lab systems to strengthen comprehensive surveillance in Pakistan. It was highlighted that UKSHA provided significant support to the provinces in terms of improvement in the technical areas and core capacities as per the JEE recommendations from 2016 to 2023. It was mentioned that the JEE Country Report 2023 is being finalized and the UKSHA has provided significant support in the process of conducting JEE in Pakistan. The recommendations of the said document will help in aligning the health and non-health sectors under the One Health ambit.

## Pan-Africanism crucial in addressing contemporary global challenges: Ethiopian Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Jemal Beker Abdula on Thursday highlighted the imperative role of advancing Pan-Africanism as a strategic measure to confront the pressing global dilemmas unfolding in the contemporary time.

He stressed on the importance of Pan-Africanism during a meeting with Pakistan-based Ambassadors of all the African countries here at the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Embassy. The discussion of African Envoys centered on amplifying Pan-

Africanism's influence to effectively tackle challenges including climate change, terrorism, migration, and the complexities of the global economy.

During the gathering, Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula underscored the importance of promoting Africa's collective interests on the international stage through a cohesive embrace of pan-African principles.

Notably, he said the Pretoria Agreement, inked on November 02, 2022, between the FDRE Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front to end the conflict in Ethiopia's northern parts, stood as a vivid manifestation of the advancement of

Pan-Africanism.

The ambassador eloquently narrated the beginning and successful execution of the agreement, characterized by a resolute commitment to "African solutions to African Problems." While extending his heartfelt gratitude, Ambassador Jemal Beker expressed appreciation for the collaborative efforts of fellow African nations and international partners that contributed to the realization of the Pretoria Agreement. This accord, instrumental in upholding Ethiopia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and constitutional order, facilitated unimpeded humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas.

## DC Islamabad directs operations against societal Issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon on Friday issued a decisive directive to Assistant Commissioners for curbing various societal issues in their respective jurisdictions.

These officials have been entrusted with the task of orchestrating rigorous operations to curb price gouging, dismantle encroachments and address the plight of professional beggars within their respective jurisdictions.

Under the watchful eye of the ICT spokesperson, the Assistant Commissioners embarked on an extensive inspection of 105 locations to combat the menace of price hikes.

This resulted in the imposition of fines amounting to Rs. 26,000 on errant businesses, while stringent measures led to the closure of one establishment.

Moreover, displaying an unwavering commitment to societal welfare, authori-

ties took 30 professional beggars into custody, subsequently transferring them to police custody.

The crackdown against encroachments exhibited no leniency, as five individuals were apprehended and handed over to law enforcement for violating public space.

The operation, carried out in tandem with efforts to tackle inflation, also yielded the confiscation of over 6 kilograms of environmentally hazardous polythene bags. The purview of these commendable efforts extended to addressing irregularities in business practices as well, with illegal petrol filling agencies and an unauthorized LPG filling station facing the full brunt of legal action. It is worth noting that the battle against encroachments, price gouging, and professional begging continues unabated, reaffirming the authorities' steadfast commitment to fostering a more just and equitable society.

## Govt taking measures to revive tourism: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for State on Tourism and Chairman of PTDC Board of Directors Wasi Shah on Friday said the interim government took serious measures to promote tourism in the country to support the national economy.

In a statement, the minister said he and his team were striving to make the

country a paradise for tourists. "Pakistan is a safe country for tourism that attracts swathes of local and foreign tourists to explore its natural, geographic, and architectural beauty," he added.

He said the government was formulating strategies to provide all kinds of facilities to the tourists that would pave the way to

encourage them to come to Pakistan.

On the occasion, he took serious notice and sought a complete report from the relevant authorities about police officials misbehaving with a foreign tourist couple in Pind Dadan Khan.

"Nobody will be allowed to misbehave or disrespect foreign tourists," he added.

## IG implements stringent measures for road safety

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Inspector General of National Highways Motorways Police (NH&MP), Sultan Ali Khawaja, taking strong action on Friday imposed a ban on entry of vehicles transporting flammable materials onto motorways. This move comes in response to violations of Oregon laws, following a hazardous materials-laden vehicle accident on the motorway, said a spokesman of NH&MP.

In a bid to ensure safety, stringent compliance with safety protocols will now be obligatory for all vehicles traversing the highways under the jurisdiction of the Motorway Police, he added.

