

LHC orders release of Sanam
F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court has directed the immediate release of PTI activist Sanam Javed, who was detained in connection with the Gujranwala case. A two-member bench, led by Justice Asjad Javed Gharal, issued a 14-page written ruling on Javed's petition. The court criticized the repeated arrest of Javed as a misuse of the legal system.



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IHC issues notice to CDA
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has issued notice to Capital Development Authority (CDA), seeking response from it for sending notice to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) central secretariat Islamabad on encroachment. A petition on CDA notice against PTI secretariat violation of rules and encroachment was heard today in the IHC.

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ISLAMABAD: President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Pakistan, Azerbaijan to expand bilateral ties

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Azerbaijan have affirmed their commitment to further expanding mutually beneficial cooperation in the areas of bilateral interest, especially energy, trade, connectivity, defence, and people-to-people linkages.

These topics were discussed during a meeting between President Asif Ali Zardari and the visiting President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Friday. Welcoming President Ilham Aliyev, President Asif Ali Zardari said that both countries enjoyed excellent relations and had a great scope of further improving ties in various areas of mutual interest.

He underlined the need for more regular engagements between the people and businessmen of Pakistan and Azerbaijan to

cement bilateral ties. He highlighted the importance of Gwadar port, suggesting that Central Asian Countries and Azerbaijan enjoyed a high frequency of people-to-people exchanges and both the countries needed to promote business-to-business relations for enhancing economic prosperity to the region.

President welcomed the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, adding that the MoUs would give a new impetus to bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade, commerce, tourism, mines and minerals, science and technology, law & justice, and culture. President highlighted that the East had the potential to lead the world towards prosperity. He added that Pakistan wanted to build a sustainable and result-oriented engagement with Central Asian Republics and Azerbaijan.

Speaking on the occasion, President Ilham Aliyev said that Pakistan and Azerbaijan enjoyed a high frequency of people-to-people exchanges and both the countries needed to promote business-to-business relations for enhancing economic relations. He stated that Pakistan and Azerbaijan could also explore the possibility of working together in the renewable energy sector.

Later, the President also hosted a banquet in honour of President Ilham Aliyev and his delegation, which was also attended by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Federal Ministers, parliamentarians, diplomats, and journalists, at the President's House. The President expressed his warm greetings for the people of Azerbaijan and reassured Pakistan's unwavering support for Azerbaijan.

SIC, JUI-F hails verdict in favour of PTI

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Friday said that the ruling coalition's desire to amend the Constitution according to its wishes has been blocked by the Supreme Court ruling.

The apex court, in a majority verdict, declared that the PTI is a political party and eligible for reserved seats denied by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). The order has effectively deprived the government of a two-thirds majority in the Parliament, essential for amending the Constitution. While addressing the media after the Supreme Court announced its verdict, the barrister said the decision announced by the court today was based on truth.

"It is a happy day for 25 million people, for democratic forces," he said. "The decision of the Supreme Court will be remembered in history." He further claimed that 11 judges of the Supreme Court ruled in favour of PTI and added that the verdict blocked an attempt to amend the Constitution. Gohar explained that based on the appeals that have been allowed in the ratio of 8 to 5, the seats will be returned to PTI.

He insisted: "We request the Commission to implement these orders immediately and first of all, the Election Commission should issue us the certificate of our intra-party election within this week." During the press conference, the PTI chief was accompanied by Chairman of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) Hamid Raza, and party leaders Shibli Faraz and Salman Akram Raja who also spoke to the media. "Today, we have won legal battle, now, we have to win political battle," Raja said.

In a phone call with PTI stalwart Asad Qaiser, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that his party "accepted" the apex court's verdict, which came out as a major legal victory for the former ruling party.

"We express goodwill to the PTI on the [favourable] verdict and hope that the development will improve the ties between the two parties," Fazl told Qaiser. At this, the former NA speaker thanked Fazl for his good wishes. He said that today's verdict would establish the supremacy of the Constitution and democracy. PTI stalwart Asad Qaiser in reaction to the favourable decision by the apex court said that it was a "victory of Constitution and law".

PTI eligible for reserved seats: SC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Going against the grain of its previous decisions regarding the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the run-up to Feb 8 election, the apex court on Friday overturned the Peshawar High Court's verdict of depriving the PTI of the reserved seats of non-Muslim and women candidates in assemblies.

The apex court, in its majority 8-5 decision, announced that the conduct of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding reserved seats was 'unconstitutional', adding that the PTI would remain intact as a political party even without being assigned an election symbol. The verdict was authored by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah.

Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Ayesha Malik, Justice Irfan Saadat, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Ali Mazhar have decided in favour of the PTI to be allotted reserved seats while Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, Justice Jamal Mandokhail, Justice Naem Afghan and Justice Aminuddin Khan favoured against the PTI.

Besides, Justice Yahya Afridi wrote a dissenting note. The SC accepted the PTI as a political party and rejected the SIC's appeals. It has been said in the SC verdict that the PTI could give list of the candidates of the reserved seats, adding that those 41 candidates could present their certificates to prove that they were members of the party.

It is noteworthy that the full court bench had also deliberated on the PTI's reserved seats for almost two hours on Wednesday. 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 Naem Akhtar Afghan attended the meeting presided over

by the CJP on Thursday.

During the final hearing on Tuesday, SIC counsel Faisal Siddiqui submitted before the Supreme Court that he would prove that the Election Commission (ECP) had not fulfilled its responsibility. He stated this as soon as the court resumed hearing on the SIC's plea regarding reserved seats for women and minorities. "I will take 15 minutes to argue my point," he added.

Advocate Siddiqui stated that they [ECP] argued that the SIC did not participate in the elections and did not submit the list of candidates for reserved seats. He argued that the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) did not win any seat in 2018 but got three reserved seats. The ECP submitted a prejudiced response regarding the BAP election. The issue was raised before the ECP before moving the Supreme Court, he submitted and added that the ECP claim was contrary to its own documents. Isn't it distortion [of facts]?

Justice Mandokhail asked the lawyer was the ECP decision in accordance with the Constitution? He replied that [in 2018] it was in accordance with the law. Justice Minallah inquired him whether the ECP decision on the BAP reserved seats was challenged. Advocate Siddiqui said the ECP would have admitted that there was a mistake. But it acted as if the decision regarding the BAP did not exist.

Justice Saadat questioned him whether the BAP participated in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections? Advocate Siddiqui replied that it contested the election but did not win a seat. Justice Saadat said this case is different from that of the BAP. The SIC did not participate in the elections. He asked the lawyer to argue now and give a detailed answer later. Justice Mandokhail said that there is a difference between a political party and a parliamentary party. The decisions taken in parliament are made by the parliamentary party. Such decisions cannot be made by a political party.

A parliamentary party is not bound

to accept the decision of a political party. For example, the parliamentary party will decide whether to vote the prime minister or not. It (the parliamentary party) is not bound to implement the decision of the political party. Advocate Siddiqui agreed with Justice Mandokhail.

Everyone in the court burst into laughter when Justice Mandokhail called the name BAP (father) weird. Justice Mandokhail questioned what will happen if a party wins a seat in [three] provinces and does not win in one. Advocate Siddiqui replied that BAP won seats in other provinces but did not win a seat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The chief justice asked Advocate Siddiqui whether he wanted the Supreme Court to take judicial notice. If you want the Supreme Court to take up the 2018 election [anomaly], it can do so. But the court would not take into consideration the 2018 election [while deciding SIC plea]. Advocate Siddiqui submitted that the apex court should take into consideration the discriminatory attitude of the ECP. Chief Justice Isa inquired him whether the ECP was right in 2018? Is the Supreme Court bound by the interpretation of the ECP?

"I don't want to embarrass you; were the 2018 elections right?" he asked the lawyer. It may be noted that 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 was the eighth hearing on the SIC plea. The ECP is of the opinion that the SIC is not entitled to reserved seats, while the PML-N, the PPP and the JUI-F have also opposed the SIC petition for reserved seats for women and minorities.

Isn't it responsibility of judiciary to correct ECP's unconstitutional step, asks Justice Minallah Justice Athar Minallah in last hearing remarked that isn't it responsibility of the judiciary to correct mistakes committed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) who denied the right to a political party by keeping it away "unconstitutionally".

PM vows to work for solarization of tube wells

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday vowed that after Balochistan, the federal government would also work in collaboration with the governments of Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the welfare of farmers regarding the conversion of agricultural tube wells to solar energy.

Chairing a meeting on solarization of agriculture tube wells and anti-power theft campaign at the PM House, the prime minister highlighted that solar energy was the cheapest source of producing electricity, therefore promoting the solar energy in the country had become the government's top priority.

The prime minister directed the relevant authorities to prepare a comprehensive strategy after consultation with the provincial governments regarding the conversion of agricultural tube wells to solar energy in the provinces. In the meeting, the prime minister was told that shifting diesel-powered agricultural tube wells to eco-friendly solar energy would save US\$ 2.7 billion in foreign exchange.

PM Shehbaz also instructed to formulate a comprehensive plan to further improve electricity theft prevention measures. The prime minister appreci-

Shehbaz directs plan for PASSCO's privatisation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities concerned to prepare an action plan for the privatisation of the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Cooperation (PASSCO).

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to discuss the matters related to the Ministry of National Food Security and Research and PASSCO, also instructed to carry out the restructuring of the Wheat Board. He said the restructured Wheat Board should include representatives of farmers, Land Information Management System and PASSCO. The prime minister called for taking effective measures to enhance the yield of wheat and other crops. He asked the relevant authorities to formulate an alternate strategy for wheat procurement by the federal government and hold consultation with the provincial governments and also those of Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, as well as relevant departments.

ating the provincial governments for their cooperation with the Power Ministry to prevent electricity theft, directed the authorities concerned to present a comprehensive plan to introduce smart metering system in the country. He said the over billing in the electricity bills would not be tolerated.

The meeting was informed that during the anti electricity theft campaign, since September 2023, some 74,366 people had been arrested, 174,562 FIRs had been registered, 46 employees of Power Distribution Companies had been suspended and 421,460 cases had been filed across the country.

The meeting was further told that recently some 1,113 new electricity meters were installed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and around 12000 illegal connections were removed. The meeting was attended by Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister for Power Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, Petroleum Minister Dr Musaddik Malik, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Ali Pervaiz Malik (through video link), Coordinator to PM Rana Ehsaan Afzal (through video link), and other high officials. Chief Secretaries of the four provinces also attended the meeting via video link.

‘No danger’ to govt, says law minister

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar said that the Supreme Court's verdict on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) reserved seats does not pose any threat to the incumbent coalition government.

"We still have a majority of 209 members and the verdict has not been completed yet," said the minister after the top court ruled that the PTI was eligible for the allocation of reserved seats. Tarar said that he was not sure whether the government would file a review petition challenging the verdict or not as it was the prerogative of the federal cabinet, not a minister.

Terming the verdict "interesting", Tarar, while speaking during a press conference, said the SIC had claimed the reserved seats and not the PTI. "There was no mention of PTI in the PHC verdict and the law says that no judgement can be given against someone without hearing them," said Tarar.

He pointed out that the majority of the parties were not present in the court yet the verdict was announced against them. Tarar further said that 80 candidates had never claimed in the SC that they belonged to the PTI and why they had to join the SIC. "These 80 candidates said that they belonged to SIC," he said. "There are constitutional and legal flaws in this verdict that will remain under discussion," said the law minister.

Adviser to Prime Minister on Political Affairs, Rana Sanaullah on Friday said that the Supreme Court's ruling declaring PTI eligible for reserved seats was not a conspiracy against the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz-led (PML-N) coalition government. "The decision to seek a review of the verdict lies with the cabinet," Sanaullah stated talking to the media. "Court verdicts are not based on ambiguity; a review is just one option; we will

consult our legal team after the detailed verdict".

In response to a question about whether this decision posed a "threat" to the PML-N-led government, an unfazed Sanaullah asserted that the PML-N-led government had sufficient numbers in the federal government and more than necessary in Punjab. On the PTI's stance, Sanaullah said, "PTI never claimed the reserved seats. If the Election Commission misinterpreted the ruling, PTI could have interpreted it correctly. Even if PTI has committed a mistake, the court must rectify it".

"The Supreme Court ruling did not favour the SIC [Sunni Ittehad Council], as their petition was not accepted by the court," Sanaullah noted. "The new ruling identifies these independent members as part of PTI. Verdicts should be transparent, understandable to the public, and further a sense of security, leading to national progress."

Voicing grave concerns over the ruling, he argued that "rewriting the Constitution threatens its protection". "Relief was granted [to PTI] without any request for it. Judicial decisions should be comprehensible to the common man. Unfathomable rulings are never in the nation's interest."

Reflecting on past judgement, he added, "A previous ruling had granted someone the unsolicited power to amend the constitution, which the nation suffered from for years. Such decisions were extremely regrettable and against the country's interest, he said.

"We hold the courts and the judges in utmost esteem. They are the best at what they do. Judges have sworn to protect the constitution; rewriting it contravenes this oath," Sanaullah concluded by reiterating, "The government respects the judiciary's decisions and will carefully consider its next steps following a detailed consultation with their legal team."

Tarar rejects propaganda against ECP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, Culture and National Heritage Attaullah Tarar on Friday said the PTI should better confess its blunders, instead of maligning the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in a matter related to the reserved seats in the Parliament.

Rejecting the PTI's propaganda against the ECP, the minister said it was the PTI which failed to hold intra-party election in accordance with the law. Likewise, the party had not submitted declaration and party tickets to the concerned, he added. He, in a news statement, said the PTI also failed to join any party which had presence in the Parliament. "In this case, they did not request to be declared as MNA of the PTI," he added. After all these blunders, he said the PTI did not have the right to question the ECP's credibility. Ironically, it was portrayed that all in the country were guilty except the PTI, he added.

Meanwhile, PML-N Senator Irfan Siddiqi said that Friday's verdict raised a big question of whether there was any value or importance left of the Constitution of Pakistan. "The Constitution should be set aside if the decisions have to be made on the basis of the doctrine of necessity or the theory of convenience," he added.

I'm the most qualified person to run for president, claims Biden

WASHINGTON (AFP): US President Joe Biden defiantly insisted that he will run for another term and win, as a series of verbal gaffes while leading a major summit threw a harsh new spotlight on his fitness. The 81-year-old president sought to show himself in command as he led the NATO summit in Washington two weeks after a disastrous debate performance raised fears among Democrats that he may lose to Donald Trump.

But Biden mistakenly introduced Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky as his Russian foe Vladimir Putin before quickly correcting himself. At a high-stakes evening news conference afterward, Biden mistakenly referred to "Vice President" Trump.

But he vowed to stay in the race. "I think I'm the most qualified person to

run for president. I beat him once, and I will beat him again," Biden said of Trump. Biden, already the oldest person to be elected the first time to the White House, said he was "not in this for my legacy" but to "complete the job I started." Biden has faced a steady drumbeat of Democrats calling for him to abandon his 2024 candidacy, fearing that Trump is in a position to beat him.

Biden made clear he supported Harris - who as vice president would take over from him, but is also seen by a growing number of Democrats as a stronger candidate at the top of the ticket. Biden said he would not have picked Kamala Harris, whom he accidentally referred to as Trump, if "she was not qualified to be president." He also denied reports that he needed to go to bed by 8 pm, a time at which he was

still holding his news conference on Thursday.

"Instead of my every day starting at 7:00 am and going to bed at midnight, it would be smarter for me to pace myself a little more," Biden said. The US president said his administration was making progress towards a ceasefire deal in war-torn Gaza. "These are difficult, complex issues. There are still gaps to close. We're making progress. The trend is positive, and I'm determined to get this deal done and bring an end to this war, which should end now," he told reporters at the White House.

President Biden said he would still be ready to deal with Russian leader Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping well into a second term as he faced questions over his advancing years and fitness for office. "I'm ready to deal

with them now and three years from now... there isn't any world leader that I'm not prepared to deal with," he told reporters at the White House. During the press conference, Biden acknowledged concerns over his mental capacity - saying he was focused on reassuring Democrats amid growing calls for his withdrawal from November's presidential election.

"I'm determined on running but I think it's important that I allay fears," he told reporters at a high-stakes press conference. President Biden, seeking to allay concerns about his mental fitness as he seeks reelection, said that neurological exams found he is in "good shape." "I've taken three significant and intense neurological exams by a neurologist," Biden said, the most recent in February. "And they say I'm in good

shape."

Biden's error on Zelensky's name drew gasps from the room but Zelensky, Ukraine's wartime leader against Russia's 2022 invasion, laughed it off. Fellow leaders at the summit have fielded questions about Biden, and their answers have largely been supportive. "Slips of the tongue happen, and if you keep a close enough eye on everyone, you will find enough," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said after the president's latest gaffe. French President Emmanuel Macron said Biden had appeared "in charge," while British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he "was on good form."

But key American supporters have moved away from the diplomatic niceties. Hollywood actor and well-connected Democratic supporter

George Clooney called on Biden to exit the race, and party grandee Nancy Pelosi has stopped short of fully backing him. Around 14 Democratic members of the House of Representatives have openly urged the man who beat Trump four years ago to drop out, along with one Democratic senator.

A poll released on Thursday showed more than half of Democrats say Biden should end his bid for a second term, and two-thirds of Americans believe he should quit the race. But the former president and the incumbent remain in a dead heat on 46 percent, according to the Washington Post-ABC News-Ipsos survey. Biden's campaign was however quietly testing the strength of Harris in a potential match-up against Trump, The New York Times reported.



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Tordher presiding over a meeting regarding provision of facilities to foreign investors.

SACM directs for facilitation of investors at essential stages

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Tordher has directed that the interested foreign investors in various potential sectors of the province should be provided with possible facilities at essential stages.

He issued this directive while presiding over a meeting regarding provision of facilities to foreign investors here in the Committee Room of the Industries Department on Friday.

Besides Deputy Commandant Special Security Unit Tariq Iqbal, Chief Planning Officer Industries Department Basit Khalil, Director (Business Facilitation)

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade Iqbal Sarwar and other managers of the board Akhtar Ali and Gul Muhammad, Chief Operating Officer (COO) KP Economic Zones Development and Management Company (EZDMC) Adil Salahuddin, Deputy Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs Department Azizullah Jan and other authorities attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the SACM said that all concerned departments and agencies must have an effective coordination among themselves so instead of unnecessary delay all facilities including issuance of no objective certificate (NoC) are provided to the investors in time.

