

**Blast kills two children**  
**F.P. Report**

FAISALABAD: A laptop explosion sparked a deadly fire early Wednesday in the Sharifpura area of Faisalabad, claiming the lives of two children and injuring nine others, officials said. Rescue services rushed nine persons, including two women and five children aged three to nine, to Faisalabad's Allied Hospital with burns, according to doctors.



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# KP CM takes control of grid station

— restores power supply in D I Khan

**F.P. Report**

D I KHAN: The loadshedding dispute between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and centre intensified on Wednesday as Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur entered a grid station in his hometown of Dera Ismail Khan and restored the power supply.

The firebrand KP CM also issued his own loadshedding schedule limited to 12 hours per day. "We'll not allow the load-shedding exceeding from 12 hours per day in any area. All the MNAs and MPAs should visit the grid stations in their areas and ensure the implementation of 12-hour loadshedding schedule," said the chief minister.

Ali Amin Gandapur has slammed the federal government for the rampant electricity loadshedding in the province after protests erupted in major cities and towns on the third day of Eidul Azha amid ongoing heatwave. The chief minister came down hard on the ruling PML-N, warning that if the issue of the unbridled power outages persisted he would be forced to take steps to halt electricity supply.

Gandapur also accused the WAPDA [Water And Power Development Authority] of unfair treatment towards Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He also insisted that no WAPDA assets were damaged. The chief minister called upon all KP parliamentarians to convene at WAPDA grids to ensure uninterrupted electricity restoration [for their constituencies].

Asserting the province's rights, Gandapur reiterated that "money was collected in our province's name but not returned. No obstacles will deter us from claiming what rightfully belongs to us". The chief minister issued a final ultimatum to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, demanding the immediate release of Rs16 billion owed to the province by the federal government. He threatened to approach the IMF if the funds were not disbursed promptly. "These people have assumed power through illegitimate means. I understand how they came into office and how to remove them," Gandapur added. In a statement earlier in the day, Gandapur alleged that the federal government was exacting revenge from the people of the province.

The CM stated that the province was experiencing the worst power shutdowns,

adding that the federal government had not fulfilled its commitment to provide the required electricity to the province. Gandapur mentioned that local Wapda officials were cooperating with the provincial government to the best of their capacity, but it was the federal government that had further reduced power supply to the province.

"There will be another round of talks with the federation to discuss power load shedding. The provincial government is fully cooperating with Wapda on the issue of line losses," Gandapur said. The chief minister urged the federal government to correct its attitude towards Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, warning that otherwise, the people of the province would take to the streets to protest.

He added that the federation's failure to fulfill its commitments was leading to mounting complaints about increasing power outages. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi also commented on the issue, stating that the federal government was not meeting its commitments regarding power supply to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Protests erupted on the third day of Eidul Azha against rampant electricity loadshedding in major cities and towns of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with the PTI announcing plans to protest in the National Assembly and on the streets against the discriminatory electricity supply to the province. Enraged citizens staged demonstrations in Peshawar, Nowshera and Mardan, where the Grand Trunk Road was blocked, triggering severe traffic jams.

Irate protesters raised slogans against unannounced power outages during Eid, causing problems for motorists and pedestrians alike. Several ambulances were seen stuck in traffic gridlocks. Former KP chief minister Pervaz Khattak's car was also caught in a traffic snarl. Khattak urged protesters to exercise restraint.

Meanwhile, PTI leader Asad Qaiser joined a protest against power loadshedding in Swabi. He criticised the federal government and announced plans to protest in the National Assembly and on the streets against the discriminatory electricity supply to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In Karak, women protesters demonstrated against unannounced power cuts, blocking Shagai Road to traffic.



D I KHAN: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur talking to media persons regarding load shedding issue.

## 550 pilgrims died during Hajj, mostly Egyptians

RIYADH (INP): Diplomats said on Tuesday that at least 550 pilgrims died during the hajj, underscoring the gruelling nature of the pilgrimage which again unfolded in scorching temperatures this year.

At least 323 of those who died were Egyptians, most of them succumbing to heat-related illnesses, the two Arab diplomats coordinating their countries' responses told a foreign news agency "All of them (the Egyptians) died because of heat" except for one who sustained fatal injuries during a minor crowd crush, one of the diplomats said, adding the total figure came from the hospital morgue in the Al-Muaisem neighbourhood of Mecca.

At least 60 Jordanians also died, the diplomats said, up from an official tally of 41 given earlier on Tuesday by Amman. The new deaths bring the total reported so far by multiple countries to 577. The diplo-

mats said the total at the morgue in Al-Muaisem, one of the biggest in Mecca, was 550.

Earlier on Tuesday, Egypt's foreign ministry said Cairo was collaborating with Saudi authorities on search operations for Egyptians who had gone missing during the hajj. While a ministry statement said "a certain number of deaths" had occurred, it did not specify whether Egyptians were among them.

Saudi authorities have reported treating more than 2,000 pilgrims suffering from heat stress but have not updated that figure since Sunday and have not provided information on fatalities. At least 240 pilgrims were reported dead by various countries last year, most of them Indonesians. The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and all Muslims with the means must complete it at least once.

The pilgrimage is

increasingly affected by climate change, according to a Saudi study published last month that said temperatures in the area where rituals are performed were rising 0.4 degrees Celsius (0.72 degrees Fahrenheit) each decade. Temperatures hit 51.8 degrees Celsius (125 Fahrenheit) at the Grand Mosque in Mecca on Monday, the Saudi national meteorology centre said. Reporters in Mina, outside Mecca, on Monday, saw pilgrims pouring bottles of water over their heads as volunteers handed out cold drinks and fast-melting chocolate ice cream to help them keep cool. Saudi officials had advised pilgrims to use umbrellas, drink plenty of water and avoid exposure to the sun during the hottest hours of the day. But many of the hajj rituals, including the prayers on Mount Arafat which took place on Saturday, involve being outdoors for hours in the daytime.

## Journalist laid to rest in Landi Kotal

**F.P. Report**

LANDI KOTAL: Senior journalist and reporter of Khyber News, Khalil Jibran was laid to rest in his ancestral graveyard in Sultan Khel village of tehsil Landi Kotal, district Khyber on Wednesday morning.

It is to be stated here that last evening Khalil Jibran along with his advocate friend was returning back in their car after attending a private food party in Mazreena, hilly area of Landi Kotal when they were intercepted by unknown armed and opened indiscriminate firing on them. As a result the local media person was shot and killed on the spot while the advocate sustained injuries who were shifted to District Headquarter, Landi Kotal for medico-legal formalities.

Large number of people from different walks of life attended the funeral prayer of the slain media person held at Takya point of Sultan Khel and was laid to rest in his ancestral graveyard. Earlier, the local journalist, political workers besides relatives of the Martyred media person staged a protest sit-in at Pak-Afghan highway at Sultan Khel market by putting the dead body on the road. The protestors demanded the government to trace the armed persons and bring the culprits to law. The media persons threatened that they will continue their agitation till provision of security to their community.

## Earthquake shakes KP parts

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: A moderate earthquake jolted several parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad on Wednesday morning, causing panic among people.

The National Seismic Monitoring Centre said that a 4.7 magnitude earthquake with 98 kilometers depth and epicenter in southeastern Afghanistan hit several parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. The tremors were felt in Peshawar, Mardan, Nowshera, Swat and adjoining region in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Tremors were also reported in Malakand, Lower Dir, Mansehra districts, Hazara division, North and South Waziristan districts. No casualties were reported from the quake.

Earlier on June 02 an earthquake with 4.8 magnitude jolted Swat and adjoining areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The quake's epicenter was Tajikistan border, at the depth of 195 kilometers. However, no loss of life or damage to property reported from the area. On May 3, an earthquake with a magnitude of 4.2 jolted Khuzdar district of Balochistan.

## PNS Babar visits port of Jeddah

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The first MILGEM class warship of Pakistan Navy PNS Babar visited the port of Jeddah. According to ISPR, upon its arrival in Jeddah, the ship of the Pakistan Navy was warmly welcomed by senior officials of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces and Pakistani diplomatic officials.

Commanding Officer of PNS Babar held a meeting with Deputy Western Fleet Commander Royal Saudi Naval Forces. During the meeting, issues of mutual interest including maritime cooperation between the two countries were discussed.

At the end of the visit, PNS Babar participated in a naval exercise with Royal Saudi Naval Forces ship HMS Al Riyadh. The aim of the exercise is to promote mutual cooperation and strengthen friendly relations between the two countries.



NEELUM VALLEY: Group photo of Deputy Prime Minister, Ishaq Dar with Chinese engineers and Pakistani team during his visit to under construction Jagran-2 hydropower plant.

## PM, Malaysian counterpart to redouble efforts for truce in Gaza

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Prime Minister of Malaysia Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim have agreed to redouble efforts for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza as well as to ensure provision of essential aid to the innocent Palestinian brethren.

On the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif exchanged Eid greetings with Prime Minister of Malaysia Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. The prime minister conveyed his sincere wishes and prayers for the prosperity and progress of the fraternal people of Malaysia as well as for the Muslim Ummah, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release on Monday.

While discussing the ongoing crisis in Gaza, the prime minister appreciated Malaysia's principled and consistent stance on the Palestinian cause, under the leadership of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. Underscoring the close and cordial relationship between Pakistan and Malaysia, the prime minister expressed satisfaction on the upward trajectory of bilateral ties.

The two sides agreed to further strengthen their relations which were marked by commonality of views on all issues of mutual interest. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further broaden the historic ties between Pakistan and Malaysia in all areas of mutual interest, particularly in trade and investment.

While recalling their recent warm and productive meeting on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum's Special Meeting in Riyadh in April 2024, as well as two telephone conversations in the last four months, the two leaders underscored the need for maintaining regular high-level exchanges. In this regard, Prime Minister Shehbaz thanked Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim for graciously accepting his invitation to visit Pakistan in the very near future.

On X account, the prime minister said that he was delighted to have spoken with Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia today and exchange warm greetings on Eidul Azha. Conveyed best wishes and prayers for the happiness and prosperity of the people of Malaysia. Exchanged views on bilateral cooperation and matters of mutual interest, he said.

"Also agreed to maintain regular high-level exchanges to broaden fraternal ties between our two brotherly countries. Looking forward to welcome Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in Pakistan very soon," the prime minister further posted on X.

**PM, President Kassym-Jomart discuss bilateral, regional issues:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Monday discussed bilateral as well as regional issues of mutual interest.

The prime minister emphasized that enhanced connectivity between the two countries was critical for economic and trade relations and the two sides need to maintain their focus on this important dimension. The prime minister held a telephone conversation on the occasion of Eidul Azha.

The two dignitaries exchanged Eid greetings and prayers for the peoples of both countries. The Kazakh president expressed his delight on the prime minister's election for the second time and remarked that this would help strengthen Pakistan's political and economic situation.

"The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the positive trajectory of their bilateral relationship and reaffirmed shared desire to expand cooperation between both countries to its full potential, particularly in trade and investment," PM Office Media Wing said in a press statement. While underscoring the significance of regional cooperation, the prime minister said that he looked forward to his participation in the upcoming

SCO Heads of State meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan on 3-4 July, 2024.

The Kazakh president expressed his happiness on learning of the prime minister's participation in next month's Summit, where the invited leaders would discuss a comprehensive agenda to advance regional cooperation. The prime minister also extended a cordial invitation to the president of Kazakhstan to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at his earliest convenience, which he graciously accepted.

On X account, the prime minister said that he had a wonderful conversation with President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan on Eid ul Adha. "Exchanged warm greetings and discussed ways to further strengthen our bilateral relations, especially trade & investment as well as regional cooperation. Look forward to my visit to Astana for the SCO Heads of State meeting next month," he said in the post.

**Shehbaz conveys Eid greetings to UAE president; lauds consistent support to Pakistan:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephonic conversation with President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and conveyed warm greetings to him on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

The two leaders extended best wishes and prayers for the continued progress and prosperity of the people of the UAE and Pakistan. Prime Minister Shehbaz reiterated Pakistan's deep appreciation to President Mohamed bin Zayed for the UAE's consistent support to Pakistan and also reaffirmed Pakistan's full support to the Emirates through thick and thin.

Recalling his "most productive" visit to the UAE in May 2024, the prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to transforming

(Continued on Back Page)

## Campaign underway to sabotage Pak-China ties

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday accused "a political party" of spreading misinformation about Pakistan-China relations over the past few days, claiming that a smear campaign was underway to sabotage the strong ties between two time-tested friends.

"Trolling is being used to put pressure on critics, subjecting them to harassment," Iqbal said addressing a press conference in Lahore. Iqbal categorically stated that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) or any other political party would not be allowed to spread misinformation against the state's diplomatic relations and policies.

"While differences exist between the government and opposition, state institutions should not be targeted. Weakening these institutions jeopardises the stability of the state." The minister pointed out that for the first time, Pakistan and China were advancing their relations in the space sector.

"China's participation will elevate the space programme to new heights. China has expressed readiness to enhance CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic

Corridor) at an upgraded level," he reiterated. He said that a state's policy was not determined by random articles. "Articles are written and published worldwide, but no country or state formulates policy based on them. Policy decisions are made through negotiations between governments."

The federal minister further added that "cooperation with China have also expanded into the space sector". "After hearing joint statements, only a fool would claim that relations are deteriorating. Relations with China have improved after recent engagements."

Iqbal quoted the Chinese President as saying that "they (China) want to deepen strategic relations". The planning minister remarked that Pakistan-China relations would further strengthen, dismissing claims that Beijing had downgraded its relations with Islamabad as enemy propaganda.

The minister emphasised that any attempt to toy with the interests of the state would be dealt with iron hands, and "we may have disagreements, but that doesn't mean we are playing for the state's interests". Earlier on Sunday, in an apparent reference to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

(PTI), Barrister Aqeel Malik, the federal government's spokesperson on legal affairs warned that the state would clamp on those involved in running anti-state campaign on social media in a bid to damage Pakistan's ties with friendly countries.

He urged the PTI to quit its "anti-state activities and propaganda," and hold dialogue with the government on political issues to mull over solutions instead of damaging the nation's interest at global forums. The spokesperson stated this while addressing a press conference to brief the media on the political party's anti-state activities abroad.

Barrister Malik said that there was no precedent to PTI's "enmity as it was perpetrating anti-Pakistan legislation in foreign countries". "Pakistan is an independent country and does not take dictation from any nation. We want friendly relations with all nations."

"However, a concentrated smear campaign against Pakistan in foreign countries that started after the 2022 vote of no confidence which mounted the anti-Pakistan propaganda," he said, adding that the PTI had hired lobbyists and PR firms to promote anti-Pakistan campaign abroad.

## Bilawal to meet Shehbaz

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is likely to meet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to discuss his party's reservations over the federal budget.

According to sources, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has conveyed Eid greetings to Bilawal Bhutto and invited him to visit the PM house. The PPP chairman will discuss the issues related to the Punjab and centre during his meeting with the prime minister.

Bilawal Bhutto will also discuss his party's reservations about the federal budget. Earlier, the PPP had attended the budget session only after a high-powered delegation of PML-N visited Bilawal Bhutto at his chamber in National Assembly.

MNA Shazia Marri had said that the PML-N violated its earlier commitments related to the PSPD and therefore they had decided not to participate in the budget session. Senior PPP leader Syed Khurshid Shah had said that they were not informed about the budget and the government did not take them into confidence regarding agreements with the IMF and China. Later, Dy PM Ishaq Dar and senior cabinet member Rana Tanveer Hussain had visited Bilawal Bhutto's chamber in NA to convince the PPP to participate in the budget session.





KARACHI: Workers slaughtering camels organized by JDC Welfare Organization, sacrificed 200 camels and cow meat to distribute among the deserving people on the Eid-ul-Azha festive. —APP Photo

## Tessori offers Eid prayers at Governor House

KARACHI (PPI): Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori offered Eid-ul-Adha prayers at Governor House, accompanied by consul generals from Islamic countries. The event was attended by Consul General Bakheet Ateeq Al Remeithi of UAE, Cemal Sangu of Turkey, Abdullah Ahmed Bughous of Bahrain, Hasan Nourain of Iran, SM Jabar of Afghanistan, Herman Hardynata Bin Ahmad of Malaysia, and Nayef Shahein R. M. Alsulaiti of Qatar, among others. Special prayers for Pakistan's progress and prosperity were offered during the Eid prayers. Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori extended his Eid greetings to the nation and highlighted the significance of serving the underprivileged. He, along with the consuls general, participated in the sacrifice of a camel at the Governor House. During Eid, 100 camels, 100 goats, and cows were sacrificed at the Governor House. Following Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori's directives, over 20,000 needy individuals received sacrificial meat and ration bags on the first day, with distributions continuing on the subsequent days. Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori emphasized that the true beneficiaries of the sacrificial meat are the underprivileged. He thanked the consuls general for recognizing his efforts. Speaking to the media on the first day of Eid, Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori expressed optimism about Pakistan's future, highlighting support from countries like UAE, Iran, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Malaysia. He reassured that Pakistan's challenging times would pass, urging the nation to unite against adversarial plots. Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori stressed the importance of serving the nation beyond political interests, as national development ensures public prosperity.

## Shah announces interest-free loan scheme for installing solar systems

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Energy Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah has said that the Sindh government would introduce an interest-free loan scheme for installing solar systems. This he said while addressing media person at his residence. Shah acknowledged various issues faced by the region and highlighted the government efforts to alleviate these problems through the budget. He emphasized that ongoing schemes had been prioritized, and the promises made to the public would be fulfilled. He also announced measures to ensure the supply of clean water across Sindh. He pointed out that over 200,000 houses in the province still lacked electricity. To address this, the government plans to provide electricity to 500,000 people annually. Initially, every poor household would receive solar systems capable of powering a fan and three bulbs. For those who wish to install solar systems independently, the government was introducing an interest-free loan scheme. The interest on these loans will be covered by the Sindh government. Additionally, Shah revealed plans to construct two grid stations in every district of Sindh to further improve the region's energy infrastructure.

## Nutritious food provided to prisoners across Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Home Secretary Noor ul Amin Mengal has said that all prisoners across the province are being provided with nutritious food that meets their caloric needs besides better medical cover and other amenities of life. He stated this during his visit to Camp Jail here during Eid holidays. He also had lunch with juvenile prisoners and appreciated the taste and quality of food. The under trial prisoners informed the secretary that all inmates were happy with the food quality served under the direct supervision of Senior Superintendent Zahir Ahmad Virk who visits them daily. The secretary emphasized that the food served is designed to fulfill the nutritional needs of the inmates, contributing to their overall health and well-being. He underscored that the provision of hygienic food is a top priority in Punjab's correctional facilities. The IG (Prisons) has implemented strict standards and regular inspections to ensure that the food is prepared in clean environments and is free from contaminants, he added. Noorul Amin Mengal highlighted the improvements in medical care within the prisons. "The government has enhanced healthcare services to provide better medical attention to inmates. This includes regular health check-ups, prompt treatment of illnesses, and access to necessary medications. These measures are part of broader efforts to improve the conditions within Punjab's prisons," he added. He said these initiatives reflected a commitment to rehabilitation and reintegration, helping inmates to maintain their health and well-being during their confinement and preparing them for a successful return to society. Dr Waqar Ch Advisor to Minister of State and Federal Tax Ombudsman, Superintendent Zahir Ahmad Virk along with his team Deputy Superintendents Kamran Maqbool, Mohsin Ali and Muhammad Afzal Wattoo were also present. Inspector General of Prisons Punjab Mian Farooq Nazeer apprised the secretary, "We got slight change in the jail menu with the addition to seasonal vegetables and grams after having marathon meetings with Dean Food and Nutrition of the Agriculture University Faisalabad which will be implemented shortly. The IG said zero tolerance on food quality, medical care, security and discipline. He mentioned that e-libraries and utility stores had also been established in jails and chillers were operating providing filtered cold water to prisoners. He said, play grounds made available to prisoners for games for their physical fitness. The IG also visited interview sheds and waiting areas and enquired from the relatives of prisoners about arrangements. He appreciated Senior Superintendent Zahir Ahmad Virk for excellent supervision. DIG Lahore region Naveed Rauf Langrial also accompanied the IG. Later, Commissioner Zaid Bin Maqsood also visited the jail same day and spent good time with prisoners. Earlier, the IG (Prisons) with Dr Waqar Ch Advisor to Minister of State and Federal Tax Ombudsman distributed sweets among the prisoners on the occasion.



LAHORE: People offering Fateha on the graves of their family members in graveyard on the first day of Eid-ul-Adha. —APP Photo

## CM Maryam meets Spanish ambassador

LAHORE (APP): Punjab has rich investment opportunities for Spanish business community in textiles, food processing, agriculture and livestock, said Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif in a meeting with Ambassador of Spain to Pakistan H.E. Mr. José Antonio de Ory and the Honorary Consul of Spain H.E. Mr. Jalal Salahuddin. They discussed opportunities for the promotion of bilateral ties between Punjab and Spain in the fields of trade, investment, education, culture and tourism. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said that foreign investors are being provided with the best environment for safe investment in Punjab. She said that the trend of increasing trade volume between Pakistan and Spain is welcome. The meeting also discussed investment opportunities in infrastructure and renewable energy. The need to increase joint efforts in strengthening mutual relations was also emphasised in the meeting. The Spanish Ambassador expressed deep interest in promoting a strong economic partnership with Punjab. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb and other relevant officers were also present. Punjab CM lauds cleanliness on Eid: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Wednesday appreciated municipal authorities and citizens for ensuring cleanliness in cities on Eid-ul-Azha. She said in a statement that the campaign of removing waste and ensuring cleanliness in cities, districts, tehsils and union councils remained successful only with the cooperation of citizens. The Chief Minister also sent a message of gratitude to the elected public representatives of Punjab for their full support and coordination in getting all this done.

### Four drown at Karachi's Hawkes Bay, three rescued

KARACHI (INP): Four picnickers drowned in Arabian Sea at Karachi's Hawkes Bay beach rescue sources said on Wednesday. According to rescue officials, three persons among the four drowned in the sea including a woman have been rescued, while a search has been underway to trace unaccounted fourth person Shaharyar. Rescue officials said that all four of them belong to same family and residents of the Federal B Area of Karachi. Earlier, the Sindh government, imposed section 144 in the coastal areas of Karachi with a ban on swimming in the sea during the holidays of Eid-ul-adha. Authorities said that precautions being taken to protect lives of picnickers who visit the city's beaches during eid holidays. The District South Police has confirmed that police officers are stationed at the beach to prevent citizens from swimming in the sea at unguarded beaches. The ban is a preventive measure taken by the authorities, and beachgoers have been requested to comply and refrain from potentially hazardous swimming into the sea.

### Haleem sees animal waste still lying in Karachi streets

KARACHI (PPI): Residents of Karachi are distressed due to the piles of animal waste scattered across the city, leading to foul odors and health concerns. In response to complaints, PTI Sindh President and former Opposition Leader, Haleem Adil Sheikh, visited various areas of Karachi to assess the situation. Speaking to the media, Mr Sheikh expressed his dismay, stating, "Today is the third day of Eid, and animal waste are strewn everywhere with no one to collect them." He questioned the expenditure of the Solid Waste Management's Rs18 billion budget, highlighting the ineffectiveness despite both Solid Waste Management and the Karachi Mayor being under the control of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). "Karachi has turned into a garbage dump," he lamented. Sheikh pointed out that prior to Eid, a claim was made that 154,000 tons of animal waste would be disposed of, but Mayor Murtaza Wahab reported only 68,000 tons collected. "The remaining 86,000 tons are still lying in the streets," he added. Sheikh criticized the inadequate number of collection points, with only 99 for a city of 25 million residents, spread across 7 districts and 25 towns. "How can the city be cleaned with just 99 collection points?" he asked, noting the spread of diseases due to the stench from the waste. He further alleged that KMC, town, and Solid Waste staff are more focused on extracting fat from the waste rather than disposing of it. "Instead of discarding the remains, they are collecting fat," he claimed. Sheikh demanded accountability for the Solid Waste Management's 18 billion rupee budget, arguing that neither the Sindh budget provided for Karachi nor did it ensure cleanliness. Before Wahab's tenure as mayor, Karachi was cleaner, Sheikh asserted, accusing the PPP of making Karachi the sixth dirtiest city in the world. He concluded by stating, "It's the third day, and there is no one to collect the waste. Citizens are forced to dispose of it themselves. The Sindh government must answer for its enmity towards Karachi."

### More than 1.36m ton waste disposed of in two days

LAHORE (APP): The district government departments and waste management companies disposed of 1.36 million ton waste during first two days of Eid-ul-Adha. In accordance with the grand waste management plan, operational report for the first two days released here on Wednesday. The district government and waste management companies conducted uninterrupted cleaning operations for 48 hours, and disposed of 86,000 tons of waste while local governments managed to dispose of 50,000 tons of waste in two days. The Lahore Waste Management Company disposed of 18,500 tons of waste on the second day while collectively, over 50,000 workers remained in the field during both days of Eid. The waste management companies resolved 21,000 complaints and local governments resolved 8,000 while zero waste operation will take place on the third day of Eid, Secretary local government Shakil Ahmad Mian said in a statement, and added that central control room remained active on the third day as well and effective implementation of the grand waste management plan had been ensured.



LAHORE: Security official standing high alert outside Badshahi Masjid during Eidul Azha prayers. —APP Photo

## LWMC sets new sanitation standards

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) validated Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz's dream of cleanliness as reality. Under the leadership of CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, unprecedented standards of public service were established during Eid-ul-Adha 2024, marked by a new record in sanitation efforts. The Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) executed a 72-hour non-stop cleaning operation, exceeding its responsibilities to ensure the city's cleanliness. The CM Punjab also praised the Local Government Minister, Local Government Secretary, and all the officers and staff involved in the cleanliness drive. Live monitoring data from government organizations, district administration, and the LWMC's control room indicated that the Chand Raat zero waste operation was successfully conducted and disposed of over 54,000 tons of green waste, offal, and animal waste in an environmentally friendly manner over the three days of Eid. More than 8,000 tons of animal remains were disposed of in the zero-waste operation. On the first day of Eid, more than 16,000 tons, on the second day of Eid, more than 18,000 tons, on the third day of Eid, more than 11,000 tons offals were disposed of. Commissioner Lahore Zaid bin Maqsood praised LWMC workers for their continuous efforts in the field, ensuring prompt garbage collection throughout the Eid cleaning operation. Swift action was taken in response to public grievances received via helpline 1139 and social media. More than 20 thousand citizens contacted Eid helpline 1139. 100% redressal of public grievances was ensured. Commending the LWMC workers for their dedication, LWMC Chief Executive Officer Babar Sahib Din in a press statement, highlighted that, in alignment with Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision, the best possible cleaning facilities were provided to citizens during this Eid. CEO Babar Sahib Din highlighted the grand cleaning operation conducted during Eid-ul-Adha, aligning with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. He emphasized that the best cleaning facilities were provided to the citizens during the festival. To ensure efficient service, a control room, 291 UC camps, 105 temporary collection points, and 5 dumping sites were operational for 24-hour live monitoring by the LWMC. In Lahore, 1.4 million eco-friendly waste bags were distributed free of charge, with supplies available at 30 model camps throughout the three days of Eid. Over 15,000 LWMC staff worked in three shifts, conducting a zero-waste operation on Chand Raat at key locations and markets, including more than 250 Jamia Mosques and Eidgahs.

رَاسْمُ الْعِیْلِ وَرَاسْمُ الْجَمْعِیَةِ

Rasm e Qul

The Rasm e Qul for my dear brother,

Mominzeb Durrani,

who passed away on June 18, 2024, after a prolonged illness, will be held today, June 20, 2024, at 12:00 PM at 2 Old Bara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

The deceased was the son of Lieutenant Colonel Jehanzaib Khan Durrani, son-in-law of Iftikhar Khan Mohmand, and cousin of Taimur Saleem Jhagra.

From:

Dr. Alamzeb Durrani and the bereaved family



# Protests erupt against electricity loadshedding

PESHAWAR (INP): Protests erupted on the third day of Eidul Azha against rampant electricity loadshedding in major cities and towns of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with the PTI announcing plans to protest in the National Assembly and on the streets against the discriminatory electricity supply to the province.

Enraged citizens staged demonstrations in Peshawar, Nowshera and Mardan, where the Grand Trunk Road was blocked, triggering severe traffic jams.

Irate protesters raised slogans against unannounced power outages during Eid, causing problems for motorists and pedestrians alike.

Several ambulances were seen stuck in traffic gridlocks.

In response, the Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) decided to take action against MPA Fazal Elahi, Jameel and 45 others for disrupting the power distribution company's operations.

The SDO for the Rasheed Garhi Subdivision wrote a complaint to the Rehman Baba police station, seeking the registration of an FIR against MPA Fazal Elahi and his companions, citing losses totalling Rs 2.64 million incurred by Pesco due to the incident.

**'Attack' on grid station: Application for FIR against MPA Fazal, others moved**

The Pesco has lodged an application with police for registration of an FIR against KP MPA Fazal Elahi and 45 others for storming a grid station and forcibly restoring power supply, causing over Rs2.6 million financial loss to the company.

MPA Fazal allegedly entered Rehman Baba grid station and restored power to 10 feeders.

A video showing the MPA and dozens of other people forcibly entering the grid station has gone viral.

MPA Fazal claimed that Pesco and the district administration had given a schedule for loadshedding, but they did not follow their own schedule and did unscheduled loadshedding, causing great inconvenience to the masses.

He said he was forced to go to the grid station and restore the power supply.

The Rashid Garhi Sub-Division SDO has filed an application in Rehman Baba Police Station. The complainant alleged that MPA Fazal Elahi and Jameel along with 45 people stormed the Rehman Baba grid station.

## Ex-Governor sacrificed 2 big, 10 small animals

PESHAWAR (APP): The Ex-Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali sacrificed two big and 10 small animals and distributed them among poor people who invited them to his residence on main warsak road.

Former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali slaughtered sacrificial animals at his house and celebrated Eid with the local people. The former Governor of Peshawar distributed meat among the poor and poor and also provided them with breakfast.

Eid Al-Adha teaches us sacrifice, former governor Haji Ghulam Ali told media men during conversation. In the present circumstances, share happiness with your children as well as the children of the poor, Haji Ghulam Ali said.

He said during his tenure as Governor the door of the Governor House was always open for the people from all sections of the society. Every small and big Eid was spent in the Governor house with the people of the province, Ex-Governor Haji Ghulam Ali said.

"I feel happy seeing other people's children happy," Haji Ghulam Ali said.

The current political situation is not stable, the business community is also unhappy with the budget," former Governor said.

Economic conditions cannot be corrected without stabilizing the political conditions, Haji Ghulam Ali said. "I have always been a supporter of a peaceful environment and dialogue," the Ex-Governor said.

The federal government should also sit together with the business community and solve the economic problems, the former governor said.

## Cleanliness operation continued

PESHAWAR (APP): WSSP's Eid-ul-Adha cleanliness drives all across the city got under and the operation continued for three days.

Member of the National Assembly Muhammad Asif Khan and Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Mehsud and CEO WWSP graced the occasion as guests and formally inaugurated the campaign during the three-day.

A total of 2559 personnel are participating in the Eid cleaning operation. Goods are being lifted by 679 small and big vehicles.

A total of 24 collection points have been set up to collect waste with goods being brought to the collection points by small vehicles and taken to the dumping site from there. A pit has been dug in the dumping site to destroy the waste.

In the dumping site, animal stuff is being covered with soil after spraying. Spraying continues in the city and the dumping site. Teams are visiting different areas in all the five zones for monitoring. More than nine water supply staff are also on duty.

Arrears have been paid to the employees, Riaz Mehsud said. Rewards will be given to employees for good performance, Commissioner and CEO said and disciplinary action will be taken for poor performance, Riaz Mehsud added. People should throw garbage only at designated places instead of streets, Commissioner Peshawar said.

## Wave of inflation not reducing

PESHAWAR (APP): Waves of inflation in the provincial capital Peshawar could not be reduced as the price of ginger and garlic hit high in the vegetable markets along with increase in the fruits.

However, the district administration has issued an official price list but such price could not be carried by the vendors either they are in the vegetable markets or in the fruits market and selling their food items at their own set price.

The price of Ginger increased by Rs. 120 and now it is being sold at Rs. 820 per kg instead of Rs. 700, the official rate. As far the official price of Garlic is Rs. 450 but it is being sold at Rs. 550, likewise

## Govt to ensure facilities to tourists

PESHAWAR (APP): The provincial government and the tourism department ensuring maximum arrangements in view of the rush of tourists in Malakand and Hazara divisions.

The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in view of the large number of tourists in the upper and northern regions of the province, has made all administrative machinery to provide security and other travel facilities to the tourists.

Instructions have been issued to enable it. In this regard, under the instructions of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur, Advisor Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzab and Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Secretary Tourism Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan called on the Commissioners of Malakand and Hazara Divisions, Regional Police Officers, Deputy Commissioners of all relevant districts, has clearly warned the Director General of Culture and Tourism Authority and the Heads of Development Authorities to make necessary arrangements in this regard.

Similarly, in another order, Secretary Tourism Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has directed the heads of Provincial Culture and Tourism Authority, Guliyat, Kaghan, Upper Swat, Kumrat and Kalash Development Authorities to keep Felicity centers open day and night for the convenience of tourists.

Ensure coordinated traffic arrangements with local traffic police at tourist spots, keep heavy machinery ready for highway clearance and proper sanitation, washrooms and ablution facilities in local bazaars and markets, the Adviser directed the concerned quarters.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister Arshad Ayub Khan inspecting sanitation work in City during his visit.

# Power crisis getting out of control in KP: Governor

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi has said power crisis in the province is spinning out and he will talk to the federal government on the issue.

He said it was the responsibility of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur to solve people's problems of the province as they have elected him their chief executive.

The governor said there was an allied government in the country and issues would be resolved with negotiations and talks.

He said the PPP would support Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in getting the federal budget approved.

"PPP and government talks on the budget are under way. We will support the government] for budget approval if the negotiations are successful," Kundi said.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor said that the federal government tried to give a "good budget".

**Governor expresses grief on killing of journalist Khalil Jibran:**

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi here Wednesday expressed profound grief and sorrow over the killing of former President Landi Kotal press club Khalil Jibran and expressed sympathy with members of the bereaved family.

The Governor prayed Allah Almighty to may rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant patience to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with patience.

## Wild animals at Peshawar zoo draws children influx on Eid holidays

PESHAWAR (APP): On the third day of Eidul Azha's vacations, the families along with children here Wednesday thronged to Peshawar zoo where they took keen interest in wild animals including eagles, Zarafas and African snakes.

Malaika Bibi (10), a sixth grade student is overwhelmed after visiting the country's biggest zoo at Peshawar where wild animals caged in natural environment, attracted an influx of children along-with families on the 3rd of Eidul Azha amid great funfair and excitement.

"Seeing wild animals including cobra snake, lion, falcons and zarafa with own eyes were my dream. Big thank you to my papa for fulfilling my childhood dream today," said Malaika, a resident of Wapda Town Peshawar.

"I am very impressed to see rare wild animals were kept in natural environment besides facilities made for the visitors at Peshawar zoo," she told APP while seeing falcons.

Like Malaika, thousands of children along-with relative visited the zoo during Eid holidays and took keen interest in zarafas, lions, cobra snakes, bears, pheasants, dears, cranes, reptiles, birds, parrots and falcons.

The species remained center of attraction of small children, youth and families arrived from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and spent few hours in its relax environment amid food cuisines enjoyed by them in its sprawling lawns.

Children accompanied by parents arrived from Khyber, Kohat, Nowshera, Charsadda, Mardan, Mohmand, Swabi, Peshawar and others districts of KP were briefed by the wildlife experts.

Established on 29 acres land near University of Peshawar, it was the biggest zoo of Pakistan setup by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wildlife department wherein almost all species of wild animals and birds existing in the country were caged in natural habitats.

At entrance, big statue of elephant and zarafa have been installed in front of main gate that attract attention of visitors, and children while passing through Rahatabad Road. Falcons' cage remained a centre of attraction of tourists, wildlife lovers, students and children where three large sizes brown and black eagles are kept.

On its left and middle sides, zarafas, zebras, camels, dears, ducks, pheasants and others birds draw visitors' attention.

A safari bus is also available for visitors to help them in watching all these wild animals in short time besides a restaurant for food services. Free swings, camel and train ride inside facility doubled the joy of children.

Sumbul Riaz (34), who came to the zoo alongwith her children from Nowshera told APP that it was a great gift for people of Peshawar, which has not only enhanced beauty of Peshawar but also become a symbol of healthy entertainment.

"In the past, I had visited Islamabad and Lahore zoos to entertain my children. This year I did not go to these cities because of Peshawar Zoo," she said.

"Falcons have always attracted my children and that is why I came here to see them closely on my kids demands," she said.

"It is not only a place of entertainment but a great source of education and research for students of wildlife and zoology who otherwise travelled to Islamabad and Lahore for this purpose in the past," she said.

She underscored the need for proper shelter shades, trees plantations and proper cold watering for animals, adding services of DVM doctors may be hired 24/7 for looking after medical needs of the animals in harsh weather conditions.

The zoo was a good addition in provision of healthy entertainment and recreation facilities for residents of Peshawar and adjoining districts.

People from Attock Punjab have also visited Peshawar zoo, which are bringing people of all provinces further closers by enhancing bonds of friendship and love besides knowing about each others' culture, language and traditions.

She said its play-lands, train ride, swings, motion and camel ride, cafeteria and safari train have added colours of the zoo.

Suggested an establishment of a testing laboratory at the zoo premises for treatment of common diseases, he said the facility would help avoid deaths of precious animals in future.

He said fare of zoo was relatively high and small children should be exempted from it.

Special focus should be made on training of doctors and staff employed at the zoo so that they could properly take care of the animals as per international standards.

Wildlife experts urged visitors not to throw stones at animals or tease them, and extend full cooperation with zoo staff. They said the zoo was identity of Peshawar and visitors should make it neat and clean for people.

# Peshawarties suffer as offals of sacrificial animals block sewerage system

PESHAWAR (APP): Ispite of completion of three days of Eidul Azha, the operation of disposal of offals and solid waste of sacrificial animals have yet been completed in rural areas of Peshawar where its bad smell made negative effects on the lives of people.

The offals and solid waste thrown at water channels have blocked drainage systems at peripheries areas of Peshawar that caused standing of sewage water in streets affecting common man.

The scene is not very difficult to comprehend as the sewerage channels mostly blocked by offals had exposed the residents to various diseases. The residents of Chamkani, Tarnab, Pando, Afridi Ghari and others demanded of the WSSP to extend its operation to rural areas of Peshawar and complete it on priority basis.

Noorul Amin, a resident of Chamkani claimed that offals and solid waste of sacrificial animals have caused blockage of sewerage channels in city including Chamkani, Tarnab, Shahdhand, Ganj and Kohati mostly inhibited by low-income people and its clearance was required on war footing basis as the Govt and private offices would open on Thursday.

He said the residents of Shahdhand, Chamkani, Afridi Garhi and other rural areas that was nearer to somewhat beautiful, planned and affordable locality of provincial metropolis Gulbahar, is once considered unsuitable for living due to huge excavation for mud that was procured by brick kiln situated on Phandu and Kohat roads also complained about presence of offals and sold waste in open fields and drainage systems.

The rapid urbanization due to massive influx from suburban areas of the city and Afghans in the past led to multitude of problems including sewerage issues linked to numerous health hazards.

"When we had acquired house on rent at Shahdhand few years ago as it was less populated and the living environment was far better as compared to present situation that adversely affect its inhabitants owing to overflow of drainage water channels with bad smell everywhere in streets besides caused by offals," said Bilal Khan, an employee of real estate agency while talking to APP.

"We were extremely happy due to the availability of all basic amenities including electricity, water, sui gas and good sanitation but are ill at ease due to the worsening sewerage system mostly blocked by offals these days."

The situation has changed completely after the area became overpopulated due to an influx of people from suburban localities including erstwhile Fata and other tribal districts who made Peshawar their abode to find employment, schools and colleges, healthcare services and seek better economic opportunities for their loved ones, he said.

"The main problem in our locality is continuously deteriorating sanitation conditions due to massive urbanization and inadequate sanitation services," He said the rusted water pipes at Gunj, Kohati, Sikandar Town, Deh Bahadur, Nauthia Qadeem and Nauthia Jadeed had exposed Peshawarties to waterborne diseases and demanded for its immediate replacement.

"Poor sanitation and contaminated water caused by urbanization leads to different waterborne diseases including diarrhea, typhoid fever, cholera, dysentery and hepatitis A that may prove fatal especially for children and elderly citizens," said Dr Malik Riaz Khan, senior medical officer, Govt hospital Pabbi Nowshera while talking to APP.

He said about 60 percent infant and children deaths were caused by diarrhea while cholera fatality rate is 25-50 percent and that in every 16th minutes, a person dies of hepatitis mostly due to drinking of unsafe water.

He said that Pakistan was the 6th most populous country in the world with 2% annual growth and investments in water and sanitation services are barely keeping pace in the wake of rapid population growth and cities' extension.

The proportion of Pakistanis living in urban areas has increased substantially, from 17.7% of the population in 1951 to 36.4% in 2017 that created challenges of unmanaged urbanization and poor sewerage system.

Water and Sanitation for

Urban Poor (WSUP) study has revealed that Pakistan was expected to have 15 cities with population of over one million people within the next 15 years, and by 2030 it is estimated that Karachi and Lahore's population would reach approximately 28 and 15 million respectively with grave challenges of water sanitation and sewerage system.

"Another form of unplanned urbanization is mushroom growth of multi storey buildings in the provincial metropolis that also created water sewerage issues in Peshawar," said Haji Sikandar Khan, a resident of Gulbahar.

He said these buildings lack sewerage mechanisms that cause overflow of water in street water channels besides entrance of flood water in houses or blocked by offals.

The encroachment in water channels was another form of rapid and unplanned urbanization creating sewerage problems, he said, adding the encroachment appears slowly with an imperceptible pace disturbing the already disjointed infrastructure of sewerage leading to a variety of problems.

The increased microbial contamination of sewerage caused by offals has made the situation worse and created health related hazards like typhoid, hepatitis and many gastric diseases, he said.

The experts said that there was a dire need to clear offals on war footings basis and minimize effects of rapid urbanization by devising a strategy with a focus to improve sewerage conditions.

Underlying the need to shift and dispose of the offals in remote areas of Peshawar, the experts said that great responsibility rest on each and every member of society to realize the gravity of situation and address issues emanated due to unplanned urbanization in already congested cities including Peshawar.

Officials in Local Govt department told APP that WSSP has almost completed its offals clearance operations in the assigned areas of Peshawar.

He expressed the hope that the entire operation would be completed by mid night today.

KP cities improvement project (KPCIP) has been launched to provide clean drinking water, congenial environment and quality sewerage services to people.

He said KPCIP was aimed at the redesign and reconstruction of the existing dilapidated drainage system that would significantly improve the management of sewerage and storm water and prevent flooding in cities of KP.

KP government with financial assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank was executing multiple projects including KPCIP in the five divisional headquarters of Peshawar, Mardan, Mingora, Abbottabad, and Kohat to modernize municipal services.

The project aims to enhance the livability and community health of the five cities through the construction of clean water supply treatment facilities, sewerage treatment facilities, and the rehabilitation of dysfunctional tube wells.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) had approved \$385 million in financing for KPCIP.

An integrated waste management system would be established in big cities to ensure collection, safe transportation, segregation, and scientific disposal of solid waste in a sanitary landfill cell besides covering of waste water channels.

The projects will involve the installation of flow meters, supervisor control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems to ensure water quality and better sanitation services. He said existing rusted pipes would be replaced with leak-proof water supply lines and addressing the issue of water leakage.

He said the projects would focus on treating wastewater and utilizing it for irrigation purposes or returning it to water bodies.

Under the project, the rehabilitation of the British-era Lady Garden on modern lines will create a climate change-resilient environment and promote the well-being of the community.

The official said over 3.5 million people will benefit from improved access to clean water, reliable waste management and sanitation services, green urban spaces, and gender-friendly facilities.





## In brief

### Three minor kids killed

SHIKARPUR (PPI): A horrible incident occurred in the jurisdiction of Lodra police station in Shikarpur district on Wednesday, in which three minor children were killed while one other was injured. According to a report, a tractor-trolley carrying grass went out of driver's control in village Habibullah Jaffery and fell into a ditch. As a result, four minor children came under the loaded trolley. As a result, three of them were killed on the spot. Those killed were identified as two brothers Ali Gul aged 10, and Munir Ahmed aged 12, and a girl, Shakeelaan. The bodies and injured were shifted to a local hospital. One injured was later shifted to a Sukkur hospital for the treatment.

### 3 of a family drown in River

ATTOCK (PPI): A man, his son and his daughter drowned in Indus River near Attock district on Tuesday. According to a report, the family from a local village was on a picnic when the incident occurred. The man's wife cried for help following which the rescuers rushed to the scene. They rescued the man, identified as Khurram Shehzad, alive. The rescuers retrieved the body of Khurram's 17-year-old son, Shaheer, but they could not find the 11-year-old daughter of Khurram.

### Finance officer, nephew killed

MATYARI (INP): A federal finance officer along with his nephew was shot dead in Sindh district of Matyari on Tuesday. Finance officer Sachadno Kaka and his nephew Allah Bachayo Kaka were targeted by unidentified armed men of a rival group in Kaka community in village Serachaun Kaka in New Saeedabad area of Matyari. The Eid celebrations turned into mourning in the village after the murder. Sachadno Kaka came to the village to meet his relative on the eve of Eidul Azha. The police so far could not ascertain the motive behind the murders. They shifted the bodies to a hospital for further medico-legal action. After the murder of a federal officer, a large contingent of police rushed to the crime scene and collected evidence. A large gathering of local residents also gathered near the crime scene.

### Two girls drown in Pishin dam

PISHIN (INP): Two girls drowned in a dam in Pishin district of Balochistan on second day of Eid ul Azha. According to eyewitnesses, four girls and a rickshaw driver visited the dam. However, two girls and the rickshaw driver fled after the incident, they added. Local police said the bodies of the girls could not be retrieved.

### Brother shot dead

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): When the occasion of Eidul Azha is extending celebrations all around the world an unfortunate incident over distribution of Qurbani (sacrificial) meat has turned this sacred event into a mourning at a house in Azad Kashmir on Tuesday. The incident occurred in Shawai area of AJK Capital Muzaffarabad wherein a disagreement among four brothers over the distribution of Qurbani meat led to the murder of one of them. The four brothers came to blows over the meat distribution and one of the brothers, identified as Nawaz, injured another brother, Asad, and their father with a knife.

# PTI MNA backs dialogue with other parties

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: The central leader and member national assembly of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party Muhammad Atif Khan has favoured political dialogues of PTI with other rival political parties for the sake of country.

Muhammad Atif Khan who had also remained as ex-senior provincial minister in the last PTI provincial government expressed these views while talking to journalists at his residence here on Wednesday. He told that PTI was a political party that was why its leadership believed in resolving of issues and problems through political dialogue.

"No doubt that every political party has its own different manifesto and political agenda but talks and dialogue must also be held among these political parties," he said, adding there was no wrong for PTI to hold talks with other political parties. Muhammad Atif Khan declared that the incumbent central coalition govern-

ment-led by Pakistan Muslim League-N as one of the weakest, adding that the prime minister Mian Shabbaz Sharif had no powers.

He alleged that both the federal interior and finance ministers had not been giving weight to orders of the incumbent prime minister of Pakistan as they were out of his control. The PTI MNA claimed that the incumbent central government to fall due to its own deeds as it had taken unnecessary tussle with judiciary and media.

He blamed and claimed that six judges of Islamabad High Court had written to letters to authorities concerned regarding pressure over them for giving decisions against the PTI chief Imran Khan, its other leadership and workers. To a query about holding of protest demonstrations for release of PTI chief Imran Khan, the MNA Muhammad Atif Khan replied that the holding of protest demonstrations for release of PTI founder only inside Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa province would not work rather the movement had to be started from Punjab province then it would work.

"There is a Marshall-law like situation across the province of Punjab as its chief minister Maryam Nawaz has considering Punjab as its own state and she is the Mahrani of that state," he alleged. He accused that there was complete ban over holding of protest inside Punjab province. Besides, the provincial government of Punjab had brought a bill against the journalists so that to take control over media in the province.

To a query, he blamed that the central government of Pakistan Muslim League-N was creating hurdles and problems for PTI provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but all bids of the center would be failed. Despite of all these challenges, the PTI provincial government would succeed to deliver as per expectations and aspirations of the dwellers of KPK province, he added.

# 40 incidents occurred on Eid days in Dir

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A total of 42 incidents of various nature occurred on Eid days in the Lower Dir district. According to officials of Rescue 1122, several youths were injured in road traffic accidents occurred in Maidan, Odigram, Rani, Zawal Baba, Tormang and Timergara Shaheed Chowk.

The Rescue 1122 emergency and medical teams rushed to the sites and provided first aid to the victims in Timergara, Balambat, Kumbat, Bandi Maidan, Khazana, Sado, Khongi, Lal Qila, Walai Kandao, Rahimabad, Malala, Chamanabad, Miahbanda,

Shekolai, Makhai and other places. The officials said there were 5 incidents of forestfire in different mountains and forests of Lower Dir. They said the incidents occurred in Duba Barkhni Maidan, Bandagai Maidan, Shadas Maidan, Torming, Danwa, while there was also a house fire incident in Adam Dheri Chakdara. Rescue 1122 fire fighters responded in time and brought the fires under control while preventing further damage.

Seven people were injured when a car fell into a deep ravine at Shadas area of Maidan on second day of Eid. The injured were shifted to Timergara

hospital. Four other persons were injured when a car fell into a ravine on Odigram road. The injured were shifted to DHQ hospital Timergara.

A child was reportedly drowned in the Panjkora River at Shalpalum area of Khall here on Wednesday. A search operation began soon after the incident but the body was yet to be recovered. Similarly a youth identified as Yasir Syed was shot dead by unknown accused at Gorgia area of Timergara. His body was handed over to the heirs from the DHQ hospital Timergara. Reason behind the crime is not known.



HYDERABAD: Relatives of two brothers, who was killed by unknown persons holding a protest, as they demand arrest of killers.

# Clean Bannu mission successfully completed

## F.P. Report

BANNU: WSSC Bannu's grand cleaning operation on Eid Al-Zhaa completed 393 tons of rubbish and garbage were cleaned at points through special spray campaign. According to the details, the WSSC Bannu conducted an operation at the designated points on the three days of Eid in which the duties of personnel were assigned in different zones.

During this time, various areas of the city were visited under the leadership of Manager Jawadullah Kundi, Manager Shazeeb Khan and Assistant Manager Sentation Engineer Bakht Niaz Khan. During the operation, 393 tons of garbage was picked up and dumped by heavy machinery in Bannu city and adjacent areas. The ground was reached and the designated points of dirt were cleaned and washed by the fire brigade, after which the smell was completely removed.

On this occasion, Manager Jawadullah Kundi said that in the light of the special instructions

of the district administration, an Eid plan was formed and for cleaning. Different teams were formed and focal persons were formally nominated who performed their duties diligently on the three days of Eid and cleaned the city completely from dirt, due to which the leaders of Bannu and the elected representatives of local bodies WSSC. Appreciated for excellent service

Meanwhile, former provincial minister and the central leader JUI F Syed Hamid Shah has said that the provincial government has taken out projects for the development of the people of the southern districts and especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the provincial budget. Most of the development in which instead of reforms in important sectors like health and education, the people have been deprived of development.

There is a welfare plan, but in the plan, people are being given monthly vaccinations in the name of treatment and billions of rupees have been stolen by the capitalists only in Sahat Insaf card. But party

officials and workers and regional leaders were also present. Former provincial minister Syed Hamid Shah said that the current provincial government has budgeted the development projects of public welfare approved by various sectors including health and education of most districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the budget.

The hopes of the people have been dashed by taking it out of Nagar, although in the previous era we had approved such public projects which would have solved most of the problems of the people at their doorsteps, but this time the budget has been extended to the entire province and especially the southern districts. He said that the provincial government has launched Sahat Insaf Card, which is the best project of public welfare, but unfortunately, the special class has earned billions of rupees from this project. He said that he believe in decency and honesty and practical measures in politics, but in the present era people are being cheated through lies and deception.



LANDI KOTAL: People from different walks of life offering funeral prayer of martyred journalist, Khalil Jibran.

## Bench-Bar role vital for speedy justice, says Muqam Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs, Engr Amir Muqam here Tuesday said that bench and bar could play an effective role in dispensation of speedy justice to litigants and betterment of democracy in the country.

Addressing an oath taking ceremony of tehsils bars Chakasar and Poran at Malam Jabba on the second day of Eidul Azha, the Minister said that lawyers should not use their coats for an interest of an individual rather it should be used for the country's interest and better service to masses. He said that lawyers had created Pakistan and its protection was also their responsibility.

The Federal Minister said that some elements did not tolerate the government's enormous success on reducing price hike, inflation and bringing economic stability in Pakistan and termed such irrational approach of these negative elements were highly deplorable.

He said that Prime Minister and Army Chief were working tirelessly for strengthening of economy of Pakistan and that the negative elements were unnerved after seeing the country's fast development process. Engr Amir Muqam said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Army Chief Syed Asim Munir and the entire Government were committed to take the country's out of crisis and will success inshallah. The Federal Minister announced Rs one million each grant for different works of both the bars.

## DC visits DHQ Hospital F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad visited District Headquarter Hospital on Eid Day. She inquired after health of patients admitted in the hospital and distributed sweets among patients.

She inspected children emergency, general emergency, surgery, medical wards and other department and reviewed provision of free of cost medicines and other treatment facilities to patients in the hospital. She took feedback from patients and their relative regarding availability of healthcare and other facilities. She directed the hospital management to ensure free of cost medicines and other facilities without any delay.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad said that under the vision of neat and clean Punjab of the Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, district administration and Municipal Committees made ideal arrangements for ensuring cleanliness and lifting offal of sacrificial animals while all collection points have been washed with antiseptic lotion.

DC said that she herself, ADCG/Administration MC Hafizabad Hamaullah, AC Munawar Hussain, Chief Office MC Ansar Sahi, AC Pindi Bhattian Ishfaq Ahmad and Chief Officer Pindi Bhattian Ikram Ullah Sandhu were visited different areas to review working of sanatory staff during Eid days.

# Minister reviews cleanliness operations

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Minister Arshid Ayub Khan on Wednesday visited to Mardan city to inspect the ongoing cleanliness operations of Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) during EidulAzha.

He also visited the dumping site and transfer stations established for efficient and quick response to cope the huge volume of animal remains and offal. Arshid Ayub Khan lauded the efforts of management and sanitation staff of WSSCM for provision of improved sanitation services during the EidulAzha operations. Commissioner Mardan Division Muhammad Ayaz Khan and Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao were also present during the visit.

DC Mardan and Chief Executive Officer WSSCM Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao briefed Minister for LG that during two days of EidulAzha WSSCM collected 2065 tons of animal remains and safely disposed off. Six hundred sanitation workers and more than 70 various sanitation vehicles were deployed for transportation of waste to transfer stations and dumping sites. 41 Complaints were received during Eid two days which were immediately resolved.

Moreover, prior to EidulAzha 4500 biodegradable bags have been distributed among the citizens through elected representatives and other social activists for safe collection of animal remains. Provincial Minister of Local Government Arshid Ayub Khan expressed his satisfaction on the WSSCM EidulAzha operations and stated that provincial gov-

ernment is trying to provide a clean and safe environment to the citizens.

He saluted the sanitation staff and said that despite the intense heat in different districts of the province, the performance of all the local government institutions was satisfactory for providing the best services to the citizens.

He paid tribute to all staff of the company for their excellent cleanliness, and stated that sanitation workers worked day and night to provide clean environment to the citizens. General Manager WSSCM Imran Zaman, Manager Municipal Services Muhammad Khalil Akbar, Manager HR & Admin Rahatullah, Deputy Manager Solid Waste Management Muhammad Ishaq and Assistant Commissioner Takht Bhai Junaid Khalid were also present during the visit.

# Two brothers shot dead in Mardan

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: A mentally-ill young man shot dead his father, two brothers and critically injured his mother in Darbo village Khura Banda within the remits of Sheikh Maltoon Police Station.

The officials of Sheikh Maltoon Police station here on Wednesday quoted the injured woman identified as Munsifa, 51, as saying that she along with her husband and sons were sleeping open in the air inside her house when the incident took place.

She told that her son identified as Nihad Ali, 23, who was mentally-ill entered his home late on the night between Tuesday and Wednesday and opened indiscriminate firing over his own family members including his father, two brothers and she herself and then he also committed suicide.

As a result of firing, she told that her husband and two sons identified as Nasrullah, 56, Faizullah, 36 and Ibadullah, 31, died on the spot while she herself sustained critically bullets

wounds. She told that her accused son was mentally-ill and was under-treatment. The officials of Sheikh Maltoon Town police station registered FIR on the complaint of injured woman against her slain accused son and began further investigations into the case.

**PO gunned down:** A proclaimed offender was gunned down by police in a retaliatory firing when he opened firing over police in a bid to run away from the spot and protect himself from police arrest. The relevant officials told that the incident took place within the remits of Sheikh Maltoon Town Police Station here on Sunday.

They told that the slain pro-claimed offender identified as Irshad alias Shad Ali resident of Bajaur Koroona was wanted to police in several cases of robberies, thefts and other illegal serious cases. On the incident day, they said that police on a tip-off about his presence in the area, took action to arrest him. They, however, that the pro-claimed offender opened firing over

police team when he saw them, with the purpose to make his escape good from the scene.

They claimed that the police personnel were narrowly escape the firing. They said that they took their positions and started retaliatory firing and resultantly killed the proclaimed offender on the spot.

The DSP Sheikh Maltoon area Izhar Shah Khan who was leading the police team, told that they tried their best to arrest the slain pro-claimed offender alive but he was equipped that modern arms and was not ready to lay down the arms and give safe arrest to police. He told that they were compelled to carry out retaliatory firing when he started firing over the police team. He told that they shifted the dead body to hospital and had taken his arms and cartridges into their control. Besides, he told that they had also began further investigations in to the case so that to ascertain that who was backing him or providing assistance.

# Suspects arrested

## F.P. Report

KARAK: Suspects who stole batteries and goods from mosques in the suburbs of Kirk police station were arrested and the stolen goods were recovered.

According to the details, District Police Officer Karak Khankhel took strict notice of the complaints of theft of batteries and goods from mosques in the suburbs within the limits of Kirk City Police Station and directed the DSP Headquarters and SHO of Kirk City Police Station to trace and arrest the accused.

On which the SHO Farman Khan of Karak City police station under the leadership of DSP HQ Abid Afridi along with a police force traced the suspects who were stealing from mosques and arrested two accused thieves. On the identification of the arrested accused, the police recovered the stolen goods from different mosques, five batteries of different wattage and one large power regula-

tor. The accused have accepted their crime during preliminary investigation by the police while further investigation of the accused is going on.

**DPO visits jail:** District Police Officer Karak Khan Khel paid a surprise visit to the Central Jail Karak and reviewed the security of the jail from outside. While visiting the jail, he visited different parts and gave instructions to the jail authorities in the context of the current situation and advised the police officers in charge of jail security to be vigilant and alert. However, the jail authorities were told to immediately inform the police control room in case of any emergency or unusual situation so that additional personnel of the Quick Response Force at the headquarters can be called round the clock. Meanwhile, DPO Khan Khel also awarded the traffic officer on regular duty at Jail Chowk by commending him for his excellent duty procedure.

**Eid celebrated:** Like the rest of the country, Eid-ul-Azha was celebrated with enthusiasm and religious devotion in the district of Karak today. The district administration distributed sweets to the prisoners, soldiers on security duty, and patients under treatment in the hospital. Deputy Commissioner Kirk Mujibur Rehman along with Member Provincial Assembly Khurshid Khattak, District Police Officer Karak Khan Khel, Additional Deputy Commissioner Kirk and Additional Assistant Commissioner Karak visited the local jail and hospital to spread joy and happiness on the occasion of Eid.

The main objective of the visit was to instill a sense of positivity and compassion among those who could not celebrate Eid with their families due to imprisonment or hospitalization and to strengthen community bonds and government for the welfare of all citizens.





## EU rebukes France for breaking budget rules

BRUSSELS (AFP): The EU on Wednesday reprimanded France for breaching the bloc's budget rules under President Emmanuel Macron, 10 days before snap elections marked by lavish spending promises. The news will be a blow to Macron as it is the first time France returns to the EU's public spending sin bin since he came to power in 2017. And it sets the stage for a potential clash between Paris and Brussels following elections on June 30 and July 7 -- in which the far right and left, ahead in the polls, are pledging to spend billions more at a time when France will need to make cuts.

Alongside France, the European Commission said "the opening of a deficit-based excessive deficit procedure is warranted" for Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Slovakia. The procedure kickstarts a process forcing a country to negotiate a plan with Brussels to get their debt or deficit levels back on track.

The seven countries had deficits -- the shortfall between government revenue and spending -- above three percent of gross domestic product, in violation of the bloc's fiscal rules. The centrist Macron plunged France into political turmoil by calling the snap vote after his party's crushing defeat to the far right in EU elections earlier this month.

Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire has warned that France could be thrown into a debt crisis if the spending programmes of

either the far right or a new left-wing alliance were adopted. But senior EU officials refused to be publicly drawn on what the impact of France's vote could be on its fiscal discipline. A French finance ministry source said France's deficit would return from last year's 5.5 percent to below three percent by 2027 "provided a new government doesn't go in a different direction".

Brussels is reprimanding nations for the first time since the EU suspended the rules after the 2020 Covid pandemic and the energy crisis triggered by the Ukraine war, as states propped up businesses and households with public money. The EU spent two years during the suspension overhauling the budget rules to make them more workable and give greater leeway for investment in critical areas like defence.

But two sacred goals remain: a state's debt must not go higher than 60 percent of national output, with a public deficit of no more than three percent. "Our economic and fiscal policies are now entering a new cycle," said the EU's economy commissioner, Paolo Gentiloni. "This does not mean 'back to normal', because we are not living in normal times; and definitely not 'back to austerity', because this would be a terrible mistake." The commission will propose opening excessive deficit procedures for the seven countries in July to the EU's finance ministers.

It also noted that

Romania had "not taken effective action to correct" its excessive deficit, despite opening a procedure in 2020 based on 2019 data. France aside, the EU countries with the highest deficit-to-GDP ratios last year are Italy (7.4 percent), Hungary (6.7 percent), Romania (6.6 percent) and Poland (5.1 percent).

Italian Economy Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti said Italy had expected the move and would continue on its path to "sustainable public finances, which is welcomed by the markets and EU institutions".

Countries failing to remedy the situation can in theory be hit with fines of 0.1 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) a year, until action is taken to address the violation. In practice, though, the commission has never gone as far as levying fines -- fearing it could trigger unintended political consequences and hurt a state's economy. EU officials have however stressed there would be stronger enforcement this time round. The commission said states must send their multi-annual spending plans by September 20 for scrutiny and it will then publish its recommendations in November. The new rules stipulate that countries with an excessive deficit must reduce it by 0.5 points each year, which would require a massive undertaking. But the rules also now give greater flexibility for investment in critical areas like defence and the green and digital transition.

## Deadly explosions rock Chad

CHAD (BBC): A huge fire at a military ammunition depot in Chad has killed at least nine people and injured 46 others, the health minister has said. The death toll was in danger of rising as many of those wounded were in an "extremely serious" condition, Abdelmadjid Abderahim told journalists.

The explosions from the depot in the Goudji area of the capital, N'Djamena, lasted for about half an hour overnight. Video footage showed them lighting up the night sky, with witnesses saying they could be heard miles away. The weapons depot in Goudji is the country's main arsenal and is in the north of the city near the military headquarters, a French army base and the airport. There are also numerous residential houses in the neighbourhood.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Abderaman Koulamallah told French media the cause of the fire was accidental and far fewer people had died than had initially been feared. "We were expecting dozens and dozens of deaths. In the end, the collateral damage isn't very big," Mr Koulamallah, who is also the government's spokesman, told the AFP news agency.

"There aren't many civilians who lost their lives," he said. In his briefing, the health minister did not specify if those killed or injured were military personnel or civilians.

One resident told the Reuters news agency that he had been woken up by the sound of the explosion. "Our house was shaking as if someone were shooting at us. Then we saw a big fire at the military camp and smoke and things exploding in the air," said Moustapha Adoum Mahamat. "We could see artillery fly over us."

According to an official working with the French forces, there were "explosions of ammunition of all calibres". "For the moment, no French military personnel have been wounded," the official, who requested anonymity, told AFP. On Wednesday morning, President Mahamat Idriss Deby visited the site of the incident and those receiving treatment in hospital. After midnight he had posted his condolences on Facebook and ordered an investigation in to the fire: "Peace to the souls of the victims, sincere condolences to the grieving families and a speedy recovery to the wounded."

## Three killed in Guatemala heavy rains

GUATEMALA CITY (AP): Three men drowned in Guatemala when two of them tried to help another who had tried to cross an overflowing river, as heavy rains caused death and destruction across Central America, authorities said.

The three fatalities on Monday were the latest in a series of deaths caused by heavy rains in the region in recent days. In neighboring El Salvador, 11 people have died over the past week. Both countries have canceled school, and El Salvador has opened shelters for the displaced. Two weather systems - one along Guatemala's Pacific coast and the other in the Gulf of Mexico - have brought saturating rains to southern Mexico and Central America. The storm forming in the Gulf of Mexico is expected to eventually become the season's first named storm, and come ashore in northeast Mexico Wednesday.

Guatemala's National Coordinator for Disaster Prevention, or CONRED, confirmed that the three men drowned in the Pulula river, in the municipality of Jalpatagua, in southern Guatemala near the border with El Salvador. Video on Monday night showed a man trying to escape the current in the swollen river, while two men jumped in to try to save him. The father of one of the three men ran to help them, while he shouted for them to swim against the current. The force of the water was relentless and the three men drowned while onlookers screamed. The rains have also collapsed and destroyed roads and caused flooding.

Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo supervised the repair of the country's main highway towards the Pacific on Tuesday.

## Shipping industry urges Red Sea action as Houthis sink second vessel

LONDON (Reuters): Urgent action must be taken in the Red Sea to stop attacks on merchant shipping by Yemen's Houthis, leading industry groups said on Wednesday, after the sinking of a second ship.

Iran-aligned Houthi militants first launched drone and missile strikes on the important trade route in November in what they say is solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza. In more than 70 attacks, they have also seized one vessel and its crew and killed at least three seafarers. "It is deplorable that innocent seafarers are being attacked while simply performing their jobs, vital jobs which keep the world warm, fed, and clothed," the world's top shipping associations said in a joint statement.

"These attacks must stop now. We call for states with influence in the region to safeguard our innocent seafarers and for the swift de-escalation of the situation in the Red Sea." The Greek-owned Tutor coal carrier attacked by Yemen's Houthi militants in the Red Sea last week has sunk, salvagers confirmed on Wednesday.

The vessel was struck with missiles and an explosive-laden remote-controlled boat, according to sources. International naval forces have been deployed to provide mainly defensive support for ships still sailing through the Red Sea, but the attacks have increased significantly.

Insurance industry sources said on Wednesday there was also mounting concern over the use of attack drone boats by the Houthis. "They are harder to defend against and potentially more lethal as they strike the water-



line," one industry source said. "Missiles have - to date - mainly caused deck and superstructure damage (to ships)."

There have been 10 Houthi strikes so far in June compared with five in May, said Munro Anderson, head of operations at marine war risk and insurance specialist Vessel Protect, part of Pen Underwriting. "The first successful use of an unmanned surface vessel represents a new challenge for commercial shipping within an already complex environment," he added. Insurance industry sources said that additional war risk premiums, paid when vessels sail through the Red Sea, had hovered close to

0.7% of the value of a ship in recent days from around 1% earlier this year.

They added that with a second ship sinking and the losses likely to emerge from that, rates are likely to firm up, adding hundreds of thousands of dollars of extra costs to every voyage. Ships must divert around southern Africa, which is the best way to protect seafarers, said Stephen Cotton, General Secretary with the International Transport Workers' Federation, the leading seafarer's union. "We would also welcome proper escorts and the shielding of ships by naval forces, which would reduce the risks of ships being hit," he added.

## South Africa's Ramaphosa vows 'new era' at inauguration

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): South Africa has begun a "new era", President Cyril Ramaphosa announced as he was sworn in for a second full term in office. He remains in office even though his party, the African National Congress (ANC), failed to secure a majority in parliament during last month's election.

The ANC subsequently made a deal with its long-time rival Democratic Alliance (DA) and other parties to form a coalition government. Mr Ramaphosa hailed this government during his inauguration speech, but also warned that unless it addressed deep inequalities, the country could become unstable.

"Through the ballots that they have cast, the people of South Africa have made plain their expectation that the leaders of our country should work together," President Ramaphosa, 71, said solemnly. "They have directed their representatives to put aside animosity and dissent, to abandon narrow interests, and to pursue together only that which benefits the nation." They included the leaders of Nigeria, Angola, Zimbabwe, Congo-Brazzaville, and Eswatini, and gathered in the Nelson Mandela Amphitheatre outside the Union Building in Pretoria. A huge crowd gathered outside the official seat of government, waving national flags. Under a sharp blue winter sky, the Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, administered the oath of office.

"I swear I will be faithful to the Republic of South Africa... I will obey, observe and uphold the constitution and all other laws of the republic," the president said. A band then played the national anthem. The rendition was followed by a 21-gun salute and a fly-past by army helicopters. The ANC,

which has governed since the end of the racist system of apartheid in 1994, lost its majority for the first time after the 29 May election produced no outright winner.

The party got 40% of the vote, a drop of 17 percentage points, and it lost 70 seats in parliament. However lawmakers re-elected Mr Ramaphosa after the ANC made a power-sharing arrangement with the pro-business DA - who came second in the poll with 22% - and three smaller parties. The ANC's main new governing partner, the free-market DA, is ideologically at odds with the party's social welfare traditions, and seen by many as catering to the interests of the white minority, which it denies.

But the two political opponents are focused on a common agenda of fixing the country's infrastructure, providing basic services such as water and power, and creating jobs. The coalition is a move to the political centre, because the ANC's left-wing and populist breakaway parties rejected the invitation to join a national unity government. Mr Ramaphosa told South Africans the coalition was committed to reversing inequalities and growing the economy. He also warned that the country was riven with deep divisions between the haves and have-nots. Despite progress, "our society remains deeply unequal and highly polarized," he said. "There are toxic cleavages and an incipient social fragmentation that can easily turn into instability." And he warned against "those who seek to stand in our way, to inflame tensions" and "undermine our institutions." They will not succeed because South Africans are resolute, he said.

Mr Ramaphosa did not say to whom he was referring. But the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party formed six months ago by former

President Jacob Zuma didn't attend what it called the "farcical" inauguration. The party, which won 15% of votes and obtained 58 parliamentary seats, also boycotted parliament's first sitting last Friday. It has since joined a counter-coalition of opposition parties, vowing to oppose the policies of what Mr Zuma described as an "unholy alliance" between black and white elites to benefit the markets, not the people. It "must be crushed before it finds its feet," he said, "in the streets, in the courts and in parliament." MK has said its protests would be peaceful. But there have been fears that Mr Zuma's stance would trigger violence among his supporters, who carried out deadly riots in July 2021 when he was jailed for refusing to give evidence at a public inquiry into corruption during his administration. Mr Ramaphosa is expected to appoint a cabinet in the coming days, which is to include the the DA and three other smaller parties. Together, the coalition accounts for 68% of seats in parliament.

The president is then expected to formally set out the policies aimed at rescuing the flailing economy. There are many challenges ahead to navigate. They include potential ideological disagreements within the coalition, unhappiness from ANC elements on the left, and the risk of political opposition becoming volatile. But many South Africans want it to succeed.

"This is a moment when we must choose to either move forward together," Mr Ramaphosa said "or risk losing all we have built." The former trade unionist and business tycoon first became president in 2018 when his predecessor, Mr Zuma, was forced to resign because of corruption allegations. Mr Zuma has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing.

## Bardella backpedals on taking France out of NATO command

VILLEPINTE (AP): The far-right leader angling to become prime minister after France's upcoming parliamentary election backtracked Wednesday on his party's previous promise to pull out of NATO's strategic military command.

National Rally President Jordan Bardella said at the Eurosatory arms show outside Paris in Villepinte that he "doesn't plan to question the commitments France has made on the international stage" if voters give his party a majority that enables him to lead a new government, in what would be an awkward power-sharing arrangement with President Emmanuel Macron.

Referring to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Bardella said that "France mustn't leave NATO's military command while we are at war, because it would considerably weaken France's responsibility on the European scene and, obviously, its credibility with regard to its allies."

The comments pulled back from a campaign promise made by his party in its manifesto for the 2022 French presidential election. "The priority will be to leave the integrated NATO command," the 2022 manifesto read, a move that would have taken French military staff out of the NATO body that plans operations, and weakened France's role and influence within NATO.

The latest about-face comes as the National Rally is toning down previously announced positions in

an attempt to win voters outside of its traditional base before the June 30 and July 7 two-round parliamentary election - the party's first real chance of forming a government. In spite of his comments regarding NATO, Bardella maintained that he's firmly against sending troops to Ukraine.

"I am opposed, unlike the president of the republic, to sending troops and sending French soldiers to Ukraine, because I believe that first of all, a majority of French people is opposed to this decision," he said. Macron said in March that sending Western troops into Ukraine shouldn't be ruled out. Bardella said that he supported sending continued French supplies of weaponry, ammunition and other military equipment and support to Ukraine "to enable Ukraine to protect itself," but that he was also wary of the risk of any direct escalation with Russia, noting that it is nuclear-armed like France.

"My position has not changed. It is ... to hold the front and at the same time to avoid any risk of escalation with Russia, because Russia is a nuclear power," he said. Bardella's euroskeptic anti-immigration National Rally party, and particularly its former presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, are known for close ties to Russia. Le Pen has expressed reservations about supplying Ukraine with additional arms.

Earlier this month, Macron dissolved the lower house of France's parliament in a surprise announce-

ment, sending voters back to the polls, after his party was handed a humbling defeat by the far right in the European Parliament election. With his centrist block squeezed on both sides by the far-right National Rally and a newly formed coalition of parties on the left that have banded together against the far right's surge, Macron and his legislative candidates are furiously trying to steer voters back to the middle ground of French politics and away from what he describes as the extremes.

On Tuesday, Macron took aim at a campaign pledge by the left-wing New Popular Front coalition to make it easier for people to change gender in their paperwork. It is proposing that mayors and their deputies be empowered to handle such requests, which are currently managed by French courts. Macron described the proposal as "completely ludicrous," in a seeming appeal to conservative voters.

His comment dismayed campaigners for LGBTQ+ people. Campaign group SOS Homophobia posted on social media, "So the strategy is clear: exploit minorities in the race for power." In France, legislative elections decide the makeup of the parliament, not the occupant of the presidential Elysee Palace. Macron has a presidential mandate until 2027 and says he won't step down before the end of his term, although he might have to share power with a far-right-led government.

## Police detain independence leader

PARIS (AP): Police in the restive French Pacific territory of New Caledonia rounded up 11 people Wednesday, including an independence leader, who are suspected of having a role in the deadly violence that wracked the archipelago where Indigenous Kanak people have long sought to break free from France.

The detentions were part of an ongoing police investigation launched May 17, just days after unrest first erupted, into a wave of armed clashes, looting, blazes and other violence that turned parts of the capital, Nouméa, and its suburbs into no-go zones. New Caledonia's prosecutor, Yves Dupas, said in a statement that the police round-up started in the early morning, with others detained later in the day, including some who reported to police stations of their own

accord.

He said those taken in custody include Christian Tein, a leader of a pro-independence group that French officials alleged played a leading role in weeks of violence that erupted in May over contested voting reforms for New Caledonia. Dupas did not identify the 10 other people detained. The revolt prompted France to declare a state of emergency on the archipelago and rush in reinforcements for police forces that were rapidly overwhelmed. The violence led to nine deaths, including two gendarmes, and widespread destruction of shops, businesses and homes.

The prosecutor said Wednesday's detentions were part of a police investigation into a broad array of suspected crimes, including complicity in homicide and attempted homicide, armed robbery,

arson, and membership of a group created to prepare violent acts. The possible charges allow investigators to hold detainees for questioning for up to 96 hours, he said. After that, an investigating magistrate would have to decide whether police have gathered sufficient evidence to warrant formal charges. With France now plunged into frenzied campaigning for snap parliamentary elections, French President Emmanuel Macron has suspended the reforms that would have altered voting rights in New Caledonia.

With unrest now ebbing, the French Pacific territory this week shortened its overnight curfew by two hours, pushing back its start from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. It also reopened the international airport that was closed to commercial flights for more than a month.

## Religious and cultural mentions removed

TAIPEI (AP): Authorities in China's western Xinjiang region have been systematically replacing the names of villages inhabited by Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities to reflect the ruling Communist Party's ideology, as part of an attack on their cultural identity, a report released by Human Rights Watch said Wednesday.

About 630 villages in Xinjiang have had their names changed to remove references to Islam or the Uyghurs' culture and history, according to the group's report, done in collaboration with the Norway-based organization Uyghur Hjelp. The report compared the names of 25,000 Xinjiang villages as listed by the National Bureau of Statistics of China between 2009 and 2023.

Words like "dutar," a traditional Uyghur string instrument, or "mazar," a shrine, have been removed from the names of villages, and replaced with words such as "happiness," "unity" and "harmony" - generic terms often found in the Communist Party's policy documents. The Chinese Foreign Ministry didn't immediately respond to

faxed questions about the report and its policies in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang is a vast region bordering Kazakhstan that is home to about 11 million Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities. In 2017, the Chinese government launched a campaign of assimilation that has included mass detentions, alleged political indoctrination, alleged family separations and alleged forced labor among other methods. As part of the crackdown, more than 1 million Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and other ethnic minorities were estimated to be held in extralegal internment camps. The Chinese government at the time described the camps as "vocational training centers" and said they were necessary to curb separatism and religious extremism.

The UN Human Rights Office in 2022 found accusations of rights violations in Xinjiang "credible" and said China may have committed crimes against humanity in the region.

The changes to the names of Xinjiang villages included removing mentions of religion,

including terms such as "Hoja," a title for a Sufi religious teacher, and "haniqa," a type of Sufi religious building, or terms such as "baxshi," a shaman.

References to Uyghur history or to regional leaders prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 have also been removed, according to the report. "The Chinese authorities have been changing hundreds of village names in Xinjiang from those rich in meaning for Uyghurs to those that reflect government propaganda," said Maya Wang, acting China director at Human Rights Watch. "These name changes appear part of Chinese government efforts to erase the cultural and religious expressions of Uyghurs."

The Chinese government wants to "erase people's historical memory, because those names remind people of who they are," said Abduweli Ayup, a Uyghur linguist based in Norway and founder of Uyghur Hjelp. Most of the village name changes occurred between 2017 and 2019, at the height of the government crackdown in Xinjiang, according to the report.



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# China and Australia ties back on track

CHINESE Premier Li Qiang just wrapped up his official visit to Australia, the second stop in his three nation tour of New Zealand, Australia and Malaysia. The visit, the first by a Chinese Premier in seven years, represents an important thaw in relations after they fell into a deep freeze under the previous Australian government. The upgrade began last November when Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese visited China. It continued with the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi paying a visit to Australia in March.

The improvement in relations was confirmed by Li Qiang, who wrote in the visitor's book at Australia's Parliament House "the friendship between China and Australia is evergreen." The Premier first travelled to Adelaide, the hometown of the Australian Foreign minister, Penny Wong. This was followed by visits to the national capital, Canberra, and Perth, before his departure for Malaysia. During his time in Canberra, Li Qiang co-chaired the 9th China-Australia Annual Leaders' Meeting with Albanese at Parliament House. These Leaders' Meeting, which had collapsed under the previous Australian government, are intended to be annual events.

Li Qiang said the most important experience drawn from the past decade of development in China-Australia relations is that the two sides should respect each other, seek common ground while shelving differences and engage in mutually beneficial cooperation. "China is ready to work with Australia to uphold the comprehensive strategic partnership, give full play to such mechanisms as the China-Australia Strategic Economic Dialogue, scale up trade, actively expand cooperation in areas like new energy vehicles and renewable energy power generation, and step up exchanges and cooperation in culture, tourism and other fields."

To that end, China will include Australia in its unilateral visa waiver program, with the two sides agreeing to provide each other with reciprocal access to multiple-entry visas of up to three to five years' duration for tourism, business, and visiting family members. Li Qiang said, "China is ready to step up coordination and cooperation with Australia at the regional and international level, and oppose bloc confrontation and a new Cold War for the broadest common interests of all parties, that is, safeguarding peace and stability in the region."

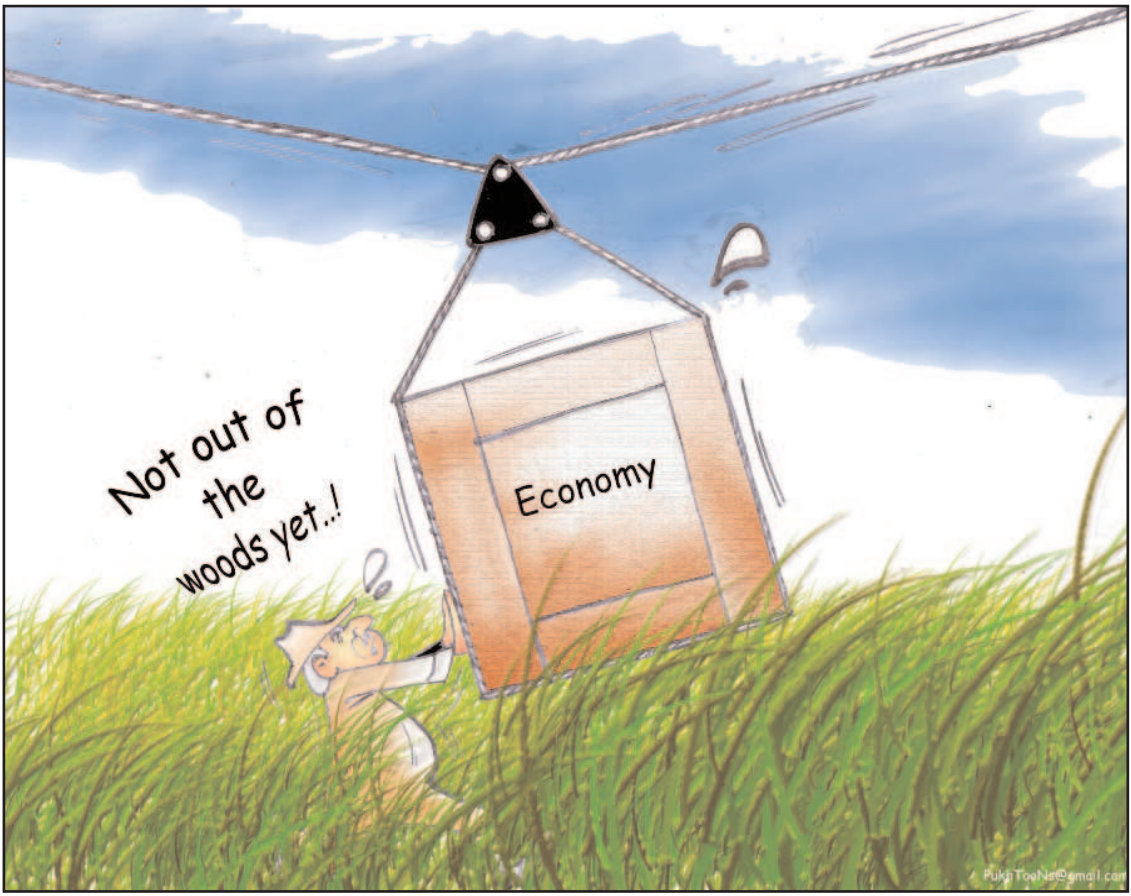
Albanese said, "In recent decades, China's economic transformation has lifted more people out of poverty than any nation." "Like Premier Li's presence here now, my visit to China last year was a step forward in stabilizing the relationship between our two nations... We continue to cooperate where we can, disagree where we must, and engage in our national interest."

Li Qiang travelled with a delegation largely made up of Chinese business leaders who participated in the 7th Australia-China CEO Roundtable. This business side of the visit was concentrated on the Western Australian capital, Perth, the state with the strongest economic ties with China through its mineral exports, particularly iron ore. China and Australia have highly complementary economic needs, clearly seen in that one-third of both imports and exports to and from Australia are to China. This trade had been seriously impacted under the previous government.

Beginning with Australia banning Huawei from its telecommunications network, a series of tit-for-tat trade barriers escalated until they began costing Australia some \$15 billion annually. These barriers to Australian exports have nearly all now been removed with Australian Minister for Trade Don Farrell recently commenting, "I've now met with my equivalent seven times, and all of the indications I get from him is that, like us, they want to put these issues behind us." Such a visit would be the clearest signal that the unfortunate hiccup in China-Australia relations has been consigned to history.

## Important Notice

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



# Will France choose fantasy politics or reality?

Mohamed Chebaro

MOST people in Europe are still digesting the results of this month's European Parliament elections, which rang alarm bells nationally and within the bloc's institutions. They are now bracing for the impact of the extreme right and populist parties, which won almost a quarter of the parliament's seats, on the future working of the union.

French President Emmanuel Macron decided to surprise everyone and call for a general election, which will be sandwiched by the Euro 2024 football championship, which kicked off in Germany last week, people departing for their annual summer holidays and the Paris Olympics, which is due to start at the end of July. This all amounts to a less than perfect setting to ensure a large turnout.

Macron's gamble, though a simple one, could backfire on his presidency — and the nation — as France could be ruled by a far-right government come July 8. The president is presenting people with a simple choice: either back his centrist, pro-business, pro-European, pro-Ukraine status quo politics or vote for the National Rally, led by Marine Le Pen, who tables an ultranationalist, populist, anti-EU, Moscow-friendly agenda.

Traditionally, the forces of France's right, left and center have managed to keep the rise of the far right at bay, aided by an electoral system that splits elections into two phases. The first is free for all to run. The candidates who achieve the highest percentage of votes in the first phase usually go to a second round of voting to determine the winner of each seat. Up until recently, when the electorate was faced with a far-right candidate being among the top-two performers, deals were struck locally and nationally to vote tactically to keep them out. This helped to keep Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie, and later his daughter and their far-right movement far away from government.

However, Macron worked to reconfigure the French political landscape ahead of his 2017 election, splitting it between conservatives and progressives and replacing the tradition-

al right-left split. Fast forward to June 2024 and it is the National Rally that has the wind in its sails. Early polls suggest the party of Le Pen could win up to 265 of the 577 seats in the National Assembly, nearly treble its current tally. And the story could get even grimmer, since the election is likely to be fought three ways: between the National Rally and its allies on the extreme right, the quickly-

would be a parliament controlled by the leftist national alliance, setting the stage for a difficult coexistence between a center-right president and a left-leaning government and legislature.

Le Pen indicated this week that her National Rally "roadmap will be the series of proposals we have made in the past to the French people, and which appear essential to us, on purchasing power, security

are incompatible with competitiveness. As France this week starts a fortnight of frenetic election campaigning, early indications point to a lack of urgency to mount a united front to deny Le Pen and National Rally a majority in the next French parliament, as the left has opted to quickly form its own alliance.

The fear for France is that the far right will not succeed at governing like it does with campaigning, which is maybe plausible. But anyone watching Jordan Bardella, the 28-year-old face of the National Rally and likely leader of its government, addressing his party's supporters after its European Parliament elections success could not have failed to notice his composure and confidence as he spoke to a sea of cheering youths, who celebrated as he underscored his party's commitment to close French borders.

The new poster boy of the French far right seems to have captured the hearts and minds of not only the old xenophobes, but also the new generation — and that is the danger for France and Europe. Bardella's attributes as a young white politician calling for a "France first" vision clearly echoes with a younger population that feels disillusioned and underserved.

Whether his party will collapse the economy or fail in its endeavor to rule France is secondary. For the time being, a section of French people of all ages, like their counterparts in many other countries, are gripped by leaders like Bardella, who project a modern image, turbocharged by the communication of messages with skillfully curated content that appeals to them. And in an age where the digital realm is king, who cares whether what Bardella says is even realistic and could translate into sound policies? But this seems enough for his 1 million or more followers to propagate and forward his messages on TikTok to create waves that convey vibes or feelings that resonate among them. But these are unlikely to fill the empty stomachs of the needy, provide adequate care for the sick in hospitals or stop immigration.

Arab News

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formed alliance of the forces of the left, and Macron's centrist Renaissance party. The president's potential alliance with The Republicans is in tatters after its leader unilaterally called for his center-right party to ally itself with Le Pen and the far right.

Macron's kamikaze decision could still be vindicated if the electorate manages to see clearly what is at stake socially, politically and economically as a result of the far-right's fantastical, uncensored reforms. But in an electoral space — in France and elsewhere — that is dominated by TikTok, fake news, trolls and alternate realities catering to every voter's whim, Macron's gamble could end up pushing voters into the arms of the political populists, as they seek to escape the often more complex and less appealing hard realities. A lesser evil

and immigration." Her party's 2022 presidential pledges were clearer. She promised to expel more migrants, stop their family reunifications in France, give French nationals priority for jobs, benefits and social housing, and expel immigrants who are unemployed for more than a year. She also pledged to privatize the media, grant police officers protection from prosecution in cases where they are accused of violence, reduce the retirement age, axe inheritance tax for many, exempt under-30s from income tax and offer zero-interest 100,000 (\$107,000) loans to boost home ownership.

Many have routinely picked holes in the uncensored plans of Le Pen's party. And some consider certain policies to be unconstitutional, such as the annulling of taxation for those under 30, while others believe that most of her proposals

Ray Hanania

# Israel should be banned from Olympics just like Russia

RUSSIA and Belarus have both been banned from participating in the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics because of their involvement in the war on Ukraine. So why is Israel not being banned as well?

Israel's military is engaged in one of the worst attacks on a civilian population since the Second World War, with more than 37,000 Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip. And we only have Israel's word that many of those killed were members of Hamas, the militant group that launched a violent attack against Israel, killing about 1,200 people, on Oct. 7, 2023. In the first two years following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, more than 30,000 Ukrainians were killed or wounded.

There are actually more specific details on how Ukrainians are being killed by Russia than there are on Israel's reckless military bombardment of nearly

every city in the Gaza Strip. The details of the violence against Ukraine is so specific that humanitarian and aid organizations have pinned down the casualty rate to 42 civilians every day.

More than 87 percent of the Ukrainians killed, or 9,241 people, were casualties of explosive weapons. More than 5.9 million people have been forced to flee Ukraine to other countries and about 4 million are displaced within Ukraine. In Gaza, nearly 85 percent of the population of 2.3 million have been forced from their homes and are constantly seeking shelter. Israel not only fires missiles into the imprisoned land mass, but it has also sent tanks, troops and snipers into the area, killing targets as they move from Beit Lahia in the north to Rafah in the south.

The host of this year's Olympics, France, is divided on the Israeli invasion and the government has taken action to oppose a rise in anti-

semitism. French President Emmanuel Macron has also offered consoling words to Muslims.

Why has the International Olympic Committee not taken action to curtail or prohibit Israel's participation in the Olympics? If the international rule of law and the West's supposed opposition to the killing of civilians had any meaning, Israel would be banned. The problem is that, when it comes to the Middle East, the West has always cared less about the suffering of Arabs and Muslims than the suffering of non-Arabs and non-Muslims. It is that racist and Islamophobic attitude, which is driven by ugly historical stereotypes that date back to the Crusades of almost 1,000 years ago, that allows the West to be concerned for Ukraine and angry with Russia, while being unconcerned about Arabs in Gaza and throughout the Middle East and accepting of

Israel. Israel largely controls the media narrative of the war, falsely asserting that the violence began on Oct. 7. The Western news media has generally championed that narrative, carrying water for Israel. Meanwhile, Israel has engaged in a war not only against Hamas, but also against independent, mainly Arab journalists, killing more than 100 of those who have been reporting on the war from Gaza and who have not been embedded with Israel's military, which censors and controls content.

The truth is that the Israeli carnage against Palestinians began long before the foundation of Hamas, which has its roots in an Israeli effort to undermine the rise of secular Palestinian nationalism in the 1970s. Israeli military censorship in both Gaza and the West Bank since the start of the occupation in 1967 means it is tough to know the exact number of Palestinians

# US democracy and a tale of two trials

Yossi Mekelberg

IN recent years, the world has faced many events to which the adjective "unprecedented" has been frequently and correctly attached: from a global pandemic to a member of the UN Security Council illegally invading a neighbor and global warming reaching a new height. However, in the next few months, much of our attention will turn to the US presidential election — and there too the unprecedented nature of events rules supreme.

For the first time, both candidates are looking to be elected for a second term; their combined age is the highest of any previous pair of candidates; and, in addition, criminal trials are dominating much of the political debate, despite the enormous challenges confronting the country domestically and internationally. And if Donald Trump wins, he will become the first American president to be a convict. For now, he holds the unenviable record of being the first former president to be convicted of felony crimes and he might even have to run the country from behind bars.

As far as the two court cases are concerned, there is a marked difference between them. In the case of President Joe Biden, he has not been suspected, let alone charged with any offence, but his son Hunter was convicted last week in a federal court on three felony counts relating to buying a handgun while being a crack cocaine user and lying about that. The president's support of his son, especially considering the tragic history of their family, is an understandable fatherly act that should be held in his favor and not used against him.

In contrast, Trump's recent conviction on 34 counts of falsification of business records in the first degree, in a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election through a hush money payment to an adult film actress, is a legal stain on his reputation that should have excluded him from running for the highest office in the country. This is only one of four criminal cases against him, with the remaining three trials yet to commence.

Trump has also been embroiled in civil cases relating to his business empire; and he was found liable for sexual abuse by a civil court last year. One wonders how he has time to focus on his election campaign or how he would run the country should he win the trust of the people for another term. More disturbing is why millions of law-abiding citizens might put their faith in someone with his record.

During this unusual presidential race, these trials are an unfortunate distraction from the real issues that are going to determine the lives of Americans over the next four years, as well as the lives of many others across the globe. Nevertheless, they are also a symptom of America's malaise and the profound rupture in its society. This gives some insight into the source of support among Republicans for a candidate who will represent almost anything that goes against the values of the vast majority of those who vote for him. In addition, social media platforms have made it extremely easy to drive a wedge between elements of society and stoke distrust through spreading disinformation, making it difficult to discern what is truth and what is a lie.

Trump is a product of our

times, whereby reality is in the eye of the beholder. Research shows that polarization is ingrained in American society, creating a perfect environment for the former president to thrive on. Moreover, supporters of both Democrats and Republicans perceive their rival supporters in an extremely negative light, as much as they do the party leaders. This split society translates to a rigid, tribal voting pattern, with little switching of support from one party to another. Instead of judging candidates by their policies and personalities, they support them according to what side of the political map they are on, while developing hostile emotions toward the rival party.

A poll conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago has revealed that an overwhelming majority of Democrats and Republicans agree on some fundamental values, among them accountable government, fair and equal application of the rule of law, personal responsibility and accountability for one's actions, and respect and compassion across differences. Those are honorable values that should be the basis for a healthy society, but in the same breath, despite both sides of the political map supporting these values, they are highly skeptical of each other. And how many of these values can one associate with Trump?

How could supporters of the Republican Party not be shocked and dismayed by Trump's rebuff of the last presidential election result or the attack on Capitol Hill — surely they should be. Apparently not, in their current state of mind: for them, the Democrats and President Biden are not rivals but enemies.

Furthermore, Republicans are more conservative in their value system, in which the family is at the center of life and society, and yet Trump is hardly a proponent of this and still won the primaries without breaking sweat. Instead of traditional values, he plays on their fear of migrants by offering them fantasy solutions that are unworkable but resonate with their emotions rather than their reason.

Ironically, when voters are polled on the issues that concern them most, one of their top answers is that Democrats and Republicans should work together, yet by supporting Trump and some of his loyalists in Congress, they are bound to achieve only partisanship and discord: the exact opposite. To explain the rise of Trumpian populism, much can be attributed to the increasing number of Americans who feel left behind and disenfranchised; levels of income and wealth inequality are higher in the US than in almost any other developed country and are rising. It is a very wealthy country, yet there are far too many people who find it difficult to make ends meet. In Trump, who manages to fashion himself as their champion, they look for salvation, while his record belies this and shows that he is clearly more concerned with the super-rich, not those who face daily economic struggle.

Few believed that Trump would win the election back in 2016 and, considering his first term, it is almost inconceivable that the great American people will renew his mandate. This might indeed appear to be a logical conclusion, but logic is something that is threatening to desert America's current social and political environment.



# Nothing ‘out of the box’ about Italy’s asylum offshoring deal with Albania

IMAGINE for a moment that you are a racist Western government plagued by an influx of asylum seekers, many of them dark-skinned. Wouldn’t you dream of packing them off to a distant land to be dealt with out of sight and out of mind?

Well, that dream is now becoming a reality for Italy, where Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni of the far-right Fratelli d’Italia (Brothers of Italy) party is overseeing an agreement with the Balkan nation of Albania to open two processing centres for seaborne asylum seekers intercepted en route to Italian shores. Located in the northern Albanian towns of Shengjin and Gjader, the centres are expected to hold up to 36,000 people per year. The scheme will cost Italy at least 670 million euros (\$720m) for the initial five-year period – but the price tag is apparently worth it in terms of racking up xenophobic nationalist points for the government.

Meloni, who rode to power on an array of fascist-friendly promises including a pledge to curb immigration, travelled to Albania on June 5 to visit the migrant penal colonies – pardon, asylum processing centres – which she says will be up and running by August. The visit was timed to coincide with the eve of European Union elections, in which Fratelli d’Italia fared spectacularly.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has praised the Italy-Albania agreement as an “important initiative” that constitutes an “example of out-of-the-box thinking, based on fair sharing of responsibilities with third countries in line with obligations under EU and international law”. Never mind that the deal is in fact a violation of international law governing rescues at sea as well as a breach of the prohibition on automatic detention.

It is also not clear why Albania, a country that was itself a short-lived colony of Italy and played no role in the catastrophic European colonial enterprise that set the stage for current migration pat-

terns, should be responsible for “sharing” the burden of dealing with refugees. Recall that Italy’s 20th century exploits in Africa entailed conducting genocide in Libya and terrorising Ethiopia. But heaven forbid any present-day Africans think themselves entitled to, you know, come look for work or a better life in Italy.

Nor, to be sure, is the practice of offshoring asylum processing quite

Manus Island cost about 1.8 million British pounds (\$2.3m) per year.

Britain, meanwhile, is threatening to finally implement in July its long-awaited plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda thousands of kilometres away – which despite its dismal human rights record has been determined to be just the place for United Kingdom-bound refugees. Then, of course, there is

**Rendering the panorama all the more sadistic is the obscene expense of Australia’s offshore operations. In 2022, Human Rights Watch reported that detaining a single asylum seeker on Nauru or Manus Island cost about 1.8 million British pounds (\$2.3m) per year. Britain, meanwhile, is threatening to finally implement in July its long-awaited plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda thousands of kilometres away – which despite its dismal human rights record has been determined to be just the place for United Kingdom-bound refugees. Then, of course, there is the United States’s preferred approach to asylum, which is to dismantle the concept altogether.**

as novel and “out of the box” as von der Leyen suggests. On and off since 2001, for example, Australia has deflected incoming asylum seekers onto the Pacific island nation of Nauru as well as Papua New Guinea’s Manus Island – an arrangement that has proved physically and psychologically destructive and has resulted in numerous suicides and suicide attempts by refugees among other forms of self-harm. Rendering the panorama all the more sadistic is the obscene expense of Australia’s offshore operations. In 2022, Human Rights Watch reported that detaining a single asylum seeker on Nauru or

the United States’s preferred approach to asylum, which is to dismantle the concept altogether.

Offshore precedents notwithstanding, the Italy-Albania agreement is unique in one respect: The processing centres in Shengjin and Gjader will be under Italian rather than Albanian jurisdiction. Sounds sort of colonial. In a January report on the deal, Amnesty International noted that Italy has been a “trail-blazer for the externalisation of border control”, having collaborated for the past two decades with Libya – another former Italian colony – in thwarting the movement of asylum seekers.

Over the years, Italian contributions to the partnership have included facilitating Libya’s interception at sea of thousands upon thousands of refugees who were then returned to Libyan detention centres to face an assortment of perils, ranging from enforced disappearances to torture and killing. Tunisia, too, has received an Italian helping hand in cracking down on migration, an arrangement that has fuelled human rights abuses but has solidly failed to deter European-bound asylum seekers.

And while Meloni has advertised the Albania scheme as an “extraordinary deterrent against illegal migrants trying to reach Italy and Europe”, it will no doubt prove to be just another costly forum for politically expedient human rights violations. As Amnesty International pointed out, Shengjin is located more than 500 nautical miles (926km) from the area in the central Mediterranean Sea where most refugees are rescued, meaning it would take two or three days to transport shipwreck survivors there – as opposed to more proximate locations in Italy or Malta.

These are people who are “often traumatised” for various reasons, from having experienced torture in captivity to having witnessed loved ones drown. The report determined: “In such situations, unnecessarily forcing them to spend days onboard rescue ships, where crews cannot fully cater to their needs, constitutes a violation of international standards on search and rescue, and may in itself amount to ill-treatment.”

Once on Albanian soil – or is it Italian soil again? – these same people will be indefinitely swallowed up by a neocolonial detention apparatus, safely out of sight and out of mind. According to Meloni, the Italy-Albania agreement is a “model” that could be “replicated in many countries” and could even “become part of the structural solution” of the EU. But if this is “out-of-the-box thinking”, it’s time to get back in the box.

# Action must be taken on alleged complicity of Israeli doctors in torture

**“I will not use my medical knowledge to violate human rights and civil liberties, even under threat.” This is a line in The Physician’s Pledge adopted by the World Medical Association in 1948, which guides the work of doctors around the globe.**

Unfortunately, as the practice of torture persists across the world, too often medical workers are at risk of becoming complicit. One country that has come under the spotlight recently regarding medical complicity in torture has been Israel. For years, human rights organisations have reported “widespread and systematic” use of torture by Israeli security forces and prison authorities. The Israeli NGO Public Committee against Torture (PCATI) has filed over 1,400 torture complaints against Israeli authorities since 2001.

Since October 7, allegations of ill-treatment and torture of Palestinians in Israeli detention have sharply increased. According to media reports, at least 40 Palestinians have died in Israeli military detention and 16 in prison over the past eight months. These numbers represent a substantial increase when compared to the average of four deaths per year from 1967 to 2019.

Medical complicity in deaths or ill-treatment of detainees would leave a dark stain on the medical profession in Israel. We therefore call on the Israeli authorities and medical institutions and associations to investigate any allegations of complicity of doctors and other medical staff in torture and ill-treatment. Reports that Israeli medical workers may have been complicit in the ill-treatment of detained Palestinians since October 7 should not come as a surprise. Human rights organisations have detailed such practices in past years.

In 2007, the Public Committee against Torture in Israel (PCATI) published testimonies alleging that in between torture sessions victims were seen by doctors who neither documented nor reported the torture. In 2009, an appeal was sent on behalf of more than 700 doctors from 43 countries asking the World Medical Association (WMA) to take action against the Israeli Medical Association based on evidence of medical complicity in torture compiled by several reputable international human rights organisations including the PCATI. The WMA did not take any action and refused even to acknowledge the submission.

In 2011, Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI) documented prison doctors’ implicit involvement in ill-treatment by returning victims to perpetrators after perfunctory care, sharing medical information with perpetrators and failing to docu-

Maha Aon & Marie Brasholt

ment and report torture and ill-treatment. Despite demands made to the Israeli Medical Association to investigate the accused doctors, no examination of medical files nor interviews with the victims were conducted. In 2016, the Palestinian human rights organisation, Addameer, released a report, decrying Israel’s policy of deliberate medical negligence towards Palestinians in detention. It detailed cases of Palestinians being denied treatment in prison and doctors failing to include physical signs of torture and ill-treatment in the medical files.

The same year, the UN Committee against Torture also raised concerns about prison doctors failing to report injuries indicative of abuse. It also recommended that they be placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Health.

However, that has not happened. Medical staff working in Israeli prisons are still not overseen by the health ministry or any other medical body and are not members of the national medical association. Given that they report to the prison authority rather than a health authority, they are at risk of compromising their patients’ health care to preserve their loyalty to their superiors. Human rights organisations in both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories have noted a spike in the cases of torture, ill-treatment and death in detention since October 7. Some have indicated that this is a deliberate policy of the Israeli authorities.

On October 11, the Israeli Minister of Health called for hospitals to refuse treatment to Palestinians from Gaza. Since then, Palestinians in Israeli prisons have reported medical appointments being cancelled and medical care being denied to them.

International standards stipulate a medical examination on entry to prison. However, PHRI found that this has not been systematically implemented for Palestinians arriving at Israeli detention centres since October 7. Thus, medical teams are not identifying persons with medical needs, nor are they documenting ill-treatment or torture taking place during the arrest process. The Israeli authorities have set up new military detention facilities in the Negev desert for arrested people from Gaza. One of them is located in the Sde Teiman military base. This site has been dubbed the “Israeli Guantanamo” with media coverage detailing horrific conditions based on whistleblower testimony.

Israel has suspended access to prisons for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) since October 7 and no visits are allowed in Sde Teiman from

lawyers or family. Thus, external oversight of the detention centres is currently non-existent.

In April, a doctor working at Sde Teiman sent a letter to the Israeli ministers of defence and health as well as the attorney general stating that the facilities’ operations “do not comply with a single section among those dealing with health in the Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law”.

According to that person, all patients are handcuffed by all four limbs and blindfolded at all times, including when receiving treatment, and must therefore use diapers.

Medical personnel treating these patients without opposing the conditions under which they are being kept are at risk of medical complicity in torture, thereby not only violating the patients’ human rights but also their own professional ethics which include the fundamental duty to respect human dignity and always act in the best interests of the patient. Over the past few months calls on the Israeli authorities and international institutions to take action have multiplied.

In March, Palestinian rights groups filed an urgent appeal to 11 UN Special Working Groups and Special Rapporteurs urging them to take action on torture and ill-treatment of Palestinians by Israeli forces. Among vast evidence of the use of torture, they also reported instances of medical doctors and nurses “disregarding and ignoring the needs of the prisoners” and “ordering the prison guards to further attack and assault a prisoner”.

In April, when this article was written, more than 600 health workers from around the world called for the closure of the Sde Teiman detention centre. We joined this call then and continue to demand the closure of the facility. We urge all health professionals to put patients first, do no harm, and document and report harm done by others.

We call on professional associations to support members who express concerns that they may become complicit in torture. We call on Israeli authorities to give lawyers, civil society organisations and the ICRC unhindered access to places of detention. We call on the international community to insist on such access, on investigations into alleged cases of torture and medical complicity, and on accountability for perpetrators. Israeli health professionals are at risk of becoming and may already be complicit in torture and ill-treatment of detained Palestinians. This needs to stop. Non-compliance with the Physician’s Pledge is a slippery slope. It can have grave consequences for patients and leave a lasting stain on the medical profession.

# Politicization of research not good climate action

CLIMATE studies are increasingly becoming politicized. Harvard University recently shut down a key geo-engineering research project because of an intense backlash, despite the college’s aspiration to become “a global beacon on climate change”.

Geo-engineering is one way humanity could deal with the real problem of climate change. The standard approach — which most of the rich world is focused on — is to try to cut carbon emissions and divert investment to solar and wind energy. However, this approach is incredibly difficult and expensive because fossil fuels still power most of the world. Despite decades of political support for fossil fuel reduction, emissions have been increasing, with last year seeing the highest ever.

In contrast, geo-engineering tries to directly reduce the planet’s temperature. One approach is to emit sulfur dioxide into the stratosphere, which would cool the planet. There is ample evidence that this works: Erupting volcanoes typically pump particles into the stratosphere, with each particle reflecting a little sunlight back into space. In 1991, the Mount Pinatubo eruption cooled Earth by about 0.6 degree Celsius for 18 months.

Harvard researchers weren’t attempting anything so grand. They simply wanted to launch a single high-altitude balloon that would release a tiny amount of particulates high above Earth. Their

experiment would have gathered data showing how particles disperse and how much sunlight they reflect.

As the world has so far mostly failed to tackle climate change by reducing fossil fuel reliance, it seems prudent to also investigate other policies that could address parts of the problem. Even the United Nations admitted in 2019 that “there has been no real change in the global emissions pathway in the last decade” despite the 2015 Paris Agreement. Since then, greenhouse gas emissions have continued to reach new highs with “no end in sight to the rising trend”, according to a new report from the World Meteorological Organization. We’re just not in a position where we can afford to ignore any pathway to mitigating climate change.

Unfortunately, as The Harvard Crimson found, pressure from climate activists made this impossible for the scientists. Even high-profile campaigner Greta Thunberg criticized the first planned tests in northern Sweden. Then the Indigenous Saami Council — whose land the tests would be above — suggested firing a single balloon into the sky bore “risks of catastrophic consequences”. Politicians jumped aboard the bandwagon, including a former foreign minister of Sweden, who declared geo-engineering was “crazy”, while young activists pushed academic funders to cut off

funds to such research.

In addition to the activists, the project’s lead researcher pointed a finger at a “vocal minority” of scientists who agree with the campaigners that geo-engineering could provide an excuse not to cut fossil fuels by highlighting another possible solution to climate change. Among such scientists, climate professor Michael Mann claims geo-engineering is a pernicious and false solution offered up by polluters to keep profiting from fossil fuels. The Saami Council opposed the Harvard experiment because the research “could compromise the world’s necessary efforts to achieve zero-carbon societies”.

That isn’t science; it’s dogma. The idea that there is only one correct policy — reducing carbon emissions to zero within a short time frame — is absurd, especially so when this sole policy is failing globally. The truth is that geo-engineering could be an incredibly useful innovation, even if it harbors risks.

Geo-engineering is the only feasible way that humanity has ever identified to lower temperatures quickly. If we were to see the West Antarctic ice sheet starting to slip into the ocean — which would be a global disaster — no standard fossil fuel policy could make any significant change. Even if all nations impossibly were to cut their emissions to zero in a matter of months, temperatures would not come

down but would only stop increasing. In contrast, geo-engineering could, in principle, end the global temperature rise — and even reverse it — at a low cost. Geo-engineering offers a price tag in the tens to low hundreds of billions of dollars over the 21st century compared with standard policy costing tens of thousands of times more.

Of course, the world shouldn’t start pumping particulates into the atmosphere anytime soon. But we need to know if this technology works and we also need to know about any potential negative impacts from its use. Partly because it is likely that countries and even the world will want to consider using this approach later but also because the cost of geo-engineering is so low that there is a risk that a single country, a rogue billionaire or even a highly energized nongovernmental organization could use the technology alone. We need to make sure the world knows the ramifications. That requires research.

These considerations are why both the scientific journal Nature and the Barack Obama administration have endorsed research into geo-engineering — even the Joe Biden administration has offered measured support. Just like with any other research, humanity needs to know what works and what problems might arise in the future. The politicization of climate research out of fear it might lead to politically unfavorable outcomes is bad for the world.

# Beware of Vietnam’s new authoritarian president

A rare internal power struggle in Vietnam over the past few months resulted in the ousting of several major leaders for corruption and the appointment of a new president, former police general To Lam. But democratic governments courting Vietnam as an attractive market and alternative to China should be wary. Rather than a hopeful sign, Lam’s rise to power is indicative of the Vietnam government’s worsening repression, its complete intolerance of criticism, and utter hostility to basic civil and political rights.

As head of Vietnam’s abusive Ministry of Public Security since April 2016, Lam is no stranger to notoriety. In November 2021 — while Vietnam was struggling through a COVID-19 lockdown — a video surfaced of the celebrity chef “Salt Bae” feeding a \$2,000 gold-encrusted steak to Lam in London. The video went viral. To make matters worse, Lam was enjoying the carbon-emitting feast while leading an official delegation to the United Nations COP26 climate summit in Glasgow.

Shortly afterwards, the rights activist Bui Tuan Lam, who parodied the feast on social media, was sentenced to five and a half years in prison.

But eating a \$2,000 steak when per capita income in Vietnam was only \$3,756 in 2021 is the least of Lam’s misdeeds. He’s done much worse. Sixty-six-year-old Lam, joined the Ministry of Public Security in 1979. He was promoted to minister in April 2016. And on his watch the agency steadily stepped up its repression of Vietnam’s civil society. The list is long:

Just days after Lam took over as head of public security, Vietnam experienced the worst environmental disaster in its history when a toxic spill devastated local fishing communities. Lam’s response? A major police crackdown to intimidate, assault, arrest, and imprison activists who protested on behalf of the victims. In May 2016, just a month after Lam became minister, security forces working under him blocked activists from meeting US President Barack Obama during his visit to Hanoi.

Two years later, in 2018, Lam’s security forces orchestrated the highly problematic Law on Cybersecurity, which has muzzled free speech, and then cracked down ruthlessly on protesters opposing the law. Security forces under Lam have also engaged in repression beyond Vietnam’s bor-

ders, including kidnapping a former party official, Trinh Xuan Thanh, from Berlin in July 2017 and a blogger, Truong Duy Nhat, from Bangkok in January 2019. Both were sentenced to long prison terms. Another blogger, Duong Van Thai, was kidnapped from Bangkok in April 2023. He is still in pre-trial detention.

Lam’s evident disdain for climate concerns goes far beyond his performative steak-eating. In 2022 and 2023, the security forces arrested several prominent environmental activists on bogus charges, with two — Dang Dinh Bach and Hoang Thi Minh Hong — now serving prison sentences and another, Ngo Thi To Nhien, in police custody awaiting trial. Lawyers like Vo An Don, Dang Dinh Manh, and Nguyen Van Mieng who dared to defend human rights activists have had to flee the country and live in exile. The lawyers who remain have been silenced by police intimidation and harassment.

Under Lam, Vietnam’s powerful security agency has nearly eradicated the country’s nascent human rights movement. Its agents have arrested virtually everyone who tried to promote democracy and human rights in the country, including members of the

Brotherhood for Democracy, the Vietnam National Self-Determination Coalition, the Independent Journalists Association of Vietnam, and the Liberal Publishing House. The police seem to target any group whose name includes words the Communist Party of Vietnam fears most: “Democracy,” “Self-Determination,” “Independent,” and “Liberal”.

The agency has also arrested nearly every influential human rights activist and prominent journalist who has dared to criticise government policies. Last February, a former political prisoner, Nguyen Vu Binh, commented that Vietnam’s “democratic movement is enduring a difficult and gloomy period.” One week later, he, too, was arrested. Of Vietnam’s 164 political prisoners still behind bars simply for exercising their basic civil and political rights, 147 were convicted and sentenced on Lam’s watch.

As head of state now, Lam will receive many international delegations on official ceremonial occasions and diplomatic negotiations. When they shake his hand, these diplomats should not forget the long trail of destruction he has left in his rise to power, and the harm he has already inflicted on human rights in Vietnam.

Aljazeera

# Macron’s leap into the unknown

Mustapha Tossa

**It is hard to say who will be in a position to govern France on July 8, the day after the second round of early legislative elections decided by President Emmanuel Macron with his surprise dissolution of parliament last week. It is also hard to say what the foreign policy of France, the only nuclear power in the EU and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, will be with regard to its European, Mediterranean, African and Arab environment, should the extreme right seize power.**

President Macron’s decision to dissolve parliament and the accelerated agenda it imposes continue to provoke party cracks internally and questioning reverberations externally. Three major shocks were observed following this dissolution.

Firstly, Eric Ciotti’s Republicans party publicly tore itself apart over the need to establish an electoral alliance with Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella’s National Rally. Meanwhile, Eric Zemmour’s Reconquest party broke up when its head of list Marion Marechal and its European deputies took up the cause of the National Rally; provoking, in Zemmour’s words, a great betrayal.

The third shock was felt by the left-wing galaxy. Despite its divisions and the multiplicity of egos that lead it, it managed to unite in record time and form a popular front that will take the

place, in the French imagination, of the Republican front that repeatedly prevented Jean-Marie Le Pen and his daughter Marine from reaching the presidential office — once against Jacques Chirac and twice against Macron. The ability of the left to overcome its contradictions and antagonisms in theory reveals the sense of urgency that is gripping it in the face of the high probability of the arrival of the far right in France in these early legislative elections.

A leap into the unknown is the expression most often used to describe Macron’s move. For no one is able to predict the outcome of the evening of Sunday, July 7, and the political architecture that will emerge from the ballot box. Some have no hesitation in attributing a Machiavellian approach to Macron — that of attracting the far right to power and then showing the French its inability to govern in order to close the door to the presidential election once and for all. This option is too risky and fraught with consequences and has been loudly denied by Macron himself.

This leap into the unknown creates a major concern for France’s future foreign policy in the event that the Quai d’Orsay is occupied by a far-right figure. What would be France’s policy toward current crises and wars? The extreme right’s admiration for Vladimir Putin’s Russia could lead France to back-

track on its support for Ukraine. The extreme right’s sudden and surprising sympathy for Benjamin Netanyahu’s government will certainly influence France’s stance on Israel’s war in Gaza. The scales will tip heavily in favor of Netanyahu and any French move to recognize the Palestinian state will be postponed indefinitely.

With the Arab countries of North Africa and the Gulf, relations will go through a phase where everything will have to be reinvented. The far right sees these Arab countries either as exporters of illegal immigration — the nightmare on which the far right has built its fortune — or as exporters of radical Islamist ideology. Unless we can imagine this new power reneging on all its promises under the pressure of political realism, this relationship with the Arab world will be fraught with grit and acid reflux, requiring a real rewriting of alliances.

By taking the decision to plunge France into an electoral sequence in such a short space of time — and on the eve of the Olympic Games being held in Paris — Macron is taking the risk of handing the keys to power either to the far right, with the anxious uncertainties we all know, or to the Popular Front, whose main driving force is the radical left. It has promised major overhauls to both erase the Macron era and attempt to immunize France against the specter of the far right.





# NETU establishment to drive innovation and sustainable development

ISLAMABAD (APP): The establishment of National Economic Transformation Unit (NETU) in Public Sector Development Programme Budget 2024-25 is aimed at driving comprehensive economic reform and sustainable development across Pakistan.

The unit was aligning with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision of a prosperous and resilient nation, a Ministry of Planning and Development press release said on Wednesday.

The ministry said the NETU would serve as a strategic body focused on facilitating economic growth, enhancing productivity, and fostering innovation. It would work in close collaboration with various stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector entities, academia, and international partners, to implement evidence-based policies and initiatives that align with Pakistan's long-term economic goal of becoming a one trillion dollar economy by 2035.

"The establishment of the National Economic Transformation Unit is a significant step towards reviving and transforming the role of the Ministry of Planning and Development as a development think tank and realizing our vision of a prosperous and resilient

Pakistan," said Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal in a statement while emphasizing the importance of the NETU.

He said the NETU would play a crucial role in addressing economic challenges, reviving and promoting inclusive growth, and ensuring that "our development strategies are sustainable and forward-thinking".

"The NETU will attract the best Pakistani talent and enable them to play their role in nation-building," he added.

The NETU will operate within the framework of Pakistan Vision 2025 and the 5Es framework, ensuring that its initiatives are in line with national development priorities.

The Vision 2025 outlines the roadmap for achieving sustainable development and economic prosperity, while the 5Es framework focuses on following areas:

1. Exports, Enterprise, Employment: Stimulating high, sustained, and inclusive economic growth to ensure prosperity and job creation.

2. E-Pakistan - National Digital Transformation: Ensuring digital transformation across all sectors to enhance efficiency and global competitiveness.

3. Environment & Clim-

ate Change - Water & Food Security: Implementing sustainable practices to protect the environment and ensure long-term economic and ecological balance.

4. Energy & Infrastructure - Affordable, Efficient & Green: Ensuring energy security and efficiency to power economic activities and support industrial growth, along with developing world-class infrastructure.

5. Equity, Ethics & Empowerment of Youth and Women by implementing SDGs: Promoting social justice and reducing disparities to ensure all citizens benefit from economic progress.

The NETU will prioritize key areas, including (1) Economic Diversification: Encouraging growth in non-traditional sectors and reducing dependency on a limited number of industries;

(2) Innovation and Technology: Promoting the adoption of advanced technologies and fostering a culture of innovation to enhance productivity and competitiveness, embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution;

(3) Human Capital Development: Investing in education, skills development, and health to build a knowledgeable and capable workforce;

(4) Sustainable Development\*: Implementing environmentally

friendly policies and practices to ensure long-term economic and environmental sustainability; (5) Public-Private Partnerships: Facilitating collaboration between the government and private sector to leverage resources and expertise for economic development, promoting the role of the private sector as the engine of growth in the economy; and (6) Modern Infrastructure: Developing world-class infrastructure to support economic activities and improve connectivity across the country.

The NETU will also establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress and ensure accountability. This will include regular reporting on key performance indicators and outcomes to ensure transparency and effective governance.

Ahsan Iqbal expressed confidence that the NETU would be instrumental in transforming Pakistan's economic landscape and improving the quality of life for its citizens.

"We are committed to making Pakistan a leader in economic innovation and sustainable development. The NETU will be at the forefront of this transformation, guiding our nation towards a brighter and more prosperous future," he added.



MULTAN: Vendor displaying fruit Lychee to attract customers at Abdali Road.

## Govt taking series of initiatives in IT sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday said that the IT and agricultural sectors could improve the country's economy, and the government had undertaken various steps to promote these sectors to boost domestic and foreign investments.

He said, "The present government's economic initiatives are aimed at uplifting the downtrodden and reducing disparity between the rich and the poor."

The minister said, "The government is closely monitoring key crops, devising policies, and planning interventions to ensure an uninterrupted supply of basic food items at affordable prices in the country."

He said, "The country, through sustainable industrial development, can tackle the present external and internal challenges."

Replying to a question, he said, "The government is focusing on government expenditures, and the nation will know about the austerity measures soon."

He also stressed the digitization of taxes, which was the only way to curb corruption at the grassroots level.

"By leveraging technology and enhancing transparency, we can build a more equitable tax system that fosters economic growth and benefits all citizens," he added.

## Exporters meet Kashif

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq on Wednesday said Pakistan had the potential to earn a sizeable amount of foreign exchange by exporting its high-quality, hand-engraved furniture in global markets.

Talking to a delegation of exporters led by Mian Faryad Ahmad Raza Arain, he highlighted that Pakistan's rich heritage of craftsmanship, combined with modern design techniques, positions its furniture industry to compete effectively in international markets. The intricate designs and superior quality of Pakistani hand-engraved furniture make it highly sought after, particularly in markets such as Europe, North America, and the Middle East, he added.

He said by focusing on quality and maintaining traditional craftsmanship, the furniture industry could attract a premium clientele willing to pay higher prices. He also pointed out the importance of government support in terms of policy and infrastructure to facilitate exports. Enhancing marketing strategies, participating in international trade fairs, and forming strategic alliances with global retailers were cited as key steps to boost exports.

Moreover, Kashif Ashfaq suggested that investing in skilled labour and modern manufacturing techniques would further enhance the competitiveness of Pakistan's furniture industry. By capitalizing on its unique craftsmanship and improving production capabilities, Pakistan could significantly increase its foreign exchange and contribute to the overall economic growth of the country, he concluded.

## Amazon to invest extra 10b euros in Germany

FRANKFURT, Germany (AFP/APP): Amazon said Wednesday it will invest an additional 10 billion euros (\$10.7 billion) in Germany, most of it in cloud computing, the US tech giant's latest major investment in Europe.

A total of 8.8 billion euros will come from Amazon's cloud computing division AWS and will be invested in southwest Germany by 2026, with the rest going into logistics, robotics and company offices.

The investment comes on top of 7.8 billion euros announced last month by AWS towards building a "sovereign cloud" centre in Germany.

The first sovereign cloud complex will be set up in

the state of Brandenburg, and will be operational by the end of 2025.

The new system is to address concerns of some European countries and public agencies, which have been reluctant to resort to cloud computing for fear data would be transferred to other jurisdictions, notably the United States.

With its recently announced investments, Amazon said it was hiring thousands of new workers in Germany, taking its total number of permanent employees in the country to about 40,000 by the end of the year.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on X that the investments showed that Germany remained "an

attractive business location".

"As the government, we are working on precisely this: strengthening our competitiveness," he said.

Germany, Europe's top economy, sees attracting new investments in high-tech fields as crucial as it struggles to emerge from a period of weakness.

The tech giant has also in recent times announced major investments to expand data centres in Spain and to develop cloud infrastructure and logistical infrastructure of its parcel delivery system in France.

A pioneer of e-commerce, Amazon's AWS also dominates cloud computing with 31 percent of the market at the end of 2023, according to Stocklytics.

## Asian markets advance after latest Wall St record

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian equities were mixed on Wednesday following yet another record day in New York fuelled by data that boosted US interest rate cut hopes, with expectations tempered by cautious comments from Federal Reserve officials.

In Europe, London fell at the open even after data showed UK inflation had eased to the Bank of England's two percent target.

The below-forecast May US retail sales figures pointed to signs of fatigue among American consumers -- a crucial driver of growth -- suggesting the world's number one economy was slowing and giving the central bank room to ease monetary policy.

The reading helped to slightly offset a surprisingly large jump in US jobs creation that pointed to a still-resilient labour market despite a long-running campaign of rate hikes and stubbornly high inflation.

The S&P 500 and Nasdaq clocked up more records, driven again by a surge in demand for Big Tech, with chip giant Nvidia overtaking Microsoft to become the world's most valuable publicly traded company.

Nvidia, a titan in the artificial intelligence sector, hit

a market capitalisation of \$3.349 trillion after cruising nearly 3,500 percent higher in the past five years. And one analyst predicted it could even hit \$5 trillion in the coming year, according to Bloomberg News.

Shares in Hong Kong piled on nearly three percent after a recent run of weakness, with analysts saying investors were hopeful for fresh market-friendly measures to be announced at a forum in China being attended by securities regulator chief Wu Qing and central bank boss Pan Gongsheng.

"There's anticipation of positive policies and expectations of reforms for banks regarding shareholder returns. I suspect the policies could be more relevant for Hong Kong-listed shares," said Billy Leung, at Global X ETFs.

Tokyo, Singapore, Seoul, Mumbai, Jakarta and Taipei also rose but Shanghai, Sydney, Manila, Bangkok and Wellington edged down. London opened slightly lower. Investors were unfazed by news that inflation had hit two percent in May, in line with expectations. The pound was barely moved.

Paris and Frankfurt were also down.

"The (retail sales) data clearly reflects a shift in US consumer behaviour, which is becoming more conservative, feeling the pinch from higher interest rates, curbing wage increases and a depletion of savings," said Rodrigo Catril of National Australia Bank.

"Importantly, too, we expect more of the same over coming quarters."

The Fed's so-called "dot plot" guidance to interest rates showed officials see just one cut before January, down from three predicted in March, and while some observers are optimistic for two, or even three, decision-makers remain reluctant.

On Tuesday, Fed governor Adriana Kugler said the policy was "sufficiently restrictive to help cool the economy and bring inflation back toward 2 percent without a sharp contraction in economic activity or a significant deterioration of the labour market".

And St. Louis Fed boss Alberto Musalem added that he needed to see a "period of favourable inflation, moderating demand and expanding supply" before he could consider easing.

"These conditions could take months, and more likely quarters to play out," he warned.

## Tokyo stocks end higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher on Wednesday following rallies on Wall Street, with tech shares advancing after Nvidia became the most valuable publicly traded company.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index was up 0.23 percent, or 88.65 points, to end at 38,570.76, while the broader Topix index added 0.47 percent, or 12.88 points, to 2,728.64.

The dollar traded at 157.78 yen, against 157.85 yen in New York on Tuesday.

All three major US stock indices climbed overnight on Wall Street, with the S&P 500 reaching a record high.

Nvidia jumped 3.5 percent to garner a market capitalisation of \$3.3 trillion following a monumental ascent over the past 18 months as enthusiasm for generative AI technology grows.

On the back of this, "semiconductor-linked shares started trading high-

er across the board in Japan, pushing the Nikkei higher at the open", IwaiCosmo Securities said.

Among major shares in Tokyo, Advantest surged 4.07 percent to 5,626 yen.

SoftBank Group added 0.99 percent to 10,225 yen, Sony Group gained 0.99 percent to 12,770 yen and Toyota rallied 1.80 percent to 3,107 yen.

Tokyo stocks opened higher on Wednesday after US stocks rallied, with chip shares advancing as Nvidia became the world's most valuable publicly traded company.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index was up 0.61 percent, or 235.51 points, at 38,717.62 in early trade, while the broader Topix index added 0.56 percent, or 15.22 points, to 2,730.98.

"The Japanese market is expected to start with gains after US stocks rallied," senior market analyst Toshiyuki Kanayama of Monex said.

The dollar fetched 157.83 yen in early Asian trade, against 157.85 yen in New York on Tuesday.

Overnight on Wall Street, all three major US stock indices climbed, with the S&P 500 reaching a new record.

In Tokyo, Nissan was up 2.62 percent at 544 yen, while its bigger rival Toyota was up 1.47 percent at 3,097 yen.

Heavy industry manufacturer IHI was up 2.15 percent at 3,845 yen. Electric motor maker Nidec was up 2.96 percent at 7,556 yen.

Nintendo was down 0.27 percent at 8,649 yen, after the game giant surprised fans on Tuesday by announcing a new chapter in its 40-year-old "Zelda" saga, one of its biggest cash cows.

During an event broadcast online, Nintendo said "The Legend of Zelda: Echoes of Wisdom" would be scheduled for release on the Switch console on September 26.

## UK inflation slows to central bank's 2 per cent target

LONDON (AFP/APP): British inflation slowed in May to the central bank's two-percent target, official data showed Wednesday, boosting Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's struggling election campaign.

The Consumer Prices Index fell as expected from 2.3 percent in April, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement citing easing growth in food prices.

That follows almost three years Britain's above-target inflation, which last stood at two percent in July 2021 before surging higher in a cost-of-living crisis.

The news sets the scene for the July 4 general election which Sunak's Conservatives are tipped to lose badly to Keir Starmer's main opposition Labour Party, according to opinion polls. Sunak hailed the inflation slowdown, but Labour slammed the Conservatives' stewardship of the economy after 14 years in power.

"It's very good news,

because the last few years have been really tough for everybody," Sunak told LBC radio.

"Inflation is back to target, and that means people will start to feel the benefits and ease some of the burdens on the cost of living, and it's because of that economic stability that we've restored."

The Bank of England will meet Thursday but it is expected to sit tight on interest rates, as is customary ahead of UK elections.

After peaking at 11.1 percent in October 2022, consumer price growth has cooled following a series of interest-rate hikes by the UK central bank.

Britain's economy, however, stagnated in April after emerging from recession in the first quarter of the year, official data showed last week.

Prices are still rising on top of the sharp increases seen in recent years but at a slower rate, as businesses and households weather the easing cost-of-living

crunch. "After 14 years of economic chaos under the Conservatives, working people are worse off," said Labour finance spokesperson Rachel Reeves.

"Prices have risen in the shops, mortgage bills are higher and taxes are at a 70-year high," Reeves said.

"Labour has a plan to make people better off bringing stability back to our economy."

The BoE began a series of rate hikes in late 2021 to combat inflation, which rose after countries emerged from Covid lockdowns and accelerated after Moscow invaded Ukraine.

The institution last month held its main interest rate at a 16-year high of 5.25 percent but hinted at a summer reduction as UK inflation cools further.

Added to the mix, elevated interest rates have worsened the cost-of-living squeeze because they increase the cost of borrowing, thereby cutting disposable incomes.

"The BoE will be

encouraged by the slowdown in headline inflation, and while concerns will remain over elevated underlying price pressures, further falls in services inflation are anticipated over the coming months," said KPMG UK chief economist Yael Selfin.

"Today's data are unlikely to spur a surprise rate cut tomorrow, however, the (bank) could have sufficient evidence to begin its easing cycle in August."

Influential business lobby the Confederation of British Industry added that the stage was now set for the BoE to trim rates in August.

"Another fall in inflation in May will come as welcome news to households as we move towards a more benign inflationary environment," said CBI economist Martin Sartorius.

"However, many will still be feeling the pinch due to the level of prices being far higher than in previous years, particularly for food and energy bills."

## Eurozone stocks hit after EU rebukes France

LONDON (AFP/APP): Eurozone stock markets slid Wednesday after the European Commission reprimanded France for breaching the EU's budget rules, a further blow for the country in the midst of political turmoil ahead of surprise elections.

London rose on a sharp slowdown in UK inflation, while telecoms giant Vodafone stock jumped two percent after the mobile phone giant offloaded most of its stake in Indian mobile tower operator Indus Towers for \$1.8 billion.

Paris led the fallers after the European Union's executive arm placed France back in the EU's public spending sin bin for the first time since President Emmanuel Macron rose to

power in 2017. Investor sentiment has been rocked ever since Macron called a snap election last week in response to a far-right surge in EU elections.

Macron's centrist bloc is currently trailing third in polls behind Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally (RN) party and a new left-wing alliance New Popular Front.

Investors fear that French public finances could worsen significantly as a result of either tax-cutting policies by the far right -- or the repeal of pension reforms by the left.

"The French CAC once again finds itself at the bottom of the pile, with Goldman Sachs warning that a Le Pen victory would see the country's debt bur-

den swell to the highest level since 1950," Scope Markets analyst Joshua Mahony in reference to Wednesday's performance.

Elsewhere, Asian stock markets finished mixed following yet another record showing in New York on Tuesday, which was fuelled by data that boosted US interest rate cut hopes.

The below-forecast May US retail sales figures pointed to signs of fatigue among American consumers -- a crucial driver of growth -- suggesting the world's number one economy was slowing and giving the central bank room to ease monetary policy.

The reading helped to slightly offset a surprisingly large jump in US jobs creation that pointed to a

still-resilient labour market despite a long-running campaign of rate hikes and stubbornly high inflation.

The S&P 500 and Nasdaq clocked up more records, driven again by a surge in demand for Big Tech, with chip giant Nvidia overtaking Microsoft to become the world's most valuable publicly traded company.

Nvidia, a titan in the artificial intelligence sector, hit a market capitalisation of \$3.349 trillion after cruising nearly 3,500 percent higher in the past five years. And one analyst predicted it could even hit \$5 trillion in the coming year, according to Bloomberg News. Wall Street is closed for trading on Wednesday for a public holiday.

Moreover, Kashif Ashfaq suggested that investing in skilled labour and modern manufacturing techniques would further enhance the competitiveness of Pakistan's furniture industry. By capitalizing on its unique craftsmanship and improving production capabilities, Pakistan could significantly increase its foreign exchange and contribute to the overall economic growth of the country, he concluded.

It said it was therefore issuing "a remark and an administrative fine of 100 million kronor (\$9.6 million)".

"Exchanges must comply with the regulations that exist to prevent, detect and report insider trading. It is ultimately about confidence in the financial market," FSA director general Daniel Barr said.

## Stockholm exchange fined \$10m

STOCKHOLM (AFP/APP): Sweden's financial watchdog said Wednesday it had fined the Stockholm stock exchange close to \$10 million for failing to detect and report suspected insider trading.

The Financial Supervisory Authority (FSA) said it had investigated "four major company events in 2021 and 2022", as well as two other cases of trading of financial

instruments in 2022 and 2023.

"The investigations show that, in conjunction with the four company events, there have been deficiencies in how Nasdaq Stockholm has conducted its trading monitoring, which should prevent, identify and report insider dealing," the FSA said in a statement.

The four companies were identified as food

retail company ICA, Lundin Energy, tobacco producer Swedish Match and vehicle safety product maker Halex.

"The investigations also show that Nasdaq Stockholm on two occasions initiated trading in financial instruments in violation of the regulatory framework," the FSA added.

The authority said the violations were not serious enough to warrant with-

drawing the exchange's authorisation.

It said it was therefore issuing "a remark and an administrative fine of 100 million kronor (\$9.6 million)".

"Exchanges must comply with the regulations that exist to prevent, detect and report insider trading. It is ultimately about confidence in the financial market," FSA director general Daniel Barr said.





## In brief

## Tanzim Hassan fined

ISLAMABAD (APP): Bangladesh player Tanzim Hasan Saqib has been fined 15 per cent of his match fee for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during their ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 Group D match against Nepal at the Arnos Vale Ground, Kingstown in St. Vincent and the Grenadines on Sunday. Tanzim was found to have breached Article 2.12 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "inappropriate physical contact with a Player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire, Match Referee or any other person (including a spectator during an International Match)." In addition to this, one demerit point has been added to Tanzim's disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period, said a press release. The incident occurred at the end of the third over of Nepal's innings, when Tanzim, after bowling a delivery, walked towards Nepal batter Rohit Paudel in an aggressive manner and made inappropriate physical contact. Tanzim admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Richie Richardson of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, so there was no need for a formal hearing. On-field umpires Ahsan Raza and Sam Nogajski, third umpire Jayaraman Madanagopal and fourth umpire Kumar Dharmasena levelled the charge. Level 1 breaches carry a minimum penalty of an official reprimand, a maximum penalty of 50 per cent of a player's match fee, and one or two demerit points.

## 'Happy' Rose extends deal

LONDON (Agencies): Marco Rose has extended his deal as manager of RB Leipzig by one year until 2026, the Bundesliga club announced Wednesday. The Leipzig-born manager, who previously had stints in charge of Borussia Dortmund and Red Bull Salzburg, took over in September 2022 and won the German Cup in the same season. Rose followed it up with a dominant 3-0 win over Bayern Munich in the German FA Supercup at the start of the 2023-24 campaign. "I'm happy that we're continuing together. I come from here and feel at home in the city and the region," Rose said in a statement. "The club is working in the background to ensure that we put together a strong team again. We feel that there is more to be done and we always want more. We are ambitious, we remain ambitious and we look forward together." In May, the coach shot down rumours he was set to follow former Leipzig sporting director to Bayern, saying "I think Bayern will be OK without Marco Rose." The 47-year-old coach took Leipzig to fourth-place last campaign in a rebuilding year after the club lost several first-team players including Josko Gvardiol, Christopher Nkunku, Dominik Szoboszlai and Konrad Laimer, Rose's announcement comes days after in-demand striker Benjamin Sesko elected to extend his deal at the club. The coach has won 53 of 86 competitive matches with the club for an average points total of 2.01, the best of any RB Leipzig manager since they were first promoted in 2016.

## Williamson turns down New Zealand contract



WELLINGTON (Agencies): Kane Williamson has turned down a new central contract with New Zealand Cricket and stepped down as the Black Caps' white-ball captain.

The 33-year-old, who is New Zealand's all-time leading Test run-scorer, said he remained "passionate" about playing international cricket, but also wanted to "pursue an overseas opportunity" during the home summer.

New Zealand's centrally contracted players must be available to play international cricket and in the domestic T20 Super Smash competition.

That tournament is likely to be in January, overlap-

ping with a number of other franchise leagues.

With New Zealand having little international cricket scheduled for that month, Williamson looks set to play abroad.

"Helping push the team forward across the formats is something I'm very passionate about and something I want to keep contributing towards," he said.

"However, pursuing an overseas opportunity during the New Zealand summer means I'm unable to accept a central contract offer. "Playing for New Zealand is something I treasure, and my desire to give back to the team remains undiminished."

"My life outside cricket

has changed however - spending more time with my family and enjoying experiences with them at home or abroad is something that's even more important to me."

A statement from New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said Williamson might accept a central contract in the future.

NZC chief executive Scott Weenink said: "This is a good way to help keep Kane in the international game so that he continues to play a major role for the Black Caps - both now and in the years to come."

"NZC has a strong preference to select centrally contracted players for the Black Caps, however we're happy to make an exception for our greatest ever batter - especially as he remains so committed to the team."

"I know it sounds a bit counterintuitive, but I'm very encouraged by this development."

England will play three Tests in New Zealand in December. Williamson's decision to step down as white-ball captain comes after New Zealand were knocked out in the first round of the T20 World Cup. It is the first time the Black Caps have not reached the semi-finals of a T20 or 50-over World Cup since 2014.

## Murray wins Queen's opener in 1,000th match of career, Alcaraz advances

LONDON (AFP/APP): Andy Murray started what is likely to be his Queen's farewell on Tuesday by beating Alexei Popyrin as defending champion Carlos Alcaraz made a winning return following his French Open triumph.

Murray, 37, a record five-time champion at the London grass-court tournament, outlasted the 48th-ranked Australian 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in the 1,000th Tour-level match of his career.

The British former world number one dropped the second set and appeared to be struggling physically, grimacing after every serve.

But he hit back in the third, a vintage cross-court winner and fist pump lifting the vocal crowd as he brought up break point before dispatching it with a clinical backhand on his way to victory in one hour and 51 minutes.

Murray, set to retire either after Wimbledon or the Olympics, said: "I've not got too many wins this year, it's been a difficult season, and I did well to come through in the end."

"Any win you can get

is important, that's why we play. With Wimbledon a few weeks away I want to get some matches in my legs and some confidence. It's great to get another win here."

The three-time Grand Slam champion, who competes with a metal hip, has struggled with an ankle injury and a back issue this year.

The Scot, who has plummeted to 129th in the rankings, said: "I've felt better, but it was enough today."

"My mum told me it was my 1,000th match and that's a lot of matches, a lot of wear and tear on the body and it's not easy, but I managed to push through it."

Spain's Alcaraz, who lifted his third Grand Slam at the French Open earlier this month, was not at his best but recovered from a mid-match dip to triumph.

The top seed committed just one unforced error in the first set to take a grip on the contest but his level dipped at the start of the second set and he trailed 2-5.

From there he battled back impressively, saving

three set points on serve at 4-5 before sealing victory to extend his winning streak on grass to 13 matches.

The world number two, who followed up last year's victory at Queen's by winning his first Wimbledon, will next face Stuttgart champion Jack Draper, who was a comfortable 6-3, 6-2 winner against Argentine Mariano Navone in less than an hour.

"The first match in any tournament is never easy but even more difficult here on grass, starting the grass season," said Alcaraz, 21.

He added: "It is good to have tough situations, having to deal with nerves."

Earlier, Lorenzo Musetti upset Australian second seed Alex de Minaur 1-6, 6-4, 6-2.

There were also wins for former Wimbledon quarter-finalist Taylor Fritz and fellow Americans Tommy Paul and Sebastian Korda.

Sixth-seeded American Ben Shelton was ousted by French qualifier Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard while Italy's Matteo Arnaldi eliminated eighth seed Ugo Humbert.



ANTIGUA: Aaron Jones of USA tosses the coin at the coin toss as Aiden Markram of South Africa looks on ahead of the ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup West Indies & USA 2024 Super Eight match.

## FIH Hockey Pro League title showdown in Netherlands

ISLAMABAD (APP): The final stage of the FIH Pro League 2023/24 season is about to get underway in Netherlands with matches to be played in Utrecht and Amsterdam from June 22-30.

Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Great Britain would all be in action in the men's and women's competition, with both titles still up for grabs, said a press release.

Netherlands currently stand at the top of women's standings with 36 points having won all 12 games so far this season. With 4 games left in the season, Netherlands hold an 8-point lead over Germany in third place, and the Danas could halt the Dutch title charge but will require other teams to take points off the hosts as well.

Argentina, who finished their campaign earlier during the Antwerp stage, are second with 34 points from 16 games. Belgium and Great Britain, on 19 and 14 points respectively are out of contention for the title, but will still aim to hit their strides fully, with the Olympic Games just a month away.

In the men's competition, Australia, who finished their campaign on 34 points were currently in pole position for their second title.

But Netherlands with 26 points and Great Britain with 22 points are also in contention with 4 games in hand.

Germany and Belgium can't mathematically catch up to the Kookaburras as they sit on 19 points from 12 games, with 31 points being the maximum either of them can reach if they win all their remaining 4 games.

## PCB stands by Haris in bullying incident

LAHORE (APP): Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi has strongly condemned the unruly behaviour of some cricket fan against ace fast bowler Haris Rauf and extended unconditional support to the fast bowler in this unfortunate incident of mass mind. Naqvi also warned of legal action against the perpetrator.

The unfortunate incident occurred in the United States of America (USA) where some cricket fan used offensive language against Haris Rauf when he was accompanying in the premises of a hotel or public place. The alleged fan was, perhaps, angry at Pakistan cricket team's early exit from the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 in the West Indies & USA.

Haris Rauf was the

highest wicket-taker alongside Muhammad Amir in the competition where he bagged seven wickets in four matches. He also picked 3-21 against India - a match Pakistan lost from a position of ascendancy. Pakistan ended up third on the points-table with a better run-rate than the second placed USA who qualified with 5 points.

In a tweet on social media platform X (formerly Twitter) the PCB Chief Mohsin Naqvi wrote: "Strongly condemn the appalling incident involving Haris Rauf. Such actions against our players are completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Those who are involved must immediately apologize to Haris Rauf, failing which we will pursue legal action against the

individual responsible.' Meanwhile, Pakistan pace sensation Haris Rauf, who completed 100 T20I wickets during the T20 World Cup, shed light on the incident through a tweet on X and elaborated how a nasty cricket fan had insulted his family in rage. "As public figures, we are open to receiving all kinds of feedback from the public. They are entitled to support or criticize us. Nevertheless, when it comes to my parent r my family, I will not hesitate to respond accordingly. It is important to show respect towards people and their families, irrespective of their professions."

The cricketing fraternity has come forward with support for Haris Rauf and condemned the incident as unwarranted and unfortunate.

## Messi takes center stage again for Copa America

Atlanta (AFP/APP): World champions Argentina get an expanded Copa America under way on Thursday with Lionel Messi looking to add a second continental title in what is almost certainly his final appearance in the tournament.

The 108-year-old competition is being held in the United States with the host nation among six teams from the CONCACAF region joining the 10 South American nations looking for a place in the July 14 final in Miami.

While FIFA will be looking closely at the organization of the event, two years out from the World Cup which will be co-hosted by the USA, Canada and Mexico, the tournament's rich history

and prestige means it is much, much more than a 'trial event'.

Argentina have won the Copa 15 times but only once, in 2021, during the Messi era and coach Lionel Scaloni has stuck largely with his World Cup-winning squad, with veterans Angel Di Maria and Nicolas Otamendi likely taking their final bow in a major tournament.

Whether this is Messi's goodbye to elite international football remains to be seen - the eight-times Ballon d'Or winner, now playing in Major League Soccer with Inter Miami, will turn 37 four days after Thursday's opener in Atlanta against Canada and has yet to decide whether he will try to play in a record sixth World Cup.

"It's great to have records and continue to achieve things but I won't take part in a World Cup just to say I've done six," Messi told ESPN last week.

"If I feel good and everything is in place for me to be there, fine, but I won't go just to go. It's very difficult to imagine what can happen because it's still two years away. I don't need to commit right now to whether or not I'll be there," he added.

What is certain is that Messi, who has managed his workload to try to be in peak condition for the tournament, would relish the chance to win a third straight major tournament with his country after so many years of frustration with his national team.

## Nicholas Pooran, bowlers steer West Indies

SAINT LUCIA (Agencies): Nicholas Pooran played a stellar 98-run knock, while the bowlers exhibited a dominant performance, propelling West Indies to a resounding win over Afghanistan in an ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 encounter at the Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium on Monday.

The Caribbean side registered a huge 104-run victory to remain undefeated in the group stage of the ongoing tournament, while Afghanistan suffered their first loss. Afghanistan, while chasing a mammoth 219-run target, bundled out for 114 in 16.2 overs.

West Indies' spinner Akeal Hosein started the defence with a wicket maiden over, dismissing star batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz on a duck.

Ibrahim Zadran then constructed a one-sided partnership of 45 runs for the second wicket with Gulbadin Naib (7).

However, West Indies bowlers halted Afghanistan's progress with three quick wickets to leave the batting side reeling at 59-4. Gudakesh Motie dismissed Naib, while Ibrahim and Najibullah

Zadran fell prey to Obed McCoy in the same over.

Ibrahim Zadran top-scored with 38 runs from 28 balls, with the help of five boundaries and one six. Azmatullah Omarzai showed some resistance amid falling wickets with a 23-run knock from 19 balls, while Karim Janat (14) and Rashid Khan (18) played quick cameos but could not bring their side back in the game.

Rashid Khan was the last wicket to fall as his team folded for a paltry 114 in 16.2 overs. McCoy led the bowling for West Indies with the figures of 3-14, while Hosein and Motie bagged two wickets each.

Sent into bat by Afghanistan, the co-hosts of the tournament started their innings with a boundary off the first delivery.

The opening pair of Brandon King (7) and Johnson Charles raised 22 runs in the first ten balls with four boundaries before Azmatullah Omarzai castled the former.

Charles was joined on the crease by Pooran and together launched an onslaught on Afghanistan bowlers. They took only 38 balls to score 80 runs

for the second wicket.

Pooran decimated Omarzai in the fourth over, which went for 36 runs, hitting 26 runs with three sixes and two fours. Charles and Pooran propelled West Indies to 92-1 in the powerplay, which is the highest in a T20 World Cup game.

However, Naveen-ul-Haq dismissed Charles in the eighth over to break the partnership with 102 runs on the board. Chares scored 43 off 27 with eight boundaries. Pooran slowed down briefly after the powerplay, while Shai Hope played a quick 25-run cameo off 17 balls with two sixes to keep West Indies in control.

Skipper Rovman Powell joined Pooran and they started things cautiously before switching gears after the 15th over. During the 64-run stand, Pooran hit Rashid Khan for 24 runs in the 18th over before Gulbadin Naib sent Powell back. The West Indian captain scored 26 runs from 15 balls.

Meanwhile, Pooran fell courtesy of a runout in the last over after playing a blistering knock of 98 runs from 53 balls, laced with six boundaries and eight sixes.





## In brief

### Food items distributed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Saudi Ministry of Commerce oversaw the distribution of over 400 million food items and more than 160 million packages of milk and juice to pilgrims during the Hajj season of 1445 AH. According to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), beverages were the most sought after, with bottled water following closely at over 147 million packages, and baked goods totaling more than 84 million loaves of bread. As part of the Hajj plan this year, the ministry's supervisory teams worked closely with organizers to guarantee the availability of essential goods for pilgrims. They conducted inspections at sales outlets, monitored food supply chains, and supervised commercial establishments to uphold consumer protection regulations and prevent any violations.

### SP issued directives

RAWALPINDI (APP): SP Sadar Muhammad Nabil Khokhar directed the administration, including police personnel, to take all necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of the tourists visiting Murree. While inspecting the security and traffic arrangements, he directed the personnel to render their best services in facilitating the tourists. He was talking to the media during his visit to Murree to check security arrangements and implement a traffic management plan. According to the details, "Traffic police officials are working hard for the convenience of tourists in Murree; more than 700 officers and jawans of Rawalpindi police are performing security and facilitation duties; and around 300 traffic police officers are doing duty devotedly to ensure smooth flow of traffic." SP Sadar said that the tourists coming to Murree were being provided effective information about the routes. "Protection and provision of facilities to the tourists visiting Murree are among the top most priorities that will be ensured," he said. "All steps are being taken to ensure safe and pleasant travel for tourists," he informed.

### World Sickle Cell awareness

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health expert Wednesday on World Sickle Cell awareness day stressed for early diagnosis, ongoing patient education and ongoing medical care which could extend their life expectancy. Talking to a private news channel, Asst. Prof. Dr. Nadia Sajid said, "People with sickle cell anemia need regular life-long blood transfusions." "Sickle cell crisis occurs when the sickle cells accumulate in the blood vessels and block the blood flow to certain parts of the body," she added. "These sickle cell crisis symptoms can be extremely painful," she said. "They may also require a stay in the hospital. Sickle cell crises can last anywhere from a couple of hours to many days." "Treating sickle cell disease requires routine doctor visits and routine testing, as most chronic illnesses do," she said. "There is no cure for sickle cell disease, so it must be monitored regularly in order to minimize the potential for sickle cell crises." "Sickle cell disease is a serious and lifelong health condition, although treatment can help manage many of the symptoms," she mentioned. She further explained, "Sickle cell disease is a group of genetic red blood cell diseases. It modifies red blood cells' morphology, which impacts their ability to distribute oxygen throughout the body."



RAWALPINDI: A large number of faithful offering dua after Eidul Azha prayers at Eidgah Sharif. —APP Photo

## Eid ul Azha celebrated with religious fervor amid tight security

RAWALPINDI (APP): Like other parts of the country, Eid-ul-Azha was celebrated across Rawalpindi division with religious fervour, enthusiasm and spirit of sacrifice amid tight security arrangements as over 3,000 cops were deployed under a comprehensive security plan chalked out for peaceful observance of Eid ul Azha.

Elite Force, Mohafiz Squad, Special Branch personnel along with ladies police and volunteers performed security duties while 692 Traffic Wardens were also deployed to maintain traffic during Eid prayers. Eid prayers were offered at Eidgahs, mosques and open places on Monday amid tight security while Ulema and Khateebis, in their sermons, highlighted the significance and philosophy of sacrifice.

Special prayers were offered for the progress, prosperity and integrity of the country, unity of the "Ummah", solution of their problems and liberation of occupied Kashmir. After the Eid prayers, cows, goats, sheep and camels were slaughtered.

According to CTP spokesman, more than 700 cops and 300 traffic wardens were deployed to ensure the safety and

facilitation of visitors and ensure smooth flow of traffic in Murree.

Special pickets were set up at 16 locations around the hill station to boost the security, he added.

Additionally, seven facilitation centers were also established to assist and guide the tourists, providing necessary facilities.

Chairman of the District Coordination Committee (DCC), Engineer Qamar ul Islam Raja here on Tuesday visited RWMC control room and hailed the cleanliness arrangements of the the company made on the occasion of Eid ul Azha.

He lauded the efforts of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Aamir Khattak and Deputy Commissioner, Hassan Waqar Cheema for making the best cleanliness arrangements on Eid days.

On the occasion, the Chairman RWMC Saqib Rafique briefed that the company was removing animal waste from all areas of the district.

Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) spokesman said that comprehensive cleanliness plan was finalized for Eid-ul-Azha to get rid of entrails of the sacrificial ani-

mals. Over 4700 tonnes of garbage were shifted to the transfer station, he said.

The cleanup operation includes 485 vehicles and more than 3832 sanitary workers, adding the control room was monitoring the workers, and over 650 complaints were resolved.

The Cantonment area was also divided into ten sections for efficient cleaning, covering altars, streets, and roads. Lime spraying was also being carried out to ensure cleanliness.

The Rescue-1122 teams remained on high alert to provide quick relief and rescue services besides medical cover to citizens across the district, in case of any emergency.

Over 400 rescuers performed special duties at the district control room and emergency rescue stations, while fully equipped ambulances, firefighting vehicles, rescue vehicles, water boozers and specialized vehicles were on standby to deal with any untoward situation.

Meanwhile, Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) had also made a special plan for smooth supply of water during Eid ul Azha.

## Thousands throng Murree to enjoy pleasant weather in Eid holidays

RAWALPINDI (APP): The 'Queen of the Mountains' Murree, which is the most famous hill station in Punjab, attracted a large number of tourists during Eid ul Azha holidays, particularly as the citizens reached Murree from different areas to enjoy the pleasant weather.

On the first day of Eid, people remained busy greeting relatives, friends, and near and dear ones and rushed to different parks, Murree, Ayubia, Nathigali, and Patriata Chair Lift, on the second and third days of Eid, to enjoy the Eid festivity.

Murree Road, particularly on Tuesday and Wednesday, remained jam-packed with a stream of vehicles after tourists, especially from the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, and other adjoining areas, thronged the Murree, Ayubia, and Nathia Gali hill stations to beat the heat and enjoy Eid vacations.

From Dhokri Chowk to Bhara Kahu and Chatter Park, the road was jam-packed with vehicles moving at snails' pace. Rawalpindi district administration had finalized all the arrangements to ensure the security of the visitors and facilitate them, particularly during Eid ul Azha holidays.

According to a police administration spokesman, City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid

Mehmood Hamdani had directed the relevant officers to make the best possible efforts to avoid traffic mess on the roads and any untoward incidents during Eid-ul-Azha holidays.

The spokesman informed us that special teams had been formed to facilitate the tourists, adding that parking of the vehicles was not allowed outside the parking areas. There was a complete ban on illegal parking in Murree.

"The beautiful climate of Murree during the summer attracts a large number of tourists, so motorists face traffic congestion," he said, adding that traffic moves slower due to heavy traffic loads as compared to normal days.

He said the CPO had advised the tourists to avoid wrong parking, double lines, speeding, and taking selfies in the middle of the roads.

He said a special plan had been formulated for Murree under which over 1000 personnel, including over 700 cops and over 300 CTP officials, were performing their duties to facilitate the visitors.

The Jawans of Murree Tourism Police were also present at different points for the convenience and protection of the tourists, he added.

The district administration, district police, and CTP, on the directive of

Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, had taken solid steps to ease traffic flow and facilitate tourists in Murree.

The officers of the district administration, district police, and CTP were present in the field to monitor the situation. All possible steps were being taken to ease traffic flow and ensure smooth flow of traffic on the roads of Murree, he added.

Senior police officers, including SP Saddar, SDPO Murree, and DSP Traffic Murree, were present in Murree and reviewed all the arrangements. SP Saddar visited different areas and checked all the arrangements, he added.

Due to solid steps taken by the relevant authorities, traffic flow was totally under control in Murree, he informed. He said, "Murree has parking space for only 3500 vehicles and urged the tourists to observe traffic rules to avoid traffic mess or any untoward incident."

The spokesman said that Rawalpindi district police, City Traffic Police, and Murree tourism police were working round the clock to facilitate the tourists, adding that visitors, in case of any emergency, could contact Police Helpline 15 or Murree Tourism Police Helpline 1757.



RAWALPINDI: Butchers busy in slaughtering sacrificial animals at Jamia Masjid Zia ul Aloom Satellite Town on the first day of Eidul Azha. —APP Photo

## Naqvi lauds CDA chairman, teams over zero waste operation during Eid days

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday appreciated Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Mohammad Ali Randhawa and his team for successfully carrying out zero waste operation in the Federal Capital during all three days of Eid-ul-Azha.

"The entire team deserves congratulations for making Islamabad zero waste by working exceptionally hard through teamwork," Naqvi said in a statement.

The minister said the CDA officers and staff, Islamabad police and Safe City personnel set an example of public service, and

successfully completed the Clean Islamabad Mission on during Eid days.

It may be added that the CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa personally supervised the zero waste operation.

More than 2500 personnel and over 200 vehicles and machinery remained in the field for disposal of the entrails and offals of sacrificial animals.

The CDA for the first time distributed free biodegradable bags to citizens and set up 110 collection points across the city to carry out animals' waste.

Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Memon

monitored the zero waste operation through the cameras of Safe City.

All the officers and staff of three departments performed their duties diligently, and it was a pleasure to see the best cleanliness arrangements in Islamabad, Mohsin Naqvi said.

He also appreciated the citizens for their full cooperation with the CDA teams in keeping Islamabad clean.

The CDA chairman, Inspector General of Police Islamabad Ali Nasir Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner Irfan Memon and Safe City officials and staff deserved kudos, the minister reiterated.

## Cruel man cuts off donkey's ears

RAWALPINDI (INP): Another incident of human cruelty on animals has come to surface as a stone-hearted man cut off ears of a female donkey is Rawat area of Rawalpindi district, reported on Tuesday.

The man amputated donkey's both ears for roaming freely in his fields and damaging the crop.

The owner of the poor animal made repeated rounds of the local police station for registration of a case but to no avail.

The incident took place on June 4 and the police were pursued to register a case 14 days after the incident.

Now the cops said they

were conducting an investigation and soon they will share the outcome.

The police, however, pointed out that both the sides had already locked in court battles as they had filed a raft of cases against each other in courts.

It may be mentioned here that a cruel landlord and five of his servants in Sanghar district have been arrested for chopping off the leg of a camel after it trespassed on his field seeking fodder last week.

The incident has attracted the attention of top political leaders, who are now arranging a prosthetic leg for the animal from Dubai.

Rustum Shar and five of his servants were arrested after he proudly posted a video, holding the mutilated leg of the camel, after cutting off the animal's right leg in Mund Jamrao village of Sanghar district last weekend.

The video caused an outcry on social media with animal rights organisations and the public demanding the government to take action against the landlord for his cruel act.

The camel's owner, peasant Soomar Behan did not report the matter to the police but was contacted by authorities after the matter came to light.



ISLAMABAD: A family members visiting Lake View Park on the second day of Eid ul Azha celebrations in the federal capital. The park is restricted just for families during Eid holidays. —APP Photo

## BBQ parties, swings in parks double joys of citizens on 3rd day of Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): The enthusiastic citizens along with kids were being witnessed in parks and dams sites where they seen enjoying BBQ and meat parties besides enjoying swings by children on the third day of Eid-ul-Azha celebrations.

The huge crowds of citizens in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Peshawar, Karachi, Quetta, Swat and other cities along with families are seen visiting parks and zoo that added color to Eid-ul Azha celebrations, said a report aired by a private news channel.

As per traditions, the people passed the first and 2nd Eid day at home and spent third day by visiting houses of their loved ones, relatives and friends for exchange of Eid greetings and meat, said a citizen of capital.

Keeping alive the rich traditions of hospitality, the people have exchanged meat dishes and invited loved ones on BBQ parties besides distributed sacrificial animals meat in poor that doubled their Eid joy, said another citizen of Peshawar.

Kids are enjoying different rides in the parks, and playing games with each other. All the public



places are crowded with people since morning, said a traffic warden.

Great hustle and bustle was seen at parks where people mostly children and youth enjoyed free swings and meat parties under an open sky amid laughter and funfair, said a woman.

The rates of chips, biscuits, burgers, soft drinks, mineral water and other items were sold almost at double prices in the parks as compared to open markets, a citizen complained.

"Eid Al Azha is an important celebration for all of us according to our religion. It's also a time to spend time and reconnect with family members we have not seen in a long time so we planned to enjoy gathered in park to enjoy

BBQ party", said another citizen of Lahore.

In twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, the spots like, Lake View Park, Pakistan Monument, F-9 Park, Rose and Jasmine Garden, Ayub National Park and other small parks are sites of attraction for the visitors, said a resident.

Cinemas, ice cream parlors and kids play lands having electronic swings, video games and other joy rides were also jam packed with families.

The people who live in Islamabad have only a handful of places to go for day-out with family and kids, but during the Eid holidays, kids feel more excited to go on different rides and have fun, said another youngster.



Trust fund generated \$300m

KABUL (TOLOnews): Shah Mohammad Mehrabi, board member of the Afghan Trust Fund in Switzerland, told TOLOnews that the fund has so far generated about \$300 million in profit. Shah Mohammad Mehrabi said that the primary purpose of establishing this fund is to ensure financial stability in Afghanistan. The Afghan Trust Fund was created in September 2022 to safeguard \$3.5 billion of the country's assets in Switzerland.

FAO issued warns

KABUL (TOLOnews): FAO warned of the threat of increased locust swarms in the fertile regions of Afghanistan. The agricultural lands have faced locust swarms for the second consecutive year. Richard Trenchard, FAO representative said: "This, [standing in a fertile area] just two or three days ago, was a wheat field with wheat growing well, and now, the locusts, they've just taken everything. This is a family's food, a family's income for the next few months, and it's just gone."

370 media outlet operational: Minister

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Deputy Minister of Information and Culture, Hayatullah Mohajer Farahi, states that more than 370 visual, audio, news agencies, and print media are active across the country.

Farahi adds that the challenges faced by the media have largely been addressed and are not under any pressure.

The Deputy Minister of Information and Culture said: "Currently, there are more than 370 visuals, audio, and print media operating in the country. Most of the issues and problems in the media sector have been resolved to a great extent."

According to Farahi, although the media faces some economic problems, most of their issues have been addressed. He assures that all media outlets in the country can carry out their media activities considering Islamic values, national interests, and Afghan culture.

Hayatullah Mohajer



Farahi says: "They can continue their media activities in the country; of course, there are some points that we all must consider, including Islamic values, the supreme interests of the country, and the customs and culture of our Afghan society."

On the other hand, some journalists demand solutions to all media problems, including access to information and the implementation of the mass media law. Journalist Rohullah Alizai said: "Support

should be provided to journalists. The government must fulfill its duties, and the institutions that work to support the media or journalists should carry out their responsibilities so that journalists can be mentally at ease in their work environment."

This comes as the Ministry of Information and Culture had previously stated that during the 1402 solar year, 10 radio stations have launched new broadcasts in various provinces of the country.

UN calls 'gender apartheid' in Afghanistan a key concern

KABUL (Ariana News): UN Secretary-General's Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq has called gender apartheid in Afghanistan a key concern and called for the rights of Afghan women to be respected.

Addressing a press conference, Haq said the UN does not see the Islamic Emirate as the legal and official government of Afghanistan.

Earlier, Richard Bennett, the special rapporteur for human rights of the United Nations, warned at the 56th meeting of the United Nations Security Council that violence against Afghan women has become strong and widespread under the control of the Islamic Emirate.

"We want to ensure that women's rights in Afghan society are respected just as they are necessary everywhere in the world," said Haq.

He called gender apartheid in Afghanistan a key concern.

In response to Bennett's recommendation that the IEA should not be treated as the legal and official government, Haq said: "We treat them [IEA] as the de facto authorities, they are not treated as the recognised government of Afghanistan."

Bennett warned at the 56th session of the UN Human Rights Council that violence against Afghan women under IEA control has become strong and widespread.

He described the exclusion of women from public life and the deprivation of Afghan women and girls from work and education as crimes against humanity and gender apartheid.

Bennett called on the international community to stop legitimizing and normalizing relations with the IEA and not to treat the IEA as a legitimate government.

This is while the Islamic Emirate has rejected any violation of women's rights under its rule in Afghanistan and considers the concerns in this case to be groundless.

IEA reacts to UN rapporteur's remarks

KABUL (TOLOnews): Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate, has described the report by UN Rapporteur Richard Bennett and representatives of some countries in the United Nations Human Rights Council meeting as an attempt to mislead public opinion ahead of the third Doha meeting.

Mujahid said that the Islamic Emirate appreciates the support of some countries in the UN Human Rights Council meeting.

Mujahid told TOLOnews: "The report by some members of the United Nations, especially the report by Richard Bennett, is an attempt to mislead minds ahead of the Doha meeting. Unfortunately, some individuals with grudges in the United Nations always try to present incorrect reports about Afghanistan."

The Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs also said in a statement that Afghanistan is currently facing increasing challenges economically and in the human rights situation, especially the rights of women and girls.

"The State of Qatar stressed that the recovery

from long decades of conflict and deteriorating human rights conditions in Afghanistan now faces increasing challenges in the humanitarian, economic, and living fields, as well as critical human rights conditions, especially the rights of women and girls," reads part of the statement of Qatar's Foreign Ministry.

Richard Bennett, the UN Human Rights Council's special rapporteur for Afghanistan, criticized the human rights situation in Afghanistan at the 56th session of the Human Rights Council, saying that violence against women in Afghanistan is strong and widespread.

In his speech, he called on the Islamic Emirate authorities to address what he believes are discriminatory and restrictive policies that deprive women of their basic rights and to provide equal access to education for girls.

"These Taliban attacks on women's rights are intensified, pervasive, and systematic," pursued through various policies and orders, all systematically cooperating with each other," said Bennett.

Some analysts believe



that the Islamic Emirate's adherence to human rights issues outlined in the UN Charter can lead to resolving existing differences between the Islamic Emirate and the international community.

"The Islamic Emirate should think about the Afghan people's demand which has been put forward by the international community as pretext and people's demands should be addressed. The world must resolve the issues with us through dialogue," said Aman Hotaki, a political analyst.

"If the Islamic Emirate lived by the issue of human rights laid down in the UN charter, it would help the interim government gain the willingness of its people

and the world community and help push its recognition demand," said Shafiqullah Khaksar, another political analyst.

This is not the first time that the UN Human Rights special rapporteur has expressed concern over what he called violations of human rights, especially the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan; similar reports have been presented in the past as well.

On the other hand, the Islamic Emirate has always said that the rights of all citizens, especially the rights of women and girls, are ensured within the framework of Islamic laws, and other countries and institutions should not interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

HR should establish mechanism to hold Taliban accountable: HRW

KABUL (Khaama Press): Human Rights Watch stated that the exclusion of women from the third Doha meeting is a violation of a UN Security Council resolution. According to the organization, countries' disregard for the Taliban's harassment of women is disappointing.

The organization has called on countries to create a mechanism within the Human Rights Council to hold the Taliban accountable and investigate their crimes. This international body expressed concern about the "suffocating" situation of Afghan women and girls and urged the world to take gender apartheid as a crime against

humanity seriously.

Human Rights Watch issued its statement a day before the new Human Rights Council meeting to review the latest report by Richard Bennett, the council's special rapporteur.

Human Rights Watch, one of the major international organizations, has supported the proposals of Richard Bennett's report. This report emphasizes recognizing gender apartheid and calls on countries to file a case against the Taliban for human rights violations at the International Court of Justice.

Human Rights Watch has also urged members of the Human Rights Council to file a complaint against

the Taliban at this court.

Meanwhile, the United Nations has excluded Afghan women from the third Doha meeting. Human Rights Watch has stated that this action by the United Nations is a blatant violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.

Since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, there has been a dire human rights and humanitarian crisis in the country. The Taliban have severely restricted women's rights, including banning education beyond the sixth grade. This regression has deprived countless young girls of their right to learn and pursue their dreams.

Women in Afghanistan are also barred from employment and working with both domestic and international aid organizations. This restriction not only impacts the women directly but also hampers the effectiveness of humanitarian efforts aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Afghan population.

Furthermore, the Taliban have restricted the free movement of women and other basic rights. Women must be accompanied by a male guardian in public spaces, and this enforcement of strict mobility limitations severely limits their ability to participate in society and access essential services.

Earthquake shakes Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan was shaken early Wednesday when a 4.8 magnitude earthquake struck near Metarlam, in Laghman province.

According to the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC), the quake hit at a depth of 68 km at 8:17 am local time.

EMSC earlier reported the earthquake at 5.1 magnitude.

The German Research

Centre for Geosciences (GFZ) meanwhile listed the quake at magnitude 5.0.

The quake was felt in Kabul but no damage was immediately reported.

Afghanistan is prone to earthquakes and continues to recover from four deadly 6.3 magnitude quakes in Herat last year.

On October 7, the first quake struck, followed by a second 6.3 magnitude quake less than half an hour later.

The pair of earthquakes caused widespread building collapse, particularly in the rural communities surrounding Herat.

At least 2,400 people were killed and over 2,000 were injured in the earthquakes.

Three days later, while the population reeled from the events, another magnitude-6.3 earthquake jolted the same region. Finally, on October 15, a fourth magnitude-6.3 earthquake hit.

MSF warns of critical health sector challenges



BALKH (TOLOnews): Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) considers the health sector situation in Afghanistan concerning and states that health centers in Balkh province, are facing numerous challenges.

The organization's report indicates that the lack of long-term support for neonatal and pediatric intensive care centers has affected these health centers.

Part of the Doctors Without Borders report states: "Public health centers in Afghanistan, such as the local hospital in Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh province,

are facing difficulties due to the lack of long-term structural support for the health sector to meet the current expenses needed for staff salaries, medications, medical supplies, fuel, and oxygen supplies."

Several doctors say there is a need for the caretaker government to develop and implement a comprehensive and standardized program aimed at self-sufficiency of health centers.

A physician Sayed Abdullah Ahmadi says: "Assistance should be sought from cadres inside and outside of Afghanistan to solve this problem and ensure that the people of Afghanistan have access to

better health services."

Another doctor Rohullah Haris states: "Currently, Afghanistan's health sector is heavily dependent on foreign aid, and this aid is very significant at the level of primary health care, which includes more than 70% of health services, particularly child and maternal health, which is a global health priority."

Although the Ministry of Public Health has not commented on this matter, it had previously stated that in the past two and a half years, it has employed over 1,500 health personnel and plans to establish 288 health centers across the country.

Afghan deportees recount mistreatment by Iranian

KABUL (TOLOnews): Afghan migrants who have been deported from Iran have complained about mistreatment by the border forces of that country.

The deported migrants told TOLOnews that if job opportunities were provided within the country, they would never go to Iran illegally.

"We call on the government to provide employment opportunities for people. No one including me will go to Iran," said Abdul Mateen, a deportee from Iran.

"The problem in our

country is that there are not employment opportunities. May Allah help us find a good job no matter if it is a low-paying job," said Jamshid, another migrant deported from Iran.

The Afghan migrants added that if job opportunities are provided for them within the country, they would not go to Iran anymore.

"We ask the Islamic Emirate to provide employment for us. We will not leave the country, even if we earn 100 Afis (around \$1.6) per day," said Hatam, s deportee from Iran.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Qasim Khalid, the governor of Nimroz, said that by launching major development projects, job opportunities for thousands of people will be provided within the country.

The governor of Nimroz said: "We have assigned a migrants committee on the border with Iran to provide social and health services. We assure the Afghan migrants of full security and that working opportunities will be provided for youth as some major national projects are underway across the country."

MoneyGram announces partnership with Rashid Khan to promote services in Afghanistan, globally

KABUL (Khaama Press): MoneyGram, a global financial technology leader, announced a partnership with Afghan cricketer Rashid Khan.

This partnership aims to expand MoneyGram's global presence and promote its services in Afghanistan and worldwide.

The collaboration was formalized during a signing ceremony in Ahmedabad, India.

"I am thrilled to announce my official endorsement of the MoneyGram brand," said Rashid.

"MoneyGram helps bring families closer through reliable and fast global money transfers, and I am delighted to share more about MoneyGram with my numerous cricket fans around the globe. I look forward to our long-term partnership."

"MoneyGram helps bring families closer through reliable and fast global money transfers," Rashid added.

Rashid looks forward to sharing more about MoneyGram with his cricket fans globally.

This partnership supports MoneyGram's ongoing expansion in Afghanistan.

Senders in Europe, Canada, and the US can use MoneyGram Online or visit agent locations to send funds to Afghanistan.

Receivers in Afghanistan can pick up funds at any of the company's 200+ agent locations.

"Rashid's commitment to excellence aligns with MoneyGram's values, emphasizing our best-in-class services," said Head of Field Marketing, Sabrina Chan.

Interior ministry reports safe and secure Eid



KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Interior says that no security issues were reported over Eid al-Adha and that the people of Afghanistan were able to celebrate in a secure and safe environment.

Abdul Mateen Qani, the interior ministry's spokesman, said on X that

police forces, in coordination and close cooperation with other security institutions, were able to provide security over the past four days across the country which allowed people to participate in religious ceremonies of Eid.

Qani added that this success was the result of accu-

rate and effective security planning, round-the-clock efforts of the security forces and the cooperation of the people of Afghanistan.

The ministry also appreciated the efforts of the security forces and the cooperation of the people.



# 9 Palestinians killed in Israeli strike

## Fighting in Gaza's Rafah as tensions soar on Israel-Lebanon border

GAZA (Reuters / AFP): Nine Palestinians were killed in an Israeli strike that hit a group of citizens and merchants in the southern Gaza Strip as they waited for convoys of aid trucks carrying goods through the Kerem Shalom crossing, medical sources told Reuters on Wednesday.

Kerem Shalom on the Israeli border "is operating with limited functionality, including because of fighting in the area," UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq has said. He told reporters that in recent weeks, there had been "an improvement" in aid reaching northern Gaza "but a drastic deterioration in the south." More than eight months of war, sparked by Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack on Israel, have led to dire humanitarian conditions in the Palestinian territory and repeated UN warnings of famine.

Meanwhile, the Israeli air strikes and clashes between troops and Palestinian militants rocked Gaza on Wednesday, as Israel's army warned it had readied an "offensive" against the Lebanese Hezbollah movement on the country's northern front.

Witnesses and the civil defense agency in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip reported Israeli bombardment in western Rafah, where medics said drone strikes and shelling killed at least seven people. The Israeli military has announced a daily humanitarian "pause" in fighting on a key road in eastern Rafah, but a UN spokesman said days later that "this has yet to translate into more aid reaching people in need."

More than eight months of war, sparked by Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack on Israel, have led to dire humanitarian conditions in the Palestinian territory and repeated UN warnings of famine. The Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt has been shut since Israeli troops seized its Palestinian side in early May, while nearby Kerem Shalom on the Israeli border "is operating with limited functionality, including because of fighting in the area," said UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq.

He told reporters that in recent weeks, there had been "an improvement" in aid reaching northern Gaza "but a drastic deterioration in the south." "Basic commodities are available in markets in southern and central Gaza. But... it's unaffordable for many people."

The war has sent tensions soaring across the region, with violence involving Iran-backed Hamas allies. The Israeli military, which has traded near-daily cross-border fire with Lebanon's Hezbollah since October, said late Tuesday that "operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon were approved and validated."

On Wednesday the military said its war-

planes had struck Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon overnight, while reporting a drone had infiltrated near the border town of Metula in an attack claimed by Hezbollah and targeting troops. The Iran-backed group also announced the death of two of its fighters.

Lebanon's official National News agency reported Israeli strikes on several areas in south Lebanon on Wednesday morning, including on the border village of Khiam, where an AFP photographer saw a large cloud of smoke. The army's announcement that its plans for an offensive in Lebanon had been approved, along with a warning from Foreign Minister Israel Katz of Hezbollah's destruction in a "total war," came as US envoy Amos Hochstein visited the region to push for de-escalation.

Syrian state media said an Israeli strike on military sites in the country's south killed an army officer on Wednesday. Israel has not commented on the report. In Gaza, Islamic Jihad, a Palestinian armed group that has fought alongside Hamas, said its militants were battling troops amid Israeli shelling of western Rafah.

Witnesses reported seeing Israeli military vehicles enter the city's Saudi neighborhood, followed by nighttime gunbattles. Parts of central Gaza also saw fighting overnight, with witnesses reporting artillery shelling and heavy gunfire in Gaza City's Zeitun neighborhood.

The October 7 attack that triggered the war resulted in the deaths of 1,194 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures. The militants also seized 251 hostages. Of these, 116 remain in Gaza, although the army says 41 are dead. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 37,396 people in Gaza, also mostly civilians, according to the territory's health ministry.

At least 24 people died over the past day, the ministry said. A UN report issued Wednesday detailed six "indiscriminate and disproportionate" Israeli strikes that killed at least 218 people in the first two months of the war. It said the strikes involved "the suspected use" of heavy bombs — a shipment of which the United States had paused in May over concerns Israel might use them in its Rafah assault.

The strikes targeted "densely populated" areas including refugee camps, a school and market, the UN rights office said, making the use of heavy bombs "highly likely to amount to a prohibited indiscriminate attack." UN human rights chief Volker Turk said: "The requirement to select means and methods of warfare that avoid, or at the very least minimize to every extent, civilian harm appears to have been consistently violated in Israel's bombing campaign."

## Army chief spends Eid with troops

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir visited the Line of Control in the Haji Pir sector Monday to celebrate Eid with the troops.

According to ISPR, the COAS offered Eid prayers with officers and soldiers at the front line, praying for Pakistan's peace and prosperity. Addressing the troops, the COAS commended their dedication, high morale, and commitment to defending the motherland.

He said: "As soldiers, we take pride in celebrating such festivities away from our homes and loved ones while on duty, ensuring the security of our country and fellow citizens. Discussing the indigenous freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people in IIOJK, the COAS reiterated Pakistan's principled stance, aligned with relevant UN resolutions.

He condemned India's ongoing oppression and brutalities against Kashmiris, noting that post-election, India has been attempting to mask its aggression and victimization of the Kashmiri people with false propaganda and provocations against Pakistan. Such tactics, including manufacturing false flag operations, have become a routine political tool of India. The COAS said Pakistan has always supported peace and stability in the region, however, any provocation or violation of Pakistan's territorial sovereignty will be met with a swift and resolute response, with the full support of the nation. Earlier, upon arrival, the COAS was received by the Rawalpindi Corps commander.

## Four land fraudsters sentenced

ISLAMABAD (INP): The District and Sessions Judge of the Anti-Corruption Rawalpindi Court has sentenced four individuals, including two revenue officials, to a total of 96 years of rigorous imprisonment and fines amounting to Rs 5.8 million for cheating, manipulation, and fraudulent forgery of ownership papers owned by a prominent British Pakistani family.

Special Judge Ali Nawaz of the Anti-Corruption Court sentenced Aurangzeb Patwari, Malik Muhammad Safdar, Muhammad Almas Abbasi, Haq Nawaz Abbasi, and Raja Shahid Ahmed for unlawfully occupying lands through fraudulent forgery of documents belonging to British Pakistani businessman Nisar Ahmad Afzal.

Previously out on bail, the convicted individuals have now been transferred to Central Jail Adiyala following the decisive verdict. The complainants had filed an application before the director-general of anti-corruption in Lahore. Anti-Corruption Lahore said in a forensic report prepared by the PFSA that it investigated the accused and established that the record of the land registry was tampered with, signatures forged, and additional pages added to the original land record in order to defraud the British Pakistani family.

The court was told that the mutation of the land was not compared or verified by Girdawar, which is a prerequisite under the law, and that "names of Almas, Haq Nawaz, and Raja Shahid seem to have been inserted subsequently" and "this mutation has not been entered in Roznamcha Waqai."

Raja Shahid, Almas Abbasi, and Haq Nawaz initially denied being involved in the forgery scheme, but the forensic investigation by Anti-Corruption Lahore (Punjab) proved they were involved in tampering with papers, fraud, and manipulation in order to snatch the expensive piece of land worth around three billion rupees (approximately £10 million).

Anti-Corruption Court Special Judge Ali Nawaz said it was proven beyond any doubt that the accused had manipulated and forged the papers to commit crime against overseas Pakistani Nisar Afzal and his family and sentenced all the accused for 96 years in total on several counts each of criminal misconduct, forgery, fraud, alteration, and using forged documents to make gains: Raja Shahid was sentenced for 17 years and fined 1.2 million rupees; Haq Nawaz Abbasi was sentenced for 17 years and fined 1.2 million rupees; Aurangzeb Patwari was sentenced for 31 years and fined 1.7 million rupees on five counts of criminal misconduct; and Muhammad Safdar Naib Tehseeldar was sentenced for 31 years and fined 1.7 million rupees.



HYDERABAD: Sindh Information Minister, Sharjeel Inam Memon addressing a pres conference.

# Landslides kill 15, displace millions, in Bangladesh, India

DHAKA (AFP): Heavy monsoon rains have triggered landslides in Bangladesh and India, killing at least 15 people, injuring several others and displacing millions, according to officials.

Eight Rohingya Muslims were among those killed by mudslides in the early hours of Wednesday, Mohammad Shamsud Douza, a senior Bangladesh government official in charge of refugees, said. The disaster is the latest in a series triggered by extreme weather in South Asia and around the globe, with heavy rains and heatwaves having killed many people and caused humanitarian crises in recent months. The refugees died in landslides in southern Bangladesh. More than one million Rohingya live in crowded camps in the border district of Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee settlement, after fleeing a military crackdown in neighbouring Myanmar in 2017.

Amir Jafar, a police official in command of security in the refugee camps, said hundreds had been moved from areas deemed at risk. The Rohingya refugees mostly live in shacks made of bamboo and plastic sheets, often on steep, bare hills. The rains also unleashed chaos in north-eastern Bangladesh.

"At least 700,000 people have been stranded by flash floods and heavy rains in Sylhet district, and another 500,000 people in neighbouring Sunamganj district," Abu Ahmed Siddique, commissioner of Bangladesh's northeastern Sylhet district, told the AFP news agency. The Bangladesh weather office said it expected heavy rains to continue for the next few days.

The nation of about 170 million

people is among the countries most vulnerable to disasters and climate change, according to the Global Climate Risk Index. Just over the border, in neighbouring India's state of Assam, at least six people were killed in floods and landslides on Tuesday night. "A landslide buried a woman and her three daughters alive," a state disaster management official, Siju Das, told Reuters.

"Their house was on a slope, and they died on the spot around midnight," he said, adding that the bodies were retrieved after a three-hour search operation by rescuers. More than 160,000 people were affected by the weather conditions in Assam, with waters surpassing the danger level in the Kopili, one of the largest tributaries of the Brahmaputra, which ranks among India's biggest rivers. More than 30 people in the state have died since the end of May in floods and landslides brought by heavy rain, officials said.

Meanwhile, to the south, the country is sweltering under a vicious heatwave. New Delhi recorded its hottest night in six years on Tuesday, with hospitals in the city of 30 million reporting at least five deaths from heatstroke this week, the Times of India newspaper said.

Meanwhile, India was battling on Wednesday extreme weather that caused severe heatwaves, landslides and floods, killing at least 11 people this week, among them a woman and her three daughters buried alive in a north-eastern state, officials and media said. The capital, New Delhi, sweltered through its hottest June night in six years on Tuesday, with hospitals in the city of 20 million

reporting at least five deaths from heatstroke this week, the Times of India newspaper said.

Its power consumption touched an all-time high on Tuesday, when the minimum nighttime temperature reached 33.8 degrees Celsius (93°F), it added. Floods and landslides triggered by incessant rain in the north-eastern state of Assam killed at least six people on Tuesday night, officials said.

"A landslide buried a woman and her three daughters alive," a state disaster management official, Siju Das, said by telephone. "Their house was on a slope, and they died on the spot around midnight," he said, adding that the bodies were retrieved after a three-hour search operation by rescuers. "A three-year-old was killed too."

Billions across Asia are grappling with extreme heat this summer in a trend scientists say has been worsened by human-driven climate change. Since March, temperatures have soared to 50°C (122°F) in Delhi and the nearby desert state of Rajasthan, while more than twice the usual number of heatwave days were recorded this season in the country's northwest and east.

These conditions stemmed from fewer thundershowers, as well as warm winds blowing in from neighbouring arid regions. In Assam, more than 160,000 people were affected, with waters surpassing the danger level in the Kopili, one of the largest tributaries of the Brahmaputra, which ranks among India's biggest rivers. More than 30 people in the state have died since the end of May in floods and landslides brought by heavy rain, officials said.

# Chinese Minister due today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister of the International Department of Communist Party of China and member of the Communist Party's Central Committee Liu Jianchao is visiting Pakistan from tomorrow (Thursday) to participate in Third Meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Consultative Mechanism.

Liu Jianchao's three-day visit to Pakistan was scheduled at the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar. During the visit, Minister Liu will co-chair with the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister the Third

Meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Consultative Mechanism of the Political Parties on CPEC.

He will also call on the senior civil and military leadership of Pakistan. Established in 2019, the JCM of Political Parties on CPEC is a regular consultation mechanism between the Communist Party of China and the political parties of Pakistan. Previous meetings were held on 19th March 2019 in Beijing and on 20th August 2020 virtually.

At the Third Meeting of the JCM, Pakistan and China will review the progress of CPEC projects, CPEC's contribution to Pakistan's socioeconomic

development, and its up-gradation and extension for regional connectivity. The visit is a part of high-level exchanges between Pakistan and China including between the Communist Party of China and the political parties of Pakistan.

It reflects the importance attached by the two countries to further deepen their All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, reaffirm mutual support on issues of respective core interests, advance high-quality development of CPEC and enhance communication and dialogue on important regional and global developments.

# PM, Malaysian counterpart

(Continued from Page 1)

the fraternal and special ties between the two countries into an enduring and mutually beneficial strategic partnership, especially focused on trade and investment. Emphasizing the significance of frequent high-level exchanges between the two countries, Prime Minister Shehbaz reiterated to the UAE president an invitation to undertake an official visit to Pakistan, at his earliest convenience.

In response, Sheikh Mohamed graciously conveyed his acceptance of the invitation and agreed to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at an early date. Both leaders agreed to remain in close contact to advance their shared desire to take the brotherly and close ties between the two countries to even greater heights.

**PM, Sheikh Ahmad exchange views on enhancing bilateral cooperation between Pakistan, Kuwait:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah exchanged views on enhancing bilateral cooperation in various fields, including trade, investment, energy, and export of skilled labour.

They also discussed regional and global issues of mutual interest, reaffirming their commitment to working closely together

er for the advancement of shared goals and objectives. The prime minister extended warm Eidul Azha greetings to Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait in a cordial telephone conversation, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

This was the first interaction between the two prime ministers since the Kuwaiti Prime Minister assumed office in April this year. On this auspicious occasion, the prime minister conveyed his sincere wishes and prayers for peace, prosperity and happiness of the brotherly people of Kuwait as well as Muslims around the world.

During their conversation, the two prime ministers reaffirmed the significance of the deep-rooted fraternal ties between Pakistan and Kuwait, characterized by mutual respect, shared values, and common religious heritage. Tracing the historic ties between both countries who had always stood by each other, especially in difficult times, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif recalled that former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif had visited the then Amir of Kuwait when the Government of Kuwait was temporarily based in Taif due to Iraq's forcible occupation in 1990-91.

This gesture of solidarity bore testament to the close and enduring ties

between both countries. In response, the prime minister of Kuwait reciprocated the warm sentiments and expressed appreciation for the longstanding friendship and cooperation between the two brotherly nations.

While referring to the Pakistani diaspora in Kuwait, the prime minister thanked the Government of Kuwait for hosting a large Pakistani community who were gainfully employed and contributing to the economic development of both countries.

**PM offers Eidul Azha prayer at Model Town; prays for country's progress:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday offered the prayer of Eidul Azha here at the Model Town mosque. The prime minister prayed for peace and progress of the country and solidarity of the Muslim Ummah.

Following the prayer, he mixed up with the people there and exchanged Eid greetings with them. Earlier, in his message to the nation on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, the prime minister said that the day served as an occasion to unite the people and foster the bonds of brotherhood and fraternity. "On this day, we pray for our Palestinian and Kashmiri brothers and sisters who are bravely facing brutal foreign occupation but remain steadfast in their struggle to achieve their right of self-determination," he stated.

# Israel's actions in Gaza intentional attack on civilians: UN inquiry

NEW YORK: The Israeli military's "deliberate" use of heavy weapons in the Gaza Strip has been an "intentional and direct attack on the civilian population", a new report by a United Nations-backed independent commission has found.

Navi Pillay, chairperson of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said on Wednesday that Israel has committed crimes against humanity, forced starvation, extermination, murder, and inhuman and cruel treatment of Palestinians. She also accused Palestinian groups of war

crimes.

As she presented the report to the UN Human Rights Council, Pillay said the Israeli military operating in Gaza "forcibly transferred almost the entire population into a small enclosure that is unsafe and uninhabitable" and used heavy weapons in densely populated areas in "an intentional and direct attack on the civilian population". Pillay said the commission concluded that specific forms of sexual and gender-based violence constituted part of the Israeli forces' operating procedures.

"Although Israeli officials have repeatedly stated their operations in

Gaza are intended to destroy Hamas and release hostages, yet neither of these aims has been largely achieved at the expense of thousands of lives," she said. "We found that Israeli forces committed sexual and gender-based violence with the intent to humiliate and further subordinate the Palestinian community. Palestinian women were targeted and subjected to sexual violence and harassment online and in person. "Men and boys experienced specific persecutory acts, including sexual and gender-based violence amounting to torture and inhuman and cruel treatment."

## Putin and Kim embrace in North Korea

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un embraced Russian Vladimir Putin on his arrival at Pyongyang's airport on Wednesday, and the two leaders shared their "pent-up inmost thoughts" and agreed to develop their nations' relations, North Korean state media said.

Putin, who arrived before dawn, is on his first trip to the North Korean capital in 24 years, a visit likely to reshape decades of Russia-North Korea relations at a time when both countries face international isolation. The countries' partnership is an "engine for accelerating the building of a new multi-polar world" and Putin's visit demonstrates the invincibility and durability of their friendship and unity, North Korea's state news agency KCNA said.

Russia has used its warming ties with North Korea to needle Washington, while heavily sanctioned North Korea has won political backing and promises of economic support and trade from Moscow. The United States and its allies say they fear Russia could provide aid for North Korea's missile and nuclear programs, which are banned by UN Security Council resolutions.