The IG Motorways Police said that notably, legal measures would be initiated against vehicles found carrying flammable materials without adhering to the safety protocols established by Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA).

He further said to enhance safety standards, rigorous implementation of OGRA's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and

regulations is imperative.

Moreover, in order to create awareness among drivers, transport companies and the general public, the IG emphasized the importance of prominently displaying OGRA SOPs at all toll plazas, while informative messages will also be strategically placed on screen boards as part of an awareness campaign, bolstered by the support of the Frontier Works Organization (FWO). Sultan Ali Khawaja underscored the critical significance of using appropriate vehicles for transporting hazardous materials. The utilization of unsuitable vehicles has been identified as a prime contributor to life-threatening situations, he added.

Acknowledging the gravity of this issue, he stressed the necessity of extreme precautionary measures for the transportation of dangerous flammable substances. In essence, IG's proactive measures reflect a resolute commitment to safeguarding lives and upholding road safety standards.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Jamal Shah and Chairman CDA Capt R Anwar ul Haq discussed the proposed plan to reenergize and revamp cultural infrastructure built by CDA.



Kankor exam Held in Kabul

KABUL (TOLOnews): The university entrance examination, or Kankor, for those students who missed it was held with the attendance of nearly six thousand boys. The National Examination Authority (NEXA) said that fifty-two participants of the exam were Afghan residents who have come to the country to take the test. "Students from madrasas, those who were abroad, and those who missed the exam in their provinces were taken in the final round of the entrance exam."

3 female students arrive in Dubai

KABUL (Agenices): Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor, founding chairman of Al Habtoor Group, said in a video posted on X social media platform that he met three Afghan female students who made it to Dubai safely this morning. "They are among those who received the comprehensive scholarship that I provided them with in collaboration with the University of Dubai. I welcomed them in the safest country in the world, as I stated, I am entirely in charge of seeing to their comfort and safety."

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

# UN’s Bennett discusses Afghanistan with German Foreign Minister



KABUL (TOLOnews): The UN special rapporteur for Afghanistan Richard Bennett and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock discussed the current situation in Afghanistan and support for the Afghan people. The German Foreign Office said on X social media platform that "our solidarity with the people in Afghanistan is unbroken. We will not let go of standing up for their human rights." "Today, a UN Special

Rapporteur for Afghanistan Richard Bennett about the current situation in Afghanistan and support for the Afghan people." Despite Germany's saying that it is working to protect human rights in Afghanistan, some human rights activists consider the situation concerning. "The world has never been with the people of Afghanistan, as we witness. It has been two years that women have been denied the right to education, and work. It will be good if the Islamic

Emirate pays attention to the rights of all the people of Afghanistan, especially the women of this country," said Tafsir Siyaposh, a women's rights activist. "We can say that women's rights have been completely violated in Afghanistan. Numerous decrees that have been issued that forbid or limit women from working or getting an education," said Abdul Matab Rasouli, a human rights activist. However, the Islamic Emirate's spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, said that human rights in

Afghanistan, particularly those of women and girls, are upheld in line with Islamic law. "Cultural and global differences must be understood. Something that is considered a law in the West may not be a law in the East, and Islamic laws have specific definitions for rights that we cannot analyze from the Western point of view," Mujahid noted. In the meantime, Petra Sigmund, Director General for Asia and the Pacific for Germany's Federal Foreign Office in a meeting with UN Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan Richard Bennett, called the situation dire for women and children in Afghanistan. They both asked the Islamic Emirate to live up to their responsibility to the Afghan people. "Today, we discuss human rights in Afghanistan with UN Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan Richard Bennett. The situation is dire, especially for women and children. We both call upon the Taliban to live up to their responsibility to the Afghan people and end systematic discrimination against women and girls!," Sigmund said on her X social media account.

# Afghanistan’s new media law submitted to supreme leader for approval



KABUL (Agenices): After two years of uncertainty and press restrictions, the Taliban has presented a draft for a new media law in Afghanistan, seeking approval from their leader. Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson of the de facto administration, revealed that the country's new media law draft has been finished and forwarded to the supreme leader for approval. He underscored its adherence to media principles. Mujahid announced that once ratified in the coming days, this law will be extended to all media outlets. It permits foreign and international media to function in

Afghanistan, contingent upon their adherence to the country's internal regulations. Mujahid stated that roughly 70% of the draft is from the old law. Changes were implemented to harmonize it with Islamic Sharia law, similar to the media law from the previous Afghan government. Addressing concerns about gender-based restrictions, the Taliban spokesperson affirmed that the new draft contains no such limitations. They clarified that all Afghan citizens would have the opportunity to establish, oversee, and participate in media organizations. Foreign media, includ-

ing prominent broadcasters like BBC and Voice of America and freelance journalists, can operate in Afghanistan, given their adherence to domestic laws. Media support organizations insist on urgent approval of the media law, citing challenges in addressing media and journalist issues without its framework. During the past two decades of Afghanistan's democratic development, media outlets and press advocacy groups flourished with substantial funding and assistance from international donors. However, the Taliban maintain suspicion toward Western-support-

ed endeavours advocating democracy and human rights. Mujahid's statement needed to be more explicit about Afghan media outlets' eligibility for foreign funding. "The law requires that funding sources must be transparent," he said emphatically. The Ministry of Information and Culture approved the previous government's mass media law about a year ago. A new media law is being passed, but journalists and media-supporting officials criticise the Taliban administration. They argue that the new law is biased and neglects input from various groups, including women.

# UNDP: Over 6.5m people in Afghanistan internally displaced

KABUL (TOLOnews): The UN Development Program said in its recent report that Afghanistan currently has a "staggering 6.55 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), making it the country with the second highest tally worldwide after Syria." Based on the report, over 4.39 million people are internally displaced as a result of conflict and violence as of 31 December 2022, while a further 2.16 million people are displaced due to disasters in the country. The report issues a warning on the potential rise of global displacement over the next 30 years. Malik Khan, who moved to Kabul from Laghman province a few years ago due to conflict and instability, told a TOLOnews reporter: "Our main issue is that there is no assistance for internally displaced people, and in the last two years, the only assistance we have received has been



50 kg of oil and 5 kg of peas." "We ask the Islamic Emirate to give us shelter and help us. We accept it if it gives us the same place and we don't have a clinic," said Maryam, another displaced person. Some other displaced people asked the Islamic Emirate and aid organizations to help them. "We came here to do

something and provide shelter to our children. We have a water problem, we have an electricity problem, and our children do not attend school. We moved here from Mazar, where there was no job," said Hayatullah, displaced from Balkh province. Poverty is a factor that has caused the people of the nation to leave their

homes in addition to insecurity and conflict. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) earlier reported a rise in the number of internally displaced people in Afghanistan. This organization has estimated the nation's internal displacement population at about six million people.

# Malnutrition cases rising among children in Afghanistan’s Badakhshan

KABUL (Agenices): Malnutrition cases among children are on the rise in the remote northeastern province of Badakhshan, as officials from the main hospital reported. Physicians have noted a disturbing surge in malnutrition cases among children in Badakhshan's leading hospitals. Over the past month, the number of critically malnourished children admitted has exceeded a hundred, raising significant concerns. Medical professionals report that admitted cases predominantly feature severe acute malnutrition, often accompanied by various disorders. In Badakhshan's provincial hospital, the children's treatment unit, housing 12 beds, attends to around 24-30 patients monthly. Mohammad Akbar, head of the department, said that due to the gravity of the conditions, each child's recovery usually entails a two-week stay. "We admit severe acute



malnutrition, which is accompanied by a disorder. We have 12 beds that can accommodate about 24 or 30 monthly patients. Every malnourished patient stays for more than two weeks until he is cured and treated," Mohammad Akbar, head of Badakhshan provincial hospital's children's treatment department, said. Some mothers of mal-

nourished children attribute their condition to poverty and hunger. "We cannot afford meat or fruit weekly. We only see them in pictures, not for eating. Without aid, childbirth and survival would be difficult," says Mursel, a mother of a malnourished child. Doctors point to inadequate nutrition and rising seasonal illnesses as the primary

factors behind the surge in child malnutrition. Gholam Rabbani Mushtaq notes that insufficiently treated diarrhoea in summer and pneumonia in winter are significant contributors to child malnutrition. This underscores the urgent need for intervention as children in Badakhshan grapple with life-threatening diseases and malnutrition.