He further said that a

complete checklist should be made available on the easy business web portal of the Board of Investment and Trade (BoIT) for the convenience of investors in all respects regarding the documents and requirements to ensure the provision of all matters including the required documents through an easy platform. Various matters and proposals regarding possible foreign investment in the potential sectors of the province also come under discussion during the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, the Special Assistant emphasized provision of all possible facilities to the investors under a useful and easy procedure. He said that several sectors of the province are very attractive for foreign investment and investors are taking special

interest in investing here.

He said that the government is determined to provide all possible facilities for investment in this regard. Therefore, he urged all concerned departments and agencies to promote coordination amongst themselves to make the complicated and lengthy process easy as per their responsibility.

He said that an updated list of required documents for investors including all the steps, timelines required for submission of documents and other requirements should be made available on the Easy Business Portal of the Board of Investment. He said for creating awareness other required standard operating procedures (SOPs) regarding NOC for investors should also be put on the portal.

Edwardes College students take part in NCLCC-24

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Edwardes College students participated in the National Conference on Literature, Culture, and Climate (NCLCC-24), held at the University of Chitral. The students, Nofal Usman, Hamza, Hasnain Maaz, Shabab Khan, and Marwan Maaz, who are pursuing their B.S. degrees in English, contributed significantly to the sessions. These students presented research proposals that explored the

intersection between literature and environmental issues, demonstrating unique approaches to understanding climate change through a literary lens.

The conference brought together respected academic institutions and notable guests from across the country. Universities such as Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, University of Chitral, CECOS University, Peshawar, Edwardes College Peshawar, and University of Peshawar

were well represented. The event featured prominent figures like Prof. Dr. Najeeba Arif, Chairperson of the Pakistan Academy of Letters, and Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseer Ud Din, Vice Chancellor of Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak. Their speeches highlighted the conference's theme and its relevance in today's world, adding considerable value to the discussions.

Dr. Syed Hanif Rasool Kakakhel and Yasir Ali Khan Sarmad were

acknowledged for their exceptional efforts in organizing the conference. Dr. Kakakhel, the Principal Organizer and an Assistant Professor at Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, along with Yasir Ali Khan Sarmad, the Secretary of NCLCC-24, an Edwardian and lecturer in English, ECP, demonstrated great dedication and planning. Their teamwork ensured a smooth and impactful event that advanced the dialogue on literature, culture, and climate change.



Handicraft industry – preserving centuries old asset

PESHAWAR (APP): In the heart of South Asia lies Peshawar, a city with stories spanning over past 2,500 years and an inimitable destination of domestic and foreign artisans bringing in marvelous and eye-catching crafts designs.

Rich in different traditional and cultural values this city boast of a tapestry of different dynasties and civilizations, most vibrant among them the handicrafts introduced by local and foreign artisans of pre-Greek, Mughals and colonial era.

Aptly named as "Peshawar" or "the City of Artisans," Peshawar still carries the legacy of craftsmanship passed down generation after generation with city bazaars like Misgran, Ratti bazaar, Dabgari Gardens and the legendary Qissa Khawani Bazaar, still echoing past glory of artisans.

"Walking through these markets is like stepping back in time. The air is filled with metal clinking, the scent of wood and steel shavings and curving and sight of meticulously crafted items," said a Senior Research Officer, Archeology and Museums Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Bakhtzada Khan.

"The shops brimming with wood and metal cutlery capture the attention of visitors as despite rapid technological advancements, these ancient bazaars maintain a steadfast appeal, especially among rural people of KP and Punjab provinces," he stated.

Bakhtzada said the discovery of human remains in Soan Valley in Punjab was evidence of stone-made cutlery and bone tools used anciently. "It was found that people started making clay and stone pots, crockery and other related utensils during the Neolithic period commonly known as new Stone Age dating back some 8,000 years back."

The wooden cutlery shops in Peshawar bazaars, in particular, are a visual feast, displaying an array of handmade items—wooden spoons, blenders, kneading plates, curd mixers and bowls—showcasing artisans' dedication and hard work. These products, though presenting an old-fashioned look, also possess a timeless quality and unique designs.

"Wooden cutlery is still alive in Peshawar. We have valuable customers for whom we specially produce these items," said Kaiser Khan, a shopkeeper



in main Dabgari Bazaar. "Majority of our customers belong to KPK and Punjab while our cutlery is also preferred in Afghanistan, Middle East and Central Asians Republics due to its durability and unique designs."

However, he complained of the lukewarm response of urban population who consider these products as obsolete and outdated and shifted to

stainless steel cutlery and porcelain crockery.

Faraz Ali, another shopkeeper at Misgran bazaar said use of wooden cutlery had declined in recent decades and the KPK government should take steps to preserve this asset. "Wooden utensils are mostly cheaper than stainless steel or aluminum. Moreover, many people think that meals cooked in clay pottery with the help of a wooden

spoon are better in taste."

If seen in the hygiene perspective, the wood cutlery and clay pots are not that harmful as those prepared by using certain chemical components.

"Wood products are not harmful for using domestically. However, mixing of some chemical ingredients in preparation of utensils from different metals can affect human health," said Dr Riaz Khan, Principal Medical

Officer, Pabbi hospital.

Although, these ancient handicrafts are our valuable asset yet their existence is under threat due to societal transformation and modernization.

A recent study by KP educationists at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa universities has revealed a complex relationship between the likeness of modern industrial products and decline of traditional indigenous

crafts.

It states that factors contributing to this decline include; lack of infrastructure and shifting to other careers, inadequate infrastructure, a shift towards other careers, lower production, and fading interest among younger generations.

Some of the significant challenges the workers associated to this profession face are limited marketing opportunities and lack of recognition for their handmade work.

These experts recommended to establishing accessible exhibition centers, promotion marketing strategies for artisans and entrepreneurship among illiterate men and women interested in handicrafts for revitalizing and protect traditional handicrafts, preserve cultural heritage and enhance skills of artisans.

Emphasizing the importance of protecting traditional handicrafts from the impact of modern branding, these experts have also underlined the need for specific actions to aid in the revival of these traditional crafts.

Meanwhile, Omair Khattak, General Manager, Investment, KP Tourism and Culture Authority has stated that

the provincial government was making all out efforts to preserve this valuable heritage and promote it within KPK and beyond.

He mentioned to organizing a three days all Pakistan Art Festival at Islamabad by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) where handicrafts model of local artisans were displayed while Pakistan Arts and Crafts Gallery, a provincial owned center for sale, marketing exhibition and promotion of handicrafts at Islamabad has also been revived.

He also assured to continue such interactions in future to promote skillfulness of local artisans and explore market for selling their products.

As modernization is gradually taking over our ancient culture and craftsmanship, many experts have underlined the need for giving this sector 'an industrial status' and financially support artisans and craftsmen to promote this dwindling business. Such initiative would not only help preserve this heritage but also provide earning opportunities for local craftsmen but also export these items to earn valuable foreign exchange.

Indonesian envoy visits KPBOIT

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment & Trade (KPBOIT) on Friday welcomed His Excellency Rahmat Hindiarta Kusuma, the Ambassador of Indonesia. Engr. Said Mahmood, Vice Chairman KP-BOIT presented bouquet, traditional turban of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and a Souvenir on behalf of KP-BOIT. Director Business Facilitation Mr. Iqbal Sarwar gave a detailed presentation about Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, vision, mission & role of KP-BOIT and potential sectors of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where joint collaboration can be explored.

KP-BOIT invited Business Community of Indonesia through His Excellency to invest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to exploit easy access for export to Afghanistan, central Asia and China.

Director Business Facilitation also invited His Excellency and Indonesian Business Community to attend KP-BOIT's International Investment & Trade Expo, Islamabad to be held in September, 2024.

The visit marked a significant milestone in the burgeoning relationship between Indonesia and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, heralding a new era of economic cooperation and mutual prosperity.

In his address, Vice Chairman of KP-BOIT highlighted strategic advantages of investing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, citing its rich natural resources, skilled workforce, and investor-friendly policies. He expressed keen interest in leveraging Indonesia's expertise in various



industries to foster sustainable development within the region.

His Excellency, the Ambassador, reciprocated with words of encouragement and support, underscoring Indonesia's commitment to strengthening economic ties with Pakistan specially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He commended the efforts of KP-BOIT in creating a conducive environment for foreign investment and assured continuous cooperation in realizing shared goals.

His Excellency, shared information about Indonesian market and its development through a detailed documentary and presentation showcasing, their strong and stable economy and infrastructure in the world. His Excellency also invited business community through KP-BOIT to attend 39th Trade Expo-Indonesia to be held in October 2024. Vice Chairman assured full support and cooperation in this regard.

KP-BOIT extends its heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency, the Ambassador of Indonesia, for his visit and looks forward to a fruitful partnership that will benefit both regions. The Board remains steadfast in its mission to drive investment and trade, fostering an era of progress and collaboration.

Vice Chairman on behalf of KP Board of Investment & Trade (KP-BOIT) expressed gratitude to His Excellency and his team for the visit and valuable discussion held during the session.

He also said that this business visit will not only strengthen business ties but also foster a deeper understanding of the culture and historic connections that exists between Indonesia and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa being a Muslim region. KP-BOIT look forward to continued Partnership with Indonesia to drive economic development and create new opportunities for businesses in the regions.

Parking in front of LRH Emergency Gate banned

PESHAWAR (APP): District administration Peshawar banned parking in front of the Emergency Gate of the Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedural Code (CrPC), said an official notification issued here on Friday.

The decision has been taken while keeping in view the hardships of the patients entering the hospitals.

It has been observed that parking of vehicles in front of the Emergency Gate of Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) is causing obstruction and hindrance in the smooth flow of traffic.

Moreover, it is also triggering a serious threat to the precious lives of patients carried by ambulances and private vehicles entering the hospital. Parking in front of the hospital not only poses a serious security threat, rather, also disrupts the smooth flow of traffic and causes inconvenience to the public at large. Furthermore, there is a history of terrorist activities, wherein, a large number of police officials and civilians embraced martyrdom.

Toru asks CEC to resign after SC verdict

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru has stated that the Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan should immediately resign on moral grounds, as the decision from the supreme court is a victory for democracy, the constitution, and the law. The minister expressed these views while reacting to the

Supreme Court's decision regarding reserved seats, Yesterday.

The provincial minister said that the decision on reserved seats has exposed the Election Commission's partiality. Zahir Shah Toru emphasized that it has been proven that the Election Commission distributed PTT's deserving seats to others. "Today is a significant day for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) said the

minister", adding that PTI is an ideology that could not be defeated.

He further extended that soon, Imran Khan would be among the workers and with the public.

The Minister for Food highlighted that the only solution to the country's economic and other issues is Imran Khan. He urged PTI workers to remain united, as success will be for PTI's ideology.

Governor assures support to equipping youth

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi showed assured full pledge support to non-governmental organizations for eradication of unemployment through technical education in the province. This he assured during his visit to German agency GIZ headquarters along with Member Provincial Assembly Ahmad Kundi.

Governor Faisal Karim emphasized the importance of equipping the new

generation with skills that meet the demands of the modern world and the market. He stressed the need to establish training programs that align with the requirements of industry and foreign countries, particularly Germany, which has a demand for skilled labor. He also highlighted the role of federal ministry for overseas Pakistanis in the program to ensure the safe, easy, and legal transfer of labor to Germany.

The governor was briefed on the various projects being implemented by GIZ in the province, includ-

ing the establishment of technical training institutes and centers of excellence. He was informed that the agency's 2023-2028 program aims to provide technical training to as many young people as possible, with a focus on strengthening the technical skills of the new generation.

The governor praised GIZ's efforts for promotion of technical education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and expressed his appreciation for the agency's commitment for skill development in the province.



In brief

Operation continue in Dera F.P. Report

DI KHAN: The search and strike operations continued in the district against anti-state and criminal elements to ensure security during Muharram in DI Khan. According to the police spokesman, on the direction of District Police Officer Dera Nasir Mahmood, District Police conducted search and strike operations and snap-checking within their respective circles for which they urged the masses to extend cooperation. The spokesman said that during the operation, which would continue for an indefinite period, the police would continue to check vehicles, motorbikes, and pedestrians. The teams conducted thorough checks and searches, focusing on potential security threats and any illegal activities in the region. "Protecting the life and property of the citizens and maintaining peace is our top priority. The public should inform the police in case of movement of any suspicious person in their vicinity," said the police spokesman.

Land retrieved from grabbers F.P. Report

KHANEWAL: An official team retrieved a five acre piece of precious urban state land worth Rs 60 million from land grabbers and dismantled illegal structures built there in Kabirwala city on Friday. Heavy machinery was deployed that razed the illegal buildings built there and officials found that the alleged land grabbers had demarcated five marla plots at the site presumably to illegally sell these to the people in a fraudulent way. Naib Tehsildar Ali Haidar Lashari led a team of municipal committee officials and police to conduct the operation ordered by ADCR Abdul Sattar Khan, and assistant commissioner Mohsin Alam. Legal action was being taken against the land grabbers.

Minister reviews arrangements F.P. Report

BAHAWALPUR: Provincial Minister for Irrigation Muhammad Kazim Ali Pirzada presided over a meeting held in the committee room of the Commissioner's Office. The meeting reviewed the steps taken regarding the arrangements for Muharram Majalis and processions in the Bahawalpur Division. The Provincial Minister emphasized ensuring full-proof security arrangements for Muharram processions and gatherings in different locations. It was directed to ensure the cleanliness of routes for processions and Majalis and the availability of other facilities. Various officials including Commissioner Bahawalpur Division Nadir Chatha, Regional Police Officer Rai Babar Saeed, Additional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, DPOs, and officers from relevant departments were present at the meeting. Commissioner Bahawalpur Division mentioned the importance of cleanliness and better arrangements of Muharram procession routes, along with the active participation of officers and staff from various departments. The meeting was informed that all arrangements for 1409 Majalis and 514 processions in Bahawalpur Division are complete. Moreover, during the Ashura of Muharram, over 17,000 police personnel will perform their duties, and from the 7th to 10th of Muharram, army and rangers companies will also be assigned security duty.



FAISALABAD: A traffic warden moving an illegally parked car with the help of lifter.

Facilities for patients at DHQ hospital directed

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad visited District Headquarter Hospital and Trauma Centre and reviewed standard of cleanliness, availability of medicines and other treatment facilities, ongoing repair work and other arrangements made for improving treatment and other facilities in DHQ and Trauma Centre.

She also inspected ongoing development schemes of establishment of Museum and government boys school Qila Ram Koor. CEO Health Dr. Umer Sharif Rathore, District Education Officer Education Samina Yasmeen and Deputy Director Development Tassawar Abbas were also along with DC.

During the visit of DHQ Hospital and Trauma Centre, DC checked general emergency, children ward, medical ward, medical ward, nursery ward and other departments and tool feedback from patients regarding provision of medicines and other treatment facilities in DHQ and

Trauma Centre.

She directed the Medical Superintendent to make fully functional air-conditions in all wards and patients would not be face any hurdle to get medicines. She also checked ongoing repair work in Trauma Centre and under construction of Museum on Sagar Road.

While visiting government boy's high school Qila Ram Koor, DC directed the education officer to ensure completion of repair and renovation work in schools across the district during summer vacation so that attractive and pleasant atmosphere could be available to students.

Population Day observed: World Population Day was observed in Hafizabad. In this connection, a seminar and awareness walk arranged by the Population Welfare Department Hafizabad.

ADCR Intiaz Ali Baig presided over the seminar while District Population Welfare Officer Muhammad Atif Ali, Tehsil Officer Sajida Mushtaq, Incharge MSU Dr. Zahida Janat, ulema, officers, officials and other people par-

ticipated the seminar and walk. Addressing the walk, speakers said that unlimited growth of population is major cause of social and economic problems confronted by the nation and to contain increasing population was inevitable for progress and prosperity of the country.

They urged the people to implement on measures of population department and the Punjab government and appropriate interval in childbirth was also beneficial for mother and children health.

DO Population said that the best treatment facilities are available for mother and children at population welfare centres in the district.

He said that awareness to keep small family was continue with the cooperation of ulema, prominent personalities, social workers, lawyers, mediamen and civil society. At the end of seminar, a walk was taken out from District Council Hall. Participants of walk were carrying banners, flexes and placards inscribed with different slogans regarding about population control.

Three coal miners killed in chair lift snapping F.P. Report

SHANGLA: As many as three laborers died in a tragic accident at the Lakhdera Coal Mine. The deceased laborers identified as Hazrat Khan, Fazal ur Rehman, and Khan Ali residents of Shangla.

The rope of the chair lift snapped which has resulted the fall of deceased laborers to several feet and resulting in their deaths. The mine's ceiling also collapsed on top of them.

According to police, the laborers were returning to the surface after completing their work when the accident occurred. Other laborers rushed to the scene and retrieved the bodies, which were later shifted to the Manjhand Tehsil Hospital.

This incident highlights the lack of safety measures in place for laborers working in coal mines in Pakistan. Despite numerous accidents and deaths, coal mining companies fail to take adequate safety precautions, putting the lives of laborers at risk. The incident has raised concerns about the safety of laborers in coal mines and demands action from the authorities to ensure their safety.

Toru terms SC verdict a win for PTI F.P. Report

MARDAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru termed Supreme Court of Pakistan verdict on reserved seats as a victory for the constitution, law, democracy and justice and demanded that after this decision the Chief Election Commissioner and members of the Election Commission should immediately resign, on Friday.

In a statement, the provincial minister for Food Zahir Shah said that after the decision regarding the reserved seats, the election commission's partiality has been proved. Zahir Shah Toru also emphasized that today it has been proved that the Election Commission had wrongfully distributed the right of PTI among others while turning away from the Constitution.

The provincial minister also said that today is a big day for PTI and it has been proved that PTI is an ideology that no one can destroy. He said that PTI workers should remain united as the success will be PTI's ideology.

Martyred police official laid to rest in Bara

F.P. Report

BARA: The late police official was laid to rest with State honor here in Bar-Qamber Khel village of Bara, district Khyber on Friday. Police personnel Israr Ahmad had been targeted by unknown armed persons last night at Kaleem staff, Shalober, Bara in which he embraced Shahadat and the killers successfully managed to escape.

District Police Officer (DPO) Saleem Kulachvi, tribal elders, police officials, relatives of the deceased and people from different walks of life were among the participants, attended funeral prayer held in Police Line, Shahkas, Jamrud.

A smart contingent of



police presented a salute and the officials put floral wreaths at the coffin and offered prayers for the departed soul. DPO, Khyber sympathized with heirs of the late police official and paid rich tribute to the services rendered by the late police soldier.

Later on the body was shifted to his native graveyard, Bar-Kamber Khel village for burial purpose. It is to be mentioned here that since January to July 2024, five police officials have martyred in different militant activities in Khyber.

Martyrdom of Imam Hussain (RA) a guideline

F.P. Report

KOHAT: The martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) is a guideline for the whole of humanity as it highlighted the importance of sacrifice for the cause of upholding the norms and principles of Islam.

These views were expressed by the Deputy Commissioner Kurram Javed Ullah Mehsud, Commanding Officer 55 Baloch Colonel Yusuf, Ulema and tribal leaders while addressing the Interfaith Harmony Conference organized by the district administration Kurram in Parachinar.

Deputy Commissioner Kurram Javed Ullah Mehsud was the chief guest while Commanding Officer 55 Baloch Colonel Yusuf was the guest of honor in the conference. DPO Kurram Nisar Ahmad Khan, Assistant

Commissioner Upper Kurram Hafeezullah and tribal leaders of Upper, Lower and Central Kurram were also present on this occasion.

The speakers said in their speeches that the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) was a guidance for the whole of humanity and we should put aside all our differences and establish an atmosphere of Islamic brotherhood.

They further said that the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) was a living example for the entire humanity by which we can achieve success. They reiterated their commitment to play a role for peace, development and prosperity of Kurram district. Deputy Commissioner Kurram in his address said that Muharram was a month which teaches us to sacrifice and firmly stand against the oppression. He

added, best people were those who established a peaceful society for their next generations and the role of the leaders of Kurram district in this regard was highly commendable.

Promotion of inter-faith harmony was a common responsibility of all of us. All the law enforcement agencies and tribal leaders were on the same page to thwart the nefarious intentions of the anti-state elements who were spreading chaos in the society.

A comprehensive security plan has been formed by the security forces for the peaceful holding of Muharram and all the processions and gatherings of Muharram will end peacefully, he hoped. At the end of the conference, special prayers were offered for the security of the country and for the peaceful holding of Muharram.

BOD approves Adil for WSSCM chairmanship

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The newly appointed members, Board of Directors (BoD) Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) agreed to recommend, Engineer Adil Nawaz as chairman for the first meeting, while the formal approval of the chairman will be executed by the provincial cabinet.

In the first meeting of the BoD, company secretary Farhan Ahmed welcomed and congratulate the newly elected members Board of Directors Haroon-ur-Rasheed, Javed Hussain and Mobeena Riazuddin on their appointment. General Manager Engineer Imran Zaman briefed the BoD that from January 2024 to June 2024 thirty three thousand, nine hundred and eighty five tons of garbage has been collected from the



fourteen union councils of Mardan city and disposed of safely, while three hundred and four kilometers of drains in the city has been cleaned.

Likewise, clean drinking water is provided to five thousand consumers three times a day through a one hundred and fifty nine km pipeline. The Company has installed SCADA systems in six tube wells and ten fuel sensors in vehicles to minimize the energy consumption with the supports of German Cooperation (GIZ). Imran told the company has already devised an energy efficiency policy for

efficient use of energy and to reduce the cost.

Chairman Engineer Adil Nawaz and the Board of Directors expressed satisfaction on the briefing and stated that our mission is to make Mardan as a model city in terms of cleanliness and we will make sure to utilize all the available resources to achieve our mission.

They stated that provincial government is trying to improve the living standards of the citizens. Keeping the environment clean is the national moral and religious duty of every member of the society.

Over 1000 cops to perform Muharram security duty

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The District Police Mardan on Friday has announced an extensive security plan to ensure peace and safety during Muharram ul Haraam. Over 1,000 police officers and personnel will be deployed throughout the district.

Special teams, including the Rapid Response Force, Bomb Disposal Squad, Ladies Police, and Elite Force, will be on standby to handle any emergency situation, said a police spokesman.

He said to maintain the effectiveness of the security plan, police officers' transfers and leaves have been canceled. Additional police checkpoints have been set up on all internal and external routes of the district, with special routes designated for traffic flow.

Extra traffic police personnel will be deployed to manage the increased movement, he told. District Police Chief Zahoor Babar Afridi has appealed to the

public, minority communities, traders and religious scholars to cooperate with the police in maintaining peace and security. He urged the residents to report any suspicious persons, vehicles, or objects by calling the helpline 15, the control room at 0937-9230065, or contacting the nearest police station.

Paramedics summons meeting for protest in favour of demands: All Pakistan Paramedical Staff Federation has called an emergency meeting on July 20 to protest the recent appointment of doctors to Allied Health Professionals Council positions, terming it a violation of the Allied Health Professionals Council Act 2022 and the Constitution of Pakistan.

The federation's central president, Sharafatullah Yousafzai has demanded that the council's chairman Zamurd Khan take immediate action to rectify the situation and appoint eligible allied health professionals to the vacant positions. The

federation has also called for the registration process to begin soon and for the council to address issues related to dispensers and medical technicians.

The meeting, to be held at the federation's central office in Islamabad, will be attended by central executive and cabinet members who will discuss the council's illegal actions and plan a course of action to protect the rights of allied health professionals.

The federation's secretary-general, Muhammad Arshad Khan has accused the council of violating the law and the constitution by appointing doctors to positions meant for allied health professionals. He has demanded that the council fulfill its legal and constitutional obligations and ensure a bright future for allied health professionals.

The controversy has sparked outrage among allied health professionals, who feel that their rights are being violated by the council's actions.

One Ph. D, two M. Phil scholars defended their thesis

F.P. Report

BANNU: Two students of Physics Department of University of Science and Technology Bannu successfully defended their Ph.D. Murad Ali Khan's supervisor was Chairman Dr. Abdul Manan and the external assessors were Dr. Shahid Ali and Dr. Yusuf Iqbal, while another scholar, Dr. Naseebullah, Assistant Professor of Physics, successfully defended his

thesis in High Energy Physics, whose supervisor was Dr. Dr. Rashid Khan and Dr. Kamaluddin Khan were among the external accused.

On this occasion, Bannu University Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Aurangzeb Khan, Prof. Dr. Sultan Mehmood, Dr. Mushtaq and other officers were present on this occasion. Addressing the event, he said that it is the urgent need of the hour to pay attention to research

agendas to adapt the new generation to the development of the region and the requirements of the modern age. If we do not pay attention to research, we will be left behind in the world.

University of Bannu is producing PhD scholars according to the market demand in the southern districts, in which the officers of all the departments of the university are actively playing their role.



GAZA: Palestinian girls walk past the school hit by an Israeli strike in Khan Younis.

France's unions call for protests to pressurize Macron

PARIS (AP): With just 15 days before the start of the Olympic Games in Paris, a major French union called for mass demonstrations and possible strikes to pressure President Emmanuel Macron into "respecting the results" of recent legislative elections and allow a left-wing coalition to form a new government.

France has been at the brink of a governing paralysis since Sunday's vote for the National Assembly resulted in a legislature split among three political groupings: the New Popular Front leftist coalition, Macron's centrist allies and the far-right National Rally of Marine Le Pen. The New Popular Front won the most seats but fell short of an outright majority to govern on its own. The alliance's three main parties, the hard-left France Unbowed, the Socialists and the Greens, have urged the president to turn to them to form the new government.

Sophie Binet, the general secretary of the influential hard-left CGT union, said in an interview with French broadcaster LCI that if Macron did not respect the results of the election, "he risks once again

plunging the country into chaos." Binet said the president should allow the New Popular Front to form the new government, although the leftist alliance has not yet proposed a candidate for prime minister because of internal divisions. She called on union members to take to the streets and "join rallies to put the National Assembly under surveillance." Binet didn't rule out strikes during the Olympics. Asked about strikes that could disrupt the biggest event France has ever organized, she said: "At this stage we don't plan a strike during the Olympic Games. But if Emmanuel Macron continues to throw gasoline cans on the fires that he lighted ..." CGT has an open call for potential strikes by public service workers from July through September. The Olympics run July 26-Aug. 11.

Macron has asked his prime minister, Gabriel Attal, to continue handling day-to-day affairs, despite Attal's offer of resignation. Macron said he will wait for the country's political parties to build a broad consensus at the National Assembly before he can decide on a new prime minister, infuriating the leftist coalition

and the unions. The new legislature's inaugural session is scheduled for July 18. CGT railway workers called for nationwide rallies on July 18 in front of the prefectures and near the National Assembly in Paris to demand the New Popular Front be allowed to form a government, according to the union's statement.

The leader of the center-left CFDT union, Marylise Léon, also expressed concern about Macron's reluctance to name a new prime minister whose government could start addressing workers' problems. "The expectations of workers around purchasing power and working conditions have not disappeared," Léon said in an interview with broadcaster France Inter. "To strike is sometimes the only way to be able to unblock a situation." She said the union would not rule out strikes during the Olympics "in certain sectors if social dialogue breaks down," including in private security and at the Paris airports. However, she added, "the goal of CFDT is not to block the Olympics." Last year, unions organized mass protests to try to stop Macron's government from raising the retirement age.

China hits back at Nato over Russia accusations

BEIJING (BBC): China's foreign minister Wang Yi has hit back at Nato's "groundless accusations" that Beijing is helping Russia in its war on Ukraine. He has also warned the Western alliance against stirring up confrontation. Mr Wang's comments, made in a call with his Dutch counterpart, came hours after leaders of Nato member states gathered in Washington DC and issued a declaration on the war.

They accused China of being a "decisive enabler" of Russia through its "large-scale support for Russia's defence industrial base", in some of their harshest remarks yet about Beijing. They called on China to stop "all material and political support" to Russia's war effort such as the supply of dual-use materials, which are items that can be used for both civilian and military purposes. Western states have previously accused Beijing of transferring drone and missile technology and satellite imagery to Moscow. The US estimates about 70% of the machine tools and 90% of the micro-electronics Russia imports now come from China. Beijing was also accused of conducting "malicious cyber and hybrid activities, including disinformation" on Nato states. W hile speaking to the Netherlands' new foreign minister Caspar Veldkamp, Mr Wang said "China absolutely does not accept" all these accusations and insisted that they have "always been a force for peace and force for stability".

In comments carried by state media, he said that China's different political system and values "should not be used as a reason for Nato to incite confrontation with China", and called for Nato to "stay within its bounds". His remarks were the latest in a flurry of angry responses from Beijing. A foreign ministry spokesperson said Nato was smearing China with "fabricated disinformation", while Beijing's mission to the EU told the alliance to "stop hyping up the so-called 'China threat'". Beijing has long rebutted accusations that it has been aiding Russia in the war and insists that it remains a neutral party. It has called for an end to the conflict and proposed a peace plan, which Ukraine has rejected. But, besides the growing accusations of military support, observers have also pointed out that Beijing's purchases of vast amounts of oil and gas have helped prop up Russia's economy crippled by sanctions and replenish coffers drained by war spending. Beijing's official rhetoric on the conflict often mirrors Moscow's - like them, China still does not call it a war - and Chinese President Xi Jinping has maintained a close relationship with President Vladimir Putin, with both of them famously declaring their partnership has "no limits".

Beijing has accused the US and other Western states of pouring "fuel on the fire" by supplying lethal weapons and technology to Ukraine for its defence. In recent weeks, several countries have gone a step further and allowed Ukraine to use their weapons to hit targets inside Russia.

Russian activist compares courts to Nazi Germany

MOSCOW (BBC): A Russian human rights activist has compared the country's judicial system to that of Nazi Germany. Oleg Orlov, who was appealing against a prison sentence for discrediting the armed forces, quoted a US prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials as saying the Nazis totally destroyed justice and law during their rule.

Orlov, 71, who chairs the now banned human rights group Memorial, lost his appeal. He was jailed five months ago for two-and-a-half years after calling Russia a fascist state and criticising the war against Ukraine. The sentence was seen as a clear sign that Russia was increasingly cracking down on public dissent. Speaking by video link from custody in the central city of Syzran, Orlov told the Moscow city court in his final statement that he regretted nothing and would not repent.

Kenya's President sacks almost entire cabinet

NAIROBI (BBC): Kenya's embattled President William Ruto sacked nearly every member of his cabinet following weeks of youth-led protests across the country. The exception was Prime Minister Musalia Mudavadi, who retained his job which makes him the most senior government official after the presidency and parliament's speaker. Mudavadi will also continue to double up as the country's foreign affairs cabinet secretary. Ruto attributed the mass dismissals to the protests and resulting withdrawal of his government's controversial finance bill, which he said had brought the country to "an inflection point". The firing of the cabinet has been one of the protesters' key demands. Ruto said he had taken time to reflect and review the performance of his ministers. Many of the cabinet secretaries are close

political allies of Ruto who aided his successful 2022 presidential bid. But allegations of government corruption have turned public sentiment against several cabinet members.

"Even with the progress we have made, I am acutely aware that the people of Kenya have very high expectations of me and they believe that this administration can undertake the most extensive transformations in our nation's history," Ruto said at State House, Nairobi, while dismissing his cabinet "with immediate effect." Ruto had earlier made concessions to the protesters, including scrapping the first lady's official budget, announcing the planned dissolution of 47 state agencies, and suspending purchases of new government vehicles and non-essential travel for government employees.

He also announced a week-long national multi-

sectoral dialogue, featuring 150 participants from different interest groups. The plan received the backing of the opposition, but has generally been rejected by protesters who say they only want their demands met. They have planned a major nationwide protest, July 16 - a day after the dialogue forum is due to begin. Demonstrators have also demanded Ruto's resignation. The protests, in which dozens of people were killed in clashes with security agents, was first sparked by opposition to tax hikes in the finance bill. The demonstrations have continued despite the president's decision to scrap the bill last month. Moody's downgraded Kenya's sovereign debt ratings this week, citing the government's inability to introduce "significant revenue-raising measures in the foreseeable future."

Australian soldier charged with spying for Russia

SYDNEY (BBC): An Australian soldier and her husband have been arrested and each charged with spying for Russia. Investigators say the couple - both Russian-born Australian citizens - obtained Australian Defence Force (ADF) material to share with Moscow. However, Australian police say "no significant compromise" of military secrets has been identified.

It is the first time stricter foreign interference laws - introduced by Australia in 2018 - have been used to lay espionage charges. Kira Korolev, a 40-year-old army private, and her 62-year-old husband Igor Korolev faced court in Brisbane on Friday, each on one count of preparing for an espionage offence - which carries a maximum 15-year jail sentence. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he had been "briefed exten-

sively" by the nation's security agencies but would not comment on the case directly as it is now before the courts. Australian Federal Police (AFP) Commissioner Reece Kershaw said the couple had been in Australia for more than a decade before the alleged offending and had both become citizens several years ago.

Igor worked as a self-employed labourer, and Kira was an information systems technician in the army, a role for which she had obtained a security clearance, police say. Mr Kershaw alleged she secretly travelled to Russia while on leave from the ADF, then instructed Igor to access her work account and send sensitive material so that she could forward it on to Russian authorities. An investigation in to whether any of the material was ever delivered to them is still underway, Mr Kershaw said, adding that the charges

could be upgraded. Both Mr Kershaw and Australia's spy agency boss Mike Burgess - who addressed media together on Friday - declined to answer questions about the nature of the documents or how authorities were tipped off about the alleged crimes.

But Mr Burgess said that the ongoing threat of espionage is "real". "Multiple countries are seeking to steal Australia's secrets. We cannot be naive, and we cannot be complacent." "If you are spying in this country, we are looking for you. If you are being spied on in this country, we are looking out for you," he added. Mr Kershaw stressed that Australia's allies could be "confident" that the country would "continue to identify and disrupt espionage and foreign interference activity". In a statement, the ADF said it was aware one of its members had been arrested and that it "takes all breaches of security seriously".

US set to wind down Gaza pier operations

WASHINGTON: The United States has said it will soon end operations from its pier designed to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip amid Israel's continuing war.

The \$230m pier has repeatedly been detached from the shore because of weather conditions since its initial installation in mid-May, and the project also faced problems with the distribution of assistance due to conditions onshore. "I do anticipate that in relatively short order, we will wind down pier operations," National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told journalists.

Pentagon spokesman Major-General Pat Ryder said in a statement that "the pier will soon cease operations, with more details on that process and timing available in the coming days". A United Nations report says 96 percent of Gaza's population is food insecure, and one in five

Palestinians, or about 495,000 people, face starvation amid Israel's nine-month war on the territory. While the pier has brought in 8,100 metric tonnes of aid to a marshalling area on Gaza's shore since it started operating in May, the 370m (1,200-foot) floating pier has had to be removed multiple times because of bad weather. Sullivan said the pier helped bring urgently needed food and other aid to Gaza, but additional supplies are now coming into the Palestinian enclave via land routes. "The real issue right now is not about getting aid into Gaza. It's about getting aid around Gaza effectively," he told reporters. Military personnel attempted to re-anchor the temporary Gaza pier to the beach after technical and weather-related issues, but were unable to do so.

The project has also been hampered by security threats that prompted aid agencies to halt distribution of the food and other sup-

plies into Gaza. The aid groups have said that while any amount of food for Gaza is welcome, many have criticised the project as a costly distraction, saying the US should concentrate on pressuring Israel to allow more aid through land borders, which have long been considered the most productive option. The UN suspended all World Food Programme (WFP) deliveries from the pier after a June 8 Israeli military raid that secured the release of four Israeli hostages but killed hundreds of Palestinians, citing concerns that troops used an area near there for flying out the rescued hostages by helicopter.

Aid flowing through the pier then began piling up in the secure area on the beach, but the WFP eventually hired contractors to move it into storage areas for further distribution. The US Defense Department said this week that a significant amount of the aid had been cleared out. — Aljazeera

US cruise missiles to return to Germany, angering Moscow

WASHINGTON (BBC): Long-range US missiles are to be deployed periodically in Germany from 2026 for the first time since the Cold War, in a decision announced at Nato's 75th anniversary summit. The Tomahawk cruise, SM-6 and hypersonic missiles have a significantly longer range than existing missiles, the US and Germany said in a joint statement. Such missiles would have been banned under a 1988 treaty between the US and former Soviet Union, but the pact fell apart five years ago. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Moscow would react with a "military response to the new threat". "This is just a link in the chain of a course of escalation," he

argued, accusing Nato and the US of trying to intimidate Russia.

The joint US-German statement made clear the "episodic" deployment of the missiles was initially seen as temporary but would later become permanent, as part of a US commitment to Nato and Europe's "integrated deterrence". German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius, who was speaking at the Nato summit in Washington, said the idea behind the US plan was to encourage Germany and other European countries to put their own investment into developing and procuring longer-range missiles. The temporary deployment of US weapons would give Nato allies the time to pre-

pare, he explained: "We are talking here about an increasingly serious gap in capability in Europe." Mr Pistorius joined colleagues from France, Italy and Poland in signing a letter of intent aimed at developing long-range missiles in Europe. The European Long-Range Strike Approach (Elsa) was intended to improve European missile capability, which was "sorely needed to deter and defend our continent", Italian news agency Ansa reported.

Such missiles were banned under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF), which was signed at the end of the Cold War and covered ground-launched missiles that could travel between 500-5,500

km (310-3,400 miles). Russia's Vladimir Putin felt it was too restrictive and in 2014 the US accused him of violating the pact with a new type of nuclear-capable cruise missile. The US finally pulled out of the treaty in 2019, and Russia followed suit. Politicians from Germany's Greens were critical of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's agreement to allow US missiles on German soil. The Greens are part of Mr Scholz's ruling coalition, and their spokeswoman on security Sara Nanni made clear their frustration that he had made no comment about the decision. "It can even heighten fears and leaves room for disinformation and incitement," she told the Rheinische Post newspaper.

French firefighters rush to put out blaze at Rouen cathedral

PARIS: The spire of a medieval cathedral in the city of Rouen in northern France is mostly clear of smoke after catching ablaze and firefighters rushed in to contain it. The fire broke out about midday in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, which was undergoing renovation, the local prefecture and emergency fire service said.

The Gothic cathedral, one of France's finest, dates back to the 12th century and was repeatedly painted by Impressionist artist Claude Monet in the 19th century, generating worldwide fame. Images from France's BFM television channel released shortly after the fire erupted showed a thick plume of smoke rising from the

cathedral's central spire and people in the streets looking up in horror.

In later footage broadcast by the channel, smoke could still be seen through a gap in the white cover encircling the scaffolding around the spire but was no longer rising in a dark column. Rouen Mayor Nicolas Mayer-Rossignol, writing on X, said all public resource had been mobilized to quell the blaze, whose origin remains unknown. The local prefecture, which exercises state authority in the region, said the cathedral had been evacuated. A security cordon was in place around the building.

It advised people to "stay away to give space for emergency responders to work". So far, there are no

reports of casualties, and the extent of the damage is unclear, according to the prefecture. Workers who were on site carrying on the renovation are safe, the cathedral's archbishop said. The cathedral was built and rebuilt over a period of more than 800 years and has features from early Gothic to late Flamboyant and Renaissance architecture. It is famous for its three towers, each of which are built in a different style. In 1822, lightning started a fire that destroyed the wood and lead Renaissance spire of the central tower. The new iron spire was not completed for six decades. It stood at 151 metres (500ft) and for a short time made the cathedral the world's tallest building. — Aljazeera

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What Britain's first Asian PM suffer defeat

THE crushing defeat of the Conservative Party in the UK election ends Rishi Sunak's two-year premiership. He has a place in history books as the first British Asian prime minister - but now also as the prime minister to suffer one of the heaviest election defeats in Britain's modern political history. Sunak was dealt an almost impossible hand on becoming prime minister two years ago - the latest in a head-spinning carousel of Conservatives to take the top job. He was the UK's third prime minister in the space of two months. Already, Boris Johnson had squandered a dominant political position with rule-breaking parties in Downing Street during the pandemic before Liz Truss's premiership imploded within weeks as her bold tax-cutting budget fell apart. When Sunak became prime minister, my father told me how important a symbolic moment it felt to him, having come to Britain from India as a young doctor in 1968. Now 80, Dad felt torn by a dilemma of how to cast his own vote.

When the general election was called six weeks ago, Dad told me he would probably vote for Sunak, despite his doubts about an unruly and divided Conservative Party. He saw Sunak as a decent man, trying to do his best in difficult times. It almost sounded like a plan to cast a sympathy vote for Sunak, just in case nobody else did. But as the election campaign wore on, he became less sure. "I would like to see him carry on as prime minister - but the country also needs a change of government," Dad said. "His being Indian and Hindu are probably not the right reasons to vote for him ... but he did well during the terrifying times of Covid," he added of Sunak's stint as Chancellor of the Exchequer before becoming prime minister.

He planned to finally decide inside the polling booth. Meanwhile my 18-year-old daughter, deciding how to cast her first ever vote, could not conceive of Sunak's identity influencing her choice. Her priority issues were climate change and rising homelessness. Her friends - including those of Asian heritage - associate Sunak more with his wealth and educational privilege than his ethnic heritage or his faith. After 14 years of Conservatives in power, the country's youngest adults have never known another government. A little younger than 10 years old when Britain voted for Brexit, they have grown up knowing that had been a big argument, while often feeling that nobody had really tried to explain what the point of it had been.

At 44 years old, Sunak leaves office as the youngest ex-prime minister for well over a century. He became prime minister just seven years after becoming an MP - shorter than any other recent occupant of Downing Street. Sunak's political inexperience was reflected in some of the mistakes made in a bruising election campaign. He apologised profusely for his decision to leave the recent D-Day commemorations in France partway through. A few of the criticisms of his apparent lack of respect for British traditions had a suspicious, prejudiced undertone: that Sunak did not understand how much it meant. Sunak, as an individual, often seems less impressed with the ceremonial aspects of his role. But traditions of Remembrance do matter to British Asians too. Indeed, the armies that fought the world wars resemble today's Britain of 2024 more than that of 1944. They were drawn from across the Commonwealth - including a massive contribution from India - that is finally being increasingly recognized.

As the election campaign entered its final week, Sunak spoke out powerfully against racist comments by a campaigner for the right-wing populist Reform UK party, which had been captured on film. He said that his daughters should never have to hear such language about him. Yet while Sunak's election defeat was political and personal, it had little to do with his faith or ethnic heritage. Sunak was unable to revive his party after 14 years in power - and negative perceptions of his wealth did seem to make it harder for him to forge a connection with voters in such tough economic times. Ultimately, this crushing defeat has much more to do with the Conservative blue color of his party than the color of his skin.

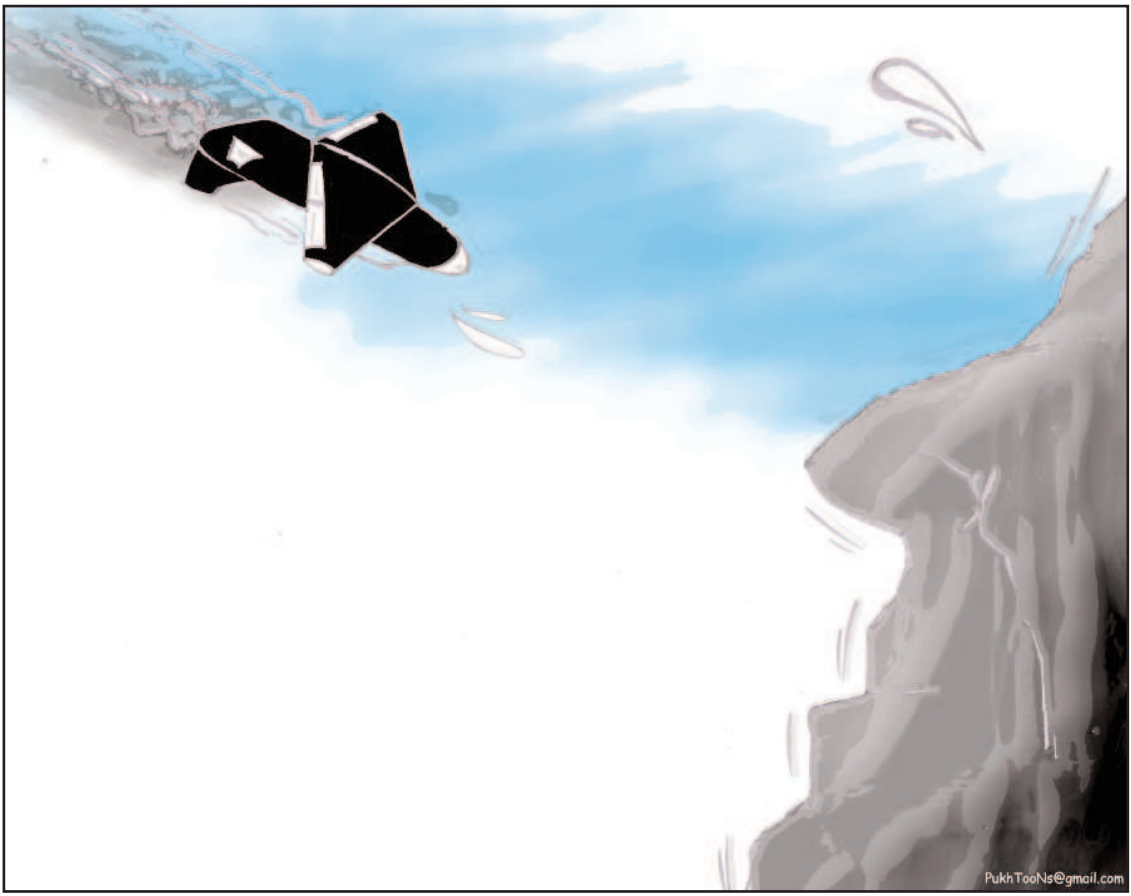
Rationally, the evidence is that Sunak's ethnicity must be marginal in public perceptions of him, given just how much his reputation has surged and fallen over a short time. Sunak had been one of the most popular British politicians for decades when he first came to public attention as Chancellor of the Exchequer during the Covid pandemic. He was seen more as a technocrat than a party politician, and his furlough scheme - where the taxpayer subsidized the wages of those who could not work virtually during lockdown - was enormously popular. Sunak's popularity was dented once the pandemic was over. Having taken on debt, he had to raise taxes. His family wealth and wife's tax arrangements became more controversial, too.

Again, on becoming prime minister, Sunak personally had a much better public reputation than his Conservative Party. But after two years in office, their reputations had converged - downwards. The political and economic context changed. Sunak's ethnicity did not. Sunak as a Hindu was the first ever British prime minister to practice a non-Christian faith. This was discussed much more in India than in Britain, reflecting a secular political culture and some awkward uncertainty too about how to talk about faith here. Sunak celebrates his faith openly - lighting Diwali lamps on the Downing Street steps.

He emphasized too that he welcomed the cultural norm of seeing diversity at the top as no big deal. The UK has had ethnic minority leaders in Downing Street and in devolved governments in Scotland and Wales - though each chosen by their party, rather than the public. If diversity becomes a new norm in British politics, minority leadership will ebb and flow depending on how leaders grapple with the dilemmas of leadership. The electoral reckoning for Sunak could barely have been more brutal - yet British voters will feel that both the man and his party were given a fair shot.

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Biden has a chance for a graceful exit. He should take it

Sam Lyman

IT'S the most pertinent question in American politics. After last month's debate debacle, President Joe Biden is facing mounting pressure from voters to drop out of the race. But he appears unfazed by recent criticism, insisting in a recent ABC News interview that no one "is more qualified to be president or win this race than me."

Biden says he has consulted staff and family about the matter. But in making such a momentous decision, he would do well to look beyond his immediate circle to the examples of his former friends in the Senate. Biden faces a stark choice: Will he follow the path of Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein? Or Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch? One is a cautionary tale; the other, a model for going out on top. First, the cautionary tale.

Feinstein was among the most accomplished legislators of her generation. She shattered the glass ceiling by becoming the first female mayor of San Francisco and the first woman elected to the Senate from the state of California. While in the Senate, she led the charge on bipartisan legislation to combat domestic violence, shore up civil liberties and strengthen our national security. She steered the powerful Senate Rules Committee and the Select Committee on Intelligence. And like Biden and Hatch, she played a critical role in shaping the courts as one of the longest-serving members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Feinstein became an icon in her party as a path-breaking lawmaker who worked in good faith across the aisle and always delivered results for her constituents. This, and this alone, is how she should be remembered. But it isn't. A single moment in time should not define a political career that spanned multiple offices and more than four decades. In the public mind, however, it often does.

That moment came for Feinstein in the early summer of 2023. After months of severe physical and mental decline, a bruised and barely cognizant Feinstein was wheeled into the Senate by a young staffer. The infamous image of the depleted senator elicited countless calls for her to

step down. In Feinstein, the public no longer saw the vibrant trailblazer of yesterday but rather an out-of-touch politician - disoriented and bent by old age - clinging to life with the same intensity that she clung to power. Despite mounting criticism from the media and members of

Hatch, Biden and Feinstein were all contemporaries in the Senate. They all had prolific legislative careers in their own right. But Hatch, more than any other senator of his generation, seemed to understand the importance of a graceful exit. When Hatch chose to step down in 2018, he was at the top of his game politically.

her own party, she refused to relinquish her seat and insisted on finishing her term. I've always wondered whether she chose to stay of her own volition or because of pressure from staff. She passed away four months later.

The obituaries written about Feinstein recognized her manifold accomplishments. But even some of the most glowing tributes came with an asterisk: Feinstein had stayed far too long, doing lasting damage to her reputation and legacy. As Mark Leibovich wrote in The Atlantic, "One lesson of Dianne Feinstein's career: Stay in your job too long, and you risk losing control of the finale." Sound familiar?

By staying in the presidential race, Biden appears to be following the script of Feinstein - and Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg before her. And now, he too risks losing control of the finale, tainting a storied career with a stubborn refusal to step aside. The good news: It doesn't have to be this way. Biden does not yet have a diagnosed medical condition like Feinstein did. So he still has time to choose a different path - that of his longtime friend, Orrin Hatch. Hatch, Biden and Feinstein were all contemporaries in the Senate. They all had prolific legislative careers in their own right. But Hatch, more than any

other senator of his generation, seemed to understand the importance of a graceful exit.

When Hatch chose to step down in 2018, he was at the top of his game politically. As president pro tempore of the Senate, he was third in line to the presidency. He had just passed

the senator to seek reelection.

As Hatch's longtime speechwriter, I watched him wrestle with the weighty decision of whether to stay or go. But with characteristic foresight and humility, he concluded that he could best serve his country by bringing his Senate service to a close, thus clearing a path for younger leaders. In his retirement announcement, Hatch teased what would come next: "I may be leaving the Senate, but the next chapter in my public service is just beginning." That next chapter would be one of mentoring. At the conclusion of his term, Hatch emphasized the importance of passing on the lessons of statesmanship to those who would come after him and promised to dedicate the rest of his life to raising up a new generation of policymakers in the ways of bipartisan dealmaking.

Hatch passed the final test, the one that separates the politicians from the statesmen. He understood that the true measure of a leader is not amassing power but knowing when - and how - to give it up. On this score, President George Washington set the ultimate example. Washington was at the pinnacle of power when he chose not to seek a third term as president. This selfless decision reinforced the importance of limited government, informal term limits and the separation of powers. It ended his political career but gave life to the democracy that came after him.

Hatch made a similar decision by giving up his seat to mentor and make way for up-and-coming leaders. That's why his legacy of commonsense policymaking lives strong today through the staff he raised up, the judges he championed and the ongoing work of the Orrin G. Hatch Foundation. Biden now faces the same test of leadership: Will he surrender his power for his legacy? Will he conduct himself as a statesman by passing the baton to the next generation? Or will he guard his power at the expense of his party and the nation? It's a simple choice between Feinstein and Hatch. To safeguard the American experiment, Biden and other members of the old guard would do well to follow Hatch.

CNN

Orban and Putin scratch each other's backs ... again

Andras Toth-Czifra

“MISSION accomplished!” crowed Viktor Orbán on July 5 after his surprise trip to Moscow, organized, as the Hungarian prime minister himself admitted, in utmost secrecy behind the back of Hungary's allies, and, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy whom Orbán had met days earlier, Ukraine.

Just how successful Orbán's "peace mission" was, was laid bare in the most horrific way three days later, on July 8 as Russia carried out a missile attack against several Ukrainian cities, targeting, among others, a children's hospital in Kyiv. But this was no peace mission. Having no mandate from the EU, NATO, or Ukraine to talk, and the circumstances on the ground the most that Orbán's visit could possibly have accounted to, as regards the war, was passing on messages. If indeed there was anything to pass on, given that the political and military circumstances that affect the chances of meaningful ceasefire, let alone peace negotiations, have not changed.

President Vladimir Putin may allude that he regards Orbán, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU Council, as the representative of the EU. He may care about European sanctions against Russia. But it is clear that even if Orbán or the presidency had a mandate to act on behalf of the EU, Putin would hardly take negotiating with the bloc seriously. The Kremlin's eyes are set on the US presidential election in November, and the looming governance crisis in France, whose president has fashioned himself as the chief Western European hawk on Russia. While we are not familiar with the substance of the conversations that Orbán held behind closed doors with Putin, it is more likely that, like his talks in Kyiv, they covered bilateral issues. There is no doubt Hungary's gas purchases, which could be impacted by the potential end of gas transit via Ukraine, were mentioned.

But why was it important for Orbán and Putin to meet in person? Some might insist that the Hungarian prime minister is simply a Kremlin agent or Trojan horse. Orbán's government is not trying too hard to counter these claims. But this is a simplistic and not very helpful take. The reality is likely more complicated. To understand Orbán's motivations, it is important to remember that he is currently engaged in a power struggle within the EU. Following an uneven showing of his allies in the European parliamentary elections in June and a dispute between several factions of illiberal parties, partly over the topic of the war in Ukraine, he has put together a new illiberal alliance, which is on track to become the third biggest group in the European Parliament. Growing this alliance is key not only to the distribution of power in Brussels, but also because

these parties might soon find themselves in government. Orbán, who is still attempting to get access to Hungary's frozen EU funds, hopes these allies could be counted on for political favors. He is thus trying to appear to be a major political pole, using the Hungarian presidency of the EU Council to support this effort.

Orbán is greatly aided by the fact that, beyond the occasional weapons shipment and tightening of sanctions, the EU and the US appear to have no clear plan to bring the war to an end in a way that respects Ukraine's territorial integrity. The EU's commitment to sustained assistance to Ukraine is weakening, and Brussels has no vision for dealing with a post-war Russia. While this is so, Russia's inhumane bombing campaigns may even help the cynical argument, often heard from supporters of concessions to Russia, that supporting Ukraine's fight will actually lead to more innocent deaths. Orbán's "peace party" may be more suitably referred to as the business-as-usual party, since that is what its members actually desire. But, unlike its opponents, it offers what to many looks like a solution. The Kremlin's strategy, meanwhile, still hinges upon Russia's resources and determination outlasting the will of Ukraine's backers. While conventional wisdom may hold that time is on Putin's side, Russia's trade, domestic finances and political stability have all taken a hit due to the war.

Portraying Orbán as the sober voice in the EU is useful to underpin Putin's domestic argument that the active phase of the war will soon be over as the West is leaning towards pressuring Ukraine into a ceasefire on Russia's terms. It is a win-win for both sides of the Moscow talks. The most immediate benefit to Putin from Orbán's visit, however, is what it makes the EU look like. The frustration that the visit has unleashed is likely not even the most important thing. Leaders of the EU and its member states have quite rightly protested against the circumstances and the optics of Orbán's talks - but they have not done much else. Punishing a member state whose government uses the rotating presidency to deliberately undermine the EU's position is not impossible. But such a step would most likely require the assent of a large majority of other member state governments, who are usually wary of setting such precedents. Orbán's rogue politicking does hurt Hungary's chances to build alliances and secure deals within the EU, but this damage is incremental and difficult to show. Currently, it looks like Orbán can afford not to care too much about the consequences of his actions in the EU. That, even more than the cacophony of disputes around the Hungarian prime minister's visit, this is something that the Kremlin loves to see.

The Moscow Times

Labour has power at last

Ruth Patrick

holds affected by the policy.

There is a lot that is cruel about the two-child limit, but one thing that is especially pernicious is the way in which its net widens and the number affected grows every day it remains in place. By the time it is fully rolled out, analysis suggests one in five children will live in affected households. That's equivalent to six children in every school class. The two-child limit seeps into the everyday fabric of families' lives, leaving children and their parents without the basic essentials that they need to get by. Over the past four years, I've been part of research working alongside families directly affected by the two-child limit and its sister policy, the benefit cap.

We have spoken to parents such as Wendy, who no longer gives her youngest children a bath or story at bedtime because this clashes with when her local supermarket reduces items close to their use-by date. And

Amanda, who had to choose which child's needs to meet when one child needed new T-shirts, the other underwear. Amanda felt the basic injustice and sadness of this, reflecting on other people who "don't have to think about which kid they love the most that month".

I have researched poverty for 15 years, and it has sadly long been common to hear parents talk about the steps they take to try to shield their children from its effects: skipping a meal so that their kids can be fed; turning the heating off during the day when children are at school. What we found in our study of the two-child limit and benefit cap is that children are also routinely trying to protect their parents from the impact of their poverty: nudging a sibling in the supermarket not to ask mum for that treat or magazine, because she doesn't have the money; trying to hide shoes

that are rubbing as they know the money simply isn't there for a new pair.

This is profoundly damaging to children who are being forced to grow up too soon, all because of political choices that could and should be overturned. Lifting the two-child limit would instantly remove 300,000 children from poverty and would send a wider signal to children, their families and to all of us that, borrowing a New Labour sentiment: every child matters. Those who defend the policy argue that people should only have the children they can afford, and that those on benefits should face the same decisions as those in paid work. But this is a deliberately simplistic and misleading argument. Working families are affected by the policy: these latest statistics show that 59% of affected households include someone in work.

None of us can know what

the future will bring. Who can be confident when they will be able to support that child without any extra help for the next 18 years? I am a mother to four children, aged from 12 to five. I work near-enough full-time and have a partner who is an electrician. At the moment we can financially support our children, but this could easily and suddenly change.

One of us could get sick, or lose our job, or our relationship might break down. Were any of these things to happen, the social security system should be there to support us, helping us through a difficult time. But so long as the two-child limit remains in place, we would not receive a penny for our fourth child. Our third would get help, purely by dint of her age; she is seven and was born just before the limit took effect. But household budgets are not boxed off into per-child elements, so all four children would suffer. The

last government was disproportionately dominated by elites, including that tiny minority of households who can say with confidence that they have the financial means to support their children come what may. But this new government is different. Many cabinet members have known life on a low income, and recognise the fear that financial insecurity bring. The new work and pensions secretary, Liz Kendall, rightly said today that "too many children are growing up in poverty and this is a stain on our society".

Starmer has pledged that his party will be judged on its record on child poverty. Scrapping the two-child limit must be the first step. But Labour should also make a broader argument about the value of social security as an investment in each and every one of us. I want to live in a country where every child born every minute has the opportunity to flourish and thrive. For that to happen, the two-child limit needs to go, and go today.

The Guardian

Blame Trump for North Korea's saber-rattling

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin's recent visit to Pyongyang and North Korea's announcement about testing new missiles have raised alarm bells in Washington, rattled the United States' allies and threaten to destabilize the whole Indo-Pacific region. While this is certainly not the first time that tensions have escalated, the current turmoil can be traced back to the actions of one man: former US President Donald Trump.

During his presidency, Trump's attempts at diplomacy were often viewed as ill-informed and dangerous, especially when he and North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un exchanged nuclear threats in 2017. Yet Trump and Kim, who met for two summits in 2018 and 2019, actually made significant progress toward resolving the decades-long conflict between their two countries - until Trump's impulsiveness derailed these efforts and set the stage for escalation.

Seeing a chance to shine on the international stage and win a Nobel Peace Prize like his predecessor Barack Obama, Trump pushed for a summit with Kim. This also reflected a stark reality. In their first and only meeting after Trump's election, Obama warned that North Korea was on the verge of acquiring missiles and bombs capable of killing millions of Americans. Obama also told Trump that the US might have to launch a preemptive strike to prevent this scenario. Trump's offer to meet Kim was a dream come true for North Korea, signifying its acceptance on the world stage. Kim, like his father and grandfather, has sought to modernize the country's underdeveloped economy. Ending the cold war with the US, which would have enabled North Korea to transfer resources from defense to the civilian econo-

my, was seen as crucial to this process.

To achieve this, Kim was even willing to put his nuclear weapons program on the chopping block. Even as they were issuing public threats, Trump and Kim were secretly angling for a summit. Immediately after Trump took office, the North Koreans reached out to the US State Department signaling Kim's desire to meet the new American president. During secret talks in Singapore, North

Joel S. Wit

expectation that the US-North Korea conflict would soon end.

But ending decades of hostility cannot be achieved in a few hours and the first Trump-Kim summit in June 2018 in Singapore fell far short of such unrealistic expectations. Trump himself seemed to realize this, telling his aides that it was a "process" that might require several summits. He was right. While Trump was criticized for being unprepared for his second meeting with Kim in Hanoi in

Notably, Kim also announced a major economic modernization program, indicating his expectation that the US-North Korea conflict would soon end. But ending decades of hostility cannot be achieved in a few hours and the first Trump-Kim summit in June 2018 in Singapore fell far short of such unrealistic expectations.

Korean spies reportedly asked their CIA counterparts whether Trump was serious about meeting Kim.

Although the Trump administration's official policy was to force the North Koreans to come to the negotiating table, the president liked the idea of a leader-to-leader summit. In December 2017, he even provided a United Nations envoy with a message for Kim, proposing a meeting. Whether Trump knew it or not, engaging directly with Kim was the only way to stop North Korea from amassing more weapons of mass destruction. While observers were dismissive of these efforts, Kim's unilateral decision to halt missile and nuclear weapons tests and start dismantling test sites showed he was serious. Notably, Kim also announced a major economic modernization program, indicating his

February 2019, the summit was preceded by intense negotiations between Trump's special envoy, Stephen Biegun, and his North Korean counterparts.

According to former US officials, the talks produced a lengthy document that addressed nearly every issue the two countries had struggled with, leaving two major questions for Trump and Kim to resolve: How much of North Korea's nuclear program would be dismantled immediately and how many sanctions Washington would lift in return. Trump and Kim came close to resolving these issues, but Kim's demands exceeded what Trump was willing to offer. The two haggled until Trump, who is known for his impatience, abruptly decided to cut the summit short.

Regrettably, Trump's impulsive decision came just as the negotia-

tions were gaining momentum. After the formal talks had ended, a top Kim adviser approached Biegun with a new promising proposal. The two seemed to be making progress when Trump walked by, shook Kim's hand, and left despite Kim's request that he stay a few more hours. The American delegation had no choice but to follow Trump and the stunned Kim returned to Pyongyang empty-handed. At the time, many experts believed that the summit had failed because Kim was not willing to give up his stockpile of nuclear weapons. Some thought that John Bolton, Trump's hawkish national security adviser, had sabotaged the talks, while others noted that Trump was likely distracted by the congressional testimony of his former lawyer, Michael Cohen. But the blame lies squarely with Trump himself.

As Anthony Fauci, the former director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, put it, Trump's attention span is "a minus number." Trump himself may have had second thoughts about walking out of the Hanoi summit. As he left Vietnam, he reportedly called then-South Korean President Moon Jae-in and sought his advice. But Trump and Kim never reconnected.

This raises the question: What if Trump had reached a historic deal with Kim in Hanoi? It is probably safe to say that the US and North Korea would have made significant - albeit slow - progress toward better relations. If they had, it is also likely that Kim would not have jeopardized his new relationship with the US by embracing Putin, nor would he be building an enormous weapons arsenal that threatens to annihilate American cities. Alas, because of Trump's rash decisions, we will never know what could have been.

The Japan Times

Russian election meddlers helping Trump

Jeff Seldin

RUSSIA is turning to a familiar playbook in its attempt to sway the outcome of the upcoming US presidential election, looking for ways to boost the candidacy of former President Donald Trump by disparaging the campaign of incumbent President Joe Biden, according to American intelligence officials.

A new assessment of threats to the November election, shared Tuesday, does not mention either candidate by name. But an intelligence official told reporters that the Kremlin view of the US political landscape has not changed from previous election cycles. "We have not observed a shift in Russia's preferences for the presidential race from past elections," the official told reporters, agreeing to discuss the intelligence only on the condition of anonymity.

The official said that preference has been further cemented by "the role the US is playing with regard to Ukraine and broader policy toward Russia." The caution from US intelligence officials comes nearly four years after it issued a similar warning about the 2020 presidential elections, which pitted then-President Trump against Biden.

Moscow was using "a range of measures to primarily denigrate former Vice President Biden and what it sees as an anti-Russia 'establishment.'" William Evanina, the then-head of the US National Counterintelligence and Security Center, said at the time. "Some Kremlin-linked actors are also seeking to boost President Trump's candidacy on social media and Russian television," he added. A declassified post-election assessment, released in March 2021, reaffirmed the initial findings. Russian President Vladimir Putin authorized "influence operations aimed at denigrating President Biden's candidacy and the Democratic Party" while offering support for Trump, the report said. US intelligence officials said they have been in contact with both presidential campaigns and the candidates but declined to share what sort of information may have been shared. The Trump campaign Tuesday rejected the US intelligence assessment as backward. "Vladimir Putin endorsed Joe Biden for President because he knows Biden is weak and can easily be bullied, as evidenced by Putin's years-long inva-

sion of Ukraine," national press secretary Karoline Leavitt told VOA in an email. "When President Trump was in the Oval Office, Russia and all of America's adversaries were deterred, because they feared how the United States would respond," she said. "The only people in America who don't see this clear contrast between Biden's ineffective weakness versus Trump's effective peace through strength approach are the left-wing stenographers in the mainstream media who write false narratives about Donald Trump for a living," she added. The Biden campaign has so far not responded to questions from VOA about the new US assessment. Russian officials also have not yet responded to requests for comment on the latest allegations, which accuse the Kremlin of using a "whole of government" approach to see Trump and other American candidates perceived as favorable to Moscow win in November.

"Moscow is using a variety of approaches to bolster its messaging and lend an air of authenticity to its efforts," the US intelligence official said. "This includes outsourcing its efforts to commercial firms to hide its hand and laundering narratives through influential US voices." Russia's efforts also appear focused on targeting US voters in so-called swing states, states most likely to impact the outcome of the presidential election, officials said. Some of those efforts have already come to light. Earlier Tuesday, the US Department of Justice announced the seizure of two internet domains and of another 968 accounts on the X social media platform, part of what officials described an artificial intelligence-driven venture by Russian intelligence and Russia's state-run RT news network. A Justice Department statement said Russian intelligence and RT used specific AI software to create authentic-looking social media accounts to mimic US individuals, "which the operators then used to promote messages in support of Russian government objectives." A joint advisory, issued simultaneously by the US, Canada and the Netherlands, warned Russia was in the process of expanding the AI-fueled influence operation to other social media platforms. The US intelligence official who spoke to reporters

Tuesday described such use of AI as a "malign influence accelerant," and warned the technology had already been deployed, likely by China, in the run-up to Taiwan's elections this past January. For now, though, US intelligence officials see few indications Beijing is seeking to interfere in US elections, as it did in 2020 and 2022. China "sees little gain in choosing between two parties that are perceived as both seeking to contain Beijing," said the US intelligence official, noting things could change. "The PRC is seeking to expand its ability to collect and monitor data on US social media platforms, probably to better understand and eventually manipulate public opinion," the official said. "In addition, we are watching for whether China might seek to influence select down-ballot races as it did in the 2022 midterm elections."

The Chinese Embassy in Washington, which has denied previous US allegations, responded by calling the US "the biggest disseminator of disinformation." "China has no intention and will not interfere in the US election, and we hope that the US side will not make an issue of China in the election," spokesperson Liu Pengyu told VOA in an email. The new US election threat assessment warns that in addition to concerns about Russia and China, there is growing evidence Iran is seeking to play the role of a "chaos agent" in the upcoming US vote. "Iran seeks to stoke social divisions and undermine confidence in US democratic institutions around the elections," according to an unclassified version of the assessment.

It also warned that Tehran "has demonstrated a long-standing interest in exploiting US political and societal tensions through various means, including social media." As an example, officials Tuesday pointed to newly declassified intelligence showing Iran trying to exploit pro-Gaza protests across the US. "We have observed actors tied to Iran's government posing as activists online, seeking to encourage protests, and even providing financial support to protesters," said National Intelligence Director Avril Haines. Haines cautioned, though, that Americans who interacted with the Iranian actors "may not be aware that they are interacting with or receiving support from a foreign government."

British defence needs root and branch reform

Edward Stringer

JOHN Healey has been Secretary of State for Defence for less than a week. Yet already, while setting out his stall at Nato's most consequential summit since its formation in 1949, some want to bounce him into scrapping his proposed defence review. The military's problems are clear, they say, and Healey must not delay in giving defence more money to plug the obvious gaps. With a war raging in Ukraine there is no time to lose.

Setting aside the chutzpah of those, in uniform and out, who were running UK defence for the past decade and now complain loudly about the state of it, they are wrong for several reasons. The two main ones are that the way the Ministry of Defence (MoD) spends its money is in a downward spiral of paying more to get less; and what it does eventually buy does not add up to a war-winning proposition.

Tinkering with process, while changing the letterheads, is usually activity masquerading as achievement. But Healey's planned reforms have been deliberately sequenced to avoid these traps, and his programme - first detailed in his Policy Exchange speech of late February - should be executed as designed.

The planned reforms of the MoD are not about shuffling the deckchairs. They are a fundamental reset of the incentives and the accountabilitys that create a culture and drive behaviour. For one, named individuals will become responsible for achieving actual results. The Chief of the Defence Staff will have a properly constituted Military Strategic Headquarters (MSHQ). He and it will be responsible for the state of the front-line military and its collective readi-

ness to fight the next war. That will require it to train and integrate the forces of all three Services, ensure they are logistically viable, and able to endure a sustained campaign. It will need to think through "how we will fight" now and in the future, and generate appropriate, realistic war plans to be resourced.

A new National Armaments Director (NAD) will be responsible for sustaining the "national arsenal". As the Ukraine conflict demonstrates, your peacetime kit doesn't last long in wartime. What allows you to prevail is the size of the war stocks you maintain and the defence industrial base you rely on to replenish them. The NAD will be accountable for managing the supply chains that feed that national arsenal - from sovereign capacities where essential, but also by burden-sharing with trusted allies. It will ensure the Services get what they need, not what they want, to meet the warplans of the MSHQ. And wrapped around both will be a rebooted Department of State under the Permanent Under-Secretary. It will be charged with informing national security policy, then taking that policy and turning it into clear direction from the Defence Board to the department and all its various components. MSHQ and NAD will be singing off the same sheet.

The other ramification of that observation from Ukraine - that your peacetime kit doesn't last long - goes beyond the logistic and into the conceptual. All wars are different, and all evolve. Look at the transformative use of drones in all spheres of Ukrainian warfare, or modern information and digital technology rapidly repurposed to make their targeting

much slicker. Rapid adaptation, across society as well as in the military, is what is needed, along with plans to mobilise that ecosystem of innovation. And then the capacity to produce at scale. Yet the paradigm Healey inherits is orientated around chasing top-of-the-range military equipment, of which we can afford only a few samples for our "bonsai" peacetime force. Often there is no open production line behind them once they are bought, and so no way of replacing wartime losses. This is not a formula for fighting and winning a sustained conflict. If your foes calculate you can't, then you lose the ability to deter that conflict, too.

So Healey's defence review is going to have to consider to what extent we need to alter that approach, and move from a capable, but very small and inherently unsustainable peacetime notion of the forces needed to fight and win a war. It will have to consider moving towards something that is capable of expanding to an adaptive, wartime force. This will require, inter alia, a new contract with our Reserves, greater supply and logistic standardisation with our allies, and realistic provision of essentials that are too easy to overlook during peacetime funding arguments.

To answer those questions honestly will require a command and management structure incentivised to be realistic, and led by named individuals that are accountable for the actual outputs that our defence relies on. And that is why Healey must first reform the structure of the MoD and the command of our front-line forces. Only then will we get fighting services that our allies and foes will respect and fear - because they will be demonstrably able to fight and to win.

The Telegraph

Political rifts have left US haunted by fear of civil war. How France can do better

IN 2016, it was the "Anglo-American" world that seemed in lockstep, the US electing Donald Trump hot on the heels of Britain's own goal of Brexit. A few weeks ago, it seemed as if France would take the UK's place as the US's partner in implosion. But even though fireworks and cheers filled Paris's Place de la République on Sunday night following the success of a hasty marriage of convenience between leftwing parties and centrist coalitions to keep the far right out of power, they only temporarily drowned out reality. France's social and political fractures are not going away any more than a four-year respite from Trump means that Trumpism has gone away.

France and the US have seen their neuroses about social fracture leading to civil conflict seep into politics, as well as playing out in film and TV dramas. The US's fractures are so deep that full-blown civil war is already the subject of fiction. Alex Garland's Civil War film skips over the reasons that the country is divided and jumps straight to the middle of the fighting, suggesting a politically improbable alliance of Texas and California to overthrow a president turned autocrat.

During the recent election campaign in France, historians, analysts and politicians evoked the spectre of conflict that could arise in the case of a far-right victory. Emmanuel Macron said that should the extreme right win it would "divide and push" the country towards "civil war".

Of course, there is one big difference between the US and France: guns. "There have to be guns for there to be a civil war; it's the bare minimum," says Marie Kinsky (Ana Girardot) in the 2024

French TV series La Fièvre. The co-protagonist and far-right activist sets about to turn France into the US (even seeking assistance from the National Rifle Association) as the basis for provoking an identitarian implosion. Far-fetched? Hopefully - though a shocking 91% of French people share the sentiment that "society is violent". La Fièvre, directed by Eric Benzekri, opens with an altercation between a football player and his coach, which both far right and far left attempt to inflate into a race and identity crisis to exploit for their own purposes. In the aftermath, Sam Berger (Nina Meurisse), a political communications consultant, and an anxiety-ridden depiction of the centre left, feverishly tries to stop Kinsky from pushing French society to the brink. The two play a nationwide game of chess that takes in disinformation, social media astroturfing, a citizens' assembly and - in a direct foreshadowing of how Kylian Mbappé and other French footballers took public stances against "the extremes" - the use of a Paris football club as a force for moderation.

While Civil War can seem almost apolitical, La Fièvre never stops theorising, pulling from Stefan Zweig's The World of Yesterday, the Overton window and the research institute Destin Commun's La France en quiete. The show lays bare the way that modern democracy is being hollowed out by what it terms "conflict entrepreneurs", those in politics and the private sector who gain from exploiting and aggravating social fracture.

One of the truths Benzekri conveys is that the far right isn't the only threat. Ideological rigidity can come from the far left too, and

often blocks progress while contributing to a society where conversation - and thus, democracy - becomes unworkable. But what seems to worry Benzekri most is the phenomenon of politics as spectacle, and the degree to which populism is contagious.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Benzekri worked with Jean-Luc Mélenchon - the radical-left leader of France Unbowed (LFI), the largest party in the New Popular Front (NFP), the shock winner in the recent French parliamentary elections. But the director has drifted towards the more mainstream centre left, and now seems to see some of his former allies as conflict entrepreneurs who also bear responsibility for the deteriorating state of French politics.

I've watched as the US has experienced the polarisation of almost all aspects of life along political lines. It's a phenomenon I desperately would love France to avoid. But how?

During the 2021-22, and 2022-23 academic years, I taught a first-year seminar to students at Sciences Po Paris that I titled, "In search of respect: US democracy confronting race and inequality." I pulled the title from a book written by a French anthropologist, Philippe Bourgois, who studied crack gangs in Harlem in the 1990s. A desire to be "respected", it seemed to me, was at the root of so much of the emotion and anger that Trump was able to channel and direct.

Populism pits different segments of society against each other, often around competing notions of respect. A far-right populist tells supporters that they are right to feel disrespected, because "someone else" has come and intruded upon something fundamental about who they are. A far-left populist tells

Alexander Hurst

French voters save the Republic. Now comes the (really) hard part

Marie Le Conte

FRANCE'S legislative election results shocked - but also delighted - much of the public, especially those on the left. The seemingly relentless march to power by the likes of far-right stalwart Marine Le Pen has been halted - at least for now. The left wing of French politics once again has a sense of its own purpose and power: the ability of its voters to achieve big things, and to do the right thing. This is why it was heartening to see so many people celebrating across the country Sunday night, as the improbably resounding election results came out. They deserved it.

The political earthquake that had been feared after last week's first round of voting - when initial results showed the far-right Rassemblement National (RN) on the brink of taking power - has been averted. The New Popular Front (NFP) - a hastily assembled coalition of France's center-left, far left and Greens - emerged with the most seats in Sunday's decisive second round. President Emmanuel Macron's centrist Ensemble alliance came in second, preventing the far right from tak-

ing power. The stakes couldn't have been higher, and it is hard to overstate the sense of urgency with which French voters flocked to the polls. Turnout for the second round was the highest since 1981. People who'd gotten used to staying at home on election days were brought back into the fold. That first round of voting last Sunday seemed to show the RN on the verge of forming France's first far-right government since the collaborationist Vichy regime of World War II.

Instead, the country is now left with two large electoral blocs - the center and the left - which came together after a week of political bargaining in which more than 200 left-wing and centrist candidates withdrew from the second round in a bid to avoid splitting the vote. It ought to be noted, however, that under half of centrist voters went for the left in a run-off against the far right. An astonishing 72% of left-wing voters in the opposite situation voted tactically, leading the coalition to historic electoral success. Still, it was only the beginning - and the easy part. Yes, the

left woke up Monday to a brand-new day, but the country also awakened to a newly fractured and fractious National Assembly. Out of 577 seats, the Popular Front has 182, Ensemble 163, and the Rassemblement National 143. Other, smaller parties share the remaining 84. The left doesn't have long to show that they are correct in thinking that, this time, they could actually change things for the better.

It is currently impossible to predict how this unwieldy and mismatched parliament will succeed. The Popular Front is itself a coalition, which managed to work well enough together during what was a short, tight and high-pressure campaign. Governing together would prove to be more of a challenge. Back in 2022, a somewhat similar alliance was formed for the legislative elections, and it descended into internecine wars about as quickly as most had expected.

It will find common ground on some issues, but it is hard to see them coming up with a cohesive party line on major issues at the



SCCI chief stresses strengthening of Pak-Indonesia bilateral trade

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: President, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Fuad Ishaq has called for strengthening bilateral trade relations between Pakistan and Indonesia.

He was talking to members during the visit of Mr Rahmat Hindiarta Kusuma, Charge De Affair, Mr Axelsyah R Miraza, Economic Attaché and M Syofiyun Sur of the Embassy of Republic of Indonesia in Pakistan, during their visit to the Chamber here Friday.

Mr Kusuma in his multi-media presentation, said that the bilateral trade volume was far away from potentials of the both countries.

He stressed the need for establishment of business to business contacts and taking mutual benefits

from each other's potentials and experience and promotion of cooperation in multiple-sectors, including tourism, education, health and others.

The meeting was attended by Senior Vice President SCCI, Sanaulah Khan, Vice President Ejaz Khan Afridi, former president Zulfikar Ali Khan, Sherbaz Bilour, members of executive committee of the Chamber Monawar Khurshid, Affaf Ali Khan, Qurtul Ain, Fahad Amin, Muhamamd Ismail Safi, former senior vice president Inman Khan Mohammad, Haji Aftab Iqbal, Nadeem Rauf, Ashfaq Ahmad, Syed Ejaz Ali Shah, Waqar Ahmad, Ihsanullah, Nisar Ahmad, Sohail Javed, Saddam Gul, Faiz Rasool, Ishfaq and members of the business community.

A documentary was played during the meeting,

highlighting the importance of the chamber, important initiatives, investment opportunities, bilateral trade and potentials of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Fuad Ishaq said prospects are brighter to enhance the mutual economic and trade relations between Pakistan

Diplomats also presented a comprehensive multi-media presentation, through which highlighted potentials to boost the bilateral trade between Indonesia and Pakistan.

Mr Kusuma and Axelsyah R Miraza while responding to various queries of the participants, said that strong bilateral trade, cultural and diplomatic relations were established between the two countries.

They, however, said proactive initiatives are essential to further tap

potentials of the both countries to enhance the mutual trade volume between Indonesia and Pakistan.

The diplomats invited Khyber Pakhtunkhwa businessmen to make investments in Indonesia with multiple facilities and a complete five year tax-holiday facility. They informed the participants that Indonesia would commemorate centennial independence next year.

The diplomats called for removal of obstacles to mutual trade and the gap between the business community and people of both the countries. They said Indonesia is giving much importance to enhance bilateral trade relations and cooperation in multiple sectors with Pakistan. Indonesia is also considering signing a free trade agreement with Pakistan, they said.



PESHAWAR: President, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Fuad Ishaq presenting the traditional turban to Mr Rahmat Hindiarta Kusuma, Charge De Affair, Embassy of Republic of Indonesia in Pakistan.

Treatment of heart attack patients

AKUH awarded Platinum Performance Achievement Award

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH) has received the Chest Pain - MI Registry Platinum Performance Achievement Award for 2024. This is an award by the American College of Cardiology's (ACC) National Cardiovascular Data Registry (NCDR). It places the Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi among the world's top hospitals for offering high-quality cardiac care to heart attack patients.

The Chest Pain - MI Registry empowers healthcare providers to consistently treat cardiac patients using the latest science-based guidelines. It establishes a national standard for better understanding and improving the quality, safety, and outcomes of care for patients with coronary artery disease, particularly those at high risk of heart attack.

This award recognises AKUH's success in bringing a higher standard of care to heart attack patients. To receive the Chest Pain - MI Registry Platinum Performance Achievement Award, the AKUH has demonstrated sustained achievement in the Chest Pain - MI Registry and performed at the highest level on specific performance



measures.

"This award reflects our dedication to delivering top-tier cardiac care to our patients. It reinforces our commitment to the health and well-being of our patients and the community. Our doctors, nurses and staff continue to strive for excellence to ensure our patients receive the highest standard of cardiovascular care," said Dr Farhat Abbas, CEO, AKU Health Services, Pakistan.

Full participation in the registry engages hospitals in a robust quality improvement process that uses data to drive improvements in adherence to guideline recommendations and overall quality of care provided to heart attack patients. AKUH has met ACC's rigorous standards for treating heart attack patients, demonstrating AKUH's commitment and dedica-

tion to continuous improvement in the quality of care and patient outcomes.

"This award is not only a recognition of our achievements but also a motivator for our future endeavours," said Dr Javed Majid Tai, Director Cathlab and site Director for NCDR. "We remain committed to advancing our cardiac care services to provide top-quality, guideline-driven care for heart attack patients."

This award serves as a catalyst for AKUH's ongoing efforts to innovate and improve, ensuring that patients receive the best possible cardiovascular care. At AKUH, this recognition is a milestone in the journey towards excellence and, most importantly, as a motivator to further its mission of providing top-tier healthcare to the community.

Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH) is a not-for-profit healthcare institute that offers all medical services to patients under one roof. AKUH emphasizes access, quality, relevance, and impact as its guiding principles and operates an extensive network of healthcare facilities across 130 cities in Pakistan. In addition to its flagship quaternary care hospital in Karachi, AKUH has a network of 4 off-campus hospitals, 35+ pharmacies, 19 medical centres and over 300+ lab collection points. The institution also extends its services to home healthcare and home delivery of medicines. In recognition of its high quality and patient safety, the AKUH is accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI) as an Academic Medical Centre and its Clinical Laboratories are accredited by the College of American Pathologists (CAP) for fast and accurate testing. As a leading healthcare institution committed to providing exceptional patient care irrespective of the socio-economic standing of the patient, AKUH offers welfare and zakat support to deserving patients. In 2023, Rs. 5.8 billion worth of such financial assistance was provided to 1.3 million patients across Pakistan.

SBP injects over Rs10 trillion into market

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) injected Rs10,129.3 billion in the market on Friday through Reverse Repo Purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation (OMO).

According to OMO results issued her Friday, the SBP conducted Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) on July 12, 2024 for 7-day and 28-day tenors and accepted all the 42 received bids amounting to

Rs10,074.3 billion.

The central bank received 25 bids for 7-day tenor accumulatively offering an amount of Rs 8,102.75 billion at the rate of return ranging between 20.54 to 20.60 percent. For the 28-day tenor 17 bids amounting to Rs1,971.55 billion were offered at the rate of return ranging between 20.54 percent to 20.60 percent.

The SBP accepted all 25 quotes for 7-day and 17 quotes for 28-tenor at 20.54 percent annual rate of

return.

Meanwhile, the central bank also injected Rs 55 billion in the market through Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for 7-day tenor.

For the 7-day tenor, the SBP received one bid amounting to Rs55 billion (face value of collateral) at 20.58 percent rate of return while no bid was received for 28-day tenor. The central bank accepted the single quote at 22.58 percent cut-off rate.

PSX loses 48 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Friday shed 48.26 points, a slight negative change of 0.06 percent, closing at 79,944.10 points against 79,992.35 points on the last working day.

A total of 437,315,657 shares were traded during the day as compared to 389,024,310 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 23.484 billion against Rs 20.924 billion on the last trading day.

Around 444 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 155 of them recorded gains and 245 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 44 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Fauji Fertilizer Bin Qasim with 45,357,302 shares at Rs 40.85 per share, K-Electric Limited with 33,085,415 shares at Rs 4.81 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 29,218,014 shares at Rs1.20 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 99.06 per share price, closing at Rs 7,699.27, whereas the runner-up was Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited with a Rs86.83 rise in its per share price to Rs 18,192.23.

Data Agro Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 42.62 per share closing at Rs 405.96, followed by Hoechst Pakistan Limited with a Rs30.00 decline to close at Rs 1,500.00.

Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Six ships, Hyundai Hong Kong, APL Le Havre, Sara, Hanyu Fressia, Carol and Top Fortune scheduled to load/offload Container, Rice, Chemicals, LPG and Coal, berthed at QICT Terminal, Grain Terminal, Engro Terminal, Sui Southern Gas Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Thursday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Maersk Pelepas, Roan Teresa and Houyoshi Park are also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on same day.

Eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a containers carrier 'Hyundai Hong Kong' left the port on today morning while three more ships, APL Le Havre, Hanyu Fressia and Toxotis are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 143,325 tonnes, comprising 81,470 tonnes imports cargo and 61,855 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,038 Containers (1,369 TEUs Imports and 2,669 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Six ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them a chemicals carrier 'Raon Teresa' is expected to take berths at Engro Vopak Terminal on Friday, while another containers ship 'MSC Positano' is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Saturday.

very good time with Dr. June who has become a good friend of Karachi's business community as throughout his tenure, Dr. June was just a call away to fully facilitate us in dealing with visa, travel and trade-related issues".

While referring to quota restrictions on Pakistani exports to Indonesia, he requested Dr. June to look into the possibility of getting these quota restrictions removed on his return to Jakarta which would actually result in enhancing the exports of Pakistan to Indonesia.

He noted that Pakistan's export to Indonesia stood at meager US\$125 million whereas goods worth US\$3.2 billion were being imported from Indonesia which needs special attention so that Pakistan's exports could also be enhanced to a reasonable level for efficiently dealing with the issue of trade imbalance.

Keeping in view the strong ties between KCCI and Indonesian Consulate, Zubair Motiwal also requested Dr. June to convey KCCI's message to his successor that after taking over the assignment in Karachi, the newly appointed Indonesian CG should hold his first meeting with Karachi Chamber. "We wish best of luck and success to Dr. June for all his future endeavors." Earlier, Senior Vice President KCCI Altaf A. Ghaffar, while welcoming the Indonesian CG, expressed heartfelt appreciation to Dr. June for his dedication towards strengthening bilateral trade between Pakistan and Indonesia. "We deeply value your exceptional contributions to diplomatic relations and cultural exchange between the two countries."

He said that Pakistan and Indonesia have a long-standing historical relationship, strengthened by regular high-level interactions. The bilateral social, cultural, and economic cooperation between the two countries reflects the depth and strength of this bond.

"Despite immense trade potential, Pakistan's exports to Indonesia stood at the meagre level of \$127 million in FY23 which needs to be further enhanced to a reasonable level through collective efforts", he said, adding that addressing trade barriers, simplifying customs procedures, promoting ease of doing business, and supporting SMEs can foster trade, exports & economic integration.

Citigroup reports better-than-expected Q2 profit

CHICAGO (Yahoo News): Citigroup (C) on Friday reported second-quarter profit that beat analysts' estimates.

Citi's net income of \$3.2 billion was 10% higher than the year-ago quarter, while diluted earnings per share (EPS) climbed to \$1.52 from \$1.33 last year, beating the \$1.38 consensus estimate of analysts compiled by Visible Alpha.

The bank's revenue rose 4% to \$20.1 billion, a shade below estimates, on growth in banking and trading

business segments. Equities trading revenue grew 37%, driven by gains in derivatives.

"Growth in client investment assets drove stronger investment revenue, and our focus on rationalizing the expense base is starting to pay off," Citi Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Jane Fraser said.

Investors and analysts were watching for Citi's cost management, especially since this is the first quarterly report since Fraser's massive restructur-

ing program aimed at curbing costs ended in March.

The bank's operating expenses fell 2% to \$13.4 billion, even though the cost of credit grew, "primarily driven by higher cards net credit losses, partially offset by a lower allowance for credit losses (ACL)."

Citi stock rose in pre-market trading Friday following the report but turned lower when markets opened, falling 2.5% to \$64.06 as of around 10 a.m. ET. It has gained roughly 25% year-to-date.

CG underscores need to diversify exports to Indonesia

KARACHI (PPI): Consul General of Indonesia Dr June Kuncoro Hadiningrat, while highly appreciating a wide range of products being manufactured in Karachi, underscored the need to diversify Pakistan's exports to Indonesia with a view to effectively deal with the trade imbalance between the two countries.

Speaking at a farewell reception hosted by Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), he said that excellent quality leather goods, surgical and several other products can also be exported to Indonesia. "Indonesian delegations, during their visits to Pakistan from time to time, prefer to carry out most of their shopping in Karachi as this city offers very good quality products."

Chairman Businessmen Group Zubair Motiwal, Senior Vice President KCCI Altaf A. Ghaffar, Vice President KCCI Tanveer Ahmed Barry, Chairman Diplomatic Missions & Embassies Liaison Subcommittee Farooq Afzal, Former Presidents Majid Aziz, Abdullah Zaki, Tariq Yousuf and Muhammad Idrees along with KCCI Managing Committee Members and officials from Indonesian Consulate were also present on the occasion.

While referring to concerns expressed over trade imbalance, Indonesian CG said that during his tenure, a lot of efforts were made to encourage Pakistani exports to Indonesia and it was really heartening to see that Pakistani rice was successfully exported to Indonesia last year and this year also. "To further improve trade ties between the two brotherly countries, I always encouraged maximum number of Indonesian delegations to visit Pakistan", he added while appreciating Zubair Motiwal for arranging Single Country exhibition in Jakarta.

Dr. June further said that last three years of his service as Indonesian Consul General in Karachi were really rewarding thanks to full support and cooperation extended by Karachi Chamber in bringing the business communities of both countries closer to each other. "I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to business community, specially KCCI, which is one of the historical Chamber of Commerce."

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman BMG Zubair Motiwal said, "We had a

US wholesale inflation picked up in June

WASHINGTON (AP): Wholesale prices in the United States rose by a larger-than-expected 2.6% last month from a year earlier, a sign that some inflation pressures remain high.

The increase, the sharpest year-over-year increase since March 2023, comes at a time when other price indicators are showing that inflation has continued to ease.

The Labor Department said Friday that its producer price index — which tracks inflation before it reaches consumers — rose 0.2% from May to June after being unchanged the month before. Excluding food and energy prices, which tend to bounce around from month to month, so-called core wholesale prices increased 0.4% from May and 3% from June 2023.

The increase in wholesale inflation last month was driven by a sizable 0.6% rise in services prices, led by higher profit margins for machinery and auto wholesalers. But profit margins for wholesalers and retailers — categorized as "trade services" in the producer price report — can be very volatile. By contrast, a measure of wholesale inflation that excludes trade services, food and energy was unchanged from May to June. It helps explain why many economists were not alarmed by Friday's unexpected uptick in overall wholesale inflation.

The producer price index can provide an early sign of where consumer inflation is headed. Economists also watch it because some of its components, notably healthcare and financial services, flow into the Federal

Reserve's preferred inflation gauge — the personal consumption expenditures, or PCE, index. Some of the wholesale price components that feed into PCE — including some healthcare costs — came in below expectations Friday, raising hopes for continued progress toward easing consumer price inflation, which would reassure the Fed.

Friday's wholesale figures follow the government's report Thursday

that consumer inflation cooled in June for a third straight month. Consumer prices declined 0.1% from May to June — the first such drop in overall inflation since May 2020, when the economy was paralyzed by the pandemic.

As a whole, this week's price figures, along with other recent data, still suggest a continued slowdown in the inflation that first gripped the nation three years ago, when the

economy rocketed out of the pandemic recession, leaving deep supply shortages and sending prices soaring.

The Fed raised its benchmark interest rate 11 times in 2022 and 2023, to a 23-year high, to try to curb the price spikes. Inflation has since cooled from its four-decade high of 9.1%, and the central bank is widely expected to begin cutting interest rates in September.

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COURT NOTICES KOHAT

In The Court of Ms Shadab Civil Judge-IV Kohat, Suit no.53/1 Date of hearing, 30-07-2024, Titled:- Taskeeu-Ud-Din Vs Javid Iqbal Notice against:- (2) Taskeenu-Ud-Din Son of Mir Azam Khan R/o Muhammad Zai District Kohat presently R/o (now in Abroad Dubai UAE) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendant in which date of hearing 30-07-2024 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Defendant is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 31-07-2024 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law. Order Issued on 25-06-2024 (Court of CJ-IX Kohat)

In The Court of Ms Shadab Civil Judge-IX Kohat, Suit no.35/1 Date of hearing, 31-07-2024, Titled:- Muammad Idrees Vs Asmat Ali Shah Notice against:- (2) Tahir Shah (4) Faisal Shah Sons (5) Mst Rozina Bibi Daughter of Nazeer Khan R/o Gumbat District Kohat presently R/o (now in Abroad Dubai UAE) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendants in which date of hearing 31-07-2024 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 31-07-2024 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law. Order Issued on 25-06-2024 (Court of CJ-IX Kohat)

In The Court of Iftikhar Ahmad Civil Judge-XI Kohat, Suit no.85/1 Date of hearing, 20-07-2024, Titled:- Haroon(etc) Vs Ikram (etc), Notice against:- (9) Mst Zubaida Daughter of Shahzad Mir R/o Garhe Risaldar Hangu Roar District Kohat presently R/o (now in Abroad America USA) (Defendant) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendant in which date of hearing 20-07-2024 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode

therefore you Defendant is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 20-07-2024 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 26-06-2024 (Court of CJ-XI Kohat)

NAMES CORRECTION

My Pakistan Engineering Council namely M/s Hashim Khan Tareen License # 14974 address is mistakenly written as Haripur Village Bhuttri, Nadowal my new and correct address is Village Bhuttri, Rehana District Haripur. Please concern this address as my permanent address.

LOST & FOUND

ملاش گمشده
مجھے سے میری ہینڈلڈ CD-70، APL،
نیل 2020 کی اور جیٹل نوٹس قاضی کی حد میں
کوئی ہے جس کا تجھس نمبر CD109430 اور
انجمن نمبر C416839 کے بارے میں برائی اس
پتہ پر ارسال کیجی دو تکلیف خیر آباد
نیل ملک موبائل: 0311-5814040



In brief

Football Club C'ship schedule announced

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Normalization Committee has announced the schedule for the National Women Football Club Championship. 2024. This premier women's football event will feature initial rounds in four cities: Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi and Quetta from July 21 to July 26, said a press release. Three teams will compete in Lahore TWK FC, Real Lahore WFC and Young Rising Stars FC. In Islamabad, six teams will vie for the final round. Group A: Legacy WFC, Gilgit WFC, Smurfs WFC; Group B: Highlanders WFC, Strikers WFC, Nawansher United FC. Four teams will battle it out in Quetta Balochistan WFC, Quetta Women FC, Hazara Quetta Women FC and Hazara United FC Karachi will host 13 teams, divided into four groups. Group A: Karachi United FC, MUK WFC, Young Muslim FC; Group B: Karachi City WFC, Mohsen Gillani WFC, Jahangir Memorial; Group C: Dya WFC, Overseas WFC, Baloch Muhammadan WFC; Group D: Jafa WFC, Karachi Women FC, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto WFC, Hazara Girls FC. The championship's final round will take place in Islamabad from August 1 to August 10. The top teams from 8 groups will compete for the coveted title. The semi-final is scheduled for August 8 and the final will be held on August 10 here at the Jinnah Stadium.

SA to host Esports Olympics in 2025

LAUSANNE (AFP): Saudi Arabia will host the inaugural Esports Olympics in 2025 the International Olympic Committee said on Friday. "The International Olympic Committee (IOC) today announced that it has partnered with the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Saudi Arabia to host the inaugural Olympic Esports Games 2025 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," the body said. "The proposal will be made to the IOC Session, which will be held on the eve of the Olympic Games Paris 2024. "The duration of the partnership between the IOC and the Saudi NOC will be 12 years, with Olympic Esports Games held regularly." Riyadh is already to host the Esports World Cup in July and August, when 2,500 gamers will battle for \$60 million in prize money. The IOC, in its perpetual quest to reconcile Olympic tradition with attempts to attract a younger audience, held an initial "Olympic e-sport week" in Singapore in June 2023, consisting of "ten mixed-gender category events". Last October, the IOC set up an "e-sport commission" chaired by Frenchman David Lappartient, the president of the international cycling union (UCI), to consider a dedicated competition. However, IOC president Thomas Bach has said in the past he does not see e-sports as part of the traditional Olympics. "With respect to esports, our values are and remain the red line that we will never cross," he said. Nevertheless he expressed his delight that the Esports Games had a natural home in Saudi Arabia. "We are very fortunate to be able to work with the Saudi NOC on the Olympic Esports Games, because it has great — if not unique — expertise in the field of esports with all its stakeholders," Bach said in a statement. "The Olympic Esports Games will greatly benefit from this experience.

Anderson ends England career in win over Windies

LORD'S (Agencies): James Anderson ended his legendary international career in England's crushing victory over West Indies in the first Test at Lord's.

Anderson, England's all-time leading wicket-taker, took one of the four wickets to fall on the third morning as the hosts completed a rout by an innings and 114 runs.

On an poignant day at the home of cricket, 41-year-old Anderson was given a guard of honour by both teams on his entrance to the field and was visibly moved by the standing ovation he received from the expectant crowd.

The result was already in little doubt after West Indies had been reduced to 79-6 on the second evening, 171 away from making England bat again.

Anderson bowled the first full over of the day and struck in his second, having Joshua da Silva caught behind.

Gus Atkinson had Alzarri Joseph held at long leg to become the first England bowler to take a 10-wicket haul on Test debut since 1976, then bowled the swiping Shamar Joseph.

The stage was set for Anderson, who somehow missed the chance for the fairy-tale finale when he dropped a caught-and-bowled chance off Gudakesh Motie.

Instead it was Atkinson who had the final say when Jayden Seales was caught at deep square leg to leave West Indies 136 all out. It gave Atkinson 5-61 in the second innings and 12-106 in the match, the best figures by an England debutant in 134 years.

The win halts a run of four successive Test defeats for England and gives them a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Anderson immediately joins the England coaching team as a bowling mentor for the second Test at Trent Bridge, which begins on Thursday.

Lord's says farewell to Anderson

This has been a long goodbye for Anderson, who announced his intention to retire in May after talks with England captain Ben Stokes, coach Brendon McCullum and managing director Rob Key.

Much of the week has been a celebration of his unparalleled career, one that has made him the most successful fast bowler to ever play Test cricket.

This did not have the drama of the exits of his great friends Sir Alastair Cook and Stuart Broad. Cook made a century in his last Test against India, while Broad hit a six from the final ball he faced in Test cricket then sealed an Ashes draw with his final delivery against Australia at The Oval last year.

On the same ground where he made his Test debut against Zimbabwe in 2003, Anderson was last down the pavilion steps. He walked between the two sets of players lined up on the outfield while the big screen showed his picture and a caption of "James Anderson The Greatest".

In a mix of England's old and new, Atkinson, playing his first Test, and Anderson, in his 188th and last, bowled unchanged and in tandem throughout the hour of play on Friday morning.

Anderson, as he has done so often, found movement down the Lord's slope to take Da Silva's edge, while Atkinson bounced out Alzarri Joseph and splattered the stumps of Shamar Joseph.

With the last pair at the crease and one final wicket to take, the crowd sang Anderson's name and cheered him to the crease, only for Motie's chipped drive to pop out of the bowler's left hand as he followed through.

In almost comical scenes, with Motie somehow evading fielders and the whole ground willing Anderson towards his moment, celebrations were



-muted when Seales hooked Atkinson to Ben Duckett.

Anderson led England from the field, soaking up the adulation, then was interviewed by his first Test captain Nasser Hussain in the England dressing room, pint of Guinness in hand.

Anderson's 3-32 leaves him with 704 Test wickets, third on the all-time list behind only spinners Muttiah Muralitharan and Shane Warne. It was England who decided to move on from Anderson, and now England must prepare for life without him. Anderson's Test career in stats:

Played under eight Test captains (Hussain, Vaughan, Flintoff, Strauss, Pietersen, Cook, Root, Stokes)

Played on 50 Test grounds
Played with 109 team-mates
Played against 409 opponents
Dismissed 261 different batsmen

Bowled more than 40,000 deliveries

England's new era begins
England refreshed their team in response to the 4-1 defeat in India and with an eye on planning for the Ashes in 2025-26.

Atkinson was superb, bowling with high pace and little fuss to record the best match figures by an England bowler on debut since Fred Martin against Australia at The Oval in 1890. He also managed to trump Anderson's career-best match figures of 11-71.

Jamie Smith was tidy behind

the stumps and impressive for his 70 on day two, while off-spinner Shoaib Bashir was not required to bowl in his first home Test.

Perhaps most importantly for England, Stokes' return to play a full part as an all-rounder provides balance that has been badly missing. His repaired left knee allowed him untroubled spells of eight overs in the first innings and 10 in the second.

Still, the skipper would like a score with the bat — his four on Thursday was his fifth successive single-figure score in Tests.

England will make at least one change for Nottingham, with Matthew Potts and uncapped Dillon Pennington vying to replace Anderson. At

some point in the summer Mark Wood will come back into the Test reckoning.

This was a chastening week for an inexperienced West Indies side. Concerns over their batting were realised and an exciting bowling attack was hampered by an injury to Shamar Joseph.

The Windies do have form for shock results. They stunned England at Headingley in 2017 and at the beginning of this year produced one of the all-time great Test wins by beating Australia in Brisbane.

They should improve as the series progresses, but England look too strong and anything other than a 3-0 series win should be regarded as a disappointment for the home side.

Pakistan thump West Indies to reach World C'ship of Legends Final

NORTHAMPTON (Monitoring Desk): Skipper Younis Khan scored a gutsy half-century before Sohail Khan's four-for led Pakistan Champions to down West Indies Champions and qualify for the World Championship of Legends final.

Chasing a daunting 199-run target, West Indies Champions' batting unit unfolded on 178 on the penultimate delivery of the innings and thus succumbed to a 20-run defeat.

Put into bat first, Pakistan Champions accumulated 198/8 in the allotted overs against a disciplined West Indies Champions' bowling attack, led by Fidel Edwards.

Edwards ran through Pakistan Champions' top-order, reducing the second-placed side to 10/3 in two overs. Sharjeel Khan, Sohaib Khan and Shoaib Malik perished cheaply. With Pakistan Champions in tatter, captain Younis Khan joined Kamran Akmal in the middle and together they anchored the innings.

The duo added 79 runs for the fourth wicket before Dwayne Smith cleaned up Akmal in the



12th over to draw curtains on his fighting knock. Akmal fell agonizingly short of a well-deserved half-century, scoring 46 off 31 deliveries, laced up with eight boundaries.

Younis then knitted a brief one-sided partnership with hard-hitting batter Shahid Afridi (1) and 11 runs to the total to take Pakistan Champions to the 100-run mark. Afridi was caught at point off SSulieiman Benn, who struck again on the next delivery to send Misbah-ul-Haq packing for a golden duck as Pakistan Champions slipped to 100/6 in 12.4 overs.

Younis was then involved in yet another crucial partnership for Pakistan Champions when he raised 34 runs for the seventh wicket with Aamer

Yamin before finally perishing in the 16th over. He remained the top-scorer for Pakistan Champions with a 45-ball 65, featuring six fours and a six.

Yamin then joined forces with Sohail Tanvir and the pair did well to bolster the total as they registered a quickfire 61-run partnership which lasted with the latter's dismissal on the penultimate delivery.

Tanvir made an 18-ball 33 while Yamin scored an unbeaten 40 off 18 balls, peppered with two fours and three sixes. It is pertinent to mention that India Champions will face leaders Australia Champions in the second semi-final of the World Championship of Legends later today at the same venue.

Volleyball C'ships prize distribution ceremony held

ISLAMABAD (APP): The prize distribution ceremony of the national senior and junior volleyball teams who won medals, and made the country proud in the Asian Volleyball Challenge (AVC) Cup and Central Junior Volleyball Championship was held on Friday.

Federal Secretary Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Nadeem Irshad Kayani was the chief guest of the event held at a local hotel, while Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF) Chairman Chaudhry Muhammad Yaqoob, Pakistan Sports Board Deputy Director General Shahid Islam, Saeed Akhtar and other officials were also present on the occasion.

Addressing at the ceremony, the Federal Secretary emphasized the IPC ministry's commitment to promoting sports development in Pakistan. He announced plans to organize a conference on sports economy to attract sponsors and support various sports.

The ministry aims to prepare a targeted plan for talented athletes, focusing on Olympics 2028, and convert mini stadiums into academies to foster a sports culture.

Kayani said the aim is to convert the mini stadiums into academies and promote the culture of sports.

The IPC ministry and PVF will play its positive role for the successful organization of the volleyball league in the country and will provide all possible support, he said.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF) Chairman, Chaudhry Muhammad Yaqoob, praised the national team for making the country proud internationally. He outlined the federation's plans for coaches and players, highlighting the need for increased funding to support participation in international events. He said the more the national team participates in international events, the better results Pakistan will get.

In the event, the players were awarded with cash prizes for winning silver medals in the Asian Senior Volleyball Challenge Cup and gold medals in the Central Asian Junior Volleyball Championship and bringing the name of the country to light.

Sahibzada Farhan to lead Pakistan Shaheens in red-ball matches in Australia

KARACHI (APP): Sahibzada Farhan has been named captain of Pakistan Shaheens for two four-day matches against Bangladesh 'A', that will be played in Darwin, Australia from 19 to 29 July.

28-year-old Sahibzada Farhan has featured for Pakistan in five T20Is. The right-handed batter has also played 58 first-class matches, scoring 4,401 runs, which includes eight centuries and 27 half-centuries.

On the tour, Pakistan Shaheens are also scheduled to play two 50-over matches and nine-team T20 tournament in Darwin. The captain for the white-ball series will be announced in due course.

The 15-member red-ball Shaheens' squad are all set to depart for Darwin in the wee hours of Saturday from Karachi via Dubai. In the squad, fast bowler Hunain Shah has been replaced with spinner



Faisal Akram, after the former was ruled out of the tour due to back injury.

Pakistan red-ball head coach Jason Gillespie is also traveling with the side to Darwin as the team's head coach. He will return to Pakistan in the first week of August after the second four-day match against Bangladesh 'A', which concludes on 29 July. Former Australian fast bowler will assume responsibilities as the national side's head coach

and commence preparations for the two-Test series against Bangladesh, which will be played in Rawalpindi and Karachi.

Pakistan Shaheens — Sahibzada Farhan (captain), Faisal Akram, Haseebullah, Kamran Ghulam, Kashif Ali, Khuram Shahzad, Mehran Mumtaz, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Huraibra, Mubasir Khan, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Omair Bin Yousof, Shahnawaz Dahani, Tayyab Tahir and Umar Amin.

Player Support Personnel — Jason Gillespie (head coach for red-ball matches), Abdul Rehman (head coach for white-ball matches and will join the side on 28 July), Mohammad Masroor (Assistant coach-cum-manager), Mohammad Asad (physiotherapist), Imranullah (trainer) and Usman Hashmi (analyst).

Spain and England go head to head in Euro 2024 final

BERLIN (AFP): A brilliant Spain team featuring teenage sensation Lamine Yamal stands between England and a first major men's international trophy in almost 60 years in Sunday's Euro 2024 final at the Olympiastadion in Berlin.

Spain have been the outstanding side at this European Championship, their run to the final taking in wins against title-holders Italy, hosts Germany and pre-tournament favourites France.

England, in contrast, have laboured their way to Berlin, going four straight games without winning inside 90 minutes before a stunning last-minute strike by Ollie Watkins gave them a 2-1 semi-final victory over the Netherlands.

But a team led by Jude Bellingham and Harry Kane contains enough match-winners to believe it can go toe to toe with Spain and end England's wait for glory which goes back to the 1966 World Cup. Unlike the country's women, who won their equivalent competition two years ago, England's men have never won the European Championship.

Back-to-back Euros finals This, however, is their second straight continental final after their agonising defeat on penalties against Italy in 2021, and the memory of that will help drive them on in their first ever

final on foreign soil. "Seeing Italy lift that trophy will haunt me forever," midfielder Declan Rice told the BBC.

"We are now presented with another opportunity where we can write our own history but we are up against another top side who we have to massively respect."

England produced their best football at the tournament against the Dutch in Dortmund, even if they needed a controversial Kane penalty to cancel out Xavi Simons' opener before substitute Watkins won it at the death. Since beating Serbia 1-0 in their first game, Gareth Southgate's side have been ahead in normal time for a combined total of about 20 minutes across five matches.

They had unconvincing draws with Denmark and Slovenia before overcoming Slovakia in extra time in the last 16, only after being rescued by a Bellingham bicycle kick in injury time.

They came from behind against Switzerland in the last eight before progressing on penalties, but the Dutch performance should give them real belief.

"We've come here to win. We play the team who've been the best team in the tournament and we have a day less to prepare so it's a huge task," admitted Southgate, whose future beyond Sunday's final is currently uncertain.

Spanish revival Spain's form means they are the favourites going into the first meeting of the nations at either a World Cup or Euros since 1996.

While England have consistently reached the latter stages of tournaments under Southgate, Euro 2024 has confirmed the revival of the nation that dominated international football just over a decade ago. La Roja won back-to-back European Championships in 2008 and 2012, either side of their triumph at the 2010 World Cup.

They didn't win another knockout game at a tournament until a run to the semi-finals of Euro 2020, but that was followed by a last-16 exit at the last World Cup.

However, Luis de la Fuente then became coach and has overseen a remarkable run of results. Spain won the UEFA Nations League last year and started their Euros campaign by thumping 2022 World Cup semi-finalists Croatia 3-0 in Berlin.

They outclassed Italy and should have won by more than a 1-0 margin on their way to ending the group stage as the only team with maximum points and no goals conceded. The knockout rounds have seen them ease past Georgia before coming through gruelling tests against Germany in Stuttgart and then France on Tuesday in Munich.



In brief

Admin cracks down against alms-seekers

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a coordinated effort led by the Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad, Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates have launched an operation targeting professional beggars across various areas of the Federal Capital. According to the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration, the operation resulted in the arrest of 12 professional beggars. The arrests were made by Assistant Commissioners in different jurisdictions. The Assistant Commissioner for the City area apprehended seven beggars near Jamia Masjid Rumi and Faisal Market. In the Pothohar area, three beggars were arrested, while the Assistant Commissioner for the Rural area detained two beggars from P.S. Lohibher, Sihala, and nearby areas. The arrested beggars were taken to the police station. Meanwhile, minors found begging were sent to the Edhi Center for care and rehabilitation. This operation is part of a daily crackdown supervised by the Assistant Commissioners, aimed at addressing the issue of begging in Islamabad.

IRSA releases 290,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 290,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 337,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1521.70 feet and was 123.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 178,000 cusecs and 135,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1193.60 feet, which was 145.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 31,500 cusecs and 27,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 187,700, 180,100, 147,200 and 75,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 69,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 26,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

AIU organises Open House 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Department of Computer Science, Allama Iqbal Open University on Friday organized the "Open House 2024," where final year BS (Computer Science) students showcased their projects addressing societal needs. A total of 77 students participated, presenting 27 projects. These included a gas leakage detection project, a rural emporium (e-commerce platform), a system for cleaning and protecting wheat from pests, a battery-powered modern wheat harvesting machine, a PC watch tower, and a 3D driving tutor, among others. The exhibition was inaugurated by the Dean of the Faculty of Sciences, Professor Dr. Hajra Ahmed. On this occasion, Dr. Hajra inspected all the projects, and the students gave presentations and demonstrated their projects. Dr. Hajra stated that all these projects were useful and aligned with today's societal needs. She mentioned that the students' projects demonstrated that they possessed ample talent. Dr. Saleem Iqbal mentioned that under the guidance of Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, they organized this event to showcase the students' projects with the primary aim of informing market.



ISLAMABAD: Students and faculty members of government boys degree college Harnai visiting Senate Museum at Parliament House. —APP Photo

Pakistan-Hungary pledge to enhance parliamentary cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Friday highlighted the importance of bolstering parliamentary cooperation between Pakistan and Hungary during a meeting with Hungarian Ambassador to Pakistan, Béla Fazekas. Emphasizing the longstanding friendship between the two nations, Sadiq pointed out their shared commitment to global peace and sustainable development.

He advocated for regular interactions between parliaments, particularly through friendship groups and exchanges of delegations, to facilitate shared learning and collaboration.

The Speaker also stressed the need to expand cooperation beyond parliamentary initiatives, focusing on trade, investment, and education — key areas that could yield mutual benefits. Ambassador Fazekas expressed gratitude for Sadiq's remarks and reaf-

firmed Hungary's recognition of Pakistan as a vital regional player.

He extended an invitation for Speaker Sadiq to lead a parliamentary delegation to Hungary, underscoring Hungary's commitment to strengthening bilateral ties.

The meeting concluded with a mutual pledge to enhance cultural and parliamentary exchanges, setting the stage for deeper collaboration between the two countries.

ICT admin imposes ban on entry some Ulema

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to maintain peace and security during Muharram, the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has issued a one-month ban on the entry of some Ulema known for their sectarian and fiery speeches. According to a notification issued here, the district administration, following the District Intelligence Committee's recommendation, has prohibited the entry of 17 Ulema into the city. This measure aims to prevent any potential unrest during the Muharram observance.

Among those banned are Allama Tahir Ashraf, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, Maulana Abdul Khaliq Rahmani, and Allama Aurangzeb Farooqi.

The list also includes Maulana Yusuf Rizvi Ilyas, Peer Irfan Al-Meshadi, Dr. Asif Ashraf Jalali, and Maulana Mohammad Hanif Qureshi.

Other Ulema included in the ban are Allama Jaffar Jatoi, Zakir Shaukat Raza Shaukat, Zakir Asif Raza Alvi, Zakir Anwar Ali Najfi, Allama Allama Kameel Mehdi, Allama Shehshah Naqvi, Zakir Kamran Abbas, and Zakir Wasim Abbas Baloch, Allama Muhammad Iqbal.

The Islamabad administration's decision underscores the importance of ensuring safety and order during Muharram.

This proactive approach aims to mitigate any potential threats and maintain harmony in the city.

Minister calls for addressing concerns of Afghan refugees

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for States & Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Engr Amir Muqam on Friday emphasized Pakistan's enduring friendship and cooperative spirit with Afghanistan, particularly in addressing the concerns of Afghan refugees. The minister in a meeting with Afghanistan's Charge d'Affaires Sardar Ahmed Khan Shakeeb called for strengthening bilateral ties.

Muqam said that Pakistan has extended the stay of Proof of Registration (POR) card holders for one year, recognizing the ongoing humanitarian situation. "People of both brotherly countries have sacrificed a lot, and the restoration of peace is crucial for the well-being," Muqam stated. He urged Afghanistan to pursue long-term solutions for its citizens residing in

Pakistan, focusing on their return and integration.

Charge d'Affaires Sardar Ahmed Khan Shakeeb expressed profound gratitude to the government and people of Pakistan for their hospitality towards Afghan refugees over the past four decades.

He appreciated the extension of the POR card validity, acknowledging it as a critical support for Afghan nationals in Pakistan.

Naqvi reviews security arrangements for Muharram processions

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the Markazi Asna Ashri Imambargah in G-6, Islamabad last night and reviewed the security arrangements for the upcoming Muharram processions. He met with participants and inquired about the arrangements.

The participants expressed satisfaction over the security measures

and arrangements. Interior Minister said that the police and administration are on high alert to ensure peace and security during Muharram.

He directed the Chief Commissioner of Islamabad Muhammad Ali Rindhawa and IG Islamabad Police, Ali Nasir Rizvi, to take necessary steps to ensure the security of the processions.

sions.

He said that a control room has been set up and CCTV cameras are being used to monitor the situation. Interior Minister was accompanied by Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Rindhawa, IG Islamabad Police Ali Nasir Rizvi, DIG Ali Raza, and other relevant officials.

Gilani urges strong governance for Pakistan's development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Friday, emphasized the urgent need for effective governance to tackle Pakistan's socio-economic challenges.

He was addressing the 35th Senior Management Course participants at the National Institute of Management (NIM).

Drawing on his experience as both Prime Minister and Senate Chairman,

Gilani highlighted the pivotal role of a professional and dynamic bureaucracy in achieving national development goals.

He stressed the importance of integrating global Sustainable Development Goals into Pakistan's development agenda, asserting that good governance is essential for their realization.

Gilani pointed out recent progress in governance, particularly the increased parliamentary representa-

tion for women, which he deemed vital for a prosperous Pakistan.

He encouraged the course participants to utilize their training to foster inclusive development while adapting to changing domestic, regional, and global dynamics.

Recognizing NIM's commitment to excellence in professional training, the Chairman commended the institute's role in shaping future leaders.

RPO, Commissioner visit main procession route of Ashura

RAWALPINDI (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Babar Sarfraz Alpa and Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak during a visit to the main procession route of Ashura reviewed all the arrangements.

On this occasion, City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani, SSP Operations, Chief Traffic Officer, SP Rawal, Assistant Commissioner,

City Hakim Khan and other police officers were present. Syed Khalid Hamdani briefed the RPO and Commissioner about the security arrangements.

The RPO and Commissioner reviewed point-wise security arrangements made on the route of the procession and gave instructions to the authorities concerned. Babar Sarfraz Alpa and Engineer Aamir Khattak also interacted with the ulema including 'Mohtmam Jamia Taleem ul Quran'.

Later, the RPO and Commissioner visited Imambargah Qadmi and reviewed the security arrangements. They also discussed the security with the organizers.

The RPO said that with the cooperation of the scholars belonging to all schools of thought, peace and order is being ensured during Muharram and the best possible security arrangements are being finalized. "We will ensure the establishment of an atmosphere of peace and interfaith harmony during Muharram and an ideal atmosphere of brotherhood and unity will be estab-

lished with the cooperation of the ulema of all schools of thought and the citizens," he said.

The Commissioner said that the establishment of peace during Muharram is first priority of the police and administration for which all possible steps are being taken. The CPO said that the 'Caravan Aman' of police and religious scholars while visiting Taxila, Gujar Khan, Kahota and other areas delivered the message of love, peace and brotherhood.

The 'Caravan Aman' would also visit other areas to promote interfaith harmony, he added. Foolproof security arrangements are being made for all the Muharram processions and Majalis, the CPO said.

The processions would be monitored with the help of CCTV cameras and special monitoring of the social media is also being done. Legal action would be taken against those trying to spread religious hatred. All possible steps would also be taken to ensure implementation of Code of Conduct and Standard Operating Procedures issued in this regard, he added.

931 Traffic Wardens regulating traffic during Muharram

RAWALPINDI (APP): Over 931 Traffic Wardens under the supervision of inspectors and DSPs are performing duties on the city roads to control traffic flow during Muharram.

According to a City Traffic Officer (CTO), Rawalpindi Tamoor Khan, Traffic Police Officers and Wardens had also been directed to take action against vehicles having tinted glasses, revolving lights, unregistered vehicles and motorcycles and others moving without, improper and fake number plates.

In order to ensure securi-

ty of the mourning processions during Muharram-ul-Haram, the City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi had issued a comprehensive traffic plan. According to the plan, a complete ban was imposed on parking of any vehicle or pushcart on the route of the procession.

The CTO informed that the wardens had been directed to remove all kind of encroachments from the processions routes besides keeping a vigil on suspected persons and things.

Entry of vehicles on the route of the processions would be blocked by erect-

ing barricades and other hurdles, the CTO added.

The CTO said, Traffic Police officials would be deployed along with district police personnel to ensure security of the mourners.

Strict disciplinary action would be taken against the delinquent officials, the CTO said. He informed that traffic load would be diverted to alternate routes during mourning processions.

A control room was set up at Traffic Headquarters to monitor the situation while motorists who seek help and assistance can use CTP helpline 051-9272616.

ANF recovers 27 kg drugs in 5 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 5 operations managed to recover 27 kg drugs and arrested 8 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that 400 grams ice was recovered from a parcel booked for Australia at a courier office in Islamabad. 20.4 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near the bus stand in Rawalpindi and 4 accused were arrested during the operation. 1 kg opium and 2 kg heroin were recovered from the possession of two suspects rounded up on M-1 Motorway Islamabad.

2.4 kg hashish was recovered from an accused netted near Daska in Sialkot. 510 grams ice was recovered from an accused arrested near Band Road Lahore. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

Girls grab more top positions in SSC Part-II exam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Maintaining the previous trends, girls bagged majority of the top positions in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Part-II 1st Annual Examination 2024 as per the declaration of the result by the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) on Friday.

In the Science group, Zebadia Naseeb from Army Public School, EME College Campus, Rawalpindi secured first position with 1087 marks while Hijab Fatima from Global School System, Rawalpindi Cantt obtained second position with 1085 marks.

The third position as shared by Mossadiq Shahbaz of Army Public School, Golra Campus, Rawalpindi and Fatima Wajid

from Fauji Foundation Model School, Morgah Campus, Rawalpindi with 1084 marks.

In Humanities group, Aqsa Farooq from Future Foundation School, Rawalpindi Cantt secured first position, Onaiza Jalil from DHA Senior School for Girls, Lahore Cantt secured second position and Muhammad Anas from Institute of Islamic Sciences, Islamabad got third position with 1014 marks.

The result was announced during a ceremony held at a local college with Federal Secretary for Education and Professional Training, Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani as a chief guest.

Speaking on the occasion, the Federal Secretary emphasized on equipping students with the latest technology to compete in this digital world.

He said that the present government is taking concrete steps to elevate the standard of education in the public school, making these students as productive citizens.

He highlighted the steps being taken to improve the infrastructure in these institutions to create more friendly and supportive environment for the students. He said that the institutions have been engaged to introduce multiple learning activities for the students as these are crucial for the intellectual growth of the students.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman, FBISE, Syed Junaid Akhlaq briefed the participants about the salient features of the examination and also advised the students to work hard in their future endeavors for the

betterment of the country.

The chairman FBISE informed that the board is taking concrete steps to transform the examination system through digitalization.

As per the SSC-II result notification, a total of 113660 regular candidates appeared in the exam out of which 104899 could pass against the 7852 private candidates out of the total 14173 who appeared in the exams, with pass percentage of 88.20.

In Science group, 101735 regular candidates were appeared in the exam out of which 94394 could pass the exam against 10505 candidates out of total 11925 appeared in the Humanities group.

Among the ex/private candidates, 10480 candidates of Science group were appeared in

the exams out of which 5623 could pass it while in Humanities group, 3689 candidates appeared out of which 2229 could pass the exam.

In technical group, no one out of four candidates appeared in the exam could pass it.

As per the result of SSC-I, a total of 132062 regular candidates appeared in the exam out of which 81583 could pass against the 2468 private candidates out of the total 11110 who appeared in the exams, with pass percentage of 58.71.

In Science group, 118962 regular candidates appeared in the exam out of which 75641 could pass the exam against 5942 out of 13100 appeared in the Humanities group.

Among the ex/private candidates of Science group, 8150

candidates were appeared in the exam out of which 1785 could pass the exam. While in Humanities group, 2960 candidates appeared in the exam out of which 683 could pass the exam.

The results cards of regular candidates are being dispatched to their respective institutions and those of Ex/Private candidates within the country are being sent to the addresses given by them in their admission forms and those of overseas candidates are being sent to heads of institutions from where they appeared.

This year, 43 unfair means cases were reported in SSC Part-I and 56 in Part II. All the cases have been decided by adopting a judicious procedure and allowing personal hearings to all the concerned.

KANDAHAR (Amu TV): Three people, including two women, were killed in an attack by unknown gunmen in the southern city of Kandahar, a local Taliban official said on Friday. The incident happened in Police District 7 in Kandahar City on Wednesday evening, July 10, the Taliban-run provincial directorate of information and culture reported. The motive behind the attack remains unclear.

KABUL (Pajhwok): One hundred and sixty people have died from measles in Afghanistan during ongoing year, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has said. Expressing concerns about the spread of measles in Afghanistan the world health body said measles disease has spread in Afghanistan now compared to the past year.

The Badakhshan governor's media office said in a newsletter that they have discussed this issue with Roza Otunbayeva the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on restructuring of Wheat Board and matter related to PASSCO.

No uplift sans peace, stability in region: CASS

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore, organised a seminar titled "Future Security Outlook of South Asia: Trends and Challenges" on 11 July 2024. The event featured distinguished speakers, who addressed the multifaceted security challenges confronting South Asia.

Mr Ameer Abdullah Khan, Senior Researcher, CASS Lahore, commenced the seminar with introductory remarks. Ambassador Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhary (Retd), former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, delivered the keynote address, wherein he discussed the theatres of international contestation and the threats posed to South Asia's stability. Emphasising the importance of the maritime domain, he urged Pakistan to focus on this area.

Dr Khuram Iqbal, Associate Professor, National Defence University Pakistan, examined the sffronisation of India's strategic culture and lamented the new regionalism instituted by the coun-



try in South Asia. Dr Farhan Siddiqui, Associate Professor, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, highlighted India's zero-sum strategy with unachievable goals towards Pakistan and stressed the need to learn from missed opportunities of the past.

In his concluding remarks, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President, CASS Lahore, highlighted the critical security challenges in South Asia arising from historical conflicts, political instability, and socio-economic inequalities. He pointed out India's sponsorship of terrorism in Pakistan, especially targeting the China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor (CPEC). He emphasised the importance of a multifaceted approach, including economic development, diplomatic efforts, investment in defence technologies, and climate resilience, to build a strong and resilient nation capable of achieving lasting peace and stability in South Asia.

The question-and-answer session generated insightful discussions. The seminar stressed the complexity of South Asia's security landscape and highlighted opportunities for peacebuilding and cooperation to achieve lasting peace and stability in the region.

PTI suspends Sher Afzal's membership

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has reportedly suspended the membership of Sher Afzal Marwat, a fire-brand party leader who was elected to the National Assembly in the Feb 8 polls.

According to media reports, PTI leaders met incarcerated party founder Imran Khan on Thursday where the decision regarding Marwat was taken. The party leaders claimed that Sher Afzal Marwat was constantly violating the party discipline and over the past month. "During the meeting with Imran Khan, it was agreed that no leader is above the party and all other leaders would face the same fate if they crossed the party line," they added.

Earlier, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf issued a show-cause notice to Sher Afzal Marwat for making irresponsible statements. As per details, the notice was issued by PTI Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan and asked Marwat to explain his statements within three days, which have been deemed damaging to the party's reputation.

The notice states that such statements are against the party's discipline and violate the clear instructions of the party's founder, Imran Khan, who has emphasized the importance of responsible behavior. Marwat was warned that failure to respond or provide a satisfactory explanation may lead to further disciplinary action.

63 missing as Nepal hit by heavy rains

KATHMANDU (AFP): At least 63 people were missing in Nepal on Friday after a landslide triggered by heavy monsoon rains swept two buses off a highway and into a river, authorities said.

Dozens of search and rescue personnel were combing the site for survivors of the accident in the central district of Chitwan, district official Khimananda Bhusal told AFP. Bhusal said that the buses were carrying at least 66 people between them but three passengers had been able to escape before they crashed into the Trishuli river and were now being treated in hospital.

"We are not sure of the total number because the buses could have picked up others on the road," he said. "The river has swollen and no one else has been found yet." The accident took place along the Narayanghat-Mugling highway, around 100 kilometres west of the capital Kathmandu early Friday at 3:30am local time. One bus was heading from the capital Kathmandu to Gaur in Rautahat district in southