

Soldier injured in attack
F.P. Report

BARA: An FC soldier sustained injuries when an unknown militant attacked Ayaz forces checkpoint here in Mehraban Kelley, Tirah Valley on Wednesday. The unidentified armed persons opened indiscriminate fire on the check post however in retaliation of the forces, they fled the scene. The wounded FC soldier was identified as Lance Naik Inayat who was shifted to Military Health Center.

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Girl abducted, raped

ISLAMABAD (INP): A teenage girl was kidnapped from mountainous area of Murree, Phagwari police station jurisdiction and allegedly raped for 10 days. Addressing a press conference in National Press Club (NPC) Islamabad on Wednesday, 17-year-old Mah Noor Arshad stated that she was in contact with key accused Hamad Irshad who telephoned her on morning of August 14 to meet her.

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KARACHI: Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi presenting a model of Tugril Class frigate 'PNS Shah Jehan' to Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

President has no role in election date, Law Ministry tells Alvi

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Ministry of Law on Wednesday told President Arif Alvi that he has no role in the announcement of date for general elections "following the amendment in Elections Act", media reported.

The law ministry has forwarded its response to President Alvi's letter, seeking opinion on Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) stance that "only it had the authority to decide the election date".

In the letter, the Law ministry said that the right of announcing the date of election rests with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). "According to Article 48(5) of the Constitution, where the National Assembly is dissolved by the President, he shall appoint a date for election and appoint a caretaker cabinet in accordance with the provision of Article 224 or as the case may be under Article 224-A," the ministry said in the letter.

Under Article 58, the letter noted, the President shall act on and in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister and such advice shall be binding on him. "An advice sent under Article 58a shall take effect within 48 hours", it added. The min-

istry further said that the system will witness a distortion if President's authority to give election date is accepted. "The purpose of amending the Election Act was a single authority can give date of elections," it added.

The development came after Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja responded to President Alvi's letter for meeting to "fix an appropriate date" for general elections, saying that participating in such a meeting would be of "scant importance" after changes to the election law. The president had written to Sikandar Raja Sultan, inviting him for a meeting regarding holding general elections in the country.

In his letter, President Alvi quoted Article 244 of the Constitution, saying he was duty-bound to get the elections conducted in the 90 days' prescribed period once the National Assembly is dissolved prematurely. Responding to the latter, ECP CEC said it was "imperative" to point out that Section 57 of the Elections Act had been amended due to an act of Parliament, which had empowered the commission to "announce the date or dates for the general elections".

"Where the president dissolves the

National Assembly, in his discretion, as provided in Article 58(2) read with Article 48(5) of the Constitution then he has to appoint a date for the general elections. However, if the assembly is dissolved on the advice of the prime minister or by afflux of time as provided in Article 58(1) of the Constitution, then the commission understands and believes that power to appoint a date or dates for elections rests exclusively with the Commission.

CEC Raja said that the delimitation of constituencies, after the approval of the digital census, was one of the "foundational legal steps" towards holding polls. He further said that the ECP was taking its responsibility of holding general elections in the country "very seriously" and had also invited major political parties to give their views on the electoral map.

Earlier, it was reported that the ECP decided to hold general elections in the second week of February 2024. Sources privy to the development told media that the election commission is likely to issue general elections schedule after December 2023. "The election schedule will be issued 54 days after the completion of the delimitation process," said sources with ECP.

Qureshi sent on 14-day judicial remand

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A special court formed to hear cases under the Official Secrets Act on Wednesday sent former foreign minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi's on a 14-day judicial remand in cipher case.

Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) produced the former foreign minister before the special court after the completion of his two-day physical remand on Wednesday. Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain, who has been given additional charge of the special court, conducted the hearing on the case.

During the hearing, FIA's special prosecutor implored the court to extend physical remand saying they needed to recover Qureshi's mobile phone and the diplomatic cable. Expressing displeasure over repeated pleas for an extension, Judge Zulqarnain rejected the request. Qureshi was arrested earlier this month by the FIA's Counter Terrorism Wing (CTW) after a case was lodged against him on the complaint of Interior Secretary Yousaf Naseem Khokhar under Sections 5 and 9 of Official Secrets Act 1923 r/w 34 PP.

"Consequent upon the conclusion of the enquiry No. 111/2023 dated 05.10.2022, registered in the CTW, FIA Islamabad, it transpired that former prime minister namely Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi, former foreign minister namely Shah Mahmood Qureshi and their other associates are involved in communications of information contained in secret classified document (Cipher Telegram received from Parep.

No fiscal space available for subsidies: Finance Minister

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): As the country continues to brave rising inflation, interim Finance Minister Shamshad Akhtar on Wednesday warned that Pakistan's economic situation was "worse than anticipated" and the government did not have "fiscal space" to provide subsidies.

Her remarks, made during a meeting of the Senate's Standing Committee on Finance on Wednesday, asserted that the interim set-up had "inherited" the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, hence, it was "non-negotiable". The finance minister's statement comes as Pakistan remains plagued by the inflated cost of living, particularly exorbitant electricity prices that have forced residents to take to the streets across the country.

So far, the caretaker government has failed to come up with any relief measures as it tries to strike a balance between avoiding drawing the IMF's ire and causing more citizens to blow a fuse. In the cabinet meeting presided over by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar a day earlier, the interim set-up expressed helplessness on how to address the issue, even on spreading electricity bills in instalments unless the IMF cleared it.

Later, interim Information Minister Murtaza Solangi, who didn't immediately hold a presser after the cabinet's meeting, told a private TV channel that the government was engaging with the IMF regarding relief measures for electricity consumers and an announcement was expected soon. A source privy to the meeting told media that the cabinet noted that the interim set-up could not give any relief to consumers, but it could allow breaking up the bills into four to six instalments. "Even in case of instalments, the government will have to get prior permission from the IMF," the source said.

Addressing a meeting of the Senate's Standing Committee on Finance on Wednesday, Akhtar said government institutions were suffering "unbearable losses" and underscored the need to accelerate privatisation. According to the finance minister, 70 per cent of Pakistan's tax revenue was being spent on debt relief. Moreover, she said the rupee was under pressure due to the dollar's low inflows and high outflows.

"The next elected government would have to re-engage with independent power producers," Akhtar stated. She went on to say that if the IMF agreement was not implemented, the dollar inflow would stop and the economic situation would worsen. But at the same time, the minister highlighted that measures other than the IMF programme needed to be taken.

"Unfortunately, we have done everything to weaken the economy," she lamented, adding that the Federal Board of Revenue's revenue was low while the expenditure was high. The finance minister also debunked the perception that the caretaker government had "unlimited powers". "We have limited options and will work within them," she said.

She further stated that the previous government had agreed on "adjustments" with the IMF and the incumbent set-up could not do anything in this regard. Akhtar added that the proposal to withdraw facilities for the privileged class was under consideration and a briefing would be given to the committee on the economy after a week.

Prior to the finance minister's briefing, a number of committee members raised concerns regarding rising dollar and sky-high electricity bills. PPP Senator Sherry Rehman highlighted that there was a long list of taxes in power bills. "We have heard more surcharges will be added in the upcoming days... the situation has broken people's backs and forced them to the streets."

Meanwhile, Senator Kamil Ali Agha demanded that taxes imposed in the bills should immediately be withdrawn, saying that the entire country was paying the price of some people's theft. The rising electricity costs appeared to have put the power companies in a vicious cycle of declining consumption and shifting resultant additional capacity charges to consumers, compelling the government to seek the staggered imposition of Rs146 billion quarterly charges in six months, instead of three months to minimise the 'price shock'.

The situation emerged at a public hearing organised by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on the government request for Rs5.40 per unit additional quarterly tariff adjustment (QTA) to consumers for April-June 2023 when the Power Division made a departure from its petitions. It requested that consumers be charged at a rate of Rs3.55 per unit for six months, instead of Rs5.40 per unit for three months, to reduce the price shock on consumers still struggling to absorb 26pc increase in base national rates notified last month. Also, the Power Division proposed that even the Rs3.55 per unit additional charge should be imposed after September when an existing quarterly adjustment of Rs1.24 per unit would lapse, thereby further reducing the cost increase. The net increase in tariff for six months — October 2023 to March 2024 — would thus stand at Rs2.31 per unit, a Power Division official pleaded before the regulator.

COAS witnesses field fire and battle drills

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir COAS, visited Tilla Field Firing Ranges near Jhelum on Wednesday. COAS witnessed Field Fire and Battle Drills.

On arrival, COAS was briefed on training objectives set for the exercise with a view to validate operational readiness of the formation in challenging environment.

COAS appreciated the synergy displayed by Airforce, Army Aviation and ground troops in execution of various operational drills. COAS praised the troops for their combat proficiency and offensive spirit. He also appreciated high morale and battle worthiness of the troops. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Lieutenant General Syed Aamer Raza, Commander 4 Corps.

IHC seeks details of cases against Imaan

ISLAMABAD (INP): A hearing was held in Islamabad High Court (IHC) regarding the human rights lawyer — Imaan Mazari — plea to provide the details of the cases registered against her on Wednesday. The IHC Justice Mian Gul Hasan Aurangzeb presided over the disclosure of details pertaining to cases registered against Imaan Mazari.

During the proceedings, it was ordered that the Interior Secretary, representing the government, would be responsible for compiling comprehensive reports of cases registered across the country against Imaan and submit these reports to the court by tomorrow.

The presiding judge directed the Interior Secretary to take all necessary measures to guarantee that Imaan remains free from any arrest and exempt from being transported out of Islamabad.

Furthermore, the court stipulated that if any cases or reports against Imaan Mazari emerge after August 20, she should not be subject to arrest. The court adjourned the case till tomorrow. Earlier to this, the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Tuesday granted a three-day physical remand to the human rights lawyer, Imaan, in a case related to "collection of funds to fuel anti-state activities".

The ATC Judge Abu Al-Hasanat Zul-Qarnain, presided over the hearing of the case against Imaan Mazari — a human rights lawyer. The prosecutor claimed that the human right lawyer is accused of 'collecting funds to fuel anti-state activities' and demanded her physical remand to recover the alleged funds and apprehend other potential co-conspirators.

Sutlej in medium flood

BAHAWALNAGAR (PPI): Sutlej River is in medium flood at Ganda Singh Wala and Sulemanki headworks on Wednesday. The water outflow in the river has been 95,000 cusecs at Ganda Singh Wala with water level as high as 20 feet. The inflow of Sutlej River has been 95,340 cusecs and outflow 81,173 cusecs at Sulemanki Headworks.

Flooding in Sutlej has wreaked havoc in Bahawalnagar district with as many as over one lac people affected in the flood. Ferocious flow of the river water has swept away protective dykes and roads in the district.

The land link over 100 settlements has been disrupted and standing crops of thousands of acres have drowned while the water has flooded several houses. The PDMA said that the monsoon spell likely to persist till 04 September.

PM emphasizes significance of war games

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday emphasized the significance of war games in validating naval war plans in sync with military and national security policy, besides exploring operational concepts and refining deployment strategies.

The prime minister, addressing the debrief session of Pakistan Navy's war game Shamsheer-e-Bahr IX, lauded the well-deliberated plans of the force commanders and the insightful analysis of the war game, which would help crystallize operational plans for maritime security and seaward defence of Pakistan, a PM Office press release said.

He also highlighted the

enhanced responsibilities of the Pakistan Navy in ensuring the security of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Gwadar Port. Prime Minister Kakar expressed complete confidence in the preparedness of the Pakistan Navy to meet all threats and challenges, and reassured the government's commitment to provide all available resources for its capacity building.

Earlier upon arrival at the venue, the prime minister was received by Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi. While presenting the overview, the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (Operations) outlined the objectives of the war game which was conducted in tri-service format, with participants of

relevant ministries and divisions as well.

He highlighted various concepts tried during the war game and recommendations pertaining to the Pakistan Navy's deployment strategies. The debrief of the exercise was attended by high-level government officials and senior officers from tri-services.

Senator Mandiwala calls on Caretaker PM: Senator Saleem Mandiwala called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

The senator felicitated the prime minister on assuming the office and extended his best wishes, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The caretaker prime minister thanked Mandiwala for his wishes.

PTI chief to stay in jail — court extends judicial remand in cipher case

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A special court established under the Official Secrets Act extended Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's judicial remand till September 13 in the cipher case, hearing of which was held at the Attock District Jail, sources told media.

Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain, who arrived at the jail to conduct the hearing, issued the decision in the case of the missing cipher, a classified state document that Khan had waved during his political gathering ahead of his ouster from office last year.

Hearing of the case took place at the Attock District Jail following approval by the Law Ministry amid security concerns expressed by the Interior Ministry. Khan has been imprisoned in the said jail since his conviction in the Toshakhana case on August 5 for failing to properly declare gifts he received while in office.

While the Islamabad High Court, a day earlier, overturned a lower court's decision to jail him for three years with a Rs100,000 fine — a judgment that kept him from contesting upcoming elections, he remains behind bars due to his judicial remand in the cipher case till August 30. The FIA had officially arrested the former prime minister in the

cipher case earlier this month after booking him under Official Secrets Act.

Subsequently, the PTI chief was sent on judicial remand in the cipher case till Wednesday at the same time while he was serving his sentence in Toshakhana case at Attock jail. At the hearing on Wednesday, Prosecutor Zulfiqar Naqvi represented the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) while PTI lawyer Salman Safdar appeared on behalf of Khan.

The PTI chief's counsel later filed a post-arrest bail application, along with the request to hear the case in an open court, as per the sources. Earlier, the court had also directed the superintendent of Attock jail to keep the ex-PM in the judicial lockup and present him upon completion of the remand period. Therefore he was not immediately released from jail, despite IHC orders suspending the trial court conviction in Toshakhana case.

Meanwhile, the PTI lawyers have moved multiple bail applications, along with the request to declare the bail trial notification "illegal", the sources said.

Meanwhile, in another, they have sought the former

(Continued on Back Page)

BAP team discusses polls roadmap with ECP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) on Wednesday held a meeting with the senior officials of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to deliberate the election roadmap.

The delegation comprising BAP senators Manzoor Kakar, Sana Jamali, Danesh Kumar and Naseebullah Bazai, in the meeting, conveyed their party's position on conducting elections within 90 days. Besides Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, ECP members and senior officials attended the meeting.

The discussions were primarily centered on the demarcation of constituencies and other election related issues. Manzoor Kakar mentioned efforts to organize a meeting of Balochistan's political parties to discuss constituency delineation and issues concerning general elections. They intended to visit Balochistan for further discussions and would subsequently present their action plan to the Election Commission, he added.

Police arrest PTI Sindh President

KARACHI (Agencies): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh chapter president Haleem Adil Sheikh on Wednesday was arrested outside the Sindh High Court (SHC), media reported. Sheikh's arrest came as he was reportedly suspected of involvement in the violent protests triggered by party's chairman Imran Khan arrest in the £190 million Al-Qadir Trust on May 9.

Sheikh and other PTI politicians in the province were reportedly among rioters booked for the violent protests in Karachi. Speaking with journalists outside the court before his arrest, the senior PTI leader said false cases were made against him.

"Blowing up balloons have also become terrorism," he said. "Aftab Siddiqui was also nominated, but escaped after holding a press conference. People who hold press conferences [easily] leave," he said, questioning the ambiguity around the arrests pertaining to the May 9 riots. Sheikh said he and his colleagues are still facing lawsuits due to political vengeance.

"I have been exposing the corruption of the Pakistan People's Party," he said. The politician also lamented the violation of Constitution and law by the rulers. Following the riots in May, a provincial high court bench restricted the police from apprehending Sheikh till May 19 after his son moved the court against a potential arrest.



RAWALPINDI: General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, CJCS, who is on official visit to Tajikistan, called on Founder of Peace and National Unity, Leader of the Nation, Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of Tajikistan. Chairman JCSC also had separate meetings with other government and military officials during which matters of mutual interests were discussed.

PSCA, Police arrest dacoit gang in joint operation

LAHORE (APP): In a significant collaborative effort, the Lahore Police and the Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) executed a successful joint operation against a notorious dacoit gang, apprehending two key members from Nishtar Colony here on Wednesday.

Police said that Safe City cameras played a pivotal role in tracking down the suspects from Sunday market ground who were identified as Ghulam Mustafa and Abdul Rahman.

The police recovered five stolen motorcycles, along with a cache of master keys and pistols that were presumably used in their criminal activities.

Following the arrest of the suspects, a case has been registered in accordance with the directives of the law enforcement officers. Additionally, an extensive inspection brought to light the involvement of the arrested individuals in the distribution of illegal goods across various areas of Lahore.

The Lahore Police, in close partnership with the Punjab Safe Cities Authority, has intensified its targeted efforts against dacoit gangs in the region, said Superintendent of Police, Ahmed Zuner.

He highlighted the instrumental role played by the Safe City cameras in curbing criminal activities.

6 dead, 1093 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least six people were killed while 1093 injured in 1081 road accidents in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours.

Of whom, 526 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 567 people with minor injuries were treated on the spot by rescue medical teams.

Analysis show that 564 drivers, 39 underage drivers, 139 pedestrians, and 396 passengers were among the victims of road accidents. Statistics show that 305 road accidents were reported in Lahore which affected 313 people placing the provincial capital at top of the list followed by 68 in Multan with 60 victims and at third Gujranwala with 68 road accidents and 66 victims.

According to the data, 927 motorbikes, 69 autorickshaws, 95 motorcars, 24 vans, 06 buses, 21 trucks and 104 other types of auto vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in the road accidents.

PTI's Ehsan Gul joins IPP

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Churian vice president Ehsan Gul has announced to join the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP).

He met with the General Secretary, IPP, Lahore Division, Mian Khalid Mahmood and announced to join the IPP. Ehsan Gul expressed full confidence in the leadership of Abdul Aleem Khan and Jahangir Khan Tareen. The IPP leader welcomed him in his party.

On this occasion, Ehsan Gul said that IPP is working on the vision of building, development and stability of the country.

Jamal Shah visits Aiwan-e-Quaid Building

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jamal Shah, Interim Minister for National Heritage and Culture on Wednesday conducted a visit to Islamabad's Fatima Jinnah Park, where he expressed the desire to enhance the facilities at the Aiwan-e-Quaid Building during his tour.

During the visit, senior officials at Aiwan-e-Quaid provided him with an overview of the different amenities accessible within the building. The Federal Minister also toured several amenities within the Aiwan-e-Quaid Building, which encompassed the Quaid-i-Azam Gallery, Quaid Public Library, Auditorium, documentation center, as well as the Training and Research Center.

Foundation stone laid for renovation,upgradation of ASH: Mayor

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab Wednesday said that foundation stone had been laid for renovation and up gradation of the gynecology ward as with the World Bank funded project Abbasi Shaheed Hospital (ASH) would be made fully operational.

During a visit to the ASH along with Deputy Mayor, Salman Abdullah Murad, he said that the renovation work would be finished before December 31.

Under a world bank funded project, he said that the Gyne ward of the hospital would be rehabilitated and upgraded to make it properly functional.

100 bedded three wards, two operations theatres, recovery room/ward, sterilisation room, doctors room, consultant rooms and reception and lobby area will be renovated. On this occasion, People's Party district central President Masroor Ahsan, General secretary Dil Mohammad, Senior

Director Medical Services Dr Nadeem Asif, Director ASH Dr. Nadir, M. S. ASH Dr. Naseem and heads of other ASH departments were also present.

Barrister Murtaza said we were working on many World Bank projects and this project would be approved under which the latest equipments would be added to the hospital.

He said that ASH had never been under the Sindh Government, today Jinnah and Civil Hospital had better facilities in front of everyone.

Medical was a field to serve the citizens, the house officer must protest but the patients should not suffer and the protest should be peaceful and the issue of salaries of these protestors was before the start of his term as mayor, he said. The mayor also inspected the Gynecology Ward and other departments of Abbasi Shaheed Hospital and met the patients.

Urs of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh to begin from Sept 5

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Auqaf and Religious Affairs, Housing, Zakat and Ushar Barrister Syed Azfar Ali Nasir has said that the 980th Urs of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh will be held from September 5 to 7.

On the special instructions of the chief minister Punjab, foolproof security arrangements had been made regarding Urs, he added.

These views were expressed by the minister with Secretary Auqaf Dr Syed Tahir Raza Bukhari and Director General of Religious Affairs Asif Ali Farrukh in a joint press conference at Committee room here on Wednesday.

On this occasion, the minister said that the Urs celebrations would start on September 5 at 11am with the ceremony of Chadar Poshi on the grave of the great saint of the Sub-continent after which the traditional milk Sabli will be inaugurated.

Barrister Azfar Ali Nasir said that special publication of two books, "Ma'arif Syed Hajvair" and "Tasheel Kashf Al-Mahjub" had also been arranged as the Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi will launch these two books.

On the occasion, more than 500 religious and spiritual gatherings and academic sessions have been arranged.

Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman will inaugurate the international conference on August 31 at 2 pm. He said that the Auqaf Department had allocated Rs 12.5 million for Langar and other ceremonies besides arrangements of Urs for pilgrims.

Talking about security arrangements, he said that 155 CCTV cameras, more than 3000 security personnel would be deployed. Lady constables will be engaged in women area. Medical camps had also been set up near Data Darbar for the convenience of pilgrims, Barrister Azfar Ali Nasir said and added that the parking lot had been opened.

IGP issues notification regarding reduction in duration of training courses for probationary officers

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar on Wednesday took a major step regarding the training courses of probationary officers, under which the duration of the courses has been reduced. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has issued a notification to amend the course of promotion for probationary ASIs and Sub-inspectors.

According to the details, the duration of the A, B, and C courses has been reduced to one month, while the duration of the D course has been reduced to six months. Officers recruited as direct upper subordinates will be confirmed after completing a probationary period of three years.

The direct sub-inspector recruits under

the P-cadet quota will not have to repeat the training and A, B, C, and D courses.

These officers will be given refresher courses of two and a half months in police stations as sub-inspectors; they will spend three years as probationers. ASIs who have not completed their practical training will complete their practical training upon being recruited as sub-inspectors.

The IG Punjab issued a notification amending the police rules and sent it to all the officers.

Dr. Usman Anwar has taken a good step for the welfare of retired police personnel. According to the details, a special tab has been added to the Punjab Police (HRMIS) App for retired police officers.

Faith leaders pass unanimously resolution to promote interfaith harmony, peaceful coexistence

ISLAMABAD (APP): The faith leaders, in response to the recent interfaith disturbances and acts of violence that shook Jaranwala, on Wednesday came together and passed a unanimous resolution, fostering interfaith harmony, promoting religious tolerance, and nurturing peaceful coexistence among all communities in Pakistan.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony convened a successful 'Interfaith Harmony Conference' here at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in which a number of faith leaders, religious scholars, diplomats and people from all walks of life participated with a united vision of unity and inclusivity.

Drawing inspiration from the foundational principles of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, faith leaders and religious scholars reiterated their commitment to unity and harmony. They paid homage to Jinnah's historic speech on 11th August, 1947, which emphasized the importance of these ideals in shaping the nation. They, leveraging the guarantees enshrined in Pakistan's Constitution, pledged to

uphold principles of equality, non-discrimination, and safeguarding life, property, and the practice of religion for every citizen. In alignment with the National Action Plan, Paigam-e-Pakistan, and the National Security Policy, the attendees vowed to condemn vehemently all acts of sacrifice, vandalism, and violence directed at religious institutions and properties. Central to their resolve was the protection of religious communities' rights to practice their faith without fear or prejudice.

They recognized that respectful and open dialogue between different faiths was pivotal for cultivating mutual respect and understanding. Committing to this notion, they aimed to leverage interfaith dialogue as a conduit to bridge gaps and address misconceptions among communities. Recognizing the importance of education, the leaders advocated for the integration of interfaith education into curricula at all educational levels as this approach seeks to foster a deeper comprehension of various religious traditions and promote

an atmosphere of acceptance.

The faith leaders, encouraging active engagement from religious leaders, scholars, and community representatives, championed values of tolerance, compassion, and respect for diversity. Law enforcement agencies were urged to intensify community policing efforts to prevent and promptly address interfaith violence and hate crimes. Media organizations were called upon to practice responsible journalism, refraining from disseminating content that fuels religious animosity or incites violence.

The leaders acknowledged that nurturing interfaith harmony required the collaborative efforts of government institutions, civil society, religious figures, and citizens. They supported peaceful methods of conflict resolution, including dialogue, mediation, and legal avenues, addressing grievances and disputes among different religious communities. Expressing solidarity with the impacted communities in Jaranwala, they reiterated their commitment to assisting in rebuilding and recovery from recent incidents of violence.



پاکستان سول ایئر لائنز اتھارٹی

PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

TENDER NOTICE

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AT BACHA KHAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, PESHAWAR

1. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is inviting tenders from Companies / Firms / Joint Ventures and Sole-Proprietors in accordance with the criteria for eligibility of bidders as described in detail in tender terms & conditions on a single stage / two-envelope basis, i.e. Technical & Financial offer for award of following concession at Bacha Khan International Airport (BKIAPI).

CONCESSION NAME	RESERVE PRICE (P.M)	LICENSED PERIOD	TIMING & CONTACT PERSON DETAILS	LAST DATE OF PURCHASE OF TENDER DOCUMENTS	TENDER FEE (NON-REFUNDABLE)	DATE, TIME & VENUE OF SUBMISSION	DATE, TIME & VENUE OF OPENING
Placement, Maintenance and Operations of two (02) Vending Machines, one (01) each in International Briefing Area & International Departure Lounge (Hall-03)	Rs. 100,000/-	Three (03) years	0900 to 1700 hours on working days Dy. Director Commercial CAA BKIAPI, Peshawar Tel: 091-9211517	14 th September, 2023	Rs. 5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand only)	15 th September, 2023 at 1100 hrs C.O.O. / APM Office BKIAPI Peshawar	15 th September, 2023 at 1130 hrs C.O.O. / APM Office BKIAPI Peshawar

2. For a detailed Tender Notice kindly visit: www.caa-pakistan.com.pk & www.ppra.org.pk

DIRECTOR COMMERCIAL & ESTATES
Headquarters, Civil Aviation Authority, Terminal – 1, Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, Pakistan
Telephone: +92 21-99242531, Fax: +92 21 99242532, E-mail: dce@caa-pakistan.com.pk

PID/K#658/23 www.caa-pakistan.com.pk

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING RE - E-BIDDING

Irrigation Department Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites Electronic Bids from eligible firms / bidders in accordance with KPPRA Procurement Rules 2014 on Single Stage Single Envelope Procedure for the following balance works:-

Work No.	Name of Work / Sub Work	Estimated Cost Rs (M)	Earnest Money	Stamp Duty	Required PEC Category	Last date / time of submission of Tenders Forms.	Time limit
A	210589 - Construction of Check Dams & Water Reservoirs in Merged Areas ADP # 2281 (2022-23) (2nd Time Tender)	-	02% of the Estimated Cost	-	CE-04	19-09-2023 Time 12:00 P.M & Will be opened on 12:30 PM	As per Work order /BOQ
1A	Construction of 12 Nos. Storage Reservoirs in Tehsil Salarzai & Mamund District Bajaur. (Unsuccessful tendered works) Construction of Storage Reservoir in Toofon Shah, Sro Wano Salarzai, Nakhtar, Ghunday, Ghara Zogai, Gabaray Ochra and Gowatay Tehsil Mamund.	19,528	390560	40000	-do-	-do-	-do-
2A	Construction of 04 Nos. Storage Reservoirs in Maina Izotai, Maina, Bar Maina Izotai and Iar Maina Izotai Tehsil Mamund District Bajaur (Unsuccessful Tendered Works).	12,180	243600	40000	-do-	-do-	-do-
3A	Construction of 02 Nos. Storage Reservoirs in Kharkay area (Loe Kharkay & Wara Kharkay). Construction of 02 Nos. Storage Reservoirs in Nakhtar (Nakhtar-1 & Nokhtar-2), Construction of 02 Nos. Storage Reservoirs in Gilai (Gilai.1 & Gilai-2) Tehsil Mamund and Construction of 01 No. Storage Reservoir in Gabari Tehsil Mamund District Bajaur (Unsuccessful Tendered Works).	19,344	386880	40000	-do-	-do-	-do-
4A	Construction of Storage 10 Nos. Storage Reservoirs in Tehsil Khar, District Bajaur (Unsuccessful Tendered Works) Khar-1, Khar-2 Tehsil Khar and Construction of 01 No. Storage Reservoir in Damano Tehsil Salarzai District Bajaur.	8,780	175600	9000	-do-	-do-	-do-
B	210593 - Construction / Improvement of Irrigation Channels in Merged Areas ADP No. 2283 (2022-23) (2nd Time Tender)	-	02% of the Estimated Cost	Stamp Duty	CE-04	19.09-2023 Time 12:00 P.M & Will be opened on 12:30 PM	As per Work order /BOQ
1B	Construction of 09 Nos. Irrigation Channels in Tehsil Salarzai & Mamund District Bajaur. (Unsuccessful tendered works) Construction of Irrigation Channel in Babel Tehsil Salarzai, Loe Kharkai, Bandaray, Nakhtor and Kitkot Tehsil Mamund	19,548	390960	40000	-do-	-do-	-do-
2B	Construction of 09 Nos. Irrigation Channels in Tehsil Barang & Tehsil Khar District Bajaur. (Unsuccessful tendered works) Construction of Irrigation Channel in Kando Ghar Shamoza, Bararo Tehsil Barang and Khair Abad Phattak Tehsil Khar.	12,787	255740	40000	-do-	-do-	-do-
C	210588 - Construction of Irrigation tube wells / Lift Irrigation Schemes and Solarization of existing Irrigation Tube Wells in Merged Areas ADP Np. 2280 (2022-23) (2nd Time Tender)	-	02% of the Estimated Cost	Stamp Duty	CE-04	19-09-2023 Time 12:00 P.M & Will be opened on 12:30 PM	As per Work order /BOQ
1C	Construction / Installation of 03 Nos. New Solar Tube Wells in Khar, Salarzai & Barang. (Unsuccessful Tendered Works) Construction of 02 Nos. New Solar Tube Wells at Dando Bartrass, Tehsil Salarzai and Baro orang Tehsil Utmankhel (Civil Work).	12,224	244480	40000	-do-	-do-	-do-
2C	Construction / Installation of 03 Nos. New Solar Tube Wells in Tehsil Mamund (Unsuccessful Tendered Works) Construction of 02 Nos. New Solar Tube Wells at Charmang and Loe Mamund (Civil Work).	12,160	243200	40000	-do-	-do-	-do-
3C	Solarization of Existing Tube Wells at Inam Khwaro Chinagai Mamund, Ghar zaga Dherai Mamund, Damadola Landai Shah Mamund, Maina Momund, Kalan Mamund, Ghakhi Nakhtar Mamund, Rai Charmang Nawagai & Qazafi Tehsil Utmankhel (Civil Work) (Unsuccessful Tendered Works under different Sub Works).	6,020	120400	9000	-do-	-do-	-do-

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:-

- Bid Solicitation Documents containing all the terms and conditions and other relevant instructions for the work can be downloaded from the Department and or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority websites (www.irrigation.gkp.pk) (www.kppra.gov.pk).
- The bidder shall submit their bids on the address "Office of the Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division Bajaur, Civil Colony Khar Tehsil Khar, District Bajaur" only through reliable courier Service on or before the deadline along with required documents as per details mentioned in Bid Solicitation Documents. The affixed labels of the Courier Service provider shall be authenticated for tracking before opening. Fake courier delivery would not be considered.
- Electronic bidding shall be done on "Above / Below system" on BOQ / Engineer's estimate.
- All bidders are required to have valid registration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority.
- The bidder shall submit 02% bid security of the estimated cost as mentioned above, in the shape of deposit at call (Original) enclosed along with their bid before closing date and time in the name of Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division Bajaur.
- Notifications issued by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority pertaining to procurement process issued from time to time shall be applicable.
- If the evaluated electronic bid costs of two or more bidders are equal, then the successful bidder will be declared through toss.
- Any bidder who provides fake information shall stand disqualified and de-barred.
- Time allowed for the completion of the work as specified in the NIT shall start from the issuance of Work Order.
- Electronic Bids validity period is 90 Days.
- Successful bidder shall sign the agreement with the department within Twenty-one (21) days after issuance of acceptance letter.
- Call deposit of scheduled Banks shall be acceptable.
- The employer has the authority to reject any bid or all the bids assigning cogent reasons.
- Bid security of the 1st 2nd and 3rd lowest bidders of each work will be retained by the department till the signing of the contract agreement.
- The successful bidder shall be subjected to all admissible taxes including stamp duty, service charges, sales tax and any other at prevailing rates.
- All Govt. Notifications/Rules/taxes updated from time to time shall be applicable.
- All Bidders are required to be registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act. 2013 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act No. XXI of 2013), for works, consulting and non-consulting services as listed in Schedule- II of the act bid.
- Non-refundable bidding entry fee @0.03% of tender cost and stamp duty in Shape of Call Deposit shall separately be furnished (in original) to this office as recommended by the Sub-committee of the cabinet notified vide Section Officer (Confidential) Chief Ministers Secretariat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Peshawar No. SO(C)/CMS/KPK/2020-21 dated: 21 04 2021.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
Irrigation Division Bjaour
Civil Colony Khar, Tehsil Khar District Bojour.
Email: irrigation.bjr@gmail.com Phone No: 0942-220393

INF/P/2097/23



Ombudsman present report to Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Ombudsman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Syed Jamal-ud-Din Shah here Wednesday called on KP Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali and presented annual report of 2022.

Additional Secretary Law Department, Zaeer-ud-Din and Principal Secretary of the Governor, Mazhar Irshad was also present on the occasion.

Provincial Ombudsman told that 2519 complaints were received by office of ombudsman among which 1947 have been addressed. He told that 492 complaints were related to Elementary and Secondary Education.

Governor appreciated the efforts of ombudsman office and its overall performance to facilitate people.

Meanwhile, 150 member representative delegation of tribal elders and elites of various areas called on KP Governor and informed him about their problems.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor assured Jirga members of his coop-

eration and assistance to resolve their problems. He said that higher authorities would be conveyed concerns of tribal people and added that progress and development of merged districts is among priorities of government.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan chairing 9th meeting of Provincial Caretaker Cabinet.

PHC orders IGP, CCPO to submit reply in COC

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprised of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Fazal Subhan ordered Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Peshawar to submit comments in Contempt of Court (COC) plea in recruitment case, on Wednesday.

The counsel Malak Shahbaz advocate argued that on 10th May 2023 PHC ordered the recruitment of an applicant named Wahid Ullah as constable by accepting the writ petition. He argued that PHC's order wasn't implemented after three months while the petitioner was compelled to rotate in different offices but to no veil, the counsel added.

The counsel added that

competent didn't recruiting the petitioner despite court's order which lies in the COC's jurisdiction while PHC ordered respondents for submission of reply in this regard.

During hearing, the counsel argued that mistakenly Wahid Ullah was shown as resident of Charsada despite he has qualified Evaluation and Testing Agency (ETEA) test by obtaining 56 marks

as well as also passed physical test and interview for Peshawar.

The counsel further argued that ETEA has corrected the mistake and recommended competent authorities for appointment of petitioner. He argued that petitioner has approached PHC in writ jurisdiction while High Court accepted the plea and ordered his appointment on Peshawar's quota.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Fazal Subhan ordered IGP along with CCPO Peshawar for submission of reply while adjourned further hearing.

Ahmad Gul completes MPhil

PESHAWAR (APP): Ahmad Gul defended his MPhil research work in Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Peshawar on Wednesday.

His thesis title was "The Role of Social Media and Academic Needs Gratification of University Students: A Case Study of Laghman University - Afghanistan".

Dr. Bakht Zaman, Assistant Professor at JMC, was his Supervisor, while his thesis was evaluated by Dr. Rahman Ullah, Chairman of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST).

Professor Dr. Faizullah Jan, Chairman of JMC, UoP, chaired the oral examination. Ahmad Gul is an Afghan citizen working as a Lecturer at Nangarhar University Jalalabad Afghanistan.

He has completed his M.Phil studies under the HEC Allama Iqbal Scholarship for Afghan students.

Bid to smuggle heroin foiled

PESHAWAR (APP): Excise Intelligence Bureau in a coordinated action with Excise Mardan Police Station on Wednesday foiled a bid to smuggle heroin abroad and arrested a foreign drug smuggler on Nowshera Mardan Road.

According to the spokesman of the Excise department, the Excise Intelligence Bureau received a tip-off about smuggling heroin from Islamabad International Airport to Dubai and intercepted a car on Nowshera Mardan Road carrying a passenger to Islamabad International Airport.

The Excise police searched and car and the passenger identified as Aqal Jan s/o Feroze Khan, resident of Kuki Khel Ali Mosque and recovered 57 heroin-filled capsules from him.

The police arrested the accused from the spot and took an air ticket, passport, and other travelling documents into custody and started an investigation after registering a case.

Tortured body of girl found

PESHAWAR (APP): The body of a six-year-old girl having torture marks, was recovered from Shah Alam area in the vicinity of Khazana police station here on Wednesday.

Police said the girl who was missing from her house in Khazana, was the daughter of Fazal Sher and a report of her missing was registered at Khazana police station.

Police further informed that the girl was murdered and later her body was dumped in the fields of Shah Alam locality.

Soon after receiving information, a police team reached the site and collected evidence for investigation. The little girl's body was later shifted to hospital for post-mortem.

A case on the complaint of the uncle of the girl was registered against unknown perpetrators, police said adding that a team under the headship of SP Rural has been constituted which has started investigation into this deplorable incident.

Health Dept on high alert — to prevent dengue virus

PESHAWAR (APP): The Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is on high alert to prevent the dengue virus in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and various teams have been formed in this connection, Dr Riaz Anwar, Adviser on Health, Welfare and Population, Labor said here Wednesday.

Talking to media men, Dr. Riaz Anwar, Chief Minister Adviser on Health, Welfare and Population, Labor disclosed that most of the cases are being reported in Peshawar, Mardan regarding dengue virus. He said steps have been taken well in time to ensure preventive measures against spreading of Dengue Virus.

Dr. Riaz Anwar Peshawar have reported 22 dengue virus, Mardan 13, Swabi 9, Chitral Lower 7, Bajaur 6, Kohat 4, Nowshera 3, Dera Ismail Khan 2, Khyber 2, Anwar said.

Abbottabad 2, Dir Lower 2, Bitgram 1, Hangu 1, Turghar 1, Mansehra 1, Lakki Marwat 1, Bannu 1.

The dengue situation is being monitored in all the districts of the province including the tribal districts and the Health department teams are taking measures to prevent dengue larvae in every district, Dr. Riaz Anwar said.

According to the reports coming from all the districts of the province, all the treatment of patients in every house with facilities including medical staff, medicines are being provided and IRS dengue spray has also been started in the affected areas, Adviser Health, Welfare and Development, Labor Dr Riaz Anwar said. Dengue affected people are being provided all medical facilities at home as well, Health Adviser Dr. Riaz Anwar said.

Target killings and robberies: Peshawar Police arrests criminal gang

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar Police conducted an operation on Wednesday and apprehended a notorious gang allegedly responsible for a series of violent crimes, including target killings and robberies.

The operation was led by SHO Nasir Farid Khattak of Badhber police station, who has been actively pursuing the gang's activities.

According to SHO Nasir Farid Khattak, the operation

was initiated based on information provided by a 16-year-old student, Muhammad Yousuf, who was reportedly attacked by the gang members while he was on his way to tuition classes on August 1st. During the incident, he was assaulted and shot, resulting in severe injuries.

Further details revealed that Khattak and his team successfully identified the gang's involvement in vio-

lent incidents during targeted raids. Two key suspects, Khadim Hussain and Abrar, were apprehended during the raids. It was Khadim Hussain who had previously fired shots at the student, Muhammad Yousuf.

The police authorities believe that this gang has been operating behind a veil of darkness, engaging in heinous crimes such as robbery, targeted killings, and more.



PESHAWAR: Vendors frying chickens for customers at Qissa Khawani Bazaar.

Crackdown against beggars launched

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration on Wednesday launched a special campaign against professional beggars in the provincial capital and constituted five teams to conduct operations on a daily basis in certain areas.

On the first day of the campaign, hundreds of professional beggars from different places in Peshawar were arrested under the

Anti-Beggary Act and transferred to Darul Kafala, district administration.

The Department of Social Welfare, Child Protection Unit, Rescue, and other organizations participated in the ongoing campaign against the beggars, said the office of the Deputy Commissioner, adding that among those arrested were children, old people and women.

It said that the complete data and records of the criminals arrested during the campaign would also be collected.

The teams of district administration would conduct crackdowns on a daily basis in Hayatabad, Hashangari, Gulbahar, Firdous, Jameel Chowk, University Town, Aman Road and many other prominent places.

AMIA calls for reforms in energy sector, privatization of DISCOs

PESHAWAR (APP): All Pakistan Marble Industries Association (AMIA) has called for massive reforms in the energy sector including the privatization of all distribution companies (DISCOs) and abolition of the single buyer system across the country to promote the wheeling system.

These proposals were flouted by the chairman AMIA, Asghar Khan while addressing a press conference along with office bearers from various marble industrial estates here on Wednesday.

He said that Pakistan has 2300 large marble industrial units and over 400 marble show-rooms

and giving direct and indirect employment to over 0.2 million people, which speaks of its crucial role in the economic development of the country.

He said that consecutive increase in the power tariff has rendered 40 percent to 50 percent marble units closed and if the issue was not addressed then the remaining units will stop operation.

He demanded abolition of taxes from the electricity bills to provide maximum relief to marble and granite industries to save the workers from going unemployed.

The association further demanded review of the agreements with independent power producers (IPPs) and abolition of all those agreements, which are not made in haste and

instead of imported resources give priority to local resources of energy.

He has also called for focusing on the prevention of power pilferages and performance of the distribution companies.

He said that the companies should ensure their timely recoveries and avoid the burden of their incompetence on the honest consumers.

Hot and humid weather expected in most KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Wednesday predicted that mainly hot and humid weather is expected over most districts of the province.

It said that during the last 24 hours hot and humid weather prevailed in most districts of the

province. However, an isolated rain-thunderstorm occurred in Bajaur district.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 37/25, Chitral 34/14, Timergara 34/23, Dir 31/15, Mirkhani 35/17, Kalam

26/07, Drosh 34/18, Saidu Sharif 32/20, Pattan 36/21, Malam Jabba 23/12, Takht Bhai 36/23, Kakul 30/18, Balakot 34/19, Parachinar 30/15, Bannu 34/19, Cherat 30/18, D.I. Khan 37/21.

The highest temperature recorded in the province was 37°C in Dera Ismail Khan.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali addressing people during an Open Court.

City police register 578 cases in 2023

PESHAWAR (APP): The city police registered 578 cases of murder and attempted murder during the last eight months of the current year.

In a report issued here by the police, it was said 371 cases of murder due to property disputes, domestic violence and other crimes were registered and 555 accused were arrested in these cases.

Similarly, 1005 suspects were arrested in cases related to attempted murder.

The district police arrested 5269 accused and suspects in various crackdowns against aerial firing, display of weapons, drug smuggling and selling, and other crimes.

The police recovered 456 AK-47 guns, 45 Kalashnikovs, 543 rifles, 283 shotguns and 5815 pistols from the possession of the arrested accused.

Similarly, 26 hand grenades, Rs 214000 cash and various other weapons were recovered from the arrested accused.

KP government releases much needed funds for UoP

PESHAWAR (APP): The caretaker government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has approved much needed funds amounting to Rs 325 million under the salary head for the University of Peshawar (UoP).

Following the approval, the KP Finance Department has started necessary offi-

cial procedures for the release of funds to the University of Peshawar.

The Vice Chancellor of the university had earlier written an application to the provincial government for the release of funds to overcome the financial issues of the university.

In a notification to the

vice chancellor here the other day, the provincial government has informed that funds have been released to pay the salaries of the university staff for the month of August.

The Finance Department released the funds on the recommendation of the Higher Education

Department.

The notification further said that these funds have been released under the Budget Book for 2023-24.

The university administration said after the release of funds, the university would now be able to manage its financial crisis for the time being.



In brief

Two shot dead over old enmity Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Armed men gunned down two people over old enmity and fled the scene here on Wednesday, police said. The incident took place in Khesghi Bala area of Nowshera where armed men of rival group sprayed bullets at opponents. As a result of firing, two people identified as Farooq s/o Syed Rehman and Abdullah were killed on the spot. The attackers fled the scene after committing dual murder. The bodies were shifted to DHQ hospital Nowshera for post-mortem. A case was registered against the culprits at Nowshera Kalan police station and raids were being conducted for their arrest.

Two fraudsters arrested F.P. Report

KOHAT: The police of Shakardara in Kohat during an operation against anti-social elements on Wednesday here arrested two fraudsters and a drug peddler. Police said the operation was conducted under the supervision of DSP Lachi, Shaukat Hayat and SHO Lachi, Wajid Khan. During action against narcotics dealers, a drug peddler identified as Ajmal, resident of Shakardara was arrested and 3kg of hashish was recovered from his possession. In another action on public complaint, two fraudsters identified as Lanaz Khan and Nemat Khan were arrested and through scientific interrogation, the embezzled amount was recovered from them. The arrested accused were shifted to Sakardara police station for further legal action, police said.

Firing claims two lives

BOLAN (INP): Unidentified gunmen opened fire on tube well killing two people and fled the scene here on Wednesday. Levies sources said that unknown culprits sprayed bullets at a tube well located in Karta area near Machh Bolan. As a result of firing, two people including Waseem Khan and Abdul Malik were killed and assailants fled the scene. The bodies were shifted to Machh hospital through Edhi ambulance and investigation into the incident was kicked off.

Cop martyred in Quetta firing

QUETTA (INP): A cop was martyred in firing of unidentified armed men near Sariahd Mill Colony in Quetta on Wednesday. The cop, Akhtar Hussain was on his way back to home after night duty when unknown gunmen attacked him. As a result of firing, the cop was martyred and assailants fled the scene. The body was shifted to hospital for postmortem and police after registering a case into the incident have started an investigation.

Fathers, two daughters killed

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Three members of a family including father and his two daughters were shot dead over property dispute here on Wednesday, police said. According to the details, the culprits visited residence of the victim family located in Kot Abdul Malik district Sheikhupura for dialogues to resolve a property dispute. However, the accused during discussion got furious over demands and opened fire at host family critically injuring family head Akram, his two daughters Shazia and Uzma. The injured were rushed to hospital where they succumbed to their wounds during treatment.



QUETTA: Activists of civil society burning electricity bills during a protest against hike in power tariff.

Spectrophotometer installed at KKKU

F.P. Report

KARAK: A state-of-the-art ultraviolet-visible spectrophotometer has been installed at the Department of Physics laboratory in Khushal Khan Khattak University (KKKU) Karak. This advanced equipment is poised to enhance the university's research capabilities, particularly in the realm of investigating the optical properties of advanced materials in both liquid and solid forms.

Dr. Abdul Hakim Shah, the Head of the Department of Physics at the Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak emphasized the instrumental role of the UV-Vis Spectrophotometer in furthering the institution's scientific searches. By enabling precise analysis of the interaction between light and matter, this equipment will empower researchers to delve into the intricate characteristics of materials that play a pivotal role in various scientific and technological domains.

Dr. Shah highlighted that acquisition of this cutting-edge instrument represents a substantial step forward



in research infrastructure for the university. He elaborated that the UV-Vis Spectrophotometer will not only benefit the faculty members and students of the Physics Department but will also serve as a valuable resource for interdisciplinary collaborations within the university. He opined for its commercial use for the university researchers in southern parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He went on saying that this is the second UV-Vis Spectrophotometer installation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, following the pioneering initiative at the Physics laboratory of the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Hayatabad office Peshawar.

Dr. Shah expressed his gratitude to the university administration and relevant stakeholders for their support in realizing this endeavor, underscoring the commitment of Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak to fostering a culture of scientific exploration and innovation.

As the academic community eagerly anticipates the opportunities this state-of-the-art equipment brings, the Physics Department envisions a future of advanced research, discoveries, and contributions to the scientific landscape. Dr. Shah informed that UV-Vis Spectrophotometer can conduct four testing modes of liquid form like transmittance, absorbance, energy and reflectance.

RPO Dera for eradication of terrorism

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Newly appointed Regional Police Officer (RPO) Nasir Mehmood Satti has said that eradication of terrorism and promotion of sectarian harmony was among his priorities.

Talking to media persons here at his office, the RPO said the terrorists were not well wishers of the state. He vowed that the scourge of terrorism would be eradicated from the society. The role of police department in war against terror would be made more effective. The RPO said the sectarian harmony would be further promoted with the help of religious leaders.

He said the welfare of the police was also among his priorities and the police officials and officers who earn good reputation for the department would be awarded with prizes. However, he said, the black sheep of the department causing disrespect for the force would be given exemplary punishment.

He said the traffic system in all the districts of the region would be improved. The concrete steps would be taken to stop smuggling in the area. RPO Nasir Mehmood Satti mentioned that the special attention would be paid to improve the policing system in South Waziristan through provision of special trainings to the personnel. Moreover, he said, the number of police stations would be increased in that area keeping in view the crime ratio and population of the specific area.

Police bust drug ring, arrest seven

SARGODHA (INP): Laxiana Police in Sargodha arrested seven drug pushers and recovered 2.3 kilograms of hashish from them on Wednesday.

According to police, the raid was conducted by a team of Laxiana Police led by SHO Malik Aslam. The team raided a house in the Laxiana area and arrested seven suspects, including Murtaza, Akram, and Imran. The police also recovered 2.3 kilograms of hashish from the suspects. The suspects were taken into custody and further investigation is underway.

The raid comes as part of a crackdown against the drug mafia in Sargodha. In recent months, the police have arrested several drug pushers and recovered large quantities of drugs. The police are determined to rid Sargodha of the drug menace. They have appealed to the public to cooperate with the police in their efforts to curb drug trafficking.

The news of the raid was welcomed by the people of Sargodha. They expressed their gratitude to the police for taking action against the drug mafia. They also urged the police to continue their crackdown against drug pushers. The arrest of the seven drug pushers is a major blow to the drug mafia in Sargodha.

Six farmers caught stealing water from canals: An irrigation task force team caught six farmers on the charge of water theft from canals in Sargodha district on Wednesday.

According to media reports, the team conducted raids in various areas of the district, including Chak no 147 NB, Hujjan and adjacent villages, and caught Farooq, Ghulam Muhammad, Sheraz, Muhammad Iqbal, Javed and Ansar and others who were stealing water from canals.

JI plans complete shutter down strike on Sept 2 in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The local chapter of Jamaat-i-Islami on Wednesday announced to observe complete shutter down strike with the support of traders' bodies in parts of the Lower Dir district here on Sept 2.

The announcement was made by JI district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari, former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, former MPA Saeed Gul, and JI district general secretary Hafiz Yaqubur Rehman, president of the Dir Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Mian Noor Alam, president Anjuman Tajiran Timergara Haji Anwarud Din and others while speaking at a news conference at the Ahya ul Uloom Balambat.

They said the government had included 11 different illegal taxes in power bills, while prices of daily use items had gone beyond the purchasing power of common consumers. The JI

and traders' leaders said that complete shutter down strike would be observed in Lower Dir on the call of Sirajul Haq, the JI chief. They said that about 189,000 Employees of power companies utilized free electricity. They said the successive governments had mortgaged the country with the International Monetary Fund by following its strict conditions.

Meanwhile, the Lower Dir jewelers' association staged a protest demonstration against the current inflated power bills. The jewelers closed their outlets on the call of their central leaders.

The Lower Dir jewelers' association president, Ziaullah while addressing the gathering said the current inflation and exorbitant power bills had put them into trouble. He said the jewelers worried about paying their rents and were unable to pay the inflated

power bills.

He said the government should realize the intensity of the situation or the public would have no option but to launch a civil disobedience movement.

Youth arrested: The Chakdara police has arrested a youth identified as Malik Sajid Khan, a resident of Tangi Brangola for uploading derogatory contents against the state institutions here the other day. The youth stated to be a worker of the Pakistan Tahreek Insaf, according to police had been continuously running a campaign on his social media account against the state institutions.

The accused had also pasted the Indian national flag on his facebook page. He was booked under sections 153A, 501, 505 and 120 B crpc. The accused was sent to the lock up and further investigations were started.

Unmasking the escalating challenge of street crimes

Ansharah Khan

I am writing to draw attention to a growing concern that has been plaguing our community/area escalating challenge of street crimes. In recent times, our streets have witnessed a distressing surge in various forms of street crimes, ranging from petty theft and vandalism to more serious offenses such as muggings and assaults. These incidents not only undermine the sense of safety among citizens but also erode the fabric of our community. Families are living in fear, local businesses are suffering, and the overall quality of life is diminishing.

Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses various stakeholders, including law enforcement

agencies, local government, community organizations, and citizens themselves. First and foremost, law enforcement agencies need to increase their presence in areas known for high crime rates. Community policing initiatives, where officers engage with residents on a personal level, can foster trust and cooperation, which are essential for effective crime prevention. A well-rounded strategy would aim to address the root causes of street crimes, offering individuals opportunities to break the cycle of criminal behavior.

Equally important is the involvement of community organizations and residents. Neighborhood watch programs and community outreach efforts can encourage people to actively participate in safeguarding their surroundings. By fostering

a strong sense of unity and shared responsibility, we can create an environment where criminals find it increasingly difficult to thrive.

I urge our fellow citizens to engage in discussions about this issue, attend community meetings, and demand action from our elected representatives. It is only through collaborative efforts that we can unmask the challenge of street crimes and pave the way for a safer future.

In conclusion, the time to act is now. Let us join hands and commit ourselves to tackling the menace of street crimes head-on. Our community's well-being and prosperity depend on our ability to come together and make a difference. Together, we can reclaim our streets and ensure that they remain safe havens for everyone.



QUETTA: Employees of Metropolitan Corporation holding a protest in favour of their demands.

DHQ hospital Landi Kotal fails to serves tribesmen

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: In spite of the fact that the District Headquarters (DHQ) hospital, Landi Kotal has been upgraded to category (A) nevertheless patients are still referred to Peshawar hospitals for treatment. Local said that the hospital had been established and developed aimed to facilitate patients of Khyber and across the border locally but ironically minor cases were yet referred to Peshawar health centers that put a question mark at the efficiency of the hospital.

Aman Ali Shinwari, a resident of Shiekmal Khel said that last week his paternal aunt had slapped and she got minor back, leg and lung injuries. When she was taken to DHQ hospital for necessary treatment, the on-duty doctors in casualty only administered pain killer injections and asked the relatives of the patient to shift her to Peshawar hospital for curing.

If non-serious cases were also referred to Peshawar for healing than what was the use of category (A) status, granted to

DHQ hospital he added and said hundreds of specialists' doctors, nursing staff and other health staff had appointed to facilitate the ailing segments of the tribal society but to in avail. Claims of the Medical Superintendent (MS) of the hospital to enhance efficiency of the health center were proved just a hollow slogan, he opined.

According to the DHQ, hospital causality record, a total of 79258 patients with various health complications visited the emergency of the health center since July 2022 till June 2023. Media coordinator Rescue 1122, Khyber Maqsood Alam while sharing details said that total referral cases recorded from DHQ hospital, Landi Kotal to Peshawar were 1758 in the year 2022. He maintained that the department so far in 2023 had shifted 984 patients to the downtown health centers for treatment.

On the condition of anonymity, the on duty doctor in the casualty said that neither the hospital administration, local doctors nor clerical staff were interested in improving its competence. He main-

tained that the referral cases to Peshawar hospitals were examined by the under training (house job) doctors on the arrival while in DHQ, Landi Kotal the patients were treated by trained and specialist doctors however deficiency of some needed facilities like CT scan, culture and serum electrolytes tests, uninterrupted supply of electricity, nonfunctional wards etc. suffered efficiency of the hospital.

When MS DHQ, hospital Landi Kotal Dr Jamshed Sherani was asked for his version on the matter he said that since his joining period referral cases had decreased and a visible change had been noted in the efficiency of the health center.

Head inquires, a person with heart problems and other various serious patients including gynecological complicated cases are referred to downtown health center for most caring treatment, he added. Due to lack of facilities like CT scan, surgical and medical Intensive Care Units (ICUs), centralized oxygen plant to facilitate the severe condition of patients.

Body argued traders to reduce profit margin

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: District Price Review Committee has asked the traders to reduce profit margin and provide maximum relief to inflation hit people. The committee met here at the office of local deputy commissioner Abdul Hadi with assistant commissioner Yasir Nazir in the chair.

AC Betanni subdivision Najam Dawar, additional AC Sultan Nooruddin Ahmer, district food controller Aman Khan, tehsil municipal food safety and Halal food authority officers and representatives of traders and consumers' bodies were in attendance.

The committee discussed prices of daily use commodities with detail and took important decisions with regard to effective market checking, availability of quality food items

in bazaars, implementation of official rate list and provision of relief to consumers.

Traders' representatives pleaded to enhance prices of certain commodities including rice, pulses and other food items on the basis of high transportation cost. But other members turned down their request being unjustified and asked them to reduce the profit margin.

In this difficult time when people are confronting back-breaking inflation the business community should express solidarity and sympathies with them by decreasing prices of essential commodities on their own", Mr Yasir said. He welcomed the proposals presented by the traders' leaders and said that in view of the recent inflation the price review committee could not burden the citi-

zens especially consumers with additional hike in rates.

After detailed deliberations the committee maintained the previous rates of many commodities and the chair directed the food authorities to release the new price list forthwith and ensure its display at a prominent place in all shops and business outlets. The traders assured the assistant commissioner that they would abide by the new price list.

The assistant commissioner said that the district administration would play its role to eliminate the difficulties the traders were facing in bringing/importing food items from other areas. He said that the price magistrates would ensure availability and sale of quality food items on control rates in bazaars and markets.



Russian tourism in Crimea down, but many still shrug off risks

YALTA, Crimea (Reuters): In years past, Siberian Viktor Motorin could hop on a plane and arrive in Crimea just four hours later to relax at his holiday apartment. Now he must fly first to Moscow and then spend a day and a half on the train. The war in Ukraine, now 18 months old, is making it harder for many Russians to reach their favourite summer haunts in the Black Sea region of Crimea, which Moscow seized and annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

And safety is a factor for some, especially after two major Ukrainian attacks since last October on the 19 km (12 mile) Crimean Bridge that links Russia by road and rail to the peninsula. But after weighing up such concerns, Motorin, from the city of Khanty-Mansiysk in western Siberia, said he decided that making his annual trip was still a risk well worth taking. "We calculated that it was reasonably safe, especially when my colleagues had already come here in June, early July. They said it was all calm here with no problems on the Crimea Bridge. The goods, the prices, everything is like before," he said.

Russians have been drawn to the lush scenery and rocky coastline of Crimea since tsarist times, but now the choice of where to go on holiday is complicated by several factors relating to the war. Sanctions have severed flights to the West, and the weakness of Russia's rouble currency has raised the cost of trips to other popular destinations, such as Turkey and Thailand. Commercial airspace over Crimea has been closed since Russia launched what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine in February 2022, meaning visitors must arrive either by car or rail. Arduous journeys are often compounded by long queues at the bridge. "We came by train: it took two days and four hours - very long this year because we were afraid to take the car. It's the fifth year we've come here on holiday," said Olga Morskova from



Rybinsk, north of Moscow, some 1,370 km (850 miles) from Crimea.

Alexei Volkov, president of the National Union of Hospitality Industries, said in an interview that tourist numbers in Crimea were expected to be down 20-30% this year to between 6 and 6.5 million people. "What's special about this year is the number of difficulties caused by the special military operation and new challenges for the hospitality industry and local residents when (emergency) situations have happened more often," he said. "It is the most difficult season for the past nine years that we have been a part of Russia," he added, referring to the 2014 annexation which is regarded as illegal by most countries and which Ukraine has vowed to reverse. Other Russian Black Sea resorts, at less risk of attacks, have seen increased demand. Volkov said hotel occupancy in Sochi was at 100%, and even the port city of Novorossiysk had seen a 6% uptick in visitors.

Fewer visitors to Crimea have meant more for Kaliningrad on the Baltic Sea and Dagestan in Russia's north Caucasus region, he said. For one Russian couple, the choice of Crimea as a holiday destination proved fatal. The man and woman

were both killed, and their 14-year-old daughter was wounded, when their car was caught in an explosion when they crossed the bridge on July 17, travelling at night to avoid traffic jams. The head of Ukraine's SBU security service, Vasyl Maliuk, later claimed responsibility for the attack, and a previous one that caused severe damage to the bridge last October.

Last week Russia's defence ministry said its forces had destroyed 42 Ukraine-launched drones over Crimea in a single day. Its Russian-appointed governor said two more were downed. Yet despite the proximity of the war, some Russians interviewed by Reuters were keen to play down the dangers, or dismiss them entirely. "No, absolutely no fears. We went without thinking twice, not afraid of anything; everything is good," said Alexander Semashko from Stavropol in southern Russia. "The goal of our trip is, of course, to have a rest, and support Russian tour operators, hoteliers, and Russian tourism, no doubt." Sergei Lenkov, from Volgoda north of Moscow, said he had confidence in Russia's air defence systems. "There are no risks really. The sky is protected. So there isn't anything to get upset about," he said.

183 killed in Ethiopia's Amhara clashes: UN

TIGRAY (AFP): At least 183 people have been killed since July in clashes in Ethiopia's Amhara region, the United Nations said as it appealed for the killings, violence and rights abuses to end.

Tension in the northern region ratcheted up this year after the end of a devastating war in the neighbouring region of Tigray that also drew in fighters from Amhara.

"We are very concerned by the deteriorating human rights situation in some regions of Ethiopia," UN Human Rights Office spokeswoman Marta Hurtado told reporters in Geneva. "In Amhara region, following a flare-up in clashes between the Ethiopian military and the regional Fano militia, and the declaration of a state of emergency on August 4, the situation worsened considerably. "At least 183 people have been killed in clashes since July, according to information gathered by the UN Human Rights Office."

Tension in the northern region ratcheted up this year after the end of a devastating war in neighbouring Tigray that also drew in fighters from Amhara. In April the federal government announced it was dismantling regional forces across the country. The move triggered protests by Amhara nationalists who said it would weaken their region.

Clashes erupted in early July between the national army and local fighters known as Fano, prompting the authorities in Addis Ababa on August 4 to declare a six-month state of emergency. The status gives the authorities broad powers to arrest suspects without a court order, impose curfews and ban public gatherings, Hurtado said. "We have received reports that more than 1,000 people have been arrested across Ethiopia under this law. Many of those detained were reported to be young people of Amhara ethnic origin suspected of being Fano supporters," she said.

"Since early August, mass house-to-house searches have reportedly been taking place. "We call on the authorities to stop mass arrests, ensure that any deprivation of liberty is judicially reviewed, and release those arbitrarily detained." She added: "We call on all actors to stop killings, other violations and abuses."

Thaksin says clemency request 'up to him'

BANGKOK (Reuters): The daughter of Thailand's jailed former premier Thaksin Shinawatra said any move to seek a royal pardon for her father would be entirely "up to him" and such a process would take time. In her first comments on the topic since her father's dramatic return last week from 15 years of self-exile, Paetongtarn Shinawatra said Thaksin, who must serve eight years for abuse of power and conflicts of interest, would be the one to pursue the matter himself.

"Drafting (a pardon request) takes time and it is up to him to choose the time and process," Paetongtarn told reporters. "He is doing it on his own, I have not seen it," Paetongtarn said of a pardon, adding it was at his discretion. Paetongtarn, a senior member of the Pheu Thai Party leading the incoming government, was speaking a day after visiting her father in hospital and said she concerned about his heart.

Thaksin, 74, was transferred from prison to a Bangkok police hospital last week just a few hours into his first night in jail, complaining of chest pains and high blood pressure. His critics have dismissed his hospitalisation as a stunt and demanded proof of his illness. "Doctors are monitoring everything," Paetongtarn said, adding that he was stressed and fatigued. The long-awaited return of Thaksin coincided with ally Srettha Thavisin being elected prime minister in a parliamentary vote that same day. Srettha is in the process of forming a cabinet for the government led by Pheu Thai, the political vehicle of the Shinawatra family.

US sees wake-up call as BRICS bloc expands

WASHINGTON (AFP): The United States is racing to improve its messaging to the developing world as the BRICS group grows, although few in Washington view an immediate threat from the Chinese-backed club. The BRICS -- Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa -- agreed at a summit last week to add six more members, in what Chinese President Xi Jinping billed as a historic moment among large emerging economies contesting the Western-led order.

As the BRICS leaders met in Johannesburg, President Joe Biden's administration renewed promises to step up funding for the developing world through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, vowed to fight to reform the Washington-based lenders at an upcoming summit in New Delhi of the Group of 20 -- boosting the roles both of the US-backed organization, which brings together both rich and poor nations, and of India, a key member of both clubs. The United States has also been highlighting Russia's withdrawal from a UN-backed deal to allow grain exports from Ukraine to the developing world, where some countries have questioned the Western priority of sending billions of dollars in weapons to Kyiv.

Publicly, Washington played down the BRICS expansion, saying only that countries can choose their own partners. Sullivan, noting the wide policy differences among the countries, earlier told reporters, "We are not looking at the BRICS as evolving into some kind of geopolitical rival to the United States or anyone else." But experts said the BRICS expansion at least showed demand for a new

way to address unmet needs, on the economic if not security front. Emerging nations are "looking for alternatives, not replacements" to the US-led order, said Sarang Shidore, director of the Global South program at the Quincy Institute, which advocates a less military-focused US foreign policy.

"It's a message to the United States that these gaps are hurting and our countries are not just complaining about them or carping from the sidelines, but actually taking action to try and fill these gaps," he said. A BRICS summit statement pointed to the breakdown of the World Trade Organization's dispute settlement system, where Washington since Donald Trump's presidency has blocked appointments as it alleges unfair treatment. Biden has ramped up climate action at home but, faced with opposition from Trump's Republican Party, the United States -- the largest historical carbon emitter and second currently to China -- is unlikely to come close to the president's promises of more than \$11 billion a year by 2024 to help developing countries hardest hit by climate change.

"I think the US is starting to take it seriously," Shidore said of developing countries' concern. "But those are statements -- is there money attached to it?" For Washington, the most concerning addition to the BRICS is Iran, which has hailed membership as a way to break out of US-driven isolation over the clerical state's contested nuclear work and clampdown on protesters. But the new members do not see eye to eye. Also joining are three Arab countries with historically rocky ties with Iran -- Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Tensions also divided the original BRICS. China has a difficult relationship with India, which has been warming to the United States while insisting on "strategic autonomy."

While the BRICS statement backed reform of the UN Security Council, a major priority for India and Brazil, few expect veto-wielding China and Russia to dilute their power willingly. Henry Tugendhat, an economist at the US Institute of Peace, said that China in promoting the expansion had inadvertently made the BRICS even less cohesive -- more akin to the G20 than the Group of Seven, the club of major industrial democracies that largely share principles. "What's striking is that they there are many issues in which they do not align," he said of the G20. Conspicuously absent from the BRICS expansion was any Southeast Asian country -- despite Indonesia's leadership in the Cold War-era Non-Aligned Movement -- at a time that China has been increasingly assertive on maritime disputes.

Colleen Cottle, a former CIA analyst now at the Atlantic Council, said that for China, BRICS expansion was "more about the rhetoric" of showing that developing countries were rallying to its side, rather than concrete plans to work together. Still, she said, the BRICS expansion showed the demand for change. The United States, she said, needs a more effective strategy than its oft-stated insistence on working with "like-minded countries" -- but also is unlikely to find success just replicating China's approach of raw infrastructure spending. "You need to have the whole package -- the articulated long-term vision as well as the concrete funds to back it up," she said.

Algeria seeks six-month transition for Niger

NAIROBI (AFP): Algeria's foreign minister proposed a six-month transitional plan for neighbouring Niger, whose coup leader seeks a far longer timeline back to democracy. Ahmed Attaf gave his suggested framework after a tour last week to three of Niger's neighbouring countries in the West African bloc ECOWAS, which has threatened to send a military force if Niger's new military regime fails to restore democracy.

Attaf reiterated Algeria's rejection of military intervention in Niger and said Algiers would not allow its airspace to be used to that end. He proposed a half-year transitional phase to allow the neighbouring country to restore "the constitutional and democratic order". In contrast, Niger's coup leader General Abdourahmane Tiani "has called for a transitional period that lasts for three years at most", Attaf said in a televised press conference.

"But in our view the (transition) process can be

completed in six months" so the coup does not become a "fait accompli", he continued. The transitional plan would aim to "formulate political arrangements with the acceptance of all parties in Niger without excluding any party" within the half-year period, the foreign minister of Africa's largest country said. The process would be overseen by a "civilian power led by a consensus figure", he continued, without specifying who that might be. Attaf's tour last week took him to Nigeria, Benin and Ghana, where he held talks against the backdrop of Algeria's repeated calls to prevent a military intervention in Niger.

The West African bloc has threatened to use force as a last resort to reinstate Niger's elected president, Mohamed Bazoum, who was detained by his guards on July 26. Attaf's tour coincided with a visit by foreign ministry secretary general Lounes Magramane to Niger,

where he met members of the military-appointed government including the prime minister, Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine. Attaf reiterated that a military solution would have "catastrophic consequences" for Niger.

He said neither Magramane nor Algiers' envoy in Niamey had met with Bazoum, though he did not indicate whether the ousted leader formed part of his country's vision for Niger's transition. Asked whether Algeria would allow its airspace to be used for military intervention, he said: "We reject the military solution so how can we allow for our airspace to be used for a military operation?" Algeria shares a 1,000-kilometre (620-mile) southern land border with Niger.

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune previously said a military solution would be "a direct threat" to his country. He stressed "there will be no solution without us (Algeria). We are the first people affected".

Prigozhin buried quietly in hometown of St Petersburg

ST PETERSBURG, Russia (Reuters): Overbearing in life but discreet in death, Russian mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin was buried quietly in a leafy cemetery on the outskirts of St Petersburg, six days after he was killed in an unexplained plane crash. The funeral took place away from the glare of the media and in stark contrast to the brazen, self-publicising style with which Prigozhin had fanned his reputation, in Russia and far beyond, for ruthlessness and ambition.

"The farewell to Yevgeny Viktorovich took place in a closed format. Those who wish to say goodbye may visit Porokhovskoye cemetery," his press service said in a short post on Telegram. Prigozhin, two top lieutenants of his Wagner group and four bodyguards were among 10 people who died when his Embraer Legacy 600 private jet crashed north of Moscow on Aug. 23. He died two months to the day after staging a brief mutiny against the defence establishment that posed the biggest challenge to President Vladimir Putin's rule since he rose to power in 1999.

Reuters photos and video showed Prigozhin's grave strewn with flowers in the wooded cemetery, with a strong presence nearby of police officers and members of the Rosgvardiya national guard. Independent news outlet Agentstvo quoted a cemetery employee as saying only 20 to 30 friends and family had attended the ceremony and that it lasted just 40 minutes. In Washington, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre gave her strongest statement yet about the possibility that Russian President Vladimir Putin directed the killing of Prigozhin.

"We all know that the Kremlin has a long history of killing opponents," she said. "It's very clear what happened here." The secrecy surrounding the funeral meant it could not be turned into a large-scale public show of support for Prigozhin, a brutal figure who was nevertheless admired by some in Russia for throwing his fighters into the fiercest battles of the war in Ukraine and speaking openly about the shortcomings of the Russian military and its leadership. In recent days

admirers had heaped flowers on makeshift shrines to Prigozhin in Moscow, St Petersburg and elsewhere. The Kremlin has rejected as an "absolute lie" the suggestion that Putin ordered his death in revenge for the June mutiny. It said that the president would not attend the funeral.

After months of insulting Putin's top brass with a variety of crude expletives and prison slang over their perceived failure to fight the Ukraine war properly, Prigozhin took control of the southern city of Rostov in late June. His fighters shot down a number of Russian aircraft, killing their pilots, and advanced towards Moscow before turning back 200 km (125 miles) from the capital. Putin initially cast Prigozhin as a traitor whose mutiny could have tipped Russia into civil war, though he later did a deal with him to defuse the crisis. The day after the crash, Putin sent his condolences to the families of those killed and said he had known Prigozhin for a very long time, since the chaotic years of the early 1990s. "He was a man with a difficult fate, and he made serious mistakes in life," Putin

said, while describing him as a talented businessman. Before the mutiny, Prigozhin had quipped that his nickname should have been "Putin's butcher" rather than "Putin's chef" - a moniker acquired after his catering company won Kremlin contracts. He always professed loyalty to Putin, though he said his defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, was so incompetent he should be executed for his treachery.

After Prigozhin's death, Putin ordered Wagner fighters to sign an oath of allegiance to the Russian state - a step that Prigozhin had opposed due to his anger at the defence ministry that he said risked losing the Ukraine war. Investigators said that genetic tests had confirmed the identities of all 10 people killed in the crash, who also included two pilots and a flight attendant. Earlier, Valery Chekalov, the head of Wagner logistics, was buried at another St Petersburg cemetery. His family was joined by dozens of people, some of whom Reuters identified as Wagner mercenaries and employees from Prigozhin's business empire.

Japan's century of efforts to tame earthquakes

TOKYO (AFP): Takashi Hosoda was in a Tokyo skyscraper when the 9.0 magnitude quake struck on March 11, 2011, but the trained architect was "not particularly worried" as modern Japanese buildings are designed to protect their occupants. A century after Tokyo was destroyed in the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, the Japanese capital today bears no resemblance to the city levelled by that 7.9 tremor, which killed 105,000 people.

The low-rise, largely wooden city that was destroyed a second time by US firebombing during World War II has been replaced by a soaring megalopolis where reinforced concrete is king. The September 1, 1923, disaster marked "the dawn of seismic design of structures in Japan", said Yoshiaki Nakano, an earthquake engineering expert from the National Research Institute for Earth Sciences and Disaster Resilience (NIED). The following year Japan introduced its first building code for earthquake-resistant construction. These standards have been constantly expanded since then, drawing on lessons from other major tremors in the archipelago, which accounts for around 10 percent of the world's earthquakes.

Japan's seismic building code is one of the most stringent in the world, Nakano told AFP. "Basically, the Japanese building requires a relatively higher strength" than elsewhere, he said, stressing the importance of meticulous monitoring of compliance. "The system to supervise and check the design and the construction on-site is a very key factor to ensure the quality of the structure, the performance of the building during earthquakes," he said. The 2011 earthquake triggered a deadly tsunami along the north-east coast but in Tokyo the damage was limited: high-rise towers oscillated alarmingly for several minutes but did not topple.

Early basic reinforced structures have been adapted with more sophisticated seismic safety measures found in modern towers. Massive soft rubber cushions are installed under the foundations to isolate them from ground vibrations; shock absorbers are distributed throughout the floors; and some even have pendulums weighing several hundred tonnes installed at the top to counteract the movement of the building during a quake. Built in 2014 and rising 247 metres (810 feet) above the city, the Toranomon Hills Mori Tower is fitted with such

seismic anti-vibration systems, including 516 oil dampers, each comprising a thick cylinder 1.7 metres long. "It stretches and shrinks repeatedly in case of an earthquake. It then starts getting warm, which means the energy of the quake transforms into heat and gets released," Kai Toyama, a structural engineering official at real estate giant Mori Building, told AFP.

"As a result, the tremor of the whole building can be controlled." After the Kobe earthquake in 1995 left more than 6,000 dead, emphasis was also placed on strengthening earthquake resistance standards for new wooden houses and upgrading older buildings dating from before the last major overhaul of the building code in 1981. The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 was also "a wake-up call to Japan", Nakano noted. "Not only the engineers but also for people." Since 1960, Japan has marked September 1 as national Disaster Prevention Day. Every year on that day, countless schoolchildren, employees and civil servants -- including the entire government -- carry out simulation exercises in preparation for a major earthquake. In Japan, many people stock emergency supplies at home, as do businesses and local governments. As of April 1, 2023,

local authorities in Tokyo have stockpiled 9.5 million instant meals (comprising rice, noodles and biscuits) in about 400 warehouses.

These precautionary measures were intensified after the 2011 earthquake, which caused huge traffic jams in Tokyo and the suspension of public transport, preventing millions of people from returning home, said Hosoda, now head of disaster management at Mori Building. Despite all these efforts, some experts say Tokyo remains vulnerable to earthquakes, and even more to other natural disasters such as floods. The eastern districts of the capital are built on unstable and flood-prone soils, and there are still concentrations of old wooden dwellings attached to each other. Post-war rebuilding of Tokyo was "anarchic" and "prioritised economic development and not the construction of a resilient city", seismologist Masayuki Takemura lamented during a recent press conference. He also pointed to an "excessive concentration of skyscrapers" and the construction of residential areas on artificial islands, increasing their risk of isolation in the event of a natural disaster. And experts say there is a 70 percent chance of a major earthquake hitting Tokyo within the next 30 years.

NEW YORK (Reuters): A US judge threw out an obstruction charge but mostly upheld the conviction of a former Central Intelligence Agency software engineer for carrying out the largest theft of classified information in the agency's history. Joshua Schulte, 34, was convicted in July 2022 on four counts each of espionage and computer hacking and one count of lying to FBI agents, after giving classified materials to WikiLeaks in the so-called Vault 7 leak.

WikiLeaks in March 2017 began publishing the materials, which concerned how the CIA surveilled foreign governments, alleged terrorists and others by compromising their electronics and computer networks. Following the conviction, US Attorney Damian Williams in Manhattan called the theft "one of the most brazen and damaging

acts of espionage in American history." In a 14-page decision, US District Judge Jesse Furman in Manhattan found "more than sufficient" evidence to support Schulte's espionage and hacking convictions.

But he said Schulte's alleged lies to the FBI agents did not support the obstruction charge. The judge found "no meaningful distinction" between Schulte's case and a 1995 Supreme Court decision, US v. Aguilar, reaching the same conclusion. "At best," Furman wrote, "the government proved that Schulte, knowing of the existence of a federal grand jury investigation, lied to federal investigators regarding issues pertinent to the grand jury's investigation." Under Aguilar, that does not suffice. Schulte represented himself at trial and in seeking to overturn his conviction. An earlier trial

ended in a mistrial when jurors deadlocked.

Prosecutors have said Schulte was motivated to leak materials out of spite over how he thought the CIA treated him prior to his November 2016 resignation. Schulte is being jailed at Brooklyn's Metropolitan Detention Center. He faces a second trial beginning on Sept. 11 for allegedly receiving more than 10,000 images and videos of child pornography. Prosecutors said they found the material in Schulte's Manhattan apartment, in an encrypted container beneath three layers of password protection, during the CIA leaks probe. A lawyer representing Schulte in that case did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Williams' office declined to comment.

The case is US v. Schulte, US District Court, Southern District of New York, No. 17-cr-00548.

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

*USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Afghanistan, at socio-economic crossroads

A high-level Afghan delegation led by Director General, Bakht-ul-Rahman Sharafat has recently paid a visit to the neighbouring Islamic Republic of Iran to discuss the scope of bilateral cooperation in the Railway and mass transit sector. Both nations have recently completed test runs of the newly constructed 225 KM Khaf-Herat cross-border railway track between their nations and are now preparing to use that track for large-scale trade and tourism.

The two neighbours face similar challenges, and shared fate, along with identical geographical and trade issues, coinciding prospects to survive and thrive in a somehow contained and isolated environment amid sanctions and coercion from powerful Western lobbies and its mouthpieces. Afghanistan and Iran have recently completed their first-ever cross-border Railway track that links Iran's border city of Khaf and the Afghan provincial capital Herat. The magnificent project had been funded by the government of Iran, which is now ready to reap its fruit. Afghanistan and Iran are vigorously working to bypass diplomatic, travel and economic sanctions imposed by the United States and allies, while Tehran-Kabul's strategy of regional connectivity and cooperation is rapidly galloping in the right direction despite multiple challenges and odds.

The establishment of transport links and expansion of cooperation among their nations and with the rest of the regional states is the key element of Iran-Afghanistan's strategy to bolster their economy and validate their importance at the international level in the wake of current isolation and estrangement with the West. Afghanistan and Iran are pursuing a comprehensive plan to extend these rail-road links to CARs through Uzbekistan as well as toward China in the southeast to counterbalance the sanctimonious policies of the Western bloc against Kabul and Tehran.

Currently, Afghanistan is the second largest trade partner of the People's Republic of China after Pakistan, and both nations are jointly working on multiple projects along with a westward extension of China Pakistan Economic Corridor into Afghanistan. Chinese companies had expressed their willingness to invest in Afghanistan's cell phone, car manufacturing and communication sectors. On the other hand, a high-level Uzbek delegation has recently visited Afghanistan and multiple MoUs have been inked between Tashkent and Kabul to boost their transit trade, investment and bilateral cooperation in multifaceted domains including science and technology, oil, energy and food grains.

Although the Afghan nation sits on landlocked soil, yet it lies at an important geographical choke point at the junction of South, Central and Western Asia that opens up tremendous prospects for regional cooperation and growth for the Afghan nation. Despite decades-long conflict and turmoil, all neighbouring states had been working hard over the past decades to bring calm to the crises that hit Afghanistan so their long-term development projects such as CASA-1000, TAPI, CPEC, Pak-Afghan-Uzbekistan Railway line and many more could be materialized and the entire region could benefit from those collective endeavours. Like several other nations, Pakistan also has great stakes in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. Islamabad is the largest trade partner of Kabul and a majority of Afghanistan's foreign trade routes are through Pakistani seaports in Karachi and Gwadar. In the current scenario, the three brotherly countries Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan have interdependent problems, similar fates and a shared destiny. If one goes westward the diamonds of this bead increase to CARs nations on one hand and toward Iraq, Turkey and MENA nations on the other. Nature has gifted unbelievable untapped human and mineral resources to Muslim Countries that await a dedicated and sincere leadership who owes the pain of the people and transforms the kismat of the entire Muslim Ummah in this universe.

Electricity bills dilemma

THE crisis of energy price hikes and overwhelming electricity bills are continuing across the nation. All Pakistan Traders Association announced a countrywide demonstration whereas Business community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has set a three-day deadline for the government to withdraw the exorbitant increase in electricity tariff and warned to go for every extent against non-acceptance of demands. The economic situation has suddenly become so dire that household incomes became insufficient for the Middle class and lower middle class to fill its highly essential needs. Awfully, doctors' visits and quality education became status symbols for the poor during this time of economic turmoil. Economy is melting unrestrictedly as the rupee is sharply losing the ground against foreign currencies including the dollar, which has been traded for 330 rupees in the open market.

During the recent meeting, the power Division suggested the government recover August's electricity bills from consumers in three equal installments, whereas the caretaker administration linked the solution with approval from the IMF. Meanwhile, the Bureaucrats sitting in power Division advised the cabinet for taking loans from commercial banks to pay dues to Power Producing Companies. Amid such a high-level economic crisis and public outrage, the International Monetary Fund did not confirm its cooperation with the South Asian economy and borrowed time to weigh its options.

Unfortunately, the level of loyalty of the Pakistani leaders and bureaucrats to their public was so high that they chose two options after a daylong deliberation over the issue. First, the consumers were given a big concession to either pay the bill as a whole in one go or in part in equal three installments along with their next monthly bills and suffer the same pain and humiliation for the rest of the year. Secondly, out of love for the nation, rulers asked for relief from the global lender without lamenting their predecessors for bad governance and lending any sacrifice of their own luxuries, protocol and emoluments. That's why Pakistan covered miles toward degradation and ignominy instead of grasping progress and glory.

Important Notice

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There is no ‘military coup’ in Israel, just civilians defending their democracy

Yossi Mekelberg

DEFLECTION is the main forte of the current government in Israel led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. For a year and half, while they were on the opposition benches, its current members constantly blamed the former coalition government led by Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid for anything and everything, even if the reality of the situation pointed the finger of blame in exactly the opposite direction.

The then government was blamed for every terrorist attack, for Iran's adventurism, whether conventional or nuclear, for the growing cost-of-living crisis, and even for financing Hamas. For the people making the accusations, it was a case of the more outlandish, the better as they constantly looked for ways to exploit their opponents' weaknesses, including harassing and, allegedly, bribing members of the Knesset to cross the floor and join the opposition.

Eventually, the government collapsed and the process culminated in the election last November, as a result of which the most right-wing and chaotic government in Israel's history was formed. Since the sixth Netanyahu government took office in late December, there is not a single aspect of its work in which improvement can be reported. Instead, the country is in complete turmoil. The security situation in the West Bank is spiraling out of control. There is a record number of homicides among the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Hezbollah is becoming bolder in its provocations along the border between Israel and Lebanon. Government corruption is becoming the rule and not the exception. The weekly demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of Israelis against the government's judicial coup continue. And more Israelis than ever are indicating that they want to leave the country.

Netanyahu and his loyal, misguided lieutenants respond to all of this by lying, issuing denials and continuing to blame their political opponents. One of the most interesting, not to say disturbing and concerning, aspects of this confrontation is the irresponsible attacks by members of the coalition, including sen-

ior cabinet members, on the security forces, including its most senior officers, and on those reservists who have stated they will refuse to volunteer for service until the government's assault on the democratic foundations of the state is halted. Some of the venomous attacks on the reservists, many of them posted on social media, range from the ridiculous to the libelous, including accusations of a military coup instigated by the "deep state" and supposedly financed by former Prime Minister Ehud Barak.

Some ministers and coalition members of the

with a government that is attacking the country's judiciary. Therefore they are questioning why they should devote their time, and potentially risk their lives, to suppress the rights of others by doing the dirty work of a government whose intentions and judgments they distrust, and by doing such work risk the possibility of appearing before an international tribunal. Those who have withdrawn their generous readiness to volunteer, to be away from home and from their families and to put their lives on the line for their country, argue, and rightly so, that they signed up to serve a democracy,

committed by Israel's occupation forces, and protected Israeli soldiers from being indicted abroad. For decades, it has allowed two very different systems of justice to exist for those on each side of the Green Line, and has put hardly a hurdle in the way of the establishment of an apartheid regime in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

Yet those in the coalition who represent settlers have been relentlessly attacking the military and the judiciary, accusing them of being soft on terrorism, or hurling at them the greatest insult they can find in their very limited vocabulary - that of being "lefties." This is rich, coming as it does from people who have senior representatives in government who do not exactly have distinguished records of serving in the military. Itamar Ben-Gvir, who ironically is now the minister of national security, was barred from compulsory service in the IDF because of far-right activism in his youth, including with the Kahanist terrorist organization Kach, and has convictions for supporting terrorism and racism.

Then there is his fellow racist, Bezalel Smotrich, a defense minister in addition to his incompetent attempts to serve as finance minister. Smotrich, who this year called for the Palestinian village of Hawara to be wiped out, deferred his enlistment in the military to study at a yeshiva, before serving a short spell in the IDF in his 20s, and has never been as a reservist. These are hardly credentials that confer any right to criticize, in the vilest of terms, those who have spent most of their lives in the service of their country's security forces.

In truth, diatribes such as the one delivered by Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi, a member of the Likud party, who said that protesting pilots can "go to hell," represent a panicked response from a bunch of ministers, and others, who are out of their depth in the face of popular resistance and an exponential rise in violence both inside Israel and in the West Bank. All they are capable of is blowing their tops in frustration. If they truly care about Israel's security, they should do the right thing and halt their harmful antidemocratic legislation, and do so immediately.

It is perhaps worth reminding the coalition that the verb “to volunteer” denotes an agreement to undertake a task of one’s own free will, and the fact that the reservists are not obliged, contractually or by law, to undertake any tasks. We are in a situation where the values of these volunteers no longer align with a government that is attacking the country's judiciary.

Knesset seem to be forgetting that they are the ones currently in power and so whatever is going wrong is happening under their watch. They need to own that instead of behaving as if they have just read "QAnon For Beginners." Many of the reservists they are criticizing are members of elite units of pilots, special forces, cybersecurity specialists, naval officers and other key parts of the military. The reckless and wild accusations and denunciations targeting them, including the allegation that their refusal to volunteer is a "military coup," are laughable but also reveal the authoritarian tendencies of the current government. It is perhaps worth reminding the coalition that the verb "to volunteer" denotes an agreement to undertake a task of one's own free will, and the fact that the reservists are not obliged, contractually or by law, to undertake any tasks.

We are in a situation where the values of these volunteers no longer align not a government that is ravaging the very democratic arrangements that have prevailed for decades, and which is embracing corruption by undermining the independence of the judiciary. After all, reservists are civilians who go above and beyond their obligations in terms of military service, and do not put on their uniforms until called up. The term "military coup" is therefore just another attempt to smear these defenders of the democratic system.

Such insults are even more despicable coming from a government that is stuffed with draft dodgers and others who, with their ultraright ideology and support of terrorism, are considered by Shin Bet, Israel's security service, too dangerous to be mobilized by the Israel Defense Forces. As much as defending the Supreme Court is the prodemocracy movement's top priority, and rightly so, that court is an institution that has whitewashed many of the human rights abuses

the possession of nuclear weapons is a fallacy. Kazakhstan once had the fourth-largest nuclear arsenal in the world. But my country voluntarily relinquished these weapons after gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Despite being a young sovereign nation, the lack of nuclear weapons did not threaten our security and stable development. Quite the contrary. Through its multi-vector foreign policy, Kazakhstan has developed good relations with all its neighbours and beyond.

Kazakhstan's case is proof that true security can be achieved through the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Our path forward is clear. We must advocate for the universal ratification of the CTBT, leaving no room for ambiguity regarding the end of nuclear testing. This

Karipbek Kuyukov

will require not only political will but also a collective commitment to securing a safer world for generations to come. The pursuit of disarmament must be a shared endeavour that transcends borders, ideologies and differences. All nuclear-armed states must demonstrate their commitment to disarmament through substantial reductions in their arsenals. Nuclear disarmament is not a distant dream; it is a tangible goal within our reach. The success of initiatives like the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), demonstrates the power of global unity. The number of nuclear weapons has declined from around 65,000 in the mid-1980s to around 12,500 tod-

BRICS expansion: A warning to US

Ahmadi Ali

LAST week, the bloc of nations known as the BRICS took the historic step of inviting six new countries for membership. The grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa will be joined by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, Argentina and Egypt as part of an expanded collective.

But these six new entrants are among dozens of countries that have expressed interest in joining the BRICS. Further expansions of an organisation many have touted as a systemic rival to the G7 seem almost certain to follow in future summits. As economic tensions soar and geoeconomics becomes a battleground, countries of the Global South seem drawn to the BRICS group, which includes and is partially led by China.

So, why are so many countries, including many US partners, participating in this project and seeking to boost its mission? Many argue we are in the midst of a new Cold War. Even members of the United States Congress have lent credence to that concept. But that is an imperfect analogy. As many have pointed out, China is a peer economy to the US and is likely to overtake it in gross domestic product (GDP) soon, while the former Soviet Union's economy was, at its peak, only a third that of the US. But what is critically different in the global landscape of alliances is that many countries are in a position to choose their alignment.

Scholars and analysts have been discussing the rise of the Global South for decades, especially since the 2008 financial crisis, pointing to how the unprecedented and sustained economic growth of many countries outside the West was redistributing global power. Researchers have also concluded that while the global economy's centre of gravity was in the Atlantic, between the US and Europe, in 1980, it had moved 4,800 miles (7,725km) to Izmir, Turkey, by 2008 and will likely lie somewhere between India and China by 2050. This new environment presents the nations of the Global South with options about how to respond to growing friction among major powers and how to position their nations in the midst of great power competition.

During the Cold War, one could awkwardly divide the world into three camps: the Western bloc, the Soviet bloc and the countries that were part of the so-called non-aligned movement. After the Cold War, many of the norms of the Western bloc formed what is often referred to as the liberal rules-based international order. This new order was enshrined into new organisations like the World Trade Organization and older venues like the United Nations during a "unipolar moment", when democratic capitalism and trade liberalisation seemed to have vanquished every foe. But today, the rising power balancing the US is not looking to form a Soviet-type bloc. The reasons are both material and ideational.

China does not have the military capacity to project power over large parts of the planet and make security guarantees to faraway friends. It also has a grim history with alliance politics - such as its fallout with the Soviet Union. So it eschews the kind of alliances that define the US's relationship with its linchpin allies in Europe and East Asia.

Beijing has many partners, even "comprehensive strategic partners", but no allies. Beijing also has a precarious relationship with the international order Washington built. The order is one designed and carried out with US interests and preferences in mind - and to a lesser extent those of its close allies. As China rises, the West, and the US in particular, jealously guard the rules they've crafted and the pegging order within those organisations. China's voting power and position in international fora are still extremely small compared with its economic weight. For example, China has a 5 percent voting share in the World Bank's main lending arm despite representing 16 percent of the global GDP. China has repeatedly asked for its voting power, and those of other emerging economies, to be increased to represent modern global economic distribution to no avail. This is a rather enticing combination to many countries of the Global South. Many of them also see their preferences and interests underrepresented or ignored in the world order as currently constituted.

Additionally, aligning with organisations like BRICS does not mean binding commitments to one side of the new Cold War. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) may be a security cooperation forum like NATO but it lacks any Article 5 feature. If the worst-case scenario, a Sino-American military confrontation, came to pass, US allies would be expected to quickly join it in the war but China's partners would not. In fact, an increasingly large coalition of countries with competing and conflicting political systems, ideologies and approaches to the West may produce an increasingly unwieldy organisation and exacerbate its collective action problem. But China is clearly gambling that a larger, more geographically and economically diverse set of countries can eventually be marshalled towards the goal of enhancing their collective representation in the world order. For example, the inclusion of more countries, especially major commodity exporters like Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, may make greater economic integration among BRICS states and the use of non-dollar currencies in trade among them more appetising.

Scholars who have examined Beijing's relationship with the international order argue that China seeks to engage international institutions to argue for its preferences. But when it is denied what it sees as power commensurate with its global position, it seeks to create parallel institutions. This can be seen in the form of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the SCO and BRICS.

The US and its linchpin allies have common values and deep social interaction. More importantly, they have similar forms of government and economic management. This both binds them together and solves collective action problems regarding world affairs. US partners in the Global South, however, are not under this umbrella and instead court multipolarity to maximise their bargaining position vis-à-vis duelling powers. Joining a forum like the BRICS is less a declaration of alignment with Beijing and more an assertion by a country that they wish to remain neutral or play both sides in line with their specific national interest.

Ahazzeera

Nuclear weapons should be relics of the past

IN the quiet and peaceful Steppe of Kazakhstan, a dark and ominous legacy lingers beneath the surface. Over four decades between 1949 and 1989, 456 nuclear bombs were detonated by the Soviet Union at the Semipalatinsk Test Site in northern Kazakhstan.

While the echoes of nuclear explosions have long faded, the scars of nuclear testing run deep. More than 1.5 million people in Kazakhstan were exposed to the toxic fallout from those tests. Countless lives were irreversibly altered, and the environment was forever scarred. I am a living testament to the horrors of nuclear testing, as I was born without arms due to the effects of nuclear radiation.

Decades have passed since the Semipalatinsk Test Site was used as a canvas for nuclear experimentation, yet the threat to the world from nuclear weapons remains all

too real. The global confrontation between major powers has raised the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used, even if accidentally. The spectre of mutually assured destruction looms large, reminding us that the line between peace and catastrophic conflict is paper-thin. It is a line we can no longer afford to tread. The recent diplomatic efforts and agreements aimed at halting nuclear testing and proliferation have shown promise, but they are merely steps on a longer journey.

The Comprehensive CTBT, which seeks to ban all nuclear explosions, is a crucial instrument in this endeavour. Yet, despite its adoption by a vast majority of nations, it awaits ratification by some key states, preventing its full implementation. Governments and leaders must recognise that the pursuit of security through

dedicated my life to urging the world to rid itself of the destructive menace of nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan is hoping to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world by 2045, the centennial of the founding of the United Nations. We have just over two decades to make this a reality, but the efforts must pick up pace now.

The path towards nuclear disarmament is not an easy one, but it is a journey worth embarking upon. We owe it to ourselves, our children, and the generations yet unborn. Let us not be remembered as the generation that failed to heed the call of reason and compassion. Instead, we should be remembered as the generation that had the courage to stand up and say, "No more." Let us be the ones to make nuclear weapons a relic of the past, forever banished from our world.

US starts to take action to reverse loss of its regional influence

Zaid M. Belbagi

TWO years ago, as US forces clambered to hastily withdraw from Afghanistan, leaving billions of dollars' worth of military equipment behind, the chaotic scenes spoke volumes. The moment almost seemed to herald a watershed for the Pax Americana that had enveloped the world in relative peace since the end of the Cold War, but both the Pentagon and the White House played down any talk of a retreat, preferring the term "strategic withdrawal."

Either way, the effects reverberated around the world, nowhere greater than in the wider Middle East. In the two years since the completion of the US departure we have seen the advent of new strategic agendas within the region, alongside newfound readiness by Washington and its allies to show enduring commitment among growing global challenges. In a similar vein to how a perceived lack of American decisiveness and strategic capacity to influence events in Syria, Iraq and Crimea preceded the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the legacy of Kabul encouraged the circumstances that led to the war in Ukraine. In arenas around the globe, what was perceived a US withdrawal based on lack of diplomatic commitment and reluctance to engage in a significant way militarily changed the geopolitical landscape. This theme is increasingly apparent in the part of the world that is commonly referred to as the Global South.

In an important article last week, the Carnegie Endowment for Peace joined several prominent academic voices in arguing that the growing use of the term Global South be retired, especially given the growing preference by intergovernmental organizations and institutions for using it. Whereas during the Cold War the world was effectively split into the US and its northern allies in

the West, and the Soviet Union with its allies and satellites in the developing world in the East, the group of 130 states in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean can no longer be so conveniently grouped together as a "Global South" in terms of their development. In the past two decades, for example, the standard of living in Turkiye has outstripped that of some European countries, Morocco's economic development can no longer be grouped with that of Egypt, and the growth in Jordan and Malaysia is the envy of Southern European nations.

Politically, the futility of a concept such as the Global South is even more clear. India has long been a US ally, for example, but it has also provided important lifelines to both Russia and Iran, often contrary to Washington's interests, and has been clear in its position of neutrality concerning the war in Ukraine. Long-standing US allies in the Gulf region have similarly been slow to offer a position on the conflict, while maintaining close ties with Moscow. Nor have their clear US security relationships prevented them from warming to the BRICS group of emerging economies that includes Russia and Iran, alongside Brazil, China and South Africa.

The once linear stratification of the world, from which the term Global South originated, is now infinitely more complex and diverse, and against the backdrop of this indisputable shift of global power Washington has begun to act. US power projection is often viewed through the military prism and its defense spending continues to increase. It now spends more on defense than the next 10 top-spending countries combined. This is an increase from 2021 when it outspent

the next nine countries combined. The spending by the US accounts for almost 40 percent of military expenditure by all countries, and this staggering amount is intended to maintain the nation's supremacy and keep other global powers in check. However, the question of a US withdrawal cannot be considered purely from a military context. The American relationship with international institutions also plays a key role and has the greatest bearing on its influence.

As such, the recent urgency surrounding calls for NATO to regroup, expand and seek out preferred new allies, following several years of US disengagement from the alliance, is indicative of the need to retain the enduring relevance of existing international institutions and frameworks. In the face of Chinese efforts to upgrade and expand the BRICS bloc of emerging markets into an out-and-out rival to the G7, US President Joe Biden has announced that Washington will be "focusing" on economic support for "like-minded countries of the Global South."

By channeling \$50 billion of investment through the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the US is attempting to bolster existing institutions in which it has always played a role. Any attempt to act unilaterally would only serve to further isolate American interests and expose the developing world to the coercive lending practices of China under its Belt and Road Initiative. With more than 40 poor countries already exposed to Chinese debt totaling as much as 10 percent of their total gross domestic products, empowering the Bretton Woods intuitions (the IMF and World Bank) is an important aspect of US efforts to

address the unceasing decline in American power and to support the developmental challenges of its allies.

The US cannot afford to act unilaterally amid the growing multipolar nature of the international system. Yet in recent years it has been seen as steadily retreating from the global arena as a result of a more insular foreign policy. Last week's tripartite summit, however, which brought together the US with allies Japan and South Korea, was a step in the right direction. It addressed the issue of cooperation, alongside efforts to uphold "international law, freedom of navigation and a peaceful resolution of disputes." Continuing support for such initiatives, and working with traditional allies, is key if the US wishes to uphold the rules-based global system it has long supported.

The most pressing theater for such efforts is currently the Middle East, where the US has not recovered from the specter of its hasty retreat from Afghanistan. Longstanding US allies are increasingly looking beyond Washington to secure their stability. Qatar's recent 27-year liquefied natural gas deal with China is the largest in history. In addition Doha, a non-NATO ally that supported the US in its efforts to evacuate 80,000 people from Kabul, is simultaneously arming Indonesia while seeking to upgrade its defense pact with Turkiye. Bahrain, which hosts the US Fifth Fleet and the UK's Juffair naval base, retains strong economic interests in Asia but continues to share security concerns with the US. Given that the perceived US reticence to fully engage in the region has some Arab countries to review their international partnerships, Washington can ill-afford any further signs of disengagement, especially amid a Chinese economic slowdown and the prospect of a new world order emerging.

Ulez ought to be end of devolution

Tom Harris

the cost to ordinary workers, the uncertain evidence used to justify it and, of course, the seeming inability of London's mayor to view criticism of the project as anything other than a conspiracy theory. But it has also exposed huge flaws in the way that devolution works.

There is the serious democratic deficit Ulez has created. More than one million motorists living outside London may face the daily £12.50 charge if they enter the city. Many will work or shop regularly in London, but live outside its borders. Accordingly, they have no way of holding the mayor to account for a policy that may cost them and their families dear. What do the champions of devolution have to say to that?

Then there is the chaotic clash of wills between different local authorities, with nobody seemingly able or willing to resolve them. Most of the councils surrounding London, confident of their own democratic mandates, are point blank refusing to install cameras or warning signs for motorists heading into the city.

In doing so, they are putting a question mark over the feasibility of the whole Ulez project. These might be dismissed as minor concerns when set against the supposedly enormous benefits of devolution. Its supporters regularly raise the spectre of big, bad, unaccountable Westminster as a slum-dunk argument for the supremacy of devolved government. But does anyone really think the SNP in Scotland or Khan in

London have been significantly more responsive to the views of their voters than have the parties in Westminster? Have they been noticeably more willing to take responsibility for their failures? Or have they, instead, chosen to shift the blame for them onto the Government? In this case, the Government chose to rant and rave about Ulez expansion, but lacked the stomach to override Khan's plan and prevent its imposition. With the notable exception of the use of Section 35 powers to quash Nicola Sturgeon's Gender Recognition Reform Bill, this follows a pattern of British ministers not wishing to rock the boat in Scotland and Wales, fearful of bringing down the ire of devolved politicians.

But when governments fail to rein in the excesses of the devolved authorities, they are letting power slip away, leading to a considerably less united Kingdom. Perhaps the most persuasive argument against an elected House of Lords is that it would create an unwelcome democratic rival to the Commons. Yet politicians seem to think nothing of setting up similar potential conflicts every time they vote to install a new metro mayor.

Britain right now does not have a strong international reputation for being particularly well run; in what way does the increasing number and powers of devolved mayoralities, and the consequent rise in policy clashes and court battles, help to restore it? It's time to call a halt to the entire devolution experiment before it further damages our country.

Urban and rural Americans need to embrace each other to improve life for all

Kerry Boyd Anderson

AS the political polarization in the US has increased, many Americans have placed much of the blame on a growing urban-rural divide. The gap between Americans who live in more urbanized areas and those in more rural areas is real but the discussion about it suffers from problems with definitions, data and a lack of nuance.

Urbanization in the US over the past century has fueled growing divides between the cultural and political views of urban and rural Americans. The political rise of Donald Trump exacerbated an already prevalent sense that Americans in urban and rural areas no longer understand each other. One challenge for any discussion of this issue is the lack of an agreed common definition of "rural." Some researchers categorize population groups as "metropolitan cores," "metropolitan suburbs," "micropolitan" areas (smaller towns), and "rural" areas that have few people living in concentrated areas. Others use different categories; for example, the Census Bureau talks about "urbanized areas" which have populations of 50,000 or more, and "urban clusters" with 2,500 to 50,000 residents.

To further complicate matters, some analysts use data based on counties, which might include urban and rural areas, while others use "census tract" or other data. This article uses "rural" to denote small towns and less-populated areas, and "urban" to include cities and suburbs.

With the caveat that different researchers use differing defini-

tions and data, the available evidence suggests that about 14 to 19 percent of the US population lives in rural areas. While many people might think of the American West when imagining rural America, the Census Bureau notes that more than 64 percent of the rural population lives east of the Mississippi River, and nearly half of rural residents are in the south of the country. There are rural areas in the northeast, midwest, west and other parts of the country, and large areas in Alaska. The stereotypical view of rural America envisions a mostly white population focused on agricultural work. However, that image is outdated. Rural America is indeed more white than urban America, but it is increasingly diverse in racial and ethnic terms. And while agriculture remains a major economic driver, it accounts for less than 5 percent of "wage and salary jobs in rural areas," according to a 2017 Department of Agriculture report. Rural America includes small college towns, Native American communities, beautiful areas that attract tourism, and close-knit communities going back generations. Many Americans who choose to live in these areas enjoy the benefits of a smaller community, including a lower cost of living, no traffic jams and the lack of urban hustle and bustle.

At the same time, much of rural America is struggling from a long-running trend of population loss, as working-age people increasingly leave and head for urban and suburban areas, and much of the remaining population is aging.

Government statistics show significant declines in the populations of rural areas over the past few decades. This trend has created challenges in providing services, most notably healthcare; the number of hospitals, emergency rooms, doctors and other medical services is declining, and even disappearing completely, in some rural areas. Poverty is not a problem in all rural areas but it is a persistent challenge in many. A 2020 Brookings Institution analysis demonstrated that persistent poverty is concern both in rural areas and cities.

A more nuanced understanding of the benefits and challenges that come with living in rural America could therefore inform a more useful discussion about the urban-rural cultural and political divide. However, many political commentators, politicians and even regular Americans willingly embrace an overly simplistic image of urban versus rural. As the authors of several recent fiction and nonfiction books have pointed out, Americans who live in cities and suburbs, especially those on the coasts, often are disdainful of "flyover country," Appalachia and the rural south. They like to perceive themselves as superior, better educated, more cultured and more tolerant than rural Americans. These assumptions are common within progressive politics and elements of the entertainment media. Rural Americans are well aware of this and resent it.

It also is true that people from small towns and rural areas like to perceive themselves as superior to

those who reside in cities. They view themselves as more sincere, "down to earth" and devoted to faith and family - in short, they see themselves as the "real Americans." This perception is strongly represented in Republican politics and some cultural tropes. For example, many romantic movies and books tell the tale of a young woman who leaves her small town for the bright lights of the big city, only to return home to heal among more-caring people after becoming disillusioned by life (and men) in the concrete jungle. The divide is more blurred than the way it is often depicted but it is nonetheless real and challenging. Most countries have some form of this divide, as urban and rural areas naturally develop different cultures, values and economies. The trouble comes when urban and rural citizens begin to feel both superior and bitter toward each other.

In the US currently, issues around politics, identity and religion, among other things, have been layered on top of urban/suburban/micropolitan/rural maps, intensifying the sense of "difference."

By ignoring the problems facing rural America, as some of its defenders do, or portraying cities as inherently superior, as some urban advocates do, we only deepen the divides while undermining ways in which life might be improved for all Americans. It is time for Americans to recognize the real differences in ways of life between urban and rural areas, while also recognizing that they both need each other.

World reminded Fukushima nuclear disaster continues

Shaun Burnie

thinking and government policies that can be measured and is focused on future generations.

But considering that the half-life of some of the radionuclides discharged from Fukushima is measured in millions of years, it is largely beyond human comprehension to grasp the reality of these matters. Tokyo Electric Power Company, the owner of Fukushima plant, plans to remove the estimated 600-1,100 tons of melted nuclear fuel at three of Fukushima's reactors (the precise amount is not known) are not based on any credible engineering analysis - there is effectively no workable plan. And while the 2011 disaster released very large amounts of radioactive elements into the environment, most of the radioactive inventory remains inside the melted fuel at a severely damaged nuclear power plant on the edge of the Pacific Ocean.

This is a uniquely hazardous long-term radiation threat to the environment, especially the marine ecosystem, including the Pacific Ocean. This threat will not decrease with the plan to discharge the radioactive water into the Pacific or with the TEPCO's current decommissioning plan. Yet the TEPCO and the Japanese government continue to ignore such fundamental problems. This reality was highlighted again last week when the TEPCO announced that about 31,000 cubic meters of radioactive water stored in the tanks at the Fukushima facility will be discharged this year. But this will not reduce the amount of tank water in storage at the Fukushima plant, because every day ground water continues to enter the nuclear plant and become contaminated with radioactivity.

This year an additional 32,000 cubic meters will accumulate in storage tanks effectively cancelling out the amount of water discharged into the Pacific. And there are no feasible plans in place to stop groundwater contamination - because there are no effective plans for the removal of the source of the radioactivity - the hundreds of tons of melted nuclear fuel inside Fukushima reactor units 1, 2 and 3. The decommissioning plan for the Fukushima plant is not attainable, nor within the official (and delusional) timeframe of 2041-2051, or beyond. And a return to pre-2011 accident conditions is not possible.

The Fukushima site is, and will remain effectively for very long timeframes (centuries at least) a permanently contaminated nuclear waste facility. The TEPCO and Japanese government agencies, as well as the IAEA, have the wrong priorities and must embark on a comprehensive reassessment of the entire decommissioning plan. Ultimately, the plant must be isolated from the environment, efforts at Chernobyl included the construction of a shelter over the entire reactor site. Effective measures should also be taken to prevent groundwater from coming in contact with nuclear fuel that will remain hazardous for tens of thousands of years. At some point in the coming years, a Japanese government will confront this reality and be forced to change policy.

By proceeding to dump the radioactive water into the ocean, the Japanese government has exposed its failed policies on nuclear energy. Public communications efforts, including advertisements across multi-media platforms in Japan, have raised public awareness (and unease) that there is a nuclear crisis less than a few hours' drive north of Tokyo. The world has been made aware of the existence of people in Fukushima, their way of life and the environmental conditions they've been living in. The Japanese government abandoned the people of Fukushima long ago and continues to violate their human rights, which the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Special Rapporteur have highlighted on multiple occasions, including this year during the Universal Periodic Review of Japan.

All of this the Japanese government wanted to erase from public debate and media scrutiny. To secure support for its "new energy policy" of relying on old nuclear technology to generate electricity, it had to make the Japanese as well as the global public forget about Fukushima nuclear crisis. That strategy has clearly failed. The radioactive water Japan is pumping down a 1-kilometer pipeline is almost certainly the most reported discharges of nuclear-contaminated water into the sea in the history of atomic energy. The world knows that nuclear plants discharge radioactivity into the environment. The Japanese government rightly, condemned on many levels for its outrageous decision, has also helped to educate the planet.

Beyond militarization

Daryl Guppy

NOT satisfied with already surrounding China with more than 300 military bases, United States President Joe Biden used the Camp David summit with Japan and the Republic of Korea to further advance his agenda to contain China. The US, Japan and the ROK agreed to a new "duty to consult" security pledge committing them to speak with each other in the event of a security crisis or threat in the Pacific.

The statement seems superfluous because such consultations already take place. But its intent signals a greater threat to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region because it is an extension of US efforts to expand NATO into a global network. What motivation brings these uneasy participants together? Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is a willing partner because the deepening US engagement supports Japan's wish to remilitarize. Japan has abandoned the principle of a defence-oriented strategy and boosted its counter-strike capability. Japan has also allowed the US to station an advanced Marine Corps unit in Okinawa. This is all painted as a defensive response to alleged adversaries but it begs the question - who is planning to disrupt trade with China, Japan's largest trading partner? It's certainly not China, although that is the clear focus of the Camp David summit.

Some in Japan fear that bolstering security cooperation will lead the country into an economic Cold War with its biggest trading partner. Others in the region worry that

Japan's military objectives extend further, perhaps supporting the US' attempts to stir up the situation across the Taiwan Strait. The ROK remains beholden to the US as a necessary bastion of support in the continuing conflict with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea because the ROK refused to sign the Korean Armistice Agreement. There is a 70-year truce in hostilities but technically a state of war still exists. It is little wonder that the DPRK feels it is under constant threat of attack. Being reliant on US military support, the ROK chose to accede to US policy directives at Camp David despite the widespread lingering distrust of Japan's political motivations and commitment to peaceful stability. This distrust is the legacy of the World War II massacre of civilians, and torture and slavery in mines and factories, along with enduring disagreements over disputed territory.

ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol announced that the ROK would use its own funds to compensate Koreans enslaved by Japanese companies. Polls show that a solid majority of people in the ROK oppose Yoon's handling of the forced labor issue and this reflects a wider unease about Japan's commitment to regional peace. The idea that the Camp David summit produced a rapprochement between Japan and the ROK is a media release concocted under pressure from the US. The motivations of Japan and the ROK in complying with the policy objec-

tives of the Camp David summit sit atop a set of policy assumptions that inherently destabilize the Asia-Pacific region.

The Camp David summit is part of the plan to involve US-led allies in a more direct and coordinated attempt to contain China. Measures include physically threatening trade supply routes, using economic sanctions and weaponizing the US dollar. The US' security alliance with Australia and the United Kingdom, known as AUKUS, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and new military agreements with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, and the attempt to expand NATO are all part of this China containment policy mix. It is a policy initiative based on the assumption that China will somehow damage global trade by taking some unspecified action in the South China Sea. Just why China would ever choose to block its vital trade routes, or why any of its largest customers would block seaborne trade with China and so injure their own economies, is not explained. The illogical basis of the China threat is apparently beyond question by those who line up behind the US. The illogical thinking underpinning this complex situation makes it difficult for Asian countries and the Global South to find the right choice. China has shown no inclination to develop a wide net of military bases in the region or the Global South, let alone close to the coast of the US. Chinese submarines do not probe US coastal waters or

hold freedom of navigation exercises between Florida and Cuba. Nor has China entered into military agreements similar to those promoted by the United States.

This means Association of Southeast Asian Nations members and the Global South would better adopt diplomatic and economic solutions led by China. Diplomatic solutions include support for an increased global role for BRICS through widening its membership to include more countries of the Global South. It includes active participation in trade agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and strengthening activities in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Central to both economic and diplomatic solutions are the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative and other initiatives advocated by China. Many of these programs and initiatives are dismissed or reviled by the US and its allies, but they provide a choice of solutions to the Global South and ASEAN. It is economic prosperity that delivers peace and stability to these regions. It is the open arc of future economic growth that delivers power to the Global South, and with it, increasing levels of political influence in the structures of global trade. Alongside this diplomatic environment is the spread of the digital economy bringing with it freedom from US dollar dominance and unilaterally imposed sanctions and trade blockages. This, not narrow militarization, is where the future of peaceful stability lies.

The China Daily



Minister pledges for reopening closed industry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce and Industries and Production, Dr. Gohar Ejaz Wednesday unveiled an ambitious agenda for Pakistan's economic growth, setting a formidable target of 25 billion dollars in textile exports for the current year.

Alongside this, he pledged a swift revival of all shuttered industries within the country, with a tight deadline of just one month, said a press release issued here.

During a crucial meeting convened with the Pakistan Textile Exporters Association, helmed by Khurram Mukhtiyar, Gohar outlined his vision.

Comparing this year's projected export figures with the previous year's 16 billion dollars, he expressed strong confidence in surpassing this milestone.

Making a resolute commitment, the minister assured that each industry

currently closed for various reasons would see reopening by September 30.

He emphasized that all challenges obstructing their operations would be systematically addressed.

Notably hands-on, Dr. Gohar asserted his willingness to personally engage with all stakeholders, including industrialists.

He even affirmed his readiness to visit their premises if required, underlining his dedication to revitalizing the industrial landscape.

In a proactive approach, the minister requested a comprehensive list of all dormant industries nationwide, along with their specific issues.

Gohar also gave his word that pending funds owed to industries by various departments, including FBR and customs, would be swiftly resolved.

Furthermore, he extended an open invitation to associations and business-

men, ensuring his availability to collaborate and find resolutions for their problems.

The minister assured that challenges related to gas,

electricity, energy, and fund disbursement would be resolved efficiently, reiterating his commitment to fostering a thriving business environment.

Gohar calls on Sanjrani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce, Industries, and Production Dr. Gohar Ejaz Wednesday called on Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani. During the meeting, Chairman Senate expressed his optimism about the government's commitment to revitalizing the economy and providing essential relief to the general public, said a news release issued here on Wednesday.

Sadiq Sanjrani acknowledged the challenging circumstances faced by the nation and looked forward to concerted efforts aimed at economic resurgence.

He urged the minister to focus on the development of underdeveloped regions such as Balochistan, underscoring the significance of equal growth across the country.

He emphasized the importance of leveraging the opportunities presented by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), particularly through Gwadar, to foster sustainable development and uplift the lives of the people in those areas. Gohar Ejaz assured his commitment to the cause of economic betterment and equitable progress.

He appreciated the valuable guidance provided by Chairman Senate and affirmed his dedication to pursuing policies that would harness the potential of underdeveloped regions and optimize the advantages of CPEC.

Siab-1 well in Kohat:

OGDCL achieves significant production enhancement

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) on Wednesday announced a remarkable achievement in its pursuit of production optimization initiatives. The company has achieved an impressive enhancement in production at the Siab-1 well, situated within the Baratai Block in the Kohat district of KP province.

Siab-1, a collaborative effort under a joint venture where OGDCL operates with a substantial 97.5%

share, in partnership with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Oil & Gas Company Limited (KPOGCL) holding the remaining 2.5% share, has showcased the potential of Pakistan's energy sector.

Since its inception on January 13, 2022, the Siab-1 well has consistently demonstrated its capability by achieving remarkable flow rates. Initially recording 125 barrels per day (BPD) of condensate and 6.2 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD) of gas at a well head flowing pressure (WHFP) of 1700

PSI from the Lockhart formation, Siab-1 has now exceeded all expectations.

Through the strategic and successful implementation of a rigorous intervention within the Lockhart formation, OGDCL has unlocked a new era of hydrocarbon production. This intervention has led to an astounding increase in output, with the well now producing an additional 265 BPD of oil and an impressive 14.3 MMSCFD of gas at a WHFP of 4300 PSI.

The enhanced production at Siab-1 officially

started on August 28, 2023. Since then, the well has consistently delivered exceptional results, contributing to a cumulative production of 20.5 MMSCFD of gas and 390 BPD of oil.

It is noteworthy that this substantial increase in gas production is injected into the SNGPL network, contributing significantly to the country's energy resources. This achievement is a testament to OGDCL's commitment to innovation and excellence in the field of oil and gas exploration and production.

IBA Karachi, AAA Associates partner to establish SEF

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi and AAA Associates, a real estate organization, have partnered to establish a Scholarship Endowment Fund (SEF). With an aim to advance the institute's financial assistance program for its deserving students, the AAA Associates Scholarship Endowment will benefit deserving students in perpetuity.

Executive Director, IBA, Dr. S Akbar Zaidi and Managing Director, AAA Associates, Mr. Shahzad Ali Kiani signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the Main Campus. Under this MoU, the latter will



provide financial support to set up an endowment fund which will benefit students in posterity.

Other members gracing the event included Mr. Wajid Riaz, General Manager, AAA Associates' Ms. Malahat Awan, Director, Alumni Affairs and Resource Mobilization,

IBA' and Mr. Moeid Sultan, Director Finance, IBA.

Mr. Kiani shared AAA Associates' resolve towards building a brighter future for our country by investing in education.

Dr. Zaidi appreciated AAA Associates for its initiative and for supporting the IBA in its mission of

providing quality education to all the students regardless of their financial backgrounds.

The Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi ensures inclusivity through its financial assistance program by supporting approximately 30% of its student body every year.

European stock markets diverge as rally fades

LONDON (AFP/APP): Europe's main stock markets diverged Wednesday after a global rally faded.

Approaching the half-way mark, London rose while Frankfurt and Paris fell. Tokyo closed higher but Shanghai and Hong Kong flattened.

Oil prices climbed as crude-rich Gabon faced a military coup.

Global equities rallied Tuesday after a softer-than-expected report on US job openings soothed fears the Federal Reserve would again hike interest rates.

That weighed on the dollar Wednesday against the

euro and pound.

"Signs of America's cooling economy have raised hopes that the pause button will be pushed on punishing interest rate hikes," noted Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown.

Wall Street enjoyed one of its best days in months on Tuesday as Amazon and Apple shares rallied.

This was after the Labor Department's closely followed Job Openings and Labor Turnover Summary (JOLTS) figure fell well short of forecasts.

A separate report

revealed consumer confidence falling owing to concerns about jobs, higher rates and lingering inflation.

The readings come before this week's release of the Fed's preferred gauge of inflation -- the personal consumption expenditures price index -- as well as data on non-farm payrolls and factory activity.

Analysts said the JOLTS reading would give monetary policymakers room to hold off on lifting borrowing costs further, having already pushed them to a two-decade high to tame prices.

The cooling of rate expectations helped bring US Treasury yields down and even allowed investors to bring forward bets on a rate cut to June from July, according to Bloomberg News.

"With layoffs estimated to be 8.8 million, it is still around 70 percent above its long-term average, but markets don't care about that," said Matthew Simpson at City Index.

"It's the rate of change that matters. And with job openings falling to a 28-month low, it suggests the labour market is indeed softening."

Tokyo stocks close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher on Wednesday, supported by rallies on Wall Street on the back of easing concerns over US interest rates.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 0.33 percent, or 106.49 points, to 32,333.46, while the broader Topix index ended up 0.43 percent, or 9.97 points, at 2,313.38.

The Japanese market "extended a trend of rallies in US stocks led by high-tech shares, as long-term and short-term yields

declined", reflecting eased worries over the US central bank's rate hike plans, Iwai Cosmo Securities said in a note.

This was supported by a surprise decline in the number of US job openings.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average finished 0.9 percent higher.

The broad-based S&P 500 climbed 1.5 percent, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite Index surged 1.7 percent.

"Job openings are now back at levels last seen in

the summer of 2021 and not too far from where they were pre-pandemic," Craig Erlam, OANDA senior market analyst, said in a note.

"Further softness over the next few months looks very plausible which could contribute to a cooler labor market and sustainably lower wage growth."

Traders will also eye fresh US employment data due to be released later this week.

In Tokyo trading, semiconductor-linked shares

were higher, with Advantest gaining 0.70 percent and Tokyo Electron climbing 0.97 percent.

Sony Group added 0.71 percent, while SoftBank Group slipped 0.47 percent.

Toyota added 1.03 percent after the carmaker said production at 12 domestic plants would resume Wednesday morning after they were hit by a technical glitch.

The dollar fetched 146.23 yen against 145.87 yen in New York on Tuesday.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce & Industries, Dr. Gohar Ejaz meeting with Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani at Parliament's House.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Maersk Denver, Maersk Brooklyn, Cetus Cachalot and FSM carrying Container, Coal and LPG, berthed at Container Terminal, Bulk Terminal and Engro Terminal, respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile five more ships, MSC Madeleine, Copenhagen, Maroudio, Besi Ktas M and Mari Blue, scheduled to load/offload Containers, Cement and Coal also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

A total of 09 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of two ships, Maersk Brooklyn and Sea Bulk sailed out to sea on Wednesday, while five more ships, Maersk Denver, MS Freesia, Okyro, Calypso Gas and FSM are expected to sail on same day afternoon.

The cargo throughput of 133,706 tonnes, comprising 99,519 tonnes imports Cargo and 34,187 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,572 Containers (1,561 TEUs Imports and 2,011 TEUs export) was handled at the port during the last 24 hours.

There are twelve ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, Maroudio, Sea Hazel, Nymph Thetis, Southern Robin and MSC Madeleine & another ship, Maersk Pelepas scheduled to load/offload Cement, Fuel oil, Palm oil, Chemicals and Containers are expected to take berths at Multi-Purpose Terminal, Oil Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Engro Terminal and Container Terminal respectively on today Wednesday, while another containers ship, Frankfurt Express is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

Pak exports rock salt to China

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan has exported eight shipments of around 35 tons rock salt to China from June to July this year through the Khunjerab land border.

"Imports and exports volume across the Khunjerab Port stand at 40 to 80 thousand tons per year. Daily imports are about 471.6 tons per day," Zhang Xiaobo, China's Customs Director of Khunjerab Port, told CGTN.

He said since 2019, China had set up a dedicated border trade area, for businessmen to settle increasingly bigger trades, and after a three-year hiatus during the COVID-19, "the zone is officially in use this year".

Zhang said, "From June to July this year, we received eight shipments, amounting to 35 tons of Himalayan rock salt. In addition to rock salt, there are also copper and wooden handicrafts, as well as some carpets."

He said, "Each trader is given a tax-free trade quota worth about US\$ 1100 each day. The increasing convenience here is starting to attract Pakistani exporters who used to ship goods to China via a much longer sea route."

Wafa Baig, a trader, said it was his first time using the Khunjerab border. "Last month we brought crude quartz, 27 tons, the first assignment. In the future, our plan is 1,000 tons." While comparing the land route and the sea route, he said, "By sea it takes a long time, by road is faster." According to reports, a new airport for civilian use has been opened near the border this year, as the authorities strive to enhance business convenience through better infrastructure.

100-index of PSX loses 525 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Wednesday and shed 525.86 points, showing negative change of 1.12 percent, closing at 46,244.56 points against 46,770.42 points the previous trading day.

A total of 200,288,813 shares were traded during the day as compared to 217,852,268 shares, whereas the trading value of shares was recorded at Rs8.987 billion against Rs8.280 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 327 companies transacted their shares in the stock market' 70 of them recorded gains and 240 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 17 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 16,322,731 shares at Rs1.18 per share' K-Electric Ltd with 12,424,393 shares at Rs1.89 per share and Dewan Motors with 12,107,424 shares at Rs16.60 per share.

Sapphire Fiber witnessed a maximum increase

of Rs78.00 per share price, closing at Rs1,148.00, whereas the runner-up was Sapphire Textile with Rs77.89 rise in its per share price to Rs1,128.00.

Mehmood Textile witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs54.50 per share closing at Rs685.00' followed by Mari Petroleum with Rs20.92 decline to close at Rs1,619.53.

Rupee sheds Rs1.39 against US Dollar

Pakistani rupee on Wednesday witnessed a Rs1.39 devaluation against the US dollar in the inter-bank trading and closed at Rs304.44 against the previous day's closing of Rs303.05.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs320 and Rs323 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs3.21 paisa to close at Rs330.77 against the last day's closing of Rs327.56, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paisa and stood at Rs2.07, whereas an

increase of Rs2.73 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs384.83 as compared to the last closing of Rs382.10.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 37 paisa each to close at Rs82.88 and Rs81.37 respectively.

Gold rates increase by Rs2,900 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs2,900 on Wednesday and was sold at Rs235,400 as compared to its sale at Rs233,500 the previous day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs2,486 to Rs202, 675 from Rs200,189 whereas the rate of 10 gram 22 karat went up to Rs185,785 from Rs183,506, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price per tola silver and that of ten-gram silver remained unchanged to close at Rs2,850 and Rs2,443.41 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market, however, increased by \$21 to \$1,938 from \$1,917, the Association reported.

Cotton yarn exports up by 36% to \$97m in July

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of cotton yarn increased by 35.96 percent during the first month of current fiscal year compared to the exports of the same month of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

Exports of the commodity during July 2023 were recorded at \$97.032 million as compared to the exports of \$71.365 million in July 2022, according to the latest PBS data.

Meanwhile, on month-on-month basis, the exports of cotton yarn however decreased by 9.40 percent

in July 2023 when compared to the exports of \$107.097 million in June 2023.

The overall textile exports reached \$1,311.659 million during the first month of the current financial year (2023-24). Textile exports showed a decline of 11.44 percent from \$1,481.173 million during the same month of last year (July 2022-23).

It is pertinent to mention here that the trade deficit witnessed a decline of 41.16 percent during the first month of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as

compared to the corresponding month of last year.

The trade deficit during the month under review was recorded at \$1.607 billion against the deficit of \$2.731 billion in July 2022, a decline of 41.16 percent. The exports during the month were recorded at \$2.057 billion against \$2.250 billion last year, showing a decline of 8.57 percent.

On the other hand, the imports witnessed a sharp decline of 26.44 percent by falling from \$4.981 billion last year to \$3.664 billion during July 2023.

Delegation of LUMS visits SCCI

SIALKOT (APP): A delegation of the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) on Wednesday visited the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI).

Dr Sabieh Anwar, Dean LUMS, Dr Toqueer Abbas, Associate Dean, Dr Ali Rauf, Chemical Engineering Department were included in the delegation.

SCCI President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Abdul Ghafoor Malik welcomed the distinguished guests.

During a meeting at the

Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ghafoor Malik appreciated the contribution and role of the Lahore University of Management Sciences in producing quality human resources which had served the country.

The president said that indeed industrial academia linkage carried a vast amount of depth and was itself a need for the country.

Malik said that with the context of knowledge-intensive societies and industrial academia linkages had become very

important on the agenda of higher education policy-making both at national and institutional levels.

Dr Sabieh Anwar, Dean LUMS, spoke to the members of the SCCI and other participants also shared their views.

The meeting was attended by Senior Vice President Wahub Jahangir, Zohaib Rafique Sethi, Senior Vice President Sialkot Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Gulzaib Waqas Awan, executive committee members and the business community.

Cement export up by 186.86% during July 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): The export of cement witnessed an increase of 186.86 percent during the first month of the current financial year (2023-24), against the exports of the corresponding period of last year.

The country exported cement worth US \$16.145 million during July 2023 against the exports of US \$5.628 million during July 2022, showing a growth of 186.86 per cent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In terms of quantity, the cement export also rose by

291.87 per cent from 105,141 metric tons to 412,141 metric tons, the data revealed.

Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, cement exports however decreased by 24.17 percent during July 2023 as compared to the exports of US \$21.292 million in June 2023, the PBS data revealed.

It is pertinent to mention here that the country's overall merchandise export declined by 8.09 per cent in July 2023 as compared to the export of July 2022.

The exports during the month were recorded at US\$2,068 million against the exports of US\$2,250 million in last July.

The imports also declined by 25.62 per cent to US\$3,705 million in July 2023 compared to the exports of US\$4,981 million in July 2022.

Based on the figures, the merchandise trade deficit declined by 40.06 per cent going down from a deficit of US\$2.371 million last July to US\$ 1.637 million in July 2023, according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data.



In brief

Pakistan team gets NOC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan football team has been issued a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to compete in the SAFF U-16 Championship in Bhutan. According to details, the game of football possesses a remarkable ability to unite the world and this championship would see immensely talented U-16 players from every nook. The diligent efforts were undertaken by PFF and Candyland to unearth talents. Out of the pool, 50 players were selected for the national U-16 training camp in Abbottabad. Comprising 23 players and 7 officials, the Pakistan U-16 football squad, nurtured through dedication and strategic collaboration, stands prepared to make their mark. The first match of the national team would be against hosts Bhutan on September 1 while will face Maldives in the second game on September 3. Pakistan team would depart to Bhutan in the early hours of Thursday.

Chelsea star World Cup burglary

LONDON (Agencies): A man has been charged after a break-in at the home of Chelsea star Raheem Sterling during the Qatar World Cup. Jewellery and watches worth £300,000 were reportedly stolen from the property in Oxshott, Surrey, while Sterling was in Qatar with England. The player left England's World Cup camp to be with family after intruders broke in on 3 December 2022. Surrey Police said a man had been charged with 33 offences of conspiracy to commit burglary. A spokeswoman for the force said Emiliano Krosi, 23, of Ditton Court Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, had been charged and remanded in custody. She said he would appear at Guildford Crown Court on 21 September. One of the offences Mr Krosi has been charged with relates to a burglary at an address in Oxshott, Leatherhead, which was reported on 3 December 2022, she said. Earlier this month, police said all lines of inquiry had been pursued and the matter would "sit on file" pending any new information coming to light. They said the victim had been made aware of the decision. The force has not commented further on any new information it received since then.

Man City reach verbal agreement

LONDON (Agencies): Manchester City have reached a verbal agreement with Wolves over a £47.3m deal to sign midfielder Matheus Nunes. The deal for the 25-year-old has not been formally agreed yet but if completed, there will be no add-ons. City had a previous bid for the Portugal international rejected last week, with Wolves believed to be wanting in excess of £60m. Nunes has been absent from training recently after making it clear he wants to join Pep Guardiola's side. In addition, Wolves have agreed to sign City's England Under-21 international Tommy Doyle on loan, with the option of a £4.3m transfer that would include a huge sell-on clause for City. These two deals are separate and come after City refused to meet Wolves initial £60m-plus valuation for Nunes. City wanted to bolster their midfield options even before Kevin de Bruyne suffered the hamstring injury that could keep him out for four months.



MULTAN: Babar Azam and Iftikhar Ahmed added a mammoth 214 off just 131 balls, Pakistan vs Nepal Asia Cup,

Azam and Ahmed hit hundreds as Pakistan crush Nepal in Asia Cup

MULTAN (Agencies): Babar Azam put up a masterclass in ODI batting, scoring 151 off 131 balls, to help Pakistan thump Nepal by 238 runs in the opening match of the 2023 Asia Cup.

On a tricky pitch in Multan, Nepal had made early breakthroughs to leave Pakistan in a precarious position. Babar consolidated the innings during that period, taking 72 balls to reach his fifty. Gradually, he increased the tempo and moved from 51 to 100 in 37 balls. Once he reached his hundred, he went into the T20 mode and smashed 51 off the next 22 balls.

Suryakumar Yadav, on Monday, said that ODIs force one to bat like all three formats. On Wednesday, Babar showed how to do it.

Babar and Iftikhar Ahmed, who smashed an unbeaten 109 off 71, added 214 off 131 balls in a fifth-wicket stand that lifted Pakistan to 342 for 6. Babar didn't come out to field and Shadab Khan captained the side during the chase. It made little difference, as Nepal were bowled out for just 104 in 23.4 overs.

Nepal were making their Asia Cup debut, and playing against Pakistan for the first time in any format. That inexperience, and

probably the nerves, showed on several occasions. In the first over of the match, Sompal Kami drifted down the leg side a couple of times, and Fakhar Zaman helped himself to two boundaries.

However, the slowness of the pitch and some good fielding came to Nepal's rescue. With the ball not coming onto the bat, both Fakhar and Imam-ul-Haq struggled for timing. When Fakhar threw his bat at a length ball from Karan and got a thick outside edge, wicketkeeper Asif Sheikh stretched to his left to grab it with both hands. In the next over, Rohit Paudel nailed a direct hit from mid-off to find Imam short.

With Pakistan 25 for 2, Babar and Mohammad Rizwan started rebuilding the innings. Playing risk-free cricket and still picking up a boundary here and there, they took the side to 100 in the 22nd over.

But then Nepal struck back, once again via their fielding. This time Dipendra Singh Airee, from cover, hit the stumps at the bowler's end to find Rizwan's bat and both feet in the air as the batter tried to avoid getting hit by the throw. Had Rizwan run normally and grounded his bat, he would have been safe. He made 44 off 50 balls.

Agha Salman attempted a sweep from well outside off and a reverse sweep in the first three balls he faced; neither shot fetched him any runs. Three overs later, he tried another reverse sweep, off Sandeep Lamichhane, but failed to keep it down and was caught at short third.

At 124 for 4, Pakistan were in trouble but Babar was unperturbed. Against spin, he used the cut shot well to rotate the strike, and reached his fifty in 72 balls.

While Nepal fielded like the World XI at certain times, they looked like Ilford Second XI at others. Having dropped Imam on 5 earlier, they put down Babar on 55, not to mention several other causal efforts resulting in misfields.

Babar made them pay. He started finding the boundary with increasing frequency and got to his hundred in 109 balls. Fittingly, it was another cut shot against spin that took him to the milestone. After that, he really opened up. In the 45th over, he hit Kami for 4, 4 and 6 off successive balls before smashing back-to-back sixes off Lamichhane.

From the other end, Iftikhar was even more brutal. In fact, it was his knock that allowed Babar

to shift the gears gradually.

Iftikhar attacked right from the moment he came to the crease. He hit the first six of the innings when he launched Kami over deep mid-wicket in the 35th over. It took him just 67 balls to bring up his maiden ODI hundred against a helpless Nepal attack. In all, Iftikhar hit 11 fours and four sixes as Pakistan ransacked 129 in the last ten overs.

Shaheen Shah Afridi then picked up two wickets in the first over of the chase. He first strangled Kushal Bhurtel down the leg side before trapping Paudel lbw for a first-ball duck. In the next over, Naseem Shah had Asif caught at first slip to make it 14 for 3.

Aarif Sheikh and Kami gave the innings some semblance of stability by adding 59 off 78 balls but the pair didn't last long against Haris Rauf's pace. He first cleaned up Aarif and then had Kami caught behind. The only resistance Pakistan's fast bowlers faced was from the muggy weather: both Shaheen and Haris had to leave the field for a breather after their first spells. Nepal's lower order was no match for Shadab's variations. Mixing his legbreaks and googlies, he picked up the last four wickets to finish with figures of 4 for 27.

Pakistan beat India 5-4 in 5s Asia Hockey Cup thriller

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's streak of impressive victories in the ongoing 5s Asia Hockey Cup in Salalah, Oman continued, as they defeated arch-rivals India 5-4 in a nerve-wracking match in their third match Wednesday.

Arshad Liaquat scored two goals, Zakaria Hayat, Abdul Rehman and Rana Abdul Waheed scored one goal each in Pakistan's victory.

Pakistan Hockey Federation President Brigadier Khalid Sajjad Khokhar awarded \$100 per player for their excellent performance against India.

Earlier in the day, Pakistan defeated Bangladesh 15-6 in their second match. Pakistan's Arshad Liaquat was awarded the man of the match award.

For Pakistan, captain Rana Abdul Waheed Ashraf scored 4 goals, Arshad Liaquat 3 goals, Muhammad Abdullah 3 goals, Abdul Rehman 2 goals, while Ehtesham Aslam, Murtaza Yaqub and Zakaria Hayat scored one goal each.

In the first match of the event, Pakistan beat Japan 26-1.

Head Coach World Hockey Cup Gold Medalist Pride of Performance Olympian Waseem Feroze is performing the coaching duties of Pakistan.

Pakistan team includes Goalkeepers: Abdullah Ishtiaq Khan, Ali Raza, Defender: Muhammad Abdullah, Midfields: Ehtsham Aslam, Muhammad Murtaza Yaqoob, Strikers: Arshad Liaquat, Zakaria Hayat, Rana Abdul Waheed Ashraf, Abdul Rehman and Abdul Wahab.

Eleven teams are participating in the five-sided Asia Cup, including Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Bangladesh, Hong Kong China, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and the host country Oman.

Iran bans weightlifter for life over handshake with Israeli

TEHRAN (Agencies): An Iranian weightlifter has been given a lifetime ban by authorities in the Islamic republic after shaking hands with an Israeli competitor at an event in Poland, state media reported.

Mostafa Rajaei, aged in his 40s, shook hands with Israeli weightlifter Maksim Svirsky on Saturday after they both stood on the podium at a World Masters championship in Wieliczka, Poland.

"The weightlifting federation bans athlete Mostafa Rajaei for life from entering all sports facilities in the country and dismisses the head of the delegation for the competition, Hamid Salehinia," the body announced in a statement cited by state news agency IRNA.

Iran does not recognize Israel, its sworn enemy, and prohibits all contact between Iranian and Israeli athletes.

According to the IRNA report, Rajaei "crossed the red lines of the Islamic republic" at the event where the Iranian delegation had been "sent with the support of the federation." Rajaei is a former member of the Iranian national team and represented his country at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in 2015 in Thailand.

In 2021, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged athletes "not to shake hands with a representative of the (Israeli) criminal regime to obtain a medal." For years, Iranian athletes have managed to avoid meeting Israelis in competitions, often by getting disqualified or providing medical certificates testifying that they were unwell.

Young chess prodigy Alireza Firouzja left Iran after the sport's federation banned him from playing in the 2019 world championship for fear he would face an Israeli player. He is now a naturalized French citizen.

34th National Games: KP medals winners athletes await cash prizes

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa medal winners of the 34th National Games were still waiting for their cash prizes, President Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association Syed Aqil Shah said on Wednesday.

The performance of our players was excellent, but despite the passage of three months, they could not get their cash prizes as promised by the then Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Riaz Anwar.

President Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association Syed Aqil Shah said that the players who won medals for the province in the 34th National Games held in Quetta were not awarded the prize money despite the passage of three months.

Provincial Olympic Association President Syed Aqil Shah said that the players of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had given outstanding performances by winning 49 medals with four gold medals, two in sailing and one each in Badminton, Judo, six silver medals, with four silver medals in sailing and one silver medal each in Judo and Wushu and 39 bronze medals including 10 in Taekwondo, seven in Wushu, four each in Judo and Karate, two each in sailing, Tennis, wrestling and one each in Badminton, bodybuilding, boxing, cycling, shooting, squash, archery and weightlifting.

It was an excellent performance, Aqil Shah said. This is the first time that our athletes have given a good performance and won dozens of medals.

It is commendable in terms of quality, but despite this, prize money announced by the former sports minister for the National Games medal winners, no one is there to appreciate the athletes.

He said even in Balochistan, AJK, Islamabad, Sindh and Punjab players were given cash prizes for winning medals but the players of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been deprived of such encouragement.

He said, "We had a squad of 437 and we beat 600 players from Balochistan and 500 players from Punjab, which is quite encouraging on the part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa players," Aqil Shah said.

Two young sisters from Sindh won gold and silver medals for their province and not only increased the good name of their province but also lowered the position of our province by a notch. Compared to other provinces, our performance was very good, but the players of Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan had already received the prize money two months ago, while our athletes were still deprived, they have demanded the provincial government to award cash prizes to the players.

"The players' cash prizes should be given as soon as possible so that the players can actively participate in the upcoming national and inter-provincial games," Aqil Shah concluded.

Murray among clean sweep of British wins at US Open



NEW YORK (Agencies): Andy Murray was one of six British players to win their first-round matches on a superb day for the nation at the US Open.

Murray kept focus against combustible Frenchman Corentin Moutet to win 6-2 7-5 6-3 in an entertaining encounter. Katie Boulter and Jodie Burrage both claimed main-draw victories in New York for the first time. Cameron Norrie, Dan Evans and Jack Draper also won as all the Britons progressed without dropping a set.

Boulter, 27, started the clean sweep with a 6-4 6-0 win over France's Diane Parry, before 16th seed Norrie won 6-3 6-2 6-2 against Russia's Alexander Shevchenko.

Former world number one Murray then saw off the challenge of Moutet before Draper beat Moldova's Radu Albot 6-1 6-4 6-3 and Dan Evans earned a 6-4 6-2 7-5 win against Colombia's Daniel Elahi Galan.

Burrage completed a successful day for British tennis, which has faced questions - particularly on the women's side - about its lack of depth at the top level, with a 6-3 6-4 victory over Russia's Anna Blinkova.

Qualifier Lily Miyazaki also reached the second round in straight sets when she earned her first win at a major on Monday. Burrage

said she felt "a little pressure" knowing she was trying to maintain the British winning streak on Tuesday. "I wish I hadn't known everyone else had won when I was going on court, but who knows, maybe it helped me," she said. "It puts you in a better mood when other people are winning. It makes you believe that you can do it a little bit more."

"It has been a good day for the Brits."

'He always causes chaos' - Murray happy to progress

Three-time major champion Murray showed plenty of his vast experience to come through a testing encounter against 72nd-ranked Moutet. An abdominal injury left the 36-year-old coming into the final Grand Slam event of the season with less court time than he would have liked and he was pushed physically in humid conditions - as well as being challenged mentally.

Moutet likes to switch up his patterns of play in a bid to confuse opponents, but Murray was able to anticipate and reacted well to dominate the opening set.

Murray saved two set points to fight back from a break down in the second set, again closing it out strongly by winning four straight games.

His ability to frustrate his rivals was shown by the demonstrative Moutet destroying a racquet, and

pretending to eat the ball, to indicate his frustration at not being able to level the match. Murray retained his composure despite everything that was happening in an action-packed encounter.

In the third set, Moutet took a tumble where he landed awkwardly on his left wrist, Murray seemed to be dealing with cramp himself and there was also the first use of VAR-style technology at a major for a double bounce. "It was an amazing match," said Murray, who clinched victory in just under three hours to become only the ninth man to win 200 Grand Slam singles matches. "He is one of the most skillful players on the tour, he has so many different ways to disrupt you. He always causes a bit of chaos out there. I hope it was entertaining, there were a lot of fun points. I'm happy to get through because the second set was so tight."

Murray will renew rivalries with Bulgarian 19th seed Grigor Dimitrov, who saved three match points before beating Slovakia's Alex Molcan from two sets down, in the second round on Thursday.

Boulter looking to re-establish herself among world's elite

Boulter climbed to a career-high ranking of 60th in the world earlier this month after a strong summer on the British grass where she won her first WTA title in Nottingham and reached the Wimbledon third round.

Those results enabled her to re-establish her place in the top 100, four years after dropping out because of stress fracture to her back.

After earning only her second major win outside of Wimbledon, she said: "I want to consolidate my ranking and really show that week in, week out I can play these girls and get a lot of wins against them."



In brief

Two members of vehicle lifter gang held

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police Koral and Phulgran police station teams have arrested two members of vehicle lifter gang involved in numerous vehicle lifting activities and recovered stolen car and motorbike from their possession, a public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police had categorically started a crackdown against criminal elements in order to save the precious lives and property of citizens. Following these directions, the Koral police teams used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending wanted members of the car lifter gang involved in numerous vehicle lifting activities. The accused was identified as Umer Shakeel. Police team also recovered one stolen car from his possession.

7 absconders involved in heinous crime held

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police have arrested seven absconders involved in heinous crime during the last 48 hours, a public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, special tasks were assigned to all seniors' police officials to ensure the arrest of proclaimed offenders and absconders involved in heinous crimes. During the crackdown, the Islamabad Capital Police Golra, Tarnol, Phulgran and Noon police station teams have arrested seven absconders involved in heinous crime during the last 48 hours. ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan said that the Islamabad Capital Police is taking all possible steps to eradicate crime from the city and those involved in heinous crimes and illegal activities will be dealt with iron hands. Safety to the lives and property of the citizens is the foremost priority of Islamabad Capital Police, he added.

Two wanted members of car lifter gang held

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Anti Vehicle Lifting Unit (AVLU) of Islamabad Capital Police has arrested two wanted members of a car lifter gang and recovered three stolen vehicles worth rupees 3.1 million from their possession, a Police Public Relation Officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, special tasks were assigned to SSP Investigation and teams were constituted under the supervision of Incharge AVLU to ensure effective action against those involved in car theft activities. The police teams used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending two wanted members of the car lifter gang and recovered three stolen vehicles Nissan, Suzuki Khyber and Suzuki Mehran worth rupees 3.1 million from their possession. The accused were identified as Saghir Hussain Shah and Muzammil Aslam Naz. During the preliminary investigation, the accused confessed to being involved in numerous car lifting incidents in various areas of Islamabad, Rawalpindi and other districts.



ISLAMABAD: A group photo of participants during interfaith harmony conference at PNCA.

First Lady hails positive role of media in promoting awareness for 'Breast cancer'

ISLAMABAD (APP): First Lady of Pakistan, Begum Samina Arif Alvi Wednesday hailed the supporting role played by the media in promoting awareness drives to educate and motivate women in remote areas for self-examination voluntarily seek early diagnosis of breast cancer.

In an exclusive interview with PTV news channel, she underlined the need for continuous mass awareness campaigns through print, electronic and social media, especially for sensitization of women and girls in far-flung areas of the country about its symptoms, self-examination, diagnosis and treatment options.

"If women are being diagnosed with breast cancer, they do not even share the news with their family members", she added.

Women in Pakistan lacked appropriate awareness about diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer due to a range of multifaceted barriers, however now women are much more confident and approach

doctors in the early stages, she mentioned.

She stressed that the healthcare system should also pay more attention to socio-psychological and cultural factors impeding women's access to available health facilities in rural areas. Replying to a question, she regretted that women are still neglecting society's priorities, adding, that unaware women in remote areas of Pakistan are the main target group in awareness drives as they are the ones who are at a higher risk of developing breast cancer because they neglect the symptoms due to lack of awareness which leads to progression of the disease and may prove lethal.

To another question about mental health, she stressed the need for raising awareness about mental health and the need to increase the number of mental health professionals, besides strengthening the capacity of general health professionals by training them to address the challenge of rising mental health disorders.

lighted that if an individual changes the IMEI number of a mobile phone and uses it on another device, it can be determined which IMEI number is original and which one has been altered. On this occasion, the CDA Officers emphasized the need for assistance from Islamabad Capital Police in transforming public parks into modern facilities. Moreover, CDA officers suggested the installation of cameras in public parks, market areas and internal and external roads with monitoring

The total number of psychiatrists available in Pakistan ranges between 500 and 600 which is not satisfactory, she added.

"The government started an initiative to provide consultative services of relevant practitioners and groups for cure purposes to citizens having psychological issues such as self-harming thoughts and depression", she added.

She also stressed adopting the joint family system to address mental health issues. To another question, she warned that excessive use of social media platforms is a main contributor to depression, anxiety and other problems in the nation's young population.

Talking about special persons awareness drives she said the government's vision is focused on improving the conditions of weaker people in society or those unfortunate who have been suffering from various issues, adding that, the welfare of special persons is a big challenge and all segments of the society need to work for it collectively.

13 incompetent parties responsible for economic disaster: Sh Rashid

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Awami Muslim League leader and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid d Ahmed says the 16-month rule of the 13 "incompetent" parties is the cause of ruination of Pakistan's economy. Taking to social media website X, formerly Twitter, the ex-minister wrote on Wednesday that inflation had gone sky-high. Electricity bills have doubled. Soon, the IMF will withdraw support.

Rashid wondered that the Election Commission of Pakistan released the schedule of demarcation of constituencies first and called the political parties later for consultation.

The former minister said the masses were not a political party, they were a symbol of stability and security of the country. To Rashid, the problem is more economic than political. "Inflation and electricity have become a matter of survival. Neither the kitchen is running nor the factory nor the shop [due to inflation]," he concluded.

12 more dengue cases reports in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 12 more dengue cases were reported in Rawalpindi during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 188 in the district.

District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control (DCEPC), Dr Sajjad Mahmood, Wednesday said that, among the new cases, six cases had arrived from Potohar town urban, five from Chaklala Cantonment and one from Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi area. He said 54 patients were admitted to Rawalpindi public hospitals, out of which 42 were confirmed cases while 132 were discharged after treatment. Giving details of the punitive actions during the last 24 hours, Dr Sajjad informed that the district administration had registered 57 FIRs, issued tickets to 15, sealed three premises, and a fine of Rs 50,000 was imposed against the violations of dengue SOPs.

During indoor surveillance, from January 1 to date, the teams checked 4,523,648 houses in Rawalpindi district and larvae were found in 27,164 homes.

through the Safe City Command and Control Center.

Additionally, a proposal was made to install emergency buttons in dimly lit areas, he added.

Furthermore, the CPO Safe City/Traffic recommended the inclusion of identification card records for individuals visiting public parks in the new system. CPO Safe City/Traffic expressed firm cooperation with the officers and arranged a visit to the Safe City Command and Control Center.

CPO safe city/traffic hold meeting with Capital Police IT experts and CDA officials

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A meeting was held to discuss the enhancement of security in public parks and markets focusing on effectively identifying stolen or lost mobile phones through IMEI numbers, a police public relation officer said.

He said that the purpose of the meeting was to devise strategies for tracing mobile phones of accused involved in thefts and criminal activities using IMEI numbers as well as to overhaul the recording and obsolete systems.

The IT experts high-

20 outlaws arrested; drugs and weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police apprehended 20 outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police have intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directives, the Kohsar police team arrested three accused namely Janat Gul, Ramish Shakeel and Adeel and recovered 615 gram heroin and two 30 bore pistols with ammunition from their possession. Karachi Company police team arrested two accused namely Shaheen and Aqeel involved in drug peddling and recovered 1,085 heroin from their possession. The Golra police team arrested an accused namely Mushtaq Ali and recovered one iron punch from his possession.

Likewise, the Tarnol police team arrested six accused namely Khayal Muhammad, Said Muhammad, Hamad Khan, Yasir Khan, Ghulam Murtaza and Alam Khan involved in illegally refilling

gas cylinders. The Shams Colony police team arrested two accused namely Hasnain Alam Zaib and Ishtiaq involved in illegally selling petrol.

Similarly, the Kirpa police team arrested an accused namely Tanveer Ahmed and recovered 12 tin of beer from his possession. The Humak police team arrested two accused namely Sajjad Hussain and Abdul Qadir involved in drug peddling and recovered 1,057 gram hashish from their possession. The Phulgran police team arrested an accused namely Khan Wali involved in illegally selling petrol.

During a crackdown against absconders police teams arrested two absconders from various areas of the city. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is under way.

ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan directed all senior officials for an effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons. He further said that the safety of the lives and property of the citizens is our prime responsibility and the performance of police officials in this regard would be reviewed on a continuous basis.

Madad acknowledges IBCC's vital role in education sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi Wednesday paid a visit to the Inter Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) and acknowledged the IBCC's vital role in education sector.

During his visit, he was given a comprehensive briefing by Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah, the Executive Director of IBCC, shedding light on the organization's vital mandate, functions, roles, and responsibilities. During the briefing, Dr. Mallah highlighted the contributions of IBCC in the education sector of Pakistan.

He illustrated IBCC's role in standardizing and streamlining the examination and evaluation systems across various educational boards in the country.

Furthermore, Dr. Mallah provided insights into the pivotal role IBCC played in ensuring the equivalence of educational certificates, which greatly facilitated students in pursuing further studies both domestically and internationally.

Dr. Mallah further briefed about IBCC's new initiatives and transformative IT reforms. He elaborated on the progressive steps taken by IBCC to embrace technology, which has led to

improved efficiency and accessibility of services for students, educational institutions and other stakeholders. These IT reforms are not only revolutionizing the operational aspects of IBCC but also contributing to a more transparent and expedited evaluation process.

The minister applauded the dedication and endeavors of IBCC in strengthening the education sector's quality and effectiveness. He acknowledged the IBCC's role in ensuring standardized and credible examination reforms, which subsequently elevate the value of Pakistani educational qualifications on the global stage.

The minister expressed his support for IBCC's continued efforts towards educational excellence and emphasized the importance of sustained collaboration between government bodies and educational institutions.

The visit concluded on a positive note, with Minister Madad Ali Sindhi expressing his appreciation for IBCC's commitment to enhancing the education system of Pakistan. He assured his support for the ongoing initiatives and reforms introduced by IBCC, underscoring the government's determination to foster an environment conducive to progressive and holistic education.

ANF seizes 464 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 464 kg of drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that in an operation near Motorway Toll Plaza Sheikhupura, 62.4 kg hashish and 3.8 kg opium were recovered from a vehicle. Three accused residents of Okara were arrested during the operation. In an operation at Allama Iqbal International Airport, 645 grams of heroin was recovered from a parcel being sent to Kuwait. In the third operation, ANF conducted a raid at an uninhabited house in Qilla Abdullah and recovered

380 kg of Ice drug and 158 litres of prohibited chemicals. 2000 litres of chemical was destroyed on the spot during the operation. In the fourth operation at Bacha Khan International Airport, 1667 grams of Ice drug was recovered from a passenger's trolley bag.

The accused, a resident of Lucky Marwat, was leaving for Jeddah on flight number SV-797. During two operations in the Zakha Khel area of Khyber, 16 kg of hashish concealed for smuggling was recovered. The spokesman informed that separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against all the accused while further investigations are under process.

CTO visits traffic chowki Civil Lines

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan made a surprise visit to traffic chowki Civil Lines here on Wednesday. CTO said that traffic wardens should work diligently to maintain flow of traffic. According to CTP spokesman, CTO also reviewed the existing record at the traffic chowki.

CTO expressed dissatisfaction cleanliness arrangements over there.

He directed duty officer to improve cleanliness and keep the surrounding clean further. CTO instructed the sector in-charges should submit a report on wardens' turnout, cleaning and administrative issues on daily basis. Khan said additional personnel should be deployed at rush hours and locations to maintain flow.

Sanjrani, FNF delegation discuss multilateral issues of mutual interest

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani was called by a delegation from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) at Parliament House on Wednesday and discussed with him multidimensional issues of bilateral interests.

The FNF delegation comprised Dr. Carsten Klein (Regional Director, FNF South Asia), Ms. Birgit Lamm (Head of Country Office, FNF Pakistan), and Ms. Rebea Firdous (Communication Officer, FNF Pakistan Office). The meeting focused on a range of crucial areas, most notably renewable energy initiatives, fostering women's entrepreneurship, and fortifying the Pak-German trade relationship within the ambit of the GSP+ framework.

Of particular note was the foundation's unwavering commitment to nurturing a business-friendly landscape in Pakistan. This commitment was further underlined by an insightful exploration of challenges faced by businesses and entrepreneurs, with a focus on proactive solutions. In addition, FNF shared valuable insights from their ongoing study titled "Energy Security and Transition to Renewable Energies in South Asia," illuminating pathways toward sustainable energy practices. The foundation also shed light on their collaborative efforts in empowering women entrepreneurs, a pivotal aspect of economic progress, in close collaboration with chambers of commerce in both Pakistan and Germany.

A poignant moment arose during the interaction as the visiting delegation presented a symbolic fragment of the Berlin Wall, evoking historical memories and embodying the spirit of unity. In response,

Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani exhibited profound appreciation for this gesture of remembrance. Recognizing the historical value and symbolic significance of the artifact, he directed its placement within the Senate Museum.

Senators Manzoor Ahmed Kakar, Nasebullah Bazi, Palwasha Muhammadzai Khan, Secretary Senate Mohammad Qasim Samad Khan and DG Coordination Senate Mir Shai Mazar Baloch graced the meeting with their presence, further enriching the discourse with their perspectives and insights. In his concluding remarks, the Chairman Senate expressed gratitude for FNF's earnest efforts in bolstering the ties between Germany and Pakistan. He lauded the foundation's role in advancing democratic values and sustainable development, underscoring its indispensable contribution to the progress of both nations.

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti in a meeting with visiting Saudi Delegation.

Gold mine collapse kills 3

TALUQAN (Xinhua): Three miners have been killed after they were trapped underground in a collapsed mine in Takhar province on Wednesday. Several miners were working in a tunnel of a gold mine in Rastaq district on Tuesday afternoon when the tunnel caved in, killing three miners, provincial police spokesman Abdul Mobin Safi said. Without providing more details, the official added that an investigation had been initiated into the exact cause of the accident.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Saffar 13, 1445 — Thursday, August 31, 2023

Teenage hostage freed

KANDAHAR (Agencies): Security forces in Kandahar province have secured the release of a teenager who had been kidnapped and taken to Iran. The Kandahar security officials say the teenager is originally from Farah and was taken to Iran by kidnappers, who demanded a ransom for his release. Officials said the kidnappers had a contact person in Spin Boldak and once he was arrested, the kidnappers released the boy, Ezatullah, who was returned through Spin Boldak district.

DAB launches plan to promote Afghani currency

KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghanistan Bank, the central bank of Afghanistan, has launched a plan to promote the use of Afghani currency and ban the use of foreign money in domestic transactions. The plan aims to strengthen the banking sector and stabilize the value of Afghani.

On the occasion, a workshop was held in Kandahar, where governors, police chiefs, intelligence chiefs, mayors, traders, money-changers, and bankers from the southwest zone of the country participated.

Hedayatullah Badri, act-



ing governor of Da Afghanistan Bank, stated that the Afghani currency is stable and has maintained its value in comparison to

the currencies of other countries in the region.

Mr. Badri urged the people of the southern region to fulfill their civic obliga-

tion of promoting the local currency by utilizing it in all domestic transactions.

He also stated that during the next two and a half months, the use of Afghani currency will become common in the southwest zone of the country.

Haji Mullah Shirin Akhund, the governor of Kandahar, hailed the initiative and encouraged people, particularly traders and industrialists to utilize their country's currency in daily transactions. He referred to the plan as a national process that should be supported by everyone.

US supports Afghan girls' education

KABUL (Agencies): A US State Department official says that in all their engagements with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) they advocate for girls' education.

Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, Beth van Schaack, Ambassador-at-large for Global Criminal Justice, said: "When it comes to girls' education, indeed this is one of the most unconscionable acts of the Taliban, to deny young girls the ability to plan their own life paths, to operate in public, to have — to contribute to the growth and vibrancy of that particular society.

"And so in all of our engagements there we are constantly pushing to have some of those restrictions be relaxed. We have a special envoy who's dedicated to women and girls and their plight within Afghanistan, and she is constantly engaging with officials in an effort to improve the situation and life for girls and women," she said.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has however defended its decisions and actions against women and says that they have been treated according to Islamic Sharia and asks the international community not to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

75 Afghan prisoners released

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the release of 75 Afghan prisoners from the prisoners of Pakistan.

According to the statement released by the Foreign Affairs Ministry, 75 Afghan prisoners, including six children, were released following the efforts of the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad and the Consulate Office in Karachi.

According to the statement, the released citizens were assisted in their transition to Afghanistan, and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) covered the cost of their return.

It should be noted that 2,516 Afghan detainees, including women and children, were freed from various Pakistani jails and returned to Afghanistan, thanks to the efforts of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA).

The statement continued that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is actively working to facilitate the release of the remaining Afghans being imprisoned in Pakistani jails.

Appointment in provinces announced

KABUL (Agencies): The spokesman of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Zabiullah Mujahid said in a statement, that according to the decree of Amir-al-Muminin, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Emirate, new appointments have been made in several provinces.

Based on this decree, Mawlawi Abdul Ali Qadratullah, the former governor of Logar, was appointed as the governor of Parwan province, Mawlawi Zia-ur-Rahman Madani, the former governor of Takhar, as the governor of Logar province, Mawlawi Obaidullah Aminzada, the former governor of Parwan as the governor of Takhar province, Haji Mohammad Osman, former governor of Kunar as the police chief of Kapisa province, Mullah Sirajuddin, former police chief of Jawzjan province as police chief of Faryab province, Saryullah Farahmand, former chief of the Council of Ulema of Kunduz Province as the Chairman of the Kunduz Zone Military Court, and Sheikh Abdul Waris, the former head of Kunduz Zone Military Court was appointed as the Chairman of the Balkh Zone Military Court.

Deputy PM meets Kabul Mayor

— calls for joint efforts to improve urban facilities



KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, met with the acting mayor of Kabul, Mawlawi Ismatullah Asim, and discussed the activities, achievements and plans of the city municipality.

Mr. Asim informed the deputy Prime Minister of the significant efforts made by the municipality

to develop and improve public facilities, urban order, and greenery in Kabul city. He also said that they have many other plans for the city administration.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir stated that all Afghans should work for the welfare and stability of Afghanistan, but that the municipality could do more to improve the urban adminis-

tration of Kabul.

He also stated that Kabul should be a standard and prosperous city, which is related not only to the city government but also to other accountable institutions and the Kabul people.

He stated that everyone should help with the rehabilitation, development, and provision of fresh facilities in Kabul.

ICRC vows to stay and continue services

KABUL (Agencies): The International Committee of the Red Cross announced that it will remain in Afghanistan and continue to provide essential humanitarian services to the Afghan people.

Eloi Fillion, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross delegation in Afghanistan, says, they have plans to provide humanitarian services for the next two years.

The ICRC has a plan for

the next two years to deliver health care, nutrition, physical rehabilitation, and other assistance, she said.

Fillion said that ICRC will continue to support the Afghan hospitals, especially in emergency care and orthopedics.

However, she also said that the responsibility for the financial management of all hospitals will be transferred to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

from Thursday, August 31. ICRC plans to continue support for 47 primary healthcare centers and wants to continue work to improve the health situation in detention centers.

The ICRC urged the international community and development organizations to increase their aid for Afghanistan and its vital structures. It said that many Afghans, who have suffered for years, need humanitarian help.

US vows to ensure safety of Afghan newcomers



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Biden administration has promised to ensure the safety, security and well-being of Afghan newcomers. In line with this commitment, the Department of Homeland Security started hosting Afghan Support Centers earlier this summer to help streamline immigration and social service accessibility.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said the US government was also committed to working with Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act to provide a durable immigration pathway for those currently on parole.

In a statement on the

two-year anniversary of Operation Allies Welcome on Tuesday, he said: "Our allies deserve certainty and stability, which only Congress can guarantee through legislation..."

Congress had approved similar measures in support of US partners after the Vietnam and Gulf Wars, as well as conflicts.

Mayorkas recalled his department two years ago to lead Operation Allies Welcome, aimed to provide refuge to Afghans nationals, including those who stood alongside the US in Afghanistan for two decades.

"Today, our country is

stronger because of the more than 115,000 Afghans we have welcomed since the summer of 2021 who contribute so much to our communities across America."

The official acknowledged the Afghan newcomers contributed to the US economy, supported their families and enriched the cultural fabric of American society.

He commended the intra-governmental workforce, veterans' networks, and Americans for supporting Afghan allies in their moment of need. "We are ready to work with Congress to finish the mission."

Afghan woman wins 2023 World Peace Prize in Sweden

KABUL (Khaama Press): Nargis Mommand Hassanzai, an Afghan woman, has clinched the 2023 World Peace Prize in Sweden. Her resolute commitment to human rights has earned global recognition, showcasing the potential of individuals to drive positive change even in the face of adversity.

Hassanzai conveyed her heartfelt gratitude for the honour on her social media platform, X, "I wish to extend my deepest gratitude for the honour of being awarded the World Peace Award 2023. It is with great humility that I accept this prestigious recognition, and I am sincerely thankful to all those who have supported and contributed to my journey towards promoting peace."

Her journey encompasses a resilient fight against oppression, inequality, freedom of speech, and gender injustice.

This award is a significant accomplishment for Afghan women, representing two years of solid commitment to overcoming challenges in education and society.

Hassanzai was a former Kabul University lecturer and a human rights advocate. This award acknowl-



edges her dedicated work in Afghanistan.

This award signifies the relentless struggle of Afghan women against injustice and suppression policies against women, as well as the resolute endeavour to reshape their country, promoting justice and equality.

Nargis Hassanzai's profound impact lifts the veil of darkness shrouding Afghan women's lives, revealing the shadow over their rights, humanity, and their country's portrayal.

She is making a difference by securing scholarships and contributing to Afghan women's football, acknowledged by FIFA. Her efforts led to official recognition of Afghan women's football and participation in European competitions.

In 2023, the Nobel Prize from Sweden celebrated Afghanistan's unwavering resilience, sharing the extraordinary essence of the Afghan people with nations worldwide.

The resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan has had a dire impact on the fundamental rights of women in the country. One of the most distressing consequences is denying their rights to education and employment, effectively confining them to their homes.

The absence of women in educational institutions and the workforce not only limits their personal growth but also stifles innovation and progress within the country.

Afghan forces recover more arms, ammunition in northern Afghanistan



MAZAR-I-SHARIF

(Xinhua): Afghan security forces have recovered a huge number of arms

and ammunition in a series of operations in the northern province of Balkh, provincial head of counter-terrorism

Atta Mohammad Bilal said.

In the operations, "the security forces have found different types of weapons including 37 Kalashnikov rifles, nine pistols, a PK machine gun along with thousands of bullets," Bilal told Xinhua, adding that they arrested three persons over illegal possession of arms and ammunition.

Security forces discovered eight weapon caches, which contain 250 pieces of different kinds of light and heavy weapons in Balkh province over the past year and arrested 25 people over illegal possession of arms and ammunition, the police said.

The Afghan caretaker government has vowed to recover arms and ammunition from anyone living outside the security organs.

MoIC common home of all authors and poets, says Minister

KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Information and Culture Minister Mullah Khairullah Khairkhan met with the provincial Directors of National Radio and Television, the ministry said in a statement.

Welcoming the provincial directors of national radio and television, Minister

Khairkhan said that the Ministry of Information and Culture is the common home of all authors and poets, according to the statement.

"People's problems should be addressed on time and if someone fails in addressing the assigned responsibility, he will be accountable first to Allah

and then to the people; therefore, all directors should strive to present a good image of the Islamic Emirate to the people," the statement quoted Mullah Khairkhan.

The provincial directors of national radio and television are not only the representatives or spokespersons

of the MoIC but are the spokesmen of the entire Islamic system, the said added quoting Khairkhan.

The directors of Radio and Television of provinces have been provided with a three-day workshop by the Ministry of Information and Culture in the capital Kabul.

UK Embassy commits \$125 million for Afghan children's education

KABUL (Khaama Press): The British Embassy for Afghanistan has announced a commitment of \$125 million to support vulnerable individuals in Afghanistan. This assistance will focus on areas such as children's education.

On Tuesday, the Embassy said on its official page that these contribu-

tions will be concentrated on the education of Afghan children.

The UK's representation for Afghanistan emphasized their commitment to a secure and prosperous Afghanistan, and the aid provided will be channelled through their partners to support vulnerable people, especially girls.

Meanwhile, the United

Nations Children's Fund has reported providing cash assistance to over 80,000 Afghan citizens in the first six months of this year.

Additionally, the UN-affiliated aid organizations had previously warned about budget cuts and increasing humanitarian needs in Afghanistan.

A reported budget short-

fall in Afghanistan is poised to strip millions of their access to vital healthcare and sufficient food.

This dire situation jeopardizes the fragile healthcare system and exacerbates food insecurity, creating a pressing humanitarian crisis that demands immediate attention and action from the international community.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the closing ceremony of Huawei ICT competition at Aitwan-e-Sadr.

Caretaker govt to remain apolitical, impartial: KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Azam Khan has said that the caretaker government will keep itself restricted to its constitutional and legal role and remain apolitical, impartial and will perform its duties without any sort of political affiliation.

He expressed these views while presiding over the 9th meeting of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker cabinet here on Wednesday. Besides caretaker cabinet members, the meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and concerned administrative secretaries. In his address to the participants of the meeting, the Chief Minister welcomed the new cabinet members.

The chief minister said that the role, responsibilities, and dos and don'ts of the caretaker setup is very much clear in the relevant provisions of the constitution and Election Commission Act 2017. Azam Khan remarked that the caretaker government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is faced with two major challenges: law and order and financial crunch, and continued that improvement of the prevailing law and order situation would be the top priority of government and pledged to make all-out efforts to this end.

He said that the province is largely dependent on the federal government, with regard to its revenue, and more than 90 percent of its revenue comes from various federal receipts and added that after the merger of ex-FATA, the population of the province has increased, and as per the existing population ratio, the NFC shares of the province has climbed to 19 percent of the federal divisible pool, but unfortunately, it is getting only 14.6 percent.

The Chief Minister remarked that at the time of the ex-FATA merger, it was committed by all the federating entities that three percent of their NFC share would be provided for the newly merged districts, whereas it was also pledged that Rs. 100 billion would be provided to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa every year for the accelerated development of the NMDs, but during the last five years, only 103 billion has been provided to the province out of the total 500 billion.

Touching upon the issue of net hydel profit, the Chief Minister said that as per the AGN Qazi formula, Rs. 1200 billion in dues are pending against the federal government, adding that in the given scenario, fast-track uplift of the newly merged districts has become very difficult. Azam Khan informed the new cabinet members that he had already taken up all such issues with the previous federal government for redress and directed the caretaker finance minister to follow up on those cases with the caretaker federal government.

Highlighting the priorities of his government, the chief minister reiterated that his government will focus special attention on merit, transparency, and good governance in its day-to-day business, adding that the administrative secretaries of the provincial government has already been directed to take the necessary steps to this end. He urged the administrative secretaries to give honest and sincere advice to their concerned ministers with regard to the official business of the department. He further directed the cabinet members and administrative secretaries to identify corruption cases, if any, in their respective departments and initiate appropriate actions against those involved.

The agenda for the meeting encompassed seven key points, notably the approval of project revisions, the establishment of a forensic science laboratory at Peshawar, the nomination of an administrative judge for anti-terrorism courts, and fixing matters relating to the Police Public School teachers' case in court.

The meeting's deliberations encompassed the approval of supplementary funding for the Forensic Science Laboratory in Peshawar and revisions to PCI for the Janikhel Bannu Police Station. These measures are anticipated to contribute significantly to counterterrorism efforts and the maintenance of law and order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Furthermore, the cabinet approved the nomination of Senior Judge Justice Ishfaq Ibrahim Khan as an administrative judge for anti-terrorism courts, a recommendation put forth by the Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court.

The cabinet also decided to forward the PC-I for the Women and Children Liaquat Memorial Teaching Hospital in Kohat and the National Programme for Improvement of Water Courses in Pakistan, Phase-II projects to the Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) for reassessment. During the meeting, a sub-committee led by the senior member of the Board of Revenue, was formed to address service rules pertaining to the Provincial Ombudsman office's employees.

The recommendations of a committee formed to address the concerns of police public school teachers were presented and subsequently endorsed by the cabinet. A committee, headed by Caretaker Provincial Minister Syed Masood Shah was also formed to oversee the implementation of these recommendations.

Saudi Crown Prince may pay visit to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman may pay a short visit to Pakistan in the second week of next month, diplomatic sources said on Wednesday.

The possible visit of the Saudi Crown Prince would be of four to six hours as part of first leg of his tour which will later take him to Pakistan's arch-rival India. The Saudi Crown Prince is likely to come to Pakistan on September 10.

During his brief stay, the Saudi royal guest is expected to hold meetings with Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq and Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir with focus on bilateral relations including defence, trade and the oil refinery plan.

Minor housemaid tortured

RAWALPINDI (INP): Another minor housemaid was subjected to 'torture' in Rawalpindi, on Wednesday. Kinza, 8-year-old, was 'beaten' by her lady owner and her husband in Rawalpindi's area of Rawat. According to the father of the minor housemaid, Kinza was tortured by Bakhtawar, the house lady and her husband.

The marks of wounds are visible on the head of the housemaid. A case has been registered against the lady and her husband at the Rawat police station. Meanwhile, SP Saddar and the ASP reached the house of the minor maid to look after her health. The cops assured the family of the provision of justice in the matter.

The cases of torture of minor housemaids are increasing in Punjab despite the presence of a law that bars from hiring of minor maids. Recently, a 14-year-old maid was allegedly subjected to brutal torture by Somalia, wife of a civil judge in Islamabad and a case was lodged by the parents of the girl at a local police station. The wife of a civil judge, who has now been demoted to OSD, Asim Hafeez allegedly tortured her maid Rizwana after blaming her for stealing gold jewellery. Somalia is currently in jail in the case.

Palestinian killed

WEST BANK (Agencies): A Palestinian has been killed by Palestinian Authority (PA) security services in a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, local media reported. Ramzi al-Ardah was shot after armed confrontations took place between the security services and fighters inside the Tulkarem refugee camp on Wednesday.

According to local sources, the confrontations broke out after young men attempted to stop members of the security services from removing barricades armed fighters had put up earlier to obstruct Israel's repeated raids on the camp. Al-Ardah's father Fakhri al-Ardah suffered from suffocation after tear gas canisters were fired by security services, sources said.

The Tulkarem Brigade armed group said in a statement that PA forces fired live bullets at the residents of the camp. "The security services removed the barricades that were placed to block the movement of the occupation forces," the Brigade said. "We will not remain silent over this act that helps the occupation, and we will not tolerate anyone who committed this bloody violation."

A spokesperson for the Palestinian security services, Talal Dweikat, said armed men opened fire in front of a government building, which resulted in their intervention to take control of the situation. Dweikat said the security services responded to complaints from citizens about barriers placed in front of schools and municipal buildings, as well as on roads within the refugee camp.

Armed fighters fired at the security services, and in the ensuing gun battle, a man was killed, Dweikat said, without specifying who was responsible. In a separate incident on Wednesday, a Palestinian man was seriously wounded after being shot by Israeli soldiers following an alleged car-rampage attempt at a checkpoint in the southern occupied West Bank.

Electricity bills become a burden for people, says Sharjeel Memon

F.P. Report

KARACHI: PPP leader and Former Minister for Information, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has emphasized that electricity is currently the most pressing issue. Electricity bills have become a burden for the people, causing widespread concern due to incorrect meter readings, while the People's Party aims to provide relief to the people.

Addressing a press conference at Bilawal House Karachi, alongside former Local Government Minister Nasir Shah, Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the People's Party is well aware of the energy crisis. During its tenure, the party focused on energy projects. In this regard, significant steps have been taken. A coal-based plant at Port Qasim is generating 1320 MW of electricity, while another coal project is producing 2660 MW. Additionally, a Chinese power plant at Lucky Cement is generating 1320 MW of electricity using Thar coal. Despite criticism, coal-fired power generation remains the most cost-effective method.

He mentioned that a 250 MW plant is operational in Ghotki, and plans are underway to establish a 400 MW solar park in Karachi with support from the World Bank. Sharjeel Inam Memon pointed out that estimated billing has resulted in inaccurate electricity charges, which is unacceptable. He stressed that the government must provide relief to the people during challenging times.

The former minister highlighted that PPP is distributing solar panels to 500,000 families, with the party covering 90% of the cost. Families are responsible for the remaining 10%. The distribution is taking place under the BISP program. Moreover, 200,000 families have been facilitated to generate electricity through solar systems. Sharjeel Inam Memon mentioned that when 2.1 million houses were being built after the floods,



Chairman Bilawal suggested providing solar systems. Despite challenges, the People's Bus Service continues to offer rides for 50 rupees.

He criticized the privatization of K Electric, stating that PPP was opposing its privatization, its profits should improve the system, not the pockets of its owners. In rural Sindh, electricity supply is disrupted for up to 20 hours. Sharjeel Inam Memon mentioned that within 24 days, the cries of the PTI chairman became apparent. Imran Khan was arrested on August 5, and his sentence was suspended on August 29, granting him relief within 24 days. Those who are awaiting justice with pending appeals should also receive such relief. Many individuals have been languishing in jails for 20-20 years, including members of the People's Party and various other parties, who were incarcerated for 5-5 years solely under the pretext of investigations. VIP justice is unacceptable, and there is no example of "Good to See You" and "Ladlaism".

He said that those who talked to divide to the people are being granted relief; there should not be double standards in Pakistan. You don't have time to listen to the case of the person who made the country a nuclear power, while those who campaigned against the institutions should not be overlooked.

Sharjeel Inam Memon mentioned that Chairman PTI is requesting milk and chicken while in custody. In response to a question, he mentioned that the Muttahida Qaumi Movement had previously obtained a stay order on jobs. PPP used to provide jobs, but there is a procedure for everything. The individuals who were receiving jobs underwent testing, and those who passed the tests were being given jobs. In this era of inflation, those who were meant to receive jobs were initially on board, but now they are protesting.

Speaking at the press conference, PPP leader and former Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Shah stated that no matter how many alliances are formed, they cannot rival the PPP. He noted that while alliances are continually being established, the Pakistan People's Party does not view them as a challenge. In Sindh, the People's Party anticipates a sweeping victory during the elections. After securing the elections, the party intends to engage in a genuine battle against poverty, inflation, and unemployment.

He mentioned that the additional charges in the electricity bills are a matter of concern, and the PPP insists on their breakdown. Additionally, there are concerns of tampering with the electricity bills.



KARACHI: Hindu women celebrating Hindu festival Raksha Bandhan at Laxmi Narayan Temple.

Dollar available for Rs304 with rupee reaching a new low

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan rupee continues shattering records as it reached a new low against the US dollar during early trading on Wednesday, with the official exchange climbing to Rs304. On Tuesday, the rupee had closed at Rs303.05, which means the local currency had declined by Rs0.95 so far in today's session.

The latest series of setting new records had begun on August 22 with the rupee touching the 299 mark for the first time in Pakistan's history, translating into a loss of Rs7 roughly since then. It is the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions which are responsible for this slide because the deal reached with the world's top lender makes it clear that there shouldn't be any government/ central bank interventions and it is the market which would determine the exchange rate.

The IMF has made it mandatory for Pakistan to keep the difference between interbank and open market dollar exchange rates not more than 1.25 per cent. Hence, a combination of guaranteed weaker rupee and the monetary tightening [higher interest rate] as suggested by the world's top lender has paralysed Pakistan's economy.

In simple words, the rise in open market price would automatically increase the official exchange rate. Thus, a Pandora's box has been opened which is propelling the prices of all food and non-food items by making the imports expensive — including the rising cost of power generation. It's a vicious circle.

Siraj calls for swift action to ensure safety of people

F.P. Report

KASHMIRE: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Sirajul Haq led the peace march held Kandhkot on Wednesday to divert the government's attention towards the deteriorating law and order situation in the area, marked by the presence of dacoit gangs and the distressing surge in kidnapping-for-ransom cases.

During the march, he called upon the government to take immediate action and ensure the safety and protection of the people of Sindh. A large number of people participated. Sirajul Haq expressed deep concern over the rampant issue of dacoits in Sindh. He said the problem had left the people in a state of sleeplessness, as incidents of daily kidnappings and killings were plaguing the region. He said that within the span of a year, a staggering 400 cases of ransom-based kidnappings had been reported in the Kashmir district alone.

He held the former government of the PPP accountable for the prevailing situation, emphasizing that its 15-year rule over Sindh had failed to deliver much-needed peace and security to the people.

The JI chief urged the law enforcement agencies and security forces to emerge from their inaction and vigorously confront the menace posed by the dacoits. Stressing the paramount responsibility of the ruling authorities to safeguard citizens, he lamented that it appeared the authorities were shielding the criminals instead. He said that if the government did not promptly fulfil its duties, the JI would lead marches on Islamabad and Karachi.

He also called upon the public to effectively support its strike call against the exorbitant electricity bills. He announced that a nationwide strike would be staged on September 2, aimed at drawing attention to the issue. He asserted that the JI would exert pressure on the government to

retract the recent electricity price hikes. Instead of burdening the poor, he urged the government to address the rampant issues of electricity theft and line losses in the power distribution system. He demanded an end to the unjust provision of free electricity to the bureaucracy.

Siraj called upon the PDM, the PPP and the PTI to issue apologies to the nation for entering agreements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that ultimately inflicted hardships on the poor population. He clarified that the caretaker government's jurisdiction did not extend to raising electricity tariffs. The caretaker administration, he stated, should actively collaborate with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to ensure that elections are conducted within the stipulated 90-day timeframe. He announced that the JI had plans to approach the Supreme Court to challenge the inflated electricity bills.

US warns N Korea against selling weapons to Russia

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The White House has warned North Korea against selling munitions to Russia for its war in Ukraine as tensions between Pyongyang and Washington continue to mount. White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said on Wednesday that the United States is concerned about potential arms deals between Russia and North Korea.

"We urge the DPRK to cease its arms negotiations

with Russia and abide by the public commitments that Pyongyang has made to not provide or sell arms to Russia," Kirby said, referring to North Korea by its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Kirby added that the US believes Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu tried to sell artillery munitions to Moscow when he visited North Korea and met with its leader Kim Jong Un in

July. The White House spokesman declined to detail how US officials had gathered the intelligence. The US has been warning its competitors and adversaries — including China — against helping Russia in its military offensive in Ukraine. Kirby's comments on Wednesday came just weeks after Russian President Vladimir Putin and Kim exchanged letters vowing to bolster ties between their two countries.

PTI chief to stay in jail

(Continued from Page 1)

premier's post-arrest bail after which the court issued a notice to all the parties seeking their responses on September 2, according to the sources. Parties, including the FIA special prosecutor and PTI lawyers, have been called to present arguments in the case on the aforementioned date.

Ahead of the hearing, sources told media that Khan's five-member legal team — headed by Advocate Salman Safdar — attended the court hearing in the prison. PTI chief's legal team comprising Naeem Haider Panjotha, Salman Safdar, Intizar Panjotha, Ali Ijaz Buttar and Umair Niazi were earlier denied request for meeting Khan, but were later allowed entry inside the jail.

The police had earlier only permitted Safdar to enter the Attock jail premises. On the other hand, one of Khan's counsels, Buttar, questioned the former prime minister's remand. "We have many questions. When was the PTI chairman remanded? How was the remand made possible without telling the party chief and his lawyers?" he asked.

Speaking to the media following the hearing, PTI chief counsel Salman Safdar said the former prime minister was arrested in the cipher case 15 days ago when he served his sentence at Attock jail. The

counsel said the ex-PM did not even know that the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had made his arrest in the cipher case as well.

Safdar said the PTI chief has been on judicial remand in the cipher case because the court rejected the FIA's request for physical remand. The lawyer said they have moved an application for Khan's bail in the cipher case hearing of which will be held on September 2 and added that another plea had been moved to conduct an open hearing of the case.

Speaking on the occasion, the lawyer also shared Khan's view on allegations of misplacing cipher, quoting him as saying that the original copy of the diplomatic document was with the Foreign Office and it was never lost. He also maintained that following the declassification of the cipher by the then Imran Khan-led government in 2022, the Official Secrets Act could not be applied in this case.

He said the act can be applied to cases in matters related to spying and other sensitive matters. "A former prime minister and foreign minister's prosecution under the Official Secrets Act is highly condemnable and concerning. The FIA's jurisdiction does not apply in this matter and the FIR should not have been registered," he said, speaking to journalists outside the jail premises.

The PTI chairman's lawyers claim that a "manipulation of justice" was keeping him behind bars. According to his lawyers, the deposed prime minister — who was ousted from office after a no-confidence motion last year — was granted bail and expected to be released from Attock Jail, where he had been locked for the last three weeks.

However, they said on Tuesday afternoon Khan remained in detention because of a previous arrest, made in secret, over a case alleging he had leaked the cipher. A day earlier, one of his lawyers told reporters outside the prison, which was surrounded by patrolling police units, that Khan was "on judicial remand" and would appear before a special court in Islamabad on Wednesday.

"He was arrested prior to today's court ruling. The exact date of his arrest remains unclear," another lawyer, Gohar Khan, told AFP by phone. Another, Muhammad Shoaib Shaheen, said "his legal team was intentionally left uninformed and kept in the dark." "This constitutes a manipulation of justice," he said. Since his ouster, the PTI chairman has been embroiled in more than 200 cases and had been previously denied bail in at least nine other cases, including three in anti-terrorism courts and six in the district courts in Islamabad.