

**Pakistan-US exercise ends**  
**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: The closing ceremony of two-week-long Pakistan-United States Infantry Rifle Company Exercise – 2024 was held at National Counter Terrorism Centre in Pabbi, said a statement issued by the ISPR on Wednesday. GOC 17 Division attended the Closing Ceremony as chief guest. Commanding General, 34 Infantry Division from United States, also witnessed the ceremony.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing National Assembly session.

## 4 security men martyred in Peshawar IBO



**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: A joint intelligence based operation was conducted by Security Forces and Police in general area Hassan Khel, Peshawar District on reported presence of a high profile terrorist.

During conduct of the operation, after intense exchange of fire, three terrorists including HVT, Terrorist Commander Abdul Raheem were sent to hell. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from killed terrorists.

Terrorist Commander Abdul Raheem was highly wanted by the Law Enforcement Agencies and Government had fixed Head money of PKR 6 Million on him, as he remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities, and was also responsible for Shahadat of Captain Hussain Jehangir Shaheed and Havildar Shafiq Ullah Shaheed on 26 May 2024.

The Wednesday's operation has avenged the heinous act and has brought the main perpetrator to justice.

However, during intense exchange of fire, four brave sons of soil; Sepoy Muhammad Idrees (age: 34 years, resident of Swabi District), Sepoy Badam Gul (age: 34 years, resident of Kohat District) of Pakistan Army and Sub Inspector Tajmir Shah, (age: 38 years, resident of: Peshawar District) & Assistant Sub Inspector Muhammad Akram (age: 34 years, resident of Mansehra District) of CTD KPK, having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat. Pakistan's Security Forces stand shoulder to shoulder with other law enforcement agencies to ensure peace and stability across of Pakistan and such sacrifices of our brave men further strengthen our resolve.

President Asif Ali

Zardari has expressed his deep grief over the martyrdom of personnel of security forces and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) during an intelligence-based operation in Hassan Khel area of Peshawar and paid tribute to their sacrifices.

He hailed the security forces for sending the high profile terrorist and other anti-social elements to hell during the operation, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

President Asif Ali Zardari also appreciated the display of professionalism and bravery of the security forces and law enforcement agencies. He said that the entire nation was standing behind its Jawans in the fight against terrorism and terrorism will be rooted out. President Zardari prayed for the high ranks of the departed souls and for the bereaved families to bear the losses with fortitude.

## 14 killed as jeep plunges into gorge in Neelum Valley

**F.P. Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: Fourteen people were killed when a jeep skidded off the highway and plunged into a ditch in Neelum Valley on Wednesday.

According to officials at the Panjgaran police station, the 14 victims included four women and three children. They said that a rescue team was dispatched to the site of the accident as soon as the incident was brought to their knowledge.

Details indicated some local people were also injured in the road mishap. Rescuers shifted the bodies of the victims to a morgue for medico-legal procedures and the injured to a nearby hospital for medical assistance. Rescue sources said that due to rain in the area, they were facing difficulties in operations.

Apart from the police and rescue teams, local people and youth also volunteered and took part in the rescue efforts. As the possible causes behind the accident are still being determined, Muzaffarabad Deputy Commissioner Nadeem Ahmed Janjua told media: "Apparently, there is no obvious cause for the car accident. There is also no trace present on the road where the accident took place, which can determine the cause behind the occurrence."

He added, "The road is perfectly smooth and in good condition." The passengers who lost their lives belonged to two families of Lawat Bala village in the Neelum Valley. The bodies were handed over to their respective kin and their funeral prayers will be offered in the village before they are laid to rest.

## Flour millers announce shutdown

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: The Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) on Wednesday announced strike against imposition of withholding tax by shutting down the mills for an indefinite period.

PFMA Punjab Chairman Asim Raza announced the decision of closure of flour mills, saying imposing tax on flour was unfathomable and unacceptable as it was an essential edible item used in every household of the country.

headed by the then chief justice Umar Ata Bandial dismissed it.

Later, Khan admitted that the filing of the presidential reference against CJP Isa was a "mistake". Moreover, the incumbent CJP has been part of various cases involving the former premier and his party has voiced concerns in this regard. PTI spokesperson, has complained of his party being deprived of justice and that even its petitions weren't being taken up by the courts.

"The PTI core committee wants that CJP Isa should not sit on benches in our cases [...] unfortunately, the kind of decisions that are being delivered are seen to be biased; the element of favouritism in case verdicts strengthens our demand," he claimed. In his four-page written submission, the PTI founder further said:

# The Frontier Post

**Cop among two killed**  
**F.P. Report**

BARA: A police constable was among two people killed and eight others injured in firing incidents in Khyber district, police informed on Wednesday. Police said tribal elder, Haji Zahir Shah along with his two guards and nephew was going to Bar Qamber Khel for a tribal jirga when unidentified armed men fired at their vehicle in Saran Sar area.

## Cabinet extends stay of Afghan refugees

Roll up your sleeves as nation wants results; won't tolerate laxity in downsizing plan: PM tells ministries

**F.P. Report**

### No decision on wheat export: Shehbaz tells National Assembly

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Wednesday approved the action plan for abolition of the Pakistan Public Works Department (Pak PWD) and decided the formation of a Pakistan Infrastructure Development Company to oversee federal development projects and Asset And Facility Management Company for repair and maintenance works.

The cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, also decided to hand over the federal government projects in the provinces to the relevant provincial departments. Similarly, the Asset and Facility Management Company would be established to carry out the repair and maintenance work currently being done by the Pak PWD. After their classification, the PWD employees would be transferred to relevant ministries and a golden handshake scheme would also be introduced for them.

Moreover, the cabinet also decided to computerise the record of all PWD properties and called for completing the transition process within two weeks. The federal cabinet was also briefed about the performance of the committee formed to reduce the government's volume. It was told that the committee would complete the information gathering about the unnecessary departments of the ministries of IT, Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, States and Frontier Regions, Industries and Production, and National Health Services by July 12 and present proposals before the cabinet by first week of August, after consultation with the relevant ministries.

Moreover, it was told that after July 19, similar information would also be sought from other ministries and recommendations would be tabled regarding the closure or merger of their departments. The cabinet granted a one-year extension till June 30, 2025, in the expiry period of POR Cards of 1.45 million Afghan refugees legally staying in Pakistan.

On the housing ministry's recommendation,

the meeting also approved transferring the building of Federal Lodges-II in Peshawar to the Election Commission of Pakistan for establishing the permanent office of the provincial Election Commission. The meeting approved the repatriation of seven accountant members of Appellate Tribunal Inland Revenue to FBR and appointing 14 officers in the tribunal benches, as proposed by the ministry.

On the health ministry's recommendation, the cabinet approved the appointment of Joint Secretary Muhammad Iqbal as Administrator of National Council for Homeopathy. It also decided to revoke the accreditation of Bahawalpur Medical College for its failure to meet the required standards of Pakistan Medical and Dental Council. The students of the colleges would be shifted to other medical colleges.

The prime minister questioned as why the college was allowed to function despite not meeting the standards and asked the Prime Minister Inspection Commission to probe into the matter. Prime Minister Shehbaz also formed a committee comprising Economic Affairs Minister Ahad Khan Cheema, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Jahanzeb Khan and PM's Coordinator on Health Malik Mukhtar Ahmed asking them to present proposals for the third party audit of the PMDC.

The federal cabinet okayed running of 53 advertisements of the medicines on television, radio and newspapers as proposed by the DRAP's committee on the subject. The cabinet approved the appointment of Javed Qureshi as a Director in the Board of Directors of K-Electric, on behalf of the Government of Pakistan. The prime minister instructed to appoint the well reputed professionals in all the non-functional and incomplete Board of Directors of government entities within two weeks. The meeting endorsed the decisions of the Economic Coordination Committee made on June 27, 2024, and those of Cabinet Committee on SOEs taken on July 4, 2024.

The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also, warning against any laxity in the implementation of the government's downsizing agenda, asked the ministries to work hard for making a difference and meeting the nation's expectations.

"I will not allow my time to waste and I am sure you will not allow your time to be wasted. The only thing that will make the difference is action and implementation. Roll up your sleeves as this is a matter of country, its resources and resolution of its issues," the prime minister said in his remarks while chairing the meeting of the federal cabinet.

## Fresh Israeli strikes kill 20 in Gaza

GAZA STRIP (AP): Israeli airstrikes early Wednesday killed 20 Palestinians in central Gaza, including six children and three women, some of them inside a purported "safe zone" declared by the Israeli military, hospital authorities said.

This second straight night of deadly strikes in the central town of Deir Al-Balah and nearby refugee camps came as US, Egyptian and Qatari mediators as well as Israeli officials came together in the Qatari capital, Doha, for talks trying to push through a long-elusive deal for a ceasefire and hostage release. Israel and Hamas had appeared to narrow the gaps in recent days, but obstacles remain.

Strikes early Wednesday hit three houses in the Nuseirat refugee camp, killing 12 people including five children, said authorities at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, where the casualties were taken. An Associated Press reporter counted the bodies. The camp, like others around Gaza, was originally erected to house Palestinians driven from their homes during the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. It has grown into an urban neighborhood in the decades since.

A fourth strike early Wednesday killed four men, three women and a child when it hit a home in Deir Al-Balah, an area that is located within the "humanitarian safe zone" where Israel has told Palestinians to seek refuge as it conducts offensives in multiple parts of the Gaza Strip. The overnight bombardment came hours after Israeli warplanes struck the entrance of a school sheltering displaced families outside the southern city of Khan Younis. The toll from the strike rose to 31 people killed, including eight children, and more than 50

wounded, officials at the nearby Nasser Hospital said Wednesday.

Footage aired by Al-Jazeera television showed kids playing soccer in the school's yard when a sudden boom shook the area, prompting shouts of "a strike, a strike!" The Israeli army said the airstrike near the school and reports of civilian casualties were under review, and claimed it was targeting a Hamas militant who took part in the Oct. 7 attack on Israel, though it provided no immediate evidence. The military blames civilian deaths on Hamas because the militants fight in dense, urban areas. But the army rarely comments on what it is targeting in individual strikes, which often kill women and children.

In nine months of bombardment and offensives in Gaza, Israel has killed more than 38,200 people and wounded more than 88,000, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. Nearly the entire population has been driven from their homes. Many have been displaced multiple times. Hundreds of thousands are packed into sweltering tent camps. Israel's onslaught was triggered by Hamas' cross-border raid on Oct. 7, during which militants killed 1,200 people in southern Israel, most of them civilians, according to Israeli authorities. The militants took roughly 250 people hostage. About 120 are still in captivity, with about a third said to be dead.

This week, Israeli troops have also been waging a new ground assault in Gaza City in the north of the territory — its latest effort to battle Hamas militants regrouping in areas the army previously said had been large-

ly cleared. Large parts of Gaza City and urban areas around it have been flattened or left a shattered landscape by previous Israeli assaults, and much of the population fled earlier in the war. But the latest incursions and bombardment prompted a new flight of people.

After Israel on Monday called for an evacuation from eastern and central parts of Gaza City, staff at two hospitals — Al-Ahli and the Patients Friends Association Hospital — rushed to move patients and shut down, the United Nations said. The Israeli military said Tuesday that it told hospitals and other medical facilities in Gaza City they did not need to evacuate. But hospitals in Gaza have often shut down and moved patients at any sign of possible Israeli military action, fearing raids.

In the past nine months, Israeli troops have attacked at least eight hospitals, causing the deaths of patients and medical workers along with massive destruction to facilities and equipment. Israel has claimed Hamas uses hospitals for military purposes, though it has provided only limited evidence. Only 13 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are functioning, and those only partially, according to the United Nations' humanitarian office.

International mediators were making a new concerted effort to push through a proposed ceasefire deal. An Egyptian official said the head of Egypt's General Intelligence Service, Abbas Kamel, went to Doha to join discussions over the deal. The official said US and Israeli officials were also attending. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief the press on the meetings.

## NAB amendments case: 'It's not about me but the country,' says Imran

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has said that the issue of amendments in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) ordinance is not about himself but in fact relates to the whole of the country.

"This was not about personal gain but the greater good of our country and millions of Pakistanis who place their faith in a system that should serve them," Khan said in his written submission to the apex court. The former premier made the request while referring to a previous apex court order.

The PTI founder's submission comes as the SC, last month, reserved its verdict on the federal and provincial governments' pleas challenging

the apex court's September 15 majority 2-1 judgement, which was announced by a bench led by former chief justice Umar Ata Bandial. In 2022, the Pakistan Democratic Movement government made amendments to the National Accountability (NAB) Ordinance which were challenged by Imran Khan in the top court.

The move comes as the incarcerated prime minister shares a rather contentious history with CJP Isa as it was his government that had filed a presidential reference against the incumbent chief justice in 2019 for allegedly owning properties abroad under his wife and children's names and not mentioning them in his wealth statement. The reference was challenged by the judge in the SC and subsequently, a 10-member larger bench

headed by the then chief justice Umar Ata Bandial dismissed it.

Later, Khan admitted that the filing of the presidential reference against CJP Isa was a "mistake". Moreover, the incumbent CJP has been part of various cases involving the former premier and his party has voiced concerns in this regard. PTI spokesperson, has complained of his party being deprived of justice and that even its petitions weren't being taken up by the courts.

"The PTI core committee wants that CJP Isa should not sit on benches in our cases [...] unfortunately, the kind of decisions that are being delivered are seen to be biased; the element of favouritism in case verdicts strengthens our demand," he claimed. In his four-page written submission, the PTI founder further said:

"Throughout my political career, I have consistently taken a stand against corruption, even at great personal risk and sacrifice, including my current imprisonment. My life's work and sacrifices have always been dedicated to the fight against corruption and the establishment of justice," Khan said.

Continuing, the ex-PM said that the NAB amendments were made with the sole intention of ending cases against those involved in corruption and that they did only terminated their cases but also significantly hindered the prosecution of white-collar crimes in the future. "By undermining the rule of law, these amendments create an environment where corruption can flourish unchecked, deterring legitimate investment and stalling economic progress — harming the very people

whose interest the legislators have been elected to protect.

"The amendments to NAB Ordinance, designed to protect the corrupt, will have long-term detrimental effects on our economy, making it harder for honest businesses to thrive and for foreign investors to trust our legal system," he said. On the issue of the abuse of powers by the anti-graft body, Khan said that the NAB Ordinance, in such cases, should be reformed to prevent such abuses. He also referred to the Toshakhana case against him and said that a neck-lace worth Rs18 million was falsely declared as being worth Rs3.18 billion. Reiterating his stance on the NAB amendments case, the PTI founder has requested the top court to dismiss the federal and provincial government's intra-court appeals.

Barrister Salman Akram Raja, a key counsel for PTI, in an X post published on Friday, June 5 said, "I am often asked why no objections are raised regarding the Chief Justice's involvement in PTI's cases." "In response to an objection raised by Advocate Niazullah Niazi, it was reminded that Imran Khan himself has appeared via video link without objection. Who was the advisor?" In the same thread, he added that there were specific legal grounds for objecting to any judge. "Previous decisions causing harm do not provide legal justification. Personal animosity must be proven separately from decisions. Leaders do not dictate my objections. I appeared for the candidates who were caused to be defeated by the party. Alone. Light a candle in the darkness," he wrote in the X post.



# CM Murad reviews progress of major development works

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, reviewing the progress of major development works in progress in the city, directed the Local Government department to expedite work on the Malir Expressway so that its first phase (one segment) could be opened for the public in the second week of August. He also directed the Water Board to start work on the rehabilitation of the Hub Canal project on the first of August so that it could be completed within a year.

The CM issued these directives while chairing a meeting at the CM House here Wednesday. The meeting was attended by Minister Local Govt Saeed Ghani, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Secretary LG Khalid Hyder Shah, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, CEO Water Board Salahuddin, PD Malir Expressway Niaz Soomro and other concerned.

Briefing the progress of the Malir Expressway project, the CM was told that the first segment of 1 to 15 km from Jam Sadiq to Shah Faisal was 77 percent. The physical progress of Segment-2 Shah Faisal to Kathore (15 to 38 km) has been achieved at par 29 percent.

Minister Local Govt Saeed Ghani informed the chief minister that the progress on Jam Sadiq Bridge connectivity had reached 13 percent. Additionally, the EBM Interchange, Pir Bukhari Nullah Bridge, Chakora Nullah Bridge and Shah Faisal Interchange have reached 96, 99, 99 and 90 percent completion respectively. However, work on Quaidabad connectivity stands at 8 percent.

It may be noted that work on the 38.681 km Malir Express carriage was started on May 12, 2022 and is scheduled to be completed in June 2025. It has three into three (six lanes) lanes and the width of the carriageway is 30.9 km. It would have six interchanges and two Toll plazas.

The CM directed the Local Government department to expedite the work on Segment -I and he would open it on August 14 for the public.

The CM was informed that his government has started the project known as the Rehabilitation of the existing canal and appurtenances construction of a new canal 100 MGD and upgrade the existing canal for Rs12.73 billion.

The CM said that with the rehabilitation of the existing canal, 30 to 35 percent water for two districts of Karachi – West, Central and Keamari would be increased. He added that with the construction new canal along the existing canal, these three districts would be receiving 200 MGDs.

Murad Shah said that keeping in view the importance of the project, he had decided to construct the project from provincial government’s resources, therefore he would not tolerate any delay in its process.

Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab told the CM that he personally monitored the entire process. He added that after hiring of the consultant, work had been awarded and would shortly be started. The CM directed the Mayor to start the work on May 1 and send him pictures. I will personally visit the site and witness the progress of the work in the mid of the August, he said.

# Khawaja Salman reviews Muharram security arrangements

LAHORE (APP):Punjab Health Minister and Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order Khawaja Salman Rafique reiterated the importance of inter-sect unity and meticulous implementation of the standard operation procedures (SOPs) across the province.

He said this during his visit to Sahiwal and Bahawalpur on Wednesday to oversee the security arrangements for Muharram-ul-Haram.

According to a handout, in Bahawalpur, he presided over a meeting to review the preparations for Muharram processions and majalis.

Commissioner Bahawalpur Nadir Chhatta and RPO Rai Babar provided detailed briefings on the security measures. It was reported that security arrangements for all 1,409 majalis and 514 processions in the Bahawalpur Division have been finalized, with 165 individuals included in the fourth schedule list.

A total of 17,000 police personnel have been deployed, and 15 companies of the Army and Rangers will be on duty during the peak days of Muharram (7th to 10th).

The minister emphasised the collective responsibility to ensure a peaceful Muharram and mentioned that special attention is being given to security across Punjab. He also highlighted the provision of water on official sabels along the procession routes and the importance of adhering to SOPs issued by the Home Department.

The meeting was attended by several Provincial Assembly members, including Dr. Rana Muhammad Tariq, Chaudhry Khalid Mehmood, Sardar Khalid Waran, and Shoaib Owaisi, along with all Deputy Commissioners, DPOs, and representatives of relevant institutions. Kh Salman also inspected the main procession route and Imam Bargahs in Bahawalpur.

In Sahiwal, the minister reviewed the arrangements for the 782nd urs of Hazrat Farid-ud-Din Masood Ganj Shakar and inspected the main procession routes. Two control rooms have been established at the Deputy Commissioner's office and along the procession route.

Kh Salman reported that all arrangements for the 1,749 majalis and 461 processions of Muharram in Sahiwal Division are complete, with 77 ulama and speakers being restricted. Additionally, 74 individuals have been added to the Fourth Schedule. Eight companies of the Army and Rangers will also be deployed for security during Muharram.

The review was attended by Provincial Finance Minister Mujtaba Shujaat Rahman, Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani, Transport Minister Bilal Akbar Khan, Home Secretary Noor Ul Amin Mengal, IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, and other senior officials.

## Seven profiteers arrested

LAHORE (APP): In a significant move to enforce official prices, the price control magistrates conducted inspections at 3,005 locations, leading to the arrest of seven individuals for overpricing fruits, vegetables, and other essential items.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rafia Haider told media on Wednesday that 10 cases had been registered for violations of government-set prices. A fine of Rs 600,000 had been imposed on 100 people over non-compliance.

The DC emphasized that price control magistrates were actively ensuring adherence to official rates. Supervision of the auction process in fruit and vegetable markets was also underway to prevent any malpractices. Administrative officers were ensuring the sale of fruits, vegetables, and bread at government-approved prices. All stalls and shops were being instructed to prominently display the rate list, and strict action was being taken against those failing to comply, the DC said.

# LESCO detects 471 power pilferers in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) detected a total of 471 connections from where customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts: Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara, on the 285th day of anti-power theft campaign.

A LESCO spokesman told the media on Wednesday that the company had also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 140 FIRs had been registered in respective police stations, while 18 accused arrested by the respective police.

On the 285th consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units. Among the seized connections 12 were commercial, 09 agricultural and 450 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 434,136 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 12,354 million.

During the 285 days of the grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned, the LESCO detected pilferage on 102,028 power connections and 88,026 FIRs have been registered against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations, while 34,209 accused have so far been arrested by the police. The LESCO has so far charged a total of 114,219,507 detection units worth Rs 4,102,473,292 to all the power pilferers.

**LESCO collects over Rs 3.94m from 91 defaulters in 24 hours:** The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has recovered more than Rs 3.94 million from 91 chronic defaulters in all five districts - Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara - on the 262nd day of its recovery campaign.

A LESCO spokesman told the media here on Wednesday that on the 262nd day, SE (Superintending Engineer) Nisar Sarwar has recovered outstanding dues of Rs 0.58 million from 12 defaulters in Northern Circle; SE Umar Bilal recovered Rs 0.45 million from 13 defaulters in Eastern Circle; SE (Central Circle) recovered Rs 0.61 million from 11 defaulters; SE (South Circle) collected Rs 0.11 million from 11 defaulters; SE (Nankana Circle) recovered Rs 0.47 million from 08 defaulters; SE Najamul Hassan recovered Rs 0.46 million from 09 defaulters in Sheikhupura Circle; SE (Okara Circle) collected Rs 0.48 million from 14 defaulters and SE (Kasur Circle) recovered Rs 0.78 million from 13 defaulters in Kasur Circle.

During the 262 days of anti-power theft campaign under the supervision of Director (Customer Services) Sarwar Mughal, the spokesman added, the company recovered more than Rs 3.28 billion outstanding dues from 106,909 dead defaulters.