# Afghan embassy in Ankara hosts cultural exhibition



KABUL (Agenices): The Afghan Embassy in Ankara celebrated the country's 104th independence anniversary with a captivating cultural exhibition. The embassy recently organized a two-day cultural exhibition showcasing a remarkable array of artworks that spanned paintings, calligraphy, wooden crafts, handicrafts, and exquisite

Afghan carpets. This vibrant collection vividly illuminated the diverse tapestry of Afghanistan's culture and history, offering a glimpse into the rich heritage of various regions within the country. The event provided an immersive experience for visitors, allowing them to delve into the intricate narratives woven within

each art piece. Through this exhibition, the embassy successfully conveyed the depth and breadth of Afghanistan's cultural legacy, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the country's artistic and historical nuances. Various dignitaries, including members of parliament, government officials, mayors, and repre-

sentatives from Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, political parties, and civil and charity organizations, attended the exhibition. Visitors were deeply impressed by the Afghan artists' creations and expressed how Exhibitions like these play a vital role in promoting and fostering a greater understanding of Afghan culture and art.

# Traffic accidents kill 4, injure 9 in Afghanistan’s Samangan

SAMANGAN (Agenices): At least four people died, and nine others were injured in two traffic accidents in Afghanistan's Samangan province, officials said on Friday. Four commuters died, and nine were injured in two road accidents in northern Afghanistan's Samangan province. Traffic police official Neyaz Mohammad reported the incidents on Friday. A deadly sequence of road accidents unfolded on Thursday in the northern province of Samangan, Afghanistan. The first incident occurred when a car overturned on the



Baghlan-Samangan highway in the Qachen area due to reckless driving. The devastating incident resulted in the loss of four people and injured eight others. Simultaneously, another

collision occurred in the same area after two vehicles collided, injuring one person. These incidents indicate the importance of road safety and responsible driving practices to prevent such

deadly accidents. Meanwhile, all the injured people were taken to the nearby hospital for further medical treatment. Earlier on Wednesday, a road accident in Afghanistan's Nuristan province claimed the life of one individual and left four others injured, indicating the ongoing road safety challenges in the area. According to experts, several factors contributed to the surge of incidents in the country, including reckless driving, dilapidated roads, congested highways, lack of attention to traffic rules and regulations and driving fast.



# No one would be allowed to fan flames of extremism: Solangi

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi said on Friday that the interim government believed in protecting and promoting the rights of all citizens in accordance with the Constitution and the law. "We will not allow anyone to fan the flames of extremism and lawlessness," he said during a conversation with Maulana Tahir Ashrafi, Chairman Pakistan Ulama Council who met him here.

Minorities, especially Christians, played an important role in the establishment of Pakistan, Solangi remarked. The minister said that caretaker Prime Minister had strongly condemned Jaranwala incident, adding "the government will not tolerate such behavior."

The process of construction and rehabilitation of the affected churches and the houses of the affected citizens was in progress, the minister told Ashrafi. The Maulana congratulated Murtaza Solangi on assuming the responsibilities as caretaker Minister. Tahir Ashrafi paid tributes to Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar for taking immediate legal action against those involved in the Jaranwala tragedy. He said that Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi's immediate actions in that regard were commendable.

**Minister reiterates caretaker govt's commitment to constitutional role:** Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi said the caretaker government was committed to its oath and would not deviate from the constitutional role.

Talking to a private channel, he said the primary mandate of the caretaker government was to assist the Election Commission of Pakistan in holding the election on the fixed date. It was a "responsible and constitutional government" which would not resort to attack any constitutional office, nor would it become part of any such campaign, he added.

The minister said the previous government was formed by a political alliance

and it would be better if they could explain their performance. He said the caretaker government was fully cognizant of the effects of increase in the prices of electricity, gas, and essential commodities, and it was taking measures to control the inflation.

The oil prices witnessed an increase in the global market and the rupee was also devalued in past few days that created economic difficulties, he added. The government would present an economic recovery plan soon, Solangi said. "All the ministers included in the Federal Cabinet are experts in their respective fields," he said while responding to a query.

He said the economy would be in a better shape when the next elected government assumed charge as the caretaker government was taking prudent measures for economic progress and prosperity. Steps like austerity were imperative to stabilize the economy, he added. Solangi said the May 9 tragedy was unprecedented which had weakened the democracy. No political party had taken such action in the past, he said, adding courts were there to decide the fate of May 9 culprits, and the caretaker government would respect their verdicts.

"We do respect the law and the Constitution," he remarked. "Justice is our salvation not the revenge." The minister said the statement of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar about Pakistanis going abroad was taken out of context.

