

BDU disposes of IED in DI Khan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The district police along with Bomb Disposal Unit (BDU) on Sunday foiled a terrorist attack by disposing of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in the limits of Kulachi Police Station where the by-elections on village council seat were being conducted. According to a police spokesman, the IED was installed on Rohri road to target police and security forces.

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# PM urges solid steps for reduction in electricity bills

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Sunday here said solid measures should be presented to him in the next 48 hours for reduction in increased electricity bills.

He was chairing a meeting on increase in electricity bills, power theft and problems of the power sector. He was given a detailed briefing on the increase in electricity bills of July. He said no step would be taken in haste to avoid harm to the country.

The prime minister said such steps would be taken which would not put additional burden on the national exchequer and would also facilitate the consumer.

It was not possible that the common man was in difficulty and the Prime minister and the bureaucracy were using free electricity from their taxes, he added.

He said relevant ministries and departments should provide details of the institutions and officers who were getting free of cost electricity.

He said he represented the common man, adding the electricity expenditure of the Prime Minister House and Pakistan Secretariat should be reduced as much as possible. "Even switch off the air-conditioner of my room if this is needed," he remarked. He said detailed consultation would be held with provincial chief ministers on Monday on steps to save electricity and on the issue of increased electricity bills in July.

The power distribution companies should give a road map for stopping electricity theft, he added.

The PM said reform plans in the electricity sector and short, medium and long term plans should be pre-

## PM vows to resolve issues of Balochistan

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar here on Sunday assured that issues of Kalat and other areas of Balochistan would be resolved.

He was talking to a delegation of notables of Kalat area.

He said Pishin and Mastoong were his eyes and Quetta was his heart and he would serve the people of Balochistan wholeheartedly.

He pledged construction of a

sented as soon as possible.

Caretaker federal ministers Shamshad Akhtar, Gohar Ejaz, Murtaza Solangi, Advisor to Prime Minister Dr Waqar Masood, Secretary Power, Chairman NEPRA, Chairman WAPDA and other officers attended the meeting.

**Caretaker govt's efforts to give a fillip to industrial revolution in Balochistan: PM Kakar:** Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Sunday said that the interim government, during its short period, would make all-out efforts to spur an industrial revolution in Balochistan.

He said that under the Special Investment Facilitation Council, efforts would be made so that Balochistan province could benefit from foreign investment.

The caretaker prime minister was addressing a delegation of the Quetta Chamber of Commerce that called on him. The delegation comprising

highway from Karachi to Chaman, adding he had ordered construction of highways which were important for the province. A road tunnel would be built for Dera Ghazi Khan to ensure supply of fruits and vegetables from Balochistan to Punjab, he told.

He said work on Kachhi canal would be speed up as it was not only a significant project for Balochistan but also for Pakistan.

prominent members of the business community of the province also apprised the prime minister of their issues, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release issued here.

The prime minister said that Balochistan was not only the largest province of the country owing to area, but also a very suitable area for trade due to Gwadar port.

He opined that the province should have been a hub of industries due to huge mineral resources and vast agricultural land. During the meeting, the caretaker prime minister also assured the delegation of the resolution of their issues. Separately, a delegation led by Sahibzada Muhammad Khan also called on Caretaker PM Kakar.

The delegation felicitated the prime minister on assuming his duties and expressed good wishes.

The prime minister assured them to address the lingering issues faced by the residents of the province.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairing an emergency meeting regarding electricity bills at the Prime Minister's House Islamabad.

# Widespread destruction caused as India releases water into River Sutlej

LAHORE (NNI): Hundreds of homes have been destroyed, while at several places roads and embankments have been washed away as the release of more water by India into River Sutlej has led the river to burst its banks.

The river has caused devastation especially in Bahawalnagar, Hasilpur, Vehari and Luddan, Arifwala and Chishtian where roads are completely submerged, leaving hundreds of villages and towns cut off from their surroundings. Pakistan Army, on the other hand, is assisting the local administrations in relief and rescue operations. The situation is still grim at Arifwala where water from River Sutlej has inundated over 28 kilometers of area around the river.

The situation is more precarious in Tibbi Lal Beg area where water level continues to rise.

Dozens of villages have been flooded, resulting in the washing away of homes, crops, and roads.

At several places, embankments have also been washed away.

Tehsil administration, Rescue 1122 personnel and army jawans are together evacuating people from their homes, while on the directives of Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi food items are being distributed among the affected people.

The assistant commissioner, on the other hand, has said that all kinds of facilities are being provided to the people at relief camps set up in the tehsil. Malik Afzal has said that vaccines for the victims of snake and dog bite are also available at the medical camps besides medicines for other diseases. However, the situation has started improving in some areas such as Bahawalpur, Kasur and Okara.

## Pak Army continues rescue, relief operation in flood inundated areas

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Army continues rescue and relief operation in low-lying areas, which have been inundated by flood water released in the Sutlej River by India.

In this connection, the troops are also engaged in distribution of free ration; besides, carrying out rescue operation and running free medical camps for the flood affected people in Khairpur Tammay Wali, Hasilpur, and Bahawalnagar.

The Army troops, with the help of the local administration, shifted people to safer places from flood-hit areas of Mailsi, Chishtian, Minchanabad, Vehari, Pakpattan, Hasilpur, Arifwala, and head Sulaimanki. The Pakistan Army has established a large number of medical camps to provide free medical assistance to protect people from waterborne diseases and epidemics during the flood.

According to a report released by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), during the three-day period, from August 23 to August 26, water has receded in over 100 villages.

Meanwhile, The civil administration of Vehari district has shifted over 29,000 flood hit citizens to safer places, said Deputy Commissioner Syed Asif Hussain Shah on Sunday.

The villages in district were affected by floods, prompting coordinated action from the district administration, finance department, rescue, and police, said DC during his visit to Sahuka and Jamlera region to monitor ongoing relief and rescue efforts.

The residents of the area raised concerns about the prevalence of mosquitoes. Deputy Commissioner Shah emphasized the prioritization of rescuing those stranded in flooded areas and instructed a halt in transportation services within these

inundated zones. Safeguarding human lives is the top most concern, and any attempts to enter the river through hazardous means will lead to detention by the police, he added. The DC highlighted a positive trend of decreasing floodwater levels, particularly evident at Headworks Islam and Mailsi Siphon. A month ago, preemptive evacuations took place following flood warnings, resulting in limited damages despite subsequent higher flood levels.

Essential amenities were now accessible across 20 flood relief camps and 3 tent settlements. While the district administration has offered facilities in these camps and settlements, a notable portion of flood victims remains hesitant to avail them, opting instead to stay with relatives.

Notably, the relief camps were not only accommodating the flood victims but also providing necessary support for their animals.

## Shehzad Akbar's brother among two return home

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The brothers of former accountability adviser Shahzad Akbar and former PTI MNA Ali Nawaz Awan have returned home safely.

Shahzad Akbar's brother, Murad Akbar was missing on May 28, and Ali Nawaz Awan's brother Umar Nawaz Awan disappeared on July 5.

The two leaders confirmed the return of their brothers in two separate posts on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter). A case was registered under section 365 in response to a complaint lodged by Danial Akbar, Murad's son, who subsequently filed the petition with the IHC for the recovery of his father. According to a first information report (FIR) registered with Shalimar police station, Murad was "abducted" by people purportedly from different law-enforcing agencies from his Islamabad residence on May 28.

## Jl to countrywide protests over heavy electricity bills from Sep 2

LAHORE (NNI): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Ameer Sirajul Haque, while reacting to heavy electricity bills and inflation, has announced to hold countrywide protest demonstration

from September 2, if the government does not withdraw heavy electricity charges.

In Lahore, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Siraj-ul-Haq, while addressing the foundation day ceremony, said the PDM government had ended and the caretaker prime minister took oath and the price of petrol was increased by 20 rupees as soon as he arrived.

He said the blood of the people was being sucked by imposing 16 types of taxes. "We will go on strike across the country to withdraw the harsh decisions. The situation has gone

from bad to the worst as loan we are seeking loans from country to country," he said. The Jamaat-e-Islami amir said when he went to see Rizwana, the victim of violence, the girl's mother said that just for Rs13,000 they handed over their beloved to the judge's wife.

He said he went to Jaranwala where the houses of innocent people were burnt and there was no justice for the poor in the country. "The system has collapsed and there is one that stands with the people," Sirajul Haq said, adding that it was not possible to understand the religion without understanding the Holy Quran. He said no nation could make progress until there was justice and fairness.

## Rs15 per unit reduction in electricity price possible: Shah

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Former minister for water resources Syed Khursheed Shah has suggested the government reduce electricity prices, saying a cut of Rs15 per unit is possible.

The PPP leader said the previous PDM coalition government could reduce the electricity tariff by Rs4 per unit, but did not.

He further claimed that a Rs15 per unit slash in power prices is still possible. He says the caretaker government can apply this reduction if it wants.

On the other hand, the former minister has claimed that PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif cannot return anytime soon, as he is unwell. He said because of his poor health, Nawaz may not return. "Shehbaz Sharif may be saying that Nawaz will return in October. But the three-time PM isn't well, his health can deteriorate at any moment," he claimed.

## Pakistan, China joint air exercise 'Shaheen X'

BEIJING (NNI): The Pakistan-China joint air training exercise Shaheen X will begin tomorrow which is being hosted by China in Jiuquan and Yinchuan. China's Ministry of National Defense said in a statement, "Based on the annual plan and bilateral consensus, China-Pakistan Joint Air Force Training Exercise 'Shaheen (Eagle) - X' will be held in northwest China's Jiuquan and Yinchuan from late August to mid-September."

It added, "This is the tenth joint training exercise between the Chinese and Pakistani air forces, which will help further deepen practical cooperation between the two militaries and improve the level of actual combat training of their troops."

Shaheen's series of exercises aim to enhance the professional skills and operational preparedness of both the air forces in addition to developing a mutual understanding of each other's combat skills and promoting interoperability.

# Taliban ban women from visiting popular national park

BAMIYAN (Agencies): The Taliban government have banned women from visiting the Band-e-Amir national park in Bamiyan province.

Afghanistan's acting minister of virtue and vice, Mohammad Khaled Hanafi, said women had not been observing hijab inside the park.

He called on religious clerics and security agencies to forbid women from entering until a solution was found.

Band-e-Amir is a significant tourist attraction, becoming Afghanistan's first national park in 2009.

It is a popular destination for families and the ban on women attending will prevent many from being able to enjoy the park. Unesco describes the park as a "naturally created group of lakes with special geological formations and structure, as well as natural and unique beauty".

However, Mr Hanafi

said going to the park to sightsee "was not obligatory", Afghan agency Tolo News reported.

Religious clerics in Bamiyan said the women who were visiting the park and not following the rules were visitors to the area.

"There are complaints about lack of hijab or bad hijab, these are not Bamiyan residents.

They come here from other places," Sayed Nasrullah Waezi, head of the Bamiyan Shia Ulema Council told Tolo news.

Afghan former MP Mariam Solaimankhil shared a poem she had written on X, formerly known as Twitter, about the ban and wrote "we'll return, I'm sure of it".

Fereshta Abbasi, of Human Rights Watch, noted women had been banned from visiting the park on Women's Equality Day and wrote it was a "total disrespect to the women of Afghanistan".

Meanwhile Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, asked why stopping women from visiting Band-e-Amir "is necessary to comply with Sharia and Afghan culture?".

The Taliban have a history of implementing bans on women doing certain activities on what it insists is a temporary basis, including preventing them from attending schools in December 2022.

The ban on visiting the Band-E-Amir national park is the latest in a long list of activities that women have been prevented from doing since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021.

Most recently, the Taliban ordered hair and beauty salons in Afghanistan to shut and in mid-July stopped women from sitting the national university entrance exams.

# Russia says genetic ests confirm Prigozhin died in plane crash

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian investigators said on Sunday that genetic tests had confirmed that Yevgeny Prigozhin, chief of the Wagner mercenary group, was among the 10 people killed in a plane crash last week.

Russia's aviation agency had previously published the names of all 10 on board the private jet which crashed in the Tver region northwest of Moscow on Wednesday. They included Prigozhin and Dmitry Utkin, his right-hand man who helped found the Wagner group.

"As part of the investigation of the plane crash in the Tver region, molecular-genetic examinations have been completed," Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app. "According to their results, the identities of all 10 dead were established. They correspond to the list stated in the flight sheet," it said. There had been some speculation, especially on pro-Wagner Telegram channels, about whether Prigozhin - who was known to take various security precautions in anticipation of a possible attempt on his life - had really been on the doomed flight.

Authorities have yet to say what they believe caused his private jet to fall from the sky.

The crash came two months to

the day after Prigozhin and his Wagner mercenaries staged a mutiny against Russian military commanders in which they took control of a southern city, Rostov, and advanced towards Moscow before turning back 200 km (125 miles) from the capital. Muscovites laid flowers on Sunday at a makeshift shrine festooned with Russian flags and photographs set up a short distance from the Kremlin to the memory of Prigozhin and Utkin.

"I have got used to comrades in arms dying," said Dmitry Karpov, who wore military fatigues, adding that Prigozhin had shown by his actions how things should be done in wartime. "Such people remain in history as an example."

Another man who came to pay his respects, Alexander Dykhov, alluded to criticism by President Vladimir Putin of Prigozhin's past mistakes. "The talk about some mistakes, different opinions, I think all this will be forgotten. And in people's memory there will be the image of a hero. He and Dmitry Utkin are real heroes."

Putin described the June 23-24 mutiny as a treacherous "stab in the back", but later met with Prigozhin in the Kremlin. He sent his condolences on Thursday to the families of those killed in the crash.

Western politicians and com-

mentators have suggested, without presenting evidence, that Putin ordered Prigozhin to be killed as punishment for the mutiny, which also represented the biggest challenge to Putin's own rule since he came to power in 1999. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday that such suggestions were "an absolute lie". Asked whether Putin might attend Prigozhin's funeral, Peskov said it was too early to say and also noted the president's "busy schedule". Wagner fighters played a prominent role in the fighting in eastern Ukraine, especially in the months-long siege of the city of Bakhmut, despite Prigozhin's frequent, profanity-laced attacks on Russia's military high command over their conduct of the war that culminated in the failed mutiny.

The Wagner fighters have now left Ukraine and some have relocated to neighbouring Belarus under the terms of a deal that ended their mutiny. Some are expected to be absorbed into Russia's armed forces but many will be angry over the sudden demise of the group's founder who inspired a high degree of loyalty among his men.

Putin paid a mixed tribute to Prigozhin on Thursday, describing him as a "talented businessman" but also as a flawed character who "made serious mistakes in life".

Malaria cases surge in Sindh

KARACHI (INP): Sindh is seeing growing numbers of malaria cases this month in every division, particularly lower Sindh, forcing the caretaker chief minister to direct the officials concerned to prepare a province-specific action plan to counter the mosquito-borne illness. Official figures showed that 286,317 cases of high fever were reported at health facilities in the province this month.





## Global Breastfeeding Week starts today

LAHORE (APP): Global Breastfeeding Week starts tomorrow with a theme to enable breastfeeding by making a difference for working parents.

The Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department has arranged programmes to celebrate the week by organizing various events, including discussions at various hospitals, a provincial launch and advocacy seminar at a local hotel on Aug 28 to discuss the current status of breastfeeding legislation in Punjab and policies for enabling environment for working mothers.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in its report on Pakistan, has expressed its gratitude regarding the increasing number of newborns that are enjoying the benefits of breastfeeding, however, it is not yet time for celebration as less than one in two children are adequately breastfed in the country.

"The UNICEF would continue working with partners and the government of Pakistan to further accelerate progress to ensure that every child has the best start in life, a very first step for realizing the child's rights to full growth and development," the report said. According to the latest National Nutrition Survey (2018), proportion of children put to breast within one hour after delivery increased from 40 percent in 2011 to 45.8 percent in 2018. Likewise, practice of exclusive breastfeeding has increased from 37.7 percent in 2011 to 48.4 percent in 2018.

## Minister visits LGH

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Human Rights Khalil George assured the public that the government was committed to upholding the rule of law at all costs.

During a visit to the Lahore General Hospital here on Sunday, he spoke to the media about the importance of justice and accountability, stating that even the government officials would not be exempt from facing the court if they commit injustices.

The minister emphasised his personal connection to matters of human rights and commended the media for shedding light on issues that might otherwise go unnoticed. He stressed equal rights to minorities in the country and acknowledged their significant role in Pakistan's freedom struggle. Khalil George also praised the unity between Muslim Ulema and local communities, particularly in supporting Christians in Jaranwala.

Concerning Rizwana, a victim of domestic violence, the minister noted her ongoing health struggle, but highlighted the progress made through dedicated efforts. Her plea for justice resonated with him. Responding to queries, the minister explained that the removal of the assistant commissioner in Jaranwala, who belonged to a minority group, was done to ensure his safety. He also mentioned that the Punjab governor was addressing matters related to the Islamic University.

# Interim CM directs to control Malaria in a week

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Justice (Retd.) Maqbool Baqir, while taking notice of increasing malaria cases across the province here on Sunday, directed the Health Department and Local Government (LG) Department to take necessary measures to control the disease in a week.

He said that most of the cases were being reported from Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Larkana and Sukkur divisions.

The caretaker CM directed the Health Department to launch a campaign against the elimination of malaria.

Baqir also directed to make arrangements for the availability of malaria drugs and wards in all government hospitals.

He said that the LG department should start spraying mosquito killers in their respective areas. He further said that the Solid Waste Management Board should improve sanitation.

## 'Toxic effluent discharged into Manchhar lake, RBOD project to not help even if completed'

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Planning and Development Mohammad Younus Dagha on Sunday directed the Secretary of Irrigation Department to prepare a plan to reduce the risks to the structure of the Sukkur Barrage, the flooding of cities and villages on the right bank of River Indus and to rehabilitate Manchhar Lake.

The directives were issued in a meeting attended by the Chairman P&D Syed Hassan Naqvi, Secretary Irrigation, and engineers and other officials of Sindh irrigation department, a communique said. The Secretary Irrigation briefed the meeting about the progress of Right Bank Outfall Drainage (RBOD) project.

It was informed that

RBOD continues to be a sick project and the toxic effluent of the right bank continues to be discharged in the Manchhar Lake.

The meeting was informed that there is no project/plan presently under execution, which could improve the situation. The meeting was further informed that even if the RBOD project is completed, it will not help the flooding of Right Bank, which includes the districts of Kambar-Shahdadkot, Larkana, Dadu and Jamshoro.

These areas, which were severely affected during the floods of 2011 and 2022 will continue to remain vulnerable unless some schemes are undertaken to divide the waters of flood into various zones with

independent discharge systems into the river.

It was also informed that any repeat episode of 2011 super-floods can threaten the stability of the structure of Sukkur barrage unless any scheme is made and implemented to safely divert excessive water into the Nara desert.

The Minister Dagha directed the Irrigation department to take urgent steps to prepare plans for the revision and reactivation of RBOD project, which ensure rehabilitation of Manchhar lake; flood water drainage channel to divert the water in the upper right bank region directly into the Indus River and escape channel upstream Sukkur Barrage to divert flood water into the Nara desert.

## Sir Syed University bestowed with the Brand of the Year Award

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sir Syed University of Engineering & Technology (SSUET) has been once again bestowed with the Brand of the Year Award by the Brand Foundation for academic excellence and research development. The university played an effective and significant role in transcending traditional disciplinary limitations in pursuit of intellectual fusion and developing a culture of academic enterprise and knowledge entrepreneurship.

Brands Foundation is focused on bringing global best practices, expertise & resources for branding transformation in Pakistan. They are making local brands competitive in the global arena of Fortune Brands, to ensure a "Brand Empowerment Economy".

Commenting on such an amazing achievement, Vice Chancellor SSUET, Prof. Dr. Vali Uddin, said that it is a matter of great pride that the university secured the Brand of the Year Award second time which shows its tremendous progress in multiple directions like academics, research, knowledge areas, and co-curricular activities. Sir Syed University was an active partner in the National Ideas Bank (NIB) and took part as a National Host in the national-level



program.

He pointed out, "We are fully aware that the world is moving at a fast pace. To match ever-growing professional demand, SSUET keeps abreast with innovation, creativity, and wisdom."

Sir Syed University imparts quality education to the young generation and contributes to national and international development. Research activities are encouraged in the university and students are groomed in a way to face the challenges of practical life.

Registrar Syed Sarfraz Ali said that Sir Syed University has always strived to be progressive,

adapting to advances in science, engineering, and technology, as well as business management.

Vice Chancellor SSUET, Prof. Dr. Vali Uddin received the award from the Chief Guest Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Former Speaker of the National Assembly, along with the Registrar Cdr. (R) Syed Sarfraz Ali, Dean Faculty of Civil Engineering & Architecture, Prof. Dr. Mir Shabbir Ali, Dean Faculty of Computing & Applied Sciences plus Dean Faculty of Business Management & Social Sciences, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Asif, and Director Finance, Munaf Advani.



LAHORE: Caretaker Federal Minister for Human Rights Khalil George is visiting the child victim of violence Rizwana in Lahore General Hospital.

# Collective responsibility for energy conservation in Pakistan

### Aydaan Aali

The ongoing electricity crisis is not to be blamed on the government as is done always. Rather, some other factors are needed to be looked upon as well. It is time that traditional ways of using/consuming electricity must change and efficiency be brought in the system.

A significant challenge in improving electrical energy efficiency in Pakistan is the lack of awareness and knowledge among the general public. Most people in Pakistan are not aware of the benefits of energy-efficient appliances and practices. There is a need to educate the public on the importance of energy conservation and the steps they can take to reduce their energy consumption. This can be achieved through public awareness campaigns, educational programs, and workshops.

Energy conservation measures can significantly contribute to improving electrical energy efficiency in Pakistan. The adoption of energy-efficient lighting, such as LED lights, can reduce energy consumption by up to 80% compared to traditional incandescent bulbs. Additionally, the implementation of building codes that mandate energy-efficient design and construction can also contribute to energy conservation.

Conserving energy in Pakistan is a critical concern due to the country's growing population and increasing energy demands. Energy conservation not only helps reduce the burden on the national grid but also has environmental and economic benefits. Implementing effective energy-saving strategies is essential for sustainable development in Pakistan.

We have to promote the use of energy efficient appliances at homes. Encouraging the use of energy-efficient appliances, such as LED

bulbs, energy-efficient air conditioners, and refrigerators, can significantly reduce electricity consumption. Government incentives and awareness campaigns can drive the adoption of these appliances among the public. Upgradation in the infrastructure is extremely important. Invest in modernizing the electricity grid to minimize energy losses during transmission and distribution. This reduces wastage and ensures that the available energy is efficiently utilized.