ISLAMABAD: Constitution Avenue decorated with colorful lights in connection with the arrival of President of Azerbaijan on his official visit to Pakistan. —APP Photo

## Another PO arrested from Saudi Arabia

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Police have arrested another proclaimed offender (PO) after four years from Saudi Arabia. According to the Punjab police spokesperson, the fugitive, Imdad Hussain, had been wanted by the Ferozewala Police, Sheikhupura, since 2020 in a murder and attempted murder case. The Punjab Police, in collaboration with Interpol, issued a red notice and maintained continuous follow-up. The Saudi Arabian police arrested the fugitive and handed him over to Pakistan. Punjab Police team took the fugitive into custody at the airport. The spokesperson said that the total number of fugitives arrested from abroad this year has reached 50.

## Over Rs. 2m released for cops' medical treatment

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has ordered for releasing over Rs 2 million for treatment of ailing and injured police officers in Lahore and other districts.

The IGP issued Rs 1.4 million for traffic warden of Lodhran police, Muhammad Dildar, for leg operation and treatment. Rs 0.2 million were released for medical expenses of injured Constable Muhammad Mujahid of Faisalabad police. Constable Zawar Hussain was given Rs 0.16 million for cancer treatment. Rs. 150,000 were released to the injured Constable Tajamul Hussain of Sialkot police for medical expenses. Injured Constable Abdul Khaliq of Faisalabad Police was given Rs 150,000 for medical expenses. The IGP released the funds after scrutiny and approval of the Welfare Branch. He said quick rehabilitation of Ghazi personnel injured during duty is the first priority and full cooperation will continue in this regard.

## LDA seals 22 properties on violation of parking rules

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Development Authority (LDA) and Traffic Engineering & Transport Planning Agency (TEPA) on Wednesday launched an operation in Faisal Town and Allama Iqbal Town and sealed 22 properties on violation of parking and construction rules. According to a spokesman of the authority, in response to directives from Lahore Development Authority Director General Tahir Farooq, LDA and TEPA enforcement wing team took strict action and sealed 12 properties including private banks, restaurants, trading companies, private offices, grocery shops, pharmacies, furniture stores, salons, clinics, and other establishments in Faisal Town, and 10 properties in Allama Iqbal Town were also sealed. In a parallel operation against land grabbers, LDAs teams razed three properties in Gujarpura, including Plot No. 2-C, Plot No. 127-C-1, and Plot No. 572-C-1.

# Over 30,000 policemen perform duty on third day of Muharram

LAHORE (APP): On the third of Muharram, 137 processions and 3,715 majalis (gatherings) were held across the province, with security provided by over 30,000 police officers and personnel, according to the Police Department spokesman here on Wednesday. In Lahore, 15 processions and 395 gatherings were held, with security duties carried out by over 3,000 officers and personnel.

The IG Punjab said that security would remain on high alert across the province during Muharram. He mentioned that female police officers are deployed for the security of female citizens. In compliance with Punjab government directives, Section 144 is being strictly enforced. He emphasized the prohibition of jubilant firing, display of weapons, dissemination of hate material, and incitement. Security arrangements for gatherings and processions are being monitored with the help of Safe Cities Authority and district administration cameras.

The CTD, Special Branch, Traffic Police, Dolphin Squad, and other field formations are deployed for Muharram security. Actions are being taken indiscriminately against individuals promoting hate material on social media. Dr. Usman Anwar further said that Muharram control rooms established in all districts are connected to the central control room of CPO, continuous monitoring of security arrangements is going on.

# CM announces 1,224 flats for workers in labour colonies

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, during a performance review meeting of the Labour Department, announced 1,224 free flats for workers in Taxila and Sunder labour colonies.

She also ordered for disbursement of death and marriage grants totaling Rs 6 billion to labourers. These grants, which were not paid to 29,000 workers by the previous government, would now be distributed to deserving labourers.

The CM ordered for building two hostels for women workers in Garment City, saying that free accommodation would be provided to 704 women workers in Sheikhupura. Maryam Nawaz also reviewed workers' scholarship programme, establishment of labour colonies and health facility projects for workers, besides reforms in the Department of Labour, Occupational Safety and Health and implementation of minimum wage laws. She said the Punjab government has set a minimum wage of Rs 37,000 per month in the current budget, adding "It is our responsibility to protect the rights of every worker of Punjab."

The ordered to take measures to immediately take all stakeholders into confidence to get the minimum wage implemented. It is painful that every worker is not getting full wages, she said. She highlighted the non-enforcement of labour laws on domestic workers is regrettable.

CM Maryam Nawaz ordered to ensure implementation of safety protocols and standard operating procedures (SOPs) at the workplace. Ensure the use of safety gear for sanitary staff while cleaning drains and manholes, she inspected.

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Information & Culture Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, Provincial Minister Labour and Human Resource Faisal Ayub and MPA Sania Ashiq attended the meeting. Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman, Secretary Labor, Principal Secretary to CM Sajid Zafar Dal and other relevant officers were also present.

# Tunisia's Consul calls on Rana Mashhood

ISLAMABAD (APP): Consul of the Republic of Tunisia, Ammad Rasheed called on Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan on Wednesday.

The two sides held a productive meeting which discussed various initiatives undertaken by the Prime Minister's Youth Programme. They explored avenues of cooperation between Pakistan and Tunisia in youth development, said a news release.

During the meeting, Consul Ammad Rasheed expressed his admiration for the Prime Minister's Youth Programme initiatives highlighting their significant impact on empowering the youth of Pakistan.

He specifically commended Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan for his dedicated efforts in spearheading these initiatives to foster socio-economic development and promote youth entrepreneurship across the country.

Rana Mashhood expressed gratitude for the Consul's appreciation and assured him of the Programme's commitment to further enhancing bilateral relations with Tunisia.

He emphasized the Programme's ongoing efforts to create opportunities for the youth, enabling them to contribute effectively to Pakistan's progress and prosperity.

Tunisia Consul and chairman PMYP reaffirmed their commitment to continue collaboration and mutual support in promoting youth-centric initiatives between both countries.

# Minister Ramesh Arora visits FGA Bible School

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora visited the FGA Bible School on Wednesday and met Principal Reverend Liaquat Qaisar and his team.

During the visit, he inspected various departments of the school and reviewed the ongoing educational activities.

He was briefed that FGA Technical Institute, 21 literacy centres, 27 schools across the province and four stitching centres were affiliated with their centre. People from remote areas, including minority women come here to take various courses, the minister was told.

Arora appreciated the school's educational performance and said that undoubtedly minority educational institutions were playing key role in the country's development.

He assured the school administration that the government would provide all possible support for meeting educational needs of minorities.

He said that protecting the rights of minorities was among the government's top priorities and every possible step was being taken in this regard.

He said that the Punjab government was about to bring about a historic revolution in the field of IT by establishing IT cities in five cities and they were developing a digital platform in collaboration with the School Education Department so that digital literacy could be promoted from one city to another.

The school administrator thanked the provincial minister for his visit and expressed satisfaction with the government's support.



LAHORE: Rickshaw passing through rain water accumulated on road in Provincial Capital during heavy rain in the city. —APP Photo





**PESHAWAR:** Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Tordher, on Wednesday, called on Advisor to Chief Minister for Finance Muzammil Aslam, in his office at the Civil Secretariat in Peshawar. The Special Assistant discussed with the Advisor, the idea of solarization project for industries in the province to address the energy crisis faced by industrialists. The Special Assistant emphasized the need for a solarization project to provide affordable electricity to industries, which would help the industrial sector stand on its feet. The Finance Advisor asked the Special Assistant to submit a feasible proposal for the project, and assured him that work would be done on the proposal.

## KPRA has surpassed its revenue collection target by Rs6.77 billion

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) has successfully collected Rs 41.77 billion against the target of Rs. 35 billion assigned to it by the provincial government for the financial year 2023-24.

Despite the overall economic situation, the Authority has shown a growth of 37% in the fiscal year 2023-24 as compared to the collection of the financial year 2022-23 in which the total collection was Rs30.6 billion. It is worth mentioning that KPRA's revenue collection increased fourfold in the past five years.

As per the details shared by the KPRA media wing, the Authority has collected Rs36 billion from the sales tax on services, and Rs5.77 billion from the Infrastructure Development Cess (IDC).

The Authority worked on broadening its tax net and took its registered taxpayers' count to more than 22,800 by the end of this year, which also played a key role in the revenue collection growth.

Director General KPRA Fouzia Iqbal appreciated the efforts of the KPRA staff for achieving their targets. She thanked the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mr. Ali Amin Gandapur and

Advisor to CM on Finance Mr. Muzzammil Aslam for their support and guidance which helped the KPRA to achieve its targets.

She also paid tribute to the taxpayers of KPRA for their trust and compliance with KPRA. "Taxpayers are our stakeholders; we value and appreciate their support and contribution. Without their support and trust the target could not have been achieved. We expect the same level of compliance and assistance in the coming years and assure them full support from my team KPRA in making tax payments and its related matters easier for them," she said.

She also lauded the tire-

less efforts of the KPRA team in surpassing the targets. "It is a proud moment for all of us that we have not only achieved our targets but surpassed them with a staggering Rs6.7 billion. It all became possible due to the team efforts," she said adding that they are determined to work with the same passion to achieve the targets assigned to KPRA for the year 2022-23.

"If we work with the same dedication and continue with the same approach then I am sure that we will surpass the next year's target as well and will continue on our path towards making the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa self-reliant," she said.

## Barkwal highlights impacts of climate change on water resources

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture Major Retired Sajjad Barkwal while addressing the opening session of the National Workshop in Peshawar said that water has a vital role in human health, food security, basic needs and energy production.

Governments around the world are concerned about both water scarcity and excess. The impacts on water due to climate change are a pressing concern for policy makers around the world. Only 3 percent of the world's water resources are fresh water, each of which is covered by glaciers that are beyond human reach.

The National Workshop on high efficiency Irrigation Systems held at Serena hotel in Peshawar. Workshop was attended by Director General on Farm Water Management Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Hayat Khan, experts related to irrigation and agriculture, representatives of World Bank and

FIO.

In the workshop, there was a detailed discussion on the steps taken to improve the irrigation system while suggestions for the future were formulated.

Addressing the inaugural session, Provincial Agriculture Minister Major Retired Sajjad Barkwal further said that the availability of water in Pakistan is 1,000 cubic meters per person. Which counts the country as one of the water-scarce areas. The agricultural sector contributes 26% to the total GDP of Pakistan.

Despite the presence of the world's largest glacier, Pakistan is the 32nd country in the world where there is a shortage of water. 80% of the country's exports depend on agriculture. Pakistan has excellent agricultural resources and the largest integrated irrigation system in the world.

An estimated 104 million acre-feet of water is diverted to the canal system. About 62 million acre-feet of water are lost in canals.

The province is badly affected by substandard irrigation systems and unfair distribution of water. To meet the needs of the growing population, the production of crops has to increase accordingly. This increase can be achieved either by bringing more area under cultivation or by increasing the crop yield per acre. The desire to increase crop production requires special attention to the management of available water resources.

Provincial Agriculture Minister Major Retired Sajjad Barkwal while appreciating the performance of the on Farm Water Management Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said that since 1975, with the help of various international organizations, big projects have been successfully completed, which not only created awareness among the farmers of the province but also Played a key role in preventing wastage of precious water.

According to the data, out of a total of more than 87,000 hides, only 34,000

were worked on while the remaining 53,000 are in dire need of work. Considering the importance of water. From 2020, a six-year project has been launched with the support of the World Bank, which has set targets for maturing 14,000 ditches, constructing 5,000 water storage ponds, 500 land levelling equipment and introducing 11,650 acres of modern irrigation systems.

On-Farm Water Management is working day and night for the timely completion of these projects and has achieved success in meeting the set targets. However, there are difficulties regarding the installation of drip and sprinkler irrigation systems and so far no substantial results have been achieved. Today's national workshop has been organized to solve the problems faced in this regard.

He requested the participants to guide us by formulating suitable recommendations for timely achievement of the goals of this modern system.

## An appeal from society

Ahmed Khan

*Recently, like many of you, I have noticed the proliferation of doll-shaped statues lining the footpaths of Peshawar city and nearly every village in KP. These dolls are finding their way into homes and are increasingly captivating our youth, especially children, who insist on acquiring them. Brothers, this phenomenon represents a dangerous conspiracy and a threat to our faith, Islam. These dolls, despite their artistic appeal, pose a significant risk of altering the mindset of our future generations, potentially leading them away from Islam and towards ideologies antithetical to our beliefs. This trend mirrors the influences already permeating through platforms like Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and other forms of social media. As Muslims, we recognize and appreciate the role of technology in global development, information dissemination, and communication. However, in this era marked by a clash between Muslim and non-Muslim religions, we must remain vigilant against subtle yet perilous attempts to undermine our faith. Historical precedents, such as India's efforts under Indira Gandhi to promote obscenity and vulgarity through Bollywood, and the ongoing struggles faced by Palestinians against Israeli-backed American influence, serve as stark reminders of the challenges we face. Therefore, I earnestly appeal to all Muslim scholars, religious leaders, and governmental authorities to take immediate action to halt this influx of non-Muslim dolls in Pakistan. Let us unite to safeguard our Islamic values and protect our future generations from influences that seek to erode our faith.*

Anti-dumping duties

## PHC stops probe against paperboard manufacturer

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Dr. Khurshheed Iqbal stopped National Tariff Commission (NTC) from initiation of anti-circumvention investigation of Anti-dumping duties against paperboard manufacturer while adjourned further hearing till 24th July.

PHC verdict stated that the petitioner runs his business as a sole proprietorship and is involved in the business of paper, paperboard and related products. The present controversy relates to the import of the petitioner i.e. two-sided Coated Bleached Paperboard from the neighboring country China.

Barrister Qasim Wadud stated while referring to initiation of preliminary investigation by NTC in terms of section 20 of the Anti-Dumping Duties Act, 2015 on the application of the respondents; has argued that the preliminary investigation was conducted, whereby imposition of Anti-dumping Duties was recommended at the rates mentioned in the said notification on the Bleached Board importable from China.

The said preliminary investigation was followed by final determination approving Anti-dumping Duties against dumped imports of Bleached Board / Folding Box

Board with white Back into Pakistan at the rates specified in the notification for a period of 5 years with effect from February 28, 2017, vide the Final Determination Report dated 09.04.2018, by the Commission.

It was on 21.11.2019 that the matter was once again challenged before the Commission in terms of section 63 of 09.07.2024 which, inter alia, envisages for anti-circumvention measures.

The proceedings were concluded and the conclusion report, shows that the Commission has decided to continue definitive anti-dumping duties on product under review from China as per rates specified in the table given in the said report for another 5 years with effect from February 28, 2022, the judgement says.

Later, respondent No.3, which is a local manufacturer, had filed another complaint before the Board of Revenue on December 22, 2022, wherein it was the allegation of the respondent No.3 that the importers of investigated products were mis-decelerating the investigated products to avoid levy of Anti-dumping Duties.

The Collectorate of Customs Appraisement (East) Custom House Karachi had entertained the said petition, investigated the matter and physically examined the consignment by referring the samples to the Lab test. It is the opinion

of the Laboratory that the sample is in the form of one side glazed white paperboard. On test is found to be duplex paperboard consisting of middle layer off-white paper sheet composed of mixture of mechanical and chemical wood pulp.

The learned counsel for the petitioner has finally referred to the notice initiation of anti-circumvention investigation of Anti-dumping Duties for a period from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2023, in terms of section 63 of the Act and has argued that the matter in question was indeed past and closed transaction and could not be reopened under section 63 of the Act when a similar request was already decided by the Commission under the doctrine of res judicata and in support of his contentions, he has relied upon the judgment of Lahore High Court, Lahore, passed in Writ Petition No.804391/2021 dated 03.03.2022 that the principle of res judicata is equally applicable to the 4 v cases of judicial, quasi-judicial and administrative matters.

Therefore, the repeated proceedings initiated against the petitioner at different fora are tainted with mala fide. PHC's divisional bench comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Khurshheed Iqbal stopped NTC from collecting Anti-dumping duties from paper board manufacturer while adjourned further hearing till 24th July.

## PHC stops KPPSC from recruitment

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A single bench of Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhel at Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted stay order against the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission's decision to recruit contract lecturers and ordered for submission of reply.

The counsel Musadiq Khan Barki advocate argued that KPPSC had advertised various posts for contract lecturers on September 1, 2022, and the petitioner, a candidate for the Urdu lecturer post, had submitted their application and passed the written test, awaiting an interview.

However, on May 10, 2024, the commission issued a notification suddenly stopping the recruitment process for Urdu lecturers, while allowing the process for other subjects to continue on the direction of Higher Education's department, the lawyer stated.

## MoU singed between KP-RETP and KP-TEVTA

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-Rural Economic Transformation Project (KP-RETP) and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Technical Educational and Vocational Training Authority (KP-TEVTA) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) today to foster economic growth and enhance employment opportunities in the region.

The KP-Rural Economic Transformation Project (KP-RETP), a flagship initiative by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), aims to reduce poverty and enhance food and nutrition security for approximately 785,000 households, benefiting around 4.35 million individuals across 36 districts. The project specifically targets households with a Poverty Score Card (PSC) score of 0-34, focusing on women and youth through economic graduation programs, market oriented initiatives, and capacity-build-

ing activities.

The MoA aims to strengthen the institutional capacity of KP-TEVTA, enabling it to conduct comprehensive job market assessments and design vocational training courses aligned with evolving market demands. By leveraging the expertise and resources of KP-RETP, this collaboration will significantly contribute to the economic development and employment landscape in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Key elements of the MoA include:

- Strengthening Institutional Capacity: Enhancing KP-TEVTA's ability to conduct thorough job market assessments and deliver relevant vocational training courses.
- Job Market Study and Annual Outlook: Establishing a system within KP-TEVTA to undertake job market studies and release an annual job market outlook.
- Budget Allocation: Allocating PKR 14.50 million for the implementation of this agreement. Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Muhammad

Project Director KP-RETP said: "The signing of this MoA with KP-TEVTA is a critical step towards achieving our shared vision of economic empowerment and sustainable development in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This collaboration will enhance the employability of our youth and ensure they are equipped with the skills required in today's job market." Mr. Haider, Director Planning KP-TEVTA on behalf of Managing Director KP-TEVTA passed remarks: "We are excited to partner with KP-RETP to strengthen our vocational training programs.

This agreement will enable us to better understand job market trends and tailor our courses to meet the demands, thereby increasing employment opportunities for the youth in our province." The signing ceremony was also attended by representatives from the Planning & Development Department and Industries Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Workshop on Quantum Computing organized

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has prepared a master plan to familiarize the youth across the province with modern technology. In this regard special training will be provided to the youth from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to gain expertise in quantum computing.

The duration of the training in the first phase will be one year. In this series a workshop on quantum computing was organized yesterday by the Directorate of Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The special guest of the workshop was Syed Fakhar Jahan the advisor to the Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs. He was accompanied by the Director of Youth Dr. Nauman Mujahid, Iram Fatma and all the District Youth Officers from various districts.

Addressing the participants of the workshop Syed Fakhar Jahan said that the trend of quantum computing is growing rapidly and those who gain expertise in it can benefit greatly in modern times.

He stated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has prepared a master plan to familiarize the youth across the province with modern technology. In this regard special training will be provided to the youth from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to

gain expertise in quantum computing.

The duration of the training in the first phase will be one year Young people who gain proficiency in technology will have more employment opportunities.

He emphasized that the future belongs to quantum computing and keeping this in mind the Directorate of Youth will train one thousand youth from various districts of the province.

This training course will be one year long and next year the number of youths will be increased to four thousand so that more youth who are interested in this field can benefit and contribute to Pakistan's development along with their economic stability.

Earlier, addressing the workshop participants Dr. Zuhair Ahmed explained that a quantum computer

is a special type of computer system that is very fast and powerful.

This computer uses a new kind of technology called quantum mechanics information in ordinary computers is stored using bits, 0 and 1, while in quantum computers, information is stored using quantum bits and it can connect to the world through the cloud system.

He stated that the future belongs to quantum computers and the importance of this can be gauged from the fact that the United Nations has declared 2025 as the year of quantum computing.

Dr. Zuhair Ahmed mentioned that quantum computers can solve problems more efficiently than traditional computers and help youths create new applications and technologies that will be very important for the future.

He stated that the quantum computing industry is worth 9 trillion and efforts are being made to train as many youth as possible from Pakistan especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to take full advantage of this invention in modern times. He also mentioned plans to soon install quantum computer servers in Pakistan.

At the beginning of the workshop the Director of Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Nauman Mujahid welcomed the participants and said that the purpose of the workshop is to provide youth with a better life and the best employment opportunities so that they can take timely and appropriate practical steps for their bright future. At the end of the workshop shields were distributed among the guests.







## In brief

### First aid training for rescuer held F.P. Report

WANA: A two-day training session for Rescue 1122 staff of Sheikh Fatima Model Hospital, Wana, on first aid, fire safety, drowning, and emergency response kicks off, on Wednesday. The training was arranged on the instructions of Director General Rescue 1122 Dr. Muhammad Ayaz and Director South Region Imran Khan while Training Wing provided practical training to participants on controlling bleeding, CPR, fracture management, and transferring patients from one place to another in emergency situations. It is essential for every individual to be trained in emergency response to ensure a safe society and prompt response to accidents. Rescue 1122 is fulfilling its responsibility in this regard.

### Youth shot dead in Sheikhpura

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Unidentified gunmen shot dead a youth here on Wednesday and escaped the scene of crime, police said. According to details, unknown culprits sprayed bullets at a youth at Sargodha road near Jhamke stop in Sheikhpura. As a result of firing, the youth was killed on the spot and attackers escaped the scene. The body was shifted to hospital where his identity was yet to be ascertained and police after registering a case against unidentified assailants started investigations. Meanwhile, five workers were injured when a factory bus overturned due to bursting of tyre here on Wednesday, rescue sources said. According to details, bus owned by a private factory turned turtle when its tyre burst at Sharpur road near Dhamoke stop in Sheikhpura. Five factory workers including Nadeem Abbas 38, Zain 22, Asad Ali 25, Abdul Rauf 27, and Muddasir 25, were seriously injured in the accident. The rescue teams reached the scene of accident and shifted the injured to hospital.

