

Quake felt in Peshawar
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An earthquake of magnitude 4.9 struck Peshawar and its surrounding areas on Wednesday afternoon at 3:30 pm. The Regional Meteorological Center said the tremors were felt in various regions including Peshawar, Swat, Malakand, North Waziristan, Parachinar, Lower Dir, Hangu, Charsadda, and Swabi. There were no initial reports of damage or casualties.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing budget session of National Assembly.

PM invites Opp to hold dialogue

PM greenlights Pakistan-China JV project for industry relocation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday invited the opposition political parties to join heads for a dialogue to discuss the ways for taking the country ahead.

"Let us sit together to take the country ahead. Let us talk for the betterment of the country. There is no other way forward," the prime minister said addressing the National Assembly, while responding to a point of order by Sunni Ittehad Council Ali Muhammad Khan. He recalled that in the past too, he had invited the political parties to evolve a consensus on a Charter of Economy but that idea was ridiculed just for political point-scoring.

He said the way the sloganeering was done on the offer, was the darkest chapter in the country's history. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the House should also fix the responsibility on those who contributed to such a bitterness in the society. The prime minister also recounted his ordeal of facing victimization and that he was in jail when his mother passed away. Despite request to the jail superintendent, he was not given exemption from court appearance, he added.

He said that despite being a cancer survivor and with a backbone ailment, he used to be driven to courts on the ordinary prison van just to exacerbate the condition, but he never complained. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that other PML-N leaders like Khawaja Muhammad Asif and Rana Sanaullah also faced humiliating treatment despite being the under-trial prisoners. But he said, having faced all the victimization, he would never want his political adver-

saries to face an identical situation. The prime minister said that if the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder faced any problems in jail, that should be conveyed to the government.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif gave the green light to the joint ventures between Chinese and Pakistani companies for relocating the Chinese industries to Pakistan.

Chairing a meeting to discuss the matters of the Board of Investment (BoI), he said that promoting both local and foreign investment in Pakistan was among the government's priorities. He said the government was taking all possible steps to create a business-friendly environment for traders and investors.

The prime minister directed the concerned to submit a comprehensive report on the follow up of Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) signed between Pakistani and Chinese companies in Shenzhen during his recent visit to China. He also instructed a review of the draft law for the Special Economic Zones One Stop Shop in light of the developments following his China visit.

Prime Minister, Shehbaz said there was significant potential for relocating China's textile, leather, footwear, and other industries to Pakistan. Meanwhile, during the briefing, the BoI Secretary said that the steps were being taken to relocate Chinese industry to Pakistan. It was told that the services of Chinese experts were being hired for establishing Business Facilitation Centre in the federal capital and the draft of "Easy Business Act" was being sent to Cabinet Committee for Legislative Cases.

Dialogue after release of PTI founder: Omar Ayub

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Leader of Opposition in National Assembly Omar Ayub has said that dialogues with the government are precondition with release of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and other detainees.

Responding to the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's offer of talks, he clarified that the talks will be held only after PTI founder and other detainees were set at liberty. Speaking in the National Assembly on Wednesday, Omar Ayub addressed the prime minister, whom he referred to as "Form 47 PM". The speaker intervened, saying the environment was improving, to which Ayub responded that he had the right to reply.

He said the House could only function with mutual respect. The Opposition Leader mentioned that while Shehbaz Sharif talked about his mother's funeral, he attended Kulsoom Nawaz's funeral but could not attend his

Fazl decries 'burden' of taxes in budget 2024-25

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazalur Rehman said that the burden of taxes has been imposed on salaried persons as well as businessmen in the budget.

Speaking on the National Assembly floor during the budget debate, Maulana Fazalur Rehman said that the government demands taxes from the citizens but is not ready to give their rights. He said that everything would be fine when the 'interference' in politics ends. Maulana Fazalur Rehman said that the country is currently being ruled by a minority as the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led federal governments 'lacks' a majority in the parliament.

"Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is not part of the coalition government hence the PML-N lacks the majority," the JUI-F chief added Speaking on the vision Azm-e-Istehkam, Maulana Fazalur Rehman said that it will further destabilise the county. "Azm-e-Istehkam will not bring stability rather instability," he added.

own father's funeral.

Reconciliation would only be possible if the government make amends for mistreatment of Dr Yasmin Rashid, Mahmoodur Rashid, Hassaan Niazi and others, he added. At this point, the speaker asked Omar to sit down, stating that he had made

his point and had been allowed to speak. However, the opposition leader continued to speak and said his leader was detained in a death cell while others were provided with air-conditioners. He contended that the country's instability was due to a lack of rule of law.

The Frontier Post

Body returned to Kabul
F.P. Report

TORKHAM: Pakistan has taken a significant humanitarian step by returning the body of a member of the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan on Wednesday. The deceased had recently drowned in a river in the Lalpura area of Afghanistan, and the body was carried by the Kabul River into Pakistan. Soldiers from the Frontier Corps Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North recovered the body from the river.

US House passes resolution in support of democracy, Human Rights in Pakistan

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON: On June 25, 2024, the US House of Representatives passed House Resolution 901 with an overwhelming majority, reflecting a strong bipartisan consensus. The resolution, which garnered 350 votes in favor and 65 against, was a clear statement from the United States in favor of democracy and human rights in Pakistan. The resolution was introduced amid growing concerns about political instability and human rights violations in Pakistan, where many activists and opposition members have faced increasing pressure and threats.

The resolution called for the Pakistani government to uphold democratic principles, ensure fair elections, and protect the rights of all its citizens, including minorities and political opponents. It highlighted specific instances of human rights abuses, urging immediate and effective actions to address these issues. The resolution specifically emphasized the importance of free and fair elections as a cornerstone of democracy, urging the Pakistani authorities to ensure that upcoming elections are conducted transparently and inclusively.

The passage of H. Res. 901 was met with a mixed response. Supporters in the US Congress emphasized the importance of standing with democratic movements worldwide and supporting nations striving to maintain democratic governance and human rights. They argued that such resolutions help to pressure governments to reform and respect the rights of their citizens.

In Pakistan, reactions were divided. Some

Resolution reflects ignorance of Pakistan's electoral process: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan says the US House of Representatives' resolution on political situation in Pakistan stems from an incomplete understanding of the political situation and electoral process. In response to media queries regarding the passage of House Resolution 901, Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra-Baloch said, "Pakistan believes that timing and context of this resolution does not align well with the positive dynamics of Pak-US bilateral ties." She said Pakistan, as the world's second-largest parliamentary democracy and fifth-largest democracy overall, was committed to the values of constitutionalism, human rights and rule of law in pursuance of our own national interest. The Foreign Office spokesperson said Pakistan believes in constructive dialogue and engagement based on mutual respect and understanding, and such resolutions are therefore neither constructive nor objective. She said: "We hope that the US Congress will play a supportive role in strengthening Pakistan-US ties and focus on avenues of mutual collaboration that benefit both our peoples and countries."

viewed the resolution as a positive sign of international support for democratic values and human rights. However, others criticized it as interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, arguing that such actions should be handled domestically without external pressure.

Despite the controversy, the resolution underscored the US commitment to promoting democracy and human rights globally. It served as a reminder of the international community's role in supporting democratic transitions and protecting human rights in countries facing political turmoil. The passage of H. Res. 901 marked a notable moment in the ongoing dialogue between the US and Pakistan regarding

the latter's political future and human rights landscape.

The repercussions of this resolution are expected to be significant. In the short term, it may lead to increased scrutiny and pressure on the Pakistani government from both international bodies and domestic activists. In the long term, it could influence US foreign policy and aid decisions, tying them more closely to democratic practices and human rights records in Pakistan. The resolution sends a clear message that the US will continue to monitor the situation in Pakistan and support efforts towards a more democratic and just society.

AGP prays SC to dismiss SIC's appeal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan on Wednesday submitted written arguments to the Supreme Court of Pakistan in the case of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) regarding reserved seats.

The AGP requested the top court to dismiss the SIC's appeal and uphold the verdict of Peshawar High Court (PHC) in the matter. He said, "A political party that participates in elections and wins at least one seat can get reserved seats. According to the law, a list has to be provided for certain seats to the ECP (Election Commission of Pakistan)."

The SIC neither participated in the elections nor submitted the list for the specific seats, "which are only reserved for minorities and women", he added. The AGP said, "Independent candidates can join the political parties that have representation in the Parliament."

He argued that the SIC was not a parliamentary party at the time of the allocation of reserved seats, and its demand for reserved seats was unconstitutional. He said that the PPP, PML-N and others had submitted their lists before the elections, and their voters were aware about the reserved seats before elections.

The PTI has decided to become a party in the reserved seats' case being heard by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa-led full court and submitted a plea via its chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan. The petition sought the top court's permission to be a party in the case after the "Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) levelled 'unfounded' allegations on the PTI during the hearing of the SIC's appeals".

It read that the PTI and the SIC were deprived of reserved seats despite being eligible. The SIC was ready to provide a list of candidates for the allocations but was denied permission to submit it. The Imran-founded party blamed the poll organising authority for "unconstitutionally" allocating reserved seats belonging to the PTI-SIC alliance to other political parties which also went against the aspirations of the nationals.

The former ruling party said that SIC Chairman Sahibzada Hamid Raza contested the 2024 general elections and won a seat in Faisalabad's NA-104 constituency. It further claimed that Article 51 of the Constitution does not elaborate on obligations to independent candidates to join those political parties who won more than one seat in the polls.

Israeli forces pound Gaza, battle Hamas in Rafah

GAZA (Reuters): Israeli forces pounded several areas across Gaza on Wednesday, and residents reported fierce fighting overnight in Rafah in the south of the Palestinian enclave.

Residents said fighting intensified in the Tel Al-Sultan neighborhood in western Rafah, where tanks were also trying to force their way north amid heavy clashes. The armed wings of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fighters attacked Israeli forces with anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs. Since early May, ground fighting has focused on Rafah, abutting Egypt on Gaza's southern edge, where around half of the enclave's 2.3 million people had been sheltering after fleeing other areas. Most have since had to flee again.

Israel says that it is close to destroying the last remaining Hamas battalions in Rafah, after which it will move to smaller scale operations in the enclave. Medics said two Palestinians were killed in one Israeli missile strike in Rafah. The Israeli military said in a statement its forces killed a Hamas militant who had been involved in the smuggling of weapons through the border between Rafah and Egypt. It said jets struck dozens of militant targets in Rafah overnight, including fighters, military structures and tunnel shafts.

Later on Wednesday, an Israeli strike killed three Palestinians and wounded others near the northern Jabalia camp, one of the Gaza Strip's eight historic refugee camps, medics said. Residents and Hamas media said the casualties were among a group of people who gathered outside a store to get an Internet signal to communicate with relatives elsewhere in the enclave. In Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip, tank shells struck an apartment, killing at least five people and wounding others, medics said. The Israeli military had no immediate comment.

Israel's ground and air campaign in Gaza was triggered when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing around 1,200 people and seizing more than 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. The Israeli offensive in retaliation has so far killed 37,658 people, of them 60 in the past 24 hours, the Gaza health ministry said on Tuesday, and has left the tiny, heavily built-up Gaza Strip in ruins.

The Gaza health ministry does not distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, but officials say most those killed have been civilians. Israel has lost

314 soldiers in Gaza and says at least a third of the Palestinian dead are fighters. More than eight months into the war, international mediation backed by the US has failed to yield a ceasefire agreement. Hamas says any deal must bring an end to the war and full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, while Israel says it will accept only temporary pauses in fighting until Hamas is eradicated.

Orly Gilboa, whose 20-year-old daughter Daniela is being held hostage in Gaza, called on Israeli leaders to accept the deal and on the international community to pressure Hamas to do the same. "The deal is there to be signed and implemented. I'm asking my own government to stand behind its own proposal, to be brave as our girls are, to save them, to save us. Time is running out," she told a press conference in Tel Aviv.

In the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinians complained of a severe lack of food and soaring prices, and health officials said thousands of children were suffering from malnutrition that has already killed at least 30 since Oct. 7. "There is only flour and canned food, there is nothing else to eat, no vegetables, no meat, and no milk," said Abu Mustafa, who lives in Gaza City, with his family.

Their house was struck in the past week by an Israeli tank, that destroyed most of the upper floor. "Apart from the bombing, there is another Israeli war taking place in northern Gaza, starvation. People meet in the street and many can't recognize one another because of weight loss and older looks," Abu Mustafa told Reuters via a chat app.

Gaza remains at high risk of famine, though delivery of some aid has limited the projected spread of extreme hunger in northern areas, a global monitor said on Tuesday. More than 495,000 people across the Gaza Strip are facing the most severe, or "catastrophic," level of food insecurity, according to an update from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) a global partnership used by the United Nations and aid agencies. Wrapping up a visit to Washington, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Israel was fighting against Hamas, not the people of Gaza. "We are committed, and I am personally committed, to facilitating the delivery of essential humanitarian aid to Gaza. We only fight those who seek to harm us," Gallant said in a video statement.

Assange welcomed home in Australia

CANBERRA (Reuters): WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange landed to an ecstatic welcome in Australia on Wednesday after pleading guilty to violating US espionage law in a deal that sets him free from a 14-year legal battle.

Assange disembarked from a private jet at Canberra airport just after 7:30 p.m. (0930 GMT), waving to waiting media and cheering supporters before passionately kissing his wife, Stella, and lifting her off the ground. He embraced his father before entering the terminal building with his legal team.

Assange has not spoken publicly since being released and did not appear at a Wikileaks press conference at a hotel in Canberra, where Stella Assange said it was too soon to say what her husband would do next. "Julian needs time to recover, to get used to freedom," she said. "I want Julian to have that space to rediscover that freedom." She added she believed



her husband would one day be pardoned.

Australia Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who has lobbied for years to free Assange, said he had spoken to him by phone after his plane landed. "I had a very warm discussion with him this evening, he was very generous in his praise of the Australian government's efforts," Albanese told an earlier press conference. "The

Australian government stands up for Australian citizens, that's what we do."

Assange's arrival ends a saga in which he spent more than five years in a British high-security jail and seven years in asylum at the Ecuadorian embassy in London battling extradition to Sweden on sexual assault allegations and to the US, where he faced 18 criminal charges. Those charges stemmed from WikiLeaks' release in 2010 of hundreds of thousands of classified US military documents on Washington's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq - one of the largest breaches of secret information in US history. During a three-hour hearing held earlier in the US territory of Saipan, Assange pleaded guilty to one criminal count of conspiring to obtain and disclose classified national defence documents but said he had believed the US Constitution's First Amendment, which protects free speech, shielded his activities.

INF(P) 1463/24

Mine owners, governor, discuss problems relating to royalty

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of Frontier Mines Owners Association here Wednesday called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi and apprised him about their problems relating to taxes and royalty.

The delegation that was led by President of the association, Sher Bandi Khan Marwat highlighted their problems about excessive taxes and

issuance and renewal of explosive license. They said that these hurdles have negatively impacted the industry besides increasing problems of associated workers and stakeholders.

Mines owners said that KP Government has increased mineral royalty to almost 1300 percent. They said that mining is underway on 600 leases while remaining 3300 mines are non-functional.

The governor was informed that revenue of 600 leases is 6.5 billion rupees and income could be increased exponentially if mining starts on closed mines.

Speaking on the occasion, KP Governor assured delegation that their problems relating to mineral royalty would be conveyed to federal authorities. He said that federal government is working to include all the

sectors in tax net following existing policy and rules aiming strengthening of economy.

The governor said that KP is richly endowed with various natural resources adding that steps would be taken to promote mineral sector and protect interest of stakeholders. He also stressed to utilize modern technology in exploiting natural resources of the province.



PESHAWAR: Excise and Narcotics Department set on fire contraband items worth 290 million rupees on World Narcotics Day near Motorway toll Plaza.

Loadshedding duration on 75 feeders reduced to 12 hours: Pesco

PESHAWAR (APP): On the special instructions of Federal Energy Minister Awais Leghari and Federal Secretary Power Rashid Mahmood Langriyal, in view of the increase in heat intensity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the duration of load shedding on 75 high-loss feeders has been reduced to 12 hours for the convenience of PESCO consumers.

A PESCO press release on Wednesday said that specific teams have been formed to reduce the losses on the aforementioned feeders in the next 15 days

through special operations.

According to the details, during a meeting between Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur and CEO Pesco Akhtar Hamid Khan.

At the meeting special strategy was discussed to eliminate loadshedding on high loss feeders under which 75 high-loss feeders of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been selected, including 13 feeders from Peshawar circle, 18 from Khyber circle, 27 from DI Khan circle, 13 from Bannu circle, 3 from Mardan circle and 1 feeder from Swabi circle.

Losses on these feeders have reached 60% to 90% due to the frequency of electricity theft and non-payment of dues, which resulted in increased load shedding on these feeders.

Therefore, it said in order to provide relief to the people, the selected 75 feeders have been given relief on these feeders and loadshedding has been reduced to 12 hours for the next 15 days and at the same time.

Special teams have been formed for the operation, in which apart from Pesco SDO, assistant commissioners, police and MNAs and MPAs of the respective areas will also participate.

The goal of the teams formed is to eradicate the kunda culture, encourage people towards meterization and collect dues in order to reduce losses.

Apart from this, Jirgas will also be held in different areas in addition to the operation so that the problems of the consumers can be heard and resolved.

DPP nominates committee for legal aid in Budhbher killing

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: District Public Prosecutor (DPP) Peshawar Jamshed Khan has constituted a three-member committee of experienced prosecutors to oversee the investigation into the brutal killing of 9 individuals in the Badh Bher area, on Wednesday. The committee has been formed to ensure a thorough and transparent investigation into the heinous

crime, which has sent shockwaves throughout the region.

Senior Public Prosecutor Irshad Ullah serving at Anti-terrorism court will head the committee comprising of Senior Public Prosecutor Qaiser Khan and Assistant Public Prosecutor Shehzad, both of whom have extensive experience in criminal law and investigation.

In this regard a notification issued from DPP office

stated that the committee's primary responsibility will be to provide legal guidance and assistance to the police officers during the investigation. They will review the evidence collected so far, identify any gaps or inconsistencies, and provide recommendations for further investigation.

The committee will also ensure that all legal requirements are met, and that the investigation is conducted in accordance with the law.

In addition to providing legal oversight, the committee will also maintain close contact with the investigation agency to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to apprehend the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

The committee will be available to provide assistances to the investigation team at all times, and will ensure that the case is prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

KMU Senate approves Rs3,828.571m surplus annual Budget for 2023-24

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The KMU Senate has approved a surplus budget for the financial year 2024-25. The proposed expenditure is Rs. 3,828.571 million, while the total estimated resources amount to Rs. 4,158.95 million, resulting in a surplus of Rs. 330.387 million.

This approval was given during the 18th Senate meeting held at Governor House Peshawar, chaired by the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi the Chancellor of KMU. Additionally, the Senate approved the minutes of the anomaly committee concerning the HEC policy, service structure, and faculty selection criteria.

Key attendees included VC KMU, Meritorious

Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq, Registrar KMU, Inam Ullah Khan Wazir, Secretary to the Governor Mazhar Irshad Khan, Justice(Rtd) Mian Muhammad Ajmal, Qaisar Khan Dy Secretary Health, Jave Iqbal Additional Secretary HED, Arshad Ali Additional Secretary Finance, Jamshed Khan Additional Secretary Establishment KP, Syed Akhtar Ali Shah Police Department, Dr. Mazhar Saeed Director HEC, Prof Dr. Tauseef Aman, Prof Dr. Nasir Shah, Prof Dr. Zahid Aman, Prof Dr.Asmat Shaheen , Prof Dr. Naem Prof Dr. Naem Ul Haq and others senae members.

KMU Treasurer, Waseem Riaz, presented the revised budget for 2023-24 and the budget estimates for 2024-25. He credited the university's

surplus budget to the diligent financial management led by Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq and the entire financial team. The approved revised budget for 2023-24 with suplus of Rs. 474.906 million with Receipts of Rs. 4550.127 million and Expenditure of Rs. 4,075.221 million, while the surplus budget for 2024-25 is Rs. 330.387 million. The new fiscal year's budget includes provisions for establishing new institutes and stabilizing existing programs, with a significant amount allocated for these purposes.

Under Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq's vision, KMU is implementing reforms to enhance transparency in the examination system, including computerizing the entire process. An adequate budget has been allo-

cated for this initiative.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Kareem Kundi praised KMU's surplus budget and emphasized the importance of maintaining this financial discipline. He appreciated the surplus budget and the associated expenditures and revenue sources of Khyber Medical University. He praised KMU's finance-related initiatives as a role model for other universities. He encouraged the university to invest surplus funds in profitable projects and highlighted the need for allocating more budget for scholarships to support deserving students. After thorough discussion and deliberation, the meeting unanimously approved the revised budget for 2023-24 and the annual budget for 2024-25.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi presiding over a meeting of Frontier Mines Association.

KP Food Safety and Halal Food Authority crackdown Huge quantity of fake and substandard goods seized

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority has intensified its crackdown against adulteration in edible items, conducting significant operations in Peshawar, Mardan, Nowshera, and Charsadda. The food safety teams seized large quantities of fake and substandard beverages, milk, and counterfeit packing materials, imposing heavy fines.

While providing details, spokesperson for the Food Authority stated that the

food safety teams carried out inspections at the Peshawar Motorway Toll Plaza and GT Road Pabbi in Nowshera. The teams set up checkpoints and inspected vehicles carrying food items. Using mobile food testing lab, they examined samples from milk tankers, ice cream, and various food items. Over 500 liters of substandard milk were found and subsequently dispose of on the spot.

Furthermore, Peshawar team also inspected an ice factory, where the factory owner was fined for violating food

authority regulations, with a warning notice issued as well.

According to the details, the Nowshera team intercepted a vehicle at a checkpoint in Pabbi, seizing over 3,000 liters of fake and substandard branded cold drinks. In another operation, the Mardan food safety team raided an ice cream factory, confiscating 180 kilograms of counterfeit packing reels. Similarly, during a check in Charsadda, 120 kilograms of fake packaging reels were seized from a vehicle. Heavy fines were imposed

on the owners for violating health and safety standards, and further action was initiated under the Food Safety Act.

Director General of the Food Authority, Wasif Saeed, commended the food safety teams for their successful operations. Wasif reiterated the commitment of the KP Food Authority to protect public health, stating that those involved in producing and distributing hazardous and substandard food items will be dealt with iron hands, and no leniency will be shown.

Fazl seeks written guarantee from PTI before an alliance

Umair Muhammadzai

PESHAWAR: Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, the head of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), has demanded a written guarantee from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) before formalizing an alliance. On the other hand, PTI has formed a six-member high-level committee to negotiate with JUI. According to sources, Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman is willing to form an alliance with PTI, but he has reservations about the behavior of some PTI leaders. Therefore, he wants a written guarantee before any alliance. Some key PTI leaders are in favor of an alliance with JUI, and the party has formed a committee to negotiate the

terms of the alliance. The committee includes PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan, former National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser, Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan, and Shibli Faraz. Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman has decided to announce the names of the committee members on June 29 after a meeting of his party's central council. A senior PTI leader, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the party is willing to form an alliance with JUI, but they want to negotiate the terms first.

He said that four key points have been agreed upon for an alliance with Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, including the end of establishment's role in

politics, the supremacy of the constitution, the resources and issues of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and long-term relations with neighboring Afghanistan. The party's high command has established a ceasefire between Maulana and Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur, which is why there have been no statements against Maulana from Ali Amin's side in the past two to three weeks.

Sources close to the negotiations say that Maulana has no objection to Mahmood Khan Achakzai being the head of the opposition alliance, and he is willing to soften his stance on the issue. However, the issue of the country's presidency is still on the table, although

it may not be included in the written agreement.

Maulana Attalulhaq Darvish the central election commissioner and provincial general secretary of JUI, said that on June 29, they will inform the party's leadership about the progress of the talks with PTI and prepare for a future course of action.

When asked about the past bitterness between the two parties, he said that there is no personal enmity, only a difference in policies. If PTI leadership addresses our concerns, there will be no obstacle to forming an alliance in the future.

When contacted, two PTI leaders involved in the negotiations refused to comment on the matter.

Meeting discusses progress on targets assigned to TEVTA



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting to review progress on targets assigned to the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) for bringing improvement in its performance was held in the Committee Room of the Department of Industries with Special Assistant to KP Chief Minister on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Tordhir in the chair here on Wednesday.

Besides, the Additional Secretary Industries Shama Nimat, Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Basit Khalil and Directors TEVTA Munir Gul, Khalid Usman, Haider Ali and Syed Sajjad Ali Shah, others also attended the meeting.

The Special Assistant was briefed about progress on the achievement of the targets of digitization, sustainability, human resource, financial affairs, procurement, technical and vocational training, business and education and training, business production and other issues.

The Special Assistant was also briefed about various schemes initiated under the Annual Development Programme (ADP) and completed schemes.

He was informed that a Student Complaint Cell will be established in TEVTA within 20 days for the convenience of the students.

The Special Assistant directed that all the officials of the authority and the department fulfill their responsibilities within the given time lines and also complete the required matters within the specified time period.

He stressed the need for introduction of new trades in the curriculum of technical and vocational education while keeping in view the supply and demand of the province and further

directed the speedy achievement of the target of attaining financial self-sustainability.

He also stressed the need for the revival of the image of TEVTA and urged the officers of the authority to perform their duties in a better manner in this regard.

The Special Assistant appreciated the proposal of a mobile workshop model for imparting various skills and services. He also collected information about progress made so far in utilizing the resources of technical educational institutions and their usage as production houses.

PPP leader organizes feasts in honour of KP Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): A provincial leader of PPP, Abidullah Khan Yousafzai organized a feast in honour of Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi here the other day, said a press release issued here on Thursday. Besides, central leaders Syed Zahir Ali Shah and Farzand Ali Wazir, President PPP Peshawar Division Misbahuddin and Zulfikar Afghani, office bearers and workers attended the event at least.

On arrival at the residence of Abidullah Khan Yousafzai, the KP Governor was accorded a warm welcome and showered with petals. The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa mingled in the party workers who briefed them regarding their problems. He issued on spot directives for the resolution of the most of problems.

The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi, Syed Zahir Ali Shah and others were put on traditional turbans while the Governor presented his turban to senior PPP leader Zulfikar Afghani.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said that he is a pro-people governor, adding whenever the party had posted him on any post, he had made all-out efforts to perform his responsibility with honesty and devotion. This time, he said President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Faryal Talpur have expressed trust in him by posting him as Governor , of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and he will leave no stone unturned to come up to the expectations. He said that he is available for the party and urged the workers to take benefit of his presence in the Governor's House saying he has devoted himself for the party and its workers.



In brief

PkMAP opposes operation F.P. Report

BANNU: Pashtun Khwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) termed Azm-e-Istikam operation is a failed attempt and not a solution to any problem. Wherever necessary, it should be discussed through negotiations. Even earlier, operations have been going on in the province for years, with positive results. In the press release issued by the secretariat of the Pashtun Khwaja Milli Awami Party, the provincial leaders and district leaders have said that the federal government has approved the operation stability in recent days. The people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and all the political forces should have been taken into confidence because the number of operations that have taken place across the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and tribal districts, has increased terrorism instead of ending it, due to which Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that the Pashtun-Khwa Milli Awami Party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will probably strongly oppose the operation stability and stand by the side of the nation in every forum. He said that the operation not only causes loss to the people, but it also destroys businesses and people travel for many years, an example of which is the Waziristan operation.

2 robbers killed in encounter

FAISALABAD (INP): Two robbers were killed while their two accomplices managed to escape after exchange of fire with police here on Wednesday. According to details, the Dolphin Police Force chased a four-member gang of robbers riding a motorcycle at Sargodha road in Islam Nagar area of Faisalabad. The robbers entered a close end street and finding no way to escape climbed roof top of a house. An exchange of fire took place between Dolphin Force and robbers in which two robbers were killed while their two accomplices managed to escape. Arms were recovered from possession of the killed robbers. The bodies were shifted to hospital. The police cordoned off the area and conducted search operation for fled robbers.

Anti-drugs rally arranged

HYDERABAD (PPI): Deputy Commissioner Hyderabad Zainul Abidin Memon has expressed concern over the increasing illegal drug trade, stating that "unfortunately, the illegal drug business is flourishing." He made these remarks while speaking to the media after a rally against drugs outside the Deputy Commissioner's office in Shabbaz Building. He said that senior provincial minister Sharjeel Inam Memon had issued directives to eradicate drugs, and accordingly, relevant agencies were taking effective action against drug peddlers. Many drug dealers had been arrested and strict legal action had been taken against them. The Deputy Commissioner added that due to increasing unemployment and economic issues in the country, drug peddlers were exploiting the youth, making them addicts. However, he warned drug peddlers that a noose was tightening around them, and without any discrimination, action was being taken to eradicate drugs. He expressed the hope that soon, drugs would be completely eliminated from the country. A large number of officials from relevant departments and social workers participated in the rally.



QUETTA: A girl drinking apricot juice from a roadside vendor during hot weather.

Residents hold protest against load shedding

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The duration of load shedding has been increased from 6 hours to 12 hours due to unknown reasons, on Bakhshali-Dubai Adda feeder after hike in power cut, the political and social personalities protested and conveyed their concerns to the authorities.

On this occasion, the elders said that there was already a six-hour load shedding schedule on the Bakhshali-Dubai Adda feeder, which has been increased to 12 hours from last night, which is no less than a punishment in extreme heat due to high load shedding, if on one hand the children and the sick are facing severe difficulties, on the other hand, Bakhshali is a commercial center and due to high load shedding, traders are also facing severe difficulties.

The elders demanded that the decision of additional six hours of load shedding should be withdrawn immediately otherwise they reserved the right to protest.

Performance review meeting held: A meeting on the performance of administration and revenue officers held, while PMRU in-charge gave a detailed briefing on the performance of all the officers in the light of the instructions issued by the provincial government. Provision of possible relief is to be ensured.

Additional Deputy Commissioner issued instructions to the administration officers to ensure daily inspection of health and educational facilities and to control the prices of food items while dealing with revenue cases in a time-bound manner as well as emphasizing on government recovery. He expressed overall satisfaction with the performance of the administration and revenue officers and issued instructions for further improvement in service delivery.

Traders joined hands for collective efforts: Provincial General Secretary of the central organization Tajran and President Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Zahir Shah said that the Sarhad Business Alliance has proved that it is business-friendly by rejecting the federal budget and has exercised its right to business representation in the true sense.

The representatives of all the business groups of the province put aside their personal differences and united in the name of Sarhad Business Alliance for the businessmen of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. At this time, to run the wheel of the country, the problems of the traders need to be solved on priority.

Most of the industries in the country are

already closed, business is almost non-existent in the tax burden on the business people in the budget from above has done the trick, which will create a storm of inflation and the businesses which were already on ventilator be completely demolished. He said that the government followed the IMF's strict conditions and presented the budget, which has increased tax rates as well as many new taxes.

The Mardan Chamber and business community will not accept any increase in taxes in the federal budget and will not allow them to take effect and every step will be taken against them under a coordinated strategy. He said that the main objective of the budget year 2024-25 has further ruined and threatened the country's economy, business, trade and industries. Zahir Shah said that taxes are needed to run the economy of Pakistan, but instead of putting additional burden on the existing tax payers, new people should be brought into the tax net so that the existing tax payers get relief, do not have to bear the burden of additional taxes and the country's economy get stability.

He said that the government's Tajir Dost Scheme has become controversial before its implementation because doubts and misgivings have arisen among small traders about the scheme as the nature of the scheme is not yet clear and the relevant stakeholders have not been taken into confidence. Zahir Shah has termed the government's imposition of fixed tax on electricity consumers as illegal and unfair and demanded its immediate withdrawal. He emphasized that the policies should be made business friendly.

PO killed in encounter: A proclaimed in drug dealing and other serious cases like theft, burglary was killed in a police encounter. Police shifted the body to DHQ Hospital. According to the details, during the ongoing campaign against criminals and proclaimed offenders, a resident of Afzal Colony Labor, wanted in several police stations of this district in robbery, theft, drug selling and other serious cases, was killed in a police encounter.

On seeing the police raiding party, the alleged accused started firing at the police party while fleeing to avoid arrest due to the retaliatory action of the police the accused was killed in the police encounter. The police seized the weapon and pistol from the dead accused and shifted the body to DHQ Hospital. The slain PO was wanted by police in Police Station City, Saddar, Saro Shah and Takht Bhai in more than 10 serious cases.

Tribesmen demand provision of rights

F.P. Report

WANA: The Pashtun National People's Movement (PNPM) held a protest rally and press conference demanding the resolution of various issues affecting the Suleiman Khel tribe, on Wednesday.

The protesters, led by PNPM chairman Dr. Ismail, founder Engineer Ibrahim, and others, demanded the resolution of the tribe's iden-

tity issue, provision of basic amenities like internet, health, and education, opening of the Waziristan border, and establishment of a separate NADRA center for the tribe.

The protesters alleged that the tribe was being subjected to discrimination and neglect by the authorities and threatened to launch a movement if their demands were not met. Political leaders Taj

Muhammad Wazir and Ayaz Wazir also addressed the rally and expressed support for the legitimate demands of the Suleiman Khel tribe.

The protesters demanded that the government take immediate action to address their grievances, including the provision of a separate NADRA center, a university in Waziristan, and a paved road from Wana to Zarmelan.

Four cops suspended for violence on students

F.P. Report

LARKANA: The relatives of the protesting students met the SSP Larkana in connection with the police violence on two students at the police station Bاده, Mir Ruhul Khan Kahoso along with DSP Madam Paras Bakhrani reached Bاده police station and tool stern actions.

According to details, SHO Bاده closed to police line Talib Hussain Kasar, ASI Asad Shah, constable Ali Gul, constable sadam Hussain also issuing orders of their suspension. On the orders of SSP Larkana, medical letters were also issued to two students who were affected due to violence, while further legal action will be taken in the light of

the medical report.

For further departmental action, DSP Hydari Madam Paras Bakhrani has been appointed as inquiry officer, further legal and departmental actions will be taken in the light of the inquiry report.

Meanwhile, two suspects who injured Assistant Sub-Inspector Riaz Shahani while performing duties to Sub-Inspector Ayaz Shahani in Sachidno Kalhoro, Police Station, Taluk Larkana, were arrested with weapons, according to the details few days ago, during the investigation of the case, the accused who attacked the police in Sache Dino Kalhoro, within the boundaries of the police station, have been arrested with illegal

weapons.

Among the arrested accused are Zahid and Rabil while separate cases under the Sindh Arms Act, Case Crime No. 78/2024, were filed against the arrested accused for the recovery of one repeater + cartridge and one pistol + bullets without license. 23ISAA and Case Crime No. 79/2024 under Section 23ISAA have been registered, according to the police, Case Crime No. 76/24 under Section 397.337Hii.114ppc and Case Crime No.77/2024 under Section 324.353.6/7ATA have been registered against the accused. It is recorded, further legal and regulatory actions are underway including the investigation of the Lockup accused.

KP Governor visits Tarbela dam site

F.P. Report

SWABI: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday visited Tarbela dam site where was accorded warm welcome and briefed by the Wapda authorities.

Accompanied by Provincial President of Pakistan Peoples Party, Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, Secretary Coordination Farzand Ali Wazir and other office bearers, the Governor wrote his views in the visitors books at Tarbela rest house and planted a sapling of tree.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said that Tarbela dam was a key asset of Pakistan having far reaching positive effects on all important sectors including agriculture, water and food security. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was producing maximum electricity for the country. As per the country's constitution the area from where a resource was generated or produced should be given first priority in order to facilitate its people. He said problems related to load shedding, gas and water could be addressed with solid arguments based on facts and through negotiations.

Faisal Kundi reiterated the role of a bridge and even a lawyer between the federation and province to address all these problems for the benefit of people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Governor said that for this purpose he was endeavouring to keep all political forces united.

MPs thank to KP CM Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Elected Members from Kohat paid thanks to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for sanctioning Rs.30 Million for transformers repair, on Wednesday.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister on Law and Finance Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate, former Federal Interior Minister and Senior PTI Leader Sherryar Afridi MNA and Members of the Provincial Assembly Shafi Jan and Daud Afridi Advocate have expressed their heartfelt thanks to Chief Minister KP Ali Amin Khan Gandapur for sanctioning a huge amount of Rs.30 Million for the repair and maintenance of transformers in Kohat and have won the hearts of the people. It was the longstanding demand of people of Kohat which was honoured by Chief Minister.

The elected members of the National and Provincial Assemblies have expressed the hope, keeping in view the needs and demands of the people of Kohat, the Chief Minister KP will generously provide maximum funds for other important sectors also in the same way. They said that the current period of the PTI government will prove to be an ideal and historic for Kohat because for the first time Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has swept Kohat and all its members in the National and Provincial Assembly are on the same page. Together, they are moving ahead with mutual consultation and consensus for the development and prosperity of Kohat, and it will surely have a very positive and far-reaching impacts on the entire district, they said.

Dir residents reject launch of military operation in region

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Hundreds of youths, social and political activists and area elders under the auspices of the Dir Olasi Pasoon (DOP), a citizens' body working for peace and development in the area, held a 'peace' march at Timergara here the other day.

Local traders' community, civil society, lawyers and political workers participated in the event. Carrying white flags and placards inscribed with slogans of 'we want peace on our soil', the marchers walked on the roads and chanted slogans for peace.

The DOP arranged the march to mobilize residents for maintaining peace in the district after the growing incidents of militancy in the Maidan area of Lower Dir. The frequent incidents of target killings and attacks on security forces in Maidan forced the peace-building bodies to unite people against militancy in the area.

The rally at the Timergara Shaheed Chowk was addressed by the PTI activist Ali Shah Mishwani, JI district secretary information Shuiab Ahmad and others. The speakers condemned the killing of Sheikh Inamullah and attacks on security forces in Maidan and termed it a bid to sabotage peace.

They also rejected the federal government plan to launch a fresh anti-terrorism operation especially in parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. They said that Dir was a peaceful district and its people knew better the hardships of 2009-10 mass displacement. "We are loyal and patriotic citizens and want peace on our soil", one of the speakers said, adding the government was planning to launch yet another military operation on the pretext of terrorism. The speakers said that local residents would prefer death rather than leave the area this time.

They said that the people of Dir could not bear militancy or military operation. They suggested the government should spend the budget allocated for eradicating militancy on education and health. They said the government should restore brotherly relations with neighboring Afghanistan, Iran and other countries so that their soils could not be used for anti-state activities against Pakistan. Later the marchers dispersed peacefully.

Earlier, the local politicians, civil society and intellectuals collectively rejected the 'Azm-i-Istehkam operation in parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and demanded the government to take concrete steps for stopping infiltration of militants on the borders. The demand was made during a grand jirga arranged by the Dir Quami Pasoon (DQP), a citizens' body working for peace in the district, held at a local hotel in Timergara with its chief Malik Jehan Alam in the chair.

Leaders of all political parties, social and political activists and area elders including Dir Quami Jirga president and former MNA Sahibzada Muhammad Yaqub Khan, PML-N former provincial minister Malik Jehan Zeb Khan, PML-N

district president Malik Farooq Iqbal, former senator Maulana Gul Naseeb Khan, PTI activist Ali Shah Mishwani, ANP provincial secretary general Hussain Shah Yousafzai, former MPA Haji Bahadur Khan, Malik Muhammad Zeb from ANP, JUI-F district chief Sirajud Din, PTI-P former provincial minister Muzaffar Syed advocate, PPP Lower Dir president and former provincial minister Mahmood Zeb Khan, PPP district secretary information Alamzeb advocate, JI district general secretary Engineer Yaqoob ur Rahman, president Anjuman Tajiran Timergara Anwaruddin, vice president Talash Dushkhel Quami Jirga Aftab Alam, DQP chairman Malik Jehan Alam, members from civil society, lawyers and political workers attended the event.

A joint declaration issued at the conclusion of the Dir Amn Jirga demanded the government to avoid launching operations in the area as the people of Dir were loyal and patriotic citizens and wanted peace on their soil and if there were loopholes on borders the government should take measures to stop infiltration by militants. Dir Aman jirga also condemned the federal and provincial governments for giving assent to launching military operations in Dir as it said Dir was a peaceful district and its people knew better the hardships of 2009-10 mass displacement as a result of military operations.

The Jirga expressed anger over the meaningful silence of the elected representatives from Dir and demanded of all the elected representatives to raise their voice on the assembly floors. "Giving approval to launching military operations in Dir by the federal apex committee in the presence of chief minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a real contempt of the mandate of the people of Dir", the Jirga maintained.

The joint declaration said that after the 2009 military operation, trust by civil society had been restored on government institutions after hectic efforts by political leadership, government institutions and civil society members and this time round it would be almost an impossible task. Launching yet another operation in the area would create a distance between the public and government institutions which was in no way in the best interest of the country.

It was decided that cooperation and all out support to the government and its institutions would be carried out, however, the people of Dir would form no Aman Lashkar. Also, it was decided that the people of Dir would resist any kind of military operation in the area and they had reserved the right to peaceful protest in case a military operation was launched.

The speakers condemned the killing of Sheikh Inamullah and attacks on security forces in Maidan and termed it a bid to sabotage peace. Both the provincial and federal governments should take a serious notice of the declaration otherwise the people of Dir as well as Malakand division would strongly resist any military operation in the area, the joint declaration added.

Probe into PWD projects' funds embezzlement sought

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Senior government contractor Haji Karim Khan has appreciated the prime minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif for his decision to abolish the Pakistan Public Works' Department (PWD) and has demanded an appropriate inquiry against the contractors, lawmakers and bureaucrats for looting national wealth. Speaking at a news conference at the Timergara press club here on Wednesday, Haji Karim Khan said the PWD had become a hub of corruption as most of its development funds were misused by former MNAs and Senators along with government contractors and officers of the department.

The contractor said the PWD was an extra burden on the government and many mega financial scams attached to it surfaced in the past but no one was punished for the wrong doings. He demanded the

government to take practical steps against the lawmakers, contractors and bureaucrats involved in embezzling the government treasury. "The government has to recover the looted money from the corrupt elements involved in this malpractice", Haji Karim said, adding that funds worth millions were drawn for infrastructure development but there had been no construction work on the ground.

The contractor said that PWD worked better some 30 years ago but later it became a 'white elephant' for the government and the nation through which a hefty amount of funds were embezzled. Haji Karim Khan alleged that blue-eyed contractors were awarded contracts through MNAs and Senators and the money was corrupted.

He pointed out that there had been mega corruption scandals in funds allocated for development in the districts of Mohmand, Bajaur

and Charsadda where funds of a senator were embezzled. He said the PWD always issued tender forms to contractors recommended by MNAs and Senators and the funds were later shared by them without doing any work on the ground. He demanded the government to probe the funds' embezzlement through the Pakistan army and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) so that the looted money could be refunded to the national kitty.

Fish seeds: The Lower Dir fisheries department released thousands of fish seeds (fingerlings) of different kinds in the Panjkora River at different spots here the other day. The district director fisheries Sajjad Khan told local journalists that the fingerlings would increase the production of fish fauna in the river. The official said that illegal fishing in the district was banned while several violators had been booked under the relevant sections of law.

Scorching heat affects daily life in costal districts

F.P. Report

SUJAWAL/THATTA: The residents of Sujawal and Thatta facing sweltering heat, with temperatures reaching 43 degrees Celsius in both coastal districts from last weeks. The surge in temperature has severely impacted business activities in urban areas, leaving major city streets eerily deserted. However, people in remote villages of Sujawal and Thatta districts are finding natural ways to cope with the heat. They are bathing in water channels, sitting under trees, and spending time in green farmlands.

Ghulam Rasool, a farmer responsible for inspecting water flow, spends his day sitting along the water channel in the shade of thick trees. "I'm well aware of the heat's intensity, but its impact on me is lesser because I spend my time in greenery," Ghulam Rasool claims. He also brings his children to the land to let them experience the aura of greenery and fresh air.

Allah Bakhsh, a local grower, states that people are facing dire consequences for tampering with nature. He explains that trees reduce the impact of heat, but unfor-

tunately, people are chopping trees for their selfish interests. "The extraordinary surge in temperature indicates that we should return to our basics and work towards ecological betterment."

Khamiso Muhammad Khan, a seasoned grower, describes the impact of warm weather on seasonal crops.

"Extreme heat has adverse effects on paddy crops, especially in coastal areas where the land is less fertile than in other parts of the province." He adds that cotton and tomato crops have also suffered due to the scorching heat.



GAZA STRIP: A woman bids farewell to her child, who was killed in an overnight Israeli bombardment in Maghazi, at the morgue of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir el-Balah.

Conservatives heap pressure on Trudeau with by-election win

TORONTO (BBC): Conservatives have narrowly snatched the Toronto-St Paul's seat from the Liberals, in a political earthquake that is expected to intensify political pressure on Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Candidate Don Stewart won the closely watched by-election by a little more than 500 votes. Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre described Mr Stewart's win as a "shocking upset", saying locals "voted to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime". In response to the stunning loss, Mr Trudeau said he hears Canadians' "concerns and frustrations".

Canadian political experts have described the loss as an embarrassment to Mr Trudeau and his party, as the electoral district was considered a Liberal stronghold - the party had held it for 30 years. Conservatives have long struggled to win support in "Canada's major urban cores", so it is remarkable that they have successfully "penetrated fortress Toronto", said Alex Marland, a politics professor at Acadia University in Nova Scotia. Mr Stewart won with around 42% of the vote, with 15,555 ballots cast for him, according to Elections Canada. Liberal candidate Leslie Church took 14,965.

The narrow result became clear after the Liberals remained in the lead for the first seven hours of tallying. Speaking, Mr Stewart said his cam-

paign's performance was a sign that "the country is waiting for change". The following day on X, formerly Twitter, he said that Mr Poilievre's plan was "resonating in every corner of the country, including right here in the heart of Toronto". In a statement, Mrs Church said voters "sent us a clear message". "I hear that message loud and clear, and that's exactly what we plan to do," she added.

Mr Trudeau said in a statement that it was "obviously not the result we wanted", and vowed to listen to frustrated Canadians. "These are not easy times. And it is clear, I and my entire team, have much more hard work to do to deliver tangible, real progress that Canadians can see and feel," he said. He also told reporters that he plans to stay on as Liberal leader despite the upset. "We will never stop working and fighting to make sure you have what you need to get through these tough times," he said. "My focus is on your success and that's where it's going to stay." Some of his party members have since come out to publicly support the prime minister, including Deputy PM Chrystia Freeland. Dan Vandal, another cabinet member of Mr Trudeau's government, argued that Mr Poilievre's Conservatives would impose sweeping cuts and that voters should ask themselves: "What sort of Canada do you want to live in?"

The result comes as Mr Trudeau has seen a significant drop in his pop-

ularity since taking over as PM in 2015, due to a host of issues including cost-of-living pressures. "Liberals should be concerned that public opinion polls showing frustration with their party is not a blip or an aberration," Mr Marland told BBC News. A recent Ipsos poll for Global News suggested that as many as 68% of Canadians want Mr Trudeau to step down. The Canadian prime minister has repeatedly pledged to lead his party into the next nationwide poll, which is expected by October next year. It would be his fourth time running for prime minister. Conservatives themselves appeared surprised by their victory in the Toronto-St Paul's seat, and Canadian political experts said that if the Liberals can lose a seat in downtown Toronto, they could lose anywhere.

Former MP Carolyn Bennett won the seat nine times before her recent resignation to become the country's ambassador to Denmark. Tari Ajadi, a politics professor at McGill University in Montreal, told BBC News that in previous years the seat would have been a "foregone conclusion" for Liberals, so "the result should terrify" the party as it struggles to reach voters. "The win sets up what is likely to be a 'change' election next year, which puts the Liberals at a distinct disadvantage," he said, noting that the Conservative victory "cannot be attributed to a single issue".

Impeached South African judge becomes MP for Zuma's party

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): A former judge in South Africa, who was impeached for misconduct four months ago, has been sworn in as an MP for ex-President Jacob Zuma's party. John Hlophe was among the 58 uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) MPs sworn in as the party ended its boycott of the parliament formed after the 29 May elections.

MK, which is set to become the official opposition, has appointed Dr Hlophe to lead its team in parliament. This is despite Dr Hlophe being impeached as a judge following findings of misconduct. An investigation found Dr Hlophe, who was the leading judge in the Western Cape province, tried to influence justices at the country's top court in a case linked to Mr Zuma. He approached two justices in 2008 to see if they would support Mr Zuma in a decision relating to a corruption case. He denied any wrongdoing, saying the case was political. MK emerged as the third-largest party in the election, playing a major role in the African National Congress (ANC) losing its

parliamentary majority for the first time in 30 years. Mr Zuma campaigned for MK after a massive fall-out with the ANC and its leader, President Cyril Ramaphosa. The ANC has signed a coalition deal with the second-biggest party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), and eight smaller parties to form a new government. The MK's 58 new parliamentarians were sworn in more than a week after MPs from other parties were. MK had been boycotting parliament, claiming the elections were marred by irregularities. It has not provided evidence to support its claim. MK spokesperson Nhlamulo Ndhlela said that the party's decision to end the boycott "does not, in any way, signify an acceptance" of the election result.

He has also said MK was "proud" to appoint Dr Hlophe as its parliamentary leader, praising him as an "impeccable jurist and seasoned activist". He was chosen for the post after South Africa's highest court ruled that the constitution barred Mr Zuma from becoming an MP because he was sentenced to 15 months in prison in 2021

for defying a court order to co-operate with a judge-led inquiry into corruption during his nine-year presidency. As he was sworn in, Dr Hlophe said he was "grateful" to Mr Zuma and the MK leadership for launching the party, adding that the ANC had "completely gone astray". "This is not the ANC that we used to know," he said. Lawson Naidoo, an expert on South Africa's constitution, said the "anomaly" that enabled Dr Hlophe to become an MP will have to be addressed at some point. He told the BBC that the constitution barred an impeached president from holding any public office, but not a judge. Mr Zuma ditched the ANC for the newly formed MK just five months before the election - and led them to win almost 15% of the vote. Along with boycotting parliament, MK refused to recognise Mr Ramaphosa as South Africa's president.

More than a week ago, Mr Ramaphosa was voted in by parliament for a second term with the backing of the DA and some smaller parties. Mr Zuma has described the ANC's deal with the DA

as an "unholy alliance" between black and white elites to benefit the markets, not the people. MK advocates the nationalisation of white-owned land and mines, a policy also championed by the fourth-biggest party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). It, too, has refused to join a coalition government that includes the DA. For days, the coalition has been negotiating how cabinet posts will be shared. The DA, which has been the ANC's long-term rival, has requested it takes up the post of deputy president, and be given control of key ministries, local media reported. The ANC has dismissed some of its demands as "outrageous". Mr Ramaphosa will announce his cabinet once a deal is struck, possibly in the coming days. "If you have a coalition of 10 parties, it leaves very few parties in parliament to exercise an oversight role," Mr Naidoo told the BBC. He added that MK and the EFF would be the main opposition parties, but it was to be seen whether they would play the role of "spoilers" or provide "constructive opposition".

Indians march to end 'slavery' after worker death shakes Italy

AGRO PONTION (AFP): Thousands of Indian farm labourers urged an end to "slavery" in Italy after the gruesome death of a worker shone a light on the brutal exploitation of undocumented migrants.

Satnam Singh, 31, who had been working without legal papers, died last week after his arm was sliced off by a machine. The farmer he was working for dumped him by the road, along with his severed limb. "He was thrown out like a dog. There is exploitation every day, we suffer it every day, it must end now," said Gurmukh Singh, head of the Indian community in the Lazio region of central

Italy. "We come here to work, not to die," he told AFP. Children held up colourful signs reading "Justice for Satnam Singh" as the procession snaked through Latina, a city in a rural area south of Rome that is home to tens of thousands of Indian migrant workers. Indians have worked in the Agro Pontino -- the Pontine Marshes -- since the mid-1980s, harvesting pumpkins, leeks, beans and tomatoes, and working on flower farms or in buffalo mozzarella production. Singh's death is being investigated, but it has sparked a wider debate in Italy over how to tackle

systemic abuses in the agriculture sector, where use of undocumented workers and their abuse by farmers or gangmasters is rife. "Satnam died in one day, I die every day. Because I too am a labour victim," said Parambar Singh, whose eye was seriously hurt in a work accident. "My boss said he couldn't take me to hospital because I didn't have a contract," said the 33-year-old, who has struggled to work since. "I have been waiting 10 months for justice," he said. The workers get paid an average of 20 euros (\$21) a day for up to 14 hours labour, according to the Osservatorio Placido Rizzotto, which

analyses working conditions in the agriculture industry. Far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has sought to reduce the number of undocumented migrants to Italy, while increasing pathways for legal migration for non-EU workers to tackle labour shortages. But according to the Confagricoltura agribusiness association, only around 30 percent of workers given a visa actually travel to Italy, meaning there are never enough labourers to meet farmers' needs. This month, Meloni said Italy's visa system was being exploited by organised crime groups to smuggle in illegal migrants.

Russia blocks dozens of independent media outlets

MOSCOW (BBC): The Kremlin has said it is blocking 81 European publications in retaliation for an EU ban on some Russian outlets. Magazines, public broadcasters and newspapers from 25 out of 27 EU member states will become inaccessible inside Russia.

The Russian government said it was imposing "proportional countermeasures" to an EU decision to block Russian outlets Voice of Europe, RIA Novosti, Izvestia and Rossiyskaya Gazeta on 17 May. At the time Brussels accused the publications of "spreading and supporting Russian propaganda and war of aggression against Ukraine". The list of black-listed media includes Europe-wide outlets such as Politico and EU Observer, Ireland's public broadcaster RTE, France's Le Monde newspaper and Germany's Der Spiegel magazine. Several Italian outlets, like public broadcaster Rai and newspaper La Repubblica, will also see their access restricted. Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the decision, saying that "it will not erase the effects of a violent, devastating and illegal war". The US said the Russian government was "afraid of their own people hearing the truth".

European Commission Vice President Vera Jourova said the ban was "nonsense retaliation," adding that "propaganda outlets funded by Russia to spread disinformation as part of Russia's military doctrine are not the same as independent media". Moscow said it would consider rescinding the ban if restrictions against Russian media outlets were lifted. Russian state-backed news channel RT had its licence to broadcast in the EU revoked shortly after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Around the same time, Russia restricted access to several Western websites, including the BBC, accusing them of spreading "false information".

Macron warns voters against far right and hard left

PARIS (AP): French President Emmanuel Macron is warning voters against choosing the far right or the hard left, asserting that their divisive policies increase the risk of political "conflict and civil war," ahead of first round of crucial parliamentary elections.

Macron said both the far-right National Rally and hard-left France Unbowed bring bad responses to "real problems" because they "respond in some way by increasing conflict and civil war." He spoke in an interview with French podcast "Generation Do It Yourself," released.

Macron called snap elections following the defeat of his centrist alliance at European Union elections earlier this month. Voters will choose lawmakers for the National Assembly in two rounds on June 30 and July 7. "When you are fed up with everything, when daily life is hard, you can be tempted by extremes that have quicker solutions. But the solution will never lie in rejecting others," Macron said.

He asserted that the National Rally's policies, detailed by the party's president Jordan Bardella, would "lead to civil war" and are "an impoverishment program, because it's several thousand euros in hidden taxes every day and an impossibility of paying pensions and paying employees well." The hard-left France Unbowed encourages tensions between communities for electoral purposes, he asserted, arguing it also means "civil war" because it "reduces people to their religious or ethnic group."

Polls show that the outcome of the early election remains uncertain amid a complex voting system and potential alliances. Macron is aligned against both the National Rally and the New Popular Front, a coalition of far-to-center-left parties that includes France Unbowed.

ICJ seeks arrest of Russian officials over Kyiv attacks

THE HAGUE (AP): The International Criminal Court said it issued arrest warrants for Russia's former defense minister and its military chief of staff for attacks on Ukraine's power plants, the third time the global court has accused senior Russian leaders of war crimes.

There is no immediate likelihood of either former Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu or chief of staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov being detained to face charges of war crimes and the crime against humanity of inhumane acts. Russia isn't a member of the court, doesn't recognize its jurisdiction and refuses to hand over suspects. Still, the move heaps more moral condemnation on Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The warrant is the global court's latest effort to intervene in a major conflict. Earlier this year, the court's chief prosecutor requested arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his defense minister and three leaders of the Hamas militant group over the militants' deadly attacks in southern Israel and the ensuing war in Gaza. Last year, the court issued a warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin, accusing him of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine. That has occasionally complicated his travel though the practical implications have been limited. Russia's Security Council dismissed the arrest warrants as "null and void".

"That is empty talk, considering that the ICC's jurisdiction does not include Russia and the decision has been made as part of the West's hybrid warfare against our country," it said in a statement carried by Russian news agencies. The court said in a statement that warrants were issued because judges considered there were reasonable grounds to believe that Shoigu and Gerasimov are responsible for "missile strikes carried out by the Russian armed forces against the Ukrainian electric infrastructure" from Oct. 10, 2022, until at least March 9, 2023.

Judges who approved the prosecutors' request for warrants said the suspects are charged with inhumane acts because there is evidence they "intentionally caused great suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health" of civilians in Ukraine.

Under the leadership of Shoigu and Gerasimov, the Russian military has launched waves of missile and drone strikes that have killed thousands and damaged the country's energy system and other vital infrastructure.

Moscow has insisted that it only has targeted military facilities despite daily casualties in civilian areas. The court alleged missile attacks covered in the warrant tar-

geted civilian installations. It added that in the case of any installations that could have been considered military targets "the expected incidental civilian harm and damage would have been clearly excessive to the anticipated military advantage."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy welcomed the warrants in a post on social platform X, saying both men are accused of "heinous crimes against civilians in Ukraine during Russia's reckless bombing of Ukrainian critical civilian infrastructure. These barbaric missile and drone strikes continue to kill people and inflict damage across Ukraine." He added: "Every criminal involved in the planning and execution of these strikes must know that justice will be served. And we do hope to see them behind bars." Details of the warrants were kept under seal to protect witnesses, the court said. ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan said in a statement that the decision to issue warrants "reflects my office's continued commitment to give meaningful effect to the protection that the law provides to civilians and protected objects."

Khan said his prosecution office "remains focused in pursuing multiple, interconnected lines of investigation in Ukraine." Putin removed Shoigu as defense minister in a Cabinet shakeup in May as he began his fifth term as president. Shoigu, 69, has been widely seen as a key figure in Putin's decision to invade Ukraine. Russia had expected the operation to quickly overwhelm Ukraine's much smaller and less-equipped army. Instead, the conflict galvanized Ukraine to mount an intense defense, dealing the Russian army humiliating blows, including the retreat from an attempt to take the capital, Kyiv, and a counteroffensive that drove Moscow's forces out of the northeastern region of Kharkiv and from around Kherson in the south in the fall of 2022. Shoigu, who had personal ties with Putin, got a soft landing with the high-profile post of secretary of Russia's Security Council. At the same time, Shoigu's entourage faced purges. A longtime associate and deputy, Timur Ivanov, and several other senior military officers were arrested on corruption charges, and other senior Defense Ministry officials lost their jobs. Gerasimov, the chief of the General Staff since 2012, has so far kept his job. The 68-year-old career military officer has directly overseen Russian military operations in Ukraine. In addition to the warrant against Putin, the court issued arrest warrants in March for two high-ranking Russian military officers on charges linked to attacks on civilian infrastructure in Ukraine that judges said happened "pursuant to a state policy."

Court finds Russia guilty of rights violations in Crimea

BRUSSELS: The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has found Russia guilty of systematic violations of human rights in Ukraine's occupied Crimean peninsula. The verdict in the first interstate case brought by Ukraine against Russia over Crimea said that the rights breaches starting in February 2014, when Moscow occupied and annexed the peninsula, included violations of the right to life, inhuman or degrading treatment, the prohibition of freedom of religion and freedom of expression, among others.

The court based in Strasbourg, France, said in its unanimous judgement that there was sufficient evidence - corroborated by a range of witness testimony and reports from non-governmental organisations - to find Russia guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt". It said the "incidents had been sufficiently numerous and interconnected" and amounted to a "system of violations". The court ordered Russia "to take measures as soon as possible for the safe return

of the relevant prisoners transferred from Crimea to penal facilities located on the territory of the Russian Federation". The impact of the decision is likely to be limited as Russia refuses to recognise the judgements of the court.

The country was expelled from the Council of Europe in the wake of Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. As a result, it is no longer a member of the European Convention on Human Rights, which the court in Strasbourg enforces. However, the court can still rule on incidents that occurred before Russia's expulsion. The case in question dates back to March 2014. A top Ukrainian presidential official hailed the ruling as "a great achievement" of international jurisprudence.

"Ukraine has become closer to restoring justice," Iryna Mudra, deputy head of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office, said on X. Margarita Sokorenko, Ukraine's representative for the ECHR, said the ruling "essentially nulli-

fied Russia's ten-year narrative that human rights are respected in Crimea". "This is a crushing decision of the ECHR for the aggressor! The ECHR recognised that the government of Ukraine has proven the existence of systematic violations of our citizens since the beginning of Russia's occupation of Crimea in February 2014," she wrote on Facebook. The government of Ukraine argued in this case that since February 27, 2014, Russia exercised a campaign of repression against non-Russians in Crimea that included disappearances, illegal detentions, ill-treatment, the inability to renounce Russian citizenship, the suppression of the Ukrainian media and the functioning of the Ukrainian language in schools, as well as the transfer from Crimea to remote prisons in Russia.

Russia had previously denied accusations it violated human rights and oppressed political opponents on the peninsula. It stopped participating in the ECHR proceedings in 2022. — Aljazeera

US surgeon general declares gun violence a public health crisis

WASHINGTON: US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has declared gun violence a public health crisis in the United States. In an advisory issued, Murthy called for more stringent laws to limit the widespread availability of firearms, which many blame for the country's unparalleled levels of gun violence.

"Firearm violence is an urgent public health crisis that has led to loss of life, unimaginable pain, and profound grief for far too many Americans," Murthy said in a statement. While high-profile mass shootings attract a large share of attention, everyday gun violence is a persistent threat that has led to a dismal upward trend of gun injuries and deaths. Murthy noted that young people and communities of colour are especially impacted. It is unclear what changes, if any, the declaration could bring, with efforts

to enact gun control at a standoff at the federal level, where many conservative politicians resolutely oppose any efforts to place greater limitations on firearms access. Many Republican-led states have moved to further roll back existing restrictions. The National Rifle Association (NRA), a powerful political group that has fought to further loosen limits to firearms access, called the advisory an "extension of the Biden administration's war on law-abiding gun owners". Murthy said that the impact of gun violence extends beyond the roughly 50,000 people killed in the US per year, with lingering effects for those who witness or survive shootings or deal with injuries or the loss of loved ones.

"America should be a place where all of us can go to school, go to work, go to the supermarket, go to our house

of worship, without having to worry that that's going to put our life at risk," he told the Associated Press, calling for steps such as greater background checks, the restriction of guns in public spaces, and the banning of high-power automatic rifles. The report notes that gun violence became the leading cause of death among US children and youths in 2020, and that firearms-related deaths, which include murders and accidental deaths as well as suicides, have ticked upwards.

Such rates of gun violence make the US an aberration among comparably wealthy countries: the advisory notes that the country's firearm mortality rate for young people is 11 times that of France, 36 times that of Germany, and 121 times that of Japan, where access to guns is highly regulated. — Aljazeera

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The Julian Assange saga

JULIAN Assange is not your regular newspaper or television journalist. He is more of an activist who wanted to expose governments which kept things covered up, and doled out lies in the public. He has been rightly described as an anarchist. The secret documents, mostly from the United States defence department revealed the many blunders that the world's sole superpower had committed in Afghanistan and in Iraq, and in retrospect they turn out to be unlawful and fruitless wars. But the Americans would not tolerate anyone who exposed their own evil deeds. Assange was not an American citizen, and he was not in the defence services of the country. Yet, they used their superpower status to hunt him down, to get him arrested and to try him in an American court.

They turned Assange into a fugitive. But strangely enough, Ecuador held out against the United States and gave him political asylum in its embassy in London where he was forced to live out for five years. He was then held in a British prison while all the time he fought a case in British courts against the jurisdiction of the American state to try him. This is indeed the confusing part of international law. If a country feels that an individual has posed a threat to its security, it feels that it has a right to chase that person as enemy and seek his custody. This is exactly what the US had done with the hundreds of people it had arrested in Afghanistan and whisked them away to secret CIA prisons in Europe and in Africa, apart from lodging a large number of them in the Guantanamo Bay prison.

Unfortunately, the international legal system had not been able to prevent this American unilateralism and exceptionalism. The US had its way to a great extent with Assange even as the Australian government weighed in that Assange, an Australian citizen, should be left alone. So, it found Assange guilty on one count which he had to accept, and a plea bargain was made which is a common feature in American criminal cases. So, Assange was awarded a 62-month prison sentence which has been counted as part of the time he spent in British prison, and he was allowed to go back to Australia.

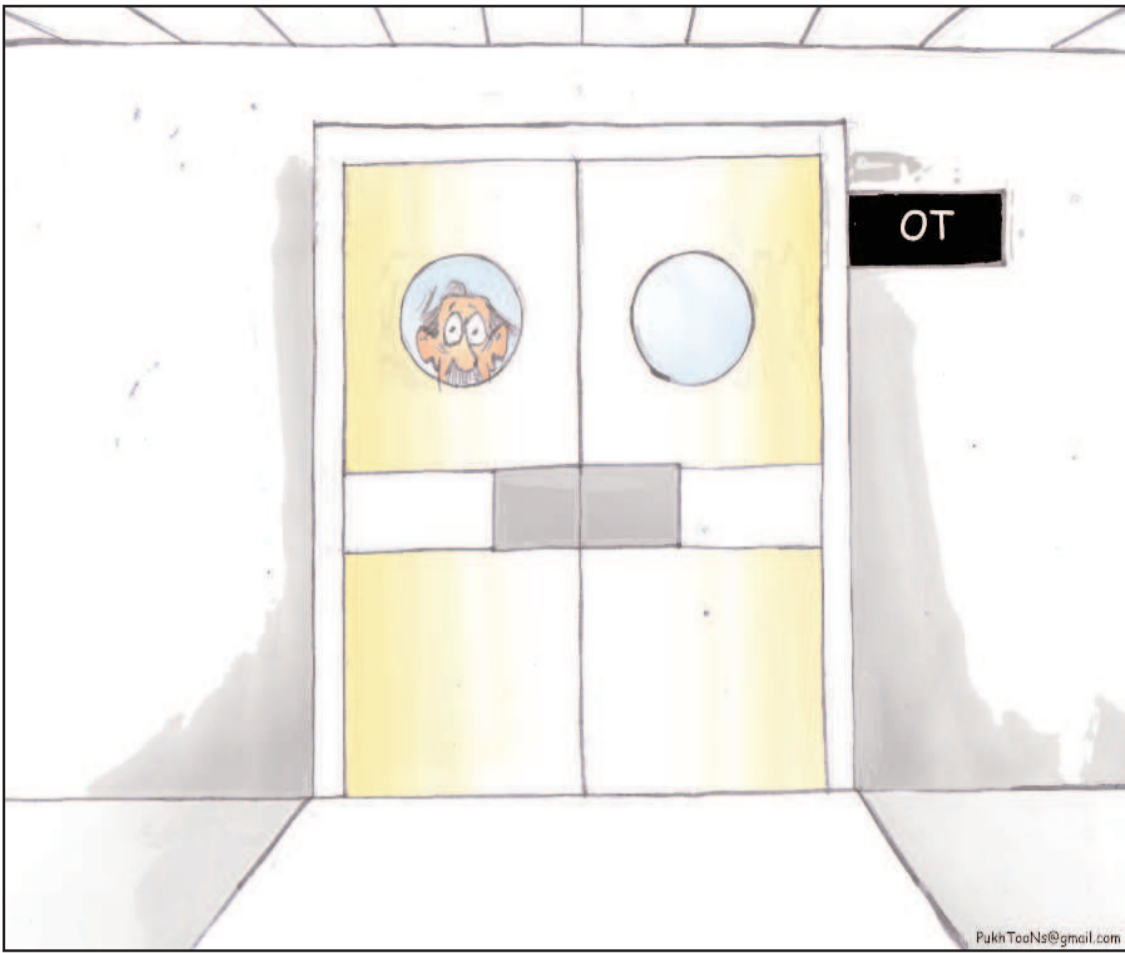
Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese made the statement, "There is nothing to be gained by his continued incarceration and we want him brought home to Australia."

The Assange case leaves many loose ends. The US had convicted a man over whom it had no legal right. And it used its political clout to keep him confined because if he was free he would have been kidnapped by the CIA and taken to the US and convicted. Possibly, the American courts would have overturned the defence department's arguments. But it is true as pointed out by Stella, his lawyer and his wife, that this issue of finding him guilty on one count is a matter of serious concern for journalists. It can be recalled that the Pentagon Papers, which was the official history of the Vietnam war locked away in the defence department strong rooms, was leaked to The New York Times and The Washington Post, by Daniel Ellsberg, the government raised the same cry that it compromised the security of the country.

In the case of Assange, the defence department said that he endangered the lives of secret agents on the field. But the US defence department did not follow the procedures prescribed in international law in such matters. It tried to arm-twist Assange, which was not a difficult thing to do given the mighty arm of the American state. The world is not convinced that Assange is guilty and the world is convinced that that America used extra-judicial powers.

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Gaza: Where the abnormal is becoming normal

Mohamed Chebaro

MORE than eight months into Israel's war on Gaza, following the October 7th attack by Hamas, and the Arab and international mediation, backed by the US, has so far failed to bring about a lasting ceasefire agreement. Hamas says any deal must bring an end to the war, which could be a way for it to claim victory, as it would not have been eradicated. Israel, on the other hand, is only ready to agree to temporary pauses in the fighting, while freeing some Palestinian prisoners in exchange for hostages. It will not sign up to a total cessation of hostilities as it believes Hamas is weakened but not yet finished, meaning Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his ultra-right government would not have achieved their key goal.

Peace, which the Palestinian people have been waiting for, is therefore likely to remain elusive in a year dominated by electoral calculations across many parts of the world and amid continued discord between the big powers. The global powers are divided over many geostrategic issues that stretch from the Gaza and Ukraine wars and many conflicts in Africa to nuclear North Korea and Iran, trade, the environment and even technology regulations.

This is why Gazans are feeling that the chances for peace are receding, while their living conditions in tents are becoming more permanent. The trickle of aid entering the Strip for the 2.4 million Palestinians remains at the mercy of Israel and its intermittent closures of land crossings. And while the Strip teeters on the brink of lawlessness, disorder and famine, with disease rife and infrastructure lacking, testimonies from Gaza inhabitants point to a common fear: that the abnormal could become the normal

as their collective punishment drags on.

Anyone following the situation in Gaza in recent months is surely feeling worn out by the daily grind of bad news about military confrontations, reprisal attacks and casualties, as well as the colossal infrastructure destruction and the razing of homes, farms, industrial plants, schools and hospitals. Gaza has also become the deadliest conflict for journalists in recent history, despite Israel denying any foreign reporters entry to the Strip. The US-based Committee to Protect Journalists reports at least 103 Palestinian journalists killed so far. Other sources suggest that the number is even higher.

An investigation by The Guardian published this week suggests that, amid a loosening of the interpretation of the laws of war since the deadly Hamas-led attacks on Oct. 7, Israel has deliberately sought to silence critical reporting. This investigation identified at least 23 individuals killed since Oct. 7 who worked for the largest Hamas-run media network in Gaza.

However, the abundance of reports that recount the scale of Gaza's suffering have ceased to have an impact, while the numbers of victims have also ceased to shock, despite their importance and regardless of which side of the conflict one is on. Save the Children, a UK-based aid group, claimed in a report published this week that 21,000 Palestinian children are missing in Gaza, believed to be trapped beneath the rubble, buried in unmarked graves, harmed beyond recognition by explosives or lost in the chaos of the conflict.

Also this week, the UN has warned that the conflict and the increasing desperation among Gazans is causing civil order to collapse, making

aid delivery even harder. In his report to UNRWA's advisory body, Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini warned that the breakdown of civil order in Gaza had allowed widespread looting and smuggling and blocked aid deliveries, leaving "children dying of malnutrition and dehydration, while food and clean water wait in trucks." All that has occurred while Israel is still effectively refusing or obstructing the free flow of sufficient humanitarian aid into Gaza, despite all the Arab and international outcry.

UNICEF reported recently that a third of children in northern Gaza are acutely malnourished or suffering from wasting, citing data from its partners on the ground. Meanwhile, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, a global partnership that measures food insecurity, has listed the 2.4 million Gazans among the nearly 166 million people worldwide estimated to need urgent action against hunger.

All the data and surveys, however, fail to convey the full picture of what is happening to the individual Palestinians coping, or rather failing to cope, with this tragedy that has been unfolding for nearly nine months, with no end in sight. The testimonies collected by brave citizen journalists, activists and media outlets creates a more shocking picture and a less abstract one about what has happened to the Palestinian soul and the crushing impact of the conflict on the everyday life of civilians living in Gaza.

Amid the dust of battles surrounding them, many in Gaza — as in many other conflict zones I have reported on in my years as a journalist — wake up after a sleepless night and it is imperative for them to find water and

wood to cook whatever meager canned food is offered to them, as well as find bread. If they are lucky, they can wash, but forget about a fresh set of clothes or a hot shower.

Some of the testimonies scattered around social media offer a cruder view of what Palestinians feel as they wait, week after week, for the end of the violence and a chance to return to their damaged or destroyed homes. But from within this unparalleled state of despair, one can still sense a basic hope and a basic will to persevere as human beings and to dare to hold on to life, through yearning and even dreaming.

However small and benign this dream is, it shows a will to live that the war machine has failed to destroy — and that is through expressing attachment to their homeland, the simple life of Gaza and what it offers them even during its darkest days. All no doubt yearn to return home. They yearn for clean water to wash their face, a hot shower, a set of clean clothes, a bed, a wall to replace the piece of cloth separating them from the next displaced family, and a deep sleep that shuts out the anxieties and traumas, even if only for an hour. They yearn to reunite with families and friends and to say sorry to lost loved ones for not giving them the burial and funeral they deserved. They yearn to even have a piece of paper and a pen to write, draw or record their life on the edge of the abyss.

It is that will to live that is likely to rise above all the despair and suffering. Those small dreams demonstrate a deeply rooted hope in humanity, meaning that the long-term inhabitants of Gaza are unlikely to give up and accept that the abnormality of war and violence has become normal, however late that ceasefire comes.

Foreign aid key to UK's soft power in Middle East

Zaid M. Belbagi

THE UK has traditionally been a leading donor of foreign development aid, annually earmarking funds to support education, infrastructure, healthcare and peacebuilding in some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries. Foreign aid has helped wealthy Western nations create positive socioeconomic impacts globally and jointly resolve transnational challenges such as epidemics, climate change and conflict.

Currently, the top three recipients of British bilateral foreign aid are Afghanistan, Ukraine and Nigeria. The UK also contributes significant portions of multilateral overseas development assistance to international organizations such as the World Bank's International Development Association, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the African Development Fund. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, which in 2020 incorporated the Department for International Development, is at the forefront of British overseas development assistance.

However, in the last five years, the UK has seen a notable decline in foreign aid and a redirection of funds toward domestic priorities. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the British government "temporarily" reduced its overseas development assistance spending from 0.7 percent of gross national income to 0.5 percent due to economic weakening. Former Prime Ministers Tony Blair and David Cameron both warned against this at the time, saying it was an irresponsible policy with far-reaching consequences.

With a significant increase in Ukrainian refugees in the UK since 2022, British foreign aid faced further strain, as the government has used its overseas aid budget for domestic spending on hosting refugees and asylum seekers. In 2022, the UK spent £3.7 billion (\$4.7 billion), close to 30 percent of its overseas development assistance budget, on in-donor refugee costs, while spending just over £2 billion on bilateral development aid in Asia and Africa combined. In 2019, aid to least developed countries made up 19 percent of combined UK overseas development assistance, while in 2022 this stood at 10 percent. From Nigeria to Nepal, several of these countries have faced the negative impact of British aid cuts.

Despite being key to Britain's strategic and economic interests, the Middle East has not been a priority region for British overseas development assistance. A reduction of more than 30 percent in the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund's budget in 2022 has severely limited the UK's ability to stabilize conflict zones in the region, such as Libya, Syria and Sudan. The Middle East has seen the effects of this, with reductions in the already limited aid streams in the region. Since 2021, aid to Lebanon has reduced by 85 percent and to Syria by 70 percent. In addition to weakening commercial and diplomatic relations in the Middle East, a downturn in development aid has negatively impacted British credibility in the region, pushing the countries in this

area to focus on other international partners.

It must be noted, however, that the majority of British overseas development assistance to the region at present is focused on climate change mitigation. Of the £9 million allocated to the region under the foreign aid budget, close to 97 percent is earmarked for climate action. The UK also runs a program called "PHENOMENAL" — Pioneering a Holistic approach to Energy and Nature-based Options in MENA for Long-term stability — which supports various clean energy and water management projects across Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia. This offers a timely opportunity for bilateral cooperation in the region on a pressing matter, as the Middle East continues to face the challenges of climate change and global warming.

The Labour Party, which is only a week away from potential victory in national elections, has committed to restoring UK overseas development assistance to 0.7 percent of gross national income "as soon as the fiscal situation allows," to revive the UK's pro-aid policies under past Labour governments. It has prioritized PHENOMENAL and climate action in the Middle East as a focus area of international development, along with the provision of humanitarian aid and long-term development assistance to conflict zones such as Syria and Yemen. It is also keen to address the gender gap in the region by promoting the educational, economic and political empowerment of women in collaboration with regional partners.

Despite recent downward trends, British overseas development assistance is expected to rise in 2024. Total foreign aid in 2023 stood at £15.4 billion, or 0.58 percent of gross national income, which is the highest since 2019. Moreover, year-on-year spending on Ukrainian refugees and asylum seekers will decrease and, by 2029, the UK is projected to clear its dues to the EU's external action and humanitarian aid, in line with targets under the post-Brexit withdrawal agreement. This indicates a renewed commitment toward foreign aid and Labour's stated commitment to spend 0.7 percent of gross national income on aid promises the reinvigoration of overseas development assistance if it comes to power.

The UK is staring down the barrel of waning global influence and, at such a time, a stronger commitment to foreign aid can go a long way toward reinstating strategic partnerships in the Global South. Foreign aid has long been one of the most influential tools in the UK's arsenal, helping to establish its soft power globally. In the Middle East, UK aid has supported the region in diverse areas, from women's empowerment to employment, and a return to this approach is crucial at a time when British foreign policy in Gaza has been criticized across the board, affecting its reputation in the region.

A sustained stream of foreign aid is important to ensure that some of the most impoverished regions of the world are able to develop their skills and infrastructure, which will in turn usher in economic prosperity and political stability. As the old adage goes, the more a government spends on aid today, the less it spends on bullets tomorrow.

religious values and adherence to order and authority, yet they upheld basic liberal principles (private and civil liberties, equal citizenship, separation of powers).

The rise of the far-right can be attributed to several key factors, including the new political landscape of contemporary democracies, breaking away from the binary division of right and left from the First Industrial Revolution, the erosion of the working class, the multilateralist challenge faced by European societies amid massive immigration, and reactions to globalization.

Sociologists and political scientists have explored and analyzed these phenomena, but this does not diminish the significance of the recent electoral event that has shaken EU countries.

This event occurred in a volatile context, marked by

In Kenya, tomorrow is here

Patrick Gathara

With 180 seats secured, conservative and populist far-right parties, though still a minority and internally divided, will now wield considerable influence in the European Parliament.

Already in power in Hungary, Italy and the Netherlands, far-right movements are gaining momentum across Europe. Despite their diverse backgrounds and ideologies, these political groups share three core beliefs:

First is a nativist, ethnic-based concept of national identity. This vision of national identity is confined to an organic bond within a homogeneous blood community.

Second is a strong culturalist notion of the nation. They view their nations as

They are "opting for other, more effective modes of engagement with governance in the years in between elections". This is not new. Coming of age in the 80s and 90s, their parents too had rejected the rules of participation set for them by the independence generation, which privileged ideas like development, unity and peace — many times at the expense of democratic freedom and individual rights. They developed new ways to engage with an oppressive regime and overbearing state. As they rallied to "mass action" to demand reform of the political system, they adapted to and took advantage of global changes such as the end of the Cold War to create powerful coalitions and institutions outside of the state which channeled popular discontent into meaningful action.

By the early 2000s, their

PROTESTS have returned to the streets of Kenya's towns and cities, as the country gets to the latest stage of the slow-motion revolution it has been undergoing for over 40 years. Animated by anger over the state's arrogance, corruption and long-running neglect of their needs as currently manifested in its tax proposals, a new generation has taken up the fight, and it is glorious to behold.

Two years ago, the same Kenyan youths were derided as "disengaged" for failing to register as voters and to turn up for the general election. "It's a huge dent in democracy," wailed one analyst. Yet far from being disengaged, the young are demonstrating that what they reject are what I described at the time as "the political rituals of their parents" — the formalised ways of democratic participation that their elders valorise but that have consistently failed to deliver on their promise.

Starvation and division as weapons of war in Myanmar

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

IN the relentless tragedy unfolding in Myanmar, the junta has escalated its brutal tactics to maintain control, plunging ethnic minorities, especially the Rohingya, into deeper despair. As international attention ebbs and flows, the military regime has adapted, finding new ways to perpetuate suffering and quash dissent. The latest tools in their arsenal: starvation and ethnic division.

The Rohingya, a Muslim minority long persecuted in Myanmar, now face an insidious strategy aimed at their systematic destruction. Reports have surfaced detailing how the military deliberately uses starvation as a weapon of war. By denying food, aid and necessities to Rohingya communities, the junta forces desperation upon them, leaving starvation as the grim alternative to submission.

This tactic serves a dual purpose for the military. Firstly, it weakens the resolve of Rohingya communities, making them more susceptible to forced recruitment. Desperate for any means to survive, some Rohingya have been coerced into fighting for the junta against their own people, a horrific twist of fate that deepens their suffering. Secondly, the junta uses starvation to manipulate international aid access, controlling the flow of humanitarian assistance to further isolate and punish dissenting communities.

The brutality does not end with starvation. Recognizing its inability to crush resistance outright, the junta has turned to a more insidious strategy: fostering conflicts between ethnic groups. By sowing seeds of discord and manipulating ethnic tensions, the military aims to divert attention from its own atrocities and weaken unified opposition.

The Arakan Army, a prominent ethnic armed group challenging military rule, has been particularly instrumentalized in this strategy. Accused of committing abuses against the Rohingya and spreading harmful rhetoric, the Arakan Army's actions have played into the military's hands. Reports of beheadings, killings and the burning of Rohingya property underscore the depths of this human tragedy. As a result, an additional 45,000 Rohingya have been forced to flee their homes, seeking refuge from both military oppression and inter-ethnic violence.

The UN has sounded the alarm but international responses have been woefully inadequate. Diplomatic condemnations and economic sanctions, while important, have not stemmed the tide of suffering. The Rohingya and other ethnic minorities continue to bear the brunt of a conflict that shows no signs of abating.

Bangladesh, already bur-

The country struggles to provide adequate shelter, food and healthcare amid ongoing instability, highlighting the urgent need for international support and sustainable solutions to alleviate the Rohingya's plight.

The international community's failure to protect the Rohingya reflects a broader pattern of indifference and ineffectiveness in responding to atroci-

The brutality does not end with starvation. Recognizing its inability to crush resistance outright, the junta has turned to a more insidious strategy: fostering conflicts between ethnic groups. By sowing seeds of discord and manipulating ethnic tensions, the military aims to divert attention from its own atrocities and weaken unified opposition. The Arakan Army, a prominent ethnic armed group challenging military rule, has been particularly instrumentalized in this strategy. Accused of committing abuses against the Rohingya and spreading harmful rhetoric, the Arakan Army's actions have played into the military's hands. Reports of beheadings, killings and the burning of Rohingya property underscore the depths of this human tragedy. As a result, an additional 45,000 Rohingya have been forced to flee their homes, seeking refuge from both military oppression and inter-ethnic violence. The UN has sounded the alarm but international responses have been woefully inadequate. Diplomatic condemnations and economic sanctions, while important, have not stemmed the tide of suffering. The Rohingya and other ethnic minorities continue to bear the brunt of a conflict that shows no signs of abating.

dened with hosting more than a million Rohingya refugees, faces intensified challenges as conflict in Myanmar and monsoon rains worsen conditions. The recent influx has strained resources and infrastructure, exacerbating humanitarian crises in overcrowded camps.

ties. Despite widespread recognition of Myanmar's descent into brutality, meaningful action remains elusive. Political calculations, economic interests and geopolitical strategies often overshadow humanitarian imperatives, leaving vulnerable populations to fend for them-

selves.

For the Rohingya, justice seems a distant dream. Displaced, persecuted and now exploited in a cruel cycle of violence, they face an existential threat that demands urgent and decisive action. The principles of human rights and international law, once held as universal standards, ring hollow in the face of Myanmar's impunity.

What can be done? The answer lies in concerted, coordinated efforts that prioritize humanitarian aid, accountability for perpetrators of violence and genuine dialogue aimed at reconciliation. The international community, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in particular, must bolster support for humanitarian agencies on the ground, ensuring that aid reaches those most in need despite the military's attempts to obstruct it.

Furthermore, diplomatic pressure must intensify, targeting not only the military leaders but also those who support and enable their atrocities. Economic sanctions should be expanded and enforced rigorously, targeting key industries and individuals that sustain the junta's grip on power.

Beyond immediate measures, a long-term strategy is essential. This includes supporting Myanmar's civil society, strengthening democratic institutions and promoting inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation. The Rohingya and other minorities must have a seat at the table in shaping Myanmar's future, free from fear and persecution.

The crisis in Myanmar is not just a humanitarian catastrophe; it is a moral test for the international community. Failure to act decisively risks emboldening not only the Myanmar junta, but also other regimes that seek to suppress dissent through violence and division.

As we bear witness to Myanmar's descent into darkness, we must summon the courage to confront injustice and uphold the dignity of every human being. The Rohingya deserve more than our sympathy; they deserve our unwavering commitment to justice and our steadfast determination to end their suffering.

In the face of brutality, silence is complicity. Let us not be silent. Let us stand together in solidarity with the Rohingya and all those who suffer under oppression, affirming that their lives and their rights matter, today and always.

German car manufacturers under pressure

PETER MOCK

IN mid-June, after months of investigation, the European Commission announced potential import tariffs on battery electric vehicles from China in the range of 17 to 38 percent, differentiated by manufacturer. This would be on top of the current standard tariff of 10 percent.

The decision is preliminary and needs to be confirmed by the commission by July 4. The new tariffs are the subject of much debate among EU policymakers. In particular, the German government, and automakers headquartered in Germany, are positioned against higher import tariffs.

After growth in recent years, China-headquartered manufacturers today account for about 3 percent of all new passenger car registrations in Germany. Brands of Japan and the Republic of Korea make up 8 percent and 6 percent of the market respectively, and manufacturers of the United States are another 7 percent. The remaining three-fourths of

come into effect in the European Union is expected to sharply increase electric vehicle market shares again. Some worry that a large fraction of this additional European demand will be met by vehicle imports from China.

European import tariffs may be perceived as a viable protection mechanism at first sight. But they present a dilemma for German automakers for two reasons.

First, it's not actually easy to put a stamp of origin on a manufacturer. A good example is the Smart brand. Originally fully part of Mercedes-Benz, it is now half owned by Geely and half by Mercedes-Benz. Not a single Smart model is produced in Europe — the vehicles all come from China. According to the EU Commission's plans, a duty of 21 percent would be levied on Smart vehicles. Other models from manufacturers that are at least in part German would be similarly affected. This shows

This is on top of other benefits such as drastically reduced air and noise pollution, and avoided oil imports.

Combustion engine vehicles have served German brands well in previous years, but ultimately this technology doesn't have a future. There is no question that German manufacturers are increasingly feeling the pressure to transition to cleaner technologies more rapidly. Premium brands such as BMW and Mercedes already got hit by surprise when Tesla sales skyrocketed some years ago. Now it is up to mass-market brands, such as Volkswagen, to better prepare to compete with affordable, right-sized battery electric vehicles manufactured by Chinese companies.

A fear regularly expressed is that the German car industry could find itself marginalized like the German solar panel industry was in the 2010s. Back then, German companies were leading in developing innovative solar panels but were then displaced

After growth in recent years, China-headquartered manufacturers today account for about 3 percent of all new passenger car registrations in Germany. Brands of Japan and the Republic of Korea make up 8 percent and 6 percent of the market respectively, and manufacturers of the United States are another 7 percent. The remaining three-fourths of Germany's new car sales are provided by German brands (about 50 percent) and other Europe-headquartered manufacturers (about 25 percent). However, when we look at battery electric vehicles only, Chinese brands already account for 8 percent of new car registrations in Germany. China-headquartered manufacturers recognized early how important it is to invest in battery technologies and vehicle electrification, and they are now benefiting from economies of scale and strong supplier networks. German manufacturers, meanwhile, have remained heavily reliant on combustion engine vehicle technology and are now perceived as late in offering attractive and affordable electric models. The German government's purchase incentives for electric vehicles ended rather suddenly in late 2023, and the market share of battery electric vehicles has been stagnant at around 13 percent. But in 2025, the next level of car carbon dioxide standards that will come into effect in the European Union is expected to sharply increase electric vehicle market shares again. Some worry that a large fraction of this additional European demand will be met by vehicle imports from China. European import tariffs may be perceived as a viable protection mechanism at first sight. But they present a dilemma for German automakers for two reasons. It's not actually easy to put a stamp of origin on a manufacturer. A good example is the Smart brand. Originally fully part of Mercedes-Benz, it is now half owned by Geely and half by Mercedes-Benz. Not a single Smart model is produced in Europe — the vehicles all come from China.

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how the tariffs under discussion could affect Europe's domestic industry, as well.

Second, if the Chinese government decided to respond with increased tariffs on vehicle imports from Europe, German automakers would be hit especially hard, as they have a long history of sales activity in China. Today, about 17 percent of all new car sales in China are by German brands.

Those impacted the most by increased tariffs might be consumers, though, in Europe and in China. Increased import tariffs would artificially increase vehicle prices, and consumers would have to pay in the end.

At a time when we must urgently speed up the deployment of electric vehicles, this would be a step backward and risks losing precious time.

From what we know today, battery electric vehicles are the only technology that can deliver enough carbon dioxide savings for road transport to decarbonize within the time frame of the Paris Agreement.

by Chinese brands selling at very competitive prices. Today, about 90 percent of solar panels in Germany are imported from China. In Germany, this is a lesson remembered not only by policymakers and the industry, but also one that lives on in the public memory and influences public opinion.

Increased import tariffs on cars are not the only option. The EU and China could instead agree on local content requirements for electric vehicles. For many years, foreign vehicle manufacturers have had to produce locally in China, usually in collaboration with a Chinese manufacturer, to gain market access. A similar requirement in the EU could help ensure that Chinese manufacturers develop local production capacities that create jobs in Europe.

The clock is ticking, but there are still a few weeks before July 4. That means there is still time for a solution that serves all, including our climate and the environment, as well as consumers and industry in the EU and China.

Julian Assange is on his way to freedom – but the fight is far from over

DURING one of the many conversations I had with Julian Assange while he was at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, I asked him what he would do first if he could get out of the building.

“I would look at the sky,” he said, calmly.

This was in 2016, and at that time he had already spent more than 2,500 days without seeing the sky.

Three years later, in April 2019, he was finally “allowed” to leave the embassy, but was not given a single moment to look up at the sky.

British police barged into the building, arrested him, and quickly transferred him to the high-security Belmarsh Prison in South London, where he would remain imprisoned and basically in solitary confinement, for the next five years.

I’ve known Julian for over nine years, but never got to meet him as a free man.

His two children, now five and seven years old, never got to see their father as a free man either.

This injustice, finally and hopefully, seems to be coming to an end.

As I write this, Julian is in a plane in the sky, flying towards an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean that is under US jurisdiction.

Once he gets there, he will face an American judge and plead guilty to a “crime” – one count of conspiracy to obtain and disclose classified US national defence documents. He will then be sentenced to “time already served”, and hopefully, return to his native Australia as a free man.

So, today is a day for celebration. One of the most courageous publishers of our age is – finally – on his way to freedom.

As we celebrate Julian’s freedom, howev-

er, we must not turn a blind eye to the grave crime simultaneously being committed against not only him, but also journalism and freedom of speech.

Today, Julian is being forced to plead guilty to a made-up “crime” after years of arbitrary detention, but those who are responsible for the very real crimes that he exposed – the killing of Reuters journalists and Iraqi civilians by US forces among others – are

Srecko Horvat

sider ourselves free if the basic principles of journalism, such as protecting sources and revealing the crimes of our governments, are now being treated as crimes?

Are we really free, if it is not those who committed the crimes Wikileaks exposed, or the crimes being livestreamed today on our phones from Gaza, but Julian Assange who is being made to “plead guilty”?

and publishers, whistleblowers and political prisoners all around the world continue to speak truth to power no matter the consequences.

We are free and we will remain free as long as those who campaigned for Julian’s freedom for so many years, thousands of people from all walks of life all over the world, continue to fight for journalism, freedom of speech, and justice.

All those years ago,

British police barged into the building, arrested him, and quickly transferred him to the high-security Belmarsh Prison in South London, where he would remain imprisoned and basically in solitary confinement, for the next five years. I’ve known Julian for over nine years, but never got to meet him as a free man. His two children, now five and seven years old, never got to see their father as a free man either. This injustice, finally and hopefully, seems to be coming to an end. As I write this, Julian is in a plane in the sky, flying towards an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean that is under US jurisdiction. Once he gets there, he will face an American judge and plead guilty to a “crime” – one count of conspiracy to obtain and disclose classified US national defence documents. He will then be sentenced to “time already served”, and hopefully, return to his native Australia as a free man.

still walking free.

Today, in freeing Julian Assange under these conditions – forcing him to plead guilty to the “crime” of doing journalism and holding power to account – the US empire is once again attempting to intimidate journalists, publishers and activists everywhere who dare to put a spotlight on its own very real, very deadly, crimes.

I cannot help, but ask: Can any of us truly con-

On this day, as Julian flies to his freedom, I want to be hopeful, and say, “Yes, we are, against all odds, still to a certain degree free.”

And we will remain free as long as there are people like Julian Assange, like Chelsea Manning, like Edward Snowden, who dare to question the conduct of our governments and expose their brutality. We will remain free as long as principled journalists

during our conversation at the Ecuadorian Embassy, Julian had told me while he wanted to “look at the sky”, he did not resent not being able to.

“This is not a price I have stumbled across, because I didn’t understand how the world works,” he told me. “That’s the price I knew I would pay, not this particular price, but a price like this. Yes, the situation is tough, but I’m



PSX turns bullish, gains 335 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend, on Wednesday, gaining 335.07 points, a positive change of 0.43 percent, closing at 78,275.65 points against 77,940.58 points on the last working day.

A total of 469,756,007 shares were traded during the day as compared to 292,186,284 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 19.777 billion against Rs 11.414 billion on the last trading day.

Around 454 companies transacted their shares in

the stock market, 149 of them recorded gains and 248 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 57 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 57,647,948 shares at Rs 1.24 per share, K-Electric Limited with 37,639,343 shares at Rs 4.58 per share, and Pervez Ahmed Company with 31,130,746 shares at Rs1.79 per share.

Mehmood Textile Mills Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 35.05 per share price, closing at Rs 534.00, whereas the run-

ner-up was Sazgar Engineering Works Limited with a Rs 18.23 rise in its per share price to Rs 838.57.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 242.35 per share closing at Rs 6,914.00, followed by Pakistan Engineering Company Limited with a Rs 61.08 decline to close at Rs 627.26.

Gold rates dip by Rs 900 per tola to Rs 240,600

The price of per tola of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 900 and was sold at Rs 240,600 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs

241,500 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs 771 to Rs 206,276 from Rs 207,047 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs 189,086 from Rs 189,793, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 2,850 and Rs 2,443.41 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$13 to \$2,313 from \$2,326, the association reported.

PCJCCI keen for Digital Pakistan by 2025

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan should take solid steps to bolster reforms related to the market-oriented allocation of data elements and speed up the construction of digital infrastructure, including industrial internet and computing power networks, as part of its broader push to advance the building of a 'Digital Pakistan', just like Digital China.

Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki stated this in a meeting of the joint chamber here Wednesday. He added that China rolled out a plan for the overall layout of the country's digital development last year, vowing to make important progress in

the construction of a Digital China by 2025. "We can take help from this model, it has all the information for advancing the development of data-related fundamental institutions, coordinating the integration, sharing, development and application of data resources, and pushing forward the planning and building of a Digital China, which includes a digital economy and society," he maintained.

Fang Yulong, Senior Vice President said that more efforts should be made to establish and improve a data property rights system, formulate policies to promote the efficient circulation and trading of data in a compliant manner, and establish a rev-

enue distribution system and a security governance system for data.

He said that just like China, Pakistan should also accelerate the research of data security technologies, bolster the digital, intelligent and green transformation of industries, strengthen international cooperation in the digital economy domain as well as continuously optimize the regulations concerning the cross-border data flow.

Hamza Khalid, Vice President PCJCCI, said that China has unveiled a guideline to expand the application scenarios of data elements in more fields, foster new growth drivers and give birth to new industries and new business models,

adding that efforts will be further stepped up to press ahead with the utilization and development of data elements. With the theme of unleashing the value of data elements and developing new quality productive forces, the summit will focus on giving full play to the multiplier effect of data, and building digital infrastructure and data resource systems.

Salahuddin Hanif, Secretary General PCJCCI, also urged efforts to accelerate the establishment of a national computing network and data circulation infrastructure and said that digital technologies are finding a wide range of applications across various industries in Pakistan.



HYDERABAD: People crowded around ice vendors to purchase ice.

SNGPL: 27 connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 27 connections; Rs 1.84 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the team disconnected 4 connections on illegal use of gas. In Multan the team disconnected 04 connections on illegal use of gas.

The regional team of Shiekhupura disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas.

In Mardan the team disconnected 10 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 1.20 million against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Gujranwala disconnected one connection on illegal use of gas. The team imposed a fine of Rs 0.61 million against gas theft cases.

In Faisalabad the team disconnected 02 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 0.03 million against gas theft cases.

In Bahawalpur the team disconnected 4 connections on illegal use of gas.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, Atlantic Ibis, Maersk Kinloss and Serenity carrying Containers and LPG, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal and Engro Vopak Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile another LPG carrier 'Bateleur' also arrived at outer anchorage of the port on Wednesday morning.

Eight ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, Atlantic Ibis, Gaslog Geneva, Sinar Mendawai and Baustella left the port on Wednesday morning and three more ships, ChemtransI onian, Serenity and Maersk Kinloss are expected to sail on today afternoon.

A cargo volume of 95,036tonnes, comprising 81,413tonnes imports cargo and 13,623 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,204 Containers (2,449TEUs Imports and 755 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 04 ships are at outer anchorage of port, out of them two ships, Bateleur and Gaschem Fuji & another ship G-Bright carrying LPG, Chemicals and Palm oil are expected to take berths at SSGC, EVTTL and LCT respectively on Tuesday, while three more ships, Maersk Cairo, MSC Maeva and Wan Hai 136 are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

Tokyo shares close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks advanced on Wednesday, with investors cheered by rallies of the tech-rich US Nasdaq index after Nvidia shares closed nearly seven percent higher.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 1.26 percent, or 493.92 points, to end at 39,667.07, while the broader Topix index added 0.56 percent, or 15.58 points, to 2,802.95.

Investors hailed Nvidia's 6.8 percent gain overnight and drove up Japanese semiconductor shares.

"Nvidia is a symbolic stock for AI innovation. Its rebound improved the sentiment for the entire high-tech sector," said Daiwa Securities.

"Semiconductor shares are higher as are pharmaceutical as well as banking issues that are benefiting from the rising yields," it added.

US, China and UAE top destinations for Pakistani exports

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the first eleven months of the current financial year 2023-24, followed by China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Total exports to the US during July-May 2023-24 were recorded at US \$4,989.140 million against the exports of US \$ 5,484.257 million during July-May 2022-23, showing a decline of 9.02 percent, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth US \$2,553.481 million against the exports of US \$1,889.195 million last year, showing an increase of 35.16 percent.

UAE was the third top

export destination, where Pakistan exported products worth US \$1,880.820 million during the months under review against the exports of US \$1,341.804 million, SBP data revealed.

Among other countries, Pakistani exports to United Kingdom (UK) stood at US \$1,861.083 million against US \$1,808.288 million last year while the exports to Germany were recorded at US \$1,381.369 million against US \$1,488.714 million last year, data said.

During July-May, the exports to Holland were recorded at \$1,273.035 million against \$1,323.770 million whereas the exports to Italy stood at \$1,032.475 million against \$1,052.640 million.

Pakistan's exports to Spain were recorded at \$1,333.875 million against

the exports of US \$1,271.414 million while the exports to Afghanistan were recorded at \$507.935 million against \$478.614 million last year.

The exports to Bangladesh stood at US \$605.744 million against US \$709.050 million.

Similarly, the exports to France during the months under review were recorded at US \$464.060 million against US \$530.180 million while the exports to Belgium stood at US \$505.812 million against US \$642.282 million.

Pakistan's exports to Saudi Arabia were recorded at US \$661.271 million during the current year compared to US \$457.551 million last year whereas the exports to Turkiye stood at US \$311.011 million against US \$296.618 million.

Oil up over positive demand outlook, ongoing geopolitical risks in ME

ANKARA (APP): Oil prices increased on Wednesday over a positive demand outlook in the US, the world's largest oil consumer, uncertainty about the timing of the US Federal Reserve's (Fed) rate cut, and escalating tensions in the Middle East, which threaten global oil routes.

International benchmark Brent crude was trading at 10.25 a.m. local time (0725GMT) at \$84.62 per barrel, up 0.47% from the previous trading session's closing price of \$84.22.

The American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$81.28 per barrel at the same time, a 0.55% rise from the previous session's close of \$80.83.

The market expects crude oil inventories in the US to decrease by 2.6 million. The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) will release official inventory data later in the day.

Prices are expected to rise even further if official data from the EIA show a drop in oil stockpiles. Meanwhile, ongoing uncertainties over the timing of the Fed's interest rate cut continue to influence prices.

Analysts noted that Fed officials want to see more evidence of inflation slowing down and expect growth data to be released on Thursday and personal consumption expenditure data due on Friday to give clues about the Fed's roadmap in the coming period.

Earlier on Tuesday, Fed Board Member Michelle Bowman said lowering the Fed's policy rate too soon or quickly could result in a rebound in inflation, necessitating future policy rate increases to return inflation to the central bank's 2% target in the long run.

Markets rise after WS rebound, inflation in view

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian and European markets mostly rose Wednesday following a tech-led bounce on Wall Street as investors prepared for the release of crucial US inflation data, while the yen fell back towards levels that have stirred intervention warnings from Japanese officials.

The euro also remained under pressure ahead of weekend elections in France that polls suggest will see big wins for the far-right and left-wing parties pushing President Emmanuel Macron's centrists into third.

With few catalysts to drive action, investors were jockeying ahead of Friday's personal consumption expenditures index -- the Federal Reserve's preferred gauge of inflation -- hoping a softer reading will allow the bank to cut interest rates soon.

Comments from two monetary policymakers Tuesday did little to lift hopes for a move anytime soon.

Fed governor Michelle Bowman warned: "We are still not yet at the point where it is appropriate to lower the policy rate."

"I will remain cautious in my approach to considering future changes in the stance of policy," she said in prepared remarks.

Fellow governor Lisa Cook added that she saw inflation slowing this year, and even more so next, and that borrowing costs could come down "at some point".

Their remarks were broadly in line with those of their bank colleagues, who have said they wanted to see more evidence that prices were under control before deciding to lower rates.

The Fed's so-called "dot plot" guide for rates points to one cut before January -- down from three predicted in March -- though there is much debate on whether it will make two, or even none at all.

Equity markets have been well supported this year by an expectation that officials will ease policy after a long-running campaign against sticky inflation.

However, the rally is showing signs of petering out owing to a string of data indicating the US economy and labour market remain strong, while investors are also concerned valuations may have gone too far, particularly among tech firms.

On Tuesday, the Nasdaq and S&P 500 both recovered from a recent sell-off

GCAA-UAE's assessment continued

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The GCAA team evaluated different security measures at the airport. This encompassed evaluating security measures being implemented to protect Etihad Airways flights and assessing the security measures at the Cargo Complex of IIAP, Islamabad.

The AVSEC Directorate of PCAA, under the leadership of Air Cdre (R) Shahid Qadir, provided a briefing to the GCAA assessment team regarding the security measures being enforced.

The assessment team will complete the aviation security assessment of Islamabad International Airport.

Engineers must be part of campaign for 'Made in Pakistan' products

FAISALABAD (APP): Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) Chairman Engr. Muhammad Najeeb Haroon said on Wednesday that engineers must be included in the decision-making process at the highest level for establishment of the import substitution industry and promotion of 'Made in Pakistan' products.

Addressing the business and industrial community during a meeting in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he stressed the need to enhance quality and employability of the registered engineers and said that in this connection the PEC had launched a six-month internship course for the young engineers.

He urged the industrialists to avail from this project as PEC would pay the stipend while their placement in industries would help engineers to understand the engineering related intricacies and present their workable and cost effective solutions.

He said that PEC was also funding innovative projects. "Last year, it had undertaken 250 research projects while this year it was funding 600 tasks," he

said and added that next year approximately 1,000 projects would be launched in collaboration with universities to promote research culture.

He requested the industrialists to encourage engineers working in their respective establishments to get renew their membership of PEC. Continuing, Engr. Najeeb Haroon said that 48 years ago when he passed the engineering exam, Pakistan was included in the developing country and still we are in the same stage.

He held his generation responsible for this debacle as we failed to deliver and put the country on the road to progress and prosperity.

He said that there are 255,000 engineers and we could usher an industrial revolution by exploiting their professionals' skills.

He also mentioned unprecedented technological and scientific growth during the last two decades and said that we should also avail from these developments. He stressed the need for forging close relationships between engineers and industrialists and said that young engineers should prefer to become entrepreneurs by themselves instead of running after the jobs.

He said that being a signatory of the "Washington Accord", Pakistani engineering degree is recognized all over the world.

He said that PEC is a regulatory body but it has also presented eight study reports on different sectors including energy to the federal government.

He said that PEC has also launched a Project Management Professional (PMP) certification course in addition to introducing arbitration and mediation courses duly recognized by the UK. Chairman PEC said that there are different cadres of services like police, civil and postal etc but there were no separate engineering service in our civil structure.

He said that the senate has approved the engineering services of Pakistan but still there are many hitches to recognize engineering as a separate service.

Senior Vice President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad welcomed the guests and said that FCCI has 10,000 members representing more than 100 trades, sectors and subsectors. "There are three office bearers with 28 executive members.

Similarly, more than 100 standing committees are representing different sectors", he said and added that these are responsible to identify their sector specific issues along with their viable solutions.

He said that office bearers make serious efforts for the resolution of these issues at local, provincial and federal level.

He said that textile is the iconic representation of Faisalabad. "This city alone was contributing more than 60% share towards total textile exports just a few years ago in addition to providing 40% jobs to the unemployed youth", he said and added that now the agriculture sector was also making steady progress but the exports have declined.

Correction of Name

My correct name is Ehsan Ullah, while Ehsanullah is written in the educational certificates by mistake instead of Ehsan Ullah so correction should be made please. Ehsan Ullah S/o Adam Khan, Peshawar.



In brief

Training camp for wheelchair players continues

PESHAWAR (APP): The month long Wheelchair Women and Tennis continued in full swing wherein players from all across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are taking part. Umar Ayaz Khalil, the coordinator of wheelchair tennis program, the training camp of wheelchair tennis players is going on in Peshawar and the chief executive engineer of Real Engineering Services Peshawar Sajjad Mohammad Khalil visited the camp. After meeting with the players, the coordinator along with Sajjad Mohammad Khalil held a meeting and discussed in details regarding the development of wheelchair Tennis in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They also make important announcements for the players on this occasion.

Babar, Rizwan slip down in ICC rankings

KARACHI (Web Desk): Pakistan captain Babar Azam and wicket-keeper batsman Mohammad Rizwan slipped down in ICC Men's T20I batting rankings released on Wednesday. The skipper dropped one spot to fourth place replacing Mohammad Rizwan, who has slipped to fifth spot. The fall in their rankings comes after Pakistan were knocked out of the T20 World Cup 2024 in early stage. Meanwhile, dynamic left-hand batsman of Australia, Travis Head, is the new No.1 batter as he has dethroned India's Suryakumar Yadav. Suryakumar Yadav has been the top-ranked men's batter in the T20 format since December 2023, having also held the No.1 spot on previous occasions. But SKY's tenure is no more, thanks to some stunning displays at the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup by an inform Australian. Head saved his best for last in the T20 World Cup, slamming a brilliant 76 in a losing cause against India, keeping a high-scoring game alive for far longer than looked likely after Rohit Sharma had teed up a huge score for India. The Australian has jumped four places into the top spot, with Suryakumar, Phil Salt, Babar Azam, and Mohammad Rizwan all dropping down a place to make up the remainder of the top five. West Indies' Johnson Charles is the only new arrival into the top ten, up four spots, with Afghanistan star Rahmanullah Gurbaz a place lower after going up five spots.

Joshua to fight Dubois for IBF title

LONDON (AFP): Anthony Joshua will face Daniel Dubois in an all-British showdown for the IBF world heavyweight title at Wembley on September 21 after Oleksandr Usyk confirmed he was vacating the belt. Dubois is the IBF's mandatory challenger and it was announced on Wednesday that he will go up against Joshua. Usyk, 37, became the first heavyweight to hold the IBF, WBO, WBA and WBC belts when he beat Tyson Fury on a split decision in Saudi Arabia last month. "Anthony and Daniel, listen. I know the IBF title is important to you. It is my present to you on September 21," Usyk said in a video posted on social media on Tuesday. Britain's Lennox Lewis was the last man to unify the major heavyweight belts -- three at the time -- prior to Usyk, in 1999. Two-time world champion Joshua, 34, has 28 victories and three losses during his career while Dubois, 28, has won 21 of his 23 fights.

Squash legend, Jan Sher Khan calls on KP Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): A three-member delegation led by former World Champion of Squash, Jan Sher Khan called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi here on Wednesday and discussed matters pertaining to promotion of Squash and others games in the province.

Talking to the delegation, the governor said that sports played a key role in mental openness, forbearance and inculcate discipline in youth.

He said that sports created tolerance and self-control besides earning a good name for the country.

Governor Faisal Karim

Kundi said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had produced scores of legends in different sports including Squash, Cricket, Hockey and others games and hoisted the national flag in world sports grounds.

He reiterated that Governor House would play effective role in promoting sports in the province that produced international world class players like Jan Sher Khan, Jahangir Khan, former captain in Hockey Qazi Mohib, Superstars Shahid Afridi, Umar Gul, Yunas Khan in Cricket and others.

He said that rehabilitation work on the Arbab

Niaz Cricket Stadium Peshawar was started in 2017 and was still incomplete and its dilapidated condition was not hiding from any one eye.

The governor said that it was a matter of great concern that first class cricket matches had not been held in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the last 15 years.

He while lauding the budget allocation of Sindh province for higher education sector said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had allocated only Rs 3 billion while the Sindh Government earmarked Rs 30 billion in the budget showing a huge difference of Rs 27 billion.

Robinson concedes record 43 runs in one over

HOVE (AP): Ollie Robinson rewrote the English Championship record books in the wrong way when the test cricketer conceded an astonishing 43 runs off one over for Sussex on Wednesday.

Leicestershire batter Louis Kimber dispatched Robinson for a flurry of sixes and fours, with the punishment made worse because of three no-balls in the over at Hove, near Brighton.

Robinson's unwanted feat came just two days after England spinner Shoaib Bashir conceded 38 runs in an over for Worcestershire, with Surrey's Dan Lawrence blasting him for five straight sixes.

It could have been even worse for paceman Robinson, who has 76 test wickets for England at an economy rate of 2.75, because the huge-hitting Kimber scored only one run from the Sussex player's last ball.

Batting at No. 8 in Leicestershire's second innings, the 27-year-old Kimber reached only his second county championship century from 62 balls.

His incredible innings ended on 243 from 127 balls, when he edged onto his own stumps chasing a big total, with only the No. 11 batter for company.

Kimber hit 20 fours and 21 sixes in Leicestershire's second-innings total of 445, and his strike rate of 191.33 would have stood out even in a Twenty20 batting barrage. Division Two leader Sussex won by just 18 runs — a small relief for Robinson, who took five wickets in the match.

Abdul Rahman needs to be appointed as coach

PESHAWAR (APP): To promote swimming in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa International swimmer who represented Pakistan in London Meet Abdul Rehman should be appointed as coach in the Directorate of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This was stated by former Director Sports Pakistan Wapda and Secretary General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Swimming Association Salahuddin Qazi, a former international footballer, while talking to APP here on Wednesday.

He said there are more talented players in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in the recent past the swimmers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa not only at the junior level also excelled in the swimming at national and international levels.

He said to promote swimming in the province like Mobeen Khalil, a FINA qualified coach, Abdul Rehman should also be appointed as coach. He said the coaches appointed in Directorate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are working on administrative jobs rather than delivering their best as coaches. He said the administration job is different and why coaches are appointed for the administration job, leaving the players of that particular game without proper coaches.

"How can a game be promoted without proper and qualified coaches," Salahuddin Qazi told this agency. He said a prominent swimming champion and coach from Peshawar, along with winning the honor of being the national champion, also represented Pakistan in international competitions and won numerous awards, and Abdul Rahman was appointed as a swimming coach.

Abdul Rahman has also recently applied for swimming coaching. With this, he won the sixth position in the South Asian Swimming Championship held in Islamabad.

He has won medals in competition and has a national color holder and is the first swimmer from KP to get this honor. It should be remembered that Abdul Rehman won silver and bronze medals in 2007 All Pakistan Governor Gold Cup held in Peshawar in 2006.

He also won silver and bronze medals in the gold cup competitions of 2008. Abdul Rehman won two more gold medals and two silver medals in the same competitions and he is the most experienced swimmer and coach at the moment.



HOVE: Louis Kimber goes big.

Asian Jr Squash C'ship main draw, plate event quarterfinals on Thursday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The second round matches of the Asian Junior Individual Squash Championship were played here at the Mushaf Squash Complex on Wednesday.

Squash contingents from Hong Kong-China, India, Iran, Japan, Korea, Macau-China, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Singapore and Sri Lanka were featuring in the championship.

In Boys U-13, Faizan Ali (Pak) beat Wong Ho Kiu (HKG) 15-13, 2-11, 11-9, 8-11, 12-10, Fawad Khan (Pak) beat Vidhurran Ruthiran (MAS) 11-9, 5-11, 9-11, 13-11, 11-8, Mohammad Iffat Zulkifli (MAS) beat Minki Kim (KOR) 11-6, 13-11, 11-4, Mamoon Khan (Pak) beat Wayne Issac (MAS) 11-4, 11-4, 11-4.

In Boys U-15, Muhammad Raziq (MAS) beat Rehan Alamgir (Pak) 11-5, 11-3, 11-7, Shiven Agarwal (IND) beat Rayyan Bahadur (Pak) 11-

9, 11-1, 11-5, Sim Yeak Wei (MAS) beat Ahmed Rayyan Khalil (Pak) 7-11, 9-11, 11-8, 11-9, 11-7, Shiv Kaul (SPR) beat Weung Tsung (HKG) 11-7, 4-11, 8-11, 11-4, 11-9.

In Boys U-17, Abdullah Nawaz (Pak) beat Young Wook Lee (KOR) 11-5, 11-6, 11-2, Nikhelswar (MAS) beat Lee Ka Hoe (MAC) 11-2, 11-2, 11-4, Yahya Asad (Pak) beat Cheng Ting (HKG) 8-11, 11-6, 11-6, 11-7, Azaan Ali (Pak) beat Renshi Makino (JAP) 6-11, 12-10, 11-9, 11-7.

In Boys U-19, Yusha Nafees (IND) beat M Saleh Akhani (IRI) 11-7, 11-5, 11-6, Jooyoung NA (KOR) beat Abdullah Nadeem (Pak) 11-3, 11-1, 11-2, M Ammad (Pak) beat Low Wa Sern (MAS) 11-5, 8-11, 4-11, 11-8, 11-6, Harith Danial (MAS) beat Usman Butt (Pak) 11-2, 11-4, 11-4.

In Girls U-13, Aadya Budhia (IND) beat Sadia Zhoor (Pak) 11-2, 11-6, 11-1, Lee Ka Man (HKG) beat Chanumi Nimthara (SRI)

11-9, 11-4, 11-6, Maisarah Mohd (MAS) beat Jacintha (SPR) 11-9, 11-6, 8-11, 11-8, Goushika (IND) beat Maliha Shah (Pak) 11-3, 11-3, 11-3.

In Girls U-15, Harleen Tan (MAS) beat Disenundri (SRI) 11-1, 11-3, 11-0, Lo Pui Yin (HKG) beat Ifra Shasmin (SRI) 11-0, 11-4, 11-7, Anika Dubey (IND) beat Wong Suit (HKG) 11-5, 11-1, 11-4, Yek Rue (MAS) beat Sithumi Rohansa (SRI) 11-2, 11-7, 11-9.

In Girls U-17, Enna Wong (HKG) beat Dinuli Dimandi (SRI) 11-2, 11-2, 11-2, Cheung Zhe (HKG) beat Adhita Charani (SRI) 11-3, 11-1, 11-2.

In Girls U-19, Goh Zhe (MAS) beat Sana Bahadur (SRI) 11-6, 11-2, 11-6, Leung Ka (HKG) beat Sahar Noor (Pak) 11-1, 11-1, 11-1, Parmin Nekopayantak (IRI) Valerie Kaitlyn (HKG).

The quarterfinals of both main draw and plate event would be played on Thursday.

Secretary IBCC lauds Pak-Turk girls hockey series

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dr. Ghulam Ali Malah, Executive Director of the Inter Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) Islamabad, recently concluded a successful visit to Turkey, where he participated in a thrilling three-match series between Pakistan's Inter Boards Sports hockey team and the Turkish U-16 National Hockey Team.

The series, organized by the Turkish National Hockey Federation, showcased exceptional talent and sportsmanship from both teams, said a press release on Wednesday.

The first match saw a spirited performance from the Turkish girls team, who emerged victorious with a 2-1 win. Captain Shanzee scored the sole goal for the Pakistan Inter Boards

Sports hockey team. In the second match, Pakistan's team displayed remarkable skill and resilience, securing a 1-0 victory with a decisive goal by Sawira.

The series culminated in a highly competitive third match, where the Turkish team clinched the series by winning 3-2. Sabah and Taiba each scored a goal for the Pakistan team, highlighting their determination and teamwork.

Dr. Malah, addressing the closing ceremony, praised the efforts and dedication of the young athletes from both countries. He emphasized the importance of international competitions in cultivating healthy bodies and minds, as well as promoting global friendship.

"The young girls from both countries have shown exceptional skill, determination, and teamwork, making this tournament a resounding success," he stated.

He also acknowledged the initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education for encouraging such programs, which are crucial for empowering young women in sports, nurturing healthy competition, and building international relations.

The event was a testament to the power of sports in bridging cultural divides and strengthening ties between nations.

Dr. Malah expressed his gratitude to the Turkish National Hockey Federation for their excellent organization and hospitality, and he looked forward to future collaborations that will continue to empower and inspire young athletes.

Inter Provincial Netball C'ship kicks off

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Inter Provincial Netball Championship, organized by the Pakistan Netball Federation (PNF), commenced at the Liaquat Gymnasium of Pakistan Sports Complex on Wednesday.

Pakistan Sports Board Deputy Director General Shahid Islam inaugurated the event, which has brought together seven men's and as many women's teams from across the country.

The participating teams include Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

The championship is being played under PNF rules, following a knock-out system. The winning teams will receive prizes at the conclusion of the event.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by PNF Chairman Mudassar

Arain, Secretary General Mohammad Riaz, Associate Secretary Rana Tanveer Ahmed, Islamabad Netball Association (Women Wing) President Sayeqa Rani, Secretary Rahat Sultana, and a large number of netball enthusiasts.

This championship aims to promote netball in Pakistan and provide a platform for players to showcase their skills and compete at the national level.

ICC Men's T20 WC semis match officials named

ISLAMABAD (APP): Richard Illingworth and Nitin Menon would be on the on-field umpires when Afghanistan make history by playing in their first ICC Men's T20 World Cup semi-final.

An eight-run win against Bangladesh, via DLS, secured safe passage from the Super 8s at Australia's expense, said a press release.

They would play South Africa in Trinidad on Wednesday June 26, with a place in Saturday's final on the line. South Africa were looking to secure a maiden ICC Men's T20 World Cup final appearance.

Richard Kettleborough

would be the TV Umpire, with Ahsan Raza in place as Fourth Umpire.

In the second match, Chris Gaffaney and Rodney Tucker would be in the middle as India and England meet for the second tournament running in the semi-finals.

Reigning champions England booked their place in the final four with a 10-wicket win against co-hosts USA, while India put the finishing touches to a perfect Super 8s stage with a 24-run win over Australia.

Joel Wilson would be the TV Umpire for a re-run of the 2022 semi-final, which saw England come out on

top, with Paul Reiffel in place as the fourth umpire in Guyana on June 27.

Semi-finals Match Official appointments- June 26: South Africa v Afghanistan (Trinidad), Referee: Richie Richardson, On-field Umpires: Richard Illingworth and Nitin Menon, TV Umpire: Richard Kettleborough, Fourth Umpire: Ahsan Raza.

June 27: India v England (Guyana), Referee: Jeffrey Crowe, On-field Umpires: Chris Gaffaney and Rodney Tucker, TV Umpire: Joel Wilson, Fourth Umpire: Paul Reiffel.

Women's camp for Asia Cup commences in Karachi

KARACHI (PPI): A four-day training camp of the Pakistan women's cricket team for next month's ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup 2024 started here at the Hanif Mohammad High Performance Centre in Karachi on Wednesday morning.

According to PCB information on Wednesday, twenty-eight (28) cricketers have been invited for the camp by the women's national selection committee, which will be onsite to assess and evaluate players' performances before announcing the squad for the Dambulla, Sri Lanka, event.

The players will also undergo practice sessions at the High-Performance Centre on Friday, while they will play T20 practice games at the Mo'in Khan Academy on Thursday and Saturday. The camp will be

supervised by Abdur Rehman and Hanif Malik.

Meanwhile, the PCB has confirmed the team management for the ACC Women's Asia Cup 2024. Muhammad Wasim will be the head coach, while former Test bowlers Abdur Rehman and Junaid Khan will be the spin bowling and assistant coaches, respectively.

The eight-team ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup will be played in Dambulla, Sri Lanka from 19 to 28 July. In the T20I tournament, Pakistan are placed in Group 'A' along with India, Nepal and UAE. Pakistan will take on arch-rivals India on the opening day of the tournament, while matches against Nepal and UAE will be played on 21 and 23 July, respectively.

Players in alphabetical order are: Aliya Riaz,

Anoosha Nasir, Ayesha Zafar, Diana Baig, Dua Majid, Eyman Fatima, Fatima Sana, Gull Feroza, Humna Bilal, Iram Javed, Maham Manzoor, Muneeba Ali, Najiha Alvi, Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Nida Dar, Omaima Sohail, Quratulain, Rameen Shamim, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Syeda Aroob Shah, Tasma Rubab, Tuba Hassan, Yusra Amir, Umm-e-Hani and Waheeda Akhtar.

Player Support Personnel for the ACC Women's Asia Cup 2024 – Hina Munawar (manager), Muhammad Wasim (head coach), Abdur Rehman (spin bowling coach), Junaid Khan (assistant coach), Hanif Malik (fielding coach), Rabia Siddiq (physiotherapist), strength and conditioning coach (tbc) and Waleed Ahmed (analyst).

Raducanu in first top-10 win after saving match point



E A S T B O U R N E (Agencies): Britain's Emma Raducanu saved a match point on her way to knocking out world number five Jessica Pegula to reach the quarter-finals at Eastbourne.

The 21-year-old wildcard had never won against a top 10 opponent before.

She rallied from a set down against Pegula and saved a match point in the second set tie-break before battling to a remarkable 4-6 7-6 (8-6) 7-5 victory.

"I'm pretty drained right now," said Raducanu. "I want to say thanks to everyone for getting me through some really difficult moments in that match."

Raducanu's win continued an impressive day for British women's tennis on the south coast as Katie Boulter moved past former French Open champion

Jelena Ostapenko with a confident 6-4 7-5 victory.

Harriet Dart also booked her place in the last eight, beating Sofia Kenin, a former Australian Open champion, 6-3 6-7 (3-7) 6-0.

It is the first time since 1978 there have been three British women in the quarter-finals at Eastbourne.

Raducanu emerges triumphant in rollercoaster match

Raducanu went into Wednesday's match having never won a set against a top 10 player, let alone claiming victory against one, Pegula was fresh from winning the Berlin Open on Sunday and asserted control early in both of the first two sets. Despite looking laboured at times, Raducanu managed to claw her way back from 4-1 down in the first before

Pegula eventually served it out, while she trailed 3-1 in the second set.

Again she rallied and Pegula had to dig deep to force a tie-break. The American netted a match point at 6-5, and Raducanu capitalised to take the match to a deciding set, much to the delight of the British crowd. The 2021 US Open champion grew in confidence, feeding off the support to go a double break up.

But, with a cushion behind her, the nerves started to tell and Raducanu was unable to serve out the match on two occasions as Pegula levelled. It seemed like a third chance would be wasted, too, but the Briton, who had broken again, fought back from 0-40 before holding her head in her hands in disbelief as she emerged triumphant.



In brief

Rising temperatures create health risks

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dr. Sumiyya Zahid, a health specialist, Wednesday said that due to climate changes, the temperature was increasing rapidly, which was leading to a rise in death rates. Talking to a private news channel, she said that extreme heat and humidity could be dangerous and create serious health risks, especially for infants, children, pregnant women and the elders. Without taking proper precautions, such as wearing cool and airy clothes, covering the head with a white cloth or hat, and maintaining proper water intake, extreme heat can lead to heat stroke and, in severe cases, fatalities, she added. During this hot season, it is essential to be cautious with outside food because there is often no standard of temperature control for these foods, which can lead to the growth of various germs, she further added. She warned that consuming such food can cause stomach inflammation and diarrhea, among other issues which can lead to dehydration as well.

RDA seals unauthorized properties

RAWALPINDI (INP): In line with directions of Director General (DG) Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Kinza Murtaza, the authority on Wednesday sealed 27 unauthorized commercial properties. A spokesman of RDA said that the RDA Enforcement Squad conducted an operation against unauthorized commercial buildings on Fateh Jang Road and sealed 27 properties, including five hotels, seven shops, six markets, two service stations, three plazas, a factory, poultry farm, and a workshop. Assistant Director Building Control, Building Inspectors, and other officials took part in the operation. The owners of the properties had violated the approved building plans and maps. The DG had directed the Land Use & Building Control (LU&BC) Wing to take strict measures against encroachments, unauthorized constructions and commercial activities in residential areas without any discrimination. The spokesman informed that RDA had asked the citizens to remove encroachments on their own to avoid legal action.

Crackdown continues against LPG stations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Assistant Commissioner (AC) Saddar Zone accompanied by the Magistrate on Wednesday launched a relentless campaign against illegal Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and petrol filling agencies in various areas of Saddar sub-division here. On the directives of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, both officials accompanied by the district administration teams raided at different areas and checked illegal; activities, said the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration. During the operation, an LPG filling station was found in illegal activities and promptly sealed by the Assistant Commissioner. Additionally, four individuals implicated in illegal activities were apprehended and handed over to law enforcement authorities. The crackdown on price hikes, encroachments, and other violations is an ongoing effort, highlighting the commitment of authorities to uphold the rule of law and protect consumers from exploitation. On the occasion, AC warned that safety of citizens was the topmost priority of the district government and no one would be allowed to play with innocent lives.

Mohsin Naqvi urges combined efforts against Drug abuse, illicit trafficking

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday stated that the fight against drug abuse and trafficking cannot be fruitful unless we all as a nation put our combined efforts behind this noble cause to make Pakistan a healthy society free of drugs.

"I must acknowledge that the fight against drug abuse and trafficking cannot be fruitful unless we all as a nation put our combined efforts behind this noble cause to make Pakistan a healthy society, free of drugs", he said.

Naqvi expressed these words in his message issued on the occasion of International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking day being observed today.

Given the devastating effects of drug abuse on our society, it is imperative to make this fight against

drugs a national priority, he said.

This year's theme for the day is "The Evidence is Clear: invest in Prevention."

Narcotics Minister said, "I urge all citizens to join hands with us in this critical mission. Prevention lies at the heart of our strategy, and we must prioritize preventive education, community engagement, and robust law enforcement to stem the tide of drug abuse."

Mohsin Naqvi said "Let us reaffirm our resolve to build a healthier, drug-free Pakistan. Together, we can make significant strides in safeguarding the well-being of our nation and future generations."

As we observe the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking today, it is a staunch reminder of the persistent danger posed by substance abuse within our society adding he said

Pakistan has long been exposed to its wide-ranging negative consequences on the overall fabric of the society and the associated array of problems including crime, violence, health deterioration, and productivity loss.

Recognizing the magnitude of this challenge, he said the Government of Pakistan was undertaking comprehensive measures against drug abuse and illicit trafficking in alignment with its National Anti-Narcotics Policy of 2019.

This policy encompasses a holistic approach, incorporating Drug Demand Reduction, Drug Supply Reduction, and International Cooperation, he added.

These strategic pillars serve as the foundation of our endeavors to counter the spread of narcotics and controlled substances within our nation's borders, he maintained.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Dr. Riina Kionka, Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Pakistan called on the Federal Minister for Law and Justice and Human Rights Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar. —APP Photo

EU envoy calls on law minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dr. Riina Kionka, Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Pakistan on Wednesday called on the Federal Minister for Law and Justice and Human Rights Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar.

In the meeting, relations between Pakistan and European Union and issues of mutual interest were discussed, said a press release.

The law minister assured the EU ambassador that the government was taking all possible measures for the betterment of minorities and protection of their rights, and the Parliament had also passed resolutions in this regard.

He said that provincial governments had also been urged to play an effective role in protecting the rights of minorities.

Issues regarding Pakistan's GSP-plus status were also discussed in the meeting.

Chairperson BISP emphasizes lifting beneficiaries out of poverty

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid on Wednesday emphasized the critical role of skill development in lifting the programme's beneficiaries out of poverty.

She was speaking during a meeting with Co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates. The discussion focused on key initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty through skill development and economic empowerment of women.

She stated, "Economic empowerment is a prerequisite for the overall empowerment of women. Financial independence is the key to their freedom and success. Taking beneficiaries out of poverty is our top priority, and BISP is committed to various projects to achieve this goal."

One of the major advancements discussed was the introduction of a digital system to enhance

transparency in the disbursement of quarterly stipends.

This system aims to ensure that beneficiaries receive their payments promptly and securely, thereby improving the overall efficiency of the programme.

Bill Gates commended the initiatives and performance of the BISP, calling it an excellent welfare programme for those in need.

He expressed his full support for the programme, acknowledging the significant progress made in combating malnutrition and increasing food security for vulnerable populations.

Gates stated, "I appreciate the remarkable strides made by the BISP in addressing key issues such as malnutrition and food security." Chairperson Rubina Khalid extended her gratitude to Bill Gates for his continued support of Benazir Income Support Program projects. "We are deeply thankful for the support from the Bill &

Christian community welcomes minority's rights resolution

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Christian community has welcomed the approval of the minority's rights resolution by the National Assembly with a majority.

Christian spiritual leader and Archbishop of Rawalpindi/Islamabad Dr Joseph Arshad said that the Christian community applauded the Federal Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Azam Nazir Tarrar and members of NA for tabling and approving the resolution in the National Assembly.

He also demanded the implementation of Justice@ Tasadaq Hussain Jilani points for the protection of minority rights. Joseph added that the development and prosperity of the motherland was possible only by ensuring the provision of equal rights to all citizens.

Melinda Gates Foundation, which bolsters our efforts to empower the most deserving segments of our society," she said.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq addressing an awareness campaign spearheaded by NCRC and Embassy of France

NCRC, French Embassy launch child rights campaign

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC), in collaboration with the Embassy of France, launched a comprehensive awareness campaign to address critical issues affecting children in Pakistan: child domestic labour, child sexual abuse and the enrollment of out-of-school children.

The campaign's primary goal is to raise awareness about the pervasive issue of child domestic labour, targeting the demand side while promoting education as a key factor in eliminating child labour. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), one in four households in Pakistan employs a child for domestic work, often in hazardous conditions. The campaign aims to shed light on these practices, advocating for the protection and rights of these vulnerable children.

Ambassador of France to Pakistan, His Excellency Nicolas Galey, emphasized the importance of this initiative: "France is committed to promoting children's rights throughout the world, alongside all our partners. Our collaboration with the NCRC represents a significant step towards addressing the pressing challenges faced by children in Pakistan. Our shared vision is to safeguard the rights of children and ensure they

grow up in environments free from exploitation and abuse".

Ayesha Raza Farooq, Chairperson NCRC, said "With over 26.2 million out-of-school children, Pakistan confronts a severe challenge. Economic pressures and limited access to quality education drive many children into the workforce, perpetuating a cycle of poverty. This campaign is a call to action for all of us to ensure that every child has access to their fundamental right to education".

The campaign also tackles the distressing rates of child sexual abuse in Pakistan. According to the "Cruel Numbers Report 2023" by SAHIL, 11 children are sexually abused every day in the country. The NCRC is committed to advocating for stronger legislation and societal awareness to combat this abhorrent crime.

In response to the increasing exploitation of children in domestic work, the NCRC has drafted the "Bill on the Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work 2024". This proposed legislation seeks to explicitly ban the employment of children under 18 as live-in domestic workers and introduce stricter penalties for violators. The bill will soon be presented to the Cabinet for consideration and action.

Additionally, the NCRC has conducted extensive consultations across all provinces and at the federal level, focusing on the Education Sector

Plans and the plight of out-of-school children. These dialogues have provided critical insights and recommendations, which will be compiled into a forthcoming policy brief aimed at driving educational reforms.

A key element of the campaign was the creation of culturally sensitive animations designed to raise awareness and inspire action among various audiences, particularly children and parents. Addressing issues such as child labour, child sexual abuse and the lack of school enrollment requires an approach that resonates deeply with the target audiences. The campaign ensures that the content is tailored to the local context, culturally sensitive and age-appropriate. The characters, settings, and scenarios depicted in each animation are familiar and relatable to the Pakistani community, enhancing the authenticity and impact of the message.

We urge all citizens to actively participate in this campaign. Sharing these animations on social media and within personal networks can help disseminate the message and foster collective action against child labour and abuse while promoting education. If you witness or instances or any other forms of exploitation, please report them immediately at 1099 or 1121 as your prompt action can save a life.



ISLAMABAD: A youngster jumping into a stream of water to cool himself off at Angoori during a hot weather as temperatures soared 42°C in federal capital.

315 schemes of Rwp district included in ADP

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak while briefing the study tour officers on the characteristics of Rawalpindi Division, said that total 315 schemes of Rawalpindi district were included in Annual Development Program (ADP).

40th Mid-Career Management Course Inland Study Tour Officers here on Wednesday visited the Commissioner Office.

The Commissioner briefing the officers said that Rawalpindi district is a district of seven tehsils covering 4403 square kilometers. Total population of Rawalpindi district is 5.745 million, he added.

The Commissioner informed that literacy rate of Rawalpindi district is 70 percent. 89 schemes are new while 227 are ongoing, Engineer Aamir Khattak said adding, various mega projects are currently underway in Rawalpindi.

He said, the most important mega projects to reshape Rawalpindi include the construction of the Rawalpindi Ring Road and the Dadocha Dam to meet

water shortages. Rawalpindi Ring Road has been divided into three phases, he said.

Phase one includes the construction of 38.3 km Banth to Thalian. Phase two would link this road to the motorway and phase three would include the Eastern Loop, he added.

The Commissioner informed that the target for completion of Phase-I of the project, which started in September 2023, is December 2024. After the completion, it would not only solve traffic problems but also emerge as an industrial hub, he added.

The construction of Dadocha Dam has also been started to provide Rawalpindi with 35 million gallons of clean drinking water per day. The land acquisition work of the dam was completed and revised PC-I had also been forwarded, Engineer Aamir Khattak informed.

Lai Expressway, Kutchery Chowk, Safe City Project, Water Supply Schemes, Holy Family and Benazir Bhutto Hospital revamping projects are in progress, he said adding, a mobile health service proj-

ect, 'Vehicle on Wheels' has been launched.

150-bed Rehab Center at Wah General Hospital, Upgradation of Pirwadhai Bus Stand, Slaughter House, Construction of Freelance IT and Gymkhana in all districts are prominent features of Rawalpindi, Engineer Aamir Khattak said.

He further said that efforts are underway to provide better educational facilities by giving top priority to the Education Department, adding, apart from the flagship schemes of the Education Department, Divisional Public Schools have also been started in all the districts.

He informed that the Government Islamabad Higher Secondary School No.1 Murree Road has organized special classes for transgenders for the first time. So far, 63 students have been enrolled.

In the recent anti-polio campaign, more than 900,000 children were vaccinated in Rawalpindi district, the Commissioner said. Engineer Aamir Khattak said that 57 small dams have been completed and made functional in Rawalpindi division.



ISLAMABAD: A view of a massive traffic jam clogs the Islamabad Expressway, with a seemingly endless queues of cars, buses, and motorcycles stretching as far as the eye can see. —APP Photo

Mujahid to lead delegation

KABUL (Ariana News): Zabihullah Mujahid, the IEA spokesman, will lead the IEA's delegation to the third UN-sponsored meeting on Afghanistan in Doha. This was announced after a coordination meeting on the upcoming event, which was chaired by Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. The meeting was attended by Zabihullah Mujahid, Noor Ahmad Agha, deputy of Da Afghanistan Bank, Abdul Haq Hamkar, deputy interior minister for counter-narcotics and advisers.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Zil-Hajj 20 1445 — Thursday, June 27, 2024

600,000 mt transferred

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Public Works has announced the transfer of 60,9158 metric tons over the past two months via the railway line. The Ministry reported that among these, 47,1536 tons were transferred via the Hairatan port, 68,676 tons via the Agina port and 68,462 tons via the Torkhamdi port. From the total of these transfers, a portion constitutes exports, with 33,161 tons of commercial goods exported during this period.

Faryab officials emphasize education

FARYAB (TOLOnews): Local officials and several religious scholars in Faryab consider the acquisition of modern and religious education a critical need for society.

At the ceremony introducing the new head of education in Faryab, they urged him to undertake balanced development and to provide opportunities for quality education in the schools and madrasas of this province.

Hamidullah Ershad, Deputy Governor of Faryab, said, "Our society

needs both modern sciences and religious sciences."

Hayatullah Haleem, Head of the Faryab Ulama Council, said, "For our country to stand on its feet, we urgently need modern sciences. As long as we do not study modern sciences alongside religious sciences, we are like a one-eyed camel that sees one side but not the other."

Meanwhile, Mohammad Tahir Jawad, the new head of education in Faryab, assures that he will continue his efforts for balanced development and the stan-

dardization of the educational process, addressing the existing challenges.

Jawad said, "We strive to first improve the quality of our education. Because no matter how many schools we build, how many madrasas we increase, or how much we expand our structure, if there is no quality, the effort is wasted."

Residents of Faryab urge the new head of education in this province to make greater efforts in developing education and constructing standard buildings for the province's schools.

Construction of Pashdan Dam 75% complete

HERAT (Ariana News): The Ministry of Energy and Water said that the construction work of Pashdan Dam in Herat is in full swing and it is 75% complete.

The ministry's spokesman, Matiullah Abid, said that the dam will irrigate 13,000 hectares of land and will have the capacity to produce 2 megawatts of electricity.

He added that the dam will reserve 54 million cubic meters of water.

Officials in the Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock also emphasized that water management, especially the construction of dams, will have a great effect on agriculture.

"Investing in the agriculture and livestock sectors is a very big thing and requires huge foreign and domestic investment from the private sector and will have great benefits. At the same time, our country will become self-reliant and excessive imports are prevented. Thousands of jobs will be created for our youth, which can lead to the growth and prosperity of our country," said Omid Heydari, a member of the Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock.

Economic experts also believe that conditions have improved for water management.

"There are huge water sources inside the country. To manage them, the government can play the main role, not the private sector. The private sector can play a role only in some cases. The government should see the plan of the private sector, how it manages, how much fund it has, how much it facilitates job creation and how much land it can irrigate and benefit agriculture," said Kamaluddin Kakar, an economic expert.

Doors of administrations always open to people: IEA

KABUL (Ariana News): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the political deputy prime minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), met with Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, where they discussed the need to increase coordination between different departments, expanding cooperation and increasing the effectiveness of services.

In this meeting, officials of the Islamic Emirate emphasized the need to strengthen understanding and coordination with the people and said that the doors of the central and local administrations are always open to the people.

Hanafi said that corruption in the system has been eliminated and that people's petitions and requests are implemented in a timely manner. He emphasized



that officials should expand the coverage of services by grading priorities.

At the same time, Kabir praised the efforts of the officials and departments of the Islamic Emirate and said: "There is a need for

concrete changes to be made as a result of the activities in solving people's problems and providing them with convenience."

He clarified that all the departments should work in

a coordinated and determined manner so that unemployment and poverty can be curbed and basic work is done for economic strengthening, positive social changes and infrastructure construction.

'Installation of scanners at land ports essential'



KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Commerce and Industry says the acting minister has ordered the installation of scanners at the country's border crossings that deal with imports and exports.

According to a newsletter published by the ministry, the issue was discussed at the first meeting of the leadership committee of the private sector support fund.

Nooruddin Azizi, the acting minister of commerce and industry, said at the meeting that the scanners need to be purchased and installed at land ports to facilitate the import and export of goods.

In this meeting, there was a discussion about the financing mechanism and ways to spend the private sector support fund.

Issues around collecting customs fees for imports

and exports were also discussed as was the need to open a bank account for the fund.

A decision was also taken to introduce permanent members of the support fund to the leadership committee.

In conclusion, the ministry stated that the financing mechanism and the method of spending of the private sector support fund have been finalized.

Drink plenty of water, avoid fried foods, salt for healthy kidneys

KABUL (Pajhwok): To prevent stones from developing in kidneys, doctors recommend drinking enough water and not eating too much greasy and fried food and salt.

Dr Abdul Ghani Basirat, a specialist in urology in Kabul, told Pajhwok Afghan News that kidney stones were a common disease that affected three to five percent of the world's population.

He said kidney was considered one of the vital organs for the continuation of life.

According to him, stones formation has different factors, internal or unchangeable factors.

One of the internal factors can be genetic, people with a family history of kidney stones, if one's father or mother had the same problem, he/she is more likely to suffer from this issue."

He said the second factor was age and stones started developing in ages between 25 and 50 years.

He pointed out that gender also played a role in the formation of kidney stones as men were more prone to kidney stones than women.

According to Dr. Basirat, based on research, men are three times more likely to develop kidney stones than women.

He added that one of the external factors was geographical. "Generally, people who live in hot areas, their body water comes out through sweat, which causes density in the urine and leads to the formation of stones in kidneys".

The formation of kidney stones is higher in people who live in hot areas than those living cold areas.

Dr. Basirat said another external factor was season and usually more cases surfaced in summer.

"Lifestyle has also its effect, people who consume a lot of animal protein or red meat, eat a lot of salt and don't do physical activity, they are prone to this disease and people who work in warm weather and don't drink enough water also develop kidney stones."

According to him, drinking less water is also a factor behind the formation of kidney stones.

He said drinking less than one and a half liters of water in 24 hours increased the risk of kidney stone formation.

He also said: "Research shows men are three times more likely to suffer from kidney stones than women."

Dr. Basirat said stones formation caused pain in kidneys, sometimes unbearable and fever.

He said some patients complained about other dis-

eases, but they were diagnosed with kidney stones formation.

"If the kidney stone is five to six millimeters in size, it does not need surgery and will remove with medicine and drinking a lot of water, but if larger than this size, surgery is required."

He also asked all the people to drink enough water, avoid eating too much fried food, and use less salt.

He also said reducing the use of tomatoes, chocolate and salt could help prevent kidney stones.

Mohammad Zamir, a resident of Afshar district of Kabul province, told Pajhwok that his grandfather underwent a surgery today in Ariana Complex hospital remove a stone from one of his kidneys.

He said his grandfather had severe pain and the surgery was inevitable.

Efforts being made to restore Noh Burja in Chihil Sutun

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Noh Burja area of Chihil Sutun is one of the ancient parts of Kabul, with a history spanning nearly 200 years.

This historical area was constructed during the reign of Emir Dost Mohammad Khan by his elder brother, Nawab Jabarkhan.

Noh Burja of Chihil Sutun covers an area of 20,000 square meters and includes nine towers with tall walls.

Currently, four of the nine towers remain, and among these four, two are partially destroyed.

Ketab Khan Faizi, head of the Kushani International Research Center, said: "Noh Burja, Chihil Sutun, was built by the elder brother of Dost Mohammad Khan, Nawab Jabarkhan, between 1839 and 1843. It has nine towers and covers an area of twenty thousand square meters."

Mohammad Anwar Faiez, a scientific member of the Archeological Research Center of the Academy of Sciences, said: "This must be preserved so it can be passed onto future generations to show what architectural art was like in the past."

10,000 operations performed

BALKH (TOLOnews): The authority of Abu Ali Sina-e-Balkhi Regional Hospital in Balkh province said that in 1402 (solar year) nearly 10,000 operations were performed.

Doctors at the hospital said that those operations were impossible in the past.

They asked the people to go to government hospitals for their operations.

Ashraf Rawan the head of Abu Ali Sina-e-Balkhi Regional Hospital said: "In 1402 (solar year), 9,488 patients were admitted to our hospital, for 9341 of them, major operations were performed."

Doctors at Ali Sina-e-Balkhi Regional Hospital said they can do complicated operations in the hospital.

Kamran Hamnava, a doctor said: "Fortunately, at this hospital, with all the facilities, we seriously performed the free operation."

"Now the majority of these operations are performed in Afghanistan, even those operations that are performed in Pakistan and India," said Noor Muhammad Faiz a doctor.

A patient who uses health services expressed satisfaction but said the lack of medicine and medical equipment is one of the major challenges facing them.

Ahmad Khalid, a patient, said: "Doctors help very much, I bought most of the medicine, and the hospital contributed a certain amount of it."

"I am very happy for free treatment because I do not have more money to go to another hospital," said Abdul Khaliq a patient.

Each year citizens pay billions of dollars for treatment in foreign countries.

In the construction of Noh Burja, mostly stone and clay were used, and it was once the residence of the kings of the time.

"It is called Noh Burja [Nine Towers] because it has nine towers, Queens, kings, and chiefs lived here," said Jamalluddin Siddiqi, a resident of Noh Burja of Chihil Sutun.

The towering walls of Noh Burja, with a thickness of three meters, provide a beautiful view of the area.

Meanwhile, the residents of Noh Burja called for the restoration of the towers of this historical area.

"Our request from the Islamic Emirate is that historical places should be

restored and given attention so people can come to visit these places," said Abdul Sabor Fedayi, a resident of Noh Burja.

"Serious attention should be given to these places because they are very important in the country," said Naeqeb Ahmad Rahmani, another resident.

The officials from the Department for the Preservation of Historical Monuments at the Ministry of Information and Culture speak of having plans to restore the castle.

Abdul Qadeer Temori, an employee of the Department for the Directorate for the Preservation of Historical Monuments at

the Ministry of Information and Culture, said: "The Department for the Directorate for the Preservation of Historical Monuments at the Ministry of Information and Culture has held several discussions with the Aga Khan Foundation and international companies regarding the preservation of this historical towers. Plans and maps for the restoration of Noh Burja have been created."

Noh Burja of Chihil Sutun was used as a military stronghold during the wars of the 1990s, which led to significant damage to this historical fortress. Currently, more than 26 families live in the area.

'Mes Aynak project vital for economic stability'



KABUL (BNA): In a meeting on the Mes Aynak Project commencement, attended by Mullah Abdul

Latif Mansoor, the Acting Minister of Energy and Water, Shahabuddin Delawar, the Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, emphasized the importance of the project for the coun-

try's economic stability and resource utilization.

The meeting revolved around discussions concerning natural resources, mining contracts, water management, and notably, the establishment of a power substation and its transmission to the Mes Aynak project in Logar

province.

In the end, both sides emphasized the importance of launching economic projects, particularly the Mes Aynak project, for the stability of the country. They also pledged cooperation in implementing and adapting these projects.

Minister meets Norwegian Chargé d'Affaires



KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Information and Culture, during a meeting with Mr. Paul Klouman Bekken, Charge d'Affaires of Norwegian Embassy for Afghanistan, emphasized that dialogue and mutual understanding are essential for addressing challenges and issues effectively.

During the meeting, Mullah Khairullah

Khairkhwa, the Acting Minister of Information and Culture, stated that the Islamic Emirate, based on bilateral relations, aims to strengthen and expand its relations with the world. He reiterated that dialogue and mutual understanding are fundamental solutions to challenges and issues.

Minister Khairkhwa stressed Norway's significant role in meetings and

discussions concerning Afghanistan, highlighting its effective contribution to developing and strengthening ties between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and the international community.

Bekken concluded the meeting by outlining details about the upcoming Doha meeting, underscoring its pivotal significance for Afghanistan's future.



BAMYAN (TOLOnews): In the past week, Bamyan has hosted nearly one hundred thousand domestic and international tourists. Safiullah Raed, the head of Bamyan's Information and Culture Department, states that they have plans in place to promote the tourism industry.

Raed said: "This year, during the week of Eid, about 92,000 people visited Band-e Amir, including the his-

torical sites of Bamyan such as the city of Zahhak, Gholghola, and the Buddha area."

Bamyan is one of the central provinces of the country, which, with its numerous natural and recreational attractions, draws thousands of tourists from all corners of Afghanistan and the world every year.

Several tourists who have come to Bamyan from various provinces

express satisfaction with the security on Bamyan's routes but say that more tourism facilities are needed.

Izzatullah, a tourist from Helmand, said: "It is a very green and beautiful province, and we are very happy with this trip. Additionally, the security atmosphere was very well-organized."

Navid, a tourist from Kabul, said: "It is a very good place for recreation. Our compatriots should make an effort to visit Band-e Amir."

Lifting the ban on women visiting Band-e Amir National Park and the reconstruction of roads to recreational and historical sites are other demands of tourists and residents of Bamyan.

Sayed Zamen, a resident of Bamyan, said: "A regulation should be made so that women are not deprived of tourism and outings."

Ajmal, a tourist, said: "Efforts should be made to facilitate tourism for families." Band-e Amir National Park, Qazan Folangi, the Buddha statues, the city of Gholghola, and the city of Zahhak are among the most important recreational and historical sites in Bamyan, which also play a key role in attracting tourists.



KARACHI: Activists of Jamat-e-Islmi holding placards during a protest for acceptance of their demands.

NA approves 103 demands of grants

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly (NA) approved over Rs 6,101 billion for 103 demands for grants related to various ministries, divisions, and departments for the fiscal year 2024-25 on Wednesday.

The Demands for Grants were presented by Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, and no cut motions were moved against them. The approved grants cover numerous sectors, including the Aviation Division, Cabinet, Intelligence Bureau, Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority, Prime Minister's Office (Public), National Disaster Management Authority, Federal Public Service Commission, Civil Services Academy, Council of Common Interest (Secretariat), Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Division, and Commerce Division, Pakistan Post Office Department, Defence Division, Defence services, Defence Production division, Economic Affairs Division, miscellaneous expenditure of economic Division, Geological survey of Pakistan, Federal Education and Professional Training division, Higher Education Commission, National Rahmatul-Lil-Allameen Wa Khatamun Nabiyyin Authority, National Heritage and Culture Division, other expenditure of finance division, controller general of accounts, superannuation allowance and pension, Housing and works division, Human Rights division, National Commission for Human Rights, National Commission on the right of Child, National Commission on the Status of Women, Industries and Production Division, Information and Broadcasting division, miscellaneous expenditure of Information and Broadcasting Division, Information Technology and Telecommunication Division, Combined Civil Armed Forces, National Counter Terrorism Authority, Inter-provincial Coordination Division, Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Division, Federal Judicial Academy, Federal Shariat Court, District Judiciary, Islamabad Capital Territory, Maritime Affairs, Division, Narcotic Control Division, National Assembly, the Senate, National Health Services Regulations and Coordination Devising, Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Division, Parliamentary Affairs Division, Planning Development and Special initiatives division, Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division, Benazir Income Support Programme, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Privatization Division, Railways Division,

Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony Division, Science and Technology Division, States and Frontier Regions Division, Water Resources Division, Federal miscellaneous investments and other loans and Advances, Development Expenditure of Aviation Division, Development expenditure of Board of investment, Development Expenditure of Special Technology Zones Authority Division, Development Expenditure of Establishment Division, Development Expenditures of Supraco, Development Expenditure of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Division, Development expenditure of commerce division, Development expenditure of communications Division, Development expenditure of Defence division, Development expenditure of Defence Production Division, Development expenditure of Power Division, Development Expenditure of Federal Education and Professional Training Division, Development expenditure of Higher Education Commission, Development expenditure of National Heritage and Culture Division, Development Expenditure of Revenue Division, Development Expenditure of Human Rights Division, Development Expenditure of Information and Broadcasting Division, Development Expenditure of Information Technology and Telecommunication Division, Development Expenditure inter Provincial Coordination Division, Development Expenditure of Law and Justice Division, Development Expenditure of Narcotics Control, Development Expenditure of National Food Security and Research Division, Development expenditure of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination Division, Development expenditure of planning Development and Special Initiatives Division, Development expenditure of Science and Technology Division, Development Expenditure of Stats and Frontier Regions, Development Expenditure of Water Recourses Division, Capital Outlay on development of Atomic Energy, Capital outlay on Development of Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority, Capital Outlay on Petroleum Division, Capital Outlay on Federal Investments, Development Loans and Advances by the Federal Government, External Development Loans and Advances by the Federal Government, Capital Outlay on Civil Works, Capital outlay on Industrial Development, Capital Outlay on Maritime Affairs Division and Capital Outlay on Railways divisions.

Kenya president backs down on tax hikes after unrest

NAIROBI (Reuters): Kenyan President William Ruto on Wednesday withdrew planned tax hikes, bowing to pressure from protesters who had stormed parliament, launched demonstrations across the country and threatened more action this week. The move will be seen as a major victory for a week-old, youth-led protest movement that grew from online condemnations of tax rises into mass rallies demanding a political overhaul, in the most serious crisis of Ruto's two-year-old presidency.

But some demonstrators said on social media that despite Ruto's climbdown they would go ahead with a rally planned for Thursday, with many reiterating demands that he resign. Ruto announced he would not sign a finance bill including the tax increases, a day after violent clashes between police and protesters at the assembly and nationwide left at least 23 people dead and scores wounded, according to medics.

"Listening keenly to the people of Kenya who have said loudly that they want nothing to do with this finance bill 2024, I concede. And therefore, I will not sign the 2024 finance bill, and it shall subsequently be withdrawn," he said in a televised address with lawmakers, some clapping, seated behind him. Vice

President Rigathi Gachagua asked young people to call off the protests to avoid any further loss of life and destruction of property, and blamed the intelligence services for giving the government poor advice.

"There would have been no mayhem, but they slept on the job," Gachagua said in a speech, calling on the head of the National Intelligence Service to resign. Protesters were defiant, repeating calls for Ruto to step down and vowing further action in the streets. Boniface Mwangi, a prominent social justice activist involved in the protests, called for a "1-million-people march".

"The arrogance is gone, but the lies are still there," he said on social media platform X. "Yesterday they unleashed goons and police to kill peaceful protesters. That will not stop us." Other members of the protest movement continued to post on social media using the hashtag #Rutoanethursday, or "see you on Thursday" in a mix of Swahili and English. Kalonzo Musyoka, a senior opposition leader and former vice president, wrote on X that pulling the bill did not go far enough and he called on Ruto to quit. "Many Kenyans died. Many Kenyans suffered serious injuries. It is currently beyond the Finance Bill, 2024," Musyoka said. Ruto said he would now

start a dialogue with Kenyan youth, without going into details, and work on austerity measures - beginning with cuts to the budget of the presidency - to make up the difference in the country's finances. He said the loss of life on Tuesday was "very unfortunate". Kenyan police have not responded to requests for comment about the violence. Even if Ruto's concession manages to see off the immediate threat of more unrest, it still leaves him caught between the competing demands of his hard-pressed citizens and of lenders such as the IMF - which is urging the government to cut deficits to obtain more financing.

Kenya's sovereign dollar bonds were trading largely flat despite Ruto's rejection of the finance bill. Its bonds were trading between 74.6 and 95 cents on the dollar, Tradeweb data showed, with the longer-dated 2034 maturity at the lowest price. On Tuesday, police opened fire on crowds who massed around parliament and later broke into the senate chamber and national assembly, minutes after lawmakers had voted through the tax measures and sent them on to the president. The Nation newspaper documented protests in at least 35 of Kenya's 47 counties, from big cities to rural areas - even in Ruto's hometown of Eldoret in his ethnic Kalenjin heartland.

Two TTP leaders held in Balochistan

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The Balochistan government on Wednesday announced the arrest of two high-value commanders of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) namely Nasrullah alias "Maulvi Mansoor" and Idris alias "Irshad".

"We have broken an important terrorist network. Terrorists Nasrullah and Idris have been arrested after a difficult operation," Balochistan Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove told a presser in Quetta. The arrests came a day after the federal cabinet approved Operation Azm-e-Istehkam -- a reinvigorated and re-energised national counter-terrorism drive decided by the National Action Plan's Central Apex Committee. Provincial home minister Balochistan Zia Longo told reporters that an important network of terrorism had been smashed from Balochistan and two important commanders of the banned organisation had been arrested after a difficult operation. He said that India's hand is behind the terrorist activities, India provides financial support to the terrorists, the youth who are sitting outside have been misled, the youth should recognize the enemy's intentions and do not fall for their words. Provinces and people are being harmed.

The minister also played the video statement of the arrested terrorist Nasrullah Mehsud of the banned organization, in which the terrorist Nasrullah Mehsud said that he had carried out sabotage operations on the check posts of the Pakistan Army on the Pakistan-Afghan border, in South Waziristan, North Waziristan and Dera Ismail Khan also carried out destructive activities.

Vawda tenders apology to SC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Senator Faisal Vawda on Wednesday tendered an unconditional apology to the Supreme Court, asking it to withdraw the contempt charges against him.

In his apology on Wednesday, Vawda said that he had every respect and regard for the judiciary, adding that he could not "imagine to do any act which lowers the estimation of the judiciary in any manner." He said that the matter was not about anyone's ego and one should "act more cautiously to work towards the establishment of a better image of the judiciary."

"It will be adverse to the interests of the people of Pakistan if two Constitutional bodies are seen to be standing against each other," Vawda said in his letter. He said he realised that the maintenance of a good public image and estimation of the judiciary was vital for the judiciary to be able to perform.

Despite his best intentions, he said, his press conference may have come across as objectionable. He said to ensure the prestige concerning the image of the judiciary, the respondent submitted himself before the honourable court and deeply regretted any harm that may have been caused by his press conference. "That further, in order to show his utmost respect as per the teaching of Islam for the Honourable Court the respondent sincerely apologizes unconditionally," he said.

Agriculture sector to be developed on modern lines, says Gandapur

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Regional Director of International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Reehana Raza called on Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in Islamabad on Wednesday, and discussed with him matters related to execution of Rural Economic Transformation Project in the province. Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Secretary Agriculture Javed Marwat and higher officials of Planning and Development department were also present on the occasion. It was decided in the meeting to immediately finalize all the prerequisites for initiating practical work on the project.

Both the sides also agreed to have a joint strategy to ensure physical progress on this important project as per the stipulated timelines, in addition to deciding that an effective mechanism would be put in place for coordination and close linkages between the concerned provincial departments and donor agency. The concerned authorities on this occasion were directed to immediately complete the baseline survey regarding Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Economic Transformation Project as well as to complete all the arrangements including deployment of necessary staff so that physical work on the project could be initiated without any delay.

The chief minister has directed the concerned administrative secretaries to hold forthnightly meetings in order to review progress on the projects, adding that Rural Economic Transformation Project is of vital importance for providing livelihood opportunities to the people. The provincial government would extend all out support at its part including provision of funds so as to ensure that



the project is implemented within the stipulated timeframe, said the Chief Minister.

He maintained that the developing agriculture sector on modern lines is the priority area of his government; and significant investment is being made for this purpose. He said that agriculture sector has a lot of potential and can go a long way in providing livelihoods to the needy people of this province; incumbent provincial government is working under a comprehensive strategy to utilize this potential in a beneficial manner.

The chief minister further said that at current, the government is working on 49 different projects aimed at developing agriculture sector on fast track and sustainable basis. Apart from this, Rs 4.00 billion have been allocated in the new fiscal budget for providing soft loans to the people working in this sector, he said and added that work is also in progress on other important projects including CRBC, Gomal Zam Dam and Tank Zam Dam projects, which on completion would provide all time solution to the issues of food security in the province. Similarly, he said that a number of suitable sites have been identified for the construction of check dams, thereby preserving the natural water resources as well as

providing employment opportunities to the people.

Later on, the chief minister chaired an important meeting regarding mega development projects being executed in the province in collaboration with international development partners. The participants on this occasion, thoroughly reviewed the progress on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Investment and Institutional Support Project, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated Tourism Development Project, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Accessibility Project and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Roads Development Project.

The chief minister has directed the concerned quarters to ensure that all these maga projects are completed within the stipulated timelines, adding that the government will provide funds required for this purpose on priority basis. However, he directed them not to compromise on the quality of the projects, adding that the government is spending huge resources on the projects, so the benefits should also reach the people in the truest sense. Secretary Agriculture Javed Marwat, Secretary Local Government Daood Khan, Secretary C&W Asad Ali, Chief Economist Arifullah and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

PHC seeks report from PTA within seven days

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) for immediate removal of all content deemed blasphemous as well as objectionable from the Tik Tok, (social media) platform and adjourned further hearing till 24th July, on Wednesday.

PHC divisional bench comprising of Justice SM Attique and Justice Shakeel Ahmad issued these directions on a plea filed by a citizen named Imran, who alleged that Tik Tok is using to spread religious hatred and obscene content in Pakistan.

Barrister Babar Shahzad Imran argued that Tik Tok

being used to spread religious hatred and obscene content, which was against the laws of the land and the Constitution of Pakistan. He further argued that the platform being using to promote immorality and blasphemy in the society.

The petitioner's lawyer also referred to previous court orders and government actions against social media including ban imposed on Tik Tok in March 2021. He argued that Tik Tok is continuously used to spread objectionable content and added that PTA had failed to prevent uploading of such content from the social media platform.

PTA lawyer Jahan Zeb Mehsum informed PHC that the authority had already

blocked many objectionable videos on Tik Tok. But the petitioner's lawyer argued that more needed to be done to stop the spread of such content.

Barrister Babar argued that Tik Tok had a large user base in Pakistan, with over 54.4 million users, and that the platform had the potential to be used for both positive and negative purposes. PHC also observed that this was a national issue and that the PTA should take a keen interest in it. PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice SM. Atique Shah and Justice Shakeel Ahmed ordered PTA to immediately remove all objectionable content from Tik Tok and to submit a report within seven days.

Opp MPs will not be silenced: Rahul Gandhi

NEW DELHI (AFP): India's new opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said Wednesday in his first speech since formally taking up a post vacant for a decade that his lawmakers would not be silenced.

Gandhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's chief rival, was appointed by fellow opposition lawmakers to the post in a signal of a reinvigorated challenge to the government. "The government has political power, but the opposition also represents the voice of India's people," Gandhi said in a speech in the lower house of parliament, accompanied by supportive thumps by his party's lawmakers on their desks.

"This time, the opposition represents significantly more voice of the Indian people." In the past two parliaments, Gandhi's once-mighty Congress party did not have enough seats in the legislature to qualify him for the post. Modi's first two terms in office followed landslide

wins for his right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), allowing his government to drive laws through parliament with only cursory debate.

However, the BJP won only 240 seats in this year's poll, its worst showing in a decade and 32 seats below a majority. That forced it to rely on coalition allies to build a 293-seat majority in the 543-seat lower house. Modi, 73, on Monday appealed to an emboldened opposition for "consensus" following his election setback.

Gandhi, 54, defied analysts' expectations and exit polls to help his Congress party nearly double its parliamentary numbers. It was its best result since Modi swept to power in 2014, and rescued it from the political wilderness. "We would like the house to function often and well," Gandhi told veteran BJP lawmaker Om Birla, the speaker in the previous parliament, who was reelected on Wednesday to the post.

"It is very important that

cooperation happens on the basis of trust," he added. "It is very important that the voice of the opposition is allowed to be represented in this house." Modi's BJP remains in control of all key cabinet posts, but analysts say he will be forced to seek consensus within his coalition to push more contentious legislation through parliament.

Gandhi told Birla that the speaker's role was not only to facilitate the passing of laws, but also to ensure democratic debate flourished. "The question is not: How efficiently the house is run? The question is: How much of India's voice is being allowed to be heard in this house?" Gandhi said.

"The idea that you can run the house efficiently by silencing the voice of the opposition is a non-democratic idea," he added. "This election has shown that the people of India expect the opposition to defend the constitution of this country."

IHC orders removal of Zartaj Gul from ECL

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court ordered the removal of the name of former state minister Zartaj Gul from the Exit Control List (ECL) on Wednesday. Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri of the IHC took up the petition filed by Zartaj Gul, the parliamentary leader of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC).

During the proceedings, the assistant attorney general appeared before the court

and presented the relevant case record.

The judge questioned the state lawyer why Zartaj Gul's name was listed in two FIRs in the report, quipping that the names of actual terrorists never make it to the ECL. The judge wondered why the names of political leaders are put on the ECL just for holding political rallies.

He also questioned the state lawyer if there was anyone answerable for such actions, observing that no gangster or terrorist ever

walked into his courtroom requesting to be taken off the ECL. Addressing Zartaj Gul's counsel Osama Tariq, the judge inquired whether there were only two cases registered against his client.

The lawyer replied that his client was on bail in both cases. The court, while observing that both were minor charges, ordered the removal of the name of Gul from the ECL. The court also ordered the assistant attorney general to submit a report in this respect within a week.

Houthis disappear dozens of UN, NGO staff

LONDON: Houthi authorities in Yemen must release dozens of people arrested and forcibly disappeared since May, Human Rights Watch said on Wednesday. In a report, HRW said the Houthis have forcibly disappeared Yemenis in territory they control, including at least 13 UN staff, as part of a wider crackdown on civil society.

"The arbitrary arrests appear to be based on the detainees' present or past employment," HRW added. Beginning May 31, Houthi forces began arresting employees of several NGOs, raiding homes and offices. One source said more than 60 people had been arrested as of June 12.

In all cases, Houthi forces "arrived unannounced at the homes of those they were aiming to arrest with several armored vehicles and an average of about 10 to 30 armed men," HRW said. "Almost all forces were wearing military uniforms and head and face coverings, sometimes with only their eyes showing. In many cases, the forces arrived early in the morning while families were still asleep."

No search or arrest warrants were presented in any of the cases, and Houthi forces have denied requests from family members asking for the whereabouts of their kin. No formal charges have been brought against any of the detainees. However, starting June 10, Houthi authorities began releasing a series of videos showing Yemeni men detained between 2021 and 2023 confessing to spying for Israel and the US.

HRW said there is a "high risk" that the confessions were coerced, and sources told the NGO that the timing of the releases was intended to "frame" the recently detained as part of a larger "spy network." UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk have called on the Houthis to release all UN and NGO staff.

Since the start of the raids in late May, many people in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen have fled. The existing "brain drain" from Houthi-controlled areas will only worsen as a result of the arrest campaign, one source told HRW. Another said: "Although I managed to flee ... I couldn't sleep ... I've had panic attacks every day since I fled from Sanaa ... I'm very worried about my friends and colleagues in Sanaa who are just waiting for Houthis to arrest them." — Arab News