Meanwhile, caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi expressed grief over the demise of the father of senior journalist and General Secretary of the Karachi Union of Journalists (Dastoor) Naimat Khan. The minister, in a condolence message, prayed to the Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear the irreparable loss. Solangi said he was saddened by hearing the news of the demise of Naimat Khan's father. He said he shared the grief of the bereaved family.

## PML-N calls for accelerated constituency delimitation

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Friday suggested that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) should expedite the process of constituency delimitation to facilitate early holding of general elections.

Talking to the media after a meeting of the PML-N delegation with the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal emphasized that the Election Commission was required to conduct elections as per the requirements of the Constitution. The meeting revolved around topics concerning the forthcoming elections, during which the ECP briefed the PML-N delegation about its preparations for the upcoming general elections, he said.

Ahsan Iqbal noted that the Election Commission was informed about the proposal to augment the women representation through increased seats. He expressed the confidence that the next election would adhere to constitutional and legal norms. Highlighting the significance of the forthcoming elections, the PML-N leader emphasized that they would do the utmost to hold free, fair and transparent elections. The PML-N delegation asked the Election Commission to promptly announce the voter registration date.

Ahsan Iqbal conveyed that the Election Commission has provided an assurance regarding the sharing of the code of conduct with political parties. Furthermore, he said the Election Commission has given its commitment to implementing effective measures in response to the concerns raised after the incidents in 2018.

Addressing the gathering, Rana Sanaullah mentioned that the constituency delimitation process would conclude by December 14. Subsequently, the election schedule for the 54-day period will be released. During the meeting, the PML-N delegation raised concerns about issues like the breakdown of the Result Transmission System (RTS) and result delays, similar to the occurrences in 2018. They put forward the suggestion to enforce the code of conduct strictly to reduce election expenses and prevent the spread of divisive politics.

## Qureshi's remand extended

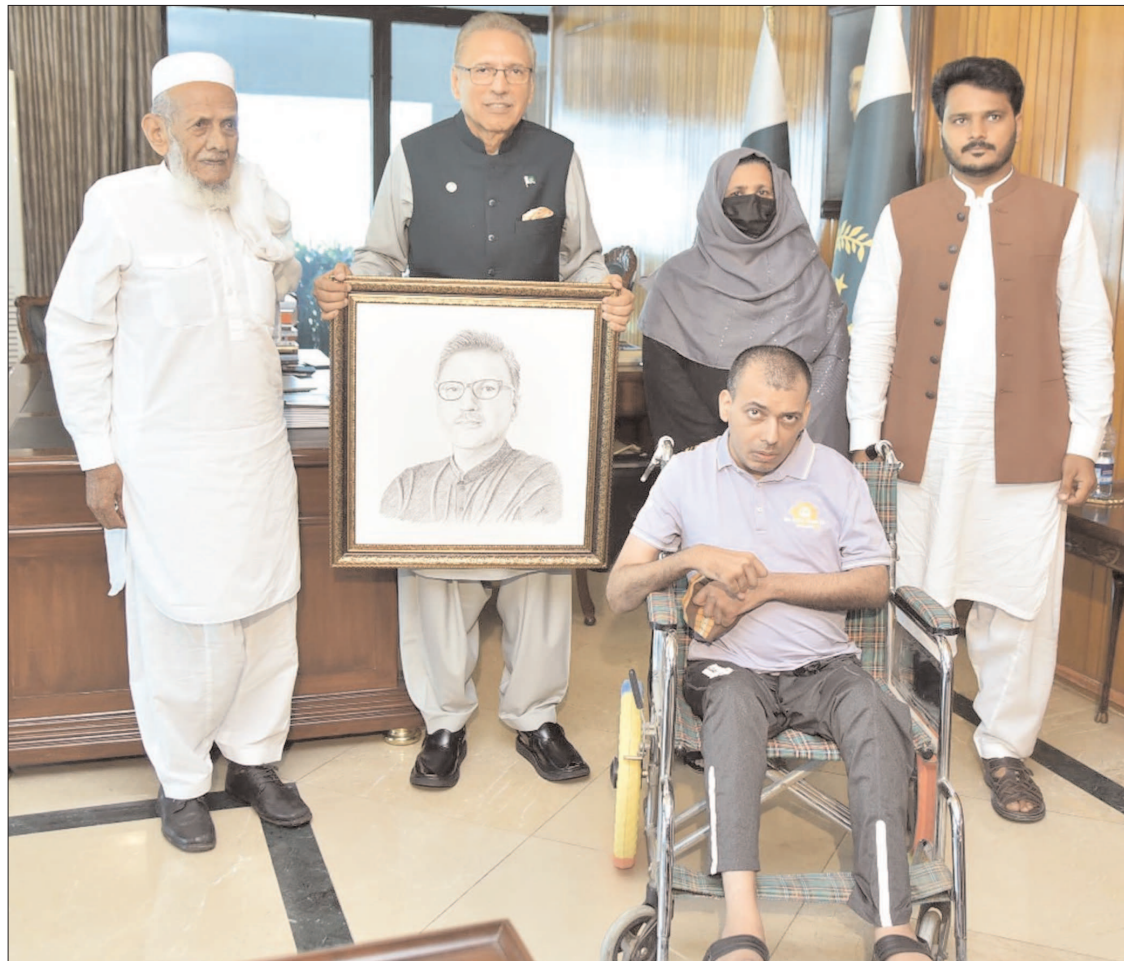
ISLAMABAD (INP): Special court in Islamabad on Friday granted the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) PTI leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi's three-day physical remand in a case pertaining to a diplomatic cipher that reportedly went missing from ex-prime minister Imran Khan's custody.