Solar Energy Adoption should be promoted urgently. Pakistan has abundant sunlight throughout the year, making solar energy an excellent option. Encouraging the installation of solar panels on rooftops and in rural areas can reduce the reliance on fossil fuels and ease the burden on the national grid. Implement building codes and standards that encourage energy-efficient construction. Proper insulation, orientation, and use of energy-efficient materials can reduce the energy needed for heating and cooling.

Public transportation and carpooling must be adopted. Promote the use of public transportation systems and carpooling to reduce individual energy consumption. Investments in efficient public transport infrastructure can also help ease traffic congestion and reduce pollution.

Industrial audits can be a great step. Conducting regular energy audits in industries to identify areas of energy wastage and implement energy-efficient technologies and practices is the need. Incentives for industries that reduce their energy consumption can further motivate them. Launching nationwide awareness campaigns to educate the public about the importance of energy conservation and how small changes in their daily routines can make a significant difference can help a lot.

Offering tax incentives and subsidies for businesses and individuals who invest in energy-saving technologies and practices is a good idea. This can make these options more affordable and attractive.

Efficient Water Management can help contribute in electricity conservation. Implement water-saving technologies in agriculture, which accounts for a significant portion of energy consumption in Pakistan. Drip irrigation and water recycling systems can reduce the energy needed for irrigation. Investing in research and development of innovative energy-saving technologies and solutions tailored to Pakistan's specific needs and climate conditions is a good method. Encouraging the use of energy-efficient vehicles, such as electric and hybrid cars is important. Developing charging infrastructure to support electric vehicle adoption is a must. Encouraging communities to take ownership of energy conservation efforts is the need.

Community-based projects like tree planting, waste reduction, and local renewable energy generation can have a positive impact. In conclusion, conserving energy in Pakistan is not just a choice; it's a necessity for sustainable development. By implementing a combination of policy measures, public awareness campaigns, and technological advancements, Pakistan can reduce its energy consumption, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and ensure a more reliable and affordable energy supply for its growing population. It's a collective responsibility that requires the active participation of the government, industries, communities, and individuals to secure a brighter and more sustainable energy future for the country.

## LWMC pioneer in cleanliness arrangements, digital transformation: CEO

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) has emerged as a pioneer in both cleanliness arrangements and digital transformation, ushering in a new era of efficient operations, besides offering additional benefits like insurance, technical training, bonus and driving licences to its employees, considering their real heroes.

Embarking on a digitalization journey, spearheaded by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Babar Sahib Din, the LWMC has implemented pivotal measures such as AI-optimised routes, waste segregation through a three-bin system, digital field operation monitoring, vehicle tracking, and a state-of-the-art centralised control room. This transformational approach is in partnership with the Centre for Urban Information, Technology and Policy at the LUMS University.

In an interview with APP, LWMC

Chief Executive Officer Babar Sahib Din said that in initial phase, involving artificial intelligence (AI) driven route optimisation in Gulberg Town, yielded remarkable results, reducing vehicle count and distance travelled, leading to significant fuel savings. Additionally, through live monitoring system, the company boosted field staff attendance to 82-90 per cent, exposed around 1,000 ghost employees, and enhanced operational integrity.

The use of artificial intelligence also helped save about 1.5 to 2 lakh litres of fuel per month, he said and added that the company was going to introduce a state-of-the-art android application 'Digitization of TCPs' in Lahore for registration of all temporary collection points (TCPs) and registration of all illegal dumping vehicles. This application will help in data analysis, monitoring of secondary waste collection vehicles, which will eventually

improve the service delivery.

The LWMC is on its way to revamp the revenue streams by setting up the target of Rs 1 billion against current collection of Rs 40 million annually from 94,000 units. The department has mobilised its business development wing and increased the existing 94,000 units to 550,000 units across the city including commercial shops, public private offices, banks, workshops, fuel stations.

The LWMC CEO said that workers were company's real heroes, who sacrifice their Eid and festivals for citizens. They are performing the most difficult task of removing the waste of others even in extreme weather conditions. Therefore, their health and safety was a priority and the department had taken the initiative to provide the LWMC workers and their families with health insurance cover.

## Online shopping scams on rise with influx of platforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): The influx of online shopping platforms during the last few years has undoubtedly made the lives of people much easier by making every essential item available to their doorsteps but their reliability is still questionable for many.

It has been observed that a number of online shopping websites, social media pages and groups operating in the country were selling sub-standard stuff including dresses, shoes and other accessories to the customers, contrary to what is displayed and shown. A number of fake websites created in the names of famous brands are making buyers fool by showing original branded pictures of dresses and other items with original prices but delivering substandard stuff and replicas.

"Those fake websites are even using exact names and logos of the famous brands that anyone can hardly feel the difference between the

original and the fake ones", Samina Naz, a regular online buyer said.

Talking to APP, she said, "I placed the order of two dresses on a popular brand website after fulfilling all the requirements. The delivery man from a famous courier service company delivered a packet to my house after receiving payment."

"When I opened that packet, both of the dresses were totally different to what I ordered and the poor quality of fabric, design and embroidery reflected that these were taken from some flea market. Even the phone number mentioned on the parcel cover was also a fake one", she said.

"It is better to visit the branded stores for shopping instead of relying on the online shopping websites. I cannot understand why these brands do not take any action against the fake websites using their names and logos and spoiling their image", she observed.

This has also been observed that some websites offering highly attractive discounted deals on different items are not offering the option of cash on delivery but demanding payment through credit cards in advance.

Sajid Akber, a young boy said, "I liked a jacket through an online shopping website (local) and I got crazy to buy that urgently. Payment through a credit card was the only option to purchase that jacket so I paid the amount". "It has been two months now since I placed the order and the jacket never arrived. But I think it was my mistake that I blindly trusted on an online shopping website without checking the facts", he said.

The tempting sale offers on the fake online shopping sites are attracting buyers like me and the relevant authorities must take action against these website owners who are looting the customers, he insisted.



LAHORE: Book lovers selecting old books on a roadside stall in the city.





## Governor praises Christian schools educational services

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali on Sunday lauded the significant contributions of Christian Church-administered educational institutions to the advancement of education.

He highlighted that these institutions have played a commendable role not only in producing numerous scholars across the country, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but have also contributed to increasing the literacy rate prior to the partition of the subcontinent.

Governor Haji Ghulam Ali expressed these sentiments during a meeting with a delegation led by Priest Rauff Masih of the Seventh Day Adventist

Church. The delegation, which included Principal of Seventh Day Adventist School, Waris Sharif, Adil Siddiqui, and others, discussed the provision of facilities in the schools under the administration of Adventist Church.

The delegation informed the Governor about the challenges faced in providing clean drinking water and other facilities at the Adventist Church-administered school.

They also shared that the construction of a tube well had been initiated by the Department of Auqaf (Religious Affairs), but due to a lack of funds, progress had been hindered, causing difficulties in ensuring clean drinking water for the

students.

Governor Haji Ghulam Ali attentively listened to the delegation's concerns and assured them of his complete cooperation in resolving the issues.

He expressed his condolences over the Jaranwala incident, emphasizing that minority communities are equal citizens of the country and their protection is the responsibility of all.

He mentioned that individuals from various schools of thought, including important figures and even the Prime Minister, had shown solidarity with the Christian community.

Praising the exemplary educational services provided by the Christian community, Governor Haji

Ghulam Ali said that the Christian community is contributing significantly to the progress and well-being of the nation.

He emphasized the importance of ensuring facilities in all educational institutions, recognizing that children are the future and providing facilities in educational institutions is not just a duty but also vital for the bright future of the nation.

The delegation expressed gratitude to the Governor for his willingness to address their concerns and offer cooperation in finding solutions. They also commended the steps taken by the Governor for promoting education in the province.



PESHAWAR: Delegation led by Priest Rauff Masih of Seventh Day Adventist Church meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor's House.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary, IGP and Home Secretary meeting with Provincial Election Commissioner KP Shamshad Khan at his office.

## Monitoring by-election in 21 districts of KP: PEC

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Shamshad Khan in a video message said that they were monitoring the by-elections in 21 districts of KP wherein a Control room, and complaint cell had been established for three days of the election. "A central control room has been established for monitoring the election process, and redressal of complaints," Shamshad Khan added. He said, "Officers in the central control room along with the monitoring team are monitoring the election process." "Senior officers from the central control room along with the monitoring team are closely monitoring the election process for three days without interruption," Shamshad Khan disclosed. "Apart from this, complaints regarding the election process will also be resolved immediately," he informed.

**CS, IGP visit office of Election Commissioner**  
Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chaudhry Nadeem Aslam, Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Gandapur on Sunday visited office of PEC KP in connection of local bodies Bye Elections. Polling remained peaceful throughout 21 districts without any break from 8am to 5pm. The Spokesman of ECP said that counting process is continue and will be announced officially.

## PESCO directs staff not to use green number plates vehicle

— seeks police protection amid protests

PESHAWAR (INP): The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) has directed its staff to remove green number plates from their vehicles amid protests over inflated electricity bills.

The move comes as people across Pakistan are taking to the streets to demonstrate against the recent increase in power tariffs.

In a notification issued by Assistant Manager Transport PESCO, all officers were asked to avoid using government vehicles, especially those with green number plates, until the law and order situation normalizes.

The notification said that this was being done to prevent any untoward incidents or damage to government or PESCO assets.

Meanwhile, the Peshawar Electric Supply Company has asked for police protection due to continuous protests of the masses amid inflated electricity prices.

Inflation-weary Pakistanis are hitting the streets

in huge numbers to protest against inflated electricity bills in almost every part of the country.

In a letter penned to the police authorities, the PESCO has asked for the police protection of its offices and staff amid protests from enraged masses outside the building.

The operations of the PESCO might be affected as workers are afraid due to the protests of the masses, the letter penned by PESCO read.

## Traditional ways of using electricity will have to change

Zahiruddin Babar

People are protesting about the increase in electricity bills, of course the government is well aware of the difficulties of the common man in this matter, but the question is how the price of electricity is increased, what are the hidden factors in this decision, actually. It is important to keep in mind that Pakistan has to depend on furnace oil, coal, diesel or other imported fuels from abroad to meet its energy needs, so when the prices of these commodities increase in the global market, inevitably the price of electricity has to increase, another major reason is the expensive dollar, we need

to understand that whatever Pakistan imports from abroad, it has to be paid in dollars.

As the government has to increase the price of unsolicited cloud power, another difficulty is that the power generation plants (IPPs) are also paid in dollars, which inevitably makes electricity more expensive. An important aspect that should not be ignored is that the current caretaker government is forced to fully implement the agreements made by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government with the IMF during its tenure.

It can be understood that when an international organization makes an agreement with any gov-

ernment of Pakistan, it is guaranteed by the state of Pakistan. The result is that the State Bank is now free from government influence, the question now is what options are left for the government to deal with the challenge, one solution for the caretaker government is to artificially devalue the dollar, try to control it, but according to economic experts, it may result in a burden on the country's foreign exchange reserves, which will further increase our economic problems, this is also a big problem.

The IMF has already committed that it will not try to control the dollar artificially but its value will be determined in the open market, now the main ques-

tion is how to get out of the energy crisis that Pakistan is facing. Economists agree that work on alternative energy projects in the homeland should be started on an emergency basis, the encouragement in this regard is that the PDM government has started work on many such projects during its tenure. For example, 10,000 megawatts of additional electricity from solar energy is now available to the National grid.

The Work on the plan to add to the grid is in progress, but the challenge is that more time is still required to complete the said project, on the other hand, the problem of electricity theft has been going on in the country for decades, which has not been controlled despite efforts.

The truth is that dishonest electricity users are being punished by honest consumers who not only use electricity without any manipulation but also never commit any delay in paying the bill, the bitter truth is that the government is still unable to recover the cost of power generation and transmission, as a result of which the government has to do load shedding on the one hand, while on the other hand the deficit of the power sector i.e. circular debt also increases.

Undoubtedly because of the global climate the temperature has increased in most areas of the country, in such a way that the use of electricity by consumers

has also increased, which has inevitably resulted in an increase in bills.

The question is that in the above situation, what the common Pakistani wants to do now, of course, the nation has to act sparingly in the use of electricity while recognizing the ground realities, both the common citizens and the business community have to adopt the ways of the citizens of developed countries regarding the use of electricity, e.g.

In the modern world, it is preferred to deal with more and more issues in the sunlight, but unfortunately, the situation is completely reversed in our country, for example, most of the bazaars open from 11 am to 12 pm and close from 12 pm to 1 am. Ironically, we Pakistanis are not willing to understand that we should minimize the use of electricity from 5 pm to 11 pm so that not only electricity can be saved but bills can also be significantly reduced.

In order to facilitate the public, the government is also considering the proposal to privatize the electricity distribution companies so that an environment of competition can be created on the one hand while on the other hand, there may be a decrease in the habit of always declaring Pakistan responsible. We have to collectively act in order to minimize the issues of electricity going on. This is how nations get out of the crises always.

PESHAWAR (APP): Aziz Jan Trust and Saylani Welfare Trust have united their efforts to introduce the Aziz Jan Mass IT (SMIT) courses in Peshawar, Pakistan. This joint endeavor aims to equip the local youth with essential IT skills, opening new avenues for personal and professional growth.

The inaugural SMIT course examination drew a remarkable participation of 3,000 students at Peshawar's Qayyum Stadium here on Sunday. The occasion marked the inauguration of the Mohsin and Huma IT Centre, an initiative driven by Aziz Jan Trust, where intensive IT training will be provided to 1000 students over varying course durations, ranging

from six months to a year.

Distinguished guests and dignitaries, including Senator Mohsin Aziz and Chairman of Saylani Trust Maulana Bashir Farooqi, graced the event with their presence and officially inaugurated the IT Center.

Eminent figures like Zafar Iqbal Jhagra, former Governor of KP Afzal Chamria, and representatives from diverse sectors attended the event, showcasing strong support for this educational initiative. Aziz Jan Trust, the benevolent wing of Aziz Group of Industries, has already made significant contributions in the education sector.

The Aziz Jan Institute of Learning at SOS Village Peshawar has been a beacon of quality education for

over 1200 underprivileged children. Furthermore, their philanthropic efforts extend to providing free meals to communities, including Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar, and offering scholarships to deserving students across various educational institutions.

Saylani Welfare Trust, renowned for its nationwide humanitarian efforts, is now expanding its footprint in IT education. With a vision to train a million Pakistanis in IT programs and contribute to a 100-billion-dollar IT export industry, Saylani offers a diverse range of courses including artificial intelligence, cloud computing, mobile app development, web development, graphic design, video animation, and CCNA.



PESHAWAR: Provincial president PPP Women Wing Robina Khalid welcoming women delegation joining PPP. — F.P. photo



PESHAWAR: Members of Jamaat-e-Islami (F) chanting slogans during a protesting against inflated electricity bills. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

## Traditional cultural dances keep alive in KP province despite mushroom growth of social media

PESHAWAR (APP): The centuries-old traditional dances of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which was mostly used to infuse energy among tribesmen before going to the battlefield or achieving success, was kept alive in the province despite the mushroom growth of information technology and social media in Pakistan.

Mehsud, Khattak and Yousafzai attams (dances) were used in the past to warm up tribesmen ahead of the start of a battle or war and get psychological advantage upon the warring tribe or external aggressor.

Despite mushroom growth of information technology and social media in last two decades in KP, these cultural dances are still being practiced by the professional dancers during happy occasions of mar-

riages, Eid, birthday parties and welcoming of VVP guests in the province including merged tribal districts.

"Mehsud dance, which is believed to be originated from South Waziristan centuries ago was mostly used by Mehsud tribe in a bid to bring the warring tribe under pressure before start of the battle in a bid to ensure their independence, protect lands, mines caves or settle disputes in case of unsuccessful negotiations by the peace jirga" said Bakhzada Khan, research officer, Archeology and Museum Department, while talking to APP.

He said Mehsud, Khaatak and Yousafzai tribesmen had also performed their traditional dances after achieving victory in the battlefield.

In Mehsud dance, the

active members of Mehsud tribe equipped with guns gather and the loud gunfire by them create an echo in the area that added to the fierce and proud energy to the dance besides creating an inerascable imprints on the minds of the spectators.

"In Mehsud dance, the male dancers with handkerchiefs mostly with long and lustrous hair flick it around while carrying guns on high beatsdrums. They fire with their weapons into the air as they kneeled and the sound of the gunfire create an echo that infused new energy and spirit among participants," said Gohar Mehsud, an expert of Mehsud dance told APP on Sunday.

He said that 100 percent fitness is required to perform Mehsud dance. "The dancer performs the dance with high zeal like a hero and displays his supper fit-

ness through speedy body movements while holding guns and firing simultaneously at a same time."

Bakhtzada said the practice of Mehsud dance continued even in the colonial era in Waziristan where Mehsud, Ahmadzai Wazir, Bhattani and others tribes known for their bravery had never allowed British to establish their rule in erstwhileFata.

Sir Olaf Caroe, who acted as the former Governor of the British Indian Frontier said, "The Masud tribe are a people who can never even think of submitting to a foreign power. From 1860 to 1937, the English forces had repeatedly attacked Mehsud positions, but never got a foothold in the area.

In spite of the passing of many centuries, Mehsud

dance is still able to withstand the change of times as its essence depicts an agility of a dancer, who performs at the thrilling beat of drums and from the core of their heart.

Like Mehsud dance, the subcontinent oldest and most popular Khattak dance was also being practiced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa despite mushroom growth of IT and social media.

Being the national dance of Pakistan, Khattak dance introduced by Pashtun's Khattak tribe in the 14th century, is still being performed mostly on the occasions of weddings, births and welcoming functions of VIPs in the province including merged tribal districts, leaving an indelible imprint on the minds of the spectators.

Bakhtzada said Khattak

dance is as old as the history of the Khattak tribe in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which goes back to the fourteenth century.

Khattak dance passed from one generation to another in Khattak tribe and gave birth to many dances including braghoni, shahdola, bangra, balballah, chatrali etc that later made deep inroads in our society.

Khattaks mostly lived in Karak, Nowshera and other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had used to dance on mesmerizing movement of swords as a warm-up exercise prior to taking on their rival tribes in a battlefield or achieving success against other warring tribes in wars.

"The dance was very popular during Mughal and British eras, who recruited Khattaks in their respective armies for their heroic war-

fare skills on battlefields. The Mughals rulers were highly impressed with the bravery of Khattaks including freedom fighter Khushal Khan Khattak, who stood for the freedom and unity of Pakhtoons", he said.

Khattak dance is performed in a bright and colourful traditional 'shalwar' and custom-made frock like 'Kamiz' in addition to a red embroidered waistcoat with a large decorative scarf tied around the waist.

The dancers wave glittering swords in the air and swirl to drumbats and tunes of the surmai.

The dance is a five-step routine involving spins, with the swords crossed over their backs and elbows outward or swords out to sides and typically attains half spin in place leading to

a full spin.

Depending on rhythm of the beat, the spin was reversed in full synchronicity as the dance was being performed with musicians turning the beat to the technique of the performers.

Irshad Gul, an expert of Khattak dance and local musician of Nowshera district said that Bhangarah is the first step where every member swirls while carrying swords as the prop followed by Derabi in which two youths at a time carrying one sword and handkerchief each in their hands start dance in front of a man with surmai and the rest of troupe members wait for their turn."

Laila is the third step wherein a group of four performers were holding two swords each while performing stunts moving in a circle.





## In brief

### 10 stolen bikes recovered

**SARGODHA (INP):** Police in Sargodha arrested two members of a bike thief gang and recovered 10 stolen motorcycles and valuables. According to police on Sunday, the accused were identified as Muhammad Ali and Amir Khan. They were arrested by a team of the Cantonment police station on a tip-off. The police said that the gang was involved in dozens of motorcycle theft and robbery cases in Sargodha and surrounding areas. They had stolen the motorcycles from different parts of the city and were selling them in the black market. The police have registered a case against the accused and are further investigating the matter.

### Man killed by train

**FAISALABAD (INP):** A mentally-challenged person was killed after hit by train at Faisalabad Jhumra road on Sunday. According to details, 32-year-old Farooq Hussain s/o Fazl Ahmed while walking along railway track near Bhaiwala crossing was hit by train coming from Sargodha. As a result of accident, the mentally challenged youth was killed on the spot. Police took the body into custody and later handed it over to heirs after legal formalities.

### Three drug peddlers held

**MUZAFFARGARH (INP):** Police during a crackdown against drug peddlers across the district launched here on Sunday, arrested three drug peddlers and recovered drugs from their possession. In line with special directives of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) of Punjab Dr Usman Anwar, a special crackdown against drug peddlers was being carried out across the district to prevent drug supply. The police arrested three notorious drug peddlers and recovered 200 bottles of imported wine and over two kilograms of Hashish from their possession. Separate cases have been registered against the criminals with the relevant police stations, however, the District Police Officer (DPO) Syed Husein Haider has directed the relevant officers to continue crackdown on a daily basis and added that a zero-tolerance policy was being followed in this context.

### Commercial buildings sealed

**MULTAN (INP):** The district administration in Multan has sealed over 1600 commercial buildings and godowns over the presence of dengue larvae during current month. According to media reports, the crackdown was launched under the zero-tolerance policy against dengue larvae, which was announced by Deputy Commissioner Omer Jahangir. The surveillance teams also arrested 102 violators of dengue SoP and registered 4000 cases. The health department has also issued warning notices to 13000 citizens and is conducting a special awareness campaign in markets and residential areas. The focal person for dengue larvae, Dr Atta Ul Rehman, visited different tire shops and distributed awareness pamphlets. He urged the citizens to cooperate with the health department in controlling the spread of dengue by keeping their surroundings clean and free of mosquito breeding sites. The district administration has warned that strict action will be taken against those who violate the dengue SoP. It has also urged the citizens to report any suspected dengue cases to the health department immediately.

## Protesters sit-in:

# Peshawar-Chitral highway blocked

**CHITRAL (APP):** In Dodan village area Darosh of Chitral, the protesters blocked Peshawar-Chitral highway for the second time in a week with huge traffic jams demanding immediate arrest of the killers of two villagers of Shahnagar.

Hundreds of passengers are facing difficulties as protesters staged a sit-in on the road at Kuldam Gol, blocking it for all traffic for seven hours, demanding immediate arrest of the killers of the two people who were brutally murdered in Shahnagar on Wednesday, last.

According to the details, the people of Darosh Tehsil in Lower Chitral blocked Peshawar-Chitral main highway for the second time as Wednesday, last, two persons Ashraf Ali and Ehsanuddin from Shahnagar area of Darosh were brutally murdered while they were fetching firewood from Shahnagar forest.

At that time, the people of the area kept their dead bodies on the road in Darosh Chowk and closed the Peshawar-Chitral highway for all kinds of traffic. Later, Sub-Divisional Police Officer Darosh Iqbal Karim assured that the accused would be arrested within forty-eight hours after the protestors cleared the way.

