

Polio affects three-year-old
E.P. Report

BANNU: A three-year-old boy in Bannu, Pakistan, has been paralysed for life due to the wild poliovirus, highlighting the continued threat of polio in areas with limited healthcare and unsanitary conditions. This is second polio case reported in Bannu. Despite efforts by the government to eradicate the virus, the incident emphasizes the need for further action.

 @thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX No. 194 Regd. No. 241 MUHARRAM-UL-HARRAM 14 1445 -- THURSDAY, AUGUST 03 2023 PESHAWAR EDITION 08 PAGES PRICE. 30

High time for Pak-Turkiye boost strategic cooperation — says PM after MILGEM-IV warship launch

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday lauding the leadership role of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said that it was high time for Pakistan and Turkiye to enhance their bilateral strategic cooperation for the prosperity of the two nations.

The prime minister, addressing the launching ceremony of the fourth MILGEM Class Corvette - PNS Tariq here, said the joint venture project was an example of cooperation and support between the two brotherly countries. Earlier, the prime minister and visiting Vice President of Turkiye Cevdet Yilmaz launched the fourth MILGEM warship. Initiated in 2018, the MILGEM project envisages the construction of four Corvettes for the Pakistan Navy - two in Pakistan and two in Turkiye.

The prime minister said Recep Tayyip Erdogan was a great leader which was reflected by his "wonderful" victory in the recent poll. Therefore, the prime minister said it was high time for both countries to enhance their strategic cooperation and add more joint ventures in other fields. The prime minister earlier attended the launching ceremony of the third Naval Corvette, PNS Khyber, in Istanbul, in November 2022. The first two Corvettes, PNS Babur and PNS Badar were launched in Istanbul and Karachi, in August 2021 and May 2022 respectively.

The MILGEM project represents an enduring symbol of Pakistan-Turkiye collaboration in the maritime domain. It is a tangible step towards self-reliance and indigenization and would fulfill the critical security needs of the Pakistan Navy. The prime minister said that Pakistan and Turkiye were tied with the commonality of faith, heritage and civilisation with both sharing perspectives on regional and global issues. Referring to the tremendous support by the people of the subcontinent during Khilafat Movement, the prime minister

ter said the bilateral ties predated the establishment of Pakistan.

"We celebrate each others' success stories and also stand together in the face of challenges... This is the level of our relations as we share each others' bounties and sorrows," he remarked. The prime minister recalled Turkish President Erdogan and Turkish First Lady's visit to Pakistan after the floods as well as the generous contribution by the Turkish people for the flood victims of 2010 as well as last year.

The prime minister said that Pakistan Navy was fully dedicated to ensuring the high-quality maritime activities. He said following the increasing burden on Port Qasim of Karachi, Pakistan was needed to create linkages between Karachi and Gwadar ports as Gwadar was about to become a business center for the country as well as the region. Calling the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor a "roaring success" the prime minister said Pakistan and China had agreed to launch the second phase that would comprise green corridor, business corridor, special economic zones and IT corridors.

He said the second phase was bound to increase the quantum of business transactions and Turkiye was a "natural partner" and reiterated his invitation for the country to join that joint that wonderful opportunity of prosperity. Prime Minister Shehbaz thanked Turkish President Erdogan, Naval chief, head of Karachi Shipyard and the ministry of defense production as well as the workers for their hard work and contribution to make the MILGEM project a success.

He said that following the said achievements, certain actors were trying to establish their hegemony, so it was important to strengthen our navy and maritime activity. For this purpose, he said the government was fully geared to provide all-out resources to the Pakistan Navy to augment national security. The prime minister also announced a "gift" of

Rs200 million for the experts and workers involved in the construction of the MILGEM-IV, with a view to recognize their efforts and for their encouragement.

In his address, Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yilmaz condoled the loss of lives in Bajaur attack and reiterated Turkiye's condemnation of terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations. He said the people of Pakistan had a unique place in the hearts of Turkish people as both stood by each other throughout the centuries. He particularly mentioned the Turkish support to Pakistan after the flood and thanked Pakistan for its solidarity after the deadly earthquake hit Turkiye in the recent past.

He said considering the prevailing regional situation, the Pakistan-Turkiye defence cooperation was becoming more relevant with enhanced scope. He said that Pakistan and Turkiye were faced with the challenges like Turkiye like cross-border terrorism which necessitated the understanding of the terrorists' objective and acting totally opposite to their expectations.

The Turkish vice president said Turkiye had become a major global actor and reduced its foreign dependence in the defence industry, consequent to the will and leadership of President Erdogan. He said Turkish shipping industry was among the world's top ten industries producing the warships. He told the gathering that the MILGEM warships were equipped with cutting edge technology and weapon system developed by Turkish industries.

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi said the MILGEM project would become an emblem of the Pakistan-Turkiye friendship. He said both countries stood shoulder to shoulder in hour of need and exemplified the recent flood in Pakistan and earthquake in Turkiye. Highlighting the opportunities of regional connectivity being provided

(Continued on Back Page)



KARACHI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Turkiye's Vice President Cevdet Yilmaz, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto and Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi cutting a rope to launch into sea Pakistan's 4th MILGEM Class Corvette 'PNS Tariq' in Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works.

Two soldiers' martyred in Tirah Valley arm battle

E.P. Report

BARA: Two forces cops embraced Shahdad and four others sustained bullet injuries in a shootout carried out between forces and militants here in Tund area of Tirah, Bara district Khyber on Wednesday.

The forces official while confirming the incident said that the bomb disposal squad of the forces came under attack from unknown armed persons injuring six of them. However two cops succumbed to their wounds on the way to the health center, the official said.

In retaliation firing from the nearby check post, the militants fled the scene, he added. The falling soldiers were identified as Sepoy Tariq and Sepoy Rehmat while the wounded included Naik Khan Muhammad, Lance Naik Ihsan, Sepoy Farooq Said and Sepoy Abdullah who were receiving necessary treatment in a military hospital.

Meanwhile due to security reasons, the forces temporarily suspended Tirah Maidan road for all kinds of traffic. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the offence. In a message published on social media Muhammad Khurasani, spokesperson of TTP said that armed persons of TTP ambushed the FC persons killing three of them.

It is to be stated here that in recent insurgence of the militants in the merged tribal region besides scores of security forces and police personnel, civilians were also assaulted in Bajaur.

Iranian FM in Pakistan

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on Wednesday arrived in Islamabad on a two-day official visit to discuss the entire gamut of bilateral ties and the emerging regional situation with the leadership of Pakistan.

During his visit, FM Abdollahian will hold talks with his Pakistani counterpart Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Thursday. "The wide-ranging agenda includes discussion on all aspects of bilateral relations and the emerging regional situation, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a statement.

Foreign Minister Abdollahian will call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for an exchange of views on the consensus between the leadership of the two countries for taking this relationship forward. The Iranian FM will also call on the speaker National Assembly and chairman Senate where the two sides would discuss parliamentary linkages between the two brotherly countries.

Pak-China militaries are 'brothers in arms': COAS

E.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir said Wednesday that bilateral ties between Pakistan and China are "unique" and the militaries of the two countries are "brothers in arms".

He made these remarks while addressing the 96th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China, which was commemorated at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi today, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

Her Excellency Ms. Pang Chunxue, Charge d'Affaires of the embassy of the People's Republic of China, Major General Wang Zhong, Defence Attache', Chinese Embassy officials & Officers from tri-services of Pakistan

attended the event. COAS felicitated the PLA and lauded the PLA's role in China's defence, security & nation building.

While highlighting various facets of the deep-rooted ties between the two states, militaries and the people, COAS said that "Pakistan-China relationship is unique & robust that has proven its resilience in the face of all challenges." "The PLA and Pakistan Army are brothers in arms & our relationship will continue to contribute towards safeguarding our collective interests", COAS concluded.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chinese Charge d'Affaires thanked COAS for hosting the event for the 96th anniversary of the founding of the PLA. "This all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between China & Pakistan has stood the test of the time and change of international landscapes", the Chinese Charge d'Affaires remarked.

"China & Pakistan have just jointly celebrated the 10th anniversary of the launch of CPEC and in the past months, COAS and other military leaders paid successful visits to China, which has strongly promoted the relationship between the two militaries", the Chinese Charge d'Affaires endorsed.

Chief of German Army called on COAS: Lieutenant General Alfonso Mais, Chief of German Army called on General Syed Asim Munir, COAS at GHQ.

During the meeting matters of mutual interest, regional security situation and defence cooperation were discussed. Both reiterated the desire to further enhance bilateral relations in all fields. The visiting dignitary acknowledged and appreciated Pakistan Army's successes in fight against terrorism and Pakistan's continued efforts for bringing peace and stability in the region.

'Daniyal, Talal punished as they told truth': Marriyum

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Wednesday that both Daniyal Aziz and Talal Chaudhry were punished only because they were telling the truth at that time which was not acceptable to those who wanted to minus Nawaz Sharif from politics.

In a tweet, she congratulated the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leaders for emerging as real leaders in front of history and the masses. "Both of them faced extremely unfavorable conditions but did not leave the path of truth nor did they leave the people of the constituency, and

stood by their position, leadership and party", she maintained. She congratulated Daniyal Aziz, Talal Chaudhry, and the people of their constituency.

Marriyum inaugurates modern monitoring system at DEMP: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb has inaugurated the Central Monitoring System at Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP) which will help the government in swift data gathering and monitoring through modern technology.

"Pleased to launch and inaugurate today the new and first Central Monitoring System (CMS) in Pakistan based on Artificial Intelligence-

enabled modern monitoring software, ACTUS DIGITAL (Digital Content Logger), for monitoring electronic, print and digital media," the minister said in a tweet. She said the CMS was capable of machine learning, speech recognition, video ad detection and data research. "It will enable quick and accurate media monitoring and information gathering, which will enable faster and better informed government decision-making," she added.

The minister said the new system would also be available to the students of the Information Services Academy. She appreciated the Information Ministry's team on the launch of new system.

FO confirms involvement of Afghan nationals in Zhob attack

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Foreign Office on Wednesday confirmed that Afghan nationals were involved in July 13 "dastardly attack" on the Pakistan Army's Zhob Garrison in Northern Balochistan.

In a statement, FO Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch revealed that three slain terrorists involved in the attack on the personnel of the Pakistan Army were identified as Afghan nationals. "The terrorists belong to Afghanistan's Kandahar province," she added.

As many as nine soldiers embraced martyrdom and five terrorists were killed in the attack. In the wee hours of July 12, a group of terrorists launched a dastardly attack on the garrison, the

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) had said, mentioning that the initial attempt to sneak into the facility was "checked by soldiers on duty". During the heavy exchange of fire, nine soldiers — while fighting gallantly — laid down their lives in the line of duty. Meanwhile, five terrorists were also killed.

"Security forces remain determined to thwart all such ghastly attempts at destroying [the] peace of Balochistan and Pakistan," the ISPR had added. The FO strongly condemned and expressed severe concerns over the use of Afghan soil and the unabated involvement of Afghan militants in terrorism inside Pakistan.

The FO also instructed the Afghan embassy in

Islamabad to receive the bodies of slain terrorists. A day earlier, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said if the Afghan interim government failed to take action, Pakistan had an option under international law to act in "self-defence" against the militants hiding inside Kabul.

While speaking to the media, he, however, made it clear that this should not be the first option for his government. The foreign minister also reminded Kabul of the Doha Accord. According to the Doha Accord, the Taliban had assured in writing that militant groups would not be allowed inside Afghanistan and nor would any militant group attack another country from inside Afghanistan.

Death toll in India's capital rises to 6

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Riot police were patrolling urban neighbourhoods near India's capital on Wednesday following a second night of sectarian riots that have killed six people so far.

The unrest began on Monday when mobs hurled stones at a Hindu religious procession and set cars alight in the predominantly Muslim district of Nuh, around 75 kilometres south of New Delhi. Arson and vandalism attacks broke out the following evening in parts of nearby Gurugram, a satellite city of the capital and a key business centre where Nokia, Samsung and other multinationals have their Indian headquarters.

One neighbourhood saw a mob of around 200 people armed with sticks and stones loot several meat shops and set fire to a restaurant while chanting Hindu religious slogans. Haryana state chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar said six people had been killed in the violence and 116 arrested so far.

"Those found guilty will not be spared. We are committed to the safety of the public," he told reporters on Wednesday. Two of the dead were security personnel on their way to help contain the unrest in Nuh, state police said on Tuesday. Police in New Delhi said they had increased security in some neighbourhoods as a precautionary measure.

Local media reports said tensions first flared after prominent Hindu nationalist activist Monu Manesar, a member of the radical right-wing group Bajrang Dal, announced he would attend Monday's procession in Nuh. Manesar is wanted by police over accusations that he was responsible for the lynching of two Muslim cattle traders in another part of Haryana state.

The alleged vigilante leader regularly posts videos celebrating attacks on Muslims accused of transporting or killing cows, which are considered sacred by Hindus.



RAWALPINDI: Lieutenant General Alfonso Mais, Chief of German Army called on General Syed Asim Munir, COAS at GHQ.

Civilians' mily trial case: SC rejects plea seeking full court

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected a plea seeking the constitution of a full court to hear a set of petitions challenging the trial of civilians in military courts.

"Full court is not available till September," Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial said while announcing a reserved verdict on Karamat Ali's fresh plea filed on Monday. A six-member bench, comprising CJP Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Sayeed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi, and Justice Ayesha Malik, was hearing the case.

It may be noted that the trials of civilians arrested for involvement in the May 9 riots, have not been started yet, Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan informed the court at an earlier hearing. The CJP also expressed hope that the civilians would not be tried till the conclusion of the ongoing case.

While announcing the verdict, the CJP said that court holidays are going on while there are other engagements of the judges as well, which are being affected by this case. He said that a full court was formed by dissolving other benches on two occasions

earlier. The CJP then turned down the plea, saying a full court was not available till September.

Later, AGP Awan gave arguments on the matter of granting the right of appeal to people to be tried in military courts. "The army men, who don't have basic human rights, are tried in the military courts," Justice Muneeb Akhtar said, while asking how would the civilians, who have human rights, be tried in military courts. The AGP informed the court that he has taken up the matter of granting the right of appeal with the Cabinet Committee on Law.

He said that the adjutant general must be consulted on the legislation relating to granting the right of an appeal, and a number of issues must be considered in this regard. CJP Bandial then directed the AGP to continue his arguments at the next hearing and adjourned the proceedings till tomorrow (August 3).

On July 31, Ali moved the SC via his lawyer Faisal Siddiqi, to constitute a full court for the ongoing hearing on the petitions, with the submission that only a judgment of the full court can counter any future contemptuous attempt to sabotage any judgment passed in this present petition as well as the connected petitions.

"The full court should include all judges willing

and available for the adjudication on the fundamental and complex constitutional and legal questions," Ali argued in the fresh application filed under Order 33 Rule 6 of the Supreme Court Rules 1980 via his lawyer Faisal Siddiqi. CJP Bandial, before reserving the verdict on this plea yesterday, directed all the petitioners to give their stance on the matter. Only Siddiqi and the lawyers of Zaman Khan Wardag had favoured the request.

Following the arrests made in connection with the violent riots that erupted across the country on May 9, the government announced its decision to hold military court trials of those found guilty of damaging and attacking military installations — a move both the government and the army considered a low blow.

In light of this decision, PTI Chairman Imran Khan, Khawaja, legal expert Aitzaz Ahsan, and five civil society members, including Piler Executive Director Karamat Ali, requested the apex court to declare the military trials "unconstitutional". In this petition filed through his lawyer, the former CJP pleaded that Section 2(1)(d)(i) and (ii) of the Pakistan Army Act were inconsistent with the fundamental rights granted by the Constitution and should be struck down.

Executive Engineer C&W Division Battagram



Govt requests federation to increase gas quota for Industrial sector

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Advisor to Chief Minister on Energy and Power Himayatullah Khan has requested the Federal government to reallocate the gas quota for the industrial sector of the province to meet the demand.

In a letter, available with this agency, the Minister said that the provincial government had already requested the then Prime Minister to direct the Ministry of Energy to sub-

mit a summary to ECC for reallocation of 100 MMCFD gas to KP industrial sector but no step was taken.

The CM's aide requested the Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik to intervene in the matter and submit a summary to ECC for reallocation of additional 100 MMCFD gas to the industrial sector.

He said that the KP industries were consuming about 40 MMCFD gas while 18 MMCFD is an

additional requirement to fulfill the demand of pending new industrial gas connections.

He said that the provincial government was developing two more economic zones including Rashakai and Hattar with a total demand of 54 MMCFD, adding that KP-EZDMC was also planning to develop different economic zones in the next three months which would require a total 126 MMCFD gas.

He further pointed out that the ECC in its meeting in 2014 decided to allocate 100 MMCFD gas for setting up thermal power projects in KP and an MoU was signed between KP and the federal governments on February 25, 2016.

He said that currently investors were interested in establishing mega industries in KP but their only concern was the allocation of gas from the federal government.

WHO donates 15 motorbike ambulances to KP Relief Deptt



PESHAWAR (APP): In a significant stride towards strengthening emergency medical services and fortifying disaster relief capabilities, the World Health Organization (WHO) has generously contributed 15 motorbike ambulances and two vehicle ambulances to the Relief Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This benevolent donation marks a remarkable milestone in advancing healthcare accessibility and rapid response within the province.

The official handover ceremony took place on Tuesday at the Rescue 1122 headquarters in Peshawar, uniting distinguished representatives from WHO, the Relief Department, and the Health Department to mark this momentous occasion. The event underscored the

spirit of collaboration and unwavering dedication to safeguarding public health and providing swift assistance during crises.

Motorbike ambulances have emerged as invaluable assets for delivering critical medical aid, particularly in areas with challenging terrains or limited accessibility. These agile and well-equipped vehicles will empower Rescue 1122 first responders to navigate rugged landscapes and swiftly reach remote communities, drastically reducing response times in life-threatening situations.

Equipped with essential medical tools such as a backpack, pulse oximeter (CE/FDA), BP apparatus, cervical collar, nebulizer, glucometer, portable oxygen cylinder set, tourniquets, digital clinical ear thermom-

eter, silicon Ambo bags, CPR mask, and dressing scissors, these ambulances ensure comprehensive care during emergencies.

Dr. Palitha Mahipala, WHO's Representative for Pakistan, expressed profound gratitude to the Relief Department for their tireless commitment to ensuring public welfare. "We are pleased to offer this essential support to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, whose commendable dedication and expertise play a pivotal role in emergency response and disaster management. These motorbike ambulances will undoubtedly enhance their ability to provide timely and effective medical assistance, especially in hard-to-reach areas."

Recognizing Pakistan's exemplary responses to

emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic and flooding incidents, Dr. Mahipala commended the preparedness and heroism displayed by Rescue 1122.

He reiterated WHO's commitment to continued support, capacity building, and collaborative efforts in establishing resilient emergency response systems.

Taj Muhammad Afridi, Minister of Relief, extended heartfelt gratitude to WHO for their invaluable assistance. The generous contribution of motorbike ambulances signifies a significant enhancement to our emergency services infrastructure. This momentous donation is a testament to the strong partnership between WHO and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government."

Abdul Basit, Secretary of the Relief Department, echoed appreciation for WHO's benevolence. "The substantial contribution of motorbike ambulances significantly enhances our emergency services infrastructure. This donation perfectly aligns with our department's mission of providing effective relief and rehabilitation services, particularly to vulnerable communities in remote regions. The positive impact of these ambulances on the lives of these communities cannot be overstated."

With these innovative vehicles at our disposal, we are better equipped to respond to emergencies with heightened efficiency, ultimately saving more lives."

SCCI rejects massive increase in fuel prices

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry acting President Ijaz Khan Afridi while rejecting the recent massive increase in fuel prices and fearing the government move will prove detrimental for the national economy, businesses and industrial growth.

Excise Police foil an attempt of drugs smuggling

PESHAWAR (APP): The Excise Police have foiled an attempt of smuggling drugs in a huge quantity here on Wednesday. According to the details given by the official of the Excise Police, KP they conducted a successful operation by failing an attempt of large quantities of drugs to Punjab.

During the operation, the Excise Police have recovered 27000 grams of high quality heroin worth millions of rupees and arrested two alleged accused who wanted to make their escape good. Acting on a tip-off, the Excise Police have been cordoned off on Peshawar Road and signal to stop a vehicle number BPU 092. But the driver of the vehicle tried to run away after a lot of resistance, the vehicle stopped, by the Excise Police officials.

During the search of the said vehicle, 27000 grams of high quality heroin was recovered from the vehicle with two suspects were arrested on the spot and a case was registered for further investigation.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, Ijaz Afridi said the economy, businesses and industries are reeling owing to flawed economic policies of the incumbent government.

On the other hand, he said consistent increase in prices of power, gas and petroleum products has further pushed the country toward economic instability and added to miseries of the business community.

The SCCI's acting chief expressed fear that a new wave of inflation will come after the historic increase in the fuel prices, resultantly, the move will affect all traders' community, poor masses and different segments of the society.

He continued that the abrupt increase in price of petroleum commodities is highly unjustifiable and incomprehensible, which is unacceptable to them.

He said cost of living and industrial production would increase after the whopping increase in fuel prices that could further push up prices of essential commodities,

which were already out of the purchasing power of the common man.

Ijaz Afridi asked the government to avoid implementation of anti-business policies and take practical steps for ease of doing business.

He was of the view that the government has multiplied problems of the business community and common man by consistently accepting demands of the IMF.

The chamber's president said a rapid negative

growth was seen in the economy, businesses and industries under the prevailing circumstances.

He blamed the government's policies for making it difficult to put the national economy on the right track.

Ijaz Afridi urged the government to take back its decision and bring down fuel prices in the line of the international market.

Otherwise, he warned SCCI along with traders' community will force a protest.

2nd Polio case confirmed this year: Health Dept KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The second Polio case of this year has come from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an official of the Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said here Wednesday.

Polio type-I virus has been confirmed in a 3-year-old resident of Bannu as the child's parents are refusing to give polio drops, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department official informed. So far the child has been given anti-polio drops only twice during the campaign, Health Department officials added. Weakness was identified in the child's arms on July 11, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department official said.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Provincial Minister Muhammad Ali Shah Khan talking during online programe at Pakhtunkhwa Radio.



PESHAWAR: Chief of JUI (F) Maulana Fazl ur Rehman, ANP leader Haji Ghulam Ali, Chief of JUI (S) Maulana Hamid ul Haqani offering dua for martyred of Bajaur blast. — F.P. photo Ghulam Murtaza

AD&SJ grants bail to alleged murderer

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Nasrullah Khan has granted bail to alleged murderer involved in famous Kabar killing case, on Wednesday.

According to prosecution, Arshad alleged killed Zahid over family dispute in the premises Jabar police station on 27 June 2023.

However, the counsel Khalid Mohmand and Atta ur Rehman advocates informed that the offense was committed at night while no eye witness is available against the petitioner and requested for bail. The counsel added initial evidences are also contradictory. AD&SJ Nasrullah granted bail to alleged murderer after conclusion of arguments.

14 cases of Congo reported

PESHAWAR (APP): A total of 14 cases of Congo reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the first 7 months of the current year.

According to a report issued by the Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as many as four people died in Congo this year and among the dead people, 2 belong to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 2 belong to Afghanistan.

The report said that nine patients infected with Congo have been recovered and in the last 24 hours, one patient recovered and was discharged from the hospital. At present, a patient infected with Congo is under treatment in Hayatabad Medical Complex.

Rescue 1122 serve 4077 mourners

PESHAWAR (APP): During Muharram 2023, Rescue 1122 has provided rescue services to 4077 mourners, out of which 3916 mourners were given first aid on the spot while 161 mourners were transferred to nearby hospitals.

The services continued under the leadership of District Emergency Officer Ghulam Murtaza. Rescue teams were deployed across the district to provide rescue services to the mourners who provided their services day and night.

Storage of rains, flood water: Govt constructs 37 small dams in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has constructed 37 small dams for storage of flood and rains water to bring arid lands under agriculture cover.

The spokesman of Small Dams Directorate, Irrigation Department told APP on Wednesday the designs of seven medium dams including Barwasa and Sher Dara Swabi, Sumri Payan Kohat, Surkhaway Mardan, Naki Nowshera, Shaheed Banda Charssadda and Tora Warae Hangu having a total accumulative water storage capacity of 13,014 AF with 14,935 acres CCA were completed.

He said 24 small dams with accumulative water storage capacity of 75,008 AF having 49,523 acres CCA were being built in different districts of KP with assistance of Federal government.

He said that 37 small and medium dams were constructed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including 15 operated by the provincial government while 11 supervised by WAPDA and ten were constructed in merged districts having 0.1377 million-acre cultivated (CCA) and 0.3414 Acres Feet (AF) water storage capacity.

He said that about 46,000 big and small dams were constructed in world including 22,104 dams by China, 5,334 by India and only 150 dams by Pakistan since its independence.

He said small dams could easily be constructed in a short span of two to three years while big dams mostly require 10 to 15 years, adding that Pakistan would require additional 76 MAF water by 2050 which was only possible by constructing small and medium dams.

Besides completion of Pezu dam in Lakki Marwat, Khattak Bandhan dam in Kohat, and Makh Banda dam in Karak by the federal government, he said Ichar and Manchura dams at Mansehra, Chashma Akora Khel dam in Karak, Sarozai dam in Hangu, Sanam dam in Lower Dir, Bada dam and Ulta dam in Swabi were also constructed jointly by the federal and provincial governments.

He said that seven medium dams including Bara dam in Khyber, Tank Zam in Tank, Shiekh Haider Zam, Chaudwan Zam, Daraban, and Kora Nullah in DIKhan and Larzan small dam in Tank with water storage capacity of 520,884 AF covering 171,748 CCA besides 31.5-megawatt power generation capacity were in design stage and practical work on it would start soon.

Approval of promotion policy demanded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An online meeting of the general body of FAPUASA (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) was held. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Feroz Shah and the representatives of the teacher's associations of the public universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa participated in the meeting.

The participants appreciated the recent directives issued by the National Assembly Standing Committee

NASC, to the Higher Education Commission. These instructions have been issued under the chairmanship of Dr. Qadir Mandukhel and have asked the Higher Education Commission to call a meeting of the Commission and approve the promotion policy for BPS teachers of the universities.

The members unanimously called on the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to approve the proposed promotion policy as

this is a long standing demand of faculty and agreements have been signed with teachers' organizations (FAPUASA and APUBTA) and the Higher Education Commission for the implementation of this policy.

FAPUASA is committed to protecting the rights and interests of the academic community in Pakistan and expects positive results from the upcoming meeting of the commission.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali talking with an injured of Bajaur blast during his visit to hospital.

PML-N achieves remarkable success in all fronts in 16 months govt, says former minister

PESHAWAR (APP): Former Provincial Minister, Wajid Ali Khan here Wednesday said that Pakistan Muslim League (N) has achieved remarkable success in all fronts in only 16 months coalition government and put country's back on right path.

Talking to APP, he said Pakistan Muslim League N has brought the national economy back on track and saved the country's from economic default.

Wajid Ali Khan who remained associated with ANP for 53 years have recently joined PMLN during a function at Swat district.

He said a state-of-the-art kidney hospital at Swat was established during tenure of former prime minister

Nawaz Sharif where poor patients was being provided free treatment.

As result of prudent agriculture policies of the Government, he said that a record wheat was produced this year while number cotton production was forecast in 2023.

He said the previous government has failed to deliver in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa despite its 9 years rule in the province, and that PTI leadership wasted time in hallow slogans, confrontation and victimization of opposition leaders.

He accused the previous government for destroying the national economy and social values besides tarnishing the country's image abroad.

"The entire nation knew about a so-called leader, who deceived people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the name of change and completely failed to address problems of masses."

He said that Imran Niazi had made tall anti corruption claims but later PTI Government in KP has closed its own created Ehtadab Commission that exposed the hallow slogans of Imran.

He said that May 9 vandalism have exposed the real face of Imran Niazi before masses.

Wajid said that people of Pakistan knew that who had attacked and put on fire the defence and government installations during May 9 vandalism and destroyed the economy during 2018-

22 and who saved the country's from bankruptcy and economic default in only 16 months Government.

He said that PMLN has strong and committed leadership in the shape of former prime minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and sitting prime minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif with ability to steer the country out of all challenges.

He said that if PMLN was voted to power in upcoming election would change destiny of people and address problems of masses of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Wajid said that people of all walks of life are joining Pakistan Muslim League N due to its record development work.



In brief

Funds allocated for free of cost medicines F.P. Report

HAFAZABAD: While addressing the meeting of District Health Authority Hafizabad held at District Complex, Deputy Commissioner Umer Farooq Warraich said that the Punjab government allocated Rs. 180 million in current fiscal year budget for providing free of cost medicines to patients and all necessary treatment facilities in the government hospitals of the district Hafizabad. Chief Executive Officer (DHA) Hafizabad Dr. Umer Sharif Rathor, Medical Superintendent DHQ hospital Dr. Shakeel Shahid, DHO Dr. Zahir Ahmad, Budget and Accounts Officer Adnan Dar, Incharge Trauma Centre Dr. Shahzad Ahmad and other officers attended the meeting. DC said that Insulin for Sugar Patients was provided in the DHQ while practical steps were taken to ensure provision of medicines in outdoor and indoor of the hospital. Being the Administrator of the District health Authority, free of cost provision of medicines and improvement in health services delivery is my top priority, he said that warned the staff of the hospitals to ensure timely biometric attendance on daily basis and negligence in services delivery would not be tolerated at all. He also directed to improve medicines record and data entry as well as to monitor record of medicines on daily basis. The meeting was informed that sufficient stock of vaccine and other medicines for patients of dog and snake biting is available in the DHQ Hafizabad.

Female drug smugglers held F.P. Report

MARDAN: The Shehbazgarhi Mardan police station arrested two drug smugglers and recovered more than 25 kg of hashish from their possession. According to police reports, under the supervision of DSP Rural Circle Fazal Sher Khan and under the leadership of SHO Mohmand Khan, police station Shahbazgarhi along with the ladies police team conducted a successful operation on a tip-off and arrested two women smugglers on the search point of Chargali bus staff. Police said that accused wife of Johar and wife of Khan Muhammad residents of Chargali were arrested with 25kg of hashish. Police said that during search, total of 25 kg and 902 grams of hashish hidden in 11 packets were recovered from the possession of the arrested accused and taken into custody by the police. Sources said that the arrested suspects were trying to smuggle the said drugs to Karachi through a passenger vehicle. Police took the accused in custody and started further investigation.

Smuggling bid foiled

QUETTA (PPI): Collectorate of Customs Balochistan claimed to have seized foreign goods worth Rs60 million in different operations conducted on Quetta-Karachi main highway near Lakpass area on Wednesday. According to a statement issued by the spokesperson for Collectorate of Customs Balochistan, a Field Enforcement Unit team seized foreign goods, including 570 parcels of sugar, expensive non-customs paid vehicles, 3100 kilograms of betel nut, foreign cigarettes, auto parts and other miscellaneous goods, in different operations. Foreign goods, valued at approximately Rs60 million, were to be smuggled to Karachi, however, staff of the Field Enforcement Unit foiled the bid of smugglers.

Mardan traders reject big increase in electricity prices

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Members of trader-community while expressing their great concern and anger over a big increase in electricity prices as well as unscheduled and excessive electricity loadshedding, have announced to begin phase-wise protest against the government and authorities concerned.

The members of Markaz-e-Thanzeem-i-thajraan (Ishan Bacha group) in a large numbers held press conference here the other day. Prominent among the traders who accompanied the president of Markaz-e-Thanzeem-i-thajraan Ishan Bacha, were included Mushtaq Seemab, Haji Maaz Ullah, Ghulam Hussain Saraf, Haji Iltaf and others.

Speaking to journalists on the occasion, the president Ihsan Ullah Bacha deplored that the incumbent rulers had no fear of Ullah in their hearts that was why they were making cruel decisions against public.

He lamented that people had no money to deposit their electricity bills, adding that they were compelled to sell their homes or other property meant to pay electricity bills.

He alleged and criticized that 23 bills were passed in parliament in a single and same day for increase in their salaries and other privileges but on the other hand, the rulers did not take any step to provide relief to countrymen. The big increase in prices of electricity and gas as well as its unscheduled and excessive loadshedding had not only made their lives as miserable but also ruined their business activities, he added.

He disclosed that about 350 posts of linemen were laying vacant in the Mardan region WAPDA offices due to which residents of the district had been facing difficulties. Other traders spoke on occasion, said that they had been facing loadshedding for more than 10 and 12 hours with different

intervals.

Desides, they also alleged that they were forced to get repaired transformers by themselves whenever it got any fault as the WAPDA personnel did not bother to take any immediate action in this regard. They blamed that the WAPDA officials had been acting like bosses before them whenever they took any complaint to their offices.

They asked the quarters concerned to take the matter as serious, otherwise, they threatened that they were going to launch their protest phase-wise if the authorities concerned failed to fulfill their demands. In first phase, they are hoisting black banners and flags on their shops, in second phase, they will hold convention of all traders' local bodies and then they will begin shutter down strikes in phase-3. Even if they did not take any justice, then they would boycott to pay their electricity bills, they warned.

PTI & PDM govts played for varsities' financial crisis

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Islami Jamiat Tulba (IJT) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa nazim Waseem Haider has said that during the previous PTI government and the current PDM government, educational institutions are facing a financial crisis. Addressing a big rally organized by the Jamaat-i-Islami at Chakdara here the other day, the IJT leader said that due to financial crises, students of the universities across the country were being burdened as they had to afford heavy fees.

IJT demanded of the government to take practical steps for restoration of students' unions in Pakistan. He complained the GDP spent on university education was less than the neighbouring Afghanistan. The IJT leader said that 60% of the country's population consisted of youth but neither the 'tabdili srkar' (PTI) nor the PDM had taken steps for their future. "Most of the youth from Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa are forced to leave the country due to unemployment", he said, adding the elite class of the country had destroyed the future of the children. He demanded the government to allocate at least 5 percent of the GDP for education.

He said that about 4.7 million children in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were deprived of their education due to poverty. He said that under the auspices of the administration in the universities, intoxication was common among teachers and students.

He said the future of students was being destroyed under planning so that they could not play their due role in development. He alleged the elite class was involved in drug trafficking and harassment in universities.

The IJT leader demanded strict action against the elements involved in the Islamia University Bahawalpur, Punjab. He threatened an agitation against the incident if the government failed to punish the culprits.

JUI-F leaders visited Bajaur blast victims: Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl senators Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidari and Maulana Atta ur Rehman paid a visit to the district headquarters hospital Timergara and inquired after the health condition of the Bajaur blast victims.

The JUI-F senior activist Qazi Ayazud Din, district chief Sirajud Din and Haji Khurshid Khan were also present on the occasion. The senators met with the Bajaur blast injured persons and prayed for their speedy recovery. They directed the hospital medical superintendent Dr Asghar Ali to provide every possible medical care to the injured workers.

Talking to party workers the JUI-F general secretary Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidari asked the workers to show patience at this critical moment. He said the whole Muslim ummah had expressed its grief over the Bajaur suicide blast. He said that party leaders and its workers stood by the blast victims.

Anti-encroachment operation conducted

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Assistant Commissioner Mardan Ayesha Tahir led the anti-encroachment drive against the violators on sugar mills bypass road Mardan.

Assistant Manager waste water management WSSCM Ikramullah along

with his team was also present.

Ayesha Tahir stated that the violators and encroachers will be dealt with iron hands to ensure efficient flow of waste water. She added that WSSCM and other departments have initiated pre-monsoon de-silting drive from the last few

months however due to encroachment they face hurdles and difficulty to ensure smooth de-silting operations. AC requested the citizens and traders to avoid encroachment on drains to ensure smooth flow of waste water and avoid urban flooding in Mardan.



FAISALABAD: Shopkeepers displayed large size of national flags outside their shops during the celebrations of the Independence Day.

Impact of digital footprints on employment opportunities

Zar Ali Khan

HAVE you ever Googled yourself or tried to explore your online digital footprints? These footprints are the traces and digital records of your actions, behaviours, and engagements that you have left behind on various digital media platforms. You might be one of the 4.76 billion users who are actively using social media platforms for accessing and sharing information. However, have you ever wondered what kind of digital footprint you're leaving behind?

The impact of social media on our lives is undeniable.

According to social media statistics of January 2023, an average user spends 6 hours and 37 minutes browsing content on social media platforms each day. However, what we failed to realize is the significant influence of social media in the professional sphere. These platforms have become a reflection of our preferences, hobbies, and even our emotional state.

Modern social media platforms are powered by artificial intelligence. The complex algorithms of these platforms curate content based on users' searching habits. As a result, every 'click', 'like', and 'share' contributes to shaping our digital

identity which is a portrait of who we are in the virtual world.

Although social media platforms were initially developed for social interaction, they have now evolved into a handy tool for decision-making. Consider the scenario where potential employers utilize the same platforms to gain deep insights into candidates' personalities, their strengths, and weaknesses beyond what's presented in their resumes. According to a survey conducted in 2020, 70 percent of the employers believe that screening candidates' social media profiles is an indispensable aspect of the hiring process. In fact, a staggering 78 percent

of employers expect their current employees to maintain a work-appropriate digital presence. The interesting part of the research is that more than half (55%) have found content on the candidates' timelines that caused them not to hire the applicant.

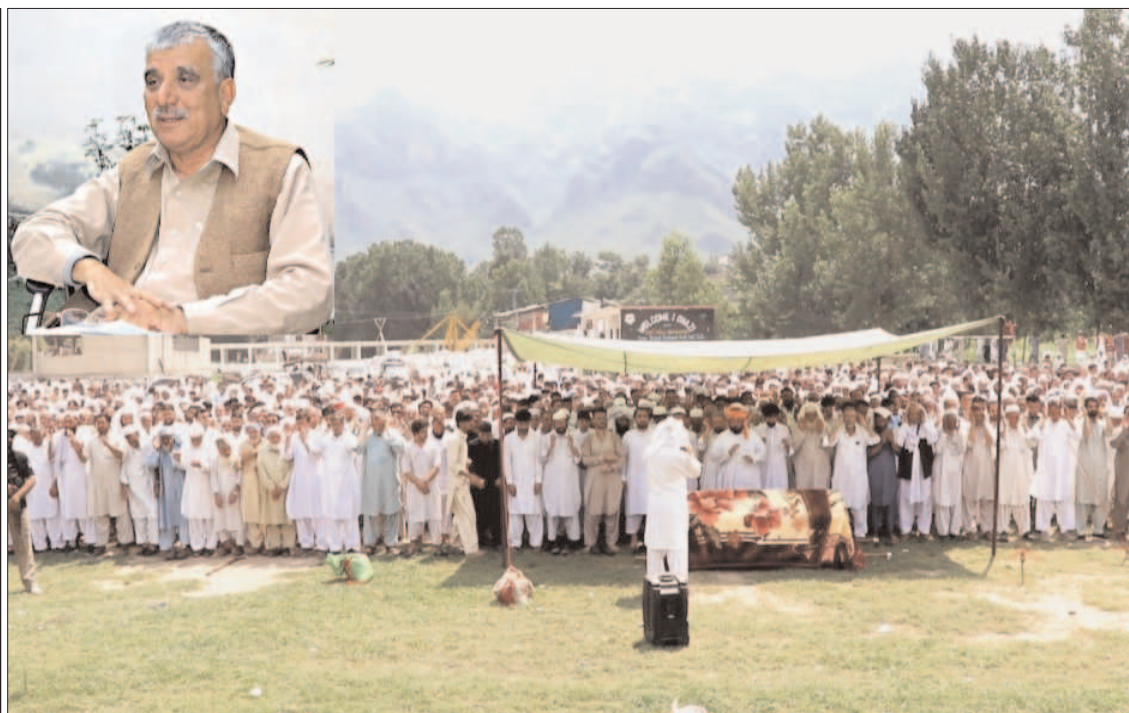
Keeping in view the professional side of the online media, it becomes evident that maintaining a positive online reputation is no longer a choice but a necessity for professionals and job seekers. A poorly curated social media account which mostly contains unauthentic information, hate speech and disparaging content, could adversely impact job prospects.

The question now is that how can one ensure a favourable online presence? The key lies in balance and mindfulness. While it's essential to be authentic and express oneself genuinely, it's equally crucial to be mindful of the content we share. We must make our platforms a window into the best version of ourselves. We must understand that 'Googling ourselves' is more than just a casual endeavour, it's a crucial step in securing professional success in the digital age.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the boundaries between personal and professional life continue to blur. By cultivating a positive

digital presence, we can enhance our employability and inspire the potential employers. Our digital narrative is always in our hands. Let's take charge of our online presence and maintain a professional reputation through a balanced approach. While it's essential to present ourselves to the relevant folks, let's also cherish the authentic social experience that social media was originally meant for. What are you waiting for, Google yourself and gain your social insights now.

The Author is working as Deputy Director-IT in the Directorate General Information & PRs, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



BUNER: People offering funeral prayer of prominent progressive poet and provincial leader of Awami National Party (ANP) Shams Buner at his native village. — F.P. photo

Shams Buner laid to rest

F.P. Report

BUNER: A prominent progressive poet and provincial leader of Awami National Party (ANP) Shams Buner has been passed away while his funeral prayer was offered at Ghazi Khani and buried at his ancestral graveyard.

During the funeral prayer of Shams Buner people from every walk of life including political leadership, journalist community, religious clerics and civil society members were present. The deceased was brother senior journalist Abid Buner while father of Riaz Khan Advocate.

Jirga demands action against police official

F.P. Report

RISALPUR: Police has failed to control of drugs and street crimes in the premises of Risalpur police station while dacoits and drug dealers are roaming freely despite captured by public and handedover to compete authorities.

This was claimed Aman Jirga chaired by Syed Kamal Shah Bacha while Abid Sultan, Peer Zulfiqar Bacha, Rahim Zada, Malak Mujeeb, Fida Khan, Humayun Khan, Shams ul Qamar, Mian Amjad, Dr. Zulfiqar, Peer Maghfir Shah, Farzand Ali Khattak, Haji Nehar Ali, Mudassir Shah, Abid Taj, Fawad, Amir Khattak, Amjad, Haji Inayat ur Rehman and Salim Mujahid were present.

The participants claimed that Station House Officer Risalpur police station Jamsheed Khan and Incharge Bara Banda Chawki Khan Zeb Khan are protecting criminals especially drug dealers and street criminals. They claimed that residents had captured street criminals and handedover to police but they are roaming freely due to loose cases registered by concerned officials.

Aman Jirga requested Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Mardan and District Police Officer Nowshera to take disciplinary actions otherwise they will arrange protest on 7th August at G.T Road on larger scale.

Commemorating India's atrocities in Kashmir

Farhan Qutab Siddiqui

ON August 5th, Pakistan observes Youm-e-Istehsal, a day to remember the egregious human rights violations and atrocities committed by India in the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir. This day holds significant importance as it marks the fourth anniversary of India's unilateral decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, stripping the region of its autonomy.

The day serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing struggle of Kashmiri people and highlights the international community's indifference towards their plight. This article aims to shed light on the atrocities committed by India in Kashmir and the pressing need for the global community to address this grave human rights issue.

India's revocation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, effectively stripped Jammu and Kashmir of its special status, eliminating its autonomy and merging it into the Indian Union. This decision was not only unconstitutional but also a brazen violation of the rights of Kashmiris to determine their own fate.

By unilaterally making such a move, India displayed a blatant disregard for the democratic principles it claims to uphold. The people of Kashmir were denied a voice in a decision that fundamentally altered the political land-

scape of their region, further exacerbating their sense of marginalization.

Following the revocation, the Indian government imposed a stringent communication blackout, cutting off internet and phone services in the region. This move stifled freedom of expression and restricted access to vital information, making it easier for Indian authorities to suppress dissent and carry out their actions with impunity. Reports of arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, and torture of civilians by Indian security forces emerged, exposing the depths of human rights abuses in Kashmir.

One of the most harrowing aspects of India's crackdown in Kashmir has been the use of pellet guns against unarmed civilians. These "non-lethal" weapons have caused severe injuries, blindness, and even death, with thousands of people falling victim to their indiscriminate use. The fact that pellet guns continue to be employed despite widespread international condemnation reflects India's blatant disregard for human rights and a total lack of accountability.

The revocation of Article 370 has ignited a renewed cycle of violence in Kashmir, with the younger generation bearing the brunt of this turmoil. The stifling environment and lack of economic opportunities have pushed many Kashmiri youth towards

radicalization, further exacerbating the already volatile situation. Rather than addressing the root causes of unrest, India's heavy-handed approach has only fueled resentment and alienation among the Kashmiri population.

Despite the blatant human rights violations occurring in Kashmir, the international community has largely remained silent. Nations that claim to champion human rights and democracy have turned a blind eye to the suffering of Kashmiris, prioritizing economic and political interests over justice. This hypocrisy not only undermines the principles of international law but also perpetuates the suffering of millions of Kashmiris living under oppressive conditions.