Judge Abu Al-Hasnat Muhammad Zulqarnain heard the case against Shah Mahmood Qureshi under Official Secrets Act 2023. At the outset of the hearing, the FIA lawyer pleaded with the court for 9-day physical remand of the former foreign minister for recovery of cipher copy, while Shoaib Shaheen, Qureshi's lawyer, opposed the request.

Later, the court extended the physical remand of Shah Mahmood Qureshi for three days and asked the investigating officer to present Qureshi again on August 28. Qureshi, who served as foreign minister, was arrested in the capital Islamabad last week.

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

According to the report, action also will be taken against Azam Khan and Asad Umar after the authorities reached the conclusion that they were also involved in misusing the classified documents. The FIR stated that the former prime minister and foreign minister distorted the facts of the diplomatic cipher. "A conspiracy was launched to misuse the contents of the cipher to fulfill nefarious purposes", it added.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi receiving his portrait made by Umer Jarra, an artist with cerebral palsy, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Pak acting as bulwark against terrorism

**E.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir has said that Pakistan is acting as a bulwark against terrorism and the international community must realise the immense sacrifices rendered by the country, a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Friday said.

The army chief made the remarks during a meeting with a group of 38 students from Harvard University, United States hailing from 9 different countries at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi, the military's media affairs wing added.



During the interactive session, the COAS talked about regional security issues and the Pakistan Army's contributions to promoting peace and stability in the region. The army chief also highlighted the rich potential of Pakistan and urged the participants to perceive Pakistan based on their experiences during their stay in Pakistan.

Gen Munir further said that the human suffering and atrocities being committed in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and efforts to change the demographic realities. "[The] students appreciated the COAS for providing the opportunity for a constructive interaction," the ISPR added.

## Black flag case: PHC orders release of culprit

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: Justice Sahibzada Asadullah of Peshawar High Court (PHC) granted bail to Zia-ur-Rehman alias Nauman for waving the black flag during Independence Day celebration, on Friday.

The counsel Asif Ali Shah advocate argued Charsadda city police arrested Nauman on 13th August on allegation of waving black flag on his vehicle. District Court Charsadda has turndown the bail petition while the applicant pleaded before PHC for relief to obtain bail, the counsel argued.

The counsel further argued that Nauman, a 20-year-old youth, has been behind bars since 14th August on baseless allegations while requesting his release on bail. PHC's Justice Sahibzada Asadullah ordered his release on bail after conclusion of arguments.

ATC grants four days remand for alleged terror-

ist: Anti-terrorism Court Peshawar granted four days physical to Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of alleged terrorist belongs to the Jummat-ul-Ahrar ban outfit. During hearing, the Investigation Officer argued that Jan Muhammad is allegedly collecting donations for Jammul-ul-Ahrar banned outfit while transferring the money via illegal channels like (Hawala Hundi) to neighboring country Afghanistan. ATC has accepted CTD's plea for further physical remand and handover for four days to the department.

AD&SJ grants bail to alleged murderer: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Peshawar Muhammad Qasim Khan granted bail culprit allegedly involved murder case. According to prosecution, Wali Muhammad nominated in First Information Report (FIR) on the murder of Tor Muhammad over family dispute at Tatar

police station.

The counsel Yousaf Jan advocate argued that neither concrete evidence is available against the petitioner nor he is recorded as criminal while requested for release on bail. AD&SJ Muhammad Qasim Khan ordered release of Wali Muhammad on bail after conclusion of arguments.

Meanwhile, AD&SJ Peshawar Aftab Iqbal ordered release of alleged drug smuggler on bail. According to prosecution, Excise police has arrested Hafiz Ali Akbar at Gol Chowk northern bypass while recovered 14 kilograms hashish from secrete cavities of the vehicle.

The counsel Israr Hussain Khalil and Safina Wazir advocates argued that prosecution lack concrete evidences against petitioner to keep him behind bars till conclusion of trial. AD&SJ Peshawar Aftab Iqbal granted bail to alleged drug-smuggler after conclusion of arguments.

## Denmark to ban burnings of Holy Quran

C O P E N H E G E N (Agencies): The Danish government on Friday said it has prepared a bill that — if passed — could lead to a countrywide ban on Quran burnings, amidst rising terror threats and outrage in the Muslim world. The bill is yet to be presented in the country's parliament.

Denmark's Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, told Danish radio that the move sends an "important political signal" to the rest of the world, reported Al Jazeera. Under the new bill, burning a Quran would be a crime subject to penalties or a maximum sentence of two years in jail. Peter Hummelgaard, the justice minister, explained that the proposed law is intended to be written into the same regulation that currently bans the desecration of other countries' flags.

The Danish law would prohibit the "improper treatment of objects of significant religious significance to a religious community", he said. Hummelgaard, speaking at a press conference, said that a spate of recent Quran burnings were "senseless taunts" aimed to incite

"discord and hatred", adding that national security was the primary "motivation" for the ban. Denmark and Sweden have seen a string of protests in public in recent weeks where copies of the Quran have been burned or otherwise damaged, prompting outrage in Muslim nations which have demanded the Nordic governments put a stop to the burnings, reported Reuters.

Following the Quran burnings, the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom recently declared that Danish officials had foiled several planned "terror" plots and made arrests. "We can't continue to stand by with our arms crossed while several individuals do everything they can to provoke violent reactions," Hummelgaard said.

The government rejected protests by some Danish opposition parties that said banning Quran burnings would infringe on free speech. "I fundamentally believe there are more civilised ways to express one's views than burning things," Hummelgaard said. Neighbouring Sweden has also said it is examining

ways to legally limit Quran desecrations to reduce tensions after recent threats that led the country's security officials to raise the terrorist threat level. The bill would make it illegal to openly burn the Quran, Torah or Bible. The time for the bill proposal to the 179-seat Danish Parliament is still unknown.

## High level flood in Sutelj

BAHAWALANAGAR, ARIFWALA (INP): High flood in Sutelj river submerged different settlements in Arifwala, Bahawalnagar and Chishtian on Friday and now the river belt of Lodhran is also on the verge of flooding. As many as 40 villages and hundreds of settlements are expected to be affected due to rapid increase in water flow at Melsi Siphon point of Sutelj River.

The administration has closed 24 owing to the flood while the education department has extended the holidays for an indefinite period in the flood affected areas.

## Afghanistan should honour commitments: FO

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office (FO) Spokesperson Murtaza Zahra Baloch has stated that Pakistan has repeatedly shared concerns with the Afghan authorities about the terrorism threat emanating from Afghanistan. She said Afghan authorities should honor their commitments of not allowing their land for terrorism against other countries including Pakistan.

Foreign Office has also started that Pakistan has not made any formal request to join BRICS group of nations. Responding to the queries of media persons in Islamabad about the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, Foreign Office Spokesperson Murtaza Zahra Baloch said Pakistan will examine the latest developments and make a determination about its future engagement with the Group.

She said Pakistan is an ardent supporter of multilateralism and as a member of several multilateral organizations it has always played an important role for global peace and development. She said Pakistan shall continue its efforts for fostering the spirit of international cooperation and revital-

ization of inclusive multilateralism. Responding to a question, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said Pakistan has repeatedly shared concerns with the Afghan authorities about the terrorism threat emanating from Afghanistan. She said Afghan authorities should honor their commitments of not allowing their land for terrorism against other countries including Pakistan.

To a question, Murtaza Zahra Baloch said that Pakistan's position on Taiwan question is consistent and principled. She said we adhere to one China policy and regard Chinese Taipei as an inalienable part of peoples republic of China. When asked about the recent Indian ceasefire violation on the Line of Control, the spokesperson said this is unacceptable, urging India to desist from such actions and ensure that the ceasefire understanding continues to hold.

The UN Special Procedures have already issued multiple communications on individual allegations of human rights violations in IIOJK, including arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, ill treatment, intim-

idation, and reprise. The sudden closure of the Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission, which rendered people in the region with little legal recourse in seeking redressal and accountability for violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Responding a question, she stated Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday where he was briefed on Pakistan's foreign policy. The briefing covered the entire spectrum of Pakistan's external relations; the working of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; recent efforts to strengthen ties with different regions and countries; and priorities for the future especially in view of the developing regional and global developments.

The Prime Minister shared his vision for a dynamic foreign policy and strengthening Pakistan's relationships with countries around the world especially in terms of trade, investment, economic diplomacy, connectivity and public diplomacy. He directed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our Foreign Missions to work diligently for the welfare of overseas Pakistanis.

## Justice Ibrahim Khan takes oath as PHC CJ

**E.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Acting Chief Justice, Muhammad Ibrahim Khan on Friday took oath as the regular Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) at a ceremony held at Governor's House Peshawar. Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali administered oath to the new chief justice of Peshawar High Court.

During the ceremony that was also attended by caretaker Chief Minister

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Azam Khan, Secretary Law, Shagufta Naveed read out the Presidential Notification of the appointment of Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan as the PHC Chief Justice. Governor KP, Haji Ghulam Ali on the occasion congratulated Chief Justice PHC Muhammad Ibrahim Khan and expressed well wishes for him in discharging his responsibilities.

The oath taking ceremo-

ny was also attended by the Supreme Court Judge, Musarrat Hilali, former Chief Justice PHC, Justice Qaisar Rasheed, former acting Chief Justice, Justice Ruhul Amin, caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Barrister Feroz Jamal Kakakhel, other ministers, Chief Secretary, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar Hayat Khan, senior lawyers and administrative officers of various departments.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Defence Minister Lieutenant General (Retd) Anwar Ali Hyder called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi.

## Bushra Bibi appeals to SC over Imran's health in Jail

ISLAMABAD (INP): Bushra Bibi, the wife of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on Friday submitted an affidavit to the Supreme Court (SC), urging the court to address the deteriorating health conditions of her husband during his incarceration in Attock jail.

After receiving permission, Bushra Bibi visited her husband in Attock Jail on August 22. Following the meeting, she formally submitted the affidavit through Advocate Hamid Khan to bring attention to Khan's ailing health situation. In the affidavit, Bushra Bibi stated that Imran Khan's well-being was compromised while in jail, with evident signs of drastic weight loss and weakened arm muscles.

She expressed concerns that his current health condition poses a substantial risk, particularly given his age of 70. According to the submitted document, Khan's life could be seriously threatened due to these health challenges. The affidavit underscores the gravity of the situation, emphasizing that immediate intervention is crucial to ensure Khan's well-being and safety.

Bushra Bibi reiterated that her husband has consistently voiced his unwavering commitment to endure hardships and make sacrifices for the betterment of the nation. However, she implored the Supreme Court to take prompt and decisive action to address the concerning state of his health. The affidavit stands as a plea from Bushra Bibi, calling upon the highest judicial authority in Pakistan to intervene and ensure the proper care and medical attention necessary for Imran Khan's health.

## Defence Minister visits Naval HQs

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Defence Minister Lieutenant General (Retd) Anwar Ali Hyder visited Naval Headquarters Islamabad and called-on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi. Upon arrival at Naval Headquarters, the visiting dignitary was received by Chief of the Naval Staff and was introduced to the Principal Staff Officers at Naval Headquarters.

During the meeting, matters pertaining to Regional Maritime Security milieu and operational readiness of Pakistan Navy were discussed. Naval Chief apprised the Defence Minister on roles, capabilities and future modernization plans of Pakistan Navy. He briefed the caretaker minister on recent acquisitions of state-of-the-art platforms and equipment to ensure an invincible seaward defence of the country. Naval Chief underscored Pakistan Navy's initiative of Regional Maritime Security Patrol and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief missions. Chief of the Naval Staff also briefed the Defence Minister on contemporary training being imparted to officers and men to keep them abreast with modern trends of naval warfare.