Despite the deadline being over the accused were not arrested and the people of eighteen mosques once again gathered at Kuldam Gol Chowk on the call of Village Council Shahnagar Chairman Waqar Ahmed.

Protesters once again staged a sit-in on the Peshawar-Chitral main road as a protest and kept it closed for all types of traffic for seven hours.

The protesters said that the Police failed miserably to arrest the accused, hence they were forced to protest

again. A protest meeting was also held on this occasion, which was expressed by the leaders of all political and religious parties.

Speakers said that the recent incident seems to be a deliberate conspiracy to disturb the peaceful atmosphere of Chitral. They said that after three days, the Police failed to arrest the killers of the innocent persons. The protestors also shouted slogans against the Police and the district administration. Later, the district administration, while negotiating with the protestors, assured that the accused would be arrested within two days and their houses would be demolished.

The protestors ended the sit-in and opened the road for traffic. Talking to the people participating in the sit-in, the elders of the area said that the accused belong to the Gujar community, who illegally occupied the public pasture and forest.

## ‘Only Islamic teachings can help get rid of issues’

**SARGODHA (APP):** Provincial Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, North Punjab, Dr. Tariq Saleem has said that by following the Islamic teachings, Pakistanis could get rid of problems facing them today.

He was addressing a ceremony held in reference to the 82nd Foundation Day of Jamaat-e-Islami and Golden Jubilee of Seerat-i-Mustaqeem Programme at Sargodha Arts Council hall, here on Sunday.

He said that Jamaat-e-Islami was founded by Maulana Maududi while Jamaat-e-Islami could lead the country, which is bestowed with every blessing of nature, on the road to development, prosperity and dignity.

Central President of Jamaat-e-Islami Youth Rasool Khan Babar said that Pakistani youth could change the destiny of the country and the nation through the platform of

Jamaat-e-Islami.

District Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami Sargodha Awaiz Qasim Tala said that a large number of youths participated in the event, which showed their confidence and trust in Jamaat-e-Islami. He expressed his belief that only the JI would pave the way for improvement and prosperity of the country.

Later, prayers for the country's development and progress was also offered.

## 66,935 liters Iranian diesel recovered

**DERA ISMAEL KHAN, (INP):** The Dera Police on Sunday intensified their crackdown on illegal fuel agencies and the business of Iranian diesel across the district.

According to media reports, in a major operation, a police team led by SDPO Sher Ullah Khan along with SHOs Din Muhammad and Rehmat Ullah of Mughalkot and Darazinda police stations,

foiled a smuggling bid and recovered around 66,935 liters of Iranian diesel from an oil tanker coming from Quetta. The police also arrested four accused in the case.

In separate operations, the police also arrested 16 other accused and recovered 6,935 liters of Iranian diesel from various parts of the district. The police also seized 11 diesel units in the operations.

All the accused were arrested as per the rules and police registered separate cases in different police stations. The crackdown on illegal fuel agencies is part of the Dera Police's efforts to ensure the availability of quality fuel at affordable prices to the people.

The police have urged the people to report any illegal fuel agencies to the police so that action can be taken against them.

## Jaranwala a shameful act, says caretaker minister

**FAISALABAD (APP):** Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage & Culture Syed Jamal Shah has said the Jaranwala incident was a major tragedy which saddened all patriotic Pakistanis.

It was a very shameful act and regrettably it was committed by those who called themselves Muslims. "I am ashamed and apologise to the Christina community over this incident, he said during his visit to Isa Nagri in Jaranwala and an interaction with the locals and the media on Saturday.

The caretaker minister said that teachings of Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) were very obvious and not only a philosopher but also a common man could understand it easily. He said Pakistan was a peaceful land despite

having diverse ethnic communities and religions. He regretted that intentionally the peaceful combination was distorted by sowing thorns in this land and "now we are facing its ill impacts".

He said "we lived in the diversity. Many of my teachers and friends were Christians, Hindus, Parsi. But our Indus culture narrative had taught us that we are a bouquet of diversity and our difference was a beauty of the land where flowers of all kinds grow". He said Pakistan was a most peaceful land in the region. It was the land of Sufis who prohibited strictly from injuring feelings of any person.

He quoted a proverb in Pashto that "I am a Muslim but my friend is a Hindu. Therefore, I am ready to sweep his place of worship for the sake of my friend"

and said that it was a pity that thorns were intentionally sown for the last four decades to disturb peace of the land. "These thorns have robbed our peace and tranquility by committing horrible and terrified incidents day by day," he said and added that now it was our collective responsibility to remove these thorns and put them in a ring of fire for their complete elimination once and for all.

He stressed the need for peace and reconciliation and said "we have come to guard the country for a few months and we would try our optimum best to discharge our obligations honestly. If there was some corruption or wrongdoings, we would strive to eliminate it or we would hand them over to those people who could improve it", he added.

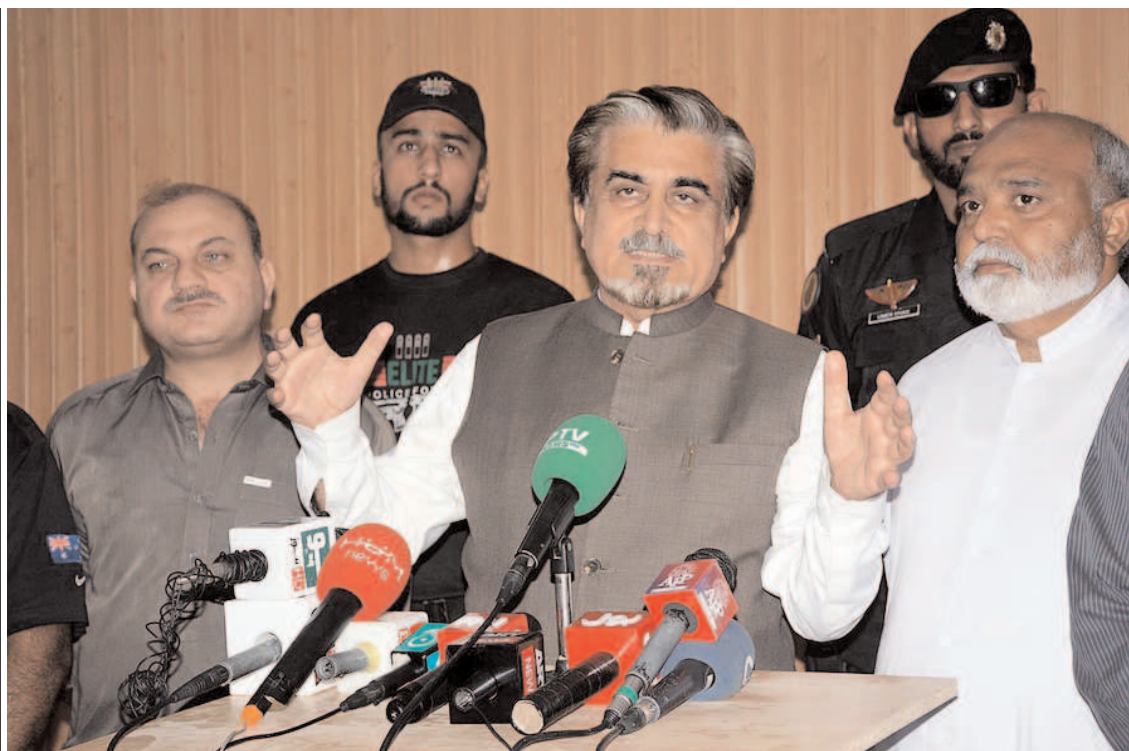
## MEPCO installs 4,300 net metering connections

**MULTAN (INP):** Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) Multan Circle has installed 4,300 connections under the net metering system so far. The demand for net metering systems is increasing day by day after

the high prices of electricity. About 4,300 consumers have connections under net metering across Multan Circle while 259 cases are under process. The net metering system is installed on three-phase meters only.

MEPCO has the authority to install connections from 5 kilowatts to 25 kilowatts while a NOC is obtained from the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) for installing above 25 kilowatts connection.

After the submission of the application, a MEPCO team visits the consumer's site, checks the system, and approves it if it meets the criteria. The connection is installed by purchasing a meter through registered vendors and its bill is generated after two to three months as per standard operating procedures.



**FAISALABAD:** Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage & Culture Syed Jamal Shah talking to media during his visit to a church at Christian Colony Jaranwala.

## Kohat Police arrested bike lifter gang

**KOHAT (APP):** Within 24 hours, the Kohat Police arrested the members of the bike lifter gang along with the stolen motorcycles. District Police Officer Farhan Khan said on Sunday.

SHO Jangal Khel Police Station Roman Khan and his Police team arrested the members of the alleged bike lifter gang Majid Shah, resident of Pir Khel Jangal Khel, Naveed Khan, resident of Nai Abadi Jangal Khel and Auranzeb, resident of Afghan Muhajir Camp during the successful operation.

A case has been registered against the arrested bike lifters in Jangal Khel Police Station after recovering the stolen bikes from their possession. The bike lifter gang was detained during an operation based on ground intelligence.

The alleged bike lifters gang members have confessed to their involvement in the theft of motorcycles and more important revelations are expected, said Jangal Khel Police Station Official.

## Two killed in coaster truck collision

**KASUR (INP):** Two brothers were killed and 10 others got injured in a road traffic accident near Kasur. According to Rescue 1122 officials, a speeding coaster (passenger van) collided with a truck near Steel Morr.

Both Naeem Sarwar and Nadeem Sarwar died on the spot while 10 other passengers got injured in the tragic accident.

The injured were later identified as Noor Fatima, Ummhe Habiba, Sakila, Mansha, Ghulam Fatima, Faisal Jameel, Matloob and Allah Wasya who were shifted to the Bulleh Shah District Hospital.

Police also reached the spot and started investigation of the incident.

## 5 suspects in maid murder case released

**RANIPUR (INP):** Police in Ranipur, Khairpur have released five people on Sunday who were being interrogated in the alleged rape and murder case of 10-year-old Fatima Furio, who used to work as a maid; however, Hina Shah, wife of main suspect in the case Pir Asad Shah, and her father Fayyaz Shah are still at large.

SHO Ranipur, head muharrar, two doctors and a peon have been released on bail after remaining in police custody for eight days Police said they were set free after they gave to the investigation team, formed by the DIG, proofs of their innocence.

On the other hand, prime suspect Pir Asad Shah has been on physical remand for the last 10 days. Police have said all those released could again be summoned for questioning whenever the need arises.

The barbaric act came to light around 10 days ago after a video of the child went viral in which she could be seen lying on a floor after she was allegedly sexually assaulted by Pir Asad Shah. The girl eventually lost her life due to torture as confirmed by videos showing signs of torture on her body.

## Jirga condemned inflation, excessive electricity bills

**DIR LOWER (APP):** A joint meeting of representatives of all political parties was held in Chakdara Press Club Adenzai under the auspices of National Jirga against inflation and excessive electricity bills.

Notable of the areas including Hussain Shah Khan, Central Vice President of ANP, Khurshid Ali Khan, Leader of PPP, Awan Khan, Tehsil President PTI, Sultan Yar Advocate, Former Tehsil President JI, Naeem Khan PPP leader, Aman Khan, Javed Iqbal, District General Secretary, JUI, Malik Azmat Khan, former Federal Minister and President of Malakand Division, PPP, etc were also present in the Jirga.

The senior leaders while holding a press conference said that in our four provinces, the mistreatment of our province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its people should be stopped. Since electricity is the product of our province and load shedding is more in our province than other provinces.

No province has as many facilities as forests and minerals in our province, but despite hydel power generation, the authorities are charging fuel charges from the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They said that the poor people could not bear the expenses of other food items and now facing problems at the hands of overbillings and massive increase in the

charges of electricity bills.

Apart from the electricity bills, people are suffering a lot from the results of education here. The teachers here are also our brothers, but we demanded immediate action against those schools who have poor SSC results.

This is the situation that at least 99 percent of students have failed in every government school, so if the teachers cannot be fired, then at least their salaries should be stopped, demanded the speakers at the Jirga. They demanded immediate withdrawal of the huge taxes on electricity bills, we will be forced to come out on the streets in a joint action against this illegal collection from the poor people.

## Protests against inflated electricity bills continued

**MULTAN (INP):** Countywide protests against inflated electricity bills continued in several cities unabated, as people take to the streets, torch their bills and lament that the government is further pressing the poor who are already suffering due to historic inflation and rising poverty.

The Jamaat-e-Islami has decided to hold another protest today against the high bills in Islamabad. In Lahore, the party protested in Ichhra in the afternoon and said that while India had reached the moon, rulers in Pakistan are strangling the masses here.

In Gujranwala, a poor ice seller protested that he can either feed his family or pay the hefty bill of Rs64,500. He came down hard on the government,

saying he paid some of the bill by taking Rs30,000 as loan. He further protested that the price of every item of basic use, including flour, ghee, sugar, has skyrocketed. The protesters blocked the Hafizabad Road and caused a traffic jam. They also chanted slogans against the government and WAPDA and instead of paying the bills, torched them.

In Multan also, traders and citizens protest against the inflated bills and blocked roads. Farmers demanded the government reduce the electricity tariff as they were already suffering from high diesel and fertiliser prices. In Karachi also protests were planned in several areas.

In Faisalabad, people took to the streets, chanted slogans and torched their

bills. They lamented that a person earning Rs25,000 to Rs30,000 has been billed Rs100,000.

In Okara, the JI protested against the inflated bills and urged the Chief Justice of Pakistan to take notice.

Similar protests were reported in Jhang, Renala Khurd, Sadiqabad, Malakand. In Renala, the traders body observed a strike over the high electricity prices and took out a rally as well. They said the rulers have transferred the burden of their corruption on the poor. They demanded the price hike be reversed.

On the other hand, PESCO has sought security from the police over fears of vandalism of their offices in Peshawar in the wake of protests against inflated power bills.

## Secretary visits Social Security Hospital

**SIALKOT (APP):** Punjab Secretary Labour and Human Resource Faisal Farid has said that after approval of the provincial cabinet, a formal notification of the minimum wage of Rs 32,000 per month would be issued.

In this regard, all relevant departments have sent the matter to Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, which will be implemented in the next few days and a formal notification will be issued. He expressed these views while talking to representatives of trade union

and civil society on the occasion of a detailed visit to Social Security Hospital Sialkot and Quaid-e-Azam Public School Sialkot.

Faisal Farid said the proposal of setting up a burns unit at the Social Security Hospital Sialkot would also be considered. He said efficiency of the existing dispensaries would also be increased while insulin will also be provided in all dispensaries. Apart from this, by abolishing the referral system, the patients who come directly to the hospital would also be treated

and they would be provided with treatment facilities.

During his visit to Quaid-e-Azam Public School Sialkot, the secretary said a new school would also be established in Sialkot for children of labourers, while the evening shift would also be run in the existing school. He said the applications for marriage, death grants and scholarships for families of workers working in factories have been made online, due to which all these applications have now been notified to the applicant through a message.

## Sutlej River's roaring floodwaters penetrate Bahawalpur

**BAHAWALPUR (INP):** After a span of 13 years, the water level beneath the iconic Empress Bridge located at Bahawalpur has surged to an astonishing height of 10 feet. This extraordinary rise is attributed to the torrential floods that have inundated the Sutlej River, causing widespread havoc in the region.

Reports indicate that an overwhelming discharge of approximately 130,000 cusecs of water is coursing through the Empress

Bridge, presenting an awe-inspiring yet alarming sight for onlookers.

The unrelenting volume of water has managed to breach multiple dams in its path, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. Numerous villages have been engulfed by the deluge, displacing residents and prompting rescue operations on an urgent basis.

Agricultural areas have not been spared either, as the force of the floodwaters

breached a temporary dam near the banks of the Sutlej River. As a result, vast stretches of fertile fields now lie submerged, posing a significant threat to local farmers' livelihoods.

A major disaster was being feared when the floodwater at Islam Headworks reached Bahawalpur as the district administration's measures to avert the devastation were negligible. It has taken no steps to strengthen the small protective dams.





## Russian teen eco-activists fight for future as risks mount

PENZA (AFP/APP): Egor Chastukhin, an 18-year-old environmental activist, holds a flask to a drain spurring out warm, putrid water near the historic city of Penza in western Russia.

"It smells like herbal tea," he jokes after taking a waft of the sample while Sonia, his wife, jots down notes. She records the odour and its yellowish colour as two other teenage activists, Alexei Zetkin and Yakov Demidov, look on.

The water's source is a nearby paper factory previously fined for pollution. Its destination is a tributary of the Sura river, around 600 kilometres (372 miles) from Russia's capital Moscow. The group carries out a spot test on the liquid, which shows excess levels of chlorine, iron and organic matter. "People who drink this water, fish in it and bathe in it need to understand the danger," Egor told AFP.

The chances of that happening are slim. Environmental groups in Russia not linked to the government -- those like Egor's -- have long faced pressure from authorities.

And since an unprecedented crack-down on dissent launched after Russia's full-scale military intervention in Ukraine, their future is in doubt. Russia has outlawed the work of Greenpeace and the World Wide Fund for Nature, branding them and dozens of other Western-linked groups "undesirable".

The exiled coordinator of the climate action nonprofit Bellona, Ksenia Vakhrusheva, told AFP there were no longer any Russian environmental organisations powerful enough to bring about "systemic change". What remains of ecological advocacy in Russia rests on the shoulders of under-resourced activists like Egor, who are still trying



to raise awareness in spite of the risks. "What we're doing is legal and harmless. But tomorrow they could link it to extremism or terrorism. The slightest transmission of information could become an alleged threat to the state," Egor says.

Suddenly, a press officer and factory employee holding a camera arrive on the scene, with the rag-tag group taking off after a security guard appears -- a move that is sometimes followed by a police visit.

Several metres away, men under some trees continue to fish the polluted water. The group regularly inspects rivers and dumps. Together with a more experienced activist with a legal background, they report violations to local prosecutors or the environmental protection agency.

Sometimes with surprising success. In November 2021, Egor and his friend Alexei, then high school students, tested the water discharged by the paper factory.

Alexei sent the results to the authorities, who fined the factory manager about \$5,000 after confirm-

ing the violations.

The factory is run by a local politician from the Kremlin-loyal United Russia party, and says it has since invested in modernising its equipment. Following the probe, Alexei, then a member of a pro-government environmental group, was accused of carrying out the inspection without the approval of his superiors and kicked out. In February last year, he set up Eko-Start, and he and Egor campaign together.

After the factory, activists and AFP journalists visited a landfill outside Penza, a jumble of rotting vegetables, batteries and medical waste emitting toxic fumes.

"The owners of the dump are high-ups in the region. They save money by not sorting the waste and not respecting the rules on storage," Alexei said.

Alexei met Egor in the Komsomol, the youth wing of the Russian Communist Party, which, though subservient to the Kremlin at the national level, sometimes represents opposition locally.

## Fukushima: Japan asks China to stop citizens making abusive calls

TOKYO (BBC): Japan has complained to the Chinese government after businesses and institutions began receiving volumes of abusive phone calls about the release of contaminated water from the damaged Fukushima plant.

The calls come from numbers with Chinese dialling codes.

One restaurant chain in Fukushima has received more than 1,000 calls.

It comes as Tokyo said seawater around the nuclear plant is showing no detectable levels of radioactivity. The calls had begun since the release of contaminated water from Fukushima, authorities said, and have been made to government departments, schools and even an aquarium. The callers speak in Chinese, Japanese and English - and sometimes



use abusive language. They speak about their opposition to Japan's decision to release the treated nuclear water. China has described the discharge as an "extremely selfish and irresponsible act". On Thursday it said it would ban Japanese seafood imports. Meanwhile, Tokyo is hoping regular radiation testing in the waters near the plant will allay concerns from neighbouring

countries and fishing groups. Weekly test results will be published for the next three months.

More than a million tonnes of water stored at the nuclear plant will be discharged over the next 30 years. It has been accumulating since 2011 when the plant was badly damaged by a tsunami.

Japan says the water is safe, and the UN's nuclear watchdog has approved the

plan, but critics say the release should be halted.

The water is being filtered to remove most radioactive elements then diluted to reduce levels of tritium, a radioactive isotope of hydrogen which is difficult to separate from water. The Environment Ministry said samples from 11 locations near the plant showed tritium levels below 7-8 becquerels per litre, the lower limit of detection.

The water "would have no adverse impact on human health and the environment", it added. There has also been opposition to the release of water in South Korea, and on Thursday protesters in the capital Seoul attempted to storm the Japanese embassy. On Sunday, South Korea said it had sent nuclear experts to Fukushima to monitor the discharge process.

## Landslide claims 2 lives in Chattogram city

DHAKA (Xinhua/APP): A devastating landslide triggered by heavy rains in Bangladesh's seaport city Chattogram, some 242 km southeast of capital Dhaka on Sunday morning resulted in the loss of two lives, an official said.

Abdullah Harun Pasha, a senior official of the Chattogram Divisional Fire Service, told journalists that the incident occurred Sunday morning, around 7:30 a.m. local time in a hilly area near the Sholosohor Rail Station in the city. "Md Sohel, 35, and his seven-month-old daughter, Bibi Jannat, died in the landslide triggered by heavy rains in Chattogram city," said the official.

As a white-ruled British colony named Rhodesia, the country broke away from London in 1965, gaining independence in 1980 after a long guerrilla war and renamed Zimbabwe.

But under Mugabe, its first leader, the fledgling democracy spiralled into headline rule and economic decline, with hyperinflation wiping out savings and deterring investment.

The opposition hoped to ride a wave of discontent over corruption, high inflation, unemployment and entrenched poverty.

But ZANU-PF was also declared the winner in the parliamentary race, securing 136 of the 210 seats up for grabs under a first-past-the-post system, against 73 for the CCC. One seat was not assigned due to the death of a candidate.

Another 60 are reserved for women appointed through a party-list system of proportional representation.

In a statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency, the State Emergency Epidemic Prevention Headquarters said North Korean citizens abroad had been allowed to return home in line with "the eased worldwide pandemic situation". "Those returned will be put under proper medical observation at quarantine wards for a week," it added. The move signals that North Korea will shift its stringent Covid

policy and gradually ease quarantine measures, Cheong Seong-chang, a researcher at the Sejong Institute, told AFP. "With the latest announcement, it's expected that a large-scale return of North Koreans will be made via the land route as well," he added.

Last month, high-level Chinese and Russian delegations visited Pyongyang for a key anniversary celebration, the first foreign dignitaries allowed to visit the country in years.

And earlier this month, a delegation of North Korean athletes was allowed to attend a taekwondo competition in Kazakhstan, while state-run Air Koryo made its first international commercial flight in three years last week.

Despite the signs of easing of its pandemic isolation, analysts say North Korea is not yet ready to fully reopen its borders.