Youm-e-Istehsal serves as a solemn reminder of the ongoing human rights crisis in Kashmir. India's revocation of Article 370 and the subsequent actions against the Kashmiri people have exposed a deeply troubling reality about the world's approach to human rights abuses.

The international community must end its silence and take a firm stance against India's actions in Kashmir, demanding accountability and justice for the countless lives affected. Only through genuine efforts to address the grievances of Kashmiris and uphold the principles of democracy can we hope for a peaceful resolution to the Kashmir issue.

Residents facing starvation due to closure of road from 12 days

F.P. Report

BUNER: The residents of Arooni a mountainous village located at Mandanr tehsil has cut from rest of Buner due to land sliding from 12 days during monsoon downpour while the locals are facing starvation because edible items are finished in the houses especially the lives of children and elderly people at risk.

A resident named Sahib Zar said that residents of Arooni village facing starvation due to shortage of edible items in the premises and closure of road to

ensure supply chain. He added that people compelled to initiate opening of road with community support.

Another Ali Gul said that competent authorities including administration, disaster management authority and tehsil municipality has turned blind eyes towards the residents which may cause a human crisis.

Moreover, one Samar Gul claimed that the youth is compelled to attain school at Khananu Dheri due to unavailability of medal and high school in the village. He added that

students carried out the seven kilometers path with bare foots.

However, Bakhti Gul a resident claimed that people has initiated restoration works on road make accessibility of pedestrians to nearest village and bazaar to maintain supply of edible items. He argued that otherwise the populace will death due to starvation. The residents argued competent authorities to initiate relief works and restoration as well as provision of edible items to the locals especially to protect children and elders in the premises.

Growers sensitize of protecting fruits

F.P. Report

BARA: A day-long session of protecting fruits was held here in the agriculture office, Bara last day. The activity was organized by the agriculture department, Khyber under the supervision of agriculture officer Sharafat Afridi and a number of local fruit growers participat-

ed in it.

The agriculture experts informed the gardeners of various methods of controlling fruit fly. They added that since long spread of fruit flies in the fruits and vegetables had revealed that the growers suffered a lot. Fruit fly set on the groceries and left germs in it that caused rotter in a few days, they added.

The experts introduced a small box and asked the farmers to put a sweet thing, coated with poison and hang it in the fruit tree. When the fly enter to eat the sweet things, it will die instantly, they remarked. The agriculture officials vowed that they would extend every possible assistance to protect the interest of the local farmers.



UK foreign aid cuts: Thousands will die as a result: Report

LONDON (BBC): Thousands of women in Africa will die in pregnancy and childbirth as a result of cuts to the UK's overseas aid budget, ministers have been warned. According to an internal assessment by civil servants, almost 200,000 more women will also face unsafe abortions. Their report reveals the impact of cuts this year to the overseas aid budget. The Foreign Office says its budget for low-income countries has been cut in the short-term to hit a savings target, but will then nearly double. The internal document says a 76% cut in aid for Afghanistan will leave some of the world's most vulnerable women and girls without critical services. And half a million women and children in Yemen will not receive healthcare. The conclusions come in an assessment made by Foreign Office civil servants earlier this year, to inform ministers before they decided what to cut. Andrew Mitchell, the development minister, gave it to the International Development Committee as part of his efforts to make UK aid spending more transparent - as it used to be before the Department for International Development was merged with the more secretive Foreign Office. Previous governments have rarely published such detailed calculations about the impact of their spending reductions. In the assessment, the Foreign Office outlines some of the headline cuts to the department's Overseas Development Assistance budget worth more than £900m for this year. Many of these reductions were imposed on the Foreign Office after the Treasury allowed the Home Office to spend about a

quarter of the aid budget housing refugees in Britain. This is allowed under international rules for the first year of a refugee's stay in the UK. But the arrival of so many refugees and asylum seekers in small boats over the Channel has sent the costs of hotel bills soaring. And that has meant less can be spent on the government's priorities overseas. The assessment said that as a result of 76% cuts in aid to Afghanistan, the Foreign Office "will not be able to support critical services for women and girls... reducing funding will potentially leave some of the most vulnerable women and girls in the world without critical services". Across Africa, it said that reductions to the Women's Integrated Sexual Health Programme would reduce protection for women with "the number of unsafe abortions averted from nearly 300,000 to approximately 115,000; number of maternal deaths averted will drop from 2,531 to just over 1,000". In Yemen, it said that half a million women and children in Yemen will not receive healthcare and "fewer preventable deaths will be avoided". "It may cause lasting damage to health systems in Yemen, if other donors are unable to fund," it said. In Somalia, the Foreign Office will have to "delay this year, and potentially stop altogether" a programme to counter female genital mutilation. And in South Sudan, cuts the humanitarian budget will mean "27,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition will go untreated, of which 12% (3,000) could die". To try to soften the blow of these cuts, the Foreign Office has used "in-year underspends and other resources" to find a

little more money to spend on aid this year, including a further £41m for Afghanistan, £32m for Yemen, £30m for Syria and £30m for Somalia. And in his letter to the Development Committee, Mr Mitchell emphasised that aid spending would increase next year, with almost double being allocated to Africa. But Sarah Champion MP, chair of the International Development Committee, said the cuts were "intolerable" and would have a "terrible impact". This astonishingly honest assessment of the real impact makes grim reading. It is a litany of the people - living in poverty, suffering hunger, women, girls, disabled people - who will no longer be supported by the UK's direct aid spending," she says. Ian Mitchell, senior policy fellow and co-director of Europe at the Center for Global Development, said: "The abrupt nature of the budget reduction imposed by Chancellor Jeremy Hunt last year meant that [the Foreign Office was] unable to protect the poorest or most vulnerable groups; or even stated government priorities like girls' education or climate." A spokesperson from the Foreign Office said UK aid spending would rise to £8.3bn next year, with a focus on dealing with humanitarian crises, protecting women and girls and supporting vulnerable people, "while delivering value for money for taxpayers". "While the budget for low-income countries has had to be reduced in the short term to achieve our savings target - it is due to nearly double for these countries the year after, including in Africa where aid will rise from £646m to £1.364bn."

NK calls US envoy a 'political housemaid'

SEOUL (AP): North Korea hurled misogynistic insults Wednesday at a newly confirmed United States special envoy to monitor the country's human rights issues and warned of unspecified security consequences if Washington continues to criticize its human rights conditions. The statement published by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency described Julie Turner as a "wicked woman" who was picked by the Biden administration as a "political housemaid" to launch groundless attacks on the country's human rights record. The US Senate confirmed Turner's appointment July 27. She previously served as the director of East Asia and the Pacific at the State Department. The statement said the Biden administration's public criticism of North Korea's human rights situation highlighted its hostility toward Pyongyang in the face of an intensifying nuclear standoff between the countries.

KCNA described Turner's past criticisms of North Korea's human rights record as absurd, and said the US "revels in meddling in the internal affairs of a sovereign state and slandering it." "Turner should know that she was chosen as a political housemaid and scapegoat for the 'human rights' plots to pressure the DPRK, a poor policy set forth by the Biden administration driven into a scrape in the DPRK-US nuclear confrontation," the agency said, using the initials of the North's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The agency said the continued US criticism on North Korean human rights issues could "backfire on it, spawning severe security issues." In defiance of Washington last week, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un hosted senior delegates from Russia and China at a Pyongyang military parade that showcased his intercontinental ballistic missiles designed

to target the US mainland. Analysts say Kim is trying to boost the visibility of his partnerships with Moscow and Beijing as he looks to break away from diplomatic isolation and insert himself into a united front against the United States. Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest point in years. The pace of North Korean missile tests and the United States' combined military exercises with South Korea have intensified in a tit-for-tat cycle. North Korea is sensitive to any criticism of its top leadership and government, and often issues harsh remarks toward US and South Korean officials in times of animosity. The country's language tends to be cruder when the targets are women: It called former South Korean President Park Geun-hye a prostitute, and former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton a "funny lady" who sometimes "looks like a primary schoolgirl and sometimes a pensioner going shopping."

Hezbollah urges halt to Palestinian camp clashes

BEIRUT (Reuters): The head of powerful armed group Hezbollah called for a halt to days of deadly clashes that have raged between rival factions in the Palestinian camp of Ain el-Hilweh in southern Lebanon. At least 11 people - most of them militants - have been killed in the camp since fighting broke out between mainstream faction Fatah and hardline Islamists, security sources in the camp told Reuters. "This fighting must not continue because its repercussions are bad - for the camp's residents, for the dear Palestinian people... for the south, for all of Lebanon," Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised address. The United Nations agency for Palestine refugees (UNRWA) said at least 2,000 people have fled their homes in the camp and UNRWA activities were suspended due to the violence. Negotiations

between the rival factions have led to brief suspensions of fighting but have failed to secure a lasting ceasefire, with heavy clashes resuming. Hezbollah, which controls southern Lebanon and is vehemently opposed to Israel, has ties to Palestinian factions and supports their cause. Nasrallah said anyone who could "pressure, say a word, make contact, make an effort" to secure a truce should do so. UNRWA estimates that up to 250,000 Palestinian refugees live in Lebanon's 12 Palestinian camps, which date back to the 1948 war between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The camps mainly lie outside the jurisdiction of Lebanese security services. Nasrallah also ramped up his rhetoric against those burning copies of the Muslim holy book the Koran in Denmark and Sweden in recent weeks, saying the weak response

from Muslim states had left believers wanting. "There is no longer any meaning to waiting for anyone. You must take up this responsibility and punish these damned people with the strongest punishment," Nasrallah said. Hezbollah was founded in 1982 by Iran's Revolutionary Guards and is classified by the United States and other Western countries as a terrorist organisation. Last year, Hadi Matar, a 24-year-old Shi'ite Muslim American, was charged with the stabbing of Salman Rushdie, author of the 1988 novel "The Satanic Verses," viewed by some Muslims as containing blasphemous passages. Matar's family originally hails from Yaroun, where Hezbollah has strong support. A Hezbollah official at the time said the group had no information on the attack and Nasrallah declined to comment directly on it.

Bahamas promises to join Kenya in security force in Haiti

NEW YORK (Reuters): The Bahamian government welcomed Kenya's decision to lead a multinational force in Haiti and committed 150 people to support the effort if the United Nations authorizes the force. The announcement from the Bahamas' foreign ministry follows a request from UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres that Haiti's neighbors join forces with Kenya, which last week said it was willing to send 1,000 police officers to Haiti to help stem gang violence. "The Bahamas has committed 150 persons to support the multi-national force once authorized by the United Nations Security Council," the ministry said in a statement. The Bahamas' statement echoed comments from Kenyan Foreign Minister Alfred Mutua, who described the security intervention as an opportunity to stand "with persons of African descent across the world." It added the Bahamas looks "forward to cooperating with the hemispheric partners including the United States and Canada." US Secretary of State Antony Blinken commended Kenya for "considering to serve as the lead nation" for the multinational force and expressed support for its authorization from a UN Security Council Resolution. In a statement, the Washington-based Organization of American States said the group's general secretariat "welcomes with appreciation" Kenya's announcement. Haiti's government requested international security assistance last year, attracting the UN's support for a security force to be deployed by member states, but no country had been willing to lead such an effort until Kenya's commitment. Regional governments have been reluctant to support the unelected administration of Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who has said fair elections cannot be held with the current insecurity.

Russia could be ready for Black Sea grain deal talks

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters): The United States has been told that Russia is prepared to return to talks on a deal that had allowed the safe Black Sea export of Ukraine grain, but "we haven't seen any evidence of that yet," the US envoy to the United Nations said. Russia quit the deal on July 17. US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that if Russia wants to get its own fertilizer to global markets and make agricultural transactions "they're going to have to return to this deal." "We have seen indications that they might be interested in returning to discussions. So we will wait to see whether that actually happens," she said at a press conference, without giving further details. Moscow has suggested that if its demands to improve its own exports of grain and fertilizer were met it would consider resuming the Black Sea agreement, brokered in July 2022 by the UN and Turkey to help ease a global food crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russia's grain and fertilizer exports are not subject to Western sanctions but Moscow has said restrictions on payments, logistics and insurance have been a barrier to shipments. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres met a week ago with Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin - who led Moscow's negotiations to agree the Black Sea deal - on the sidelines of a UN food systems summit in Rome. "Had there been a breakthrough, I think it would have been shared with you," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. After withdrawing from the Black Sea pact Russia began targeting Ukrainian ports and grain infrastructure on the Black Sea and Danube River and global grain prices spiked. Russia has also threatened to target Ukraine-bound civilian vessels, prompting Kyiv to respond by announcing similar measures against vessels bound for Russia or Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory.

Niger coup: Evacuated European nationals arrive in Paris and Rome

PARIS (BBC): Flights evacuating Europeans from Niger have arrived in France and Italy. France began evacuating its citizens from Niger amid anti-French sentiment following last week's coup - 262 people arrived in Paris early on Wednesday. The coup has prompted demonstrations against the former colonial power, with the French embassy coming under attack.

However, France says it has no plans to repatriate about 1,000 French soldiers stationed there as part of efforts to counter Islamist militants. Germany has urged its nationals to take up France's offer to help other Europeans as Italy organised a flight which arrived in Rome just after 05:00 local time on Wednesday with 87 evacuees. The plane was carrying 36 Italians, 21 Americans and one Briton, according to Reuters news agency. Juntas in Burkina Faso and Mali have warned that any forcible attempt to restore the ousted president would be seen as a declaration of war. The two neighbours, also former French colonies, have both moved away from France and towards Russia, after staging their own coups in recent years.

Their warning marks a significant twist that could escalate the volatile situation in a region battling an Islamist militant insurgency. Niger, which is rich in uranium, has been a key Western ally in the fight against jihadist extremism in the Sahel. Both France and the US have military bases there. After Mali's military leaders chose to partner up with the Russian Wagner mercenaries in 2021, France moved the centre of its regional counter-terror operations to Niger. Protesters outside the French embassy in the capital Niamey chanted "Long live Russia", "Long live Putin" and "Down with France". They also set fire to the walls of the embassy compound. France sent planes because the closure of Niger's airspace has made it impossible for people to leave by their own means.

There are an estimated 600 French nationals in Niger and fewer than 100 Germans. Italy's foreign ministry says there are about 90 Italians in Niamey out of a total of just under 500 countrywide, most of whom are in the military, the AFP news agency reports. According to the Reuters news agency, Spain is also preparing to evacuate more than 70 Spaniards by air. The UK is not organising an evacuation and has urged its nationals in Niger to stay indoors, while the European Union said it was not planning to remove its staff for the time being. The US also said it was not evacuating its citizens, seeing no immediate threat to them or its facilities, AFP reports. The situation in Niamey was reported to be calm. One



of the French evacuees, Anthony Garcia, said he was packing as little as possible for the journey: "We were asked to take just a small bag with essentials, because we can't take the suitcase." Earlier, France had welcomed the ultimatum issued by the West African bloc Ecowas, giving Niger's junta a week to reinstate elected President Mohamed Bazoum, who has been confined to the presidential palace in Niamey. Chad's President Mahamat Idris Deby was in Niger the following day, leading mediation efforts on behalf of the Ecowas and was pictured with Mr Bazoum.

These diplomatic moves prompted Burkina Faso and Mali to issue a joint statement threatening that if Ecowas intervened militarily, they would withdraw from the bloc and go to the defence of their eastern neighbour. They said such an intervention would be disastrous and destabilising. Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea are all currently suspended from Ecowas following coups in recent years. Ecowas's last major military intervention was in The Gambia in 2017, when Yahya Jammeh refused to step down as president after losing elections to Adama Barrow. After West African troops deployed, Mr Jammeh went into exile in Equatorial Guinea. The regional body also sent troops to support Guinea-Bissau's government last year following a failed coup attempt there. Algeria, Niger's neighbour to the north, has also urged caution over any possible military intervention, saying it "would lead to an escalation of the current crisis".

Niger's junta has not commented on the Ecowas demand, but vowed to defend the country from any "aggression" by regional or Western powers. It accused France of planning military intervention. But, French

Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna told French channel BFMTV the allegation was not true. She suggested the coup, which has been welcomed by the shadowy Wagner group, could be an seen as an opportunity for Russia: "I am not sure that everyone in Niger sleeps with a Russian flag under their pillow." But it is possible that Russia tries to take advantage of the situation. It does it in other countries of the region. It's an hypothesis." At a briefing, the White House's National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said the US had no evidence that Russia was behind the coup. According to Reuters, the evacuation plans will not affect operations of French nuclear fuel company Orano in Niger, as it said most of its staff were Nigerien nationals. There are no good options in Niger. The West looks set to lose its strategic counter-terror bases there and military intervention by Ecowas would almost certainly lead to a civil war. The current evacuation of French nationals is quite likely to be followed by the abandonment of US and French military bases and the departure of their 2,500 troops that have been engaged in helping Niger fight jihadist insurgents.

So who benefits from all this? Certainly not the population of Niger. The presence of Western forces was far from universally popular, but the country was receiving hundreds of millions of euros in annual financial aid and military assistance. That has now stopped. Russian flags have appeared on the streets suspiciously quickly, so it is likely that Russia's Wagner group will be looking to fill in behind the departing troops. And for the jihadists of Boko Haram and the al-Qaeda and Islamic State groups active across the Sahel, all this disruption and uncertainty is a strategic gift.

Some of Niger's neighbors defend the coup there, even hinting at war

NAIROBI (AP): Not everyone is hostile to the coups in Niger and other African nations in the past few years that have worried the West. In the "family photo" for last week's Russia-Africa Summit, Russian President Vladimir Putin stood next to Ibrahim Traore, the young military officer who seized power in Burkina Faso in September. It was an uncomfortable moment for many leaders elsewhere in Africa. "The normalization and dignifying of military takeovers must trouble our great continent," Kenya's cabinet secretary for foreign affairs wrote while sharing the photo this week.

Now Burkina Faso and another military junta-led country friendly with Russia, Mali, have taken the unusual step of declaring that foreign military intervention in neighboring Niger after last week's coup would be considered a declaration of war against them, too. They are defying the West African regional body known as ECOWAS, which said it could use force if Niger's coup leaders don't reinstate the democratically elected president, Mohamed Bazoum, within a week. Another coup-affected nation, Guinea, in a separate statement supported Niger's junta and urged ECOWAS

to "come to its senses." Their defense of the events in Niger complicates the world's response as the resolve of partners is tested. It also reflects what a United Nations study warned last month after surveying thousands of citizens of African countries that recently went through coups or other undemocratic changes of government. "A possible regional-level scenario might see the military juntas in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso team up" to challenge the region's traditional response to coups, the report said. It warned they could defy sanctions and stand for elections, with help from "new international alliances." The report said that "paradoxically," popular support for the recent military coups in Africa is "symptomatic of a new wave of democratic aspiration that is expanding across the continent" as overwhelmingly young populations grow frustrated with existing economic and political systems and press for change more rapid than what elections can deliver.

Many just want to feel secure as Islamic extremists expand their range in the Sahel, the arid region south of the Sahara Desert. "I think that a military power in Niger will better coordi-

nate its military actions with Mali and Burkina Faso to fight terrorism," Harber Cisse, a Malian citizen living in Guinea, told The Associated Press. He believes Niger's democratically elected president, Mohamed Bazoum, had been "turning a blind eye" and allowing extremists to cross into Mali. Those with memories of past coups in the region are not necessarily shocked by the hastily assembled military announcements and unrest in the streets. The UN survey found optimism and excitement along with anxiety for the future, plus an impatience that has led to multiple coups within months in more than one country. The four coups in Africa in 2021 were the most in a single year in two decades. Many people said they believed the army should take over when a civilian government is incompetent. "These findings highlight the risk of a return to an era of close military involvement in African politics," the UN report said. Certain international responses to coups can be seen as an insult, especially if some foreign partners were seen as prioritizing security instead of African governments' accountability for alleged misconduct. "In some scenarios, these

geopolitically driven interventions have compounded the very factors that heighten coup risk," the UN report said.

Niger had been seen by the United States and allies as the last major counterterrorism partner in the immediate region after Mali and Burkina Faso kicked out French troops and Mali ordered a 15,000-strong UN peacekeeping mission to leave, claiming it had failed in its mission. Post-coup economic sanctions and cuts in assistance programs threaten to worsen the living situation for many in some of the world's poorest countries, while well-off foreigners board evacuation flights to more comfortable places. To help counter the "epidemic of coups," international partners shouldn't downplay people's grievances against national authorities, and their engagement should extend beyond the security sector and "national elites," the director of the Amani Africa think tank, Solomon Dersso, wrote. "There's a small number of people profiting from the riches of Niger," one coup supporter, Seydou Moussa, said in the capital, Niamey. "Nigeriens cannot live like that. It's time that change comes. And change has come."

Suspected militant attack in Yemen kills 5 troops

SANAA (AP): A suspected militant attack in southern Yemen killed at least five troops loyal to a secessionist group, in the latest such assault blamed on an affiliate of al-Qaida, a military spokesman said. The attack took place in Wadi Omran in Abyan province and also wounded four troops from the Southern Armed Forces, which is loyal to the secessionist Southern Transitional Council, spokesman Mohammed al-Naqib said in a statement. The separatist council is backed by the United Arab

Emirates and controls much of Yemen's south. It is at odds with the internationally recognized government. Al-Naqib said suspected militants attacked their forces using mortars and rocket-propelled grenades. He said their forces were chasing the assailants, who fled to a mountainous area between Abyan and neighboring Bayda province. No group claimed responsibility for the ambush. But according to two security officials and a tribal leader, the attack was carried out by al-Qaeda militants. They

said the militants ambushed tents where many soldiers were sleeping, and fired at several armored cars. Both the officials and the tribal leader spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of reprisal.

The al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula group, or AQAP, is seen as one of the more dangerous branches of the terror network. Last month, suspected AQAP militants clashed with forces of the secessionist council in the province of Shabwa. At least two troops and one

militant were killed. AQAP is active in several regions in Yemen, exploiting the country's yearslong conflict to cement its presence in the improvised nation. Yemen's ruinous civil war began in 2014 when the Iran-backed Houthis rebels seized the capital of Sanaa and much of northern Yemen and forced the government into exile. A Saudi-led coalition including the UAE intervened the next year to try to restore the internationally recognized government to power.

The Frontier Post

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Peshawar.

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National interest, leaders’ legacy, and petrol bombs

FINANCE Minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday announced a massive Rs 19 per litre increase in the price of petrol and diesel, which he said was done in line with the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) demands. According to Dar, the government desired to reduce the oil prices but was compelled to jack up the dearly needed commodity because of its commitments with the IMF on the petroleum development levy. Interestingly, Dar lamented the previous PTI government who played blunder by breaching its commitments with the IMF and lowering the petrol price minimum. Meanwhile, the finance minister did not forget to mention that the price of high-speed diesel had moved up significantly in the international market, resulting in the government's decision to hike local rates, that is inter alia a quote to satisfy the enraged masses.