### TMA to modernize slaughterhouse F.P. Report

BANNU: Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) demolished the old porch in Slaughter House and made the old Tyran Garder usable while slaughterhouse will be modernized and all possible facilities will be provided. The years-old porch established in the house, which was unusable and could cause a major accident at any time, was demolished and the tiran and girder in the veranda was made usable, and the work on the veranda was started again and the tiran and girder were regularly installed. He said while talking to the media that under the leadership of Mayor Irfan Durrani and TMO Mohammad Yusuf Khan, the historic Slaughter House is being renovated in this regard, the reconstruction of the old and decayed verandah of the Slaughter House is underway. The work has been started because an accident could have happened at any time due to the rotten porch, for which the old items will be made usable and rebuilt. Actions are being taken on an emergency basis.

### Smuggling bid foiled

QUETTA (INP): Security forces in Balochistan have successfully intercepted a significant smuggling operation, seizing a variety of contraband items. At a checkpoint in Kalat-Quetta, forces stopped and searched a container, discovering smuggled goods including 400 tyres, 250 cloth sacks, 500 blankets, as well as weapons and ammunition.



**HYDERABAD: HESCO workers busy in installing new electric wire on the electric pole at Fatima Jinnah Road.**

## Jl Emir launches national rights movement

F.P. Report

BUNER: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Pakistan Emir Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman formally launched the "People's Rights" movement in a grand public gathering under the lights at College Ground Swari on Tuesday evening. He gave a clear message that on July 12 in Islamabad a historical country level grand gathering will be held and the people will be taken from the rulers and Jamaat-e-Islami workers of the whole district are invited to participate in it.

JI central Naib Amir Maulana Ataur Rehman, KPK Amir Professor Mohmad Ibrahim, Buner district Amir Muhammad Haleem Bacha, Naib Amiers Buner district Advocate Muhammad Hanif Advocate, Bakht Jahan Khan, Engineer Nasir Ali, Abdul Ghafar, Alam Khan, District Qaim Akbar Khan and many other leaders spoke on the occasion. The grand gathering at Swari was organized by Jamaat-e-Islami Buner that started in the evening and continued till late at night.

It was the first of its kind in the history of Buner which was held under the electric lights and in which thousands of workers of Jamaat-e-Islami participated. Jamaat-e-Islami Central Amir Hafiz Naeemur

Rahman said that the country has a nominal form 47 and form 45 government and the name is democracy but the rule is like martial law by putting the privacy of the people at stake by passing the phone tapping law, he argued. He rejected the army operation commitment and have adopted the position that the operation so far has increased terrorism instead of ending it.

In this regard, he has advised to talk to Afghan government and also advised to talk to Afghan Emirate of Islamia and Taliban as well. He also demanded that Afghanistan government and soul should not be used against Pakistan and also offered his services in this regard. He has described the Qatar talks as a good move and supported taking more steps for peace in its context.

JI Emir demanded to refrain from further debilitating Pakistan by taking loans from the IMF and imposing taxes on IMF terms and increasing inflation, otherwise warned of dire consequences, he warned. He vowed harsh on the unemployment, inflation and spoke for the people who are fed up with load shedding. He demanded the government to take positive steps, otherwise threatened to stage a sit in in Islamabad. He also

demanding the government to introduce a uniform education system and also reminded the PTI leadership that they are in power in Pakhtunkhwa, thus should fulfill their promises.

He exposed the pro-Zardari and Nawaz parties from playing power game with the people and also warned the PTI leadership not to let another party participating in this game against the government by just making noise but actually a servant of the establishment. He warned PTI this third-party man would wrap the politics of PTI and the PTI leadership will continue to watch.

Hafiz made it clear JI has planned to build three IT Skill Campuses in Buner under the "Bano Qabil" program like all over the country. He also announced and reassured the youth not to be disappointed and assured that the country is rich in natural resources and the righteous leadership of Jamaat-e-Islami will use these resources for the people and the youth will be given special importance and priority. He asked youth they should raise the slogan that the system of oppression will not last long and must participate in the Islamabad general meeting of Jamaat-e-Islami on July 12 to raise this slogan with full force.

## Provision of public services at doorsteps directed

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: In order to address grievances and to provide relief, Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Sundas Irshad held "Kuli Katcheri" at District Complex. She listened problems of people and directed the concerned officers to resolve complaints of people at the earliest.

Administrator Municipal Committee Hafizabad Hammad Ullah, Chief

Officer District Council Hafizabad Shahzad Akhtar, Chief Executive Officer Education Muhammad

Anwar Javed, AC Munawar Hussain and other officers attended the open court. DC said that objective of holding open court on the direction of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif was addressal of people's problems at the earliest and to provide easy approach to people in the offices of different

departments without any reference or hurdle.

DC said that doors of Deputy Commissioner and other departments were open for every citizen and people could visit offices without any recommendation to get resolve their problems. She said the issues of people submitted in open court would be addressed on priority basis under people friendly vision of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

## Two robbers killed in police encounters

VEHARI (INP): Three robbers were killed in exchange of firing with police and arms, three motorcycles were recovered from possession of killed robbers here on Wednesday.

According to details, a

gang of robbers fled after snatching cash from a citizen in Machiwal area of Vehari. The Saddar Police cordoned off the area and an exchange of fire took place in which two robbers were killed while others managed to

escape. The police recovered two pistols and three motorcycles from possession of the killed robbers. Police said that efforts were underway to identify the killed robbers and to trace their fled accomplices.

## Anti-theft drive conducted in Kohat F.P. Report

KOHAT: Kohat district administration along with Pesco officials conducted an operation against electricity thieves in the Kaghazai area.

According to the district administration the action was taken as part of ongoing anti-electricity theft drive on the directives of the provincial government and the instructions of deputy commissioner Kohat.

During the operation, meetings were held with the people wherein cooperation was stressed against the kunda mafia and urged them to ensure timely payment of electricity bills to overcome the issue of load shedding. The DC says that the operation would be extended to other areas of Kohat district and it would continue without any pressure in order to eradicate electricity theft.

## Over 10 cops injured in mishap

NAUSHERO FEROZE (INP): In a tragic incident, at least 10 cops injured as police mobile overturned in Naushero Feroze on Wednesday. As per details, the incident in Bhiria City, where the vehicle carrying police personnel overturned, injuring 10, who have been rushed to the nearby hospital.

In a similar incident, at least five cops martyred while three others injured as a police mobile overturned in Hub. The incident occurred near wandar Dubai Mosque when a police mobile lost control due to a tyre burst, resulting in a fatal crash claiming five lives and leaving three others injured.

According to the police officials, the injured were rushed to District Headquarters Hospital. In a separate incident, at least three police personnel injured in a Hand grenade attack on a police vehicle in Sachal area of Karachi.

The SSP said that a hand grenade cracker was allegedly hurled at a police vehicle in Sachal Karachi which left three police personnel injured, no loss of life has been reported so far. Prior to this incident, unidentified men hurled a hand grenade at SSP's squad in Dera Murad Jamali, Naseerabad. According to police officials, SSP Naseerabad Hussain Lehri was coming back from a routine patrol along with his squad when the hand grenade exploded but no one was injured.

## Muharram security in Balochistan

# Bugti orders implementation of SOPs

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Wednesday said that implementation of SOPs for providing fool-proof security to mourning processions and Majalis of Muharram-ul-Haram be ensured.

These views were expressed by him while chairing a meeting with regard to security arrangements during Muharram Security plan devised for the routes of Muharram processions be complied with, he said. Directing divisional commissioners to form a coordinated future course of action for security arrangements in collaboration with security agencies in their respective divisions, he said that reports of security arrangements for Muharram processions be dispatched to Chief Minister's Secretariat.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Home, Mir Ziaullah Langove, Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir

Khan, Additional Chief Secretary (Home), Home Department, Inspector General of Police Balochistan, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Balochistan, Commissioner Quetta Division, Director General, Balochistan Levies Force while divisional commissioners also attended the meeting via video link.

**PM's initiative to solarise Balochistan's agri tube wells commendable:** Chairman of Kisan Ittehad, Khalid Hussain Bath has said that the decision announced by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to transform Balochistan's agriculture tube wells on solar panels is commendable.

While addressing a press conference at Quetta Press Club on Wednesday, he said that converting of tube wells to solar energy will open new venue of development and prosperity in the province. Khalid Hussain Bath said, "Balochistan has fertile

land and making agricultural lands cultivable can increase the country's resources. The province has around 40,000 tube wells, and an additional 16,000 tube wells should also be converted to solar energy."

The Chairman Kisan Ittehad expressed special thanks to Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti and the Prime Minister of Pakistan for their orders to convert thousands of tube wells to solar power. He requested Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Balochistan to take measures to promote tourism in the province, ensuring the security of tourist areas to increase the province's resources.

Khalid Hussain noted that last year's heavy rains caused significant damage to farmers, and stressed the need that the government should immediately compensate for their losses. He also called for taking precautionary measures to deal with the upcoming rains in order to minimize the losses to landowners.

## As many 8 Lakh activists registered as JUI-F members

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Provincial Elections Coordinator Maulana Ahmad Ali Darwish and Deputy Assistant Elections Maulana Amanat Shah Haqqani say that the process of party membership is going on rapidly throughout the province. A target of 15 lakh memberships has been set so far more than 8 lakh people have become members of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazal (JUI-F). The membership process has been computerized wherever there is no entry through the software then the election schedule will not be issued in that tehsil or district. Overseas Pakistanis can also participate in the membership process.

He expressed these views while addressing the press conference after the meeting held in Mardan Press Club regarding the party's membership campaign. JUI Mardan Election Coordinator Mufti Salim Halimi gave a briefing regarding membership in Mardan district said that the visits to all NC/VLC levels have been completed and the process of distribution of membership copies has been completed and in the next two weeks district this process will be completed soon.

Provincial Elections Commissioner Maulana Ahmed Ali Darwish expressed his satisfaction with the process of party membership in Mardan and paid tribute to the District Elections Commissioner and all the assistants. Enrollment copies are distributed through proper channel in camp. Verification of all copies will be done. Centralized software has been made for this purpose, if the entry software of the tehsil and district is not in the software, the election schedule will not be issued in these districts.

He termed the elections as a fake match and said that if there were clean and transparent elections, the

province would be our government today. He said that in the name of election, people have been dramatized and their opinions have been insulted. Maulana Amanat Shah Haqqani said that the workers are awake and Qadian sedition has been activated again in the country.

The Golden Jubilee of Khatam-e-Nabut will be celebrated in Lahore on September 07 in which a caravan of thousands of workers from Mardan will participate, former members of the Assembly Maulana Asrarul Haq Haqqani, Maulana Taj ul Amin Jabal and Qari Ehsan ur Rahman Mohsin. Maulana Aqil Ansari and Qari Niaz Ali were also present on this occasion.

**Contractors demanded redressal of grievances:** District President Akbar Ali Kashmiri and General Secretary Abdul Haq of the Contractors Association have emphasized on the resolution of other demands including increase in schedule rate, elimination of e-bidding, fair distribution of development funds and investigation by alleging massive corruption and commission in construction works while demanding the formation of a high-level commission for this he said that the Chief Minister had said that whoever asks for bribe should be beheaded.

Here everyone is drowning in bribery. Chief Minister should tell whose head should be torn off on Tuesday while holding a press conference at Mardan Press Club along with senior vice president of the association, A. Q. Khan, Fakhre Alam, Sahar Sadiq and other leaders. They said that the contracts are being allotted to approve people. The provincial government bureaucracy and the finance department are openly demanding bribes from the contractors in the funds rails, No work is done without 10 to 15% bribes.

He said that the contractors have been forced to leave the work due to lack of funds, bribes and bribes

of the departments. Officials of the Contractors Association demanded the formation of a high commission to investigate the alleged corruption in the June 2024 Funds Rails and said that the contractors should be given their legitimate rights and their economic exploitation should be stopped. District President of Contractors Association Akbar Ali Kashmiri said that our community is suffering from many problems, the most important problem is the funds the government should immediately release the funds, until the required funds are allocated for the ongoing ADP projects a ban has been imposed on new development projects.

## 3-day training workshop organized F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The district emergency service Rescue 1122 here on Wednesday organized a three-day training workshop for the staff of Alkhidmat Foundation and Aghosh Center.

The training wing of the rescue service educated the participants through practical demonstration as to how to act when they met various emergencies and taught them various techniques for controlling bleeding, performing CPR, managing fractures and shifting patients from one place to another during emergencies.

A spokesperson for Rescue 1122 said it is essential for every individual to be trained for a safe society and quick response to accidents. He said that Rescue 1122 was playing a crucial role in this regard, and through such training workshops, different segments of society were being equipped with the skills to handle emergencies.

# Six-month computer technology course for youths concluded

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A six-month computer information technology short course arranged by the district administration with the technical support of its youth affairs' department at Chakdara concluded here the other day.

The closing ceremony was attended by tehsil chairman Adenzai Ferooz Shah, district youth officer Malik Shahzad Tariq, Insaf Youth wing general secretary Javed Khyial, Principal of the Institute of Professional Skills Chakdara Yasir Khan and others. Certificates and diplomas were distributed among 40 youth on their successful course completion.

Ferooz Shah emphasized the importance of equipping youth with modern scientific knowledge,

professional and technical skills. He encouraged the students to focus on their studies and explore vocational short courses to enhance their skills. Dr Javed Khyial highlighted the significance of technical skills and vocational training, enabling youth to earn online and become self-sufficient.

**Govt employees:** The government employees demanded the government to issue a proper notification about the increase in their salaries and abolish the imposed taxes on government employees. The demand was made during a meeting of the All Pakistan Clerks Association (APCA) Lower Dir cabinet held at the deputy commissioner's office with its provincial chairman Muhammad Salim in the chair. The meeting was attended by representatives of other govern-

ment employees' organizations.

The APCA chairman Muhammad Salim, representative of the All Government Employees Grand Alliance Alamgir Khan, president Insaf Teachers' Association Arshad Iqbal, Agega district chairman Muzzamil Shah, Wahid Zaman and Sultan Zeb spoke on the occasion. The speakers said that government employees would never compromise their constitutional rights.

They said the government workers had been the worst affected class due to record inflation and skyrocketing prices of daily use items. The speakers demanded the government to immediately issue a proper notification regarding pay raises announced in the federal budget. They also demanded the abolishment of taxes on government employees.

**KP Tibbi conference approves names for National Council of Tibb's examination body:** The Pakistan Tibbi Conference Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president and chairman inspection committee National Council for Tibb Hakeem Abdul Wahid Shamsi has said that uniting the tabibs on a single platform was the need of the day.

He was chairing a Zoom meeting here the other day. Hakeem Shahid Iqbal from Batgram, Hakeem Gul Nawaz from Swat, Hakeem Muhammad Zeeshan from DI Khan, Hakeem Muhammad Jamal from Mardan, Hakeem Khidmat Hussain from Peshawar, Hakeem Furqan Khalid from Abbottabad, Tabiba Shakira Shaheen from Peshawar and Hakeem Noor Faqir from Lower Dir participated in the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Hakeem Abdul Wahid said that Hakeem Attallah, Hakeem Siar Ahmad and Hakeem Muhammad Suhail from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province had been included in the National Council for Tibb's examination body. He said the provincial cabinet had approved the names after due consensus.

**PhD defence:** Mr Habib Ullah successfully defended his PhD thesis under the supervision of Dr. Summiya Ahmad at the Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar and qualified for the award of a doctorate in Psychology. Prof Dr Erum Irshad, chairperson Department of Psychology and Prof Dr Muhsin Atta from the University of Sargodha served as his examiners. The public defense was attended

by faculty members and students.

**Mathematics scholar defends MPhil thesis:** Ikram Ullah, an MPhil Scholar in the Department of Mathematics, University of Malakand (UoM) on Wednesday successfully defended his MPhil thesis titled: stability analysis of Seih Model for Ebola virus disease, at the UoM. His thesis was supervised by Dr. Nigar Ali and Dr. Intiaz Ahmad, Associate Professor of the said Department. The External Examiner was Dr. Saeed Ul Islam, Professor and Dean of Sciences at, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan who appreciated the hard work of the scholar. The Chairman department of Mathematics, Dr. Intiaz Ahmad and all the teachers congratulated the scholar on achieving the milestone and motivated him for further exploration of the same area.





**LUCKNOW:** A roadside assistance worker tows away the mangled remains of a double-decker passenger bus that collided with a milk truck, near Unnao, in northern India state of Uttar Pradesh.

## South Korea politician blames women for rising male suicides

SEOUL (BBC): A politician in South Korea is being criticised for making dangerous and unsubstantiated comments after linking a rise in male suicides to the increasingly "dominant" role of women in society. In a report, Seoul City councillor Kim Ki-duck argued women's increased participation in the workforce over the years had made it harder for men to get jobs and to find women who wanted to marry them.

He said the country had recently "begun to change into a female-dominant society" and that this might "partly be responsible for an increase in male suicide attempts". South Korea has one of the highest suicide rates among the world's rich countries but also has one of the worst records on gender equality. Councillor Kim's comments have been criticised as the latest in a series of out-of-touch remarks made by male politicians. Councillor Kim, from the Democratic Party, arrived at his assessment when analysing data on the number of suicide attempts made at bridges along Seoul's Han river. The report, published on the city council's official website, showed that the number of suicide attempts along the river had risen from 430 in 2018 to 1,035 in 2023, and of those trying to take their lives the proportion who were men had climbed from 67% to 77%. Suicide prevention experts have expressed concern over Mr Kim's report. "It is dangerous and unwise to make claims like this without sufficient evidence," Song In Han, a mental health professor at Seoul's Yonsei University, told the BBC. He pointed out that globally more men took their

lives than women. In many countries, including the UK, suicide is the biggest killer of men under 50. Even so, Prof Song said the reasons behind the sharp rise in men attempting suicide in Seoul needed to be scientifically studied, adding it was "very regrettable" that the councillor had made it about gender conflict. In South Korea there is a substantial gulf between the number of men and women in full-time employment, with women disproportionately working temporary or part-time jobs. The gender pay gap is slowly narrowing, but still women are paid on average 29% less than men. In recent years an anti-feminist movement has surged, led by disillusioned young men, who argue they have been disadvantaged by attempts to improve women's lives. Appearing to echo such views, Councillor Kim's report concluded that the way to overcome "the female-domination phenomenon" was to improve people's awareness of gender equality so that "men and women can enjoy equal opportunities". Koreans took to the social media platform X to denounce the councillor's remarks as "unsubstantiated" and "misogynistic", with one user questioning whether they were living in a parallel universe. The Justice Party accused the councillor of "easily shifting the blame to women in Korean society who are struggling to escape gender discrimination". It has called on him to retract his remarks and instead "properly analyse" the causes of the problem. When approached for comment by the BBC, Councillor Kim said he had "not intended to be critical of the

female-dominated society", and was merely giving his personal view about some of its consequences. However, his comments follow a number of unscientific and sometimes bizarre political proposals aimed at tackling some of South Korea's most pressing social issues, including mental illness, gender violence and the lowest birth rate in the world. Last month, another Seoul councillor in his 60s published a series of articles on the authority's website encouraging young women to take up gymnastics and practise pelvic floor exercises in order to raise the birth rate. At the same time, a government think tank recommended that girls start school earlier than boys, so that classmates would be more attracted to each other by the time they were ready to marry. "Such comments encapsulate just how pervasive misogyny is in South Korea," said Yuri Kim, director of the Korean Women's Trade Union. She accused politicians and policymakers of not even trying to understand the challenges women faced, preferring to scapegoat them instead. "Blaming women for entering the workforce will only prolong the imbalances in our society," she told the BBC. Currently women account for 20% of South Korea's members of parliament, and 29% of all local councillors. Seoul City Council told the BBC there was no process in place to vet what politicians published on its official website unless the content was illegal. It said individuals were solely responsible for their content and would face any consequences at the next election.

## Bus collides with truck in India, killing 18

LUCKNOW (AP): A double-decker passenger bus collided with a milk truck in northern India on Wednesday, killing at least 18 people and injuring many others, officials said. The collision occurred on an expressway in Uttar Pradesh state, and 19 injured people were rushed to the hospital by villagers in the area, said police officer Arvind Kumar, adding that their condition was reported to be stable. The bus was traveling from the northern state of Bihar to the capital New Delhi.

"Authorities are in the process of identifying the victims, and a probe has been launched to determine the exact cause of the accident," Kumar added. Gaurang Rathi, a government official, said that according to a preliminary investigation the bus may have been speeding when it struck the milk truck from behind, which led both vehicles to overturn. The collision was severe enough that one side of the bus was torn off, causing passengers to be ejected from the vehicle. Images on television showed bodies scattered across the road. India has some of the highest road death rates in the world, with hundreds of thousands of people killed and injured annually. Most crashes are blamed on reckless driving, poorly maintained roads and aging vehicles.

In May, a bus carrying Hindu pilgrims skidded and rolled into a deep gorge on a mountainous highway in Indian-controlled Kashmir, killing at least 21 people.

## France's polls outcome 'negative' for credit rating

LONDON (Reuters):The outcome of France's parliamentary election is negative for the country's credit rating, Moody's has warned, as a grand coalition would make decision-making and the task of bringing its debt under control more difficult.

France is facing complex negotiations to form a government after a left-wing surge in elections on Sunday blocked Marine Le Pen's quest to bring the far right to power. Possibilities include the left forming a minority government - which would be at the mercy of a no confidence vote from rivals unless they reach deals - and the cobbling together of an unwieldy coalition of parties with almost no common ground.

"In light of the constraints that any future government faces, we are unlikely to see expenditure-based fiscal consolidation in 2025," Moody's said in a note, echoing many of the concerns S&P Global voiced. France is also unlikely to be able to push through further tax hikes, given that its tax-to-GDP ratio is already the highest in the OECD, Moody's added. "Hence, the fiscal implications of the election outcome are credit negative," said the ratings agency, whose current Aa2 "stable" outlook rating on France is a notch higher than both S&P and Fitch. France's spending trajectory means its general government deficit is not likely to drop below 4% of GDP until 2027, by which point its near 110% debt-to-GDP ratio will have ballooned a few more percentage points. Moody's pinpointed a trio of triggers for a rating change. The outlook would move to negative if, for example, the fiscal and debt numbers looked likely to be materially worse than previously expected, in particular its interest payments relative to revenue and GDP. There was a weakening commitment to fiscal consolidation. \* There was a reversal of the labour market liberalisation and pension reforms of the last seven years that Moody's thought would materially dampen the country's medium-term growth potential and/or fiscal trajectory. "The current unprecedented circumstances will test French institutions and policy effectiveness," Moody's said.