"First, North Koreans have not been vaccinated," said Cho Han-bum, senior research fellow at the Korea Institute for National Unification.

He added Pyongyang was likely

## Two dead, 56 injured in Romania gas station blasts

BUCHAREST (AFP/APP): Two people died and 56 people were injured after two explosions rocked an unlicensed liquefied petroleum gas filling station just north of Romania's capital Bucharest late on Saturday, officials said.

Most of the injured were firefighters who rushed to the station to extinguish the blaze from the first explosion before the second occurred. The two people who died were a couple, emergency department head Raed Arafat told reporters on Sunday.

The man suffered a heart attack, while the woman died after sustaining severe burns, he added.

Among the injured -- some with severe burns --

were 39 firefighters, two police officers and two gendarmes, according to Arafat. "Overnight we transferred two firefighters and two civilians abroad (for treatment) and more will follow," he said in a statement. The four were taken to Italy or Belgium, according to the defence ministry. Romania has requested assistance through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to treat 18 burn patients, European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarcic said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Austria, Germany and Norway offered help, Lenarcic said. It was not immediately clear what caused the blasts in

Crevedia commune, and prosecutors have opened an inquiry. "We know that the station was no longer working, so it clearly didn't have a permit to function," Arafat said. The fire also forced the evacuation of people within a 700-metre (770 yards) radius. "I'm profoundly saddened that the explosions in Crevedia resulted in victims," President Klaus Iohannis wrote on Facebook, calling it a "tragedy". Anger has flared repeatedly in the EU member state over a lack of official oversight to ensure compliance with safety regulations. In 2015, a blaze ripped through a Bucharest nightclub after fireworks were let off, killing 64 people.

## N. Korea lets citizens abroad return in easing of Covid isolation

SEOUL (AFP/APP): North Korea has allowed citizens stranded abroad by its strict Covid curbs to return home, state media reported Sunday, as the country moves towards a full reopening after three years of pandemic isolation.

The country had sealed its borders since early 2020 to protect itself from COVID-19, which prevented even its own nationals from returning.

But there have been increasing signs of a shift in border control in recent weeks, including the resumption of international commercial air travel.

In a statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency, the State Emergency Epidemic Prevention Headquarters said North Korean citizens abroad had been allowed to return home in line with "the eased worldwide pandemic situation". "Those returned will be put under proper medical observation at quarantine wards for a week," it added. The move signals that North Korea will shift its stringent Covid

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"First, North Koreans have not been vaccinated," said Cho Han-bum, senior research fellow at the Korea Institute for National Unification.

He added Pyongyang was likely

frightened by the "collapse" of China's medical system after its abrupt decision last December to end its three-year zero-Covid policy.

The sudden end of curbs led to a massive surge in hospitalisations and deaths in China that health experts say were largely unreported by the government, with some studies saying nearly two million people died in the following weeks.

North Korea has a crumbling health system -- one of the worst in the world -- and no Covid vaccines, antiviral treatment drugs or mass testing capacity, and Cho said the situation was expected to be far worse.

The "very limited" flight service to China and Russia and allowing overseas citizens to return home "is by no means a complete reopening of the border," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

The one-week quarantine for returning citizens suggests that tourism to North Korea will not be resumed any time soon, added Cheong of the Sejong Institute.

## Florida gunman driven by racial 'hate' kills 3: authorities

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): A white man driven by racial hatred shot dead three Black people in a Florida discount store Saturday before taking his own life after a standoff with police, authorities said.

"He targeted a certain group of people and that's Black people. That's what he said he wanted to kill. And that's very clear," Jacksonville Sheriff TK Waters told a news conference about the gunman, who was in his early 20s.

According to the sheriff's office, the shooter, who has not yet been identified, entered a Dollar General store wearing a tactical vest, armed with an AR-style rifle and a handgun.

Manifestos discovered by the gunman's family shortly before the attack "detail the shooter's disgusting ideology of hate," Waters said, and at least one of the guns had hand-drawn swastikas on it.

The shooting took place near Edward Waters University, a historically Black college in the southern US state.

The university said in a statement that the shooter had been on campus earlier that day, though no one was harmed.

"An on-campus Edward Waters University security officer engaged an unidentified male in the vicinity of the Centennial Library on campus," it said.

"The individual refused to identify themselves and was asked to leave,"

it added, adding the individual -- later identified as the shooter -- left "without incident."

The FBI will investigate the shooting as a hate crime, said Sherri Onks, the bureau's special agent for Jacksonville, a city of nearly one million in the northeast corner of the state.

There was no evidence the shooter was part of a larger group, officials said. "We know that he acted completely alone," Waters said.

Mass shootings have become disturbingly common across the United States, with easy access to firearms in most states and more guns in the country than citizens.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis decried the "horrific" shooting and called the gunman a "scumbag."

"He was targeting people based on their race, that is totally unacceptable," said DeSantis, who is vying to be the Republican Party's presidential candidate for 2024.

"This guy killed himself rather than face the music and accept responsibility for his actions and so he took the coward's way out."

The shooting was part of a week-end spate of gun violence in the United States.

Earlier Saturday, at least seven people were hospitalized after a shooting at a Caribbean festival in the northeast city of Boston, police said.

Meanwhile, two women were shot at a baseball game in Chicago the

night before. That same night, a 16-year-old was shot dead and four others hurt after an argument erupted at a high school football game in Oklahoma, police said.

US President Joe Biden was briefed on the incident in Jacksonville, the White House said, and had received updates on other shootings over the last 24 hours across the country.

The deadly incident in Jacksonville is the latest in a series of racially motivated shooting sprees in the United States.

In May 2022, a self-declared white supremacist, Payton Gendron, killed 10 Black people in a live-streamed shooting rampage at a supermarket in New York state.

Gendron, who targeted the store because of the large African American population in the area, pleaded guilty in state court to the killings in November and was sentenced to life in prison, but still could face the death penalty in a federal case. In 2015, a white assailant gunned down nine Black people during a bible study at a church in Charleston, South Carolina. The shooter, Dylann Roof, is currently on death row.

Saturday's shooting in Jacksonville came five years to the day after another mass shooting in the city when a gunman at a video game tournament killed two and wounded several others before killing himself.

## Zimbabwe's President Mnangagwa wins second term in disputed vote

HARARE (AFP/APP): Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa won a second term in office, election officials said Saturday, but the opposition rejected the result of a vote that international observers said fell short of democratic standards.

Mnangagwa, 80, won 52.6 percent of the ballots against 44 percent for the main challenger, Nelson Chamisa, 45, according to official results announced by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).

"Mnangagwa Emmerson Dambudzo of ZANU-PF party is declared duly elected president of the Republic of Zimbabwe," ZEC chairwoman Justice Chigumba told journalists.

Zimbabweans went to the ballot box to elect the president and legislature on Wednesday and Thursday in polling marred by delays that sparked opposition accusations of rigging and voter suppression.

The presidential results were welcomed by the celebratory cheers of a few

ruling party supporters at the news conference venue.

But Promise Mkwanzani, a spokesman for Chamisa's Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) said the party did not sign the final tally, which he described as "false". "We cannot accept the results," he told AFP, adding the party would soon announce its next move. The vote was being watched across southern Africa as a test of support for Mnangagwa's ZANU-PF, whose 43-year rule has been battered by a moribund economy and charges of authoritarianism.

Foreign poll monitors said on Friday that the elections had failed to conform to regional and international standards. Observer missions from the European Union, Commonwealth and the 16-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC) listed a number of concerns, including the banning of opposition rallies, issues with the voters roll, biased state media coverage, and voter intimidation. "The

elections were fraught with irregularities and aggrieved the people of Zimbabwe," political analyst Rejoice Ngunya said.

"The CCC has good grounds to go to court and challenge the outcome". Chigumba of ZEC said Mnangagwa had won more than 2.3 million votes, Chamisa more than 1.9 million. By securing more than half the votes cast, the president avoided a run-off. Voter turnout was 69 percent. Nicknamed "The Crocodile" because of his ruthlessness, Mnangagwa first came to power after a coup that deposed the late ruler Robert Mugabe in 2017. A year later, he narrowly beat Chamisa a first time in a poll that the opposition leader condemned as fraudulent and which was followed by a deadly crackdown. This week, voting was forced to stretch into an unprecedented second day because of delays in printing of ballot papers in some key districts including the opposition stronghold Harare. Chamisa con-

demned the delays as "a clear case of voter suppression, a classic case of Stone-Age... rigging".

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But under Mugabe, its first leader, the fledgling democracy spiralled into headline rule and economic decline, with hyperinflation wiping out savings and deterring investment.

The opposition hoped to ride a wave of discontent over corruption, high inflation, unemployment and entrenched poverty.

But ZANU-PF was also declared the winner in the parliamentary race, securing 136 of the 210 seats up for grabs under a first-past-the-post system, against 73 for the CCC. One seat was not assigned due to the death of a candidate.

Another 60 are reserved for women appointed through a party-list system of proportional representation.

## Squeezed out: Bulgaria lavender oil makers fear EU laws

ZELENIKOVO (AFP/APP): As a successful harvesting season yielding several hundred tonnes of lavender oil wraps up in Bulgaria -- the world's top producer -- the industry's future looks more grey than purple.

With a global production glut already weighing on prices, Bulgarian distillers now fear new EU regulations will further crimp business. While the European Union has offered to pause the implementation of the bloc's revised regulations restricting harmful chemical substances, the clock is ticking.

Nikolay Nenkov, head of Galen-N distillery -- one of the biggest in Bulgaria -- is worried that he will soon have to affix health warning labels featuring off-putting slogans to his vials of lavender oil.

"We fear that such measures will lower consumption, curb production and (thus) the sector might disappear in some regions, which is very bad considering it's a long-standing tradition," he told AFP.

In an industry already reeling from low prices, labour shortages, climate change and pests, the planned revisions would "create further tension", he added. From the famous lavender fields surrounding Zelenikovo in central Bulgaria to France's Provence, producers and farmers have teamed up to defend their product against what they see as unfair laws



from Brussels.

Other major producers include China, Moldova and Greece.

Across the EU, essential oils are regulated by two main chemical laws known as REACH and CLP.

The upcoming revision of both laws seeks to provide consumers and companies with better information about the possible existence of endocrine disruptors and components that cause cancer or allergic reactions in products.

he review of REACH -- which deals with the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals -- has been postponed until the fourth quarter of 2023.

But the EU Commission's proposal to clarify the classification and labelling of substances under the CLP, particularly for online sales, is due to be

put to a plenary vote in October. Faced with the producers' resistance, the EU Council has proposed a four-year exemption from the entry into force of the text. "The problem has not been solved, but this postponement is a big step forward," said Nenkov. In a bid to allay the concerns of major European producers, Brussels has stressed that it "has no plans to start requiring an analysis of each molecule in essential oils" or "to ban" them, a spokesperson told AFP.

"Essential oils are already defined as chemical substances". At Nenkov's distillery, 70-year-old technician Vasil Andreev insists that he is handling a "fully natural product" as he filters another bucket of the pale yellow oil.

It takes up to 120 kilos of lavender -- still being

pressed by foot into huge troughs before distillation -- to produce one kilo of Bulgaria's purple gold used in famous cosmetics and perfumes.

But booming production has oversaturated the market in recent years, causing prices and profits to plummet. Prices currently hover below the costs of production at around 20-35 euros per kilo, after peaking at 140 euros in 2018.

"For the past three years, there has been global overproduction of lavender oil, with supply outstripping demand, causing more and more farmers to give up the crop," said InteliAgro think tank analyst Nikolay Valkanov.

Farmers acknowledge that they will sooner or later have to destroy some of their fragrant fields to be able to return to prices that allow them to stop selling at a loss.



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## Horrible situation of electric bills

The countrywide protests continued against the inflated electricity bills on Saturday and Sunday. The people came out to the streets in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Talagang and other major cities in the country to register their protest against the levy of additional taxes that had made impossible for the poor to pay that amount from their pockets which are already emptied by the skyrocketed inflation in the country. Thousands blocked the roads, burnt tyres, torched electricity bills and chanted anti-government slogans in most parts of the nation.

There had been unprecedented price hikes in the prices of common use commodities and over billing in the head of domestic and commercial utilities including electricity, sui gas, and water supply. Meanwhile massive telephone bills had been received by the telephone users during the past few months by the government owned service providers. Unfortunately, bulk amounts had been levelled to common customers other than government taxes and institutional Surcharges under the garb of adjustment, and capacity payments which caused great outrage in the public. This type of governance and unlawful money collection had never been seen in any nation in the region nor could it be tolerated in any civilized nation in the world. According to the reports, the government raised the basic price of electricity by 15% along with massive tax increases over the past one year that pushed the electricity out of the reach for the poor, whose electricity bills exceeded their monthly income. Meanwhile, hefty payments, hundreds of units free of cost electricity, and gas bills incentives for the Ministers, advisors and employees of WAPDA, OGDCL, PIA and other departments have become a real impediment in revenue generation of government entities. At the same time, heavy line losses, and theft of electricity and sui gas intensified the problem at this moment of national economic emergency.

Realistically, domestic service delivery and unceasing circular debt has become an unresolvable puzzle in Pakistan. The governments are compelled to burn precious foreign reserves and hard earned national resources in resolving that quandary instead of introducing pavit regulatory reforms in concerned departments to treat this chronic ailment on a permanent basis. The most suitable solution of this persistent dereliction is privatization of government entities which no political government could ever implement due to political reasons and pressure from employees union, cartels and corrupts. Ironically, the government institutions always slapped their fiscal loss on the public instead of addressing their institutional lapses, so the bureaucrats could enjoy luxurious government service without any check till the end.

The state of Pakistan resembles a huge overloaded boat, with diminishing reservoirs of fuel, food and drink, facing serious risk of survival from violent sea and ruthless pirates sitting inside the system. What the public is going through because of electricity bills, the PM's publicity stunts make no sense and further hurt the robbed masses. The power producing companies demanded another Rs. 122 billion from the government in the form of capacity charges, who will and from where would arrange that amount. Everybody knows the government can not change electricity and gas tariffs as fixed with the global lender. However, the regulator can provide some relief to the public by putting a check on unlimited incentives of the ministers and government employees, curbing institutional corruption and controlling theft/line losses of the concerned department if desired. The caretaker setup has a limited mandate of holding elections. The interim rulers must stick to their one point agenda by arranging free, fair and timely elections, that would be a great service to the nation on their part.

## Iran's sovereign foreign policy

A court in Tehran has ordered the US government to pay \$330 million in damages for planning a coup against the newly established Islamic republic in the country over four decades ago. A year after the 1979 Islamic revolution that toppled the US-backed Shah, a group of mostly army officers tried to overthrow the newly installed cleric led government. Several people were killed in clashes between the coup plotters and government forces, and scores of others were arrested. According to the reports, the relatives of those killed in the coup filed a legal petition with Iran's International Court last year and demanded compensation for the damages that occurred due to foreign sponsored coup that not only cost hundreds of precious lives but caused significant material losses to the country.

Historically, the Islamic Republic of Iran had gone through utmost challenging situations after the Imam Khemineh led revolution ousted the century long Monarch of Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1979. Shah was a close confederate of the United States and Iran had been the strong Blockhouse of America and its notorious CIA in the entire West Asia region under the rule of Reza Shah Pahlavi. The CIA had launched multiple operations to reinstate the Reza Shah government but met strong reaction from the hardliner cleric rule, while the US Embassy hostage crisis was the peak of US-Iran tension in recent decades. Later, the Iranian nuclear and missile programs and Iran's resurgence against Israel had been a major source of contention between Washington and Tehran throughout the post Islamic revolution in Iran.

Interestingly, the Iranian nation had demonstrated utmost courage in the face of continuous aggression and coercion at diplomatic level including global trade and economic sanctions by the west under the UN umbrella. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and club of five persistently, who act as American vanguards had remained engaged with Tehran over the past years but the Iranian nation did not give in to all persuasion and harassment throughout this time. The Iranian leadership has tactfully handled its adversary at all levels and also challenged American unilateral actions at the global level including the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to get release of Iranian assets held by the US. The recent verdict of the Iranian court might have no legal implications for Washington but it demonstrates the national resilience and autonomy of the Iranian nation, which had always been a main element of Iran's foreign policy throughout history.

### Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



## The case of corruption in Pakistan

Khawaja Wajih-u-Din

There is no doubt in the fact that the evil of corruption has reached our skins deep down. This is an Inescapable hard fact of life. One must also admit that after the partition no serious effort was made to stem the tide, because of first two years were the perilous years due to influx of refugees and the government could not do anything, but even afterwards only fragmentary efforts were made with no dedication. With Half hearted efforts, coupled with callousness, the results could be only disgusting. There can be no doubt that corruption is prevalent in all the countries in the world. But in our country it has attained a horrible magnitude it has assumed horrendous proportions, much to the detriment of the entire society, which is bleeding by its tremendous impact.

There is poor class in the country. On the other hand there is very rich class. Who is getting richer and richer. The middle class, thanks to the higher inflation and price hikes has been bracketed with the almost poor class. The rich class has assumed wealth by illegitimate means for it must be understood that excessive wealth can be achieved by foul means only. For example by deceit, fraudulence, hypocrisy, sycophancy and what not. Now this poor class person sees a person who has become rich in a matter of months, by adopting unfair means, naturally he has to follow suit. He wants to go up monetarily in utter disregard of moral, ethics and the moral code, which becomes insignificant for him, he too wants to achieve that monetary standard to look big. So this cycle goes on and today we see the culmination of all that race towards achieving monetary stability.

The state of corruption in Pakistan blossomed by leaps and bounds when evacuees property was being distributed here. There was actual plunder by those who mattered. Non-deserving persons joined the plunder with official connivance and political strength, and there was race for allotment of factories cinemas and buildings etc. This created a class of upstarts. On the official side with the departure of Hindus and British, there was a vacuum in services and this had to be filled by promoting junior officers, who could not possibly match their new assignments because of their lack of expediency and insufficient qualifications.

As a consequence with the business in the hands of upstarts and non-deserving people and senior jobs in the hands of mediocre's, the equilibrium was badly shaken. It is common knowledge, that when acumen, efficiency and capability is replaced by plunder favoritism and inefficiency the results are disastrous. Favoritism played with the morality and the process of degeneration started in the right earnest. It's direct consequence was corruption with the new vigor.

It's a pity that political people were also swayed by the same Temptations and the corruption reigned

supreme with no abatement in sight. However up-to 1958, the magnitude of this madness was not that alarming. History tells us that when the field Marshall took over things began to change suddenly. His patronage of the rich acted as a catalyst and consequently accelerated at a faster speed.

Elders used to tell me that when Ayub khan left we were drenched in corruption and it was a very disappointing picture. Subsequently there was a time in Pakistan when

ation, strive to damage institutions that are in place. The intellectually dishonest play in the hands of powers that be, and act as a propaganda machine for the corrupt.

Perhaps successive rulers have fallen pray to the machinations of the business, feudal lords and the exploiters class. Like others in the country these classes are also notorious for manipulating things and for collecting wealth. In other countries like USA also the influence wielded by this class is colossal.

**Having said that it would be unfair only to blame one class for the entire tragedy. We live in a society where you cannot get pure milk even on paying the demanded price. For that also you need to have a contact or a friend. It is a routine observation that for petty matters like an electricity connection or paying a bill you need to have right connection in the right place. Where as a person who believes in actual public service honestly and dedicatedly is considered a fool. There was a time when honest people were just sidelined. Now honest people are viciously taken to task through vengeance. No wonder, people most of the time, who believe in deceit, fraud and manipulation, make it to the top. Honesty with intelligence is a rare combination in Pakistan. People who are honest are sadists and those intelligent are corrupt. This indeed is a dilemma for doors responsible for running the affairs of the government. Without prejudice to the above but in addition there too it can be safely stated that till today no serious effort was made to tackle this madness of corruption and putting systems in place. We have seen adhoc measures over a period of time. The successive governments may have raised a slogan against corruption but all the drama seemed to be politically motivated. Instead of strengthening one institution there has been a tendency to create one institution over and above the other. The end result of all the mismanagement is that the rate of corruption has increased. I remember that in my advocacy days a police officer having told me that the person who makes him happy is charged in nominal offenses rather than serious ones during martial law days. He used to give options to people and had rates for everything.**

mediocrity was encouraged over education, intelligence and intellectualism. This policy added fuel to the fire. The last three years of 70s and much of the 80s bears testimony to this fact.

We have witnessed the same families in the government despite different political parties in power. These political elite mostly do not believe in building a system or take stringent measures for eradication of corruption. In fact some of them, for political consider-

routine observation that for petty matters like an electricity connection or paying a bill you need to have right connection in the right place. Where as a person who believes in actual public service honestly and dedicatedly is considered a fool. There was a time when honest people were just sidelined. Now honest people are viciously taken to task through vengeance. No wonder, people most of the time, who believe in deceit, fraud and manipulation, make it to the top. Honesty with intelligence is a rare combination in Pakistan. People who are honest are sadists and those intelligent are corrupt. This indeed is a dilemma for doors responsible for running the affairs of the government.

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The people of Pakistan have seen many institutions, Commissions formed for eradication of corruption. Most of the people appointed at the helm of those institutions perhaps did not have the will, intention, capacity or the required desire. So then another commission is formed and the reports neither see daylight nor acted upon.

It would be proper to say that corruption is now part of her life it has gone deep down our skins and bodies. It is not possible to eradicate it. It can only be minimized, but Herculean efforts are necessitated coupled with sincerity of purpose and total dedication. A particular section of society or a particular part of society is not corrupt, the entire society without any reservations, is soaked in this colossal abyss. Half hearted measures would not deliver the goods. Drastic steps consistent with the dictates of the situation, situation viewed in total true perspective and weighed in the crucible of facts are required.

I would request the readers to kindly go through the suggestions given in my article quoted above. We can begin with doing away with ostentation, encouraging merit and placing honest and intelligent people at the helm of affairs. As a nation we need to strongly inculcate ethical and moral code in all the citizens.

(The writer is former Registrar of Peshawar High Court)

## Who will be left to protect Israel's liberal democracy?

Yossi Mekelberg

A number of years ago, a dystopian TV series called "Autonomies" was broadcast in Israel. It was set in a "fictional reality" in which Israel was split into two autonomous territories — a secular state, the capital of which was Tel Aviv, and an ultra-Orthodox entity with Jerusalem as its capital.

Over time, this fictional drama has come to appear somewhat prescient regarding the future of Israel, a country where the reality is trumping fiction. There is now more than just a real-life division between the secular and the ultra-Orthodox. There are multiple social divides that are forcing the entire Zionist enterprise to struggle not only for modern-day relevance but also for its very survival.

The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel contended that each phase of the historical process could be said to contain the seeds of its own destruction, ultimately resulting in the negation of itself and the emergence of a new society.

Zionism, as the embodiment of the national aspirations of the Jewish people, was based on two main motivations. One was a wish to separate themselves from societies in which Jews were suffering from antisemitism and their inability to achieve self-determination; the other was the desire to rebel against the orthodoxy within Judaism that was holding the Jewish people back from entering the modern world.

While the first objective of self-determination was achieved in 1948, and was mainly the product of secular Zionism. In recent decades, however, Israel has fallen under the spell of the ultra-Orthodox and the religious-messianic ultra-right, who are seeking to reverse the progress of modernization and of becoming part of the liberal-democratic world.

This has left the secular majority and more liberal-minded Israelis to fight not only for their rights and for their way of life to be respected, but also against a fundamentalist version of Jewish-Halachic jurisprudence being imposed on their country.

For the ultra-Orthodox and many of the religious ultranationalists, the "Jewishness" of the country has always taken precedence over its democratic character. The dilemma facing the leaders of the ultra-Orthodox was always between remaining true to their principles of rejecting participation in the institutions of a state formed by secular "infidels," and the need to be part of the political system that allocates resources.

They realized very quickly that to boycott the state apparatus would be too costly for them and so, step by step, they became not only involved in the political game but played it to their advantage, knowing that demography was on their side — their birth rate is much higher than that of secular Israelis — and electoral support for their constituency was almost guaranteed.

Their appetite has constantly grown. They are now demanding control of major ministries, calling for huge budgets to support their constituents, but which would provide negligible benefits for wider Israeli society, and increasingly dictating the character of the country, against everyone else's wishes.

Adding to this is the emergence in the post-1967 period of a new and dangerous phenomenon — the settlement movement, Gush Emonim. This adheres to a religious-messianic ideology that claims Israeli sovereignty over the entire territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. It is this movement that prepared the fertile ground for Jewish supremacism, and with it the settler terrorism that now has support at the very heart of the Israeli government.

The writing has been on the wall for a very long time but only with the formation of the current government have Israel's liberals woken up and now they

are attempting to salvage what is left of the country's liberal democracy by protesting in their hundreds of thousands.

However, it appears some are contemplating giving up on Israel altogether. A recent survey carried out by one of the country's main TV channels found that 28 percent of respondents were considering emigration.

This is a staggering statistic. It is not only the number of people that apparently want to leave that is striking, but also who they are. They form the very backbone of Israel's society and economy. They come from the medical and education sectors, they are high-tech entrepreneurs and inventors, they are business people and scientists — the kind of people without whom the economy would collapse. They are also reservists without whom the military would struggle to function.

Those who express this desire to emigrate do so out of fear that their society is headed for authoritarianism and civil war. They are sick and tired of carrying both the financial and security burdens of the country while the ultra-Orthodox contribute practically nothing, and the ultranationalists drag them into another major conflict with the

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Palestinians and damage Israel's relations with the rest of the world.

Bearing in mind that many Israelis hold dual citizenships, and their professions and expertise are in demand abroad, a significant exodus is not beyond the realm of possibility. Only, this time it would be away from the promised land, not toward it. Some European consulates have already reported an increase in applications from Israelis for visas and passports.

It is not only a matter of those who might eventually leave the country, however, but also of those who will simply stop believing that a Jewish and democratic state that lives in peace with its neighbors is possible, and consequently will end up feeling like foreigners in their own country.

If they too check out, it will mark the demise of the Zionist dream and the members of the current government will be the ones who signed its death warrant.



# Federalism will not solve all of Lebanon’s problems

With the political impasse in Lebanon and the economic collapse resulting from it comes a heated debate, mainly among Christians in the country, regarding proposals for a federal alternative to the current system.

But not all federalists agree on the same formula or have the same rationale. The common theme is that, if we cannot live with an armed Hezbollah and we cannot fight it or disarm it, then the alternative is some degree of separation.

While at one end what is proposed is no more than a form of decentralization, at the other extreme are dangerous ideas based on twisted interpretations of both Lebanese and European history, and the result is no longer identifiable with Lebanon.

This division is not new and it dates back to long before the creation of the modern state of Lebanon. The fundamental question is whether people of different religions can live together in one unit or if they have to separate into more homogenous administrations.

The Emirate of Mount Lebanon, which enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy, collapsed in 1841 and was replaced by two separate regions, or cantons, known as the Double Qaim-Maqamate, one to the north with a Maronite majority and the other to the south with a Druze majority. After the massacres of Christians in the southern district in 1860, this was replaced by an autonomous region, or Mutasarrifate, where the two cantons were joined together under a Christian Ottoman governor, with the help of a council in which all the communities were represented. A Turkish historian

of Lebanon called this “the long peace,” with stability lasting from 1864 to 1914. The Mutasarrifate was replaced by the rule of a military governor during the First World War.

There was a similar discussion after the creation of the modern state of Greater Lebanon, which consisted of an expanded Mount Lebanon, made more viable economically by including coastal cities and the agricultural areas of the Bekaa

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***It is true, however, that during the civil war the country was divided into cantons and these were relatively efficiently run by the militias that controlled them. They collected taxes, distributed fuel and electricity, provided some services and security, and even managed to collaborate across the dividing lines. But there was also internal fighting for control within each side, sometimes more violent than the country had ever seen during the civil war. It was also at that time that radicals eventually took over in cities like Tripoli and Sidon and most parts of west Beirut. This was no longer the Lebanon we knew. In 1988, there was a meeting between two Lebanese in London. “You have to understand that the Christians are afraid of radical Islam,” said one of them, Joe, an intellectual linked to Gen. Michel Aoun, to Mohammed, a politician who was close to then-Prime Minister Salim Al-Hoss. Lebanon then had two separate governments, one headed by Al-Hoss and the other by Aoun.***  
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Valley and the south of the country, as well as the city of Tripoli and other areas in the north. The argument during the French Mandate, again mainly among Christians, was whether it would have been wiser to maintain a smaller area where they would be a majority, rather than face the challenge of sharing a country with other religious groups.

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Nadim Shehadi

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the other by Aoun. The office of the president was vacant with no clear mechanism on how to fill it.

Mohammed’s reply was to explain that Muslims have far more to fear if the radicals took over, as they would impose their way of life and their rigid interpretation of Islam on their coreligionists. They would be more of a threat to them than they would be to Christians. For him, the main antidote would be to

equally rigid definition of identity would exclude many and curb freedoms.

If Lebanon’s current condition is caused by Hezbollah, then the Shiites who are under its control are its main victims. It is their children who are being indoctrinated and recruited into the militia at an early age. It is also their young men who are sent to fight and die in Syria, Iraq or Yemen. If Hezbollah launches or provokes a war, it is they who will be its human shields and among the first targets of assassinations.

The fact that Hezbollah’s lists may achieve 95 percent of the votes in Shiite areas is not an indication of its popularity, but rather evidence of its totalitarian grip on the community achieved through the traditional methods of control. These include a bloody three-year conflict from 1988 to 1990 between Hezbollah and the Amal militia, which ended with an agreement that gave it hegemony.

Moreover, it is a fallacy that one can isolate an area and live peacefully next to Hezbollah-land. We have seen this in Palestine, where the West Bank under Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization is not isolated from the influence of Hamas’ control of Gaza. It is also the Gazans themselves who are the primary victims of Hamas’ control.

It is also true that if Lebanon, with its track record, cannot solve the puzzle of coexistence between diverse people and different religions, then nobody can — not Syria, Iraq, the rest of the Middle East or Europe. Each society has its good, bad and ugly people, and we need a solution where the good will prevail.

# Double disaster preparation: Floods and earthquakes

Dr. Theodore Karasik

preparation varies from state to state and even from country to country. California has very stringent rules and regulations on earthquake preparation, especially for commercial and business structures. They are also applicable to infrastructure projects. Nevertheless, security officials look at the potential for large quakes combined with flooding, and how that could break many of the logistics lines related to energy production and distribution in the state.

Importantly, the US West Coast is dependent on the region’s refineries and imports from Asia and the Middle East for motor fuel supplies. There are no pipelines connecting California with refining complexes along the US Gulf Coast and in the Middle West. However, that is not all the infrastructure that should be considered. Ports along the coastline bring goods and services

mountains that are subject to increasingly heavy storms, and around particular coastlines that are prone to hurricanes of stronger intensity. A large earthquake in the center of the US could cut off transportation and electricity for several weeks, according to scenarios which probably need to be updated given the changing nature of weather. Naturally, geology in terms of earthquakes has its own time scale and activity, but climate change that sends weather systems over areas of extremely loose soils from burning of forests compounds post-disaster recovery.

We have seen other disasters unfold around the world where flooding has forced countries backward and into deeper economic trouble. Pakistan is one country that stands out because of the nature of its floods and how long it has taken to drain the flow and clean up. Luckily, there was no earthquake activity, but up in the mountainous

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***With both hurricane preparation anxiety and earthquake-compounded uncertainty, the event, for some, would be a very uncomfortable experience. California’s recent double event is not unique in this case as weather patterns shift and hurricanes or typhoons increasingly follow new patterns that send such violent weather over heavy urban areas, and infrastructure such as ports and rail. But a big “double whammy” could, in theory, be a devastating economic blow. There are professionals who do forecasting analysis based on hypotheticals and climate change data combined with soil erosion measurements, especially in areas of potential seismic activity. They are warning that climate change and erosion are multipliers of costly damage. Indeed, the US has examined potential scenarios of a double natural disaster in the American heartland, with rail and road lines knocked out, including dozens of bridges and tunnels. What would be the impact on the US economy? That model is applicable globally as shifting weather patterns and infrastructure, and the geology underneath it potentially become more intertwined. The Pacific Rim countries, for instance, are all vulnerable.***  
.....

es from overseas and those products are put on trains for destinations into America’s interior.

Much of this US infrastructure needs to be rebuilt as it is really beginning to age. The geology surrounding the infrastructure that supports such networks increasingly needs to be understood with better science that also accounts for the changing climate. To be sure, the entire scope of infrastructure safety for logistic lines over 30 years old needs to be reevaluated across many susceptible zones, especially those near coastlines where liquefaction of soil would amplify shaking in the event of a quake. Port and rail closures must be part of any risk assessment plan, especially as coastlines begin to bear the brunt of changing weather systems.

This infrastructure runs through rolling hills and

regions anything is possible, and that could have an impact not only on those communities, but also on those downstream. All countries around the world have this problem, so the US and Pakistan are not the sole examples, but only the latest victims of large-scale natural disasters.

Overall, while policy professionals are preparing for climate change and working on the requirements necessary to mitigate dangerous phenomena through international meetings and other necessary activity, the fact is that the Earth is constantly in motion. A better understanding of the double disaster phenomenon would draw attention to a number of areas of concern, including the need for more secure infrastructure and better ways of dealing with the flooding that occurs from storms.

# Russia looks east to Asia Pacific

While much of Russia’s national focus remains on Ukraine, and the wider European area, President Vladimir Putin maintains big economic and political ambitions for the Asia-Pacific region, too.

The latest sign of this will come next month when Vladivostok hosts the Eastern Economic Forum from Sept. 10-13. This major business forum, which last year attracted participants from almost 70 nations, is perhaps Russia’s key annual international platform for strengthening ties with the Asia Pacific region. The largest foreign delegations at the 2022 event were from China, India and Myanmar.

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, Russia’s economic ties with Europe and much of the wider industrialized West have been significantly reduced, and so Putin has high hopes that he can reorient the economy more toward high-growth emerging markets. These include a number in the vast Asia Pacific landscape, and Russia is already, for example, part of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation group, the 21 members of which also include Brunei, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Certainly, not all Asia Pacific nations are on cordial diplomatic terms with Russia. Since the invasion of Ukraine, attitudes have hardened in Japan and

Australia, for instance. This was evident in the results of a survey by Pew, published in July, that found more than 90 percent of those polled in those two countries had a negative view of Russia.

The picture is different in other parts of the region, however. India, for example, was the only country of the 24 international powers surveyed by Pew in which a majority (57 percent) of people had a favorable opinion of Russia. In Indonesia more people (42 percent) had a favorable opinion than an unfavorable one (32 percent).

But it is very much China, which was not included in the Pew survey, that is key to Russia’s plans in the Asia Pacific region, with the partnership between the two deepening under the leaderships of Putin and President Xi Jinping. Prior to the war in Ukraine, the latter described bilateral ties with Moscow as “the highest-level, most profound and strategically most significant relationship between major countries in the world.”

Plans for cooperative projects include a new method for interbank transfers and a joint credit agency designed to create a shared financial and economic infrastructure, which would allow Beijing and Moscow to function independently of Western-dominated financial institutions.

Both nations are also among the leaders in efforts

Andrew Hammond

to create financial forums that could serve as alternatives to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, including the New Development Bank, which will finance infrastructure and other projects in BRICS states. BRICS is a grouping of the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, which this week invited Saudi Arabia and five other countries to join. Moreover, Russia and China have signed a \$400 billion natural gas supply deal that includes an approximately 2,000-mile gas pipeline from eastern Siberia to northeastern China. They have also agreed to construct a second major gas pipeline connecting western Siberia to China’s Xinjiang Province.

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, Russia has also enhanced its relationship with India. Relations between Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are cordial and, as the Pew data highlights, the Indian people have a relatively favorable view of Russia.

Moscow and New Delhi have set a target of \$30 billion in bilateral trade by the end of 2025, with diversification away from traditional sectors such as energy and minerals to others such as cybersecurity, agriculture and pharmaceuticals. The decision by Indian authorities to extend a \$1 billion line of credit to businesses interested in invest-

ing in Russia’s far east will no doubt help boost bilateral trade.

Putin is eagerly embracing these and other initiatives to help shore up his regime, economically and politically, as Europe and the wider West cut economic ties with Moscow. Though weakened by June’s Wagner mutiny, he remains determined to stand for reelection next year and could still plausibly remain in power into the 2030s.

As he works to expand ties between Moscow and the Asia Pacific region, he is well aware that Europe and the wider West will continue to cut back on economic relations with Russia. According to a recent analysis by the Kyiv School of Economics, a significant number of 1,871 European-owned entities that were active in Russia before the war are no longer operating in the country.

Moreover, analysis from the Yale University School of Management suggests that more than 1,000 companies have voluntarily curtailed operations in Russia to some degree beyond the bare minimum legally required by Western sanctions.

Among those firms that have not already cut business ties completely by withdrawing fully or severing ties with Russia, many are reducing their footprints there by suspending operations while keeping options for a return open, scaling back some business opera-

tions while continuing others, and/or buying time by postponing planned investments while continuing substantive business.

Moving forward, it seems likely this trend will only continue in the face of growing sanctions, including 11 separate EU packages of restrictive measures. In addition, a significant number of Western companies are suffering significant losses among their operations in Russia, including asset impairments, foreign exchange-related charges, and other one-off expenses as a result of the sale, closure or reduction of Russian businesses.

One reason that there is likely to be a continuing outflow of Western businesses from Russia is the increasingly complex operating environment there. Moscow is increasingly impatient, nationalistic, and still reeling from what it considers to be illegal Western sanctions and expropriation of Russian assets overseas.

Taken overall, and with Russia’s relations with the West in what appears to be a permanent state of deep freeze under Putin, Moscow is therefore likely to continue to put ever-greater emphasis on the Asia Pacific region. While not all nations there are on cordial terms with Putin, he will double down on key states such as China and India, where Russia is still viewed relatively favorably.

Sinem Cengiz

# Turkiye, Iraq seek new dynamism in their relationship

The last week has seen a busy diplomatic to-and-fro between Ankara and Baghdad, with an exchange of ministerial visits that hints at crucial messages on the future of Turkish-Iraqi relations. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, the former spy chief, visited Baghdad and Irbil for the first time since assuming the post. Meanwhile, Iraqi Oil Minister Hayan Abdel-Ghani was in Ankara for a two-day visit to discuss several issues that shape the bilateral relationship.

Historically, Turkish-Iraqi relations have seen their fair share of ups and downs due to several unresolved issues. For Türkiye, when it comes to relations with Iraq, three key factors shape its approach: the Kurdistan Regional Government, the terrorism

of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, known as the PKK, and Iranian influence. There are also three key factors for Iraq: transboundary water problems, the oil export issue and Ankara’s economic support for the country’s reconstruction. For years, these issues combined with each other, turning the Turkish-Iraqi relationship into a huge mess.

Will Fidan’s visit pave the way for a new Turkish policy toward Iraq that could lead Ankara to compartmentalize the issues with Iraq in a way that could benefit the interests of both sides? Most likely yes, but this seems mostly due to the adoption of a new approach, in which an economic agenda, rather than politics, is the driving force for bilateral relations.

Fidan’s visit to Irbil indicates the Turkish desire for a

balanced policy between the KRG and Iraq. Ankara aims to pursue a delicate balancing act between Baghdad and Irbil. However, this policy was severely tested when Iraq was dragged into civil war, terrorism and political conflict in the post-2003 era, especially with the country’s unstable political life, with a string of prime ministers having taken office since the US invasion, while Türkiye’s approach has been led by the same leadership.

The fluctuation in Turkish-Iraqi ties led Ankara to pursue a policy that capitalized on the rivalry between Baghdad and Irbil, including cultivating closer political and trade relations with the latter. However, since the failed Kurdish independence referendum that was held in 2017, Türkiye has adopted a new

approach in dealing with both Irbil and Baghdad. This has been based on a more equal approach, rather than favoring one side over the other.

The PKK issue has been a challenging one in Türkiye’s relations with both the KRG and Iraq. In terms of the KRG, Ankara seeks to cultivate ties with two main political entities: the dominant Kurdistan Democratic Party and the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. The KDP, which maintains close political and economic ties with Ankara, is at odds with the PKK due to ideological and political differences. The PUK, which does not enjoy the same ties with Ankara, maintains close relations with Iran and is suspiciously perceived by Türkiye due to

its alleged affiliations with the PKK. Ankara is now trying to approach the PUK and it expects the PKK issue to be addressed in the same way the KDP does.

Türkiye’s military operations and its military base in Iraq have long tested its relations with Baghdad. However, in recent years, Baghdad has avoided feuds with Ankara to preserve relations, especially those from an economic standpoint. During his Baghdad trip, Fidan asked Iraq to designate the PKK as a terrorist organization.

As a former spy chief, Fidan was one of the key architects of Türkiye’s Iraq policy and he has contacts with Kurdish political actors inside the country. His appointment as foreign minister may lead to a sig-

nificant paradigm shift in Türkiye’s Iraq policy, in which diplomatic initiatives could be integrated with security and economic objectives.

There are also other factors that are vying for a greater Turkish role in Iraq. Geopolitically, Iraq is important not only to Turks but also to the Iranians, making the country a centerpiece of their rivalry as they jockey for regional influence. This Turkish-Iranian rivalry also shapes the Iraqi political scene, which plays an important role in Turkish calculations.

From the Iraqi perspective, trade and energy factors are powerful variables informing the country’s approach to Türkiye. The dispute over shared water from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers is a long-standing one, causing occa-

sional tensions between Ankara and Baghdad. During Fidan’s visit, Iraq and Türkiye agreed to establish a permanent joint committee to resolve water-related issues. This is a perfect way to make the water issue an area for cooperation, rather than contention.

Second is the oil issue. The Iraqi oil minister was in Türkiye for talks on the possibility of resuming the KRG’s oil exports through Türkiye’s Ceyhan port, which has been on hold for nearly five months. However, the two sides failed to agree on the resumption of oil exports.

The other topic is Türkiye’s support for Iraq’s reconstruction. At the beginning of 2018, Türkiye was eager to commit a \$5 billion loan to support reconstruction in Iraq. Baghdad hopes to receive

Ankara’s support for the massive Development Road, also known as the Dry Canal project — a highway and rail line from the southern Iraqi city of Basra to Türkiye, which is an important area of Turkish-Iraqi cooperation.

Fidan’s trip was expected to prepare the ground for a visit by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a date for which has not yet been set. The visit indicates that Türkiye is likely to prioritize economic relations above all else, such as it has done with other regional countries, and this will lay the groundwork for cooperation in other areas with time. Handling each contentious issue, such as the PKK, water or oil, in a different file will also enable Türkiye and Iraq to achieve a new dynamism in their relationship.





# Iftikhar stresses Africa’s \$4t market as key for sustainable development

ISLAMABAD (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industries (SCCI) former President Iftikhar Ali Malik on Sunday stressed the need for fully exploiting the vast potential and investments in Africa, a \$4 trillion market, for sustainable socio-economic development of Pakistan.

Chairing a round table conference on ‘Vast Potentials of Africa and Pakistan’, he said recognizing Africa’s potential for exponential growth in the mining sector as a result of the global energy transition, he anticipated an influx of foreign investment within the continent which holds an estimated 30 percent of the planet’s mineral reserves.

He said, “Africa possesses an impressive range of minerals, particularly

those vital to the energy transition,” according to a news release issued here.

He said, “We can not afford to sideline the continent that holds the key to many of the world’s most pressing challenges.”

He stressed the need to explore the significant opportunities that lie in harnessing the untapped potential of partnerships with African nations.

“As Pakistan seeks to diversify its economic and diplomatic relations, Africa presents a rich landscape for collaboration and mutual growth,” he added.

He said, “Africa, with its diverse economies, vast natural resources, and growing consumer markets, holds immense promise for trade, investment, and cooperation.”

He said by strategically

engaging with African nations, Pakistan could tap into sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure development, technology, and education.

Such partnerships would not only bolster our economic prospects but also strengthen diplomatic ties on the international stage, he added.

Iftikhar Ali Malik said, “By taking proactive steps to explore and exploit the vast potential of African partnerships, Pakistan can position itself as a progressive global player committed to mutual growth, peace, and prosperity.”

He said, “Visionary leadership can lead Pakistan toward a brighter future through strengthened ties with the African continent.”

He urged the government to consider formulat-

ing a comprehensive Africa policy that outlines the key objectives and strategies for collaboration with African nations.

This policy could prioritize sectors of mutual interest, encourage trade delegations and investment forums, and facilitate cultural exchanges, he added.

Another speaker Rameen Kashif recipient of the Best CEO award said initiatives aimed at knowledge exchange, capacity building, and cultural ties between Pakistan and African countries could foster a deeper understanding and friendship between our peoples.

Education and skills development programs could be established to empower African youth, leading to sustainable development, she added.



ISLAMABAD: People busy in purchasing vegetables from vendor at Sunday Bazaar.

## Meher emphasizes regional collaboration

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Meher Kashif Younis on Sunday viewed the inclusion of Pakistan in the BRICS group would be a significant step towards fostering economic and diplomatic collaboration in the region.

Speaking at a seminar on “Role of the Brics Bloc in region” held under the aegis of the Gold Economic Ring Forum he said Pakistan’s expertise in sectors such as agriculture, technology, and energy could contribute to the bloc’s overall growth and development, said a news release issued here.