Amid a high level of economic turmoil, the coalition government has dropped another bombshell on the public in the name of national interest adding to their already miserable economic conditions. The IMF has imposed stringent conditions to ensure that the \$3 billion Standby Agreement continues smoothly, while raising the petroleum levy to Rs 60 per litre was one of the requirements of the agreement of the global lender, that has been slapped by the ruling elite without any remorse and hesitation. Meanwhile, the oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has announced a 17.5 pc increase in the producer price of liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), as well as a 13.5 pc raise in the LPG consumer sale price for August that resulted an upsurge in the LPG price by Rs 281.5 per domestic cylinder of 11.8 kg. The current increase in the prices of LPG and petroleum products would surely hit a new wave of inflation in the country.

Pakistan was hit by a persistent political upheaval and economic frailty over the past one and half years and still passes through a crucial period in its history. The years long financial mismanagement, grave repercussions of COVID-19, global energy crises and past year's record super floods coupled with unceasing political anarchy practically nose downed the South Asian economy. The global slowdown in energy prices provided significant relief in the headline inflation for the second straight month to 28.3 percent in the current month, 29.4% in June as compared to around 38 percent in the previous months since January 2023. However, the recent increase in the prices of energy products is likely to reverse the improvement and a new Tsunami of price hikes is to ruin all previous economic relief to the public and political gains of the ruling coalition government.

Historically, Pakistan passed through a crucial period and Pakistanis felt the brunt of economic turmoil that prevailed in the country over the past year. The rupee plunged a record low against dollar and other regional competitors, food prices jumped by over 40%, transport fares increased by 20 percent, while rapid shutdown of industry and massive unemployment projected the poverty level to 37.2 % in the current year. The ruling coalition government has hardly averted the economic collapse through striking \$3 billion Stand by arrangement with the IMF and persistent economic cooperation from friendly nations including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, China and others. The IMF handed over a long list of demands/ economic reforms to the government and increase in petroleum levy, extension in tax network and reduction in non development expenses were the important elements of that agenda that is essential for economic revival but has a heavy price for the public, businesses and society.

Ironically, after the national exchequer filled with the begged money including foreign loans, remittances and monetary deposits by the friendly nations, the government disbursed billions of rupees in the name of development funds, while the Prime Minister and his aides started their election campaign by distributing free laptops, renovation of holy shrines and construction of roads and streets in their respective constituencies ahead of crucial election in the country. The rulers had always demanded sacrifice from the public and poor masses paid a heavy prices of the mistaken policies and bad choices of their rulers throughout in history. The incumbent PML-N led government planned to install Senator Ishaq Dar as the Prime Minister in the next caretaker setup to continue its so-called pro public policies during that time and ultimately pave the way for the next whole term in power.

A strange cycle of recurrent economic slow-down, energy shortages, low foreign reserves and the need for a bailout package has been a periodic episode throughout in our national life. Each time, leaders demanded sacrifice from the masses to overcome economic weakness and vowed to throw away the begging bowl but compromised their ego for political reasons and did not implement national agenda in true spirit that shaped into an insoluble puzzle for the nation. In fact, our nation could not get out of this magical cycle until and unless Pakistani leaders resist politics of development projects, legacy of subsidies and fake nationalism.

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Descent into illiberalism threatens Libya’s post-conflict prospects

Hafed Al-Ghwel

IN a world roiling with turmoil and uncertainty, Libya finds itself precariously balanced between a fragile peace and looming chaos. Forgotten by international headlines and living in a murky world of hybrids, precarious arrangements and shaky compromises, Libya's obscure calm barely holds on. It is eerily reminiscent of Afghanistan prior to the Taliban's takeover, signaling Libya's potential plunge into a similar quagmire. For now, a three-year-old ceasefire still holds, albeit barely, buoyed by oil revenues that have continuously diffracted tensions - or exacerbated them.

Today, only a transactional frenzy glues together the tattered fragments of once-grand aspirations to establish the first ever legitimate, publicly endorsed constitutional, governance and institutional frameworks for a post-Qaddafi Libya. However, with rival powers within and beyond vying to adjust Libya's trajectory toward a stable, unified state, the North African country risks becoming the next Afghanistan. Yet, a strange tolerance for this troublesome dynamic prevails, especially from an international community that continuously assesses the status quo as eminently favorable to Libya's past convulsions.

Nonetheless, there is a growing cost to this "pragmatism," which is more a lack of courage and initiative than a deliberate, well-thought-out and actionable policy choice. Of particular note is a deeply concerning erosion of civil liberties, which paints a grim picture for Libya's already troubled transition to a semblance of a democratic state. Beyond the self-interested transactionalism at the heart of Libya's current maladies, a stubborn power vacuum remains, fueled by deep-seated tribal divisions, two warring politico-military entities and the presence of numerous armed factions. Recent attempts to bridge the divide have been hamstrung by persistent political tensions in the country, to the detriment of hard-fought civil liberties - a cornerstone of any true democracy. Human rights abuses are notably prevalent, while freedom of speech and the right to peaceful assembly remain under constant

threat. Forces loyal to both sides of Libya's political divide continue to target outspoken civilians, journalists and activists, reflecting an unwelcome descent into illiberalism.

Lately, a tide of religious extremism has also come to the fore, further cementing the parallels to Afghanistan. The changing tenor of the rivalries among Libya's elites, from lethal confrontations to a heated competition for influence, has opened the door to extremist ideologues seeking to exert their own presence in a country adrift. As a result, a wave of oppressive Islamization is now systematically targeting the "new undesirables," i.e., atheists, secularists, foreign language teachers, ethnic minorities, women and even civil society activists.

state is cracking down on any spaces that host dissenting voices or atheist views deemed hostile to the Islamization of Libyan institutions, including those responsible for educating its youths. These escalations are similar to what happened in Afghanistan in the 1990s, when a ruling political class was happy to facilitate exclusion and suppression, so long as it helped consolidate power, divert attention from its shortcomings and conceal its intent to undermine a nascent democratic state. An additional exacerbating factor is the global community's penchant for a divide-and-rule approach that unwittingly fans the flames of instability despite pronounced intentions to do the exact opposite. A state of impunity also prevails

erties must be nonnegotiable. Such an intervention can focus on three pillars: unyielding support for civil society, fostering inclusive dialogue, and committed support to helping Libyans realize their democratic aspirations. This long-held dream remains within reach, but only if the international community engages in Libya assertively and judiciously, striving for the principles of democracy, citizenship and dignity. First, the international community must bolster civil society's capacity to tackle the multitude of pressing issues besieging Libya. By directly supporting capacity-building, financial assistance and advocacy training, international actors can augment civil society's resilience and allow it to participate effectively in peacebuilding and democratization. Second, given Libya's splintered landscape, there is still a need to continuously facilitate dialogue with various factions and in multiple forums. Encouraging that level of communication and the setting of expectations between civil society, political rivals and various ethnic or other regional groups forges a shared vision for the nation's future, ensuring a sustainable peace. It demands impartial and consistent mediation efforts, under UN auspices as well as those of key regional stakeholders.

Finally, inclusive political processes remain crucial to Libya's democratic evolution. The global community must ensure the country's political future encompasses as many diverse voices as possible. In turn, this will help counter the growing marginalization of ethnic minorities and advocate for the genuine representation and participation of women and youth in politics. The worsening sociopolitical and socio-religious dynamic in Libya should serve as a reminder of the complexity and stakes involved in post-conflict nation-building. For Libya to rise above its current challenges and evolve into a stable, unified democratic state, the international community and Libyans themselves need to insist on the upholding of civil liberties, solidify a shared national identity that supersedes tribal lines and advocate unrelentingly for the end of the ruinous political divide.

The global community should aim to support these measures while pressuring the involved parties to commit to a just and peaceful transition process, in which the preservation of civil lib-

Unaccountable and seemingly unsailable political elites now openly clude with unchecked extremist forces to introduce public policies, such as a fatwa barring women from traveling without chaperones. This tide of illiberalism is also evident beyond the public square. Online, the state is cracking down on any spaces that host dissenting voices or atheist views deemed hostile to the Islamization of Libyan institutions, including those responsible for educating its youths.

Public funding continues to flow freely to controversial Islamist-influenced institutions in Benghazi and Tripoli, which arguably makes the crackdowns and the deterioration of Libya's socio-religious landscape a state-sponsored endeavor. An uncanny alliance has also emerged between Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh and extremist religious leader Sadiq Al-Ghariani, affording what were once peripheral groups some political clout and ultimately normalizing the pivot toward exclusionary Islamism. Unaccountable and seemingly unassailable political elites now openly collude with unchecked extremist forces to introduce public policies, such as a fatwa barring women from traveling without chaperones.

This tide of illiberalism is also evident beyond the public square. Online, the

and influential external actors have so far proven unable to effectively intervene or exert pressure toward safeguarding civil liberties, which are always the first casualty of post-conflict state rebuilding that has gone awry. This plight does not bode well for a nation in the throes of a fragile transition. Besides, a democratic state, as envisioned by Libyans themselves and the global community, is hardly viable within this current context. Libya requires not just comprehensive reforms, but also a renewed emphasis on establishing the rule of law and preserving civil liberties in order to democratize effectively.

The global community should aim to support these measures while pressuring the involved parties to commit to a just and peaceful transition process, in which the preservation of civil lib-

US allies apprehensive as 2024 presidential election race heats up

Andrew Hammond

IN November 2020, it was not just US Democrats who breathed a big sigh of relief at then-President Donald Trump's election loss. Many US allies around the world were also hugely relieved by the outcome, hoping that Trump's political career had come to an end. Fast forward almost three years, however, and Trump's 2024 campaign appears strong. Indeed, it even appears to be increasing in momentum as he faces mounting legal peril, including from a new round of indictments last week.

Little wonder that key American allies from Europe to the Asia-Pacific are increasingly concerned Trump could again be elected president, not least given the game-changing geopolitical impact this could have. While most elected officials are unwilling to comment publicly on their fear, others who will never face the ballot box again have spoken out. For example, former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair has called the possibility of Trump winning the presidency again a "disaster," given the changed international relations of recent years, especially following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. To be sure, it is by no means certain that Trump will win the 2024 election. However, such a ballot may be much closer than many anticipate and some commentators, including this writer, have asserted since 2020 that the ex-president is highly likely to become the Republican standard-bearer. If Trump does become the nominee, as looks increasingly likely, there remains a significant, albeit chilling, possibility he will become only the second person in US history elected to the White House in nonconsecutive terms. The first was Grover Cleveland, who won in 1884 and 1892.

For all the wrong reasons, Trump is a precedent-shattering politician and his chances of becoming the Republican nominee only appear to be increasing with the number of lawsuits and indictments filed against him. This reflects the nature of his voter base, who, for a range of reasons, believe their candidate is the victim of wide-ranging "deep state" conspiracy theories. While Trump is now 77, he is about three years younger than incumbent President Joe Biden. So, there are no personal or political blocks that would prevent him running again as long as his health holds up and following his impeachment acquittal in the US Senate. There is also currently no legal barrier to him holding future office. Moreover, in refusing to concede the 2020 ballot outcome, the billionaire businessman's game plan for winning power again may well be to try to emulate the approach of Andrew Jackson, a president many have compared him to. In 1824, Jackson came close to winning the presidency, as he won the most electoral votes but not enough for the necessary majority in a field of four candidates. In what Johnson later termed the "corrupt bargain," the House of Representatives elected John Quincy Adams as

president, despite Jackson's Electoral College advantage. Jackson went on to win the presidency in both 1828 and 1832. While the circumstances of his loss to Biden are different to those of Jackson in 1824, Trump has sought to nurture a similar sense of grievance over his defeat. And this is despite the overwhelming evidence that points to Biden's clear 2020 Electoral College win.

Despite Trump's many controversies, he will be a formidable contender in 2024 should he win the Republican nomination. The appeal of "Trumpism" remains strong among key US groups, as has been evidenced by recent polls. Trump also has significant advantages over those who are his rivals in seeking the Republican nomination. While the outcome of the party's 2024 race is still too far away for us to be certain about any predictions, history indicates there are patterns to previous primary contests that point to potential success for Trump.

The past few decades of US political history suggest the victors in nomination contests for both major parties frequently lead national polls of party identifiers on the eve of the first presidential nomination ballot in Iowa and/or raise more campaign finance than any other candidate in the 12 months prior to election year. On both these counts, Trump is leading the other Republican candidates, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley, former Vice President Mike Pence and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy. From 1980 to 2020, the eventual nominee in about half the Democratic and Republican nomination races contested (that is, in which there was more than one candidate) was the early front-runner by both of these measures, as Trump is now for the Republicans. Moreover, in at least five partial exceptions to this pattern, the eventual presidential nominee led the rest of the field on one of the two measures, including Biden in 2020 and Trump in 2016.

With Trump, the probable Republican nominee for a third successive election, the one factor that still gives certain US allies some comfort is that it is far from certain he would win back the presidency for at least two reasons. Firstly, while the reelection campaign of Biden (presuming he becomes the Democratic presidential nominee) has key vulnerabilities, he may ultimately become a moderate favorite to win a second term in 2024. This would be especially likely if the US economy avoids recession and enters a new period of faster, more equitable growth. The second key factor influencing Trump's prospects of winning the presidential election will be how much, and how quickly, the Republican Party can unite around him given the debate between moderate and centrist Republicans - many of whom are appalled by the ex-president's behavior - and Trump's supporters over the party's future direction. A rancorous, divisive Republican nomination contest, even if Trump ultimately prevails, may only benefit Biden.

Putin is finally losing his psychological grip

Owen Matthews

VLAGIMIR Putin's psychological grip on Russia has lasted a generation. His image as an all-powerful strongman has survived repeated economic crises, mass protests, sanctions, military defeats and, most recently, a major army mutiny. But can his popularity survive increasingly frequent Ukrainian drone strikes on the heart of Moscow?

First, it is worth remembering that Putin's rise to power in 1999 was inextricably linked to his role as a defender of Russia against attack. A series of gigantic bombs placed in apartment buildings in Moscow and other Russian cities killed over 300 innocent people as they slept, sowing terror. Putin had just been promoted from heading Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) to prime minister. In contrast to the

ailing and addled Boris Yeltsin, the young, tough new premier promised to "rub the terrorists out in the sh-----". Putin blamed Chechens for the attacks, though some suggest that the bombings were actually carried out by the FSB. An invasion of Chechnya quickly followed and Putin's image as Russia's saviour and protector was born.

Now, 24 years on, pro-Ukrainian partisans regularly breach Russia's border and Ukrainian drone and rocket strikes inside Russia are becoming an almost daily occurrence. Recent Ukrainian targets have included the elite dacha lands of suburban Moscow and the skyscrapers of Moscow's financial district. Suddenly, Putin's narrative of being his people's protector looks shaky. It would be magical thinking to imagine that these drone strikes will be enough on their own to

bring Putin's authority among ordinary Russians suddenly crashing down. Kremlin propagandists have been telling Russians for years that their country is at war with Nato. In that sense, attacks on Moscow may also strengthen the Kremlin narrative that Putin's delusional invasion of Ukraine was in fact a pre-emptive defensive war against Russia's mortal enemies. Yet there is a real danger to Putin from a different direction - not the people, but his own elites. For two decades the "power vertical" that Putin created rested on a simple principle: cronies would be allowed to get rich and plunder the country in exchange for complete loyalty.

Putin's role was to act as an arbiter for the gangland-style quarrels among his subordinates, while ensuring that ordinary

Russians received a steady diet of feel-good propaganda that mixed Soviet nostalgia with an aggressive imperialistic message that the country was surrounded by jealous enemies.

The Ukraine war is shattering that arrangement. It has become an expensive quagmire. Not one of Putin's stated goals has been achieved and many of them - such as putting an end to Nato expansion and demilitarising Ukraine - have produced the opposite outcome.

And more crucially from the selfish viewpoint of Russia's elites, war has been terrible for business. Putin himself and the tiny circle of senior power brokers who surround him may be delusional and fatally badly informed. But the wider elite of generals, bureaucrats and

businessmen who control Russia's government, economy and media are not fools. Leaked phone intercepts and off-the-record conversations with well-connected Russian journalists reveal a fragmentary but consistent picture of an elite that is in equal parts appalled by the war and helpless to do anything to stop it. Putin himself has lost his aura of invincibility and infallibility.

The Wagner mutiny revealed a Kremlin paralysed with indecision. Having promised to crush the mutineers as traitors, Putin then failed to punish Prigozhin or his men. Only one of the "ultra-patriots" who have steadily blasted him for his failure to defeat Kyiv - the outspoken Strelkov - has been arrested. Increasingly bold Ukrainian strikes on the capital have eroded Putin's credibility among the elites still further.

Predicting the future of Russian politics is a risky business. But one thing is clear - Putin and his propaganda machine can only command the loyalty of ordinary Russians as long as he can avoid the three key jeopardies that brought down the USSR: the emergence of serious challengers to his rule, economic crisis, and the discreditation of his regime through military or government collapse. Today, with every drone that hits Moscow, more and more of Russia's power brokers will be looking towards a post-Putin future where they can walk away from and forget his disastrous war and its consequences. And once those elites anoint a successor - perhaps even with the Kremlin's reluctant blessing - the spell Putin has woven over his people will vanish quickly and completely.

The Telegraph

The futile search for Palestinian reconciliation

SINCE the biggest Palestinian rift in modern times took place in 2007, when Hamas fighters expelled the Palestinian Authority from Gaza and defeated Fatah loyalists in a bloody coup, there have been many attempts at restoring national unity and what the mainstream now calls "Palestinian reconciliation." But for the generation of Palestinians born after that catastrophic event, Palestinian reconciliation rings hollow. The bitter truth is that, after more than 16 years of political split between Gaza and the West Bank, achieving national unity has become an issue almost as central, and as elusive, as ending the Israeli occupation.

Unlike his predecessor Yasser Arafat, Mahmoud Abbas, who was elected as president of the PA in 2005 in addition to the Palestine Liberation Organization - the latter being the political umbrella for the most active and influential Palestinian factions - was never a popular or charismatic leader. His career has been described as clerical rather than him being a fighter in the trenches. He takes credit for negotiating the Oslo Accords of 1993 and ideologically, or so it seems, he has committed himself to their outcomes despite the fundamental and acute shifts in the inclinations of the Israeli body politic since the year 2000 and even before.

Fatah, the oldest and most popular Palestinian faction, has never been able to recognize Hamas and the other Islamist militant groups, with their extremist agendas, as equals or even as players on the evolving Palestinian political tapestry. While a politically opportunistic Arafat opted to cajole the budding Gaza-based movement of

Hamas, especially after the First Intifada of 1988, Abbas disagreed with its objectives and goals. He flatly rejected their militant approach, describing the primitive missiles they then fired at southern Israel as "absurd" or "futile." Then came the split in Gaza after the collapse of the elected government of Hamas' Ismail Haniyeh in 2007. The loss of Gaza was an especially painful blow to the PA, which presented itself as the legitimate government of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, negotiating a two-state solution and the creation of an independent Palestinian state as per Oslo.

Hamas, and later Islamic Jihad, opted for a more radical position than that taken by the PLO and its institutions, which was a negotiated peaceful settlement. They adopted armed struggle as a way to liberate Palestine. Their influence would have been limited if not for four factors: The failure of all attempts at restoring Palestinian national unity; the paralysis of peace talks between the Israelis and the PA; the rise of an intransigent Israeli far right that openly declared its rejection of the two-state solution and its intention to annex most of the West Bank; and the changing regional geopolitical landscape, which allowed Iran to infiltrate these movements under the guise of confronting Israel and standing in solidarity with the Palestinians. All this was happening while successive Israeli governments carried out a number of military operations against the blockaded Gaza Strip, with the failed aim of crushing the Islamist resistance. While Abbas and his PA stood still as Israel expanded the illegal settle-

ments in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and as the international community paid lip service to condemning the Israeli actions, the popularity of Hamas and Islamic Jihad soared.

Since the 2007 rift, there have been a number of attempts to restore national unity. From the Makkah agreement of 2007 all the way to the most recent reconciliation attempt in Algeria in October 2022, all efforts to form a national unity government, end Hamas' control of Gaza and hold national elections across the Palestinian territories have been met with failure. The latest initiative, launched by President Abbas, to hold a meeting of the leaders of the Palestinian factions in Egypt, which took place on Sunday, was equally unsuccessful. While Hamas attended, Islamic Jihad boycotted the meeting, calling on Abbas to release the "resistance fighters" who had been rounded up by the PA following Israel's bloody Jenin incursion last month. The meeting at El-Alamein failed to agree on a joint statement. The rift has widened, with Abbas calling for peaceful resistance to the Israeli occupation and a commitment to international law, while Hamas and others urged him to call an end to the Oslo process and agree on all forms of resistance available to the Palestinians to rid themselves of the Israeli occupation. There was a symbolic, but empty, gesture of agreeing on the need to revive the PLO and to take a united stand.

Abbas, at 87, and the financially troubled PA are running out of options. The Israeli government has turned its back on Oslo and is bulldozing its way into Palestinians lands. It could

soon impose Israeli law on more than 60 percent of West Bank territory - a de facto annexation. The Biden administration will not risk a confrontation with Israel over Abbas and the PA ahead of an election year. Hamas and Islamic Jihad appear emboldened by the fact that Abbas is weak and is looking for ways to evade the ultimate question of who will succeed him. And while the heads of more than 10 Palestinian factions were meeting in Egypt on Sunday, fighting broke out between Fatah and "extremist groups" in the Ain Al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. It was the most serious inter-Palestinian fighting in Lebanon in years. This is a bad omen for what may come soon. Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati described the timing of the fighting as "suspicious." Palestinian reconciliation has become an empty rhetorical statement. Hamas, which is becoming unpopular in the beleaguered Gaza Strip, will not give up control. Abbas is reluctant to allow the holding of elections because the militants may win, as younger and more desperate Palestinians become more skeptical about the prospect of a peaceful settlement that will liberate them. He has become hostage to his obsolete ideological beliefs, all while the PA has become an instrument of normalizing Israeli occupation.

For now, a far-right Israel is benefiting from Palestinian divisions. But Abbas will not last forever and Fatah, his political base, is crumbling under his feet. A new generation of Palestinian leadership is likely to emerge. And as Israel ups the ante, the Palestinian response will surely come.