## Search intensifies for buried in Indonesian landslide

PALU (AP): Search efforts for those trapped in a deadly landslide intensified Wednesday, with more rescuers deployed to search an unauthorized gold mine on Indonesia's Sulawesi island that saw 23 deaths over the weekend.

More than 100 villagers were digging for grains of gold Sunday in the remote and hilly village of Bone Bolango in Gorontalo province when tons of mud plunged down the surrounding hills and buried their makeshift camps. The provincial Search and Rescue Office said Wednesday that 81 villagers managed to escape from the landslide, several of them pulled out by rescuers, including 18 with injuries. It said 23 bodies were recovered, including a 4-year-old boy, while 33 others were missing.

More than 1,000 personnel, including army troops, were deployed to increase the strength of search efforts, said Edy Prakoso, the National Search and Rescue Agency's operation director. He said the Indonesian Air Force would send a helicopter as it was the only way to speed up the rescue operation that has been hampered by

heavy rains, unstable soil, and rugged terrain. Informal mining operations are common in Indonesia, providing a tenuous livelihood to thousands laboring in conditions that pose a high risk of serious injury or death. Landslides, flooding and collapses of tunnels are just some of the hazards facing miners. Much of gold ore processing involves highly toxic mercury and cyanide with workers frequently using little or no protection.

The country's last major mining-related accident occurred in April 2022, when a landslide crashed onto an illegal gold mine in North Sumatra's Mandailing Natal district, killing 12 women who were looking for gold. Environmental activists have campaigned for years to shut down such operation across the country, especially on Sulawesi, where the practice has grown in recent years. Sunday's landslide reignited their outcries. "The local government which has allowed illegal gold mining activities in this area to continue has contributed to the deadly disaster," said Muhammad Jamil, who heads legal division of the

Mining Advocacy Network, an environment watchdog known as JATAM.

He said that gold mining involves many people who share blame, from those working on the ground all the way up to officials in the local council and even the police. "This mafia network appears to have helped shield the miners from law enforcement, even as they tear up protected forests," Jamil said, "When natural resources such as rivers, forests, land and the sea are damaged, it will be a complete loss to the country's economy." Ferdy Hasiman, a mining and energy researcher from Alpha Research and Datacenter, said the proliferation of the pit mines has long been blamed for environmental damage in upstream areas that has in turn exacerbated flooding and landslides downstream. "Flash floods and landslides would persist if illegal mining and the deforestation in the practice continue," Hasiman said, "We call on the local and central government to expand their efforts to shut down illegal gold mining across the country."

## Russian court orders arrest of opposition leader

MOSCOW (AP): A court in Russia ordered the arrest of the widow of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny during a hearing that was conducted in absentia as part of a sweeping Kremlin crackdown on the opposition.

Yulia Navalnaya, who lives abroad, would face arrest if and when she returns to Russia. Moscow's Basmanny District Court ruled to arrest Navalnaya on charges of alleged involvement in an extremist group.

Navalny, the fiercest political foe of Russian President Vladimir Putin, died in February in an Arctic penal colony while serving a 19-year sentence on extremism charges that he had condemned as politically motivated. Authorities said he became ill after a walk but have otherwise given no details on

Navalny's death.

Navalny was imprisoned after returning to Moscow in January 2021 from Germany, where he had been recuperating from the 2020 nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin.

Navalnaya has accused Putin of her husband's death and vowed to continue his activities. Russian officials have vehemently denied involvement in Navalny's poisoning and death. Navalnaya mocked the court's order on social media platform X, saying that it's Putin who should be prosecuted. Her spokesperson, Kira Yarmysh, described the court's ruling as a recognition of her "merits." German Chancellor Olaf Scholz noted on X that Navalnaya is carrying on her husband's legacy and

denounced the Moscow court's ruling as "an arrest warrant against the desire for freedom and democracy." Russian authorities haven't specified the charges against Navalnaya. They appear to relate to authorities designating Navalny's Foundation for Fighting Corruption as an extremist organization. The 2021 court ruling that outlawed Navalny's group forced his close associates and team members to leave Russia. A number of journalists have been jailed on similar charges in recent months in relation to their coverage of Navalny.

The Kremlin's crackdown on opposition activists, independent journalists and ordinary Russians critical of it has intensified after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

## Trump seizes on Biden's re-election woes

WASHINGTON: Republican presidential contender Donald Trump has seized on the tumult surrounding United States President Joe Biden's re-election campaign, sarcastically praising the Democrat for choosing his vice president as an "insurance policy" against him being replaced. Addressing supporters in Miami, Florida, Trump said Biden had made the "brilliant decision" to appoint Vice President Kamala Harris as his running mate to avoid any challenge to his faltering candidacy.

"If Joe had picked someone even halfway competent. They would have bounced him from office years ago, but they can't because she's got to be their second choice," the former president said, claiming Democrats are having a "full-scale breakdown" over who should be the nominee. Trump also challenged Biden to "redeem" himself after his stumbling debate performance last month by participating in another debate or a round of golf.

"Let's do another debate this week so that sleepy Joe Biden can prove to everyone all over the world that he has what it takes to be president but this time, it will be man to man, no moderators, no holds barred, just name the place anytime, anywhere," he said. The Biden campaign said the president was too busy leading the country to respond to Trump's "weird antics". "We'd challenge Donald Trump to create jobs, but he lost three million. We'd challenge Donald Trump to stand up to Putin, but he bent the knee to him," Biden campaign spokesman James Singer said. "We'd challenge Donald Trump to follow the law, but he breaks it." Biden and his team have been scrambling to assuage doubts about his electability since the January 27 debate, during

which the 81-year-old Democrat repeatedly tripled over his words and appeared to lose his train of thought.

Democratic lawmakers met privately to discuss Biden's campaign amid persistent concerns about physical and mental fitness. While top Democrats, including Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, reiterated their support for Biden, Mikie Sherrill, a House representative from New Jersey, became the seventh elected member of her party to publicly call on him to step aside. Biden, who is trailing Trump nationally and in key swing states in the polls, has repeatedly dismissed calls for him to quit the race, and it is unlikely that Democrats would be able to force him out against his will. Harris has been widely tipped as the most likely replacement for Biden if he does step aside, although she has not fared much better than her boss in the polls.

## Tanzanian artist who burnt president's picture freed

MBEYA (BBC): A young Tanzanian portrait artist who was convicted last week of cybercrimes has been released from prison after social media users raised more than \$2,000 (£1,600) to pay his fine. Shadrack Chaula was ordered by a court to pay the fine or face two years in prison after he admitted recording a video that went viral on social media, showing him burning a picture of President Samia Suluhu Hassan while insulting her.

"Thank you very much fellow Tanzanians for coming to my rescue," Mr Chaula told journalists shortly after his release. The case sparked an uproar in the country, with some lawyers saying the 24-year-old painter did not break any law by burning the picture. Police said they arrested him for using "strong words" against President Samia in the TikTok video he recorded in Ntokela village near the south-western city of Mbeya. When he appeared

in court last Thursday, Mr Chaula was charged with spreading false information about the president, contravening the country's cybercrime laws. The court ruled that his actions constituted cyber-harassment and incitement. Mr Chaula admitted committing the crime. Critics said the sentence was too harsh but the prosecution had pushed for a more severe penalty, saying this was necessary to deter others from "disrespecting" the president.

## Two armies accused of backing DR Congo's feared rebels

DR CONGO (BBC): Uganda is backing M23 rebels fighting across its border in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, UN experts say, warning that a rapidly escalating crisis "carried the risk of triggering a wider regional conflict".

The well-armed M23 is often accused of being a Rwandan proxy force, but the UN experts have put forward evidence to suggest that it also has Uganda's support. Uganda has denied the allegations in the UN report that also accuses Rwanda of having up to 4,000 troops in DR Congo fighting alongside the rebels. In response, Rwanda did not deny the allegation and told the BBC the DR Congo government lacked the political will to resolve the crisis in its mineral-rich east, which has witnessed decades of unrest.

The UN experts said that Rwandan troops were "matching if not surpassing" the number of M23 fighters, thought to be at

around 3,000 in mid-April, on Congolese soil. Rwanda has long been angered by the presence of ethnic Hutu rebels, known as the FDLR, in eastern DR Congo - joint operations in the past have failed to eliminate them. The group's leaders are accused of taking part in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, in which 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed. The Tutsi-led M23 first emerged with great ferocity in 2012, only to be defeated the following year with the help of a multinational force when most of its fighters fled to camps in Rwanda and Uganda.

They began to rearm three years ago and the group now controls swathes of territory in the North Kivu province, where the UN report says M23 has installed a parallel administration. Three million people are estimated to have fled their homes because of the fighting. The UN experts' 293-page report, which covers events up until mid-April, has just

been published - but it was first handed to the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee and then sent to the UN Security Council last month. Their report also warned that Burundi's military had been involved in operations with the Congolese army against the M23 and Rwandan soldiers, exacerbating regional tensions.

DR Congo's Foreign Minister Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner said she was concerned by the allegations of collusion between the Uganda army, M23 and Rwandan military. She said the issue would be taken up with Uganda with whom DR Congo has been involved in a joint offensive against another rebel group, the Islamic State-linked Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which attacks both countries. But the UN report said it was likely that Uganda was allowing M23 supplies and new recruits through its territory. "Since the resurgence of the M23 crisis, Uganda has not pre-

vented the presence of M23 and Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) troops on its territory or passage through it," it said. Ugandan military intelligence officers had also been in the Congolese town of Bunagana since at least late 2023 "to co-ordinate with M23 leaders, provide logistics and transport M23 leaders to M23-controlled area". The report also noted that M23 leaders, including its military chief Sultani Makenga - who is subject to a UN sanctions travel ban - had travelled to Uganda for meetings. Uganda deputy military spokesman, Deo Akiki, told the Reuters news agency the allegations in the report were false: "It would be mad for us to destabilise the same area we are sacrificing it all to have it stable." But the report further details Uganda's alleged support for the Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC) - a newly created movement regarded by some analysts as the political arm of the M23.

## Outgoing Israeli general condemns settler violence in occupied West Bank

TEL AVIV: An Israeli general has condemned the government's decision to expand settlements in the occupied West Bank and criticised rising levels of settler violence in the region, according to Israeli media reports. Major General Yehuda Fox, the outgoing head of Israel's central command, said at a departure ceremony that Israeli settlers have engaged in "nationalist crime" through violence in the occupied West Bank, which he said has "sowed chaos and fear in Palestinian residents who did not pose any threat." "This is not Judaism in my eyes. At least not the one I grew up with in my father and mother's house. This is not the way of the

Torah. It is adopting the ways of the enemy," Fox said.

Israeli forces and settlers have increased increased raids on Palestinian towns and villages in the occupied West Bank since Israel's war in Gaza began in October. Since October, at least 553 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces and settlers in the territory, and 9,510 have been detained, according to Palestinian officials. Fox's comments come just days after Israel's government approved 5,295 new housing units in a host of illegal settlements across the occupied West Bank. About 3 million Palestinians live in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and more than

500,000 Israelis reside in more than 100 settlements across the territory. The expansion of settlements remains a major roadblock to since-halted plans outlined in the Oslo Accords that promised the gradual transfer of Israeli-controlled areas to Palestinians. Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, himself a settler, has overseen a major escalation in settlement expansion under Prime Minister Netanyahu's leadership. Fox acknowledged that it was his responsibility as the chief of the command in charge of the occupied West Bank region, "to act" and tackle this settler expansion and violence but regretted that he "did not always succeed." "The Central

Command's ability to fulfil its tasks also depends on the existence of a functioning and strong Palestinian Authority, with effective security mechanisms that maintain law and order. Proactively undermining the security reality on this front endangers the security of the State of Israel," Fox added. The Israeli Army Radio reported that 340 settler attacks against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank have been recorded since the beginning of 2024. The Israeli army says its actions are an attempt to root out activities of Palestinian armed groups with whom Israeli soldiers have often exchanged fire during their incursions. — Aljazeera



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# NATO's musketeering makes all less secure

THE ongoing NATO Summit in Washington was initially aimed at finding ways to reassure Ukraine of the organization's enduring support and offer some hope to its battle-weary citizens that their country might prevail in its conflict with Russia. But it is US President Joe Biden's health and cognitive abilities that grabbed the attention of all sides before the start of the gathering on Tuesday.

The NATO Summit undoubtedly comes at a trying moment in the US president's bid for reelection, and the three-day meeting is also likely to become a trying test for Biden to prove he is "fine", as he claims. The gathering on the 75th anniversary of the alliance's founding involves not only the 32 leaders of the NATO member states but also others from some Asia-Pacific countries and international organizations invited to attend. That means dozens of multilateral and bilateral meetings and a lot of talking for Biden.

After his stumbling in the first televised debate with Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump two weeks ago, which has raised questions about his ability to defeat his challenger in the November election, Biden is intent on using the NATO Summit to show he is capable of not only winning that contest but also holding office for another four years.

However, all parties are holding a wait-and-see attitude toward that, even as the White House has tried its best to reassure the public of the president's health and mental capacities.

Yet several anonymous senior US officials, who say there isn't — at least not yet — a crisis of confidence over Biden's general mental state, told the media that the president displays a strong grasp of the broader issues — Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the threat posed by China — but on specific and incremental actions that countries or groups may take when it comes to these conflicts, Biden has appeared confused at times.

Even if Biden can prove he is no less vigorous and healthy, over the three days, than the 75-year-old organization that was said to be "brain dead" just three years back, the other leaders have enough reasons to care about a U-turn change in the US' NATO policy if Biden does lose the election.

European anxiety was heightened in February when Trump warned NATO allies in a campaign speech that he "would encourage" the Russians "to do whatever the hell they want" to countries that don't meet defense spending goals if he returns to the White House.

If that happens, the most pressing challenge the European NATO member states will be facing in just a few months will not be about how to support Ukraine to defeat Russia, but how to come up with the money to pay their NATO dues at a time when many European economies are flagging and there is public questioning of whether spending it that way is putting the money to best use.

The US and several other allies have said they will deliver on the \$1 billion air defense systems they have pledged to provide Ukraine at the opening of the NATO Summit on Tuesday. But how the others will follow up remains a question. The US used its you-are-on-the-table-or-the-menu argument to coerce its allies to follow its lead not long ago when they appeared to be reluctant to be dragged into its geopolitical games. It remains to be seen how Washington will try and persuade its allies to open up their wallets this time to stake its geopolitical games of aggression.

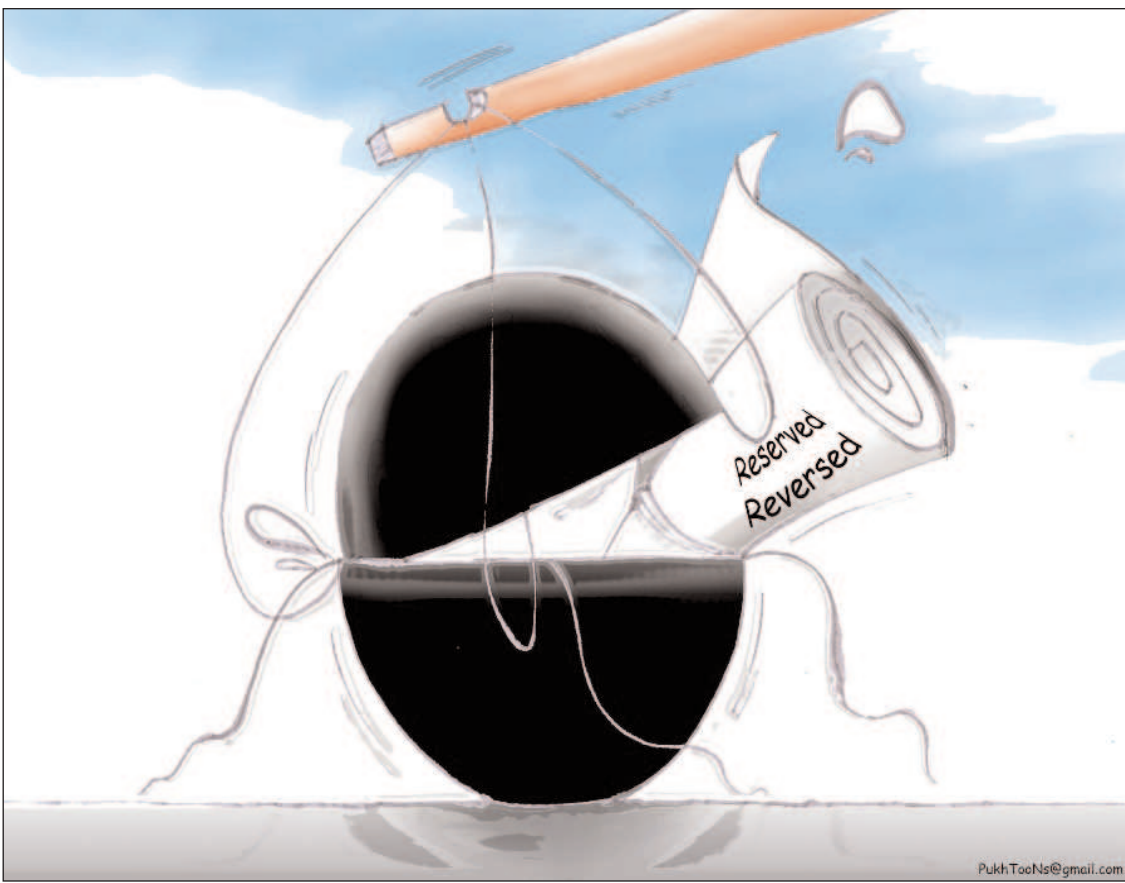
Over the past more than three years, an increasing number of people, including in the NATO member states, have seen clearly that the Three Musketeers-like vow of all for one, one for all "collective security model for like-minded countries" that Biden has tried to resurrect from the Cold War era has brought disastrous consequences to Europe and beyond.

A more consensus-seeking secretary-general is set to replace the US yes-man head of the organization. Over the past decade, the latter has done a good job in turning the NATO countries into an extended buffer zone for the US, transforming Russia from a potential dialogue partner into an enemy, and even antagonizing faraway China. So it is to be hoped the rest of the NATO member states will get a reality check and realize that their true concerns are not external threats but internal challenges.

NATO is howling that once security is hijacked by a few, it becomes a threat to all.

## Important Notice

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



# Israel moving fast to prevent a Palestinian state

Kerry Boyd Anderson

EVER since Israel captured East Jerusalem and the West Bank in 1967, Israeli governments have supported varying levels of Israeli settlement in the West Bank. Today, there are more than 100 settlements — or far more, depending on how one counts — in the West Bank and a population of more than 500,000 settlers in the territory.

For decades, the expansion of settlements has presented a growing obstacle to the potential for a Palestinian state in the West Bank. The settlements — combined with the road network, separation barrier, water allocations and other infrastructure designed to protect and support them — make any sort of governable Palestinian state impossible. The Palestinian Authority only has limited governance over enclaves that are like holes in Swiss cheese.

The creation of a viable Palestinian state would require extensive dismantling of settlements and the related infrastructure and moving many settlers back into Israel. It is not clear that any Israeli government since the Oslo Accords has been willing to seriously consider such steps, which have become increasingly difficult as settlements have expanded. It is very clear that the current Israeli government adamantly opposes the creation of a Palestinian state and actively supports increasing land appropriation and settlement.

The current government has granted Bezalel Smotrich, a committed settler activist who wants to annex the West Bank, extensive powers over the territory. This process included establishing a Settlements Administration under his authority and giving him expanded powers to determine the use of West Bank land. He is also using the position to

make it even easier for Israel to destroy Palestinian buildings and to ensure that more defense funds go to protecting settlements.

In recent comments, Smotrich made it clear that he is remodeling the bureaucracy through which Israel manages the West Bank to ensure permanent Israeli control and settlement of the territory and to block any future Palestinian state. He has also used his powers as finance minister to withhold tax revenues that Israel collects on behalf

due to the conflict, according to the UN; most of those were due to Israeli military actions, but settlers have also killed Palestinians (the UN reported 14 Israeli fatalities in the West Bank during the same period).

The UN reported 1,050 settler attacks in the West Bank between Oct. 7 and July 1. Settler attacks on Palestinians are not new, but the scale has increased substantially. The violence includes killings, beatings, arson and property destruction. The primary purpose of

revenge and to assert power.

Settlement expansion over decades and growing settler violence have played a major role in undermining Palestinian hopes for a state. The PA's inability to halt the loss of Palestinian land or to protect Palestinians has contributed to distrust of its leaders. Palestinians have long lived with the reality of daily obstacles and humiliations imposed on them by Israeli authorities, while watching settlements increasingly gobble up the limited West Bank land. Under the current Israeli government and particularly since Oct. 7, they also live with intensified fear of attack from Israeli security forces, settlers or both. The PA is unable to do anything effective about it.

A warning that settlement expansion is an obstacle to peace — at least under a two-state solution — is hardly new. Indeed, it goes back to the signing of the Oslo Accords. But the problem is far greater today than in 1993 and it is getting worse. The current government's policies make it very clear that the Israeli government seeks full control over the West Bank and rejects a Palestinian state.

As world leaders ponder what should happen in Gaza after the current war, they are paying renewed attention to the idea of a two-state solution. US President Joe Biden, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and multiple other world leaders have emphasized that a two-state solution is the only way to resolve the conflict. They — especially leaders in Washington — must recognize that the current Israeli government actively opposes such a solution and is making fast progress to make sure it never happens.

**The creation of a viable Palestinian state would require extensive dismantling of settlements and the related infrastructure and moving many settlers back into Israel. It is not clear that any Israeli government since the Oslo Accords has been willing to seriously consider such steps, which have become increasingly difficult as settlements have expanded. It is very clear that the current Israeli government adamantly opposes the creation of a Palestinian state and actively supports increasing land appropriation and settlement.**

of the PA — a move designed to undermine the already weakened Palestinian administration. Under Smotrich, settler violence against Palestinians has spiked, with increasing impunity and sometimes support from Israel's security forces. The political environment after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel has fueled even more violence against Palestinians in the West Bank. From Oct. 7 to July 1, there were 539 Palestinian fatalities in the West Bank

the attacks is often to try to force Palestinians to leave. Displacement of West Bank Palestinians has increased significantly since Oct. 7, including the use of violence and harassment to force Bedouin communities near and in the Jordan Valley to leave — which has the uncoincidental effect of easing the expansion of Israeli control and settlement in the strategically located Jordan Valley. Emotions also drive settler attacks, including a desire for

# Starmer will bring change and might find himself changing too

Bakir Oweida

“COUNTRY first, party second.” That was the statement made by Keir Starmer after his Labour Party's victory in the UK general election was confirmed last Friday. Truth be told, the statement bears great importance, and it will be recorded to hold Starmer accountable for its implementation in the future.

After seeing the party's deputies in opposition for 14 years, Labour returned to power and, the following afternoon, Starmer repeated the same statement during his first press conference as prime minister. “Country first, party second” is not a slogan. It is the guiding principle of everything we have done and must keep on doing,” he said.

The first time Starmer made this statement, I was intrigued by the fact that he addressed it to the general electorate and then singled out “those who did not elect us” — of whom, by the way, I am one — to reassure them that his government's agenda gave priority to all Britons. On the morning of Starmer's first official working day on Monday, Rachel Reeves, the

new chancellor of the exchequer and the first woman to occupy this important position in Britain, announced one of the aspects of putting that approach into practice through the launch of an ambitious house-building project.

During Britain's 2024 election saga, several aspects went from private to public, even before the battles started once Rishi Sunak had surprised everyone on May 23 by calling for it. One of those aspects is related to Sunak himself, as he was the first non-white person to become the leader of the Conservative Party and thus prime minister. This had been quite surprising and was welcomed by most segments of society, except for those who reject the concept that the party is no longer just for the wealthy or for those with “blue blood.”

They are not limited to retired politicians, but include young men and women who are eager to rekindle racism whenever it seems to be fading away. Sunak was one of those

who was resented by this particular segment. It is likely to turn out later that his surprise announcement of an early election emerged from realizing that its results would not be in his party's favor. It was kind of an unstated revenge directed at the racist current rooted in the Conservatives' bases and ranks.

As for Labour, it took advantage of the battle that surprised its opponents, the Conservatives, who thought the election would not be held until the autumn. Starmer launched his party's electoral program under the slogan of the need for “change.” There was no need to incite the general electorate to vote for change as their stance had been clear since Boris Johnson's blunders and the chaos during his time in office.

Indeed, the Starmer government will bring about many significant changes. While this is to be expected, it will not stop Starmer from realizing that, at some point, he himself, as a politician, has to change as well. Politics does not rely on a fixed principle, as this would be a sort of freezing of time.

# US election 2024: People's will or donors' will?

Belén Fernández

IN the aftermath of United States President Joe Biden's train wreck of a performance in the June 27 presidential debate with Donald Trump, Democratic Party donors went into a tizzy over the incumbent's perceived inviability as a candidate in the November elections.

Various wealthy donors suspended their monetary contributions to organisations aligned with the Biden campaign, stipulating that Biden must be replaced as a presidential contender before the money starts flowing again.

Among these donors is Abigail Disney, an heiress to the Disney family fortune, who explained to CNBC that “if Biden does not step down, the Democrats will lose”. The outlet also quoted Moriah Fund president Gideon Stein as warning that, unless Biden is removed from the equation, “my family and I are pausing on more than \$3m in planned donations”.

Objectively speaking, of course, screwing up a debate is a far less egregious political transgression than, say, abetting Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip for the past nine months — a policy that is instead applauded by many of Biden's top donors.

And although it is no doubt concerning to have an incoherent person serving as commander of the global superpower — or as the “first Black woman to serve with a Black president”, as Biden recently self-defined in an impressive verbal gaffe — the country does boast a solid history of linguistically-challenged leaders. These include Trump himself and George W Bush, the latter the source of the thought-provoking assertion: “Rarely is the question asked: Is our children learning?” In Biden's case, though, it is noteworthy that the president's alleged incompetence was only elevated to the status of Very Important Issue when donors got their panties in a bunch. This, despite the fact that, prior to the debate, an

course, there is also the even shadier business of “dark money”, defined by the Washington, DC-based — and aptly named — OpenSecrets organisation as “spending meant to influence political outcomes where the source of the money is not disclosed”.

The 2010 Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United v Federal Election Commission (FEC), which reversed campaign finance restrictions to permit unlimited spending by corporations and special interest groups, paved the way for a deluge of dark money into election campaigns. Significantly, the Citizens United decision is credited with helping to spawn what has now become an institutionalised pillar of the plutocracy: super PACs (political action committees), which according to the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School spent almost \$3bn on federal elections in their first decade of existence alone.

In theory, super PACs are required to disclose their donors to the FEC; however, this requirement is rendered entirely irrelevant by the fact that super PACs can receive unlimited funds from shell companies and nonprofit groups that are not obligated to reveal their donors. The upshot is that voters are denied the right to know who precisely is endeavouring to influence their voting choices — and what interests these actors represent.

An analysis published by OpenSecrets in March indicated an “unprecedented surge” in dark money in the 2023-24 election cycle, with contributions from dark money groups and shell companies “outpacing all prior elections”. Ultimately, OpenSecrets predicted, the influx of such funds could potentially “surpass the roughly \$660 million in contributions from unknown sources that flooded 2020 elections — a cycle that attracted over \$1 billion in total dark money, counting political ad spending as well as contributions”. And while Democrats like to make a

**Consider the slew of nearly-million-dollar checks made out to Biden's joint fundraising committee, the Biden Victory Fund, by tech entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and other elites after groups of prospective donors were hosted at the White House between June 2023 and March this year. And what more convenient setting than the very symbol of political power in the nation's capital to underscore that it is the folks with monetary capital who effectively reign?**

Ipsos poll found that a mere 28 percent of likely voters in the US were confident in Biden's “mental fitness to be president”. Following the debate, this figure dropped to 20 percent.

In short, it is just another reminder of the inordinate power and influence wielded by America's donor class in a shameless plutocracy euphemised as “democracy” — where voting and other democratic charades barely conceal a reality in which the people's will could not matter less.

While it may sound conspiratorial to say that big money controls the US government, it is just about the most unhidden conspiracy ever. Indeed, plutocratic operations have become so normalised a part of the political landscape that hardly anyone bats an eye when we talk about millions being flung around here and there in order to affect electoral outcomes. Consider the slew of nearly-million-dollar checks made out to Biden's joint fundraising committee, the Biden Victory Fund, by tech entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and other elites after groups of prospective donors were hosted at the White House between June 2023 and March this year. As the Politico website notes in its recent report on the subject: “It is not illegal for Biden to invite donors into the White House, and prior presidents have similarly used the grandeur and convenience of the building to connect with political supporters and donors.”

And what more convenient setting than the very symbol of political power in the nation's capital to underscore that it is the folks with monetary capital who effectively reign?

Beyond the straightforward financial manipulation of US “democracy”, of

stink about dark money as though the whole phenomenon is the sole purview of corrupt and unscrupulous Republicans, the Democratic Party has in recent years given its Republican rival a run for its (dark) money. The Democrats first surpassed the Republicans in spending from unknown sources in 2018, a feat that has been repeated in subsequent election cycles.

Not that it does not pay to be right-wing — just ask the Supreme Court, where the billion-dollar dark money industry is pretty much to thank for producing the most conservative court in nearly a century. Trump's former judicial adviser and dark money master Leonard Leo played a starring role in the ascension of no fewer than three conservative justices to the court, which has dutifully busied itself dismantling basic rights and freedoms in the country. Now, with obscene sums of money swirling around the field of campaign finance and general political influence-buying, one cannot help but think about all the other things that could be done with such funds — like improve the disastrous state of education and housing in the US or overhaul a healthcare system that is literally killing people. But spending money to benefit the average human being in America would mean less money to invest in democratic charades ensuring the proper flow of capital and continued elite tyranny. To that end, perhaps it is time to revise President Abraham Lincoln's famed words in praise of the “government of the people, by the people, for the people”. Because at the end of the day, the US is nothing but a government of the donors, by the donors, for the donors.



# Mining for the energy transition needs to respect human rights

**WHEN Clarissa Mwanza spoke to me of her work mining zinc in central Zambia, she looked anxious. Her husband, working alongside her, nearly died last year during a mining accident. He injured his leg when the ground caved in and spent a month in the hospital. Other miners buried up to their necks were seriously injured too.**

Mwanza told me she also worries about her seven-year-old daughter, who sometimes joins her at the mine, packing rocks into sacks. The girl was diagnosed with lead poisoning last year, most likely from the toxic, lead-contaminated ground at the mine. Mwanza continues zinc mining despite her fears. She has no other options. Zinc is a key metal used for constructing wind turbines and, therefore, necessary for the world's urgently needed phase-out of fossil fuels and transition to zero-carbon renewable energy systems. The demand for zinc and other minerals needed for renewable energy – such as lithium, cobalt, manganese and nickel – is projected to rise sharply in the coming years. Securing so-called critical minerals has become a policy priority for industrialised countries and has prompted a new kind of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy around minerals, such as the Mineral Security Partnership.

In April, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres gave a moving speech about the role of minerals in the energy transition, urging world leaders: “As we reshape how we power our societies and economies, we cannot replace one dirty, exploitative, extractive industry with another dirty, exploitative, extractive industry. The race to net zero cannot trample over the poor.”

Yet there is a high risk that this is exactly what will happen. Human Rights Watch has documented a wide range of human rights violations in mining, including the use of child labour, chemical pollution threatening health, water scarcity and police violence.

The extraction and processing of transition minerals in particular is also characterised by abuses. Children do hazardous work in cobalt mining; Indigenous people's rights have been violated for lithium mining; workers in manganese processing suffer manganese-related illnesses; and communities face severe pollution from nickel mining and smelting. Such violations of international human rights law undermine the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 3 on health, Goal 6 on water access and Goal 8 on decent work. They also play into the hands of those opposing the energy transition. Guterres's speech inaugurated a new UN body, the Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals, which consists of governments, international agencies, industry groups and a few international nongovernmental organisations. Its task is to develop “principles to safeguard environmental and social standards and embed justice in the energy transition”. Guterres's initiative comes at a crucial moment as many governments have committed to transitioning away from fossil fuels.

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Juliane Kippenberg

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Guterres's speech inaugurated a new UN body, the Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals, which consists of governments, international

comes at a crucial moment as many governments have committed to transitioning away from fossil fuels. The UN panel has a unique opportunity to help define lessons learned from the past and spell out what transformative change towards a decarbonised future could look like.

But for this to happen, governments and industry need to understand past problems and recognise

the harm mining has caused local communities. Currently, there are efforts to present mining as contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals and to encourage its recognition as an “essential ingredient” in the Sustainable Development Goals. Instead of ignoring the

urge governments and companies to ensure genuine participation of communities, civil society groups and trade unions in critical mineral decision-making and diplomacy.

There also needs to be greater transparency, including disclosure of critical mineral memorandums of understanding between governments, of mining revenues and of actors in supply chains. The panel itself should disclose who funds its work, who makes the decisions and who are the drafters of the outcome document.

The panel should spell out what wider policy and legal reforms are needed to ensure that minerals extraction generates tangible benefits for local communities and contributes to significant improvements in economic and social rights in producer countries. It should push for progressive tax and fiscal policies and recommend reform of international investment and trade frameworks – such as ending the use of secret investment arbitration – that interfere with human rights and environmental obligations of governments.

The panel should also advance policies that will reduce the overall amount of new mining. Such policies should require recycling and reuse to improve “circular” economy solutions and reduce energy use by high emission actors, including by expanding public transit and improving energy efficiency, with a view to enabling equitable, efficient and sufficient energy for all.

Finally, the panel should suggest avenues for redress when communities find their rights are being violated by mining. The UN system does not currently have a body monitoring and investigating rights violations in mining systematically.

The secretary-general and other senior UN officials should consult with civil society groups on options for a credible international body that would monitor and investigate human rights abuses occurring in the context of mining for the energy transition.

A rapid fossil fuel phase-out and just transition are needed, and there is no justification for delay. The UN panel should help bring it about by recognising and addressing the serious harm mining has caused and spell out what a truly

# Ukraine deserves to hear the truth about NATO

Daniel R. DePetris

**A year ago, NATO heads of state gathered in Vilnius, Lithuania, for their annual summit. A gathering designed to send Russian President Vladimir Putin a message about NATO's resolve and commitment became clouded instead, however, by the question of Ukraine's eventual membership in the alliance.**

The communique released after the multi-day event reaffirmed a commitment given by the alliance during the 2008 summit in Bucharest: Ukraine will become a NATO member, even if the timing is yet to be determined.

For Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, the reaffirmation was far short of his expectations. He called NATO's unwillingness to establish a concrete time-frame for Ukraine's membership “unprecedented and absurd,” causing consternation in the Biden administration and nearly derailing the summit.

Washington and Kyiv were able to patch up the acrimony. But with NATO leaders in Washington this week to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the alliance, the Ukraine membership question continues to hover over the proceedings like humidity in the dog days of August.

The United States and its allies will no doubt continue to insist ad nauseam that it's only a matter of time before Ukraine is given the privilege of joining NATO. Indeed, according to the draft communique for this week's summit, NATO is preparing to emphasize that Ukraine's path to joining the alliance is “irreversible,” — a declaration first made by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in April.

In reality, however, Ukraine is nowhere near membership. NATO doesn't look prepared to bring Ukraine into the alliance, and there's a good case to be made that bestowing membership status on Kyiv would be bad policy. It's long past time for the Biden administration to stop pretending otherwise. The White House should give Zelensky the honesty he deserves.

First, the US should be clear up front about how difficult it is for an aspiring country to become a member of NATO. Its charter makes clear that member nations agree to defend any other member of the alliance that comes under attack: “The

Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” On paper, Poland is as obligated to come to the defense of the US as the US is obligated to come to the defense of Poland.

Several key NATO members, however, haven't been especially eager to come to the defense of Ukraine. In 2008, when then-President George W. Bush wanted to offer Ukraine (and Georgia, another former Soviet state) a plan to get the accession process started, allies like France and Germany were opposed to it.

After the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 put the issue on the agenda once again, it was the US that had qualms. Then-President Barack Obama instead said that Washington would call a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, a body to nurture the bilateral relationship. Biden stated as recently as last month that he is “not prepared to support the NATO-ization of Ukraine.” Because NATO makes decisions through consensus, any single member can block Ukraine's accession.

The notion that Kyiv will enter NATO as long as the war in Ukraine is churning is of course fanciful for the simple reason that the members of the alliance would then be compelled to fight Russia directly, which raises the question of whether bringing Ukraine into NATO, even if feasible, is actually wise. Zelensky, who has spent a great deal of time since Russia's invasion trying to press the subject of membership, himself understands this necessary delay quite well.

Some foreign policy scholars, like former US Ambassador to Russia Michael McPaul, have recommended extending a NATO invitation to Ukraine to pave the way for when the war is over. This would presumably deter Putin over the long-term and prevent Moscow from using any ceasefire to rebuild its military for another invasion of Ukraine months or years down the line.

But this scenario is also problematic. Why would Putin consider a ceasefire or diplomatic settlement with Kyiv if he knew that NATO membership for Ukraine was just around the corner? Far from promoting a settlement, this idea

could make the war's termination virtually impossible for Putin, who explicitly called on Ukraine to drop its aspirations to join NATO as a core condition of any peace negotiation. As dozens of foreign policy experts wrote in an open letter last week (which I signed), “The closer NATO comes to promising that Ukraine will join the alliance once the war ends, the greater the incentive for Russia to keep fighting the war and killing Ukrainians so as to forestall Ukraine's integration into NATO.”

All that aside, it's not altogether clear that extending a NATO security guarantee to Ukraine would be fully honored — which could undermine the alliance itself.

NATO countries have repeatedly demonstrated that they won't get into a direct shooting war on Ukraine's behalf. The West's justifiable reticence to get involved militarily in Ukraine suggests that when push comes to shove, NATO is not going to plunge itself into a war with the world's largest nuclear power. A NATO security guarantee without credibility is merely a paper promise, one which Russia might choose to test. NATO would then be presented with two unpalatable options: stand idly by and erode the power of its collective defense clause or wage an unwanted war against a country with more than 5,500 nuclear warheads.

In short, insisting Ukraine will become a member of the NATO family, even if the practical roadblocks are easy to foresee, does a disservice to the United States and NATO, as well as Ukraine. The US exposes itself as a superpower giving a prospective client state false hope. NATO reveals itself to be divided on the Ukraine accession question. And Ukraine is forced to endure the humiliation of being strung along, like a proverbial hamster on a wheel that can't reach the hunk of cheese in front of it.

The best Ukraine is likely to get from NATO is more air defense batteries and missiles, a stronger training program for its troops and a commitment to help Kyiv hold the line. Biden should tell Zelensky point-blank that NATO membership is a fool's errand — and while he's at it, he ought to apologize to all Ukrainians, for waiting so long to state the obvious.

— CNN

# Alliance has become Frankenstein's monster

**THE NATO Summit to be held in Washington from July 9 to 11 will without doubt be yet another exercise in US and Western bluster and triumphalism, as well as empty posturing in what in reality has been for at least 23 years a multipolar world.**

Even more than the previous gatherings of the venerable and dangerously resurgent transatlantic military alliance, the summit in Washington will be an exercise in nostalgia, unsuccessful time travel and wish fulfillment. Being held in Washington following the 75th anniversary of the 1949 Washington Treaty that led to the establishment of NATO, the summit is aimed at celebrating that event.

However, far from being a cautious defense alliance, as the original gathering of 12 states was presented back then, NATO in the 21st century has transformed into an unwieldy blustering, aggressive would-be giant now comprising 32 member states.

No longer does NATO simply seek to preserve the security and independence of a handful of countries across North America and Western Europe from an ideologically hostile Soviet bloc. Instead, it now projects aggressive military power directly and through its proxy regimes across

Asia and Eastern Europe. The alliance continues to arm Ukraine to the teeth and urge the highly undemocratic, irresponsible and repressive regime in Kyiv to continue conflict with Russia, in what Moscow now views as an existential struggle for survival.

In Asia, NATO supported a continued catastrophic and humiliatingly unsuccessful US attempt at nation-building in Afghanistan for 20 years before the whirlwind Taliban victory in August 2021.

Today, NATO supports the aggressive, irresponsible and entirely unjustifiable AUKUS trilateral security partnership of Australia, which has far too small a population base to indulge in such geopolitical adventurism; the United Kingdom, whose days of “Asian Empire” were dead and buried before NATO was even born; and the United States.

In reality, NATO was always a frightening thermonuclear gamble. In the 1961 Berlin Crisis and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, NATO put cities and countries in Western Europe directly into the crosshair of nuclear annihilation in the alarmingly dangerous standoff between then US president John F. Kennedy and Soviet Union leader Nikita Khrushchev that put the survival of the human race at risk.

Today, the situation is even worse. Far from even aspiring to be a limited European regional pillar of global stability and peace, NATO has transformed into a running-amok giant, careening out of control. It has

Serbia and now Ukraine while indulging in insane and entirely unjustified fantasies of global power projection.

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Indeed, respected experts such as Edward Lozansky, president of the American University in Moscow and a friend

and colleague of the late Andrei Sakharov, and US historian Peter Kuznick of the American University in Washington have publicly warned that the clock should in reality be reset to only 30 or even 10 seconds before midnight.

That's how great a risk is NATO's continued commitment to Ukraine in a conflict designed not for the good or national security of the Ukrainian people but just to bleed Russia dry of the lifeblood of its own soldiers.

It is likely that this awful conflict will lead to a direct clash of US and NATO troops with the Russian military, which could go nuclear.

NATO in reality is far weaker than the SCO in all direct military comparisons.

Apart from the already weakened, debt-burdened and militarily wildly overstretched US, the only significant land military power NATO has is medium-sized Türkiye. The SCO, in contrast, can boast of four major thermonuclear military powers all of which have formidable land armies — China, Russia, India and Iran. Türkiye itself, as I have noted, now appears happier associating with the SCO than with NATO.

NATO is even in a strategic and diplomatic shambles: The world has seen how its performance in dealing with internal





**PESHAWAR:** Leader of Businessman Forum Ilyas Ahmad Bilour addressing United Markets Association and Peshawar Saddar Cantt various traders' organisations at Chamber's House.

## BF gains support of SCCI elections

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The United Markets Association and Peshawar Saddar Cantt various traders' organisations expressed complete confidence over Businessman Forum (BF) leadership and announced support in upcoming election of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

According to details, a meeting was held under chairmanship of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq here at the chamber house on Wednesday.

Leader of Businessman Forum former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour participated in the meeting.

Besides, SCCI vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, former FPCCI president Ghazanfar Bilour, Anjuman e Tajran Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Shaukat Ali Khan, former president of the chamber Zulfiqar Ali Khan, former senior vice president Shahid Hussain, former vice presidents Inayat Khan, Javed Akhtar, and Nadeem Rauf, Ghazanfar Ali Sawal, leaders of traders attached with business of mobile and

accessories, prominently among them, Deans Trade Center, Time Center, Bilour Plaza, United Mobile Plaza, Falak Sher Plaza, heads, presidents and general secretaries of traders bodies and business community were present in a large number.

Shams ur Rahim Afridi, Zahoor Khan, Ghulamur Rehman, Saifullah, Malik and along with other traders leaders from Saddar Peshawar while speaking on the occasion reposed full trust on Businessman forum leadership and announced full support for upcoming election of the SCCI.

Fuad Ishaq in the meeting presented a resolution against imposition of 2.5 percent tax on flour in retail and sale which was unanimously approved by the house.

Participants of the meeting condemned the imposition of excessive taxes in the budget and asked the government to immediately withdraw them and enforce business-friendly policies.

The meeting termed the Tajir Dost Scheme introduced by the government as an anti-trader scheme and unanimously rejected it.

Slating the government over imposition of excessive taxation measures in the budget, Fuad said the business community and people are in great trouble owing to rising inflation and additional taxes. He added people have been compelled to sale essential items to pay heavy-tariff electricity bills.

The SCCI chief revealed more than 4.8million children were out of schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which is alarming and a matter of grave concern for the government and authorities concerned.

Fuad Ishaq said the economy can be fixed with assistance from the business community so the government should provide special relief to the traders and introduce business-friendly policies.

The meeting was also addressed by former Senator Ilyas Ahmad, traders leaders Shaukat Ali Khan, Inayat and others and highlighted the role of the chamber in resolution of business community issues and urged for supporting the Businessman Forum in upcoming SCCI elections.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

**KARACHI (APP):**

Shipping activity was report at the port where three ships, Common Venture, IVS Kerstrel and Sky Blue scheduled to load/offload Rice, Steel Coil and Palm oil, berthed at Grain Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal and Liquid Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Sara, Au-Taurus and Toxotis scheduled to load/offload Rice, Palm oil and Coal also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on during last 24 hours.

A total of five ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a Liquefied Natural Gas carrier 'Al-Thakira' left the port on today morning while two more ships, IVS Kerstrel and Sky Blue are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 27,049 tonnes, comprising 26,917 tonnes imports cargo and 132 tonnes export cargoes handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 07 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Lia, AU-Taurus and Toxotis & three more ships, Isabella, One Reliability and Maersk Kensington scheduled to load/offload Cement, Palm oil, Coal, LPG and Container are expected to take berths at respectively MW2, LCT, PIBT, EVTL and QICT on today, while three more container ships, APL Le Havre, Hyundai Hongkong and MSC Positano are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

## Poultry sector must be facilitated

**FAISALABAD (APP):** Senior vice president FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad has said that the government should facilitate the poultry sector for provision of cheap protein to the public.

He said that the poultry sector is at the verge of collapse as every poultry farmer is bearing hefty losses of Rs.7 million. This loss has now become unbearable and if this situation continued, it would not only have an ill impact on the export of eggs and chicken meat but also deprive people of cheap source of protein readily available in Pakistan at affordable rates, he added.

He said that Pakistan is annually producing 17,500 million eggs and 1440-million-kilogram chicken meat. In 2022, we exported 16.8 million eggs while in 2024, chicken meat and chicken products of 115,664 tons were also exported.

He said that in Pakistan the ratio of consumption of chicken meat is only 7.20 kilogram while every Pakistani take only 88 eggs per annum which is far below than the international standard.

## Banks to observe Ashura holidays on July 16, 17

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and all banks and financial institutions will remain closed on July 16 and 17, 2024 on the occasion of Ashura 1446 A.H. The central bank, in a statement issued here on Wednesday, informed that SBP will remain closed on July 16 and 17, 2024, (Tuesday and Wednesday) being public holidays on the occasion of Ashura (9th and 10th Moharram 1446 A.H). All the banks, Micro Finance Banks (MFBs), Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), and banking and non-banking financial institutions will also remain close on July 16 and 17 accordingly.

# Continuous investment in skill development key to financial industry's success

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: The Deputy Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Dr. Inayat Hussain highlighted the pivotal role of continuous learning in ensuring the long-term success of professionals within the financial industry. His remarks were delivered during the launch of the Treasury Management Certification, where he underscored the importance of providing treasury professionals with the skills necessary to navigate the challenges of an evolving financial landscape. The course has been jointly developed by CFA Society Pakistan and

National Institute of Banking and Finance (NIBAF).

Dr. Hussain commended the collaborative efforts of the SBP, National Institute of Banking and Finance (NIBAF) Pakistan, the CFA Society Pakistan, and the Financial Market Association for developing a certification program tailored to meet local market needs. He emphasized the challenge of maintaining quality standards and ensuring the curriculum remains aligned with advancing technology and market practices.

Encouraging the financial industry to seize this opportunity, Dr. Hussain

urged institutions to encourage their treasury staff register for the certification. He stressed that investing in staff development enables professionals not only to effectively manage risks and ensure compliance, but also to leverage new technologies, and adapt to dynamic market conditions.

Director CFA Society Pakistan, Mr. Mohammad Shoaib said that NIBAF and the CFA Society Pakistan have collaborated to design and develop a local certification in treasury management that is custom designed to meet the requirements of the local capital and money

markets.

He added that this Certification covers conventional treasury products and concepts besides offering learning opportunities in Islamic treasury functions which is critical for the conversion of the entire financial system to an Islamic mode as per the directive of Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The event, attended by executives from the SBP, the CFA Society Pakistan, Financial Market Association, and NIBAF marked a significant step towards enhancing the professional capabilities of the treasury staff in the financial sector.

## Pakistan Stock Exchange witnesses bearish trend, loses 830 points

**ISLAMABAD (APP):** The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 830.51 points, a negative change of 1.03 percent, closing at 79,841.56 points against 80,672.06 points on the last working day.

A total of 495,910,236 shares were traded during the day as compared to 610,264,015 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 22.116 billion against Rs 24.317 billion on the last trading day.

Around 440 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 153 of them recorded gains and 241 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 46 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 57,716,127

shares at Rs 4.89 per share, PIA Holding Company with 43,039,629 shares at Rs 25.08 per share and United Foods Limited with 28,628,477 shares at Rs34.87 per share.

Excide Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 71.17 per share price, closing at Rs 820.38, whereas the runner-up was PIA Holding Company Limited with a Rs63.20 rise in its per share price to Rs 728.47.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs178.83 per share closing at Rs18,111.16, followed by Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited with a Rs46.03 decline to close at Rs1,065.84.

**Rupee sheds 11 paise against dollar**

The exchange rate of the Pakistan rupee witnessed a devaluation of 11 paise against the US dollar in the

interbank trading on Wednesday and closed at Rs 278.51 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.40.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market, however, were Rs 278.75 and Rs 280.75 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 12 paise to close at Rs 301.29 against the last day's closing of Rs 301.17, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.72, whereas an increase of 01 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 356.40 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 356.39.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and

the Saudi Riyal also increased by 03 paise and 04 paise to close at Rs 75.82 and Rs 74.25 respectively.

**Gold rates up by Rs600 per tola to Rs245,600**

The price of per tola of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.600 and was sold at Rs.245,600 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs. 245,000 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.514 to Rs.210,562 from Rs. 210,048 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.193,016 from Rs. 192,544, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.2,900 and Rs.2,486.28 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$10 to \$2,372 from \$2362, Association reported.

## MCB, PITB and Mastercard to collaborate on PayZen

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: MCB Bank Limited, one of Pakistan's leading banks, has entered into a strategic partnership with the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) and Mastercard Asia/Pacific Pte. Ltd. The ceremony, held at MCB Bank's head office, brought together senior representatives from all three organizations, marking a significant step towards advancing digital payment solutions in Pakistan.

Through this partnership, MCB Bank reaffirms its commitment to leveraging cutting-edge financial technologies to foster economic growth and financial inclusion across the region. The integration of Mastercard's advanced payment solutions with PITB's innovative Payzen platform is expected to revolutionize the digital payment landscape, providing real-time, secure transaction capabilities to Pakistani users.

The agreement was signed between Mr. Shahzad Ishaq - Group Head Digital Banking, MCB Bank and Mr. Khurram Mushtaq - ADG, PITB in the presence of Mr. Haroon Rasul Khokhar -



Project Director PITB, Mr. Imran Yousaf - Head Payment Solutions MCB Bank and other representatives from MCB Bank, PITB and Mastercard.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Shahzad Ishaq, Group Head Digital Banking, MCB Bank said "We are thrilled to partner with PITB and Mastercard to revolutionize the digital payment ecosystem in Pakistan. This MoU signifies a major step forward in our commitment to providing innovative, secure, and user-friendly payment solutions. By leveraging

advanced technologies, we aim to enhance the financial inclusion and economic growth of our country."

Khurram Mushtaq - ADG, PITB also added, "PITB is excited to collaborate with MCB Bank and Mastercard to bring transparent and accessible payment solutions to Pakistan. The integration of our Payzen platform with Mastercard's payment gateway services will streamline government and private transactions, ensuring a seamless and efficient experience for all users. This partnership under-

scores our dedication to harnessing technology for public benefit."

MCB Bank is one of the largest & most innovative banks in Pakistan. The Bank operates a strong and vast network of over 1,400 branches and over 1,450 ATMs in Pakistan and 11 overseas branches. With a customer base of over 8 million, MCB leads the banking & financial services sector in Pakistan and customers across the globe have 24/7 access to MCB Bank via our innovative and accessible Digital Banking Services.

## Pak Pavilion impresses at China Lanzhou Investment and Trade Fair

**BEIJING (APP):** The Pakistan pavilion emerged as a star attraction at the ongoing 30th China Lanzhou Investment and Trade Fair, showcasing a stunning array of handicrafts that captivated the hearts and minds of visitors from around the globe.

The five-day event, which opened on July 6 and runs through July 10, provides a vibrant platform for businesses worldwide to showcase their offerings and forge new partnerships.

At the forefront of the Pakistan pavilion stood Kamil Muhammad, a seasoned veteran of the Lanzhou Fair, making his seventh appearance at the prestigious event. Kamil's display of exquisite handicrafts ranges from intricate-

ly embroidered carpets to meticulously carved onyx artifacts.

"Participating in the Lanzhou Fair is a golden opportunity for Pakistani businesses to broaden their horizons and tap into new markets," said Kamil. "We are deeply grateful for this platform and are hopeful for even stronger economic ties with northwest China and beyond in the years to come."

The Pakistan pavilion, set up amidst the bustling exhibition hall of the Gansu International Convention and Exhibition Center, is a popular attraction among visitors.

From elaborately stitched textiles to intricately carved wooden artifacts, the products on display not

only showcase the artistic talents of Pakistani artisans but also serve as a testament to the country's rich cultural heritage.

The five Pakistani enterprises participating in the fair, each specializing in different areas, provided a comprehensive showcase of the country's craftsmanship and creativity.

Since its inception in 1993, the China Lanzhou Investment and Trade Fair has grown into a major platform for promoting investment, trade and regional economic cooperation in Northwest China.

This year's fair boasts more than 1,800 exhibitors showcasing a wide range of products across nearly 30 categories, including non-ferrous metallurgy,

new materials, renewable energy, modern agriculture, petrochemicals, electronics, water resources, mineral resources, food processing, cultural tourism, healthcare, biopharmaceuticals and consumer products.

The participation of the Pakistani delegation in the expo underlines the country's commitment to explore new markets and strengthen economic ties with China and other countries.

The diverse range of products exhibited by the five Pakistani companies provided a glimpse into the vibrant handicraft industry landscape in the country and its potential for collaboration and partnership.





## In brief

## Tanveer set to return home with gold medals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani blind archer Tanveer Ahmed is set to return home tonight, after winning two gold medals in two back-to-back international competitions. Ahmed informed that he bagged gold medals at the Para Archery World Ranking Event in Nove Mesto, Czech Republic, and the 1440 Double FITA Round at Jabbeke, Belgium, respectively. Ahmed's haul marks a historic achievement, as he became the first blind archer to win individual gold for Pakistan in the Para Archery World Ranking Event & European Cup 2024. He secured a remarkable 910 points to clinch the gold medal in the VI-2/3 category at the Double FITA Round in Belgium. Ahmed, who's outstanding performance makes him the only blind archer to win gold medals for both Asia and Pakistan will return to Islamabad International Airport tonight.

## Athletics C'ship in September

ISLAMABAD (APP): South Asia Athletics Federation (SAAF) Junior Athletics Championship will take place in Chennai, India from September 5. Chairman SAAF, Major General (ret'd) Mohammad Akram Sahi in a statement said that the men and women teams from seven countries including Pakistan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will compete in the three-day event, to be concluded on September 7.

## Man Utd post £71.4m loss

LONDON (AFP): Manchester United recorded a net loss of £71.4 million (\$91.4 million) between January and March this year, the club's latest financial results revealed on Wednesday. United's losses includes £30.3 million in exceptional costs related to the sale of 27.7 per cent of the club to Jim Ratcliffe, including consultancy fees owed to the American firm Raine. The significant deficit compares unfavourably to losses of £5.6 million for the same three-month period last year. United's failure to progress from the Champions League group stage will have played a part in the increased losses last season. The club are reportedly confident improved ownership and management structures are now in place to deliver better recruitment in the future, while maintaining their commercial resilience. Dan Ashworth recently joined United from Newcastle as their new sporting director, while Omar Berrada begins work as the club's new chief executive this week. While Ratcliffe's arrival came at a financial cost to United, the British billionaire is committed to investing over £200 million in developing the club's infrastructure, including upgrades for the Carrington training complex. United are believed to be confident of complying with the Premier League's profitability and sustainability rules (PSR) for the assessment period ending with the 2023-24 season. The PSR allow for losses of up to £105 million over a three-season assessment period. They will remain in place next season, with new financial rules set to be adopted for the 2025-26 season. United's total operating expenses were up 15 per cent on the equivalent quarter last year to £203.7 million, which included £91.2 million in employee costs, reflecting investment in the first-team squad.

## Djokovic into Wimbledon semis after De Minaur withdraws

LONDON (Agencies): Novak Djokovic is through to the semi-finals of Wimbledon after Alex de Minaur withdrew from their last-eight tie because of a hip injury.

The Australian ninth seed was scheduled to take on 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic in Wednesday's second match on Centre Court. Djokovic, 37, is handed a walkover and will face either Italy's Lorenzo Musetti or American 13th seed Taylor Fritz in the semi-finals. "I am devastated to pull out due to a hip injury," De Minaur said.

"I felt a loud crack during the last three points of my match against [Arthur] Fils. "[I] got a scan yesterday and it confirmed that this was the injury and with high risk of making it worse if I was to step on court."

De Minaur defeated Frenchman Fils in four sets on Monday to reach his first quarter-final at Wimbledon. The 25-year-old said the recovery period was between three and six weeks. "I have been struggling to sleep the last couple of days. I feel it [when] walking," De Minaur said. "Just hoping that I would wake up and feel it a little bit less or feel it to a point where I can at least go on court. "But, again, I think it's almost disrespectful for me to not go on the court close to 100% against someone like Novak because there's no point of me going out there if I'm not going out there to try and win."

His withdrawal helps Djokovic in his bid to win an eighth title at

Wimbledon and move level with Roger Federer. He has now moved into a 13th Wimbledon semi-final - a joint Open era record with Federer. Djokovic has looked in excellent form at SW19, despite undergoing knee surgery just three



Elena Rybakina celebrates winning match point against Elina Svitolina in the Ladies' Singles Quarter Final match.

weeks before the grass-court Grand Slam.

He made light work of 15th seed Holger Rune in the quarter-finals. In his on-court interview afterwards, he accused fans of disrespecting him, saying they used a Rune chant as "an excuse to boo".

Wimbledon organisers have filled the slot on Centre Court with a second-round mixed doubles match featuring British duo Joe Salisbury and Heather Watson, who take on Jan Zielinski of Poland and

Taiwan's Hsieh Su-wei.

That will be followed by a women's invitational doubles match, with Australia's Ashleigh Barty and Casey Dellacqua playing Germany's Andrea Petkovic and Magdalena Rybarikova of Slovakia.

## Clinical Rybakina into Wimbledon semi-finals

LONDON: Former champion Elena Rybakina cruised into the Wimbledon semi-finals with a clinical win over Elina Svitolina on Centre Court. Kazakhstan's Rybakina was a level above Svitolina in a 6-3 6-2 victory that took just 62 minutes, and will play in the last four for the first time since she won the competition in 2022.

The 25-year-old will face Czech Barbora Krejckikova, who battled past Jelena Ostapenko on Court One to reach the last four at Wimbledon for the first time. Rybakina and Svitolina traded breaks in the opening games of an initially even

first set, with the Ukrainian then dropping serve to love when trailing 4-3. Rybakina carried her momentum through to the second set, immediately breaking with a deep forehand into the corner. She broke again at 4-2 and served out for the match to reach the last four of a Grand Slam for the first time since she reached the Australian Open final in 2023.

The result ended Svitolina's run, with the Ukrainian unable to repeat her semi-final appearance

last year. Svitolina, 29, said she "tried everything in her power" to advance but felt she was unable to match Rybakina's aggressive style. "It's very, very difficult because I feel like I'm in a good form," she added. "Of course, when the opponent is striking the ball that big, everything goes in. Serve goes really quick. Lots of aces. It's tough to do anything." Rybakina has hit the joint-most aces at this year's tournament, tied on 31 with New Zealand qualifier Lulu Sun, and is the only former winner left in the women's draw.

Krejckikova battles past Ostapenko

Krejckikova started the 2024 season as the world number 10, but she has been hampered by a back injury and illness, causing her to slip to 32nd in the rankings. But a 6-4 7-6 (7-4) win to move past fellow Roland Garros champion Ostapenko marks an impressive return to form for the 28-year-old. The 31st seed had not advanced past the last eight of a Grand Slam since triumphing at the French Open in 2021. "It's an unbelievable moment that I'm experiencing right now in my tennis career," Krejckikova said.

"There have been many doubts from inside but also from the outside world, but I'm super happy that I never gave up and that I'm standing here right now and that I qualified to be in the semi-finals." Apart from a double fault in her first service game, Krejckikova was clinical on her serve and a single break at 1-1 was enough for her to clinch the opening set.

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) sacked former fast bowlers and all-rounder Wahab Riaz and Abdul Razzaq as selectors of the National Men's and Women cricket selection committees, here on Wednesday.

In a statement, issued by PCB Media Manager Raza Kitchlew here, both the former cricketers had been informed by the PCB that they were no more part of the seven-member selection committee.

Wahab Riaz, a former chief selector, was placed on the seven-member selection committee under PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and was considered de facto head of the selection committee. Abdul Razzaq was member of both the Men's and Women's selection committee.

Wahab Riaz will also cease to exist as the senior manager for Men's cricket - a role which was assigned to him during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024.

Wahab and Razzaq are the first casualties of team's poor show at the T20 World Cup in West Indies and the US.

The decision has come after PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi's consultative meetings with former cricketers and seeking their advice on team development.

The PCB is likely to reconstitute the national Men's selection committee with a chief selector.

## PCB relieves Wahab Riaz, Abdul Razzaq as selectors



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## Messi leads Argentina into Copa America final

NEW JERSEY (Agencies): Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi inspired Argentina to the Copa America final with a 2-0 win over Canada.



The 37-year-old scored six minutes into the second half to double Argentina's lead when he deflected an effort from Chelsea midfielder Enzo Fernandez past Canada goalkeeper Maxime Crepeau.

Manchester City striker Julian Alvarez had given the World Cup holders the lead when he latched on to a pass from Atletico Madrid's Rodrigo de Paul and converted from close range. It's the sixth time in the last eight editions that Argentina, the 15-time Copa America winners, have reached the final.

The final, against either Uruguay or Colombia, will be Angel di Maria's final appearance for Argentina before his international retirement and there are also doubts over Messi's long-term future.

"Let's enjoy what we are experiencing as a national team, as a group. It is not easy to be in a final again, to compete again to be champions," Messi told TyC Sports.

"I'm living it as I have been living everything lately - enjoying it very much and being aware, as it happens to Fideo (Di Maria) and Ota (Nicolas Otamendi), that these are the last battles." Argentina boss Lionel Scaloni says he will work to "convince" Di Maria and Messi to continue with international duty.

"For Leo (Messi), it's similar to Angel," said Scaloni. "We have to let him be and we will never be the ones to close the door. He can be with our team for as long as he wants to be. And if he wants to retire but still come and hang around, it would be great."

Jacob Shaffelburg, a winger for MLS club Nashville, squandered Canada's best chances in the early stages against Argentina. Canada, ranked 48th in the world, were knocked off their stride by Alvarez's goal and Argentina took a firmer grip on the game.

Lille striker Jonathan David had Canada's best chance in first-half stoppage time when he latched on to a long throw but his effort was fired straight at Aston Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez.

Despite the defeat, Canada surpassed expectations in their inaugural appearance at the Copa America. Jesse Marsch's side, the co-hosts of the 2026 World Cup alongside Mexico and the USA, will face the losers from the other semi-final in a third-place play-off on Sunday.

"What I said to the team afterwards is I know that they're very disappointed, but I'm very proud of them," said Marsch. "We've put together some incredible performances, just starting our process."

Marsch added it was important that Canada found a way to "expand" their "player pool" in the coming years. The semi-final between Uruguay and Colombia and takes place on Thursday, 11 July at 01:00 BST and Copa America final is on Monday, 15 July (01:00).

## India captain Gill hails 'crucial' T20 win in Harare

HARARE (AFP): India captain Shubman Gill led his team to what he described as a "crucial" 23-run win in the third T20 international against Zimbabwe at the Harare Sports Club on Wednesday. India took a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

Gill hit 66 off 49 balls in an Indian total of 182 for four after he won the toss and decided to bat. Zimbabwe replied with 159 for six. "It was a crucial win for us," Gill said at the post-match presentation. He added he was delighted with the way India started with both bat and ball.

The win continued an Indian comeback after they lost a low-scoring first match on Saturday. "Everyone is contributing and that is a good sign," said Gill. India raced to

49 without loss in four overs at the start of a 67-run opening stand between Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal, then reduced Zimbabwe to 39 for five in the first seven overs of the home team's innings.

Opening bowlers Khaleel Ahmed and Avesh Khan took three wickets in the power play before off-spinner Washington Sundar claimed two wickets in his first over.

Sundar finished with three for 15 in four overs and was named man of the match. India were bolstered by the inclusion of their three World Cup squad members, Jaiswal, Sanju Samson and Shivam Dube, who missed the first two matches because of India's World Cup victory celebrations in Mumbai.

Jaiswal made 36. Samson faced only seven balls towards the end of the innings and made 12 not out. Dube did not bat but conceded 27 runs in two overs of medium-pace bowling. Abhishek Sharma, who hit a century as an opening batsman in India's 100-run win in the second match on Sunday, batted at number three and was out for 10.

Zimbabwe captain Sikander Raza bemoaned a poor fielding performance. "We are proud of our fielding but the wheels came off today. We gave away 20 extra runs," he said.

Dion Myers made a spirited 65 not out off 49 balls as he and Clive Madonde (37) added 77 for the sixth wicket to lift the Zimbabwe innings after their poor start.

## Vingegaard edges Pogacar in thrilling Tour de France duel

LE LIORAN (AFP): Jonas Vingegaard edged Tadej Pogacar as a battle between the four Tour de France favourites played out over a series of hills in the central Cantal region on Wednesday.

Defending champion Vingegaard reeled in Slovenian Pogacar's ferocious attacks before a thrilling finish on stage 11 with Remco Evenepoel in third at 25sec and Primoz Roglic fourth at 45sec despite a late accident.

While the stage win went to Dane Vingegaard, the 27-year-old's tactics also won him a moral victory in the psychological struggle between the pair of two time Tour winners.

The gathering war of attrition between Vismar-Lease a Bike's Vingegaard and his challengers reached a crescendo as it climbed to the remote ski station of Le Lioran at 1,242m altitude, but surprisingly it left the top four positions unchanged.

Pogacar, 25, leads Belgian Evenepoel by 1min 06sec. Vingegaard is in third place at 1min 14sec, and the yellow jersey's compatriot Roglic is fourth at 2min 45sec.

This was Vingegaard's first stage



win on this year's Tour and above all proof he has overcome his March accidents and 12 days in hospital.

For Pogacar it is back to the drawing board after his bold, but foiled attempts to distance his rivals on a handful of testing climbs to the west of the city of Clermont.

Romain Bardet, who grew up in the

region, was greeted by a throng of ardent supporters on what was billed as 'Virage Bardet' (Bardet corner) where thousands of locals and backers bid him farewell on his final Tour de France.

He came second on the 2016 Tour de France and finished in the same position at the world championships two years later.

## KP Olympic Association demands rights of hosting of SAFE Games events



PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association in its executive body meeting has demanded the right of hosting at least three Games of the forthcoming SAFE Games to be held in Islamabad.

In this connection the meeting of the Executive Council was held here at a local hotel with President Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association and former Sports Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Syed Aqil Shah in the chair.

Members of the Executive Council including former international gold medal shooter Dr.

Inam Ullah Khan Gandapur, Arbab Naseer Khan, Secretary Zulfiqar Butt and others participated in the meeting. He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association hosted two National Games including the 31st National Games in 2010 and 33rd National Games in 2019 which were the best ever Games so it is the legitimate right of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to host at least three Games of the forthcoming SAFE Games.

Syed Aqil Shah requested the Governor KP Faisal Karim Kundi and Chief Minister KP

Ali Amin Gandapur to appeal to the Federal Government in this regard.

President KP Olympic Association Syed Aqil Shah also congratulated Zulfiqar Ali Butt for being appointed as Secretary General Pakistan Archery Federation. He said the contribution of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as vital members of the Pakistan Olympic Association so looking after the long lasting image of KP for the promotion of sports in the country, so three games should be allotted.

Former World Champion Qamar Zaman, Imtiaz Afridi, Rahmat Gul Afridi, Faqir Muhammad Awan, Zulfiqar Butt, Dr. Inamullah Gandapur, Amjad Khan and officials of various associations participated in the meeting.

Syed Aqil Shah said that a committee consisting of Qamar Zaman, Syed Akhtar Ali Shah and Zulfiqar Butt has been formed which will meet the Chief Minister, Sports Advisor and Sports Secretary and inform them about the situation of sports.

Expenditure on salaries of

sports board employees is being spent if the government wanted to promote sports, it has to talk to the Olympic Association, he added. He said that in the previous National Games, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was ahead of other provinces except Sindh.

The children of the province are playing on behalf of different departments, he said. A letter will be written to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association, which has not been getting annual grants for many years, and an annual grant should be issued, Syed Aqil Shah said.





## In brief

### ANF seizes over 371 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 7 operations across the country managed to recover over 371 kg drugs and arrested 6 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that 4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of two women going to Dubai at Islamabad Airport. 4 kg ice was recovered from a parcel booked for New Zealand at a courier office in Quetta. 3.8 kg ice was recovered from a passenger going to Bahrain from Karachi Airport. 720,000 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Western Bypass Quetta, while two suspects were rounded up during the operation. 6 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested near Tando Jam Hyderabad. 50.4 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle stopped and checked near Ring Road Peshawar. 22,000 intoxicated tablets were recovered near Nadra Chowk Torkham. Cases have been registered against the accused and further investigations are under process.

### Mohtasib's Advisor to hold Khuli Katcheri

ISLAMABAD (APP): In pursuance of the directions given by the Wafaqi Mohtasib, Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, the Advisor in the Wafaqi Mohtasib's office will hold a Khuli Katcheri at Jinnah Hall, Murree on July 11, 2024. It would be attended by the Federal Government officials and representatives, who would pass on the spot instructions following hearing of public complaints. It may be pointed out that the Khuli Katcheri is part of the Outreach Complaint Resolution (OCR), mechanism being followed by the Wafaqi Mohtasib's office, which aims at providing administrative relief to the people at their doorsteps. The Wafaqi Mohtasib has directed the officials of the electricity, sui gas, NADRA, BISP, PTCL, State Life Insurance, Post Office etc. to attend the said Katcheri in order to address the public complaints promptly.

### DG RDA inspects rainwater drainage

RAWALPINDI (APP): Director General (DG), Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Kinza Murtaza along with Managing Director (MD), Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi here on Wednesday on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak visited different city areas to inspect rainwater drainage from low-lying areas. The DG RDA on this occasion said, "Timely drainage of rain water from low-lying areas is our top priority." WASA teams are in the field and busy to ensure drainage of rain water from all areas particularly low-lying, she informed. Due to timely cleaning of the Nullah Lai, the flow of water in Nullah Lai is normal despite heavy rain, Kinza Murtaza added. MD WASA has given instructions to complete the WASA's operation to clear stagnant rain water across the city as soon as possible, the DG informed. He said, WASA staff is working hard to complete the ongoing operation. MD WASA informed that 50 mm rain was recorded in the twin cities so far. The highest rainfall of 47 mm was recorded at Saidpur.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting of Core Committee regarding Security of Chinese Citizens. —APP Photo

## Country facing shortage of nurses at national level: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, and Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday said the country is facing shortage of nursing staff at the national level as the country required a 0.9 million more nurses to cater the growing needs of the population by 2030.

The minister was replying to the calling attention notice moved by Member National Assembly (MNA), Sehar Kamran to invite attention of the Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination to the matter of shortage of doctors and nurses in Islamabad, causing grave concern amongst the public.

Tarar informed that there was no shortage of doctors in the hospitals of the feder-

al capital, but rather that of nurses. "At present, 100,000 nurses are serving whereas there are 589 nursing schools and colleges operating across the country out of which 375 are private and 214 are public institutions," he said.

He added that it was an important service and evening classes policy was being introduced and imposed since 2018. Since, there were more females opting for this profession, there were efforts underway to manage their hostel and other needs and nursing colleges were encouraged to increase their seats to accommodate increasing number of aspirants, he said.

The minister underlined that some 20,000 doctors were entering the service system per year which was satisfactory and as per the

WHO guidelines to cater the population of the country. However, he said concerns were emerging in the service ratio of those doctors in rural and urban areas.

He assured that the number of doctors in PIMS, Polyclinic, and Basic Health Units (BHUs) was satisfactory, whereas 77 positions for Poly Clinic Hospital were allocated awaiting the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) approval for recruitment. However, the FPSC was pushed to initiate that process on priority.

He mentioned that the PM had constituted a committee on Kyrgyzstan issue that proposed to incentivize doctors to serve in rural areas as they should be extended benefits against their service in less developed areas. He underscored

that health was among the top priorities of the government and would ensure recruitments under the contractual procedures.

Sehar Kamran in her supplementary question raised the concerns that the ratio of 5:10,000 meaning five nurses for 10,000 individuals was alarming. There were 40,000 trained and registered doctors who were not actively practicing in the field, whereas the Interior Minister has pledged the US government to send Pakistani nurses to US, she added.

"We have shortage of nurses at home and registered doctors are not practicing but the interior minister is thinking to send our trained workforce to the US which should be avoided and in house reforms should be made to cater the local needs," she said.

### Fire at H-9 Bazaar under control: DC

ISLAMABAD (APP): A fire that broke out on Wednesday morning at H-9 Bazaar was brought under control after 31 fire tenders were called to control the blaze, said Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon.

Talking to the media, the DC said the fire started in the garments section of the H-9 Sunday market. The flames quickly spread to the nearby crockery and utensils section. To bolster the firefighting efforts, additional support was requested from the Pakistan Navy, Air Force, and Rawalpindi administration.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon confirmed that all available resources were being utilized to extinguish the fire.

On the ground, ICT administration officials, including the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners, and concerned Assistant Commissioners, were present to oversee the operation. Despite the significant response, shopkeepers in the market resisted the fire brigade's efforts, complicating the situation.

The district administration urged the traders, urging them to cooperate with the firefighting teams to bring the blaze under control.

## Naqvi chairs meeting of Core Committee on Security of Chinese Citizens

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the Core Committee on Security of Chinese Citizens at the Ministry of Interior.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Interior, Secretary Defense, Incharge National Coordinator NACTA, Coordinator National Action Plan and senior officials of law enforcement agencies.

Chief Secretaries of all provinces, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, IGs, and Home Secretaries partici-

pated in the meeting via video link. The meeting reviewed in detail the security of Chinese citizens across the country.

The Interior Minister underlined that no compromise and negligence would be tolerated in the security of Chinese citizens. He directed that the security audit of Chinese citizens be completed within the stipulated time line and that all relevant agencies ensure 100 percent implementation of the new SOPs.

He further said that the SOPs for the security of Chinese citizens had been prepared in consultation

with all relevant agencies, and every effort had been made to ensure that all security aspects were considered in it.

The minister asked the departments and agencies working in the field to provide further recommendations. He underscored that these recommendations would be reviewed by the Core Committee and if there is any room for improvement these would be implemented immediately.

The Chief Secretaries and IGP's briefed the participants of the meeting on the measures taken to ensure the security of Chinese citizens.

## Randhawa forms committee to probe fire incident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Commissioner (CC) Muhammad Ali Randhawa visited the H-9 Sunday Bazaar on Wednesday after a fire broke out around 11 am and formed a committee to investigate the incident.

He also reviewed the fire extinguishing efforts.

Talking to media persons, the Commissioner, accompanied by the Inspector General (IG) of Police, said, "The fire brigade was dispatched right away. Our team was already active due to the rain, so 31 fire engines and several water tankers were promptly reached on the site. Over 250 rescuers are involved in the operation."

On the occasion, Randhawa said that he called the IGP and the area had been sealed off to prevent further incidents. He assured that any damage would be repaired. He said that the aim of cordoning off the area was to stop the fire from reigniting.

Randhawa acknowledged that this isn't the first fire at the bazaar. To determine the cause and find prevention measures, a joint committee of district and police officials would be formed. This committee is expected to submit its report within seven days.

The Chief Commissioner said that steps would be taken to avoid these incidents in the future. Relaying the inci-

dent details, he said that out of 2,743 shops, 500 have been damaged. Authorities have urged people not to risk their lives to retrieve goods, assuring that the government will compensate for the losses.

The committee investigating the fire incident will be led by the Deputy Commissioner and will include technical experts. The fire is now fully under control, he added.

Additionally, he said that plans were underway to enhance the city's safety measures. The authorities aim to establish a Safe City Authority, utilizing the best cameras in the country to improve surveillance and safety in Islamabad.

## Romina urges gender equity to boost climate resilience

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Romina Khurshid Alam on Wednesday has emphasized the need to address gender equity and population management to reduce emissions and build climate resilience.

In a message on World Population Day to be observed on Thursday, tomorrow, Romina Khurshid Alam stressed the importance of understanding the intersections between population dynamics and climate change.

She noted that this intersection was vital for developing effective strategies to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of a warming planet. She said this day is a timely reminder of the need for urgent action to address the challenges posed by climate change, population growth and gender inequality.

The Coordinator highlighted the opportunity to reflect on the implications of population growth and

demographic trends, particularly in relation to climate change. She said as the global population grows, there is greater demand for energy, food, and resources, which leads to higher emissions from the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial activities.

Romina Khurshid Alam noted that demographic changes like aging populations and urbanization could also exacerbate or mitigate climate impacts, but the primary driver of climate change is emissions.

She expressed concerns about climate change disrupting food production, especially in regions like South Asia, which may lead to food insecurity and malnutrition. The PM's aide also emphasized that promoting gender equity and managing population growth in vulnerable countries is essential for implementing a potential climate resilience strategy.

She urged for a collective effort to address these critical issues and develop sustainable solutions to combat climate change. She said climate-related disasters like droughts, floods and extreme heat put more people at risk, especially those living in poverty with limited resources to adapt.

Highlighting the need for effective population management strategies to mitigate climate impacts, Romina Khurshid Alam said the increasing population has far-reaching consequences on various aspects of sustainability, including environmental conservation, water efficiency, energy conservation and tree plantation programs.

She said larger populations heighten the number of individuals vulnerable to climate-related catastrophes such as floods, droughts, and severe weather events, rendering disaster management more complex. Romina Khurshid Alam underscored the importance of a comprehensive approach to build a more resilient and sustainable future.

## PR plans to introduce smart Railway cars

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Pakistan Railways (PR) was informed on Wednesday that Pakistan Railways would introduce four smart railway cars on routes between Lahore-Islamabad, Lahore-Faisalabad, Lahore-Multan, and Karachi-Hyderabad at a cost of approximately \$45 million under public-private partnership.

"The Pakistan Railways is committed to moving towards public-private partnerships and is planning to introduce four smart railway cars for routes between Lahore-Islamabad, Lahore-Faisalabad, Lahore-Multan, and Karachi-Hyderabad at a cost of around \$45 million," stated Secretary of the Ministry of Railways, Syed Mazhar Ali Shah, during the meeting.

He noted that under this public-private partnership, private parties will contribute a portion of the profit to maintain the tracks. The meeting, chaired by Senator Jam Saifullah Khan, was attended by Senators Saifullah Sarwar Khan Nyazee, Kamil Ali Agha, and Dost Ali Jessar, along with Secretary Syed Mazhar Ali Shah and other

senior officials. Syed Mazhar Ali Shah briefed the committee on the operations and performance of the ministry, said that railways were 62% safer and 72% more environmentally friendly than roads.

He highlighted that railways can economically contribute by lowering the oil import bill. Despite its potential, the first transport policy in the country was only formulated in 2018, aiming to provide safe, affordable, efficient, durable, and environmentally friendly transport.

Currently, Pakistan Railways was working towards self-reliance by increasing its market share from 8% to 30%, but financial constraints were hindering progress.

The Secretary noted that 95% of the railway budget was spent on pensions, pay, and fuel, leaving only 5% for maintenance. For the financial year 2024-25, the liabilities related to pensions amount would be around Rs 62 billion.

Pakistan Railways has taken measures to minimize operational costs and requested the federal government to include railway pensioners in the

national account. Responding to Senator Kamil Ali Agha's query, the Secretary informed the committee that a double electric line did exist between Lahore and Lodhran but has unfortunately been dismantled.

Discussing the ML-1 project, the Secretary explained that ECNEC has approved the ML-1 upgrade project at a cost of around \$6.68 billion.

The first phase will upgrade the railway track from Karachi to Multan, followed by the track from Multan to Peshawar in the next phase. The committee decided to hold an exclusive session on the ML-1 project and to visit the Islamabad and Lahore railway workshops to examine their performance.

The Committee directed that priority be given to expanding the rail network to enhance regional connectivity and maximize financial benefits. Additionally, the committee recommended creating a think tank to strategize future projects, taking into consideration future trends and climate changes, and presenting a report at the next meeting.



ISLAMABAD: A motorcycle passing through rain water accumulated on IJP Road after heavy rain in the twin cities. —APP Photo



### Old banknotes set alight

KABUL (Pajhwok): Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) torched about 889.9 million old afghani banknotes in Kabul on Wednesday. The banknotes were burnt in the presence of a delegation after an accurate count based on Articles 39 and 42 of the DAB Law, the central bank said in a statement. Mullah Muhammad Akhund, second deputy governor of DAB, asked people to pay attention to the protection of banknotes in commercial and economic transactions.

## The Frontier Post

# AFGHANISTAN

Muharram 04 1446 — Thursday, July 11, 2024

### 76,000mt of goods transported

KABUL (BNA): In the past week, 76,881 metric tons of goods were transported via Afghanistan's railway lines, managed by the Ministry of Public Works. This total includes shipments of petroleum products and various other goods transported both domestically and internationally. Additionally, the report highlights that 3,335 metric tons of export goods were transported last week, with a significant portion comprising dried fruits and pomegranate juice.

## Russia to work on removing IEA from list

KABUL (Ariana News): Moscow is making progress on removing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) from its list of banned groups, Russia's special envoy for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov said this week.

State news agency Tass reported Tuesday that when asked when the IEA would be removed from the list he answered: "When all procedures are completed. They are still going on." When asked whether the procedures are going well, he said: "Of course."

In May, Kabulov said the delisting would enable Moscow to decide whether to recognize the IEA government.

"Without this [removal of the ban on the IEA], it will be premature to talk about recognition," he said. "Therefore, with this issue continues. All considerations have been reported to the top leadership of Russia. We are waiting for a decision."

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also said recently that the IEA is the "real power" in Afghanistan and that their removal from Moscow's list of banned organizations reflects "objective reality."

## 21 new coal seams identified in Sar-e-Pol

S A R E - E - P O L (TOLOnews): The National Development Corporation (NDC) has announced that in the near future, over a thousand jobs will be created in the Balkhab coal sector.

According to officials at NDC, 21 coal seams have recently been identified in the Balkhab area.

The officials also said that two billion Afghans have been allocated for constructing roads that connect the Balkhab mines and for providing other facilities in this district.

Farid Azim, the head of the Balkhab coal sector in Sar-e Pol, told a TOLOnews reporter: "We have considered certain standards needed for underground extraction, such as safety measures. We have identified 21 coal seams throughout the Balkhab area, which will be extracted in the near future, adhering to mining principles, and can employ over a thousand local residents."

NDC Officials also say that since they took over responsibility for the Balkhab coal mines, illegal extraction by locals has been prevented.

Local officials in Sar-e Pol have said that currently, Afghan coal, especially from Balkhab, is being sold to Pakistan, and efforts to market this mineral in Central Asian countries are ongoing.

Mohammad Yaqoob Abdul Rahman Aqa, the governor of Sar-e-Pul, stated: "The coal mine is a national asset and a capital of Afghanistan. More work should be done on it to prevent exploitation by corrupt individuals."

The Balkhab district, with its rugged mountains and winding valleys, is located 140 kilometers from the center of Sar-e Pol province and contains abundant, high-quality coal deposits.

Several residents of the Balkhab district are asking the officials in the Islamic Emirate to take care of their challenges in the area of providing land, construction of roads, and health.

Sultan Raza, a resident of Balkhab district, said: "We request the Islamic Emirate standardize our roads and also build clinics and schools."

According to preliminary surveys, 1.5 billion tons of coal have been identified in the Balkhab district of Sar-e Pol province, and its extraction will play a crucial role in the country's economic growth and job creation.

Officials have said that the open-pit mining operations in Balkhab district are currently ongoing, with daily extraction reaching over a thousand tons.

# UNAMA's criticism of Afghanistan's morality ministry 'unfounded', says IEA

KABUL (Ariana News): In response to UNAMA's report on rights violations by the ministry for the propagation of virtue and prevention of vice and complaints, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) said Wednesday the claims by the organization were unfounded and that all rights were respected in accordance with Sharia.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the IEA's spokesman said that the rulings recommended by this ministry are well-known Islamic rulings.

He said UNAMA was trying to compare Afghanistan's policies against those of the West, which was not "the right thing to do".

He added that under the IEA, the rights of all citizens are secured in accSharia.

"All men and women are dealt with according to Sharia, Sharia rulings are enforceable as laws, and in this case, no one is oppressed or violated," said Mujahid.

Mujahid added that Afghanistan should be examined as an Islamic entity and the demands of the nation, the absolute majority of which are Muslims and who have made great sacrifices for the establishment of the Islamic system, should be taken into consideration.

At the same time, the spokesperson of the US

State Department, said in response to the UNAMA report, that the actions of the ministry for the propagation of virtue and prevention of vice weaken the prohibition of denying the human rights of all Afghans.

Matthew Miller said that the Islamic Emirate knows that its relations with the international community are fully related to its treatment of the Afghan people.

He said in a press conference in Washington on Tuesday that the United States is closely monitoring the behavior of the Islamic Emirate towards the people of Afghanistan, especially the women and girls of this

country.

He said that America expects the Islamic Emirate to pay attention to the concerns of its people and the international community in this regard.

"As we have told representatives of the Taliban (Islamic Emirate) in private and public meetings, the relations of this group (Islamic Emirate) with the international community completely depend on its behavior. We have made this very clear."

This is while the UN said Tuesday the ministry for the propagation of virtue and prevention of vice were violating human rights and fundamental freedoms and that decrees

and methods used to enforce rules were contributing to "a climate of fear and intimidation among segments" of society in Afghanistan.

The report, titled 'De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights' was published Tuesday and also contained the Islamic Emirate's response to the UN's findings.

The report stated: "As part of this engagement, Afghanistan's de facto authorities were invited to provide factual comments on the content of the report."

According to the report, the ministry has enforced decrees that have a dispro-

portionate impact on women and girls, like dress codes, segregated education and employment, and having a male guardian when they travel.

"The punishments attached to non-compliance with instructions and decrees are often arbitrary, severe and disproportionate," the report read.

The report meanwhile stated that since the ministry's establishment, its scope of responsibility has continued to expand.

"In addition to intensifying monitoring of compliance with existing policies, it has introduced new instructions and expanded into new areas of enforcement," UNAMA stated.

## Returnees to get shelter in Daikundi

NEILI (Pajhwok): The Refugees and Repatriation Department of central Daikundi province says 65 houses will be built for refugees, internally displaced persons and needy families in Neili City, the provincial capital.

In a statement, the Refugees Department said that construction of 65 shelters would cost \$355,680.

It said the project was being implemented by the Watan Development and Social Services Institute (WSTA) with financial support from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The project was launched in the presence of officials from implementing agencies.

The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

## Illegal money changers to be banned

KABUL (TOLOnews): Hasiullah Noori, the spokesman of the Central Bank of Afghanistan, said that all money changers who have a legal license can continue their activities as in the past, but small-time money changers must also receive a license to continue their work.

The spokesman of the Central Bank of the country said: "Several money changers have been operating illegally. Based on the decision of the Central Bank of Afghanistan, the process of banning all money changers who are operating without a license has been started."

On the other hand, the money changers of Shahzada Palace in Kabul have said that there is a need to create a regular solution for the activities of money changers so that they do not remain unemployed.

Abdul Rahman Zirak, the spokesman of the Sarai Shahzada Money Exchange, told TOLOnews: "We want a solution regarding this issue that will satisfy the Central Bank and the money changers and unlicensed money changers."

Shams Rahman Ahmadzai, an economic analyst, and an expert on economic issues, said: "The people of Afghanistan are facing an economic crisis. With the implementation of this notification, a thousand people who work in this sector will be unemployed."

Previously, the economic mission headed by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, deputy prime minister for economic affairs, considered the plan prepared by the central bank for money changers as feasible.

Based on this plan, money changers must pay 5 million afghani as a guarantee to receive their activity license, and money service companies must provide a guarantee of 50 million afghani to the Central Bank.

## Ministry to construct work offices

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Urban Development and Housing has announced the construction of essential offices for working committees at the returning migrants' camp in Torkham, Nangarhar province.

According to a press release from the Ministry, Mawlawi Nabiullah Saedi, the Director of Urban Development and Housing in Nangarhar, stated that basic offices for working committees and security personnel will be built at the Torkham migrant township camp.

He mentioned that the planning process for constructing these buildings is completed, which includes five offices for working committees, other necessary facilities, and rooms for security guards. The project is expected to be completed and operational within two months.

## Punishing criminals without court order forbidden



SAR-E-POL (TOLOnews): Mohammad Yaqoob Abdul Rahman Aka, the Governor of Sar-e-Pol, stated that without a court decision, no one has the right to punish criminals.

In a security meeting in the Balkhab district of this province, he added that in the current system, any form of corruption is prohibited, and criminals will be dealt with according to Islamic Sharia.

Abdul Rahman Aka also called on the security forces to make more efforts to ensure security and urged the people of this district to cooperate with the security forces.

Regarding this matter, the Governor of Sar-e-Pol said: "People should not be blindfolded as before, nor should innocent people be beaten until the court has decided. Once the court has decided, the guilty will bear their punishment."

The security officials of the Balkhab district, while assuring the provision of security in this district, stated that due to their continuous efforts, the gap between the government and the people has been eliminated.

Azizullah, the chief of staff of the second battalion, said: "Our patrols and checkpoints operate around the clock in coordination with other security agencies. We are at the service of the people, God willing."

Khan Nazar, acting head of the seventh battalion, said: "I assure you that we are always ready, and whatever needs to be done will be done with unity and agreement, God willing."

Previously, high-ranking officials of the Islamic Emirate had also called for good behavior towards the people and the elimination of the gap between the interim government and the citizens of the country.

## Kabir to neighbours: Don't harass refugees

KABUL (Pajhwok): Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Maulvi Abdul Kabir has called on neighbouring countries to avoid harassing Afghan refugees and provide them with necessary facilities.

A statement from the presidential office said Maulvi Abdul Kabir met Abdul Jabbar Takhari, the acting consul-general of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) in Karachi. Takhari said dozens of Afghan refugees had been freed from Pakistani prisons while talks were ongoing on the release of others. He hoped the remaining Afghan inmates would also be released soon.

Kabir called on neighbouring countries to avoid the ill-treatment of Afghan refugees and provide them with necessary facilities. Kabir issued necessary recommendations to Takhari and urged countries and international organisations to continue assistance to Afghan refugees.

According to another report, Maulvi Abdul Kabir the deputy premier also met a number of Shia religious scholars and tribal elders at his office. The religious scholars and tribal elders said today Afghanistan was in a state of stability after decades of war. They believed cooperation between the people and the government was necessary.

Kabir said all Afghans reserved equal rights under IEA. He assured the group a large number of personnel were trying to ensure the security of people during Muharram.

## Bamiyan graduates call for job opportunities

BAMIYAN (TOLOnews): A number of graduates and students in Bamiyan are calling on the interim government to provide job opportunities. Some graduates in Bamiyan say they have developed mental health issues due to unemployment and increasing poverty.

Tahir Shah, a student, said: "The primary desire of every student is to be a breadwinner for their family. That is why we seriously demand that the government provide job opportunities for every student."

Hamed, another student, said: "Our request to the government is to create more job opportunities for us as soon as possible so that we can serve our community and families in the future."

Abdulwali, a graduate from the Faculty of Social Sciences at Bamiyan University who received his degree six years ago, said he has spent a lot of time seeking job opportunities, but his efforts have so far been unsuccessful. Abdulwali said: "I have sent about 150 CVs to various institutions but unfortunately received no responses. This has affected me both mentally and economically."

Firozuddin Moradi, a university professor, said: "When educated individuals do not enter the job market, it limits quality work, job creation, and economic development in the community, and can even make these goals impossible."

Meanwhile, the governor of Bamiyan assures that job opportunities will be provided for graduates based on their abilities and skills.

Abdullah Sarhadi, the governor of Bamiyan, said: "God willing, job opportunities will be provided for all students. We urge the government to include those who understand governance within the government framework." According to statistics, over 6,000 students are currently studying across 7 faculties and 34 academic disciplines at Bamiyan University.

## Rising power outages: A growing concern for residents

KABUL (TOLOnews): Some residents of the capital have once again complained about the increase in power outages in Kabul.

They say that their businesses are heavily dependent on electricity and that the Breshna Company needs to focus on ensuring a continuous power supply.

Hedayatullah, a resident of Kabul, said, "If we have electricity for only three hours a day, it is very difficult for the people, especially in this extreme heat. Electricity should be available every day."

Homayoun, another resident of Kabul, said, "If they cannot provide twenty-four-hour electricity, at least give us electricity for eight or twelve hours because people are facing a lot of problems. Electricity comes late at night or for a short duration."

At the same time, the Chamber of Industries and Mines says that factories in the country, especially in Kabul's industrial park, are also facing a shortage of electricity, which negatively impacts domestic production.

Sakhi Ahmad Paiman, the first deputy of the Chamber of Industries and Mines, said, "The more the power outages increase, the less electricity we have, and consequently, our production lags behind. We lose our market share, and due to the lack of electricity, unfortunately, imported goods gradually take the place of our domestic products."

Meanwhile, the Breshna Company says that due to the increase in heat, daily power outages have reached up to ten hours; however, they are trying to reduce the outages. Hikmatullah Miyondi, the spokesperson for the Breshna Company, said, "In residential areas, we have ten hours of power outages, meaning 14 hours of electricity and ten hours of outages. The reason for the increase in outages is the hot weather. Demand has increased compared to supply."

A while ago, the remaining work on the 500 kV Arghandi substation project also started. Once this project is completed, approximately one thousand megawatts of electricity will be imported from Turkmenistan into the country over the next two years.

## Key restoration plans for historical monuments stressed



KABUL (BNA): Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa, the Acting Minister of Information and Culture, held a productive meeting with Engineer Ajmal Maiwandi, Head of the Cultural Services of the Aga Khan Foundation in his office.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Acting Minister emphasized that Afghanistan's historical monuments represent the country's ancient history, authentic culture, and national identity. He stressed the importance of coordination between the Ministry of Information and Culture and organizations working on the preservation and restoration of historical buildings in the country.

"Consultative meetings should be held with relevant institutions regarding the preservation and restoration of the country's historical monuments to discuss and exchange views on how to maintain and restore these structures," Minister Khairkhwa remarked.

Engineer Ajmal Maiwandi, in his briefing, informed the Acting Minister about the activities of the Aga Khan Foundation. He mentioned that the organization has

completed numerous projects across various provinces and is currently working on several key projects.

These include the comprehensive restoration of Babaji Mosque in Ghazni, archaeological excavations and the creation of an archaeological park in Bala Hissar, Kabul, the renovation of the Kabul Riverfront area known as Machin Khana, the reinforcement of the fifth minaret of the Herat Mosque, the stabilization of the porches of the Herat Great Mosque, and the restoration and stabilization of the tiles of the Khwaja Abdullah Ansari Shrine in Herat, which were damaged in the recent earthquake. Additionally, emergency measures are being implemented to protect the historical artifacts of Mes Aynak in Logar.

In conclusion, Minister Khairkhwa praised the efforts of the Aga Khan Foundation's cultural services in preserving and restoring the country's historical monuments. He emphasized the need to prioritize the preservation and restoration of historical buildings in poor condition and called for ongoing surveys to identify other historical structures that need attention.

## NEPA signs project agreement with Raha Org



KABUL (BNA): The Deputy for Professional and Policy Affairs of the National Environmental Protection Agency signed a cooperation agreement worth \$218,030 USD for a climate change project with the head of the Raha Organization.

Dr. Zainul Abidin Abid, Deputy for Professional and Policy Affairs of the National Environmental Protection Agency, and Mohammad Yousef Hamidiyan, Head of the Empowerment, Environment, and Humanitarian Aid Institute (Raha), signed the cooperation agreement to implement the climate change project over one year.

According to a press release from the mentioned agency, the agree-

ment outlines collaboration between the two organizations in several key areas.

These include conducting assessments and identifying relevant agencies related to climate change, organizing capacity-building and training programs for climate change specialists, and staff from related agencies.

Additionally, the agreement includes celebrating national and international environmental days and holding consultative programs with provincial agencies.

This comprehensive approach aims to enhance the effectiveness and coordination of climate change initiatives across various levels of governance and society.





GAZA: Relatives of a Palestinian killed in an Israeli attack on a school sheltering displaced people in Khan Younis.

## Caretaker govt banned X on ‘compliance issues’: Tarar

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, Culture and National Heritage Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday informed the Senate Standing Committee on Information that all the social media platforms are active in the country except "X" which was banned over the "compliance issues".

The decision to this effect was taken by the caretaker government, said the minister while responding to such a query of Senator Barrister Ali Zafar who presided over the Senate Panel here. He said the Ministry of Interior had submitted its reply to the Islamabad High Court regarding the ban on X formerly Twitter. "The matter is with the court which will take an appropriate decision in this regard," he hoped.

"There is no restriction on Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat and LinkedIn which are being used by the common man posting all kinds of content," he noted. The chairman committee underlined the need for ensuring provision of fundamental rights to all the citizens. "Freedom of expression is the basic right of every citizen as enshrined in the Constitution," he added.

Senator Ali stressed on devising a mechanism in collaboration with the Information Ministry which would not only ensure dissemination of cor-

rect information to the people about the government departments but also help them get their issues resolved. In the standing committee meeting, Senator Irfan Siddiqui said steps should be taken to discourage misuse of the freedom of expression as false and fabricated news were rife on the social media networking sites.

Senator Jam Muhammad called for a strategy to curb fake news, misinformation and disinformation in the country. The social media sites should be used to pursue the national interests, he added. Senator Pervez Rasheed not only regretted propaganda on such sites but also condemned the derogatory language being used by some elements.

The minister called for taking an initiative to curb crimes being committed in the digital domain, regretting there was currently no mechanism to tackle the issue of deepfake. He said the federal cabinet had taken up a proposal to establish a Digital Rights Protection Authority and formed a committee which was headed by Rana Sanaullah with the information and IT ministers its members.

At the outset of the panel's proceeding, the minister congratulated Senator Ali Zafar on assuming the role of the committee's chairmanship. "We are the custodians of democratic traditions and will work with the Standing Committee of Information

in close cooperation for further improvement of the media sector," he said while lauding the role played by his party leadership in their political grooming.

He said particularly praised PML-N Qaid Nawaz Sharif who ended his election campaign and inquired after his political opponent when he got injured in the past. "Political opponent does not mean an enemy," the minister said, adding the PML-N leadership engaged its opponents for the country's progress and prosperity. In the politics, he passionately called for promoting the spirit and norm of sharing each other's happiness and griefs.

He said important foreign policy decisions were taken by the Parliament which was led by Nawaz Sharif who held this institution in supreme regard. The credit for the enactment of the Access to Information Act went to Nawaz Sharif and the then Parliamentarians, he added. The minister informed the committee that the government had cleared the media houses' dues amounting to Rs 1.6 billion and now it was the responsibility of them to clear all the outstanding payments of the media workers and journalists. Their salaries should be increased as the government had not imposed any tax on newspapers industry and media, he added.

### SC likely to announce reserved seats case today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The consultative meeting chaired by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa regarding the case of reserved seats for the Sunni Itehad Council (SIC) has concluded.

The meeting on the reserved seats lasted about an hour and a half, with all 13 judges of the full court participating. The verdict will likely be announced today (Thursday).

According to the sources, the CJP called the 13-judge full court earlier on Wednesday. All the judges — Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Ayesha A. Malik, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Syed Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan — attended the meeting.

The bench has to decide whether reserved seats will be given to the SIC, or to other parties, or the issue will be sent to parliament to decide. It may be noted that the bench had on Tuesday reserved its decision after concluding hearing but the CJP did not pronounce the judgement. He said that he would consult with bench members before announcing the decision. And the court staff also confirmed to media that the decision would not be pronounced on Tuesday. It is still unclear whether the bench would announce verdict today or later.

### Ex-CM testifies in £190m reference

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Former federal minister Pervez Khattak has testified in the ongoing 190 million pound reference against PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi at Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi.

During Wednesday's hearing, Khattak recorded his statement, marking a significant development in the case. Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi were present in court from jail, while former minister Zubaidah Jalal and former principal secretary Azam Khan did not appear.

The cross-examination of the Bani Gala Patwari was also completed, bringing the total statements recorded to 31 witnesses, with 30 cross-examinations concluded. The court adjourned today's proceedings until July 13th, maintaining the momentum of the case.

### Fire devastates Islamabad's market

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A massive fire erupted in the H9 market of Islamabad, ravaging over 70 stalls and drawing a large-scale emergency response.

Rescue 1122 personnel, five fire brigade vehicles, and CDA staff are actively battling the blaze at Bachat Bazaar. DC Islamabad, Rana Waqas, reported that the fire's intensity prompted assistance from the Pakistan Navy, Air Force, and additional fire brigade units. The fire originated in the shoes and clothes section and rapidly spread, consuming more shops. Efforts to control the fire are ongoing, with authorities striving to extinguish the flames swiftly.

## KP govt decides to extend BRT service to Pabbi



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As an important step to facilitate masses with quality transport facility, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to extend BRT service from Chamkani to Pabbi (Nowshera). It has also been decided to declare ring road from Chamkani to Hayatabad as BRT route for starting modern bus service on the route with the aim to facilitate the commuters in the vicinity of the provincial capital.

The decisions were taken in 16th Board meeting of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mobility Authority (KPUMA) held here on Wednesday with Chief Minister Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair. Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah, Principal Secretary to CM Amjad Ali Khan, concerned administrative secretaries and other board members attended the meeting.

The forum was also briefed in detail about the urban mobility plans for divisional headquarters. The chief minister on the occasion, directed the authorities of transport department to come up with solid proposals for starting electric bus service in the urban areas of all the divisional headquarters after thorough consultations with all relevant stakehold-

ers.

The forum also decided to extend fare exemption to kids up to five years of age traveling with their parents in BRT Busses. The chief minister said that the incumbent provincial government is committed to develop transport system of the province on modern lines, directing the concerned authorities to take measures for improving service delivery and implementation of their plans in letter and spirit. He also directed for ensuring availability of all required facilities to citizens at bus stands, further directing the concerned quarters to expedite completion of commercial plazas of BRT and devise their business plans.

## Record-breaking heatwave engulfs western US

CALIFORNIA (AP): The western United States continues to grapple with an oppressive heatwave that is believed to have killed at least seven people, authorities say, and has spurred safety warnings across large swaths of the country. The bout of extreme heat has smashed records across the West, while further stoking concerns over the impacts of the climate crisis.

On Wednesday, the city of Las Vegas in Nevada was set to surpass its previous record of four consecutive days over 46.1 degrees Celsius (115 degrees Fahrenheit). That comes after heat in the city smashed the 2021 single-day record of 46.6C (116F) when it reached 48.8C (120F) on Sunday.

"This is the most extreme heatwave in the history of record-keeping in Las Vegas since 1937," said meteorologist John Adair, a veteran of three decades at the National Weather Service office in southern Nevada. Local resident Alyse Sobosan said this

July has been the hottest in the 15 years she has lived in Las Vegas. "It's oppressively hot," she told The Associated Press news agency. "It's like you can't really live your life."

Health officials have emphasised that the heat can pose serious health risks. "Even people of average age who are seemingly healthy can suffer heat illness when it's so hot it's hard for your body to cool down," said Alexis Brignola, an epidemiologist at the Southern Nevada Health District.

The heatwave has also broken records in the north-western states of Oregon and Washington in recent days, with the temperature topping 39.4C (103F) in the city of Portland and 40.5C (105F) in Salem and Eugene. The Oregon state medical examiner said on Tuesday that the heat is believed to have caused at least six deaths.

A motorcyclist also died from heat exposure in Death Valley National Park in California on Saturday,

as temperatures reached 53.3C (128F) there. In both states, the dry and hot conditions were also fuelling wildfires, including a new blaze in Oregon dubbed the Larch Creek Fire, which quickly grew to more than 12 square kilometres (5 square miles) on Tuesday evening. In California, firefighters were battling at least 18 wildfires on Tuesday, including a 109sq km (42sq mile) blaze that prompted evacuation orders for about 200 residences in the mountains of Santa Barbara County.

The heatwave comes after June marked the 13th straight month of record-breaking monthly temperatures around the world. In total, more than 161 million people across the US were placed under heat alerts on Tuesday. The threat was particularly pronounced in the southern state of Texas, where more than a million people remained without power following Hurricane Beryl, with the city of Houston particularly hard-hit.

## Houthi attack another ship off Yemen

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's Houthi militia attacked a ship in the Red Sea on Wednesday, less than a day after claiming to have hit three ships in the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Aden.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, a body that records ship attacks, said that a ship master on Wednesday reported an explosion near his vessel 40 nautical miles south of Yemen's Red Sea port city of Mocha and that the ship and its crew were unhurt. "The vessel is proceeding to its next port of call.

Authorities continue to monitor the situation. Vessels are advised to transit with caution and report any suspicious activity to UKMTO," the UK agency said in a

statement.

The attack came a day after the Houthis targeted a commercial ship destined for Oman in the Indian Ocean, breaking a more than week-long pause in ship attacks by the militia. In a televised statement, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said on Tuesday evening that the militia targeted the US-flagged Maersk Sentosa in the Arabian Sea with ballistic and cruise missiles in revenge for US military strikes on Yemeni regions under Houthi control.

Sarea also claimed the Houthis shot explosive-laden drones at the Marthopolis ship in the Arabian Sea, blaming the assault on the ship's parent

company violating the militia's prohibition on traveling to Israel. Another ship, MSC Patnaee, identified as Israeli by Sarea, was targeted with drones in the Gulf of Aden.

According to marinetraffic.com, the Maersk Sentosa is a container ship flying the US flag that docked at the Omani Salalah port on Tuesday, the Marthopolis is a Malta-flagged container ship sailing from Oman's Salalah to India, and the MSC Patnaee is a Liberian-flagged container ship sailing from Somalia to Sri Lanka. The Houthis claim that their anti-ship campaign is aimed at Israel-linked ships and those sailing to Israel in order to pressure Tel Aviv into ending its war in Gaza. — Arab News

## CASS recommends strengthening domestic cybersecurity legislation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, conducted a roundtable on the 'Cyberspace as a Global Common: Formulation and Applicability of International Law.'

Air Marshal Zahid Mehmood (Retd), Director (National Security) at CASS, set the stage for the discussion by outlining critical issues surrounding the governance of cyberspace. Drawing parallels to natural assets outside national jurisdictions such as oceans and outer space, he highlighted the unique challenges and responsibilities faced in regulating cyberspace as a 'global common'.

Air Marshal Mehmood highlighted several international initiatives working to establish norms for cyberspace governance, including efforts of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN); the United Nations' Group of Governmental Experts (GGE); and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

Additionally, he referenced legal frameworks like the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime; the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection; and NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCoE)'s Tallinn Manual 2.0 that are shaping the landscape of cyber law. Despite these efforts, he lamented that cyberspace remains largely unregulated, underscoring the pressing need for enhanced international cooperation.

Mr Jamal Aziz, Executive Director, Research Society of International Law (RSIL), remarked that discussions on great power rivalry, geopolitics, and the multipolar world often remained superficial, pointing out that the real confrontation was now unfolding in the technological domain, particularly in cyberspace. He highlighted that international standard setting works in tandem with strategic and domestic institutions, a process that needs sharp focus by Pakistan.

Additionally, he noted that domestic laws were not systematically coor-



minated, leading to ineffective domestic and international responses. Mr Aziz also expressed concern over the basic nature of agreed-upon cyber security norms and the complexity of cyber warfare, including issues of attributing cyber-attacks and managing non-state actors. He underscored the importance of developing strong domestic legal frameworks in the dig-

ital domain, noting that countries like the US and China were advancing regulations to set the pace for global standards in their interest.

Mr Khawaja Mohammad Ali, a Cyber Security, Data Privacy, and Digital Forensics Expert, was of the view that cyberwarfare must be recognised as the fifth domain of warfare, highlighting its importance for

national security. He cautioned that future sanctions could stem from cyberspace governance, underscoring the need for Pakistan to establish a presence in cyberspace and participate in its governance to avoid remaining vulnerable to cyber threats.

He pointed out the importance of the global supply chain in cyberspace, indicating the need for sophisticated cybersecurity measures. He mentioned that cybersecurity, once a buzzword around 2003-04, is now being seriously implemented by organisations across Pakistan. However, he expressed concerns that Pakistan's cybersecurity policy, currently under review in Parliament, does not address emerging technologies such as AI and cloud computing, emphasising the necessity of actionable policies rather than mere paper plans. Mr Ali also highlighted the need for securing institutions and critical infrastructure from adversaries. He concluded by stressing the importance of enhancing cyber-diplomacy; establishing international linkages to strengthen Pakistan's position

in global cyberspace governance; and focusing on indigenous development in cybersecurity solutions.

Discussants Dr Zunera Jalil and Dr Kashif Kifayat from Air University also shared their views on the subject. In his Concluding Remarks and Vote of Thanks, Air Marshal Javid Ahmed (Retd), President CASS, Islamabad highlighted that nowadays, decision-making was entirely data-dependent, hence, it was crucial to secure data. He commended ongoing efforts within academia to bolster the cyber ecosystem through R&D.

Discussing global technology dynamics, he opined that Pakistan would soon need to make strategic choices between aligning with Western or Eastern technological standards. President CASS stressed the importance of supporting existing areas of excellence within the country rather than focusing solely on vulnerabilities. He urged government policymakers to acknowledge and invest in Pakistan's human resources to enhance national cybersecurity capabilities.