He said adding Pakistan to this group could further enhance the bloc’s potential and influence, offering numerous benefits to all member nations. Furthermore, the inclusion of Pakistan could help foster stability and cooperation in the South Asian region. As we are all aware, regional stability is crucial for economic growth and security.

He said by engaging Pakistan in a platform like BRICS, the bloc could actively contribute to peace-building efforts and facilitate dialogue among neighboring countries.

He said Pakistan has a diverse economy, a strategic geographical location, and a population of over 224 million people.

By including Pakistan in the BRICS bloc, member nations could tap into new markets, establish stronger trade ties, and promote cross-border investment opportunities, he added.

# BOP appoints KPMG to study feasibility of transformation to Islamic banking

## F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Bank of Punjab (BOP) has appointed M/s. KPMG Taseer Hadi & Co. as its consultant to undertake a comprehensive study to review the feasibility and conversion dynamics for transformation of BOP’s conventional banking operations into Islamic banking. The ceremony to formalize this engagement took place at the BOP Head Office and was attended by the senior management of BOP along with representatives from KPMG. The underpinning objective of this feasibility study is to holistically assess the potential implications, challenges, and operational intricacies that a conversion to Islamic Banking may involve. This inaugural step, while significant, is part of a comprehensive process that will eventually determine the direction BOP’s banking operations will take.

The Bank of Punjab (BOP) stands as a promi-

nent financial institution within the country, boasting PACRA Ratings of AA+ for the Long Term and A1+ for the Short Term. It maintains a network of 780 branches and sub-branches spanning Pakistan, comprising 640 Conventional branches (82%) and 140 Islamic Banking branches (18%).

Given its rising popularity among faith-based customers, cost-effectiveness, and substantial potential for expanding market presence, Islamic Banking has emerged as a strategic growth area for the Bank. This growth aligns with the changing landscape, particularly in the aftermath of the recent ruling by the Federal Shariat Court pushing for a shift from an interest-based system to an Islamic financial system. In light of this, BOP is actively exploring the possibility of converting its Conventional Bank into a fully-fledged Islamic Bank.

Under the vision and guidance of its Board of Directors (BOD), The Bank

of Punjab has dedicated the past 3 years to bolstering the capabilities of its Islamic Banking Group (Taqwa). This has been achieved through the introduction of cutting-edge Shariah-compliant products and services, alongside exceptional customer care delivered via dedicated Islamic banking branches and over 50 Islamic banking windows (IBWs) integrated into its conventional branches across the nation.

With unwavering commitment, The Bank of Punjab is steadfast in its determination to extend the reach of Islamic banking throughout Pakistan in the upcoming years. The bank places special emphasis on regions such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and merged areas, Gilgit-Baltistan, Sindh, and Balochistan. This expansion will be accomplished through the establishment of fully-fledged Islamic banking branches, as well as the integration of Islamic banking windows (IBWs).

# Power sector pushing country towards anarchy

ISLAMABAD (INP): President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW)

Dr. Murtaza Mughal has said that people across the country are protesting and committing suicides as a result of excessive electricity costs, which are pushing the country into chaos.

He said, “The country is plunging into lawlessness and chaos as elites have turned an affluent country into a living nightmare for its citizens.”

After the political and economic collapse, the power bills have become a nightmare for the masses; their household budgets have been destroyed, and their lives have become miserable, he added.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that fights are taking place in the streets and in houses, violence has become the norm, and divorces are taking place due to the inflated electricity bills.

People have been forced to take out loans, sell jewellery and other essential items to pay the bills, and

compromise on food, health, and education.

In various parts of the country, announcements are being made from mosques asking people not to pay electricity bills; traders are not allowing WAPDA officials to enter the markets; strikes, roadblocks, and attacks on WAPDA officials have become routine in many places, which is a perfect recipe for a civil war, he observed.

He said that the security of the power officials, offices, and grid stations is facing severe threats, and if the situation is not controlled, a civil war may also break out across the country.

Dr Mughal said that while the cost of electricity is killing people, it is also destroying businesses. The country’s elite and WAPDA officers have become white-collar criminals who only care about their own interests and have no interest in resolving the problems of the people.

# Untapped potential: The urgent need to expand educational access for Afghan refugees

## Noor Zia

Education is a crucial tool that helps you in every aspect of life. The more educated a country’s people are, the greater their chances of development are. It reduces the chances of poverty. Also, it can create a moral and ethically better society. But here in Pakistani universities, there are limited seats for Afghan refugee students. Despite being intelligent, they fail to get higher studies. The government of Pakistan has provided them with Proof of Registration (POR) cards, but despite this, they can’t get an education the way Pakistani

students do.

What if the admissions process became the same as it is for Pakistani students? Most Afghan refugees are born in Pakistan and have never seen their homeland, not even in their dreams. Second, they are neighboring countries, and one should take more care of their neighbors. Third, they share the same cultural and religious practices. But still, they face a lot of discrimination. These acts of discrimination have a lot of adverse impacts on students.

An Afghan student Haris Noor says: “Due to the limited seats for refugee students, their time is wasted. They do apply for a univer-

sity, but due to the limited seats, they don’t get admission. As a result, their precious time is wasted due to the closing of other universities or because they can’t afford the fees of private universities. Secondly, if they want to study a subject they like, they can’t due to the limited availability of seats. In this case, they study a subject they don’t want. Thirdly, due to the limited seats, they are compelled to be admitted to private universities, which results in a severe financial burden. Because they are refugees, they can’t avail themselves of scholarship opportunities.”

Another Afghan refugee

student, Javid says: Because of the limited seats for Afghan refugees in Pakistani universities, some students feel demotivated and discontinue their studies. It results in various psychological issues and most of the problems last for a prolonged period, resulting in life-long trauma.

All the mentioned problems lead to psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety. Further, despite having POR cards, Afghan refugee students feel they have no identity. Suffering from an identity crisis leads to social isolation. Some Afghan refugee students might cut themselves off from society

because discrimination creates an inferiority complex in people. It also hampers their social quotient and limits their interaction with peers, affecting their overall growth and learning.

Apart from that, limiting access to education will limit the potential contributions these refugee students can make to society. Also, it perpetuates the cycle of poverty because education is a leading factor in breaking such cycles. We see a lot of child laborers among Afghan refugees. You ask a child laborer where he belongs, and he would definitely say that he is an Afghan refugee.

Overall, addressing

these negative impacts requires unwavering efforts to eliminate any form of discrimination and provide equal opportunities for education to all individuals, irrespective of their status as refugees, because they are first humans and then refugees. They need the same love as other humans do. They need the same opportunities as others do, and they are as respectable as others are. So, eradicating discrimination will lead to a more inclusive and harmonious society where people will live a life full of happiness.

(The writer is a student of English Department at Islamia College University)

# Trade, industry warn of more protests if power tariff hike not withdrawn

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The trade and industry has warned the government of more protests and demonstrations against the inflated and excessive electricity bills if hike in power tariff is not withdrawn, pointing out the main reason of soaring energy cost is the power purchase agreements signed with the power producers.

The FPCCI’s Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that the rising interest rates, the uncertain rupee value, soaring fuel prices, higher gas and power tariffs, and unabated food inflation were extremely serious

issues that needed to be addressed by the government on a priority basis. He said that since the arrival of the caretaker government dollar has gone out of control. The new finance minister should call of the real stakeholders to finalize policies, suggesting the institutions which are getting free electricity and petrol should be ended.

FPCCI former president stressed that the government should change the basic tariff of IPPs in rupee instead of US dollars as this change would save billions of rupees of the national exchequer and provide electricity at affordable cost to the trade and industry, mak-

ing our export competitive in the international market. Similarly, the profits of the IPPs should also be paid in local currency instead of US dollars, he said.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that they cannot compete with the international market in the current price of electricity, it is impossible to do business in the current conditions and businesses are closing down, the government should focus on alternative sources of energy to provide cheap electricity, create a conducive investment environment for tax collection.

He stated that the inflated power bills triggered country-wide

protests, including Karachi, Rawalpindi, Multan, Gujranwala, and Peshawar, demanding that the government to abolish imposed taxes on electricity, saying that increase in electricity bills is unbearable and demanded relief from the government.

In July, the then federal cabinet gave its go-ahead to a massive increase in the base tariff of electricity by up to Rs7.50 per unit against the national average tariff determination of Rs4.96 by the power regulator National Electric Power Regulatory Authority.

The regulator had hiked the tariff to increase revenue collec-

tion for the loss-making power distribution companies (Discos) during the current fiscal year.

According to a Nepra statement, the revised national average tariff for the 2023-24 fiscal year has been determined at Rs29.78 per unit kWh, which is Rs4.96 per unit higher than the previously determined national average tariff of Rs24.82.

While the regulator cited the rupee’s devaluation, high inflation and interest rates, the addition of new capacities and overall low sales growth as reasons behind the increase, it hiked to the conditions set by the

International Monetary Fund of introducing structural reforms in the energy sector.

However, the applicable tariff would be much higher after including surcharges, taxes, duties and levies, besides monthly and quarterly adjustments.

He said that IPPs were earning huge profits in dollars, but the businesses were badly suffering due to exorbitant power tariffs and the rising cost of doing business. He said that PPAs in Pakistan had made energy cost highest in the region and stressed that to save the industry, the government should renegotiate PPAs with IPPs in the

best national interest.

He said that due to the significant depreciation of rupee, the import of industrial raw materials had become very expensive which was pushing up the production cost.

He stressed that the government should take urgent measures to stabilize the value of rupee in order to save the industry from further troubles.

He said that instead of hiking the power tariffs, the government should focus on controlling the transmission and distribution losses and power theft besides improving the performance of power companies to save the consumers from further

burden.

The business community was of the view that the government could mobilize the required resources through increasing the number of taxpayers, reducing line losses and power theft, and ending exemptions to narrow the fiscal deficit instead of increasing the power tariff.

He said the last increase in power tariff left the industrial sector, particularly the export industry like textile, uncompetitive in comparison to regional competitors. This may lead to the loss of more export orders and render many more people jobless.

## COURT NOTICE

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## In brief

## PFF name squad for SAFF C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) has named the boys' squad for the upcoming SAFF U16 Championship 2023, scheduled to take place in Bhutan next month. The green shirts would kick off their campaign against the home side, Bhutan, on September 1 at Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu and Maldives on September 3 at the same venue, according to a press release issued here. The squad includes Defenders: Abdul Rehman, M. Husnain Saleem, Najeem Khan, Sameer Ahmed, Ubaid Ullah Khan, Majid Ali, Syed Muhammad Aabis Raza, and Umar Javed; Midfielders: Abdul Samad, Muhammad Faraz, Farhad, Haroon Rashed, Hikmat Ullah, Khobaib Khan, M. Shahab Ahmed, and Muhammad Khan; Forwards: Abdul Ghani, Husnain Wali Raza, Subhan Karim and Syed Kabir Ali Shah; Goal Keepers: Aadil Ali Khan, Balach Khan, and Ghulam Abbas.

## Hockey Women Jr WC 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 10th edition of the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup 2023 would run from November 29 to December 10 at the National Stadium Sports Park in Santiago, Chile. The 16 teams in the hunt for the gold medal know their pools and the opponents that stand between them and the ultimate glory. The officials were set and ready to ensure a smooth-running and fairly contested tournament, said a press release. All 16 teams that have qualified for the event were placed into their respective pools earlier this year, on June 22, at the official launch ceremony of the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup Chile 2023. This would be the third FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup to be played in the city, which has previously played host to the event in 2005 and 2016. The World Cup would begin on November 29 with 12 teams in action on the opening day! Pool B action, with Korea taking on Zimbabwe, will get the event underway. High octane clashes between Netherlands and Australia, India and Canada, Argentina and Spain, Germany and Belgium would follow, before hosts Chile play the final match of the opening day against South Africa. Hockey has shown itself to be greatly popular with the fans in Chile, which has been further enhanced by the great strides made by the Chilean women's and men's senior teams, with both making impressive debuts at the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup in 2022 and the FIH Hockey Men's World Cup 2023, respectively.

## PCB to unveil World Cup kit

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) will launch the national team's new kit for ODI World Cup 2023 tomorrow (Monday). PCB Chairman Zaka Ashraf will unveil the World Cup kit at an event in Lahore. The World Cup commences on Thursday, 5 October when 2019 finalists England and New Zealand clash at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, with the event culminating in the final at the same venue on Sunday, 19 November. Earlier this month, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced change in the World Cup matches, including the eagerly-awaited contest between India and Pakistan.



MULTAN: Pakistan cricket team arrived for the upcoming First match of Asia Cup 2023 between Pakistan and Nepal teams at Multan Cricket Stadium. —APP Photo

## Babar heaps praise on Pakistan team's hardwork, discipline

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan skipper Babar Azam believed that his team's ascension to the No.1 spot in the MRF Tyres ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings was a result of their hard work and discipline.

A 3-0 series sweep over Afghanistan helped Pakistan to the pole position in Men's ODI Team Rankings. They are now marginally ahead of Australia, with 2725 points and 118 rating points.

They had won the first ODI by 142 runs at the back of a brilliant bowling display. The second game was a nail-biting thriller, with the Men in Green eking out a one-wicket win in the last over of the game.

In the third game, they battled well on a tough wicket to set a commanding total, before regular strikes from their bowlers ensured a 59-run win. Babar was chuffed at having achieved the No.1 spot in the ODI team rankings. He described it as a complete team effort.

"Whenever you achieve the No.1 spot, it gives you a lot of joy," Babar said after the final ODI, as quoted by ICC. "This is the result of the entire team's effort. We've been here before, but unfortunately we lost that position after losing a game. But we're back here by the grace of God. This is due to our hard work and performances."

While discussing the

recently concluded series, the Pakistan skipper expressed his belief that the momentum gained from it would provide them an advantage in the upcoming Asia Cup.

"We are excited, and this series win will help us. This wasn't an easy series, even if some might assume otherwise. Afghanistan are a tough side, their spinners are one of the best (in the world). "The momentum we've achieved in this series will give us a lot of confidence. We are excited about the Asia Cup and are looking forward to Multan." Pakistan will open their Asia Cup campaign against Nepal in Multan on 30 August.

## Taimoor Khan knocks India's Singh

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani boxer and Asian Boxing Federation Heavyweight Champion Taimoor Khan knocked India's Jaskaran Singh in a bout in Dubai.

Taimoor downed Singh in the first round in 30 seconds at the bout which was part of the World Boxing Association's (WBA) Colour World Cup World Tour.

I successfully defended my Asian Boxing Federation Heavyweight title and beat India's undefeated heavyweight boxer Jaskaran Singh on a technical knockout within 30 seconds, he said in a statement issued here.

It may be mentioned that Taimoor Khan retained his Asian Boxing Federation Heavyweight title after defeating his Thai counterpart, Aekkaphob Auraiwan, in a highly-anticipated bout in Bangkok earlier this year. Taimoor was so far an undefeated Pakistani heavyweight boxer in 10 fights.

## Training camp for Davis Cup tie from Sep 1

ISLAMABAD (APP): The training camp of Pakistan team in preparations for the Davis Cup tie would kick off from September 1 in Islamabad.

According to details, Muhammad Shoaib, Muhammad Abid and Barkatullah have been selected for the Pakistan team for the Davis Cup.

The Pakistan Davis Cup team includes Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi (Playing Captain) while players comprise on Aqeel Khan, Muhammad Shoaib, Muhammad Abid and Barkatullah, said a press release issued here Sunday.

After consultations between the PTF Executive Committee and Davis Cup Captain Aisam ul Haq Qureshi, former Davis Cup player Mushaf Zia was selected as coach to oversee the training camp.

# Pakistan beat India to clinch gold medal at IBSA World Games 2023

BIRMINGHAM (APP): In a remarkable display of sportsmanship and skill, Pakistan clinched the coveted Gold medal in blind cricket at the IBSA Games 2023, prevailing over arch-rivals India in a gripping final on late Saturday.

The final clash, held at the iconic Edgbaston Cricket Stadium in Birmingham, was set alight as India won the toss and opted to bat first under the afternoon sun.

Displaying their batting prowess, India managed to amass a formidable total of 184 runs for the loss of 3 wickets within the stipulated 20 overs. Durga Tompaki led the charge with an impressive knock of 76 runs off 57 balls, complemented by Sunil Ramesh's 48 runs off 29 balls. Pakistan's bowlers



Muhammad Salman and Matullah secured a crucial wicket each. Undeterred by the challenge, Pakistan embarked on their pursuit of the target with flair and determination.

Exhibiting exceptional teamwork, Pakistan's response was swift and calculated, achieving victory in just 14.1 overs with 8 wickets to spare. The

unbeaten innings of Muhammad Salman, who scored 48 runs off 25 balls, coupled with Badar Munir's explosive 41 runs off a mere 16 balls, featuring 7 fours and 1 six, propelled Pakistan towards an emphatic win. The final outcome was a testament to Pakistan's unwavering spirit and skill, resulting in a victory by 8 wickets.

## Pakistan in pool D of FIH Hockey Men's Jr WC 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan was placed in Pool D of the FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup Malaysia 2023, scheduled to spring into action at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from December 5 to 16.

Pakistan has been placed alongside Belgium, Netherlands and New Zealand. All 16 teams that have qualified for the event were placed into their respective pools earlier this year, on June 24, at the official launch ceremony of the FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup Malaysia 2023.

The pools were established on the basis of the

very first FIH Junior World Rankings, said a press release. Pool B action between France and Egypt would get the tournament underway on the opening day, which will see 12 teams get their campaign underway.

Germany vs South Africa, Spain vs Canada, Argentina vs Australia and India vs Korea would follow the opening match. Hosts Malaysia would take on Chile in the final encounter of the opening day, with the hopes of making a perfect start in front of their passionate home fans.

Malaysia has a rich relationship with the FIH Hockey Men's Junior

World Cups, having hosted the event on three occasions in the past.

The cities of Kuala Lumpur (1982), Ipoh (1989) and Johor Bahru (2009) hosted the second, fourth and ninth editions of the event respectively.

The 13th edition of the FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup would see Kuala Lumpur play hosts once again, 41 years since the event was last held in Malaysia's capital city.

Pool A: Argentina, Australia, Chile, Malaysia; Pool B: Egypt, France, Germany, South Africa; Pool C: Canada, India, Korea, Spain; Pool D: Belgium, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan.

## Mickey lauds Pakistan after they reclaim top ODI spot

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Mickey Arthur, director of Pakistan's men's cricket team, has praised the Green Shirts after they reclaimed the number one spot in the International Cricket Council (ICC) One Day International (ODI) rankings on Saturday following their 3-0 clean sweep over Afghanistan.

While addressing the Pakistan team in the dressing room after the third ODI against Afghanistan, Arthur said on Saturday, "There is a cake here with the number one on it. This signifies all the hard work that you guys have put in over a period of time to get to number one in the world."

"Never ever take this for granted," he stressed. "Let's celebrate this tonight because there has been a lot of blood, sweat and tears that have gone into this.

This is just the start, we are in operation World Cup."

Pakistan's next assignment is the Asia Cup, which begins on August 30. Meanwhile, the World Cup will be held in India in October-November this year. Chasing a target of 269 runs in the third ODI, Afghanistan were dismissed for 209 runs in 48.4 overs which helped Pakistan register victory by 59 runs. Leg-spinner Shadab Khan was the pick of the Pakistan bowlers with figures of 3-42 in 10 overs.

Mohammad Nawaz, Faheem Ashraf and Shaheen Afridi claimed two wickets each. It was a sorry batting display by Afghanistan as the highest scorer in their innings was tailender Mujeeb Ur Rahman, who scored a career-best 64 runs in 37 balls. His explosive knock, which was only able

to delay the inevitable, included five fours and as many maximums.

Shahidullah scored 37 runs, meanwhile Riaz Hassan scored 34 runs.

Earlier, Pakistan had set a target of 269 runs after winning the toss and deciding to bat first in the third and final ODI of the series against Afghanistan in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Pakistan finished at 268-8 in 50 overs after Mohammad Rizwan (67) and Babar Azam (60) scored fifties. Azam and Rizwan added 110 runs in 145 balls for the third wicket.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Nawaz (30 off 25) and Agha Salman (38 not out in 31) provided impetus at the backend of the innings with 61 runs in 47 balls for the seventh wicket. Gulbadin Naib and Faeed Ahmad claimed two wickets each for Afghanistan.

## KP team wins bronze medals in National Youth Air Rifle Contests

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa marked their way by winning the bronze medals in the National Youth and Junior Air Rifle and Pistol Championship held at Army Military Unite, Jhelum on Sunday.

This was stated by international shooter Salman Khan while talking to APP on phone. He disclosed that it was just a day-long practice. He said the talent is there but due to lack of opportunities, the talented players could not reach the national and international teams from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Salman Khan said that the following shooters have secured a team bronze medal representing KP Shooting and Rifle Association in the National Youth and Junior Air Rifle and Pistol Championship held at AMU Jhelum.

He said, athletes generally need to practice shooting in order to develop their skills and become proficient in their sport. While natural talent can certainly be a factor in an athlete's ability to shoot accurately, it is not usually sufficient on its own to ensure success at a high level, Salman Khan, who himself is an international shooter, said.

Practice is essential for developing the muscle memory, coordination, and mental focus required to shoot accurately, he said. Athletes

often spend countless hours in the gym or on the practice field, honing their shooting skills through drills, repetition, and game simulations, he added.

In addition to practice, athletes may also rely on coaching, video analysis, and other forms of feedback to refine their shooting technique and improve their performance, he informed. They may also study the strategies and techniques of successful shooters in their sport, in order to gain a better understanding of what it takes to succeed, Salman said.

"Of course, natural talent can certainly give an athlete an advantage in developing their shooting skills, as it can make it easier to learn and adapt to new techniques. However, even the most naturally talented athletes still need to put in the work and practice diligently in order to reach their full potential," he said.

Furthermore, shooting technique can vary depending on the sport and position an athlete plays, he remarked. For example, shooting a basketball from the three-point line requires a different technique than shooting a free throw, and shooting a soccer ball accurately from long range requires a different technique than shooting a penalty kick.

Thus, athletes must not only practice shooting in general, but also tailor

their practice to the specific requirements of their sport and position.

Additionally, the mental aspect of shooting cannot be overlooked. Shooting requires focus, concentration, and confidence, all of which can be developed through practice and mental training. Athletes may use visualization techniques, positive self-talk, and other mental strategies to improve their shooting performance, Salman Khan said.

It's worth noting that while practice is important for developing shooting skills, some athletes may have a natural affinity or talent for shooting that allows them to progress more quickly or perform at a higher level. However, even these athletes still need to put in the work and practice regularly in order to reach their full potential, he said.

Natural talent can be a factor in an athlete's shooting ability, practice is essential for developing the skills and technique required to shoot accurately in a particular sport or position. Shooting technique can vary depending on the sport and position, and mental training is also important for developing focus, concentration, and confidence, he said.

The players who win bronze medals in the Team Championship including Ajab Khan Afridi, Mikail Khan Afridi and Salaar Khan Afridi.

## Andreescu withdraws from US Open due to back injury



LONDON (Agencies): Former champion Bianca Andreescu has withdrawn from the Cincinnati Masters, injury, organisers said on Saturday, after the Canadian suffered a stress fracture in her back.

Andreescu, who won the tournament in 2019, lost her opening match at the Citi Open in Washington D.C. last month before going down in straight sets to Camila Giorgi at the Canadian Open. She appeared to be in discomfort against Italian Giorgi and

needed to call a physiotherapist on court.

Andreescu then withdrew from the Cincinnati Masters, saying: "During my match in Washington I started experiencing pain in my back that kept getting worse and I did everything I could the other night in Montreal to play at my highest level."

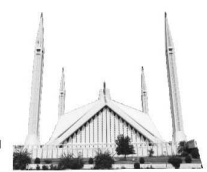
"All of this led me to undergo medical examinations and sadly the results have revealed a small stress fracture in my back," Andreescu, 23, was sched-

uled to face Ukraine's Lesia Tsurenko in the U.S. Open first round.

Former number two Paula Badosa also said on Saturday that she would miss the year's last Grand Slam with an injury. The 25-year-old Spaniard, who was due to play Venus Williams in a first-round match under the lights on Tuesday, announced she was shutting down her season to focus on getting healthy.

"Those of you who know me know how much I like to compete and how difficult it has been to make this decision... See you next year, stronger than ever," Badosa said on social media. It has been a season to forget for Badosa who missed the French Open with a stress fracture in her spine and withdrew from her second-round match at Wimbledon due to a back injury.





## In brief

### Tourists throng to hilly areas to beat heat

ISLAMABAD (APP): A large number of tourists have thronged to scenic hilly resorts and lush green valleys in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including the Nathia Gali, Ayubia, Naran, Kaghan, and Kalam to enjoy pleasant weather conditions amid scorching heat that gripped various parts of the country. According to a private news channel, Nathiagali, a famous hilly area was attracting a large number of tourists this summer season from all the provinces where owners of hotels, plazas and houses were earning almost double compared to the previous years. With a heavy influx of domestic tourists, local people have vacated rooms of their houses for tourists in Nathia Gali, Ayubia, and Kalam to increase their profits. Tourists were also being seen in tents at scenic tourist places at Ayubia, Donga Gali and Thandyani where they were enjoying waterfalls, lush green valleys, meadows and snow-covered mountain peaks.

### International Day of Charity

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Day of Charity will be marked on September 5 (Tuesday) across the globe including Pakistan which promotes charitable efforts made to alleviate poverty worldwide. Charity workers visiting homes with donation boxes. Educational events and fundraising activities are held worldwide on the International Day of Charity. Media publicity about the day is promoted via social networks, online news, radios, and TV. Printed material is also published and distributed to publicize this observance. Poverty persists in all countries regardless of their economic, social and cultural situation, particularly in developing countries. Concerned with the poverty problem, the UN called for countries to recognize and contribute towards the efforts of charitable organizations and individuals. On December 17, 2012, the UN designated September 5 as the International Day of Charity, which was first celebrated in 2013.

### CTP launches crackdown

RAWALPINDI (APP): The City Traffic Police (CTP), on the directive of City Police Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan, on Sunday launched crackdown against Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) plying on roads having substandard CNG cylinders. According to a CTP spokesman, strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against the rules violators. He informed that the CTO had directed all the Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs) and Sector Incharges of CTP to take action against the rules violators without any discrimination. He directed the CTP officers to impound vehicles on violation of the rules and remove low quality and substandard CNG cylinders installed in unsafe and dangerous manner. During the campaign the vehicles would be issued challan slips, if their cylinders were not installed in accordance with approved measures, he said adding, in order to ensure safety of the citizens and to bring down the mishaps due to substandard CNG cylinders, the operation had been accelerated. He said, the drivers and owners of the vehicles would not be allowed to put the lives of the citizens into danger and install illegal and low quality cylinders in their vehicles.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Health Minister Dr. Nadeem Jan visit the PIMS Hospital to check the health facilities.

## Commissioner organizes special event for Christian pastors

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatha here on Sunday organized a special event for Christian pastors.

Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khurram Ali, administrative officers and the pastors of all the churches of Rawalpindi district attended the event.

Addressing the participants, the Commissioner said, "Pakistan belongs to all of us and everyone has equal rights in the country. The enemy forces of Islam and Pakistan are trying to destroy our peace. We have to maintain unity in our ranks to defeat the evil designs of the enemy."

Misunderstandings and negative propaganda of the enemies on social media lead to divisiveness, he

added. A WhatsApp group consisting of administrative officers and 40 Christian representatives has been formed to increase mutual communication, the Commissioner informed.

He directed the authorities concerned to immediately investigate if a malicious news is spread and take strict action against those promoting hatred in the society.

The work of repairing the roads of Dhok Syedan and other Christian communities has also been started, Liaquat Ali Chatha said adding, special centers had been established in Sadiqabad, Bani and Naseerabad areas for the welfare of the minorities.

The Station House Officers posted at the centers had been directed to provide all possible assistance to the local minority population, he said.

The centers would take special measures for law and order and security of the minorities at the local level, the Commissioner added. The RPO on the occasion said that national unity is need of the hour, adding, "We all should make efforts to promote love and brotherhood."

Punjab Police are making all-out efforts to protect the public, Syed Khurram Ali said and added, the purpose of this event is to establish an atmosphere of brotherhood in the region.

Pastor Pervaiz Sohail said that the message of peace is being spread at all level. The administration is also providing the Christians a sense of security by visiting the churches, he added.

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi administration had registered as many as 1,802 FIRs on violations of anti-dengue SOPs from January 1 to date in various areas of the Rawalpindi district, said District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control Dr Sajjad Mehmood here Sunday.

Giving details of the punitive actions, he said that the district administration, in collaboration with allied departments, had sealed 438 premises, issued tickets to 646 and a fine of Rs 31,33,000 was imposed on violations of dengue SOPs in 2023.

1,802 FIRs registered for violating dengue SOPs

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

"Around 491 acres retrieved in Punjab, 145 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 339 acres in Sindh and only 32 acres in Balochistan," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP on Sunday.

He said that about 3,287 acres in Punjab, 832 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,180 acres in Sindh, and 687 acres of land in Balochistan were being encroached. The official said that in light of the directives of the Supreme

Court, the anti-encroachment operations for retrieval of encroached railway land all over the Railway network were initiated and a joint procedure order was issued to all divisional superintendents for retrieval of Railways land from encroachment, adding, the anti-encroachment schedules, on a three months basis, are being prepared and sent to all concerned in line with the joint procedure order.

He said that Pakistan Railways had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups and even business organizations

who were using it for residential, commercial and agriculture purposes for decades. "The encroachment operation will be launched with the assistance of Railway Police and district administrations of the relevant provincial governments," he added.

He said the organization was taking several steps to retrieve encroached land from the land grabbers including a detailed survey being carried out to identify the encroached land, occupied by the individuals and under illegal occupation by various government departments. The official said that First Information Reports (FIRs) were being lodged and cases were registered and sent to PR Judicial Magistrates for expeditious trial.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The world we live in today has gone far away from the healthy activities of the past, with one of the main reasons being the excessive use of video games overpowering the minds of our kids and teenagers, desiring things to be just 'One Click Away'.

When it comes to playing video games, surprisingly it is not a popular activity only among kids, teens, and adolescents but also the aged people who spend hours for gaining nothing.

Especially the mothers who once used to spend hours training and educating their children, are now in haste to wind up their routine home activities and rush to their gadgets to play games. When they are busy in this unhealthy activity, they take their eyes off their children who are busy in the same activity but sometimes playing violent games that leave indelible imprints on their minds.

Violent video games negatively affect the attitudes and behaviors of kids who start living in a fantasy world thinking it a permanent sort of entertainment for them.

These games attract children and teenagers who are often seen discussing features of different games or graphics which also leads them to indulge in such practices in real life.

Some of these video games show killings the people, use of drugs, alcohol, criminal behavior, disrespect to elders, authority and laws while some ask them to do tasks indulging them deeper and deeper in unlocking new features and techniques of games. Anxiety, intolerance, and distraction from our noble norms and traditions are the very outcome of these violent and indecent video games and we can clearly experience a change in their behavior and psychological problems. 'They are so deeply involved in this practice that they can hardly get rid of it' is a growing notion among parents, teachers and physiologists who claim that such kinds of games are harmful not for the kids but for society as a whole.

"Most of the time during summer holidays both of my sons were often seen glued to their mobile phones and laptops," remarked Sabir Shafique, a father of two 11 and 10-year-old sons. "Even at night when I used to wake around 2:00 or 3:00 a.m., they were seen playing video games."

How far Sabir Shafique could be successful in mending this habit of his sons, is a million-dollar question but still, he deems it a bad habit that was affecting the acumen of his kids as well as their health and studies.

Spending excessive time playing video games leads to least socializing with friends and family, lower grades in studies, poor health, weakening eyesight and unhealthy brains.

"Children who are addicted to playing violent video games start looking at the world like a game," said Ayub Khan, another father of video games-mongering kids.

"They try to copy the actions of games in real life and want to be the characters of the games. Therefore they grow up to be aggressive adults in real life." Violent video games have multiple effects on children due to technological advancements such as live interaction with the other players, competitive elements and immersive graphics.

A well-known researcher Dr. Zaheer Khan sees teenagers and individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as more vulnerable to the harmful effects of violent games.

"In developed countries, more effects of the digital divide were observed among the upper class but in countries like Pakistan research yielded opposite results," he claimed. "People with sedentary lifestyles are more susceptible to the negative consequences of violent games."

He continued saying, "The violent

## Health minister inspects federal capital's hospitals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan on Sunday visited the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) and the Federal General Hospital Chak Shahzad to examine facilities being provided to the patients. During visit, he examined various departments of PIMS and Federal General Hospital including emergency section and received response from the admitted patients about the standard of medical services being delivered to them.

On the occasion, the minister said, "We will make efforts to meet the challenges in the health sector. We have to work round-the-clock for the welfare of the people of this country."

"Health sector is our first priority and

improving the health sector is my mission," Dr. Nadeem Jan added.

He assured that he would try his level best to resolve the problems of the people in a short period of time on priority basis.

He expressed his resolve to serve the country and the nation. Public welfare projects would have to be completed on fast track, Dr. Nadeem Jan said.

"We will ensure effective measures to protect people from diseases and epidemics," he said.

He asked the hospital staff to work with full dedication to come up to expectations of the people. Dr. Nadeem said, "We will endeavor to lay the foundation of revolutionary welfare projects of public interest in the health sector."

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## Video games - Surviving in a digital onslaught

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Especially the mothers who once used to spend hours training and educating their children, are now in haste to wind up their routine home activities and rush to their gadgets to play games. When they are busy in this unhealthy activity, they take their eyes off their children who are busy in the same activity but sometimes playing violent games that leave indelible imprints on their minds.

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Some of these video games show killings the people, use of drugs, alcohol, criminal behavior, disrespect to elders, authority and laws while some ask them to do tasks indulging them deeper and deeper in unlocking new features and techniques of games. Anxiety, intolerance, and distraction from our noble norms and traditions are the very outcome of these violent and indecent video games and we can clearly experience a change in their behavior and psychological problems. 'They are so deeply involved in this practice that they can hardly get rid of it' is a growing notion among parents, teachers and physiologists who claim that such kinds of games are harmful not for the kids but for society as a whole.

"Most of the time during summer holidays both of my sons were often seen glued to their mobile phones and laptops," remarked Sabir Shafique, a father of two 11 and 10-year-old sons. "Even at night when I used to wake around 2:00 or 3:00 a.m., they were seen playing video games."

How far Sabir Shafique could be successful in mending this habit of his sons, is a million-dollar question but still, he deems it a bad habit that was affecting the acumen of his kids as well as their health and studies.

Spending excessive time playing video games leads to least socializing with friends and family, lower grades in studies, poor health, weakening eyesight and unhealthy brains.

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"They try to copy the actions of games in real life and want to be the characters of the games. Therefore they grow up to be aggressive adults in real life." Violent video games have multiple effects on children due to technological advancements such as live interaction with the other players, competitive elements and immersive graphics.

A well-known researcher Dr. Zaheer Khan sees teenagers and individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as more vulnerable to the harmful effects of violent games.

"In developed countries, more effects of the digital divide were observed among the upper class but in countries like Pakistan research yielded opposite results," he claimed. "People with sedentary lifestyles are more susceptible to the negative consequences of violent games."

He continued saying, "The violent

content in these games can influence players' minds and may trigger aggression in real-life situations. Therefore, parents are increasingly concerned about the potential link between violent games and self-harming or aggressive behavior of their children."

Zaheer pleaded that players spending too much time playing violent games to overcome difficult levels may resort to self-harm as a coping mechanism. "This alarming trend needs parental vigilance and intervention as massive use of mobile phones and other gadgets without parental moderation, is a real cause of concern," he stated.

Zaheer said that usually, the parents intervene when their children reach an addiction level stressing their monitoring from the very outset as well as keeping an eye on their social circle, as invitations to play these games often originate from friends. Calling for the implementation of a video game rating system based on a player's age, Dr Zaheer also recommended physical activity, promoting awareness and parental guidance and a balanced approach to gaming to safeguard the well-being of players and mitigate harmful effects of violent games. Although it is a challenging task, but some parents have strict discipline at home and discourage massive use of these devices. "I have specified timing for my kids for studying, spending time with family members and playing games," said a school teacher Sobia Iftikhar. "After dinner, we have family interaction time and during this period use of mobile phones, laptops, or other gadgets is completely banned." "During this time, they play mind games at home or go for a walk outside," she said and advised the parents to spend more time with their children and engage them in healthy activities.

## Ansari calls for awareness campaign on 'Zainab Alert' app

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ameen Ansari the father of late Zainab here on Sunday stressed the need to launch a massive awareness campaign on "Zainab Alert" app for effective emergency response and recovery of missing children.

"A widespread awareness campaign to sensitize the general public about the rights of children and attitudes and behaviors could help create a safe and enabling environment for them to grow up," Ansari told APP.

He urged the parents, media and all stakeholders to play their due role in implementation of the "Zainab Alert Act" in true letter and spirit to combat child abuse, advising the parents to keep an eye on children activity to avoid harassment.

He said the Inspectors general of police

(IGPs) in their provincial capacities as well as the chief ministers and provincial home secretaries should follow up on "Zainab Alert" system at relevant regional and district levels.

He reiterated his commitment to continue efforts for awareness campaign though religious scholars.

The Ministry of Human Rights has launched the app "Zainab Alert" on the Pakistan Citizen's Portal in an effort to unify and strengthen efforts to track and trace missing children and child abuse cases in Pakistan. Through integration with the Pakistan Citizen's Portal, the alert mechanism was instantly available to 3 million registered users. The application has been launched following the recent enactment of the Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Act 2020.

These video games show killings the people, use of drugs, alcohol, criminal behavior, disrespect to elders, authority and laws while some ask them to do tasks indulging them deeper and deeper in unlocking new features and techniques of games. Anxiety, intolerance, and distraction from our noble norms and traditions are the very outcome of these violent and indecent video games and we can clearly experience a change in their behavior and psychological problems. 'They are so deeply involved in this practice that they can hardly get rid of it' is a growing notion among parents, teachers and physiologists who claim that such kinds of games are harmful not for the kids but for society as a whole.

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ISLAMABAD (APP): Transportation stands as an indispensable component of daily existence, serving as the bridge that connects individuals to their workplaces, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and leisure pursuits. Amid current economic challenges, citizens strive for affordable mobility solutions, reshaping their interactions with a crucial aspect of existence.

The recent surge in petrol prices has become a pressing concern for citizens across the country, altering transportation dynamics and impacting daily lives. With the current economic trajectory, deciding to invest in a fuel-based vehicle has become a daunting decision.

Data from June 2023, released by the Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association (PAMA), reveals a 37.7% decline in the total vehicles sold in the fiscal year 2023 (13.48 lakh units), compared to 21.63 lakh units in fiscal year 2022.

Armaan Khan, a vehicles' showroom owner in Islamabad, reflects the impact: "Car prices have surged dramatically. A Daihatsu Mira 2020 model that sold for 20 lakhs in 2022 now stands at 33 lakhs."

Hike in fuel prices and vehicles' costs are two major contributors that have significantly affected overall car sales, forcing people to look for alternative affordable transport options, he remarked.

The recent petrol price hike has compelled middle-class and some upper-class families to reconsider car use, turning to motorbikes as an alternative. According to the Federal Bureau of Statistics, motorbike ownership has risen from 41% in 2015 to 53% presently. Muhammad Jasim, a Rawalpindi resident, illustrates the shift: "With petrol prices soaring, I switched from a car to a motorbike to cut travel costs to meet other must-have household necessities."

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ISLAMABAD: A woman along with her children busy in selecting and purchasing school bags from vendor at Sunday Bazaar in Federal Capital.



Jihadi hubs to be remembered

KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Minister of Information and Culture in Publication Affairs, Hayatullah Mohajer Farahi said that the ministry is working to write the history of major jihadi centers including Tora Bora, and present it to the future generation of the country. Mohajer Farahi, during his trip to Nangarhar province where he visited the Jihadi center of Tore Bora, said Tore Bora is historically a tourist site with natural beauty and high mountains.

33 hospitals face closure

KABUL (Khaama Press): In a recent report, the World Health Organization (WHO) has urgently appealed for a budget of \$125 million to provide crucial funding for hospitals across Afghanistan. The plea underscores the pressing need to ensure the continued operation of essential medical facilities in the country, emphasizing the pivotal role that adequate funding plays in sustaining healthcare services for the people of Afghanistan.

Nadim emphasizes need to apply Sharia law



KABUL (TOLOnews): Neda Mohammad Nadim, the Acting Minister of Higher Education, emphasized the need for the implementation of Sharia law in order to ensure security in the country.

others,” said Neda Mohammad Nadim. Nadim added that no one is allowed to oppress Afghans and deprive them of their basic rights. “We do not allow anyone to be oppressed. If he is a mujahid, a judge, a president, a governor, or a minister, he does not have the right to oppress the Muslim people of Afghanistan,” said the Acting Minister of Higher Education.

The Acting Minister of Higher Education emphasized the need for unity among ethnic groups in the country and said that differences are the main reason for the destruction of nations.

Nuristanis seek access to standard health services

PARON (Pajhwok): Residents of eastern Nuristan province complain they have been lacking access to standard health services, asking the government to address the problem.

However, officials say efforts are being made to build a standard hospital in the remote province.

Salman, a resident of the provincial capital Paron, said there was no standard hospital in Nuristan.

He claimed the existing hospital in Paron provided services at a lower level than district clinics and referred patients to others provinces.

Roads in Nuristan, he noted, were unpaved one the one hand and its poor people could not afford to take their patients to other provinces on the other.

Inayat-ur-Rahman Rahmani, another resident, said people brought patients from districts to the provincial hospital, whose services were far from satisfactory.

Paron Hospital Director Dr. Shukrullah Atikan said the facility had long been operating in an improper building. But now the situation has improved, as medicines are supplied and health personnel paid salaries in time.

However, he underlined the need for upgrading it to the level of a full-fledged provincial hospital. It has enough personnel and there is no problem in this regard.

He, however, admitted the hospital provided services at a lower level than the district clinic. If upgraded, the hospital would better serve the people, he believed.

Maulvi Naqibullah Noori, director of public health, said there were 37 health centres in the province. Of them, only three health centres are operating at the district level.

He said efforts were underway to build a well-equipped provincial hospital in Nuristan. Some patients who cannot be treated in Paron are referred to the main provincial hospital in neighbouring Kunar.

Inhabitants say Paron is 100km from Asadabad, the capital of Kunar province, and they take six hours reaching there due to bumpy and unpaved roads.

Uzbekistan ready to cooperate in uplift of Qosh Tepa Project



KABUL (Agencies): The officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock have discussed strengthening commercial relations with Uzbekistan during a meeting with an Uzbekistani delegation which is on a visit to Kabul.

The ministry in a statement said that Acting Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Mawlawi Atta Omari said in this meeting that Afghanistan and Uzbekistan are countries influenced by each other due to their commonalities. He also emphasized sharing experiences in the agriculture sector with each other to enhance agricultural productivity.

Omari shared information about the programs of the Ministry of Agriculture and requested Uzbekistan to cooperate with the people of Afghanistan in the agriculture field, particularly in providing improved seeds.

Ismatullah Ergashev, a special representative of Uzbekistan who was part of the

team, informed Afghanistan of his country’s willingness to collaborate in the agricultural and livestock sectors.

Kholmurodov Nozimjon, deputy minister of Investment, Industry, and Trade of Uzbekistan, also spoke about his country’s collaboration in irrigation and energy research and production.

He stated that Uzbekistan is open to participating in the development of the mega Qosh Tepa Canal project as well as research about the soil characteristics of Afghanistan.

Both parties and their technical experts agreed to meet again shortly to expand cooperation in agriculture and livestock.

**Agencies add:** Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce Nooruddin Azizi, discussed investment opportunities and the creation of transit facilities between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan in a meeting with a visiting Uzbek delegation, which is being headed up by their deputy trade minister Nazem Jan Khalmuradov.

At the same time, the Ministry of Agriculture said a number of members of this delegation, which includes the special representative of Uzbekistan for Afghanistan affairs, the deputy minister of irrigation and the ambassador of that country, met with Afghanistan’s acting minister of agriculture, irrigation and livestock. The ministry of agriculture said in a statement that the main focus of the conversation between the officials from both countries was on strengthening relations in the fields of agriculture, irrigation and livestock.

Anas reacts to statements of UK HC



KABUL (TOLOnews): Anas Haqqani, a senior member of the Islamic Emirate, has accused the Western media of spreading propaganda about Afghanistan in the last

online that “Marriott is still not able to see the facts beyond the thick curtain of propaganda.”

Haqqani said: “A cruel war, started under the pretext of terrorism ended with the defeat of invaders. Those who were blacklisted by countries/entities are now rulers of this land, widely popular amongst their people. There is no such thing as a ‘network’; it’s one country, system and leadership.”

Earlier, in an interview, the British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott claimed that terrorist organizations continue to operate in Afghan territory.

Iran reaffirms its right to water from Helmand River

KABUL (Agencies): Reasserting Iran’s right to its share of water from the Helmand River, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said Tehran’s technical delegations’ visits to water reserves in Afghanistan will lead to more transparency about the issue.

In a telephone conversation on Saturday with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’s (IEA) acting foreign

minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, Amirabdollahian referred to the recent visit by an Iranian technical team to Afghanistan.

Amirabdollahian stated that Iran has always wished well for Afghanistan and the Afghan people.

Pointing to the presence of many Afghan nationals in Iran, Amirabdollahian said Tehran puts emphasis on cooperation between all sides in Afghanistan to bring

stability, security and welfare to the country’s people, Tasnim news reported. For his part, Muttaqi thanked Iran and said efforts are underway to resolve problems.

He also invited Amirabdollahian to visit Afghanistan, noting that Tehran-Kabul ties are based on neighborliness and brotherhood.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs says that Muttaqi discussed a number

of issues with a seven-member delegation from the Iranian parliament. Among the topics discussed were security issues, the fight against narcotics, prevention of all types of smuggling on the common border, border protection and trade issues.

Muttaqi said at the meeting that Afghanistan is a good market for Iran’s industrial goods and emphasized that the two countries

should make more facilities available in the trade and transit sector and take advantage of this opportunity. The delegation of the Iranian parliament also emphasized the need for joint cooperation in various fields between the two countries and said that the two sides should cooperate and find solutions to prevent smuggling, manage border problems and prevent illegal movement of people.

Governor rejects claims of human rights violations

J A L A L A B A D (TOLOnews): The Governor of Panjshir province Mohammad Agha Hakim rejected the claims of international institutions and organizations regarding the violation of human rights in this province.

In an interview with TOLOnews, Hakim said that there have been no human rights violations in Panjshir province, and currently Panjshir is the safest province and there is no group to make it unsafe.

“These reports are definitely untrue because they get these reports from the people and they are in line with the opposition,” the Governor said.

This official of the Islamic Emirate noted that for ensuring security of the province, 300 outposts and around 10,000 forces have been assigned



tobPanjshir.

“There are about 300 security outposts in the four surrounding areas of Panjshir, because Panjshir is a province that has borders with seven neighboring countries,” Hakim noted.

In a part of his speech, the governor of Panjshir said that they are trying to prevent schools from turning

into security outposts in this province.

“We decided that every school should be evacuated and we thank God that 95% of the schools have been evacuated,” the governor further stated.

Mohammad Agha Hakim urged the people who left Panjshir after the reestablishment of the Islamic Emirate to return.

15 killed and 16 wounded in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, the caretaker government desired positive relations with the world, saying it did not want Afghanistan to become the scene of global rivalries.

**Casualties** Last week, 15 people were killed and 16 others injured in various incidents of violence across the country.

Security forces killed four kidnappers in a clash in the Paghman district of Kabul. Two people were killed and a third injured in a magnetic bomb blasted attacked to a three-wheeler.

Unidentified gunmen killed the head of the 6th police district of Mazar-i-Sharif, an 18-year-old boy in Parwan, one man in Faryab and another in Laghman. Female youtuber Hora Sadat was killed in Kabul.

Local officials say man killed his niece and a villager over having an illicit relationship in Nangarhar.

A brother killed his sister in Ghazni while one person was put to death and another wounded in a clash over land ownership in Badghis. At least 14 people were injured in a similar incident in Nangarhar.

In the previous week, 14 people had been killed and 15 others injured in different incidents across the country.

**Ties with the world** Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi insists the current government is inclusive and includes representatives of all communities. The world has failed to define what it calls a broad-based government in Afghanstan, he argues.

“By adopting a balanced policy, we no longer want Afghanistan to be the scene of a turf wars between great powers. Instead, we seek good political and economic relations with the whole world,” he remarked.

At the same time, Sirajuddin Haqqani, acting minister of interior, wants the world to interact with IEA and put an end to the ongoing punishment of Afghans. The world should not assert its power on Afghans anymore, but should have a positive interaction.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, in a meeting with UN’s Deputy Special Representative Marcus Potzelsadi, said the caretaker government desired to open a new chapter in diplomatic relations with the world.

The deputy FM said the level of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan had been reduced to zero and rehabilitation of drug addicts launched.

Serious measures were being taken against drug dealers, Stanikzai said, calling the initiative a joint obligation of the caretaker government and the global fraternity.

He also urged the UN delegation to continue supporting farmers by providing an alternative to poppy cultivation, and removing banking restrictions. Potzel acknowledged efforts by IEA and said UNAMA was striving to create a basis for international cooperation. He pledged to work together with the interim government.

**Human rights, education for girls**

UN Humanitarian Aid Coordinator Daniel Andres said 30 humanitarian workers had been killed in the past two years in Afghanistan.

He added “We also take a moment to recognize those humanitarian workers who have lost their lives or were injured, abducted, arrested or held in captivity in the line of duty, this included the 30 aid workers killed during the last two years. Many of them were polio vaccinators or deminers”

However, the Ministry of Interior rejected the claims as baseless and said the IEA had ensured security for embassies in Afghansitan, UN offices and other organisations.

UNAMA says about 800 cases of violence have been recorded against individuals affiliated with the former government, but the Islamic Emirate spurned the allegations as groundless.

In its report, the UN mission claimed since the IEA takeover on August 15, 2021, at least 800 instances of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detention, torture and ill-treatment and enforced disappearance had been carried out against individuals affiliated with the former government and its security forces.

But Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman for IEA, called the UNAMA report “baseless. He said amnesty had been implemented without any discrimination.

According to reports, a number of human and civil

rights activists asked the UN and a number of countries in an open letter to strive for the release of Matullih Wesa.

Meanwhile, former president Hamid Karzai once against asked the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools for girls above the sixth grade.

The Al Habtoor Group chairman says IEA security forces have barred female students from travelling to the United Arab Emirates for studies, but the caretaker government has not yet reacted to the claim.

Al Habtoor Group is one of the leading commercial companies in the UAE, operating in areas of car services, real estate, education and publishing. It has provided scholarships for about 100 Afghan girls.

The head of the group, Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor, tweeted on Wednesday: “Am unable to express the disappointment I feel now as the female Afghan students, whom I had provided an educational scholarship in collaboration with the @uniofdubai presented by Dr. Eesa Al Bastaki @ebastaki ...”

UN secretary-general’s associate spokesperson Florencia Soto Nino said the interim Afghan government’s move to stop Afghan girls from traveling to the UAE for education would have its impact individually and on the whole country.

But the IEA has not yet commented on the group’s tweet.

**Ties with Pakistan** Pakistani authorities have recently claimed

Women banned from visiting Band-e-Amir National Park

BAMIYAN (TOLOnews): Mohammad Khaled Hanafi, the acting Minister of Virtue and Vice, asked all religious clerics and security agencies to forbid women from visiting Band-e-Amir National Park at a meeting in Bamiyan.

Hanafi said that the decision was taken because of women’s non-observance of hijab and added that women should be prevented from entering this park until a procedure is prepared.

The acting Minister of Virtue and Vice stated that going on a trip is not obligatory.

“Women and our sisters cannot go to Band-e-Amir until we agree on a principle. The security agencies, elders and the inspectors should take action in this regard. Going for sightseeing is not obligatory,” Hanafi said.

However, religious clerics in Bamiyan said that



these women come to the park from outside Bamiyan, and the government itself should do something about it.

“There are complaints about the lack of hijab or bad hijab, these are not Bamiyan residents. They come here from other places, from other provinces or outside of Afghanistan,” said Sayed Nasrullah Waezi, head of the Bamiyan Shia Ulema Council.

“There are dozens like

this in every province, which is why problems have arisen, the enemy of Islam has gained courage and is finally pointing to Mullah.(?)”

said Mohammad Asif Burhan, a religious cleric in Bamiyan. Band-e-Amir National Park is one of the tourist spots in Bamiyan, which was introduced as the first national park in the country in 2009, and since then it attracts thousands of visitors each year.



# ‘Interfaith Harmony Conference’ to address religious issues, minority safety

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony is holding an ‘Interfaith Harmony Conference’ on Wednesday, August 30, to bring together religious leaders and representatives from various faith communities to discuss pressing issues related to attacks on religious sites, desecration of holy scriptures, and the safety of minorities.

Presiding over by Minister Aneeq Ahmed, the conference would promote unity and cooperation among different religious groups besides providing a platform for open dialogue and collaboration on topics crucial to fostering interfaith harmony. The attendees would include representatives from both Muslim and Christian communities, demonstrating their shared commitment to peaceful coexistence.

Meanwhile, in a meeting with the executive members of International Interfaith Harmony Council, President Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi highlighted the recent attack on the Christian community in Jaranwala and characterized it as a deliberate attempt by external forces to tarnish Pakistan's reputation on the global stage.

He asserted that initial investigations pointed towards the involvement of elements from India, alleging a strategic move to divert international attention from the plight of minorities in India.

Ashrafi who is also the Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council further detailed

a larger scheme involving planned incidents in Sargodha and Sialkot, alluding to Pakistan's successful prevention of these attempts by its law enforcement agencies.

He emphasized the solidarity between Pakistan's Muslim and Christian communities, noting their shared commitment to thwarting divisive agendas.

Applauding the Danish government's recent legislation against the desecration of the Holy Quran, Ashrafi underscored the Christian community's respect for the holy scripture.

He highlighted the Quran's role in providing insights into the lives of Prophet Jesus and Hazrat Maryam, further promoting mutual understanding between the two faiths.

He asserted that Pakistan belonged to both Muslims and Christians alike urging the public to refrain from seeking collective retribution for individual wrongdoings, thereby promoting a sense of tolerance and coexistence.

The conference also witnessed the presence of notable figures such as Ammanual Khokhar, representing Pakistan Churches, Tahir Naveed Chaudhry, Maulana Nawaz Khalid, Mufti Nasrullah, Maulana Ubaidullah Gurmani, Allama Tahirul Hassan, Mufti Abdul Rahim, Waqar Usmani, Maulana Aqeel Zubair, Maulana Abdul Rauf Dogar, Maulana Tanveer Ahmed Chohan and several other prominent religious leaders.

## 3 US Marines dead after aircraft crashes during drills in Australia

DARWIN (AFP/APP): Three US Marines died Sunday after an Osprey aircraft crashed on a remote tropical island north of Australia during war games, US military officials said. Five Marines had been rescued from the crash site and flown to a hospital in Darwin in a "serious condition", the US officials said, while Australian police said they were triaging the rest of the injured crew at the scene.

"There were a total of 23 personnel on board," US military officials said in a statement. "Three have been confirmed deceased while five others were transported to Royal Darwin Hospital in a serious condition." Rescue efforts were complicated by the location of the crash -- the remote and sparsely populated Melville Island about 60 kilometres (37 miles) north of the Australian mainland.

"Recovery efforts are ongoing," US officials said, adding that an investigation into the cause of the incident had been launched. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the incident as "tragic" and "regrettable" but stressed that authorities were still trying to piece together what happened. "We want to make sure that any information that is provided is absolutely accurate," he told reporters.

The Osprey -- a mix between a helicopter and a plane -- was taking part in the Predators Run exercises, a joint series of warfighting drills involving thousands of soldiers from the US and Australia, as well as other militaries such as Indonesia and the Philippines. Northern Australia has become an increasingly important staging ground for the US military in recent years, as Washington and Canberra work together to counter China's growing clout in the Asia-Pacific region.

## China condemns Lai's Transit Visit to USA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Taiwan has become a high voltage political drama of Bollywood with many twists. The chronic instigating conduct of the US has been trying to irritate China on the issue of Taiwan, according to article published in an international news paper. Its constant and continued speculative connections with the authorities of Taiwan are creating serious problems of peace and stability in the region.

In this regard, Pelosi's ill-conceived trip to Taiwan opened a gate of unwanted economic, military, and political assistance from the US establishment which has rattled bilateral relations between the US and China because it genuinely considered Taiwan as its red line which should not be crossed and compromised at any cost.

For obvious reasons, China firmly opposed this visit and categorically upheld that any form of official exchanges between the US and Taiwan, as well as any actions that support Taiwan's independence is not acceptable. As an unwise political move, Lai's prominent political figure in Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party purposefully announced that he would be leaving Taiwan to attend the inauguration of the President of Brazil in Paraguay on August 12th.

Mustafa Kamal. The MQM-P leader went on to say that Karachi needs transparent elections at the earliest, but on the same hand, Siddiqui said "If the delimitation of constituencies took weeks or months, it is not a bad deal."

"In the previous elections, fake representatives were imposed on the city," Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said, adding that this time the elections needed to be fair, transparent, impartial, and acceptable to all.

"Delimitation of new constituencies inevitable after the new census," he said. Speaking on the occasion, party leader Dr Farooq Sattar lashed out at the rulers on inflated power bills and rising inflation. "People are becoming rebels and this country is heading towards civil disobedience," he added.

If this trend continues, a "state within a state" will be created, he continued.



KARACHI: Police personnel arresting PTI supporters during a protest in favor of former Prime Minister Imran Khan at Nomaish Chorangi.

# China’s ‘aggressive behaviour’ in South China Sea must be challenged, US Navy official says

MANILA (Reuters): China's "aggressive behaviour" in the South China Sea, including the use of water canon by its coast guard against a Philippine vessel, must be challenged and checked, the commander of the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet said on Sunday.

Vice Admiral Karl Thomas assured the Philippines of U.S. backing in the face of "shared challenges" in the region, saying: "My forces are out here for a reason."

The largest of the U.S. Navy's forward-deployed fleets, the Seventh Fleet, headquartered in Japan, operates as many as 70 ships, has around 150 aircraft and more than 27,000 sailors. It operates over an area of 124 million square km (48 million square miles) from bases in Japan, South Korea and Singapore.

"You have to challenge people I would say operating in a grey zone.

When they're taking a little bit more and more and pushing you, you've got to push back, you have to sail and operate," Thomas told Reuters.

"There's really no better example of aggressive behaviour than the activity on 5 August on the shoal," he added. On Aug. 5, a Chinese coast guard ship used water cannon against a Philippine boat carrying supplies to troops aboard a warship Manila intentionally grounded on a shoal in the South China sea, a fault line in the rivalry between the U.S. and Beijing in the region.

Thomas said he had had discussions with Vice Admiral Alberto Carlos, the head of the Philippine Western Command overseeing the South China Sea, "to understand what his challenges are to find opportunities to be able to help him".

"We certainly shared challenges.

So I wanted to better understand how he views the operations that he's responsible for. And I want to make sure that he understood what I had available," said Thomas who was in Manila for a port call.

On Saturday, Thomas said he joined a flight from Manila "to go out and check out the South China Sea".

The Philippines won an international arbitration award against China in 2016, after a tribunal said Beijing's sweeping claim to sovereignty over most of the South China Sea had no legal basis.

China has built militarised, man-made islands in the South China Sea and its claim of historic sovereignty overlaps with the exclusive economic zones of the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia.

The Chinese Embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## Imran Khan distances himself from May 9 incidents again

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, during interrogation by the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) in Attock Jail, said that those involved in the May 9 incidents were not his party workers.

The JIT interrogated the PTI chairman in six cases for 30 minutes in Attock Jail on Friday.

Imran Khan told the JIT that he had not provoked anyone, adding that everyone had gone to the cantonment area on his own.

The former prime minister told the JIT team,

headed by DIG Investigation Imran Kishwar, that he was in detention, he had no telephone, how could he incite violence. "There is evidence of incitement by you regarding the May 9 incidents," the JIT said to Imran Khan.

He denied that he had called anyone and asked them to go on rampage. "The attackers are not workers of my party, they are someone else."

Sources said that the JIT told the PTI head there were video clips in which protesters could be heard chanting his name. He

said that he did not instigate anyone. The people went to the cantonment areas on their own.

An investigation team of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) interrogated the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman inside the Attock jail, in a case connection with the 'missing' US cipher. Sources said the team was led by a deputy director of the investigation agency and it grilled the former premier for more than one hour. The PTI chief was questioned about the missing of the cipher.

## MQM-P wants elections after fresh delimitations

KARACHI (INP): Mustafa Kamal. The MQM-P leader went on to say that Karachi needs transparent elections at the earliest, but on the same hand, Siddiqui said "If the delimitation of constituencies took weeks or months, it is not a bad deal."

"In the previous elections, fake representatives were imposed on the city," Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said, adding that this time the elections needed to be fair, transparent, impartial, and acceptable to all.

## Fresh evacuations as Greek wildfires burn for 9th consecutive day

GREECE (AFP): Firefighters in Greece were battling flames for a ninth consecutive day on Sunday, as more areas of the country's north were ordered to evacuate their homes.

The fire is devastating the region of Evros, near the port town of Alexandroupoli and the country's border with Turkey.

On Sunday, residents of the areas of Lefkimmi in Evros and Kassitera, in the neighbouring region of Rhodopes, were ordered to evacuate their homes.

The deputy regional governor of Evros, Dimitris Petrovic, told

public television channel ERT that it was a "very difficult situation" that had caused enormous damage.

The region had launched a new appeal for reinforcements and resources, he said, adding that the winds were set to change from Monday.

"We don't know how and if we will be able to stop the advance of the fire's frontline," he said.

Since the fire started last Saturday 20 people believed to be migrants, including two children, have been found dead in the area.

ing Turkey, and local border guards had warned that more asylum seekers could have been trapped by the fires.

An elderly shepherd died in another fire in Boeotia, north of Athens on Monday.

The fire was also consuming the Dadia forest, one of the major sanctuaries in Europe for birds of prey.

The Alexandroupoli wildfires are now the largest in the EU on record for 2023 and the second largest since 2000, according to the bloc. Another dangerous fire continues to destroy vegetation on Mount Parnitha, near Athens.

## PTI Karachi holds rally for release of Imran Khan, 55 workers arrested

KARACHI (NNI): Karachi East police arrested six workers of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for holding a protest rally and a demonstration outside its office for the early release of their party Chairman Imran Khan on Sunday.

These workers were arrested from the area of Karsaz in Karachi. The Karachi police have also made some arrests from other areas including outside the PTI's Insaf House Karachi.

After the rally in favour of Imran Khan, East police arrested more

than 55 people from different areas of Karachi during raids.

According to private channel report, Karachi East Police detained the workers from Shahrah Faisal, Nursery, Allahwali Chowrangi and Namaish areas.

The report said that a heavy contingent of Karachi police has also been deployed outside the Insaf House to make more arrests of the PTI workers.

Reacting over the arrests, PTI Karachi spokespersons said East Police arrested six work-

ers from the Karsaz when they were holding a motorbike rally for the release of Chairman Imran Khan.

The PTI spokesperson also claimed that the police beaten charged the participants of the rally at Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam and arrested six workers.

He further said that PTI activists were arrested from Insaf House Karachi, Shahrah Faisal, Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam and Chowrangi.

On the other hand, Karachi police sources said that more arrests of PTI workers may be done.

## Russia launches overnight air attack on Ukraine

KYIV (Reuters): Russia launched an overnight air attack against Ukraine on Sunday, sending missiles over other northern and central parts of the country, authorities said.

The Ukrainian military reported shooting down four cruise missiles out of up to eight total airborne targets detected, adding that the rest of the targets were "probably false".

It also said there were no immediate reports of strikes. The governor of Kyiv region, Ruslan Kravchenko, said two people had been wounded and 10 buildings damaged by falling missile debris in one unspecified area of the region. "Thanks to the professional work of the air defence forces, there were no strikes on critical or residential infrastructure," he said in a statement.

All of Ukraine was

under air raid alerts for about three hours early on Sunday before they were cleared at around 6 a.m. (0300 GMT). Russia has carried out a campaign of regular air strikes involving missiles and drones against Ukrainian targets far from the front line as part of its 18-month-old full-scale invasion.

Meanwhile, Russia's defence ministry said on the Telegram messaging channel on Sunday that its forces had shot down two drones overnight in the Bryansk and Kursk regions, which both border Ukraine.

"The regime in Kiev made further attempts to commit terror attacks using fixed-wing drones on targets in the Russian Federation during the night and in the morning of Aug. 27," the ministry said. It gave no information about possible casualties or damage. The governor of Kursk region, Roman Starovoit, posted pictures on his Telegram channel which he said showed damage caused by a drone to an apartment block in the city of Kursk, with windows blown out. Drone attacks on Russian targets, especially in Crimea - annexed by Moscow in 2014 - and in regions bordering Ukraine, have become almost a daily occurrence since two drones were destroyed over the Kremlin in early May.

The attacks have disrupted flights in and out of Moscow in recent weeks. Ukraine rarely takes direct responsibility for such drone strikes but says destroying Russian military infrastructure helps a counter-offensive begun by Kyiv in June.

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## US Commerce chief seeks trade, tourism boost in China talks

BEIJING (Reuters): U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo arrived in Beijing late on Sunday for a four-day visit aimed at boosting business ties between the world's two largest economies while declaring American national security trade measures off-limits for debate.

"If you wanted to put a tagline to the trip and the mission, it's protect what we must and promote where we can," Raimondo told reporters on Friday before departing for China. "I'm not going to pull my punches next week when I am there but I intend to be practical."

Relations are tense as the United States works with allies to block China's access to advanced semiconductors, while Beijing is restricting shipments from prominent chip company Micron Technology (MU.O) and raided and fined U.S. firm Mintz Group \$1.5 million for doing "unapproved statistical work."

Raimondo, who was greeted upon arrival by Chinese Commerce Ministry official Lin Feng, will hold bilateral meetings with Chinese officials on Monday and Tuesday in Beijing before she heads to Shanghai.

She will be joined by U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns. Raimondo spoke to President Joe Biden on Thursday about her visit and his message was enhanced dialogue with China can ease tensions.

"We want to have a stable commercial relationship, and core to that is regular communication," Raimondo said. "We need to communicate to avoid conflict." Republicans in Congress have criticized the possibility Raimondo will establish a working group with China during the visit to discuss U.S. semiconductor export controls.

Raimondo did not confirm plans for any working group but emphasized she would tell Chinese officials "when it comes to national security we don't negotiate. We don't give concessions. We don't compromise."

The United States is using government incentives and tax policy to wean American businesses off Chinese supply chains and ramp up U.S. semiconductor production.

"Just because we're investing in America does not mean at all that we want to decouple from China's economy," Raimondo said.

China's ambassador to the United States, Xie Feng, who met Raimondo last week, said China seeks "mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation".

The White House this month moved to start prohibiting some U.S. investment in sensitive technologies in China and plans to soon finalize sweeping export restrictions on advanced semiconductors adopted in October. Raimondo, the fourth high-level U.S. official to visit China recently, is the first commerce secretary to make the trip in seven years.

She spoke to more than 100 senior business leaders before the visit and vowed to raise their concerns.

"There are so many challenges to doing business in China and exporting to China and China's unfair trading practices have hurt American workers and companies," Raimondo said. Wendy Cutler, vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute, said that with a possible visit to the U.S. by President Xi Jinping less than three months away, "Beijing has an interest in working with the United States to identify practical areas in the economic relationship where cooperation may be possible."