Arab News

China paranoia on campus

Denis Simon

THE resignation of a senior faculty member from a major university is usually a fairly commonplace event, but we are living in very unique times. I made the decision to resign my faculty appointment at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill because I felt there existed an unbridgeable philosophical gap between the university's academic leadership and myself regarding engagement with China.

As anyone reading the daily news knows, over the last 3-4 years in particular, US-China ties have been in a downward spiral. Political relations are the worst they have been in many decades. Tensions in the political sphere have spilled over into the realm of S&T collaboration and education exchanges. Many American universities are filled with great anxiety about whether they should maintain ongoing cooperative relationships with China because key segments of the Congress and White House are embarked on a course to delink and "de-risk" our ties with China. Academic freedom is being put at risk as universities make it difficult, if not impossible, for their faculty, students and administrators to engage in existing programs post-COVID, let alone embark on new programs.

There is a sustained fear in the air on many US university campuses that federal funds will be cut if a campus is seen as being too close to China-even if those links do not present any direct national security threat. Campus leaders, especially in public universities like UNC, feel huge pressure to follow State Department guidance to refrain from travel to China because of fears that those trying to leave that country might have their departures blocked for an assortment of political reasons. In my case, as I have done since the early 1980s, I willingly agreed to receive a three person delegation from the PRC Embassy in Washington DC to hold informal, off the record discussions about the state of US-China relations. The meeting was intended to be low profile and not for public consumption. At a time when great mistrust exists between our two countries, it is more important than ever for the two sides to maintain active communications and dialogue. Otherwise, the downward spiral will get even worse and the possibility of mending fences in the future will become much more difficult. One does not have to be a so-called "panda hugger" to embrace the idea that mutual understanding is

enhanced through honest, frank exchanges of opinion. Because of my actions in accepting this delegation, I had my hand slapped by the university provost and told to desist from accepting such requests without securing formal permission from the UNC academic leadership.

None of the officials from the PRC Embassy were seeking out sensitive scientific or technical information; nor were they on a mission to gather protected information about activities at the university. They merely wanted to speak with faculty members who had previously engaged in cooperation with Chinese counterparts. As many people may know, the environment on many American university campuses regarding China already has been poisoned by the so-called China Initiative, a program run under the Department of Justice and the FBI to weed out alleged spies among the US academic community. The program was terminated because, among those persons being prosecuted, there was insufficient or no evidence to move ahead with the majority of the cases; except in a few isolated instances, most of the charges were dropped. The program was also halted because it was tainted by the fact that the bulk of those being accused were Chinese-Americans. From the way these cases were developed, there were clear racist overtones regarding the identification of so-called wrong-doers. After a huge outcry from across many universities and the Asian American community in the US, the DOJ was forced to shut down the program. Though the China Initiative may no longer exist, there are suggestions unfortunately that parts of the investigative aspects of the original program remain in place.

As an individual who has spent four decades working to build bridges of understanding and cooperation between the US and China, it is clear that the current interventions into university academic affairs represent a fundamental threat to academic freedom. Even more importantly, unlike in the past when relations in the sphere of education and research were highly unequal and asymmetrical, the situation is 180 degrees different today. While China's rise may be viewed as a so-called "existential threat" to the US by many in the world of the Beltway, the fact is that China's enhanced capabilities in science, technology and education represent an exciting opportunity for real mutual benefit from enhanced inter-

actions and cooperation. The simple fact is that there is no major global challenge out there-climate change, clean energy, global pandemics, cancer, food security, etc.-whose meaningful solution does not depend on close US-China collaboration. By cutting off engagement with China, American academics are in danger of losing access to the world's number two economy and the second largest spender on R&D across the globe. Moreover, by creating distance between our two countries, we also are putting at risk the future of our talent pipeline, which is severely in need of high end talent from China to join our graduate programs and eventually secure employment in those fields that define the cutting edge today and in the future.

Simply stated, I believe that the restrictive policies being followed by many US universities such as UNC are wrongly oriented and will prove detrimental to the long term interests of the United States. No one is saying that the bilateral relationship is not without its problems. Serious issues remain regarding the protection of intellectual property, the treatment and protection of data, and the use of knowledge into areas that go beyond civil application. In 1978-79, when the US and China signed the original umbrella agreements to facilitate cooperation in science and technology as well as education, most of the issues that dominated the current bilateral agenda were not considered critical with China so far behind the US in most fields that no one imagined China catching up to the US any time soon. With the rapid development of Chinese research capabilities, improvements in the performance of China's innovation system and the enhancement of Chinese universities, we clearly have entered a new era.

The US needs China and China needs the US. We may not like the idea of such intense interdependence, but the fact remains that China's rise is a reality that our country must learn to deal with. I hope American university leaders will use my example as a reason to take a step back and consider the full consequences of their behaviors; it is time to take a unified stand against the current series of misinformed policies that are akin to watching us drive off a cliff even as we see the edge right in front of us.

Lai's transit to be disastrous for Taiwan

Martin Sieff

THE Joe Biden administration would do better to take Beijing's advice and prevent Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party leader Lai Cheng-te from transiting through the United States on his way to Paraguay, Beijing has already issued a sober warning to Washington that it regards granting a Taiwan politician to transit through the US as a dangerously provocative behavior. Washington should respect and heed that warning.

Unfortunately, US policymakers and almost all Congress members are obsessed with posturing against both Russia and China so they can present themselves to the US public as crusading knights for a so-called democratic ideal they conspicuously fail to practice in their own country. In reality, some US politicians are fanning the flames of fear and hatred toward China, Russia and other countries that do not bow to its dictats in order to distract the US public from the US domestic manifest failures.

However, history is clear: such bluster always provokes a disastrous collision that cannot be avoided. War ensues, with the desperate adventurers pulling their countries down to ruin. It has always been so. But the fact that we now live in a world full of nuclear weapons raises the risks to unimaginable new levels. Wisdom and restraint are called for. The precepts of Confucius and Sun Tzu cry out to be sensibly applied in the US. But so far, the US has been deaf

there, in return for being the US' obedient pawn.

Lai, like so many other ambitious, power-hungry demagogues and power-seekers before him, expects the imagined superpower to propel him to the top, regardless of the dangers to which he exposes Taiwan residents as well as the American people. Lai's background and political history are highly revealing. He did not study economics, business, history or politics in college. He is a medical doctor, and spent some years studying at Harvard Medical School. Back in Taiwan, he propelled himself to important political positions for 20 years, and made his political assumptions and loyalty clear early, while showing no aptitude for restraint or wisdom whatsoever. Lai is indeed existentially American in an alarmingly superficial way. The restraint, caution, balance and wisdom of Confucius and the strategic genius of Sun Tzu are both alien to him. He sees the world as a chess board where the US and its acolytes are destined to win under the banner of democracy, regardless of the more sordid realities that really propel them. He is alien to the philosophy of playing go.

Such a man can only give rise to crisis and confrontation, and ruin all those who support him, whether in Taiwan or the US. That's why Beijing's recent warning to Washington to prevent Lai from transiting through the US was timely and wise. US leaders would benefit by heeding the warning.

The China Daily

Hezbollah's Catch-22 situation over conflict with Israel

Yossi Mekelberg

WHEN Hassan Nasrallah, head of the Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah, celebrates something that is taking place in Israel, warning lights should begin to flash in every Israeli household. In response to the Israeli parliament's ratification of an anti-democratic bill last week, the leader of the Iranian-sponsored movement said in a televised speech: "Today, in particular, is the worst day in the history of (Israel), as some of its people say." He was speaking in reference to Israel's current political crisis and he expressed his hope that "this is what puts it on the path of collapse, fragmentation and disappearance."

Whereas such wishful thinking has been central to Hezbollah's ideology since its inception, Nasrallah might also erroneously believe that he could give his nemesis in the south a helping hand on its route to self-destruction - an intervention that could have horrendous consequences. Such barbs and wishes for each other's demise are not new, but on this occasion they coincide with tensions along the border and a fragility among both the Israeli and Lebanese political systems. This makes a tense situation even more susceptible to an outbreak of hostilities, whether intentional or inadvertent. This month marks 17 years since the last large-scale conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, which was prompted by the latter's provocation on the border, when it killed and kidnapped Israeli soldiers, resulting in 34 days of war in which both sides suffered severe losses. Since 2006, the levels of mutual suspicion and vitriolic language between the two protagonists have increased exponentially, their respective political systems

and societies have become even more unstable, and their devastating military capabilities have expanded. In the case of Hezbollah, it enjoys a constant stream of advanced weapons and ammunition from Iran. However, in Israel, these worrying developments along its northern border have been pushed down the government's list of priorities as a consequence of the current constitutional crisis, despite the increasing threat of military clashes with Hezbollah.

The most recent tensions stem from moves by both Israel and Hezbollah along and close to the border, which began more than a year ago. Israel is building a wall along certain sections of the border to replace the old fence, with the aim of creating a barrier that will prevent future incursions by Hezbollah. In the past, the organization has tunneled into Israel. According to Israeli security officials, the aim was then, and remains, for the organization's Radwan force, estimated to have 8,000 fighters at its disposal, to cross the border and capture Israeli military posts, take over major road junctions in the north of the country and to attack villages and take civilians and soldiers hostage. Israel cannot afford for Hezbollah to gain such a morale-boosting psychological victory, while it would also become vulnerable to a hostage situation. Border disputes between Israel and Lebanon are not new, but the building of a wall represents a more permanent statement of where Israel believes - or would like to believe - the border runs, a position that Hezbollah and the Lebanese government are challenging. The lack of direct commu-

nication between the two sides, the unilateral nature of the steps they take and the general distrust between them are exaggerating every disagreement disproportionately to the act itself and leading to increasing tensions. The recent dispute concerning the village of Ghajar is a case in point. It is a small Alawite village in the Golan Heights, home to about 2,700 people, which has been occupied by Israel since 1967. Since 2001, the village has been a closed military zone that visitors require special permission from the municipal council and the Israeli army to enter. However, last September, and with no prior notice, Israel erected a fence around the northern part of Ghajar, keeping all its houses inside Israeli territory despite the dispute over the location of the border in the area.

Keeping all the village's houses within Israeli-controlled territory, regardless of the border dispute between the two countries - which are still officially at war with each other - gave Hezbollah the perfect pretext for a calculated escalation in the area. It is keeping Israel guessing about its intentions and its next moves, and it mainly presents itself as the only force in Lebanese politics that is standing up to its southern neighbor, even though it is violating the UN Security Council resolution that brought an end to the war in 2006 by erecting surveillance posts along the border, which are manned by its elite Radwan force. Moreover, back in May, to Israel's irritation, about 200 Hezbollah fighters carried out military exercises with live ammunition and drones just 12 miles from the border, while senior members of the

organization warned Israel that, in case of war, "we will rain down our precision missiles and all the weapons at our disposal." Between this aggressive rhetoric and both sides' actions on the ground, Israel and Hezbollah are edging closer to a military confrontation. Hezbollah would prefer a very limited confrontation in which it can make some gains, but Israel has no interest in such a scenario and has no wish to let its enemy gain any semblance of achievement. In terms of intentions and capability, Hezbollah is becoming Israel's immediate arch-enemy - a situation made worse by its ties with Tehran and the latter's encouragement. All the signs are that Nasrallah and his movement believe that the domestic crisis in Israel is an opportune moment to poke their militarily stronger neighbor, but to do so without provoking it to use its superior military capabilities to hit Lebanon with full force.

For now, both sides, with the help of behind-the-scenes US mediation, are managing to avoid dragging each other into a wider military clash. Israel has learned lessons from both 1982 and 2006 and is concerned with fortifying its border and preventing Hezbollah from acquiring the weapons that could alter the balance of power between the two. For Hezbollah, Israel is more a tool to maintain its political position inside Lebanon and to remain useful for Tehran in its confrontation with Tel Aviv. But by pursuing these ends, it has become a dangerous burden for Lebanese politics and society. It is a Catch-22 situation for Hezbollah: To remain relevant, it needs to maintain its conflict with Israel, but if it goes too far, it will bring about a disaster for Lebanon and possibly its own demise.

The BRICS alternatives to the US dollar

Renato Baumann

WHENEVER there is a serious economic situation - such as the mismatch between the price of gold and the reality of the US economy in the late 1960s, the two oil crises of the 1970s, the various financial problems throughout the 1990s, the creation of the euro in the early 2000s and the 2008 global financial crisis - many expect the dollar to lose its importance. Those expectations have proved to be extrapolative.

It is true that there has been an increase in the relative weight of other currencies as a means of trade, as well as part of foreign exchange reserves for a number of economies. But the US dollar remains the predominant reference in the international market: it still accounts for about 85 percent of all foreign exchange transactions, 61 percent of official foreign exchange reserves (although down from 77 percent in 1970); 40 percent of international payments, and half of all international securities and cross-border loans issued by non-US residents. The US dollar being universally accepted provides liquidity to private transactions, which many other currencies do not do. No other monetary system offers an equivalent number of "investment grade" government bonds as the United States'. And potentially competing currencies are handicapped by the absence of adequate regulation in the financial

system of the country they represent. A broad global use of a dominant funding currency has benefits, as it generates economies of scale and network effects, thus reducing the costs of transferring capital and risks around the financial system. For foreign economies, this allows borrowers to have access to a broad pool of lenders and investors, reducing funding and transaction costs.

But it also stimulates a synchronized behavior of actors in the global financial system, increasing the transmission mechanisms of shocks stemming from the US monetary policy and credit conditions. This has led to frequent manifestations with regard to the "exorbitant privilege" enjoyed by the US economy, which can finance itself using the domestic currency at a cost lower than other economies, which impose a burden on other economies. Trade in US dollars requires a double conversion from the domestic currencies of two countries other than the US into dollars and back to the domestic currencies. Why shouldn't there be other, more direct, ways to trade, avoiding such costs?

This issue was resolved in Europe by the creation of the euro. But the European Union's is in a very peculiar situation, because despite two-thirds of the EU's trade by the participating countries being

among themselves, it took several decades and a number of experiments to achieve a common currency. Yet not all EU countries use the euro and often doubts are raised about the survival of the euro. Nevertheless, the discomfort with the role of the US dollar remains, which has been aggravated by the recent sanctions imposed on Russia: the weaponization of access to foreign exchange reserves in dollars. This has stimulated the search for an alternative global financial and payment system. Any given group of countries is expected to create mechanisms to facilitate trade and investment within the group as a means to assure homogeneity and attractiveness. This holds true also for BRICS. There is an increasing demand within BRICS for other mechanisms to facilitate and reduce trade costs, including a reduction in the use of the dollar to settle trade deals. Also, the present scenario is seen by some as an opportunity for creating conditions to broaden the use of other currencies, as well as a stimulus for building new, different payment systems.

But it is unrealistic to talk about a common BRICS currency now, not least because the eurozone, even with very unique characteristics, including geographic proximity, faces frequent problems and the

euro has not achieved the expected importance in global markets. Yet some progress can be achieved. The alternative is to create a mechanism, such as periodic settlements, so that bilateral trade can take place and the actual disbursement of hard currencies is required to only pay for the amount corresponding to the imbalance in bilateral positions. So instead of talking about a common BRICS currency, efforts should be made to try and design a mechanism that facilitates bilateral trade and, at the same time, substantially reduces the demand for US dollars, therefore, reducing trade costs.

As for an alternative currency to the US dollar, this has been the desire of some policymakers in many countries and regions since at least the 1960s. The problem is that there does not seem to be any natural candidate to fulfill all the present functions of the dollar in the short run. Expectations of economic agents are a determining element, and at present all the indicators are suggestive of a still wide acceptance of the US dollar. Needless to say, the above arguments refer to a world without digital currencies. From the moment there is widespread adoption of such currencies, a good deal of the above arguments will require strong qualification, and the relative weight of some currencies might change. But that is something still to be seen.



Bullish trend continues at PSX

ISLAMABAD (APP): Bullish trend continued at the Pakistan Stock Exchange on Wednesday as the 100-index gained 534.04 points, a positive change of 1.11 percent, closing at 48,764.55 points against 48,230.51 points the previous trading day.

A total of 556,141,485 shares were traded during the day as compared to 556,930,694 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 19,989 billion against Rs 15,946 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 353 compa-

nies transacted their shares in the stock market; 194 of them recorded gains and 128 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 31 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Energyico PK with 92,895,571 shares at Rs 3.75 per share; Bank of Punjab with 46,991,000 shares at Rs 4.82 per share and Pak Refinery with 31,345,365 shares at Rs 18.40 per share.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 150.00 per share price, closing at

Rs7,150.00 whereas the runner-up was Sapphire Tex with an Rs 39.88 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,164.87.

Blessed Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 27.74 per share closing at Rs 342.24, followed by Philip Morris Pak with Rs 12.50 decline to close at Rs 430.00.

Gold rates up by Rs 800 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.800 and was sold at Rs.223,000 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs.222,200 on the previous

day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also increased by Rs686 to Rs 191,187 from Rs190,501 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold increased to Rs175,254 from Rs.174,626.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained unchanged at Rs2,800 and Rs2,400.54 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$1 to \$1,951 from \$1,950, the association reported.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Advisor Finance Himayat Ullah Khan presiding over a meeting of GRC Committee. Secretary Finance Ayaz Khan also present.

Dr Samuel called on Finance Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dr. Samuel Rizk, Resident Representative UNDP called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division.

SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Ammara Durrani, Assistant resident representative UNDP, Special Secretary Finance and senior officers from Finance Division attended the meeting, said a press release issued here.

Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar welcomed Dr Samuel Rizk and shared the economic outlook of the coun-

try and measures taken by the Government for achieving economic stability and growth.

He informed that the government has introduced reforms in various sectors for tackling persistent outstanding structural issues with a special focus on sustainable and inclusive growth.

Dr. Samuel Rizk, Resident Representative UNDP discussed the ongoing institutional arrangements by UNDP regarding the Climate Resilient Pakistan and rehabilitation initiatives in flood-affected areas. The UNDP team further extend-

ed support to the government for mobilizing SDG investments and climate financing for development.

Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar appreciated the key role of UNDP as a development partner in helping Pakistan to achieve the fast-track Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reiterated the commitment of GoP on the achievement of SDGs.

The Finance Minister also appreciated UNDP in mobilizing global support for rehabilitation work in flood-affected areas in Pakistan.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Port shipping activity was recorded at the port where three ships namely, Maersk Santosa, MSC United-VIII and PGC Petreas carrying Containers and LPG, berthed at Qasim International Terminal and Engro Vopak Terminal respectively on Tuesday. Meanwhile two more ships, Karimata and Al-Daayen with Gas oil and LNG also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim on Wednesday morning.

A total of 09 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Royal Jasmine, Andrea Victory and Emma Grace sailed out to sea on Wednesday morning, while four more ships, PGC Patreas, CL-Lindy, Maersk Sentosa and MSC United are expected to sail on same day afternoon.

Cargo throughput of 147,157 tonnes, comprising 116,759 tonnes imports Cargo and 30,398 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 4,430 Containers (3,330 TEUs Imports and 1,100 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Five ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Mega-1, Al-Daayen and Karimata & two more ships, MSC Monica and Maersk Pelepas carrying Palm oil, LNG, Gas oil and Containers are expected to take berths at Liquid Terminal, Engro Terminal, Oil Terminal and Container Terminal respectively on 2nd August are due to arrive at PQ.

PTCL Group introduces 6 months maternity and 30 days paternity leaves

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's largest telecommunication and integrated ICT services provider, PTCL Group (PTCL & Ufone 4G) has achieved a momentous milestone in organizational culture by introducing 6 months of Maternity and 30 days of Paternity leaves for its employees.

The policy guidelines provide ample time for new mothers and fathers to bond and care for their newborns through availing fully paid maternity and paternity leaves, respectively. To make it more flexible and convenient, paternity leaves can be availed on a staggered basis during the first year of childbirth.

The policy changes reflect the ongoing cultural transformation at PTCL Group that aims to promote employee well-being and help its team members support a healthier work-life balance.

PTCL Group is committed to transforming its policies and has introduced multiple initiatives to foster inclusion and support the physical and mental health and well-being of its employees.

Commenting on policy guidelines, Group Chief People Officer, Shoaib Baig said, "We're thrilled to introduce changes to our Maternity and Paternity policy guidelines, aligning them with the leading employers in Pakistan. Our

cultural transformation journey, '#TayyarHo' thrives beyond the workplace, embracing every aspect of life. Being an inclusive organization, we cater a range of 'Family Friendly' policies, guidelines and benefits thoughtfully designed for our employees which enable them to give their best to the organization while managing other integral priorities in life. This is a testament to our commitment to becoming an employer of choice."

The new Maternity and Paternity Leaves underscore PTCL Group's dedication to creating a supportive work environment and fostering a more resilient workforce.

Stock markets slide after US downgrade

LONDON (AFP/APP): Asian and European stock markets slumped Wednesday after the United States had its top credit rating downgraded by Fitch.

Ratings agency Fitch downgraded the United States' top-notch credit rating by a step late Tuesday, citing a growing federal debt burden and an "erosion of governance" that has manifested in debt limit standoffs.

The decision to downgrade the US from AAA to AA+ sparked a fiery rebuttal from the White House.

"US markets are expected to follow their Asian and European counterparts lower in the wake of a surprise Fitch downgrade," noted Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets. "For markets, this will likely only represent a short-term dent in confidence."

The announcement meant it would be more expensive for the government to borrow. However, the risk-off sentiment sent traders rushing to safe assets, such as Treasuries, as well as the yen.

The downgrade follows a long, drawn-out row between Republicans and Democrats earlier this year over raising the US borrowing ceiling, which had fuelled fears of a devastating default by the world's top economy.

While a deal was eventually struck, the saga rattled markets and reinforced the sense of long-running deadlock on Capitol Hill that has seen the gears of government jammed up.

Though the lifting of the US debt ceiling -- a limit on government borrowing to pay for bills already incurred -- was once routine, it has for several years become a contentious partisan issue. The downgrade is the first by a major ratings company since a similar debt impasse in 2011 saw S&P lower its top-notch classification for the United States.

BD receives nearly \$2b remittance

DHAKA (APP): Millions of Bangladeshis remitted home nearly 2 billion US dollars in July, the first month of the current fiscal year from July 2023 to June 2024, a central bank official said Wednesday.

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) official who preferred to be unnamed told Xinhua that "the flow of inward remittances fell 5.86 percent year-on-year to 1.97 billion US dollars last month."

Despite the fall, the official expressed satisfaction with the inflow of remittances in July saying remittance flow usually goes up ahead of major Muslim occasions such as Eid-al-Fitr and Eid-al-Azha.

Bangladeshi expatriates in June sent home 2.2 billion dollars, the highest in nearly three years, largely buoyed by the relaxation of various rules in recent months and Muslim festival of Eid-al-Adha which was celebrated here on June 29. The inflow of remittances from some 10 million Bangladeshis, living and working in over 100 countries and regions, in the last 2022-2023 financial year amounted to 21.61 billion dollars.

Remittances mainly came from Middle East countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, among others.

Poultry sector potential to earn foreign exchange

FAISALABAD (APP): The poultry sector has potential to cater domestic needs of protein in addition to earning precious foreign exchange by exporting poultry products under brand names.

This was said by Senior Vice President of Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Dr Sajjad Arshad while talking to a delega-

tion of the Pakistan Poultry Association on Wednesday. He said: "We must develop the sector on scientific lines by encouraging composite units covering hatchery, feed and pharmaceutical by arranging investment through consortiums."

He said the FCCI would make the best efforts to facilitate farmers so that it could be exported to the

potential markets to earn precious foreign exchange.

He also mentioned the upcoming event of international poultry expo and said that last year 1400-1500 farmers from Faisalabad had participated in it but this year their number must jump to 3,000.

Abdul Hai, Dr Hanif Nazir, Rana Salim Akhtar and other members were also present.

Murree Brewery holds awareness seminar



F.P. Report

RAWALPIDI: Murree Brewery arranged an awareness seminar (Smog Rules 2023) in collaboration with EPA Rawalpindi.

The Deputy Director, EPA, Mrs. Maria Safir, Research Officer, Amin Baig, and Senior Inspector,

Romesa Babar, participated in the seminar and expressed their views.

Isfandiyar Bhandara, CEO of Murree Brewery, along with Fakhar-e-Mehmood (General Manager), Naveed Iqbal (Environmental Manager), Khuram Bashir (Auditor Quality Assurance), and

Qasim Ali (Quality Control) also participated in the seminar. They highlighted the positive role of Murree Brewery in preventing smog.

At the end of the seminar, a tree plantation was organized at the wastewater treatment plant of Murree Brewery.

Tokyo stocks plunged tracking W. Street losses

TOKYO (APP): Tokyo stocks plunged Wednesday, with the Nikkei suffering its largest drop this year, amid concerns over the downgrading of US debt and gain-locking moves.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei stock index, the 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average dropped 768.89 points, or 2.30 percent, from Tuesday at 32,707.69, after losing over 800 points at one point.

The broader Topix index, meanwhile, lost 35.60 points, or 1.52 percent, to finish at 2,301.76. Stocks opened the day

with losses, primarily driven by prominent technology-related stocks, which mirrored the drop seen in US technology shares during the previous night.

Analysts here also pointed out that the market experienced selling pressure following a surge of over 700 points in the Nikkei earlier in the week.

Market sentiment was negatively affected after credit ratings agency Fitch on Tuesday downgraded the US government's credit rating, marking the first downgrade in 12 years.

Over concerns about the "growing debt burden" and "an erosion of governance," Fitch, one of three major independent agencies that assess creditworthiness, lowered the US credit rating from the top-notch AAA to AA+.

On the Prime market, decliners were led by securities and commodity futures trading, insurance, as well as the power and gas industries. Bucking the downward trend, the mining, transportation machinery, and non-ferrous metal sectors managed to eke out modest gains.

Federation of Saudi Chambers wants to set up office in Sao Paulo

SAO PAULO (Agencies): The Federation of Saudi Chambers wants to establish an office in Sao Paulo, its assistant secretary-general has said.

Waleed Al-Orainan visited the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday in Sao Paulo, where he will stay for a few more days before returning to Riyadh.

Mishal bin Hithlain, chairman of the Saudi Brazilian Business Council, was also on the visit, and said the Kingdom is working to establish the office as soon as possible.

The Kingdom's trade attache in Washington, Reem Al-Tharwa, was part of the delegation, along with Abdulrahman Al-Muaibid, relations manager for the Americas and director of the council; council member Abdulmalik Al-Qahtani; and Omar Al-

Mughamis, representing the Saudi Authority for Foreign Trade.

Bin Hithlain said the Kingdom wants more Brazilian companies to establish themselves there, as Saudi Arabia is the largest economy in the Middle East. He added that it is important for both countries' private sector to interact more and learn about each other's business cultures. Al-Orainan said partnerships in tourism, oil and gas, and food security are possibilities. "We're very interested in promoting cooperation," he added.

"If you want to do business with Saudi Arabia, you have to go there to see the great transformations that have been taking place," he said.

"Our ambition is what drives us, what gets us up in the morning," he said, adding that Saudi unem-

ployment has dropped from 13 percent to 8 percent, and that the Kingdom has a young and energetic population, as well as giga-projects in different areas and sectors such as NEOM, The Line and Qiddiya, which provide numerous business opportunities.

Giga-projects are part of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 plan for economic diversification, and the tourism sector is being heavily invested in.

The FSC delegation said it wants to increase the number of visits of businesspeople between the countries through trade missions.

"Our mission is to help and facilitate visits. We invite you to visit Saudi Arabia with a business delegation, and we can work together to make an agenda for business meetings. We're the umbrella repre-

senting our private sector," said Al-Orainan.

"We're interested in developing this relationship without limits, and we believe it will be a strategic partnership for the federation."

Al-Orainan and Bin Hithlain suggested activities, such as lectures and seminars, to raise awareness about how to do business in both countries.

The Saudis were welcomed by Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce President Osmar Chohfi, its institutional relations director Fernanda Baltazar, and director Mohamad Abdouni.

Chohfi has already been to Riyadh, and said next time he wants to visit Jeddah. "We should promote a direct flight (between Sao Paulo and Riyadh) by a Saudi airline," he added.



In brief

Italy legend Buffon retires aged 45

ROME (Agencies): Gianluigi Buffon, a legendary goalkeeper from Italy and FIFA World Cup champion, on Wednesday announced his retirement from football at the age 45. "That's all folks! You gave me everything. I gave you everything. We did it together," Buffon said on X, formerly Twitter. In the same tweet, he shared a video which showed his time with Parma, Juventus, Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and the Italian national team. Buffon had two spells with Italy's Parma in 1995-2001, and 2021-2023. He was a Juventus regular from 2001-2018, and 2019-2021 but spent one season at PSG before his return to the Turin club. In 2021, Buffon left Juventus to join his boyhood club Parma, where he ended his career. He was the Italy goalkeeper when the team won the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany. Buffon amassed 975 club appearances, and helped Juventus win 10 Italian Serie A titles, five Italian Cups, and six Italian Super Cups. He also helped PSG win the French Ligue 1 title in 2019, and secured an Italian Cup, an Italian Super Cup and the 1999 UEFA Cup with Parma.

Raducanu returns to practice court

LONDON (Agencies): Britain's Emma Raducanu has returned to the practice court for the first time since undergoing wrist and ankle surgery in May. The 20-year-old posted a video of herself hitting with compatriot Kyle Edmund at the National Tennis Centre in Roehampton on Wednesday. "August 2nd, the fun part. First time back on court," she wrote on Instagram. Former world number 10 Raducanu has been hampered by injuries since her stunning US Open title win in 2021. Raducanu has not gone beyond the second round of any Grand Slam since becoming the first British woman in 44 years to win a major singles title. She had played just 10 matches in 2023, winning five, losing four and retiring from one, before having surgery on both wrists and left ankle. Raducanu missed the French Open and Wimbledon and is unlikely to be fit for the US Open, which begins on 28 August. She is also without a coach, having split with Sebastian Sachs in June.

Bayern Munich edge Liverpool 4-3

SINGAPORE (Agencies): A stunning stoppage-time strike by Franks Kratzig sealed victory for Bayern Munich in a pre-season friendly against Liverpool in Singapore on Wednesday as the German league champions came from behind twice to win 4-3. The 20-year-old fired past Alisson as the game entered stoppage time to settle a thrilling encounter in front of a crowd of nearly 50,000 fans at the National Stadium. A goal inside two minutes by Cody Gakpo and a header by Virgil van Dijk had put the English side two goals up in the opening half-hour but Bayern hit back through Serge Gnabry and Leroy Sane to level the score before half-time. Luis Diaz regained the lead for Liverpool midway through the second half before Josip Stanisic drew level at 3-3 in the 80th minute and Kratzig secured the win for Bayern at the death. A left-back from Bayern's youth system, Kratzig has impressed on the club's pre-season tour of Asia and manager Thomas Tuchel was delighted with his performance on Wednesday when he was deployed in a more attacking position.

Pakistan Shaheens outplay Melbourne Stars

ISLAMABAD (APP): Shawaiz Irfan's attacking half-century and a disciplined bowling performance led Pakistan Shaheens to a 43-run win over Melbourne Stars at the TIO Stadium in Darwin on Wednesday.

This was Shaheens' third successive win in the Top End T20 Series. Opting to bat first, Shaheens' opening pair Shamyl Hussain (25, 16b, 5x4s) and Shawaiz provided a solid 60-run start to the innings before left-handed Shamyl returned to the hut on the final ball of the fifth over. After Shamyl's departure, Shawaiz and captain Rohail Nazir added 50 runs for the second wicket. Shawaiz amassed 65 off 37

balls, studied with five fours and four sixes before he was dismissed.

Rohail (16, 22b) soon followed Shawaiz and fell to Arjun Nair in the 12th over. Wahaj Riaz (28 not out, 20b, 2x4s, 1x6) and Ahmed Khan (19, 16b, 1x6) helped Shaheens post 169 for six in 20 overs.

For Stars, Arjun Nair and Reiley Mark bagged two wickets each.

In reply, Melbourne Stars were never in hunt for the chase and managed to score 126 for eight in 17.1 overs as Stars fell 43 runs short of the target with Cam McClure and Campbell Kellaway unable to bat due to injury.

For Shaheens, left-arm

spinner Faisal Akram took two wickets for 24. Aaliyan Mehmood, Arafat Minhas and Sajjad Ali snapped up a wicket each.

Shaheens will take on PNG on Friday in their last round match at the DXC Arena. The first ball of the match will be bowled at 1800 local time. The final of the tournament will be played between the top two teams on Sunday, August 6.

Scores in brief: Pakistan Shaheens 169-6, 20 overs (Shawaiz Irfan 65, Wahaj Riaz 28, Shamyl Hussain 25; Reiley Mark 2-23, Arjun Nair 2-28).

Melbourne Stars 126-8, 17.1 overs (Harry Dixon 32, Arjun Nair 31; Faisal Akram 2-24).

Babar Azam's ICC Test Batting Ranking improves to claim 4th position

LAHORE (INP): In the latest International Cricket Council (ICC) Men's Test Batting Rankings, Pakistani captain Babar Azam jumped a spot to claim the fourth position.

In the recently-concluded two-match Test series against Sri Lanka, he could score just 76 runs but got a fortunate push in the rankings.

Babar's fortunate promotion was a result of the demotion of Australia's Marcus Labuschagne and Travis Head.

Labuschagne and Head were far from their best in the recently-concluded Ashes and their inability to score big in the five-match series, saw them losing crucial rating points.

Consequently, Labuschagne slipped three spots to fifth while Head was demoted two spots to the sixth position.

Last week, Babar Azam slipped to the fifth position after a below-par performance in the first Test against Sri Lanka.

Pakistan's hero with the bat in the second Test against Sri Lanka Abdullah Shafique got the reward for his heroics as he rose 27 spots to 21st.

Whereas, Pakistan's first Test hero Saud Shakeel remained at 15th position with a career-best 705 rating points.

Pakistan bowlers were

also rewarded as Shaheen Shah Afridi, who made six scalps in two Tests against Sri Lanka, jumped three positions to sixth while his pace partner Naseem Shah climbed up seven spots to equal 37th.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's star with the ball in the second Sri Lanka Test Nauman Ali enjoyed a massive surge as he improved 13 places to 42nd — the most notable among improvers.

England produced a strong fightback during the second half of the series to tie the Ashes at 2-2 and a host of their best performers were rewarded on the updated ICC rankings lists.

Former skipper Joe Root rises one spot to second on the Test batter rankings with New Zealand veteran Kane Williamson the only player in front of him, while young teammate Harry Brook jumps two places to ninth and a new career-high rating following his 363 runs for the series.

Compatriots Jonny Bairstow (up two places to 17th) and Zak Crawley (up six runs to equal 29th) also make some ground on the list for batters, while experienced duo Steve Smith (up three places to third) and Usman Khawaja (up one place to seventh) are the Australian players to climb the standings.

England lose two-thirds of Test C'ship points

LONDON (Agencies): England have lost two-thirds of the World Test Championship points they earned in the Ashes after bowling consistently slow over rates.

Ben Stokes' side did not bowl at the required rate in four of the five Tests and have lost 19 of the 28 points they won for two wins and a draw.

Australia have lost 10 points for a slow over rate in the fourth Test.

England and Australia players have also been fined 5% of their match fee for each point lost.

Teams are docked a point for each over they are short. England have lost two points for two missing overs at Edgbaston, nine from the Lord's Test, three for Old Trafford and five for The Oval.

The third edition of the Test Championship has just begun, with a final due to be played in 2025.

England sit fifth in the early standings, with Australia in third and Pakistan top after their series win over Sri Lanka.

Sides accumulate points from each Test they play over a two-year cycle, with the leading two teams meeting in a one-off match to decide the Championship.

Australia won the 2021-23 competition, beating India by 209 runs at The Oval in June.



MELBOURNE: Tiernny Wiltshire of Jamaica celebrate after winning the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023 Group F match.

Jamaica, South Africa roar into Women's WC last 16

WELLINGTON (Agencies): Jamaica dumped out Brazil and South Africa sent Italy home on Wednesday as the supposed minnows roared into the last 16 of an increasingly open Women's World Cup.

The Reggae Girlz' coach Lorne Donaldson declared it "job done" after his dogged Jamaica side strangled the life out of eighth-ranked Brazil in Melbourne for a 0-0 draw.

It was the point Jamaica needed to progress into the knockout rounds for the first time in history and meant a crushing end to the World Cup career of Brazilian legend Marta.

The 37-year-old, arguably the greatest player in the history of women's football, was as shell-shocked as she was upset after-

wards. Brazil's meek group-phase exit at the hands of a team ranked 43 was their earliest departure from the tournament since being turfed out at the same stage in 1995. "It's hard to talk at a time like this. Not even in my worst nightmares was it the World Cup I dreamed of," said Marta, once nicknamed "Pele in a skirt" by the late football icon.

Jamaica finished second in Group F and will meet the team that comes top when Group H concludes on Thursday. That is currently Colombia. France topped Group F as Kadidiatou Diani hit a hat-trick in a 6-3 win over Panama and a possible meeting next with Germany.

Marta Cox's wonder strike on 67 seconds had left the French reeling, swerving a free-kick into

the corner from 30 yards for Panama's first-ever World Cup goal. She spun away in celebration and was mobbed by teammates as the tears flowed at a sold-out Sydney Football Stadium.

- South Africa joy -

There were also tears -- of joy and devastation -- after 54th-ranked South Africa showed Jamaica the way in a wet Wellington. The African champions won a Women's World Cup match for the first time with a stunning 3-2 victory over 16th-ranked Italy in a thriller.

Captain Thembi Kgatlana scored the winner in the 92nd minute to make history for South Africa and set up a meeting with the Netherlands -- sending Italy home. Arianna Caruso scored twice for Italy and thought she

Pakistan's Nabeel breaks another Indian Guinness World Record

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Nabeel Hasan has once again etched his name in history by breaking another Guinness World Record.

On August 1, he was officially confirmed to have achieved the title of "Most three-digit flash numbers memorized -40 sets" that's an astounding 120 numbers, Nabeel coach Sania Alam told APP in a statement.

In an impressive display of memory prowess, Nabeel memorized 40 sets of random 3-digit flash numbers, with each set consisting of three numbers.

These digits were rapidly flashed on the screen at the interval of 1 second, and with amazing precision, Nabeel recalled them in an accurate sequence.

Nabeel's journey of enhancing his memory skills has been nothing short



of remarkable. His rigorous training under Coach Sania Alam, at the institute of Futuristic Learning USA, has honed his abilities to an extraordinary level.

This dedication to improvement has led Nabeel to participate in numerous international mind sports competitions, including the World Memory Championships. Notably, in 2019, he earned

the esteemed title of Junior UK Memory Champion and earned Bronze Medal in the UK Mind Mapping Championship.

This Guinness World Record was previously held by India at 37 sets. Moreover, in 2022, Nabeel achieved another Guinness World Record, the "Longest Number Sequence Memorized in Four Seconds," which was previ-

ously held by India as well. His lightning-fast memory allowed him to memorize 30 random numbers in a mere 4 seconds, and accurately recall them in sequence, surpassing India's previous record of 28 numbers set in March 2022.

"Through right and dedicated training, I am living proof that anyone can unleash the power of their memory," Nabeel said. Nabeel's success is not only a testament to his personal achievements but also highlights the remarkable expertise of Coach Sania Alam.

It may be mentioned that Sania has coached students who have gone on to become World Memory Champions, World Speed Reading Champions, and World Mind Mapping Champions (junior), along with achieving four other Guinness World Records.

Naseem Shah's brilliant performance was game changer: Babar Azam

COLOMBO (INP): The Colombo Strikers bagged their first win against B-Love Kandy in their second encounter of the Lanka Premier League 2023 in a stunning manner on Monday at the R. Premadasa Stadium.

Having scored 157-6 in the first innings, the Strikers restricted Kandy to a meager score of 130-8 thanks to the stunning bowling performances of Naseem Shah and Matheesha Pathirana, who bagged five wickets between them while giving away only 43 runs in eight overs.

While with the bat, it was Pakistan Captain Babar

Azam who proved to be the star as he held the Strikers' innings together, scoring 59 off 52 balls on a difficult batting track.

Speaking about his team's performance, Babar Azam said, "When we started the inning, the pitch was behaving a bit two-paced. I then realized that it would be better to build a partnership. I thought that the pitch would also start supporting the spinners after 10 overs, and after 15 overs we would try to charge the opponents."

"For me, the standout performance was from Naseem Shah. His first spell set the

tone of the whole innings and helped us gain the advantage," added Babar.

The all-out pace and tight spells from both spinners proved really difficult to deal with for the team from Kandy. The star pacer from Pakistan, Naseem Shah, seemed really happy with the first win and said, "It was our first win of the tournament, and certainly it gives us the momentum we need for the rest of the tournament. We hope to continue with this from here on."

Colombo Strikers will be playing their next match against Dambulla Aura on August 5, 2023.

Former cricketer Sarfaraz Nawaz accuses Najam Sethi of obstructing PCB affairs

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former cricketer Sarfaraz Nawaz made a revelation stating that Najam Sethi is still obstructing the affairs of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday.

In a letter addressed to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the Patron of PCB, he highlighted the challenges posed by Sethi and Shakeel Sheikh in accepting the decision to change the board.

Nawaz stressed that the decision to change the

PCB's leadership was taken jointly by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. However, both Najam Sethi and Shakeel Sheikh seem to be finding it hard to accept this decision, leading to disruptions in the board's functioning.

According to Nawaz, internal politics are at play, and this is resulting in difficulties for the existing PCB management. He called for support from the Management Committee Chairman, Zaka Ashraf, in

navigating these challenges and ensuring the smooth functioning of the cricket board.

The allegations made by Sarfaraz Nawaz have raised concerns within the cricketing community and have put a spotlight on the current state of affairs within the PCB. As the situation unfolds, stakeholders will be closely observing the developments to assess the impact on the board's operations and the sport of cricket in Pakistan.

World University Games: Fizza loses wushu quarterfinal fight

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Fizza put up a good show at the World University Games but failed to meet the standards of her opponent, conceding defeat in the quarterfinal of 52kg weight category of wushu in Chengdu on Wednesday.

In the quarterfinal, Fizza fought hard against Turkmenistan's Gurbangeldiyeva Aygozel. But despite her best attempts the promising Pakistani athlete could not get over the line.

Her coach Muhammad Asif told APP that Fizza had

all the necessary ingredients to emerge as a formidable wushu athlete but lacked the international exposure.

"The win would have been a great achievement but she lost while fighting hard. I believe lack of international experience is the major reason of her defeat. But this is the beginning of a career. The more exposure she will get, the better she will perform," he said.

"She is the gold medal winner in the recently-held National Games in Quetta. But there is a big difference

between playing at the national level and performing at the international level," he added.

Asif said he had been closely monitoring Fizza's performance and technique, and would try to incorporate new things in her training.

The Higher education Commission (HEC) has fielded five women athletes - Amtul Rehman, Uzma Azam, Manisha Ali, Maliha Ali and Fizza - to represent Pakistan at the 12-day prestigious Games that began on July 28 in Chengdu.

Amtul Rehman, who is a student of Lahore College for Women University (LCWU), is participating in long jump and triple jump events of the Games. Uzma Azam of Government College Women University Faisalabad will showcase her skills in the hammer throw. Lahore Garrison University's Manisha and Maliha are vying in the taekwondo event, while Fizza chipped in the wushu event.

The Chengdu 2021 Universiade feature 269 events across 18 sports.

through with a win over a South Korea side who are more or less already out. Caicedo underwent X-rays after health scares at the tournament but is "100 percent" fit for the Morocco game, coach Nelson Abadia said.

The teenage Real Madrid attacker, who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer at 15 but made a full recovery, has lit up the World Cup with goals in wins against South Korea and Germany.

In the upset over two-time champions Germany Caicedo scored one of the goals of the tournament, days after going down in training clutching her chest. She also appeared to suffer breathing difficulties in that 2-1 win -- which took Colombia to the brink of the last 16 -- but carried on playing.



In brief

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 07:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Islamabad Circle, Tufail Shaheed, Cherah, Farash Town, Karpa Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Shams Colony, Pindhon, I-14/3, Noon, I-16, HPT (Radio Pak), Lakho Road, Ameer Hamza, Officer Colony, Sector-IV Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Old Rawat, New Rawat, CWO, AOWHS, Sparco Feeders, Jhelum Circle, Borain, F-2 Chip Board, Industrial, Express Mangala, Madu Kals feeders and surrounding areas.

Police arrest 7 for possessing weapons

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police on the directives of Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi conducted raids in different areas and netted seven accused for possessing illegal weapons. According to a police spokesman, in Gungmandi, Sadiqabad, Naseerabad, R. A. Bazar and Gujar Khan police conducted raids in their respective jurisdiction and arrested seven namely Gul Muhammad, Ajmal, Umar, Sikandar, Ansar, Sohah, and Adnan and recovered five 30 bore pistols, a 9mm pistol and ammunition. Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process. The SSP said that strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against the lawbreakers and operations against aerial firing and illegal weapon holders would continue.

'No negligence to be tolerated'

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner Hasan Waqar Cheema Wednesday said that strict action will be taken against those showing negligence in the anti-dengue campaign. Chairing a meeting to review anti-dengue arrangements, he underlined the need for effective utilization of all available resources to check the occurrence of dengue larvae, particularly in high-risk union councils of the district. He said that the prevailing weather was suitable for breeding dengue larvae, therefore, strict compliance with the anti-dengue SOPs was needed to prevent it. The DC said that staff deployed for the anti-dengue drive had been told that no negligence would be tolerated, adding, 100 per cent attendance must be ensured. Cheema directed the concerned to expedite the anti-dengue surveillance activities to control the growth of dengue larvae by checking the graveyard and other places daily.

IRSA releases 280,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 280,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 372,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarela Dam was 1539.79 feet and was 141.79 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 201,800 cusecs and 145,500 cusecs respectively.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf chairing meeting of the PIPS Board of Governors at PIPS.

Govt takes steps for prevention of trafficking in persons: Dr. Ehsan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General National Police Bureau Dr Ehsan Sadiq, Wednesday said that in recent years, the government undertook a range of measures for the prevention of trafficking in persons. Dr Ehsan Sadiq expressed these views while speaking on the occasion of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. The event was participated by senior officials of FIA, the Police, relevant Government ministries, UN agencies, the diplomatic community, academia, and civil society.

Highlighting the steps, he said the government has promulgated the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2018, issued TIP rules 2020, ratified TIP protocols

to UNTOC and collaborated with TIP communities at the provincial level.

He induced the need for all stakeholders to work together to reduce trafficking in person cases.

He was of the view that the recent Rizwana case highlighted the need of recognizing the importance of child protection and assessing the true magnitude of the issue. He informed that National Police Bureau is compiling a database and working closely with FIA and police to enhance coordination and collaboration.

Dr Ehsan Sadiq appreciated Sardar Zaheer Ahmed, a Pakistani law enforcement officer, who was presented with the prestigious Trafficking in Persons

(TIP) Hero award by U.S. State Department.

He said that the purpose of the event is also to recognize the services of all who are working on the issue of trafficking in persons in Pakistan.

Sardar Zaheer Ahmed in his closing remarks said thanked DG NPB Dr Ehsan Sadiq for organizing the session.

Syed Kausar Abbas, Executive Director SSDO speaking on the occasion appreciated all the stakeholders who participated at the event and suggested that this forum should be given a permanent structure and should meet at least once in every quarter to share the progress on TIP, to enhance coordination and way forward.

Sherry accuses PTI chief of hiding his corrupt practices

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief had been exposed in the Toshakhana case for committing corrupt practices and concealing the facts but he was hiding his misappropriation under hoax arguments. The federal minister took to Twitter to respond to the recent statement of the PTI chief who appeared earlier in the hearing of the Toshakhana reference filed against him. Senator Rehman wrote on her official Twitter handle, "Ever since the facts of Toshakhana came to light, PTI chief had taken U-turn (retracted from his statements) continuously.

Ulema condemn Bajaur incident, renew pledge to fight terrorism

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ulema and Mashaykh from all schools of thought on Wednesday unequivocally condemned the gruesome incidents of the bomb blast in Bajaur, suicide blast in Khyber Masjid, attack on police deputed on the security of the Holy Quran in Sweden and Denmark in the strongest terms and renewed pledge to continue their fight against all evil forces trying to destabilize Pakistan socially, politically and economically.

Leading the joint press conference along with the prominent religious scholars including Council of Islamic Ideology Chairman Dr. Qibla Ayaz, Shia Ulema Council Central General Secretary Allama Arif Hussain Wahidi, and Custodian of the Holy Shrine of Eidgah Sharif, Shaykh Muhammad Hassan Haseeb-ur-Rehman and others Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi termed all those involved in these unlawful acts criminals and emphasized that they had no connection with Islam and Muslims.

Ashrafi who is also the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony and the Middle East categorically stated that those involved in the murder of innocent Muslims, and attack on Masjid and security forces were playing the role of Kharjiets.

Giving a reference to Islamic history, he said the attacks were similar to those made by the Khawarij on Muslims. The people who embarrassed martyrdom in the Bajaur incident were all Ulema, religious scholars and Huffaz and they were all innocent, he maintained. Shedding light on the Paigham-e-Pakistan, a unanimous doctrine signed by more than 15,000 Ulema and Mashaykh hailing from all segments of the society to maintain religious pluralism across the country, and they had given a unanimous Fatwa (religious decree) that the suicide attacks were Haram (prohibited) in Pakistan, and there was no room for any struggle involving militancy in the country. Condemning the indecent incidents of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and Denmark, Ashrafi on behalf of all Ulema and Mashaykh of Pakistan, seconded the stance of the Organisation of

Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for legislating against these blasphemous acts at the international level.

He assured full cooperation to Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) Chief Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman as it is the biggest religiopolitical party and contributing to the peace, progress and prosperity of the country since day one.

He announced to hold countrywide Ulema and Mashaykh conventions for a stable Pakistan in the entire month of August and made it clear that they would not surrender before the terrorism and extremism anyway.

He further assured the national security institutions that they were standing by them for the security and sovereignty and the supremacy of Islam through thick and thin. Addressing the conference, Allama Arif Hussain Wahidi emphasized that there would be no compromise on Pakistan's security and sovereignty, which remains the topmost priority for all.

He was of the view that the enemies were trying to rob the peace of Pakistan by carrying out such cowardly attacks in the country. To meet these challenges, he said we must express unity in all ranks against the non-state actors playing havoc with the state institutions and the nation.

Condemning the desecration of the holy Quran, he proposed to the Muslim world to give a strong message to Sweden and Denmark to stop the occurrence of these disgraceful incidents causing interfaith disharmony globally.

In addition, he condemned the terrorist attack on the workers' convention of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) in Bajaur.

Shaykh Muhammad Hassan Haseeb-ur-Rehman said the OIC's emergency meeting on the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and Denmark gave a strong message to the world that Muslims could not compromise on their religious sanctities at all costs.

He said we must play our role as we have agreed in the Paigham-e-Pakistan to maintain peace and tranquillity in the country. Concluding the conference, Dr Qibla Ayaz said we all were on one page and endorsed the narrative of Paigham-e-Pakistan in letter and spirit.

Political Parties urged to take measures for educational reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Independent education policy experts, government stakeholders, and political parties on Wednesday at a conference agreed on introducing reforms for more inclusive and equitable quality education.

They were addressing a conference on Mapping the Educational Reforms in View of the Next Democratic Tenure, organized by Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) in collaboration with Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) and Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP).

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Baela Raza Jamil, CEO Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi said that education with learning is a lifeline for all citizens without discrimination. Pakistan remains lowest on key indicators of SDG 4 in South Asia failing to live up to Article 25-A, a fundamental constitutional right to education.

In Spite of progressive manifestos, political parties repeatedly fall short of delivering what they promised, compromising, excluding, and crippling the lives of millions of children, especially girls and marginalized groups. May the coming elections be a new beginning for progressive education investment and delivery for all citizens protected with strong learning foundations.

Dr. A. H. Nayyar said that the state has failed to implement the Article 25-A and provide free and compulsory education to all children under 16 years as nearly half the children are deprived of schooling on account of the failure of the state to provide the resources needed for the task.

The political parties must promise in their election manifestos to enhance allocation to education by 6% of GDP, he added.

Dr. Shoaib Suddle said that the government has been violating order no. 2 of the Jillani judgment (SMC 1 of 2014, etc.) and Article 22(1) of the constitution because school curricu-

lum and textbooks of compulsory subjects like Urdu, English and Social Studies carry substantial content relating to the religious instruction of majority religion, compelling non-Muslim students to learn Islamiyat in all courses.

Peter Jacob, Executive Director, Centre for Social Justice said that fulfilling and implementing Articles 22 (1) and 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan on the right to education without discrimination, is a fundamental constitutional obligation and a pressing need for improving foundational literacy, and the quality of education. He added that civil society will continue to engage effectively with political parties for positive educational reforms before and after the elections in 2023.

Wajahat Masood appreciated the landmark decision of the supreme court issued on 19 June 2014.

He added that it is not possible to implement articles 20, 22 (1), and 25-A of the constitution in letter and spirit unless related laws and policies are made likewise, as they are sectarian, religion-based, and discriminatory.

He added the state of Pakistan needs to ensure the equality of citizens and discourage appeasing groups promoting division on the basis of identity.

Dr. Prof. Yaqoob Khan Bangash said that there has to be social interaction among students from majority and minority communities inside and outside classrooms to promote inclusion, pluralism, and diversity.

Waseem Ajmal, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training assured that the ministry is committed to removing religious instruction and hate speech present in compulsory subjects to implement Article 22(1) of the Constitution. Saima Anwer said that school curricula and textbooks should focus on promoting inclusion, diversi-

ty, critical thinking, and learning outcomes. Moreover, minorities should have access to suitable alternatives to compulsory Islamic education. Farhatullah Babar, former Senator from PPP said that quality education should be a priority of the political parties to inculcate pluralistic values in children, and measures to transform schools into religious seminaries with single national curriculum and induction of madrasa graduates as teachers must be revisited.

Sana Jamali, Senator, and convenor of the Education Parliamentary caucus said that civil society, government and politicians need to work together and take meaningful actions to educate all children who are out of school and drop-outs.

Zubaida Jalal, MNA said that our primary aim in pursuit of educational reforms should be to cultivate equitable learning environments, where every student can access quality education and excel.

Public education must be centered on creating inclusive spaces that empower students to become valuable and participative members of society. By building on these principles, we should strive to drive meaningful changes and advancements in our education system, she said.

Mehnaz Akber Aziz, MNA emphasized bringing out-of-school children into schools, quality education, and learning outcomes. She supported the cross-party caucus on inclusive education, and proposed to initiate a scorecard of every legislator regarding their education-related interventions in their constituencies.

Dr. Ammar Ali Jan, President of the Haqooq-e-Khalq Party said that there is a need to allow critical thinking on campuses. It will only be possible if we stop viewing education from a security lens and start treating universities as sites for dialogue and debate.



ISLAMABAD: Students attending school after the summer vacation on the opening day after two months at G-7 sector.

WHO striving to eliminate hepatitis from Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Pakistan, Dr Palitha Mahipala has said that the organization was striving to eliminate the hepatitis from Pakistan. In a message, Dr Palitha said that Pakistan is facing a considerably high disease burden due to viral Hepatitis B & C.

He said that Pakistan has the highest prevalence of Hepatitis C (7%) globally and has the highest number of people suffering from HCV. "Viral hepatitis affects 360 million people worldwide and claims 3,000 lives every day." He said that in 2015, the World Health Assembly adopted a strategy to eliminate hepatitis by 2030 through prevention, testing and treatment.

Around 15 million people are estimated infected with Viral Hepatitis C in the country. Another 5 million are estimated infected with Viral Hepatitis B in the country, he added.

Dr Palitha said, "Unfortunately, our response to viral hepatitis has stagnated in recent years." He added testing for viral hepatitis has not been scaled up as tests and treatment are considered expensive. He said that the theme of world hepatitis day this year was 'Hepatitis Medicines are Cheaper - Treat to Save Lives' aims to raise awareness to scale treatment for people living with viral hepatitis.

He said that now the manufacturers have announced to lower the

price of WHO prequalified hepatitis B and C drugs in low- and middle-income countries. This has been a concerted effort by partners to ensure affordability and accessibility to hepatitis treatment, he added.

He said that these new drug prices will significantly reduce the cost of treatment to low and middle-income countries, and scale up hepatitis programs to meet growing demand, all towards eliminating hepatitis. He said that the WHO and all stakeholders will ensure the affordability and accessibility of medicines, testing and treatment to millions in low and middle-income countries. "This is indeed a major step towards the elimination of hepatitis by 2030," he added.

Eating planet-friendly foods can boost longevity, cut death risk by 25%

ISLAMABAD (APP): Eating more planet-friendly foods could help you live a longer, healthier life as well as reduce the risk of death by about a quarter, according to new research that called for a more environmentally sustainable diet.

The study builds upon prior research that identified foods that are a win-win for both health and the environment -- such as whole grains, fruit, non-starchy vegetables, nuts, and unsaturated oils -- as well as foods that could be harmful to the environment and human health, like eggs and red and processed meats.

The new findings suggest eating more planet-friendly foods can help reduce a person's risk of death from causes such as cancer, heart disease, respiratory diseases, and neurodegenerative diseases and also reduce impacts to the environment in terms of factors like water use, land use, nutrient pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions, Medical Daily reported.

"We proposed a new diet score that incorporates the best current scientific evidence of food effects on both health and the environment," said Linh Bui, doctoral candidate in the Department of Nutrition at Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health. "The results confirmed our hypothesis that a higher Planetary Health Diet score was associated with a lower risk of mortality," Bui added.

With the new study, the researchers aimed to create a simple tool that policymakers and public health practition-

ers could use to develop strategies to improve public health and address the climate crisis.

"As a millennial, I have always been concerned about mitigating human impacts on the environment," said Bui. "A sustainable dietary pattern should not only be healthy but also consistent within planetary boundaries for greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental parameters." To create their Planetary Health Diet Index (PHDI), researchers reviewed existing research on the relationships between various food groups and health outcomes of over 100,000 participants in two large studies. The data set included over 47,000 deaths during a follow-up period spanning over three decades from 1986-2018.

Overall, they found that people in the highest quintile (the top one-fifth of participants) for PHDI had a 25 per cent lower risk of death from any cause compared to those in the lowest quintile.

Higher PHDI scores were associated with a 15 per cent lower risk of death from cancer or cardiovascular diseases, a 20 per cent lower risk of death from neurodegenerative disease, and a 50 per cent lower risk of death from respiratory diseases.

However, Bui cautioned that the PHDI does not necessarily reflect all food items and their relationships with all major diseases in all countries, as it may vary with specific health conditions, religious restrictions, or food accessibility.

Oil tankers returned to Iran

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghanistan National Standard Authority (ANSA) has announced that it has sent back 13 oil tankers from Iran that did not meet the quality standards. The imported oil was tested in the laboratory and found to be substandard, so it was returned to Iran, according to a statement from ANSA. ANSA has issued a warning to the national traders to avoid importing low-quality oil products and materials, or they will face legal consequences.

Outdated food items torched

SAR-E-PUL (Agencies): Three tons of outdated food and non-food items of torched in Sar-e-pul, local officials. The materials were collected from the stores of the city by the inspection group of Sar-e-pul Industry and Commerce Department. Mirwais Ghasemi in charge of media in Sar-e-pul in an interview with BNA that the Industry and Commerce Department of Sar-e-pul warned the store owner that they will face legal action in case if they sell low-quality and outdated materials.

UN dealing with critical funding gaps

KABUL (Agencies): UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in a new report that this year's Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) remains severely underfunded with only US\$744 million received as of 31 July, less than half the amount (\$1.49 billion) at the same time in 2022.

This has raised concerns given the "short window of opportunity" between now and winter – in addition to worsening poverty and heightened vulnerabilities. "Additional climate shocks, as seen in August 2022 with

atypical flooding – a third of which were recorded in the eastern region – may generate additional needs requiring an immediate response over the next few months," read the report.

As it stands, the Afghanistan humanitarian response is facing substantial "critical funding gaps" amounting to \$1.3 billion, with many programmes already closed due to insufficient resources, and several Cluster pipelines (FSAC, Nutrition, Protection and WASH) at risk of imminent rupture between July and September 2023.

The report highlighted the need for urgent funding to procure certain items only available abroad, including Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF). The urgent need to distribute vital winter food assistance and other aid comes as many areas are at risk of being cut by heavy snowfalls as early as October.

"At the same time, additional funding is required to enable humanitarian partners to continue reaching women and girls – the most at-risk and vulnerable members of the Afghan population today," the report read.

Massive of foreign and domestic tourists rush to visit Herat

HERAT (Agencies): Local officials of Herat say that with the start of the year, 4,000 domestic tourists and 240 foreign tourists have traveled to Herat.

Lately, 13 tourists from Russia and Australia have traveled to Herat, local officials added.

The Herat's Department of Information and Culture has received 300,000 Afghanis from tourism in the past four months said Mawlawi Rehmatullah Mohammadi a local official.

With the maintained of all-around security in Afghanistan, the space for tourists to visit the historical and natural attractions of the country has become favorable.

Herat's Tourism Commissioner continues to talk about providing more facilities for foreign tourists in this province and says that recently 20 interpreters for foreign tourists have been appointed by this department.

Meanwhile, some cultural experts in Herat say that the development of the tourism industry, along with cultural interactions, is effective in the growth of domestic revenue and the introduction of Afghan culture to the world.

AELSO ready to cooperate govt sectors

KABUL (Agencies): The Director of the Technical and Vocational Education Department, Mawlawi Ghulam Haider Shahamat, in a meeting with Hanif Farzan, Director of the AELSO organization discussed the creation of jobs opportunities for youths in the country.

The director of AELSO shared details about the mission of the organization and said that this organization works in the sectors of capacity building, entrepreneurship, and scientific research.

The director of AELSO asked for the cooperation of the Technical and Vocational Education Department with this organization in the sector of creating job opportunities for youths.

For his part, Mawlawi Ghulam Haider Shahamat, the Technical and Vocational Education department strives to reduce the problems of unemployment in the country through the training of the labor force.

At the end of this meeting, the two sides agreed to work jointly to boost bilateral cooperation, and also the two sides will ink a cooperation agreement shortly.

Afghan FM meets Qatar Special Envoy



KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi in a meeting with Dr. Mutlaq -Al-Qahtani, the special representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar for

Afghanistan, emphasized for continued cooperation with Afghanistan.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the two sides discussed a variety of political, economic, and

commercial matters during the meeting.

Al-Qahtani described Afghanistan's current situation as reassuring saying that all countries should engage in constructive relationship

with Afghanistan and not pass up existing opportunities.

The two sides also stressed on the need for comprehensive and continued cooperation with Afghanistan.

Kazakh-Afghan business forum to unlock trade-economic opportunities

KABUL (Khaama Press): A three-day business forum between Kazakhstan and Afghanistan to kick off today (Thursday), lasting until Saturday in the capital city of Astana.

According to a statement from the Kazakh Foreign, around 150 businessmen from Afghanistan will attend from several economic sectors, including second-level banks. While on the Kazakh side, the Ministry of Trade and Integration, the company Kazakeksport, second-level banks, and logistics firms

will also be attended.

Meanwhile, the forum will also feature an exhibition showcasing goods and products from Afghanistan.

On July 31, Kazakh Foreign Minister Qanat Tumysh told reporters that no 150 Afghan government officials and businessmen were subject to sanctions.

The Kazakh Ministry of foreign affairs stressed that the two countries continue to strengthen their trade relations. Kazakhstan aims for vigorous years of bilateral trade with Afghanistan, surpassing the \$988 million

reached last year.

According to Vice-Minister of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan, Kairat Torebayev, more than 200 delegations led by the acting Minister of Industry and Commerce of Afghanistan, Nooruddin Azizi, will attend the forum.

"They are representatives of business, large energy and telecommunications companies, representatives of the Central Bank and several private banks, manufacturers of carpets, beverages, precious stones and many others," he said.

"I would like to note right away that all members of the Afghan delegation are not included in the United Nations Security Council's sanctions lists and, accordingly, no restrictive measures can be applied to them," added Torebayev.

The forum is the outcome of increased cooperation between the two parties following the visit to Kabul in April by Kazakhstan's Serik Zhumangarin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade and Integration.

2,000 damaged military vehicles repaired in Balkh



BALKH (Agencies): The 209th Army Corps of Al-Fath in Balkh province says it has repaired more than 2,000 military vehicles that had been damaged during the withdrawal of foreign troops two years ago.

Officials said 2,432 vehicles have been put back into operation in this time.

The spokesperson of the army Corps says that these vehicles will be distributed to the defense brigades in order to protect the territorial integrity of the country.

These vehicles, which include large and small vehicles, have been restored and ready for use by the engineering team of the 209th Al-Fath Army

Corps.

"We repaired and reactivated about 2,432 different vehicles with the few facilities and personnel we have," said Abdulaziz Kalimullah, the technical manager of the 209th Army Corps of Al-Fath.

"There is no war in Afghanistan now, but due to the needs of different brigades, a number of these vehicles are distributed for the purpose of defending the territorial integrity of the country, and the rest of these vehicles, which are our national capital, will be protected and maintained," said Sediqullah Nusrat, the spokesman of the 209th Army Corps of Al-Fath.

Authorities, in the 209th Army Command of Al-Fath, says that protection of the borders and the defense of the territorial integrity of the country are stated as one of their most basic goals.

"Your children, your brothers, have maintained the treasury and repaired the vehicles that were destroyed, and in the future, we will defend the territorial integrity of the country and the people of Afghanistan without any concessions," said Naqibullah Azizi, army commander in 209th Army Corps.

However, according to officials, the process of repairing vehicles is ongoing.

Residents complain of slow progress on road repair

KABUL (TOLONews): Residents of the capital complained about the slowness of the road reconstruction process and said that the damage to the roads and the resulting dust are causing various illnesses.

"It has been four or five months since the digging and construction of the road began, from Chehelston Garden to this place, but no one has asked for it yet," said Qais, a resident of Chehelston.

"It has been a year since they started work on a part of the road and then it stops for five to six months and then starts again, and the people have faced chal-

lenges regarding this road," said Rahmatullah, a Kabul resident.

At the same time, some residents consider road damage as one of the main challenges in their daily commute.

"The weather is hot, everyone is sick, right now I'm also sick from the dust of the roads," said Faiz Agha, a resident of Kabul.

"It has been five months since the construction of the road started. There are many problems with dust and road construction. People become sick," said Ahmad Fawad, a resident of Kabul.

Meanwhile, Kabul

Municipality said that the road reconstruction work will be completed soon.

"It is dust that may arise during the construction of the road, and all the projects -- around which there are a lot of houses -- have been directly instructed to sprinkle the area with water, and about the specific project that you asked about, the work on that has begun and will end soon," said Nematullah Barakzai, a spokesperson of Kabul Municipality.

According to Kabul municipality, out of eighty-five road construction projects, forty projects are currently being worked on.

Afghans complain of slow passport distribution

KABUL (TOLONews): Citizens voiced complaints about the slow passport distribution process, in interviews with TOLONews.

They said that not having a passport had caused the residents to face several issues, therefore they requested that the General Directorate of Passports expedite the distribution of passports in the nation's capital and other provinces.

"I've been coming here for about three or four days, and I requested a name change on my passport. The manager collected our documents, and I don't know what will happen next," said Idris, a resident of Kabul. "People are having a lot of issues. Some of them applied a year ago, but they haven't yet received them. People have (medical) patients," said Zazai, a resident of Kabul.

The General Directorate of Passports said that the passport distribution process continues as usual, and efforts are being made to reach all applicants.

"In accordance with procedure, we distribute pass-



ports to our citizens and work to bring more amenities. Passports cannot be issued to anyone who opposes the rules and regulations," said Noorullah Patman, spokesperson of the Directorate of Passports.

According to a statement from the General Directorate of Passports' spokesperson, anyone with unpaid debts, active criminal, civil,

or commercial cases will not be issued passports.

The following individuals are not eligible to receive passports:

1. People who have been banned from leaving due to non-payment of debts or other obligations by the relevant departments.

2. People who have been convicted by the court in civil and commercial crimi-

nal cases

3. Children who do not have parents or a legal guardian.

Eight to ten thousand passports are issued daily in Kabul and the provinces, according to figures from the General Directorate of Passports, and efforts are being made to set up passport distribution centers in each of the capital's four zones.

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy President of Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) Mullah Nooruddin Nouri met with Faisal Mohammad al-Eamdi, Secretary General of the Qatar Red Crescent Society, in Doha and discussed humanitarian aid to vulnerable people in Afghanistan.

According to a statement from ARCS, Mullah Nooruddin Nouri talked about humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, including climate change, limited access to drinking water, health services, and food aid.

Faisal Mohammad al-Hamdi promised that he



will share the humanitarian needs in Afghanistan with other charity organizations and work to

encourage the delivery of humanitarian aid to the war-torn country.

The Secretary General of

Qatar Red Crescent assured of his country's comprehensive cooperation with the people of Afghanistan.

‘Specialist physicians’ presence nominal in Takhar hospitals’

TALOQAN (Pajhwok): Some private hospitals in northern Takhar province have started deceiving common people by advertising the names of famous specialist physicians as if they are working in these hospitals while in reality they are not present.

Local residents complained the names of these physicians were written on the posters of the private hospital while in reality they are not working in the hospital and even not present in the province.

Paiman Hamdar, the resident of Taloqan City, said people were in bad economic condition, they transfer the sick family members with difficulty and a long distance to reach a hospital but private hospitals have certain tricks to deceive common people.

"The names of experienced and professional doctors are written on the boards and plaques of some private hospitals, but when patients visit, they sadly find that the doctor whose name is written on the hospital plaque is not present and another person is examining and prescribing patients using his name,"

he said

Hamdard termed the situation terrible and said physicians are not available but their names are written on the signboard meant that they are involved in business not in service of the masses. He urged public health authorities to take immediate action against such practices.

Sabahuddin, another Taloqan resident who has a patient, said it is summer and more people, including children and elders get sick adding that the none-availability of specialist doctors caused disturbance to them.

He alleged doctors in some private hospital are unable to determine the cause of illness and just written medicines which cost the patient.

He claimed: "From the past six months, I have been visiting some physicians in one of the private hospitals but I have not been able to see the doctor whose name is written on the signboard outside, but another person using the name of specialist doctor are available."

He also asked relevant authorities to address the issue.

Civil Society Activist Asadullah Taimour said

doctors have responsibility to serve the people but unfortunately some doctors deceived the masses and preferred their business instead of serving humanity.

He also said the signboards of some private hospitals including the names of specialist and renowned doctors but in reality these individuals were not present to serve the patients.

Responsible persons from private hospital were not available to comment on the disuse despite several contact established by Pajhwok Afghan News reporter.

But a well-placed source at one of the private hospital acknowledged to Pajhwok Afghan News that some physicians are not present in Takhar to serve people in private hospital but their names still existed on the signboards, these physicians are in Kabul or in foreign countries.

The source named some doctors such as Dr. Farid Perzada, Dr. Qayoum Sadad, Dr. Pakdash, Dr. Ghafori, Dr. Engila Azemi, Dr. Sabour Sabir who are not residing in Takhar but their names were still available on the signboards.

Pajhwok Afghan News was also unable to establish contact with these physicians.

But Dr. Shafiullah Ayan, a health affairs expert, said the absence of doctors whose names are available on signboards was a huge challenge in the province.

He said this led to the trust defection between doctors and patients and created several problems for the patients.

He suggested physicians not physically available in a hospital should remove their names from the signboard or poster of that hospital so that their names are not used to deceive masses.

Atiqullah Qanit, deputy head of the Public Health Department, said complaints regarding the nominal presence of specialist doctors received to them and pledge strict legal action against private hospital that deceive common people.

He said the absence of a doctor from a hospital for a short time or temporally was not a serious problem adding that permanent absence of a physician will be monitor by the Public Health Monitoring Committee and will be questioned.

Senate refers Official Secrets (Amend) Bill to standing committee amid opposition

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): After fierce opposition from parliamentarians, Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani on Wednesday referred the Official Secrets (Amendment) Bill 2023 to its relevant standing committee for debate in order to reach a consensual decision over the matter.

The bill was tabled by Federal Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarrar in the upper house of parliament. The bill, however, saw strong opposition from the treasury and the opposition benches in the house. The former ruling party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the ruling alliance Pakistan Democratic Movement's component party Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and the National Party opposed the bill in the Senate.

Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) senior leader and former Senate chairman Raza Rabbani and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Afnan Ullah Khan also voiced against the proposed amendments to the Official Secrets Act 1923. The members were also demanding of the Senate chairman to reject the bill immediately. 'Who had allowed terrorists to settle again in Pakistan'

Addressing the upper house of parliament, Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar said: "We need to introspect as to how terrorism is again on the rise in Pakistan." Terrorism, he added, should be eliminated to make Pakistan a cradle of peace. The financial czar also questioned as to who had allowed terrorists to settle again in Pakistan. He urged Chairman Sanjrani to arrange a detailed in-camera briefing from the Interior Ministry so that a comprehensive and effective plan can be chalked out to fight terrorism.

PPP leader and former prime minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani said the National Security Committee should

brief the House over the security situation in the country. He said joint efforts are needed to fully defeat the menace of terrorism. On his part, Senator Haji Hidayat Ullah said perpetrators of the Bajaur terrorist attack should be taken to task to set an example.

Senator Dost Muhammad Khan demanded of the federal government to announce a compensation package for the victims of the Bajaur incident.

At this, the finance minister assured to take up the matter of announcing compensation for the victims of the Bajaur attack with the prime minister and at the cabinet level. Speaking on the occasion, Jamaat-e-Islami Senator Mushtaq Ahmad said it is the responsibility of the federal and provincial authorities as well as the security agencies to protect the life and liberty of the citizens.

He also demanded that the government should announce compensation for the victims of the Bajaur incident. He proposed that an in-camera session of parliament should be held to discuss the matter and to evolve a comprehensive strategy to fight terrorism. A day earlier, the outgoing government get the bill passed through the National Assembly. The bill seeking to amend the law was tabled in the house by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Murtaza Javed Abbasi.

The statement of objects and reasons of the bill says that it is imperative to amend the Official Secrets Act 1923 and make it more effective in view of the changing social milieu to ensure the safety and security of official documents.

According to a new insertion 2(A) in Section 11 of the Official Secrets Act 1923, notwithstanding anything contained in this Act or in any other

law for the time being in future, the intelligence agencies, may at any time, can enter and search a place or a person without warrant, and if necessary, by use of force and seize any document, sketch, plan, model, article, note, weapon, ammunition, electronic or modern device or anything of like nature, or anything which is or can be evidence of any offence committed, or suspecting of been committed under this Act.

Another insertion 12A says that under this Act, the investigation officer shall be an officer of the FIA not below the rank of BPS-17 or equivalent, and he shall be designated by the FIA director general. If the DG deems necessary, he may appoint a Joint Investigation Team consisting of officers of intelligence agencies as he may appoint.

The JIT, according to the bill, will complete its inquiry within 30 days. The case, if relates to civil espionage, will be investigated by the FIA or JIT. However, according to an amendment in Clause b of Section 12, the punishment for an offence has been reduced from 14 to 10 years. The amendment clause says other than an offence punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to ten years, shall be a cognisable and bailable offence.

Earlier, Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali protested the introduction and passage of the bill in haste on the same day even without provision of its copies to members. However, copies of the bill in the English language were distributed among the members immediately. Chitrali said that it was also a violation of the Constitution that copies of the bill in Urdu language were not distributed and the same has been happening for the last few days.



BAGHDAD: Interior Minister of Iraq, Abdul Amir Al Shammari welcoming Federal Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah during his visit to Iraq.

Russia strikes Ukraine's Danube port

MOSCOW (Agencies): Russia attacked Ukraine's main inland port across the Danube River from Romania on Wednesday, sending global food prices higher as it ramps up its use of force to prevent Ukraine from exporting grain.

The attacks destroyed buildings in the port of Izmail and halted ships in their tracks as they prepared to arrive there to load up with Ukrainian grain in defiance of a de-facto blockade Russia reimposed in mid-July. Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said the Russian drone attacks damaged almost 40,000 tons of grains, which had been destined for countries in Africa, as well as China and Israel.

"Russian terrorists have once again attacked ports, grain, global food security," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Telegram. Russian state news agency RIA said the port and grain infrastructure hit at the port was housing foreign mercenaries and military hardware and a naval ship repair yard had also been targeted. Reuters was not able to verify the report. Video released by the Ukrainian authorities showed firefighters on ladders battling a blaze several storeys high in a building covered with broken windows. Several other large buildings were in ruins, and grain spilled out of at least two wrecked silos.

There were no reports of casualties, Odesa region governor Oleh Kiper wrote in a post on the Telegram app. Commercial ship tracking data showed dozens of international ships halting and dropping anchor at the mouth of the Danube, many of them registered to arrive in Izmail from the Black Sea in an apparent bid to open a breach in Russia's blockade. The port, across the river from Nato-member Romania, is the main alternative route out of Ukraine for grain exports, since Russia's blockade halted traffic at Ukraine's Black Sea ports in mid-July.

Two industry sources told Reuters operations at the port were suspended. Seaport authority head Yuriy Lytvyn said on Facebook that repair work had already begun and the port infrastructure continued to operate. Chicago wheat prices rose by nearly five per cent following the attack and were still up 1.8pc at over \$6.63 a bushel as of 1325 GMT on concern about a hit to global supplies. Ukraine is one of the world's top grain exporters. Russia has attacked its agricultural and port infrastructure for more than two weeks, since refusing to extend an agreement that had lifted its war-time blockade of Ukrainian ports last year.

PTI's parliamentarians' writs PHC orders Senator Aurangzeb to appear

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has stopped arrested Senator Aurangzeb Orakzai under section 3 of Maintenance of Public Order (3MPO) and ordered him to appear before court on 10th August, on Tuesday.

PHC's divisional comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Sahibzada Asadullah heard writ petition of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senator while Adnan Aman advocate appeared on behalf of petitioner. The counsel argued that Deputy Commissioner Orakzai has issued order under 3MPO for arrest of Senator Aurangzeb in connection to 9th& 10th May PTI's protests despite the petitioner was aboard.

Once again Senator Aurangzeb Orakzai visited Dubai from 21st to 26th June while DC has issued order for his arrest on 3rd July despite he was aboard and it expected the PTI's senator will be took into custody on his arrival, the argued. The counsel

requested to stop his arrest because petitioner is a Senator and as a law-abiding citizen will surrender willing before court of law because Senator Aurangzeb Orakzai is victim of political victimization.

PHC has stopped arrest of Senator Aurangzeb Orakzai and ordered him to appear before court on 10th August after conclusion of initial arguments while adjourned further hearing.

Meanwhile, PHC has stopped Anti-corruption Establishment for final decision against father PTI's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Ali Amin Gandapur named Major (retired) Amin Ullah and ordered to submit report in this regard. The counsel argued that Anti-corruption Establishment has issued notice to PTI's provincial president Ali Amin Gandapur (son of petitioner) regarding illegal transfer of 30 Marla land in Dera Ismail Khan.

However, Muhammad Amin has purchased a house from Tahir Amin

while it is under trial at civil court because Shafiullah has challenged the ownership of 30 Marla home, the counsel added.

In the meantime, Anti-corruption has initiated a case against Ali Amin Gandapur in 2023 on ground of said disputed property despite the fact that it was purchased PTI's president father Amin Ullah thorough registry, the counsel informed. The counsel argued to declare Anti-corruption's case null and void due to lack of jurisdiction because the case is under proceedings in civil court but the inquiry is initiated for political victimization.

Assistant Advocate General Danyal Asad Chamkani argued that inquiry is under proceeding but neither the petitioner nor Ali Amin Gandapur joined the inquiry, in the meantime, PHC has order them to join the probe and stopped. Anti-corruption Establishment from final decision while adjourned further hearing till 24th August.

Toshakhana case: SC asks Imran to wait for IHC verdict

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): With no immediate relief in sight in the Toshkhana case, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan was Wednesday turned away by the Supreme Court, which asked him to await a verdict from the Islamabad High Court, as he sought a stay on the case's trial.

Khan requested a halt to the proceedings until both the SC and the high court issued their respective decisions. The three-member bench hearing the case, led by Justice Yahya Afridi and comprising Justice Mazahar Ali Naqvi and Justice Musarat Hilali, made these remarks during the hearing of Khan's petition against the Toshakhana case.

Justice Yahya Afridi, when addressing PTI chief's counsel Khawaja Haris, said the SC will take up the case once the high court has issued an order. "We believe that the high court can issue a better order than us. It is possible that it will give the order to stop the trial tomorrow," he said.

Islamabad High Court (IHC) has fixed Imran Khan's appeal for a hearing on August 3, challenging the maintainability of the Toshakhana case. Justice Afridi told PTI's lawyers that the plea was ineffective, yet the court heard and gave an order. "First, let the

high court decide, then the case will be filed in the Supreme Court." Meanwhile, the apex court issued a notice to the Election Commission of Pakistan officials pertaining to the case, while adjourning the hearing of the PTI chief's petition till August 4.

The SC judge said that the supervisory jurisdiction of the trial courts is that of the high court and the SC will schedule the case for hearing after receiving the order from the high court. Justice Yahya, asking the PTI lawyer, said what more does he want, as the court had already given relief to Khan. "It is surprising that you still approached the Supreme Court," he remarked. Haris, on the other hand, questioned the jurisdiction of the case. "The statement of Section 342 has been recorded in the trial court. The trial court has ordered to present the list of witnesses today," he said.

He added that the trial court will consider the trial completed if the list of witnesses is not provided today. "The court should order to stop the trial until the decision of the cases in the SC and the IHC." Responding to his request, Justice Afridi said that no request for an injunction has been made. "It would be better if you think now and file an application for

injunction," he told the counsel, informing him about the possibility of relief from the IHC rather than the apex court.

"We cannot interfere in the proceedings of the trial court at this time. How can we hear the case when the Islamabad High Court has not given any order?" Justice Afridi questioned Haris. "You approached the Supreme Court without an order... let the high court decide first," he reiterated.

Responding to the judge, Haris said Khan has approached the SC because the high court has not issued a stay in the case. Last week, too, the SC rejected Khan's plea seeking a stay on the trial court's proceedings in the Toshakhana case. During today's hearing, Justice Yahya Afridi of the two-member SC bench remarked that the apex court will not interfere in the trial court's matters in the Toshakhana case.

PTI chief's lawyer Haris informed the court that there are multiple petitions — related to the jurisdiction of the trial court and transfer of the Toshakhana case — pending in the high court. The former prime minister, the first to be voted out of office through a no-trust vote last year in April, had approached the top court after being denied relief from the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

Imran again skips hearing

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Wednesday deferred Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's indictment in the contempt case as he failed to appear before the body yet again.

The electoral body's four-member bench, headed by Sindh member of the commission Nisar Ahmad Durrani, has deferred his indictment time and again as he refuses to appear before them. Khan had attended the hearing last week for the first time in the case, which had started in August of the previous year. The ECP had initiated proceedings against him and two other erstwhile top party leaders Asad Umar and Fawad Chaudhry.

They were accused of allegedly using intemperate and contemptuous language against the commission and chief election commissioner during their media interactions on various occasions. During today's hearing, Khan's counsel, Shoaib Shaheen appealed before the bench to allow his client's exemption from appearance.

At this, a member of the bench inquired whether Khan would make it to the next hearing. To this, Shaheen said that he would "try". The advocate appealed to the bench to fix the hearing in September, but the commission's members stressed that they would be busy by then.

"We will set a date in August," a member said, at which the counsel said: "Please allow me to take a breather." The lawyer informed the bench that the PTI chief had to visit the hospital for his medical checkup as he had been appearing before several courts recently.

The bench, after hearing the arguments, adjourned the hearing and said he would be indicted on August 22. "It is necessary that the PTI chief is present before the bench for his indictment," he said.

PTI expels Raja Riaz, Noor Alam and 11 others

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday terminated the basic membership of its 13 more leaders for violating the former ruling party's discipline and policies. Those expelled include Raja Riaz — Opposition Leader in the National Assembly (NA), MNA Noor Alam Khan — Chairman Public Accounts Committee (PAC), MNA Nuzhat Pathan, MNA Ramesh Kumar Vankwani and MNA Wajih Qamar.

PTI dissident lawmakers Rana Muhammad Qasim Noon, Sardar Riaz Mehmood Khan Mazari, Nawab Sher, Makhdoom Zada Sayed Basit Ahmad Sultan, Afzal Khan Dhandla, Abdul Ghaffar Watoo, Amir Talal Gopang and Ahmed Hussain Dilber Hussain were also kicked out from the party today, read a statement shared by the Imran Khan-led party on its official Twitter handle.

The leaders were instructed not to use the party's name or designa-

tion in any way.

In addition to this, the PTI secretary general served show-cause notices on ex-MPA from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Malik Shaukat for attending a meeting of a newly-established party without the approval of the former ruling party. He was asked to submit his response within two days.

Last week, the PTI also expelled former KP chief minister Mahmood Khan after he defected to the former party leader Perviz Khattak-led breakaway faction, the PTI Parliamentarians. Several other PTI leaders including former KP lawmakers Wilson Wazeer, Ishia Umar, Iqbal Wazeer, Yaqoob Sheikh and Shafiq Afridi had also been expelled from the party.

Khattak, a former close aide of ex-prime minister Imran Khan, formed the PTI Parliamentarians, days after being thrown out of the party last month. Announcing the formation of the new party, the former defence minister con-

demned May 9 attacks and violent protests.

"Our existence is directly linked to that of Pakistan. The PTI is now completely finished in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," the former provincial chief minister, who holds an important position in the province's politics, said. The politician, who served as the PTI's secretary general and chief minister of KP during the PTI government, was also sacked over his failure to respond to a "show cause notice" issued to him.

The PTI remains embattled, with its chairman facing several cases and a threat of disqualification while key party leaders have parted ways following May 9 — the day party workers wreaked havoc and attacked army installations. Some of the former party members, considered close to the PTI chief previously, also denied Khan's party in Punjab as Jahangir Tareen, Aleem Khan, and the other people formed the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party in June.



ISLAMABAD: People chanting slogans against increase of petrol prices, revised electricity tariff and overall inflation.

High time for Pak-Turkiye boost strategic cooperation

(Continued from Page 1)

by the CPEC, the Naval chief said the upgradation of Karachi Shipyard would be key to improving Pakistan's self-reliance, through the government was also striving to develop another shipyard in Gwadar.

He also appreciated the dedication and hard work of the workers and engineers and congratulated at the stakeholders for achieving the milestone. Turkish Deputy Defence Minister Celal Sami, in his remarks the MILGEM project was the manifestation of exemplary bilateral relations.

Calling for enhancing the bilateral trade volume, the deputy minister said Türkiye was ready to take part in building Jinnah Class Frigate. Managing Director of Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works Rear Admiral Salman Ilyas said the project showed technological

advancement and commitment to improving the maritime defence.

He said the MILGEM was capable to carry out a variety of naval operations. He said the Karachi Shipyard was fully equipped to undertake multiple projects and was in the process of building the indigenously designed gunboat and Jinnah Class frigate, besides contributing to the water supply project for Karachi. Federal ministers Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Ahsan Iqbal, Syed Naveed Qamar and Israr Tareen, Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori and Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah also attended the ceremony.

Pakistan, Turkiye agree to maintain close coordination for improved ties: Pakistan and Türkiye on Wednesday agreed to continue close coordination and engagement through well-established bilateral mechanisms to continue with the upwards trajectory of

bilateral relations. The bilateral relations were discussed in a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and visiting Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yilmaz, after they jointly launched PNS Tariq Corvette.

The two leaders discussed wide-ranging issues encompassing bilateral relations, the regional situation and other areas of mutual interest. Appreciating the strong bilateral cooperation, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stressed the importance of transforming the brotherly relations into mutually rewarding trade and economic ties. He underscored the importance of enhancing people-to-people contacts and joint collaborations in R&D, IT, energy, infrastructure, food security, tourism and mining sectors.

Facilitating business community, resolution of their issues among govt's priorities: Prime Minister

Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that provision of facilities to the business community and resolution of their issues were among the top priorities of the government.

During a meeting with a delegation of Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) led by its President Tariq Yousaf and Chief Executive Officer of Trade Development Authority Zubair Motiwala, the prime minister lauded the contribution of traders in addressing the economic issues of the country, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori and Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, federal ministers Syed Naveed Qamar, Syed Ameenul Haque, Ahsan Iqbal, Eng. Khuram Dastagir Khan and Musadiq Malik, special assistants Tariq Bajwa, Tariq Pasha and Jahanzaib Khan, State Bank governor, FBR chairman

and other relevant authorities attended the meeting.

The prime minister maintained that the incumbent government had taken steps for the creation of business friendly environment in the country and had set up a project of generating 10,000MW of solar power in which the foreign investors were showing keen interest. He also welcomed the suggestions regarding equitable distribution of electricity and gas.

With constitution of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), he said, huge foreign investment would be secured. The prime minister, during the meeting, directed the State Bank and Federal Board of Revenue to resolve the business community's issues with their cooperation. He assured that the government would provide electricity to the traders in Karachi at similar rates. On the occasion, Chief

Executive of the Trade Development Authority and traders' leader Zubair Motiwala submitted proposals for the resolution of the business community's problems and praised the prime minister for the resolution of their issues.

PM congratulates Talal, Daniyal: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday felicitated Talal Chaudhry and Daniyal Aziz on expiry of their five-year disqualification term awarded to them under separate contempt of court proceedings. On his Twitter handle, the prime minister thanked Allah Almighty and said that darkness of negative acts taken by a clique, who worked against progress and prosperity of Pakistan, had been ending.

The prime minister lauded their steadfastness and loyalty with PML-N leader Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and their fortitude to brace all the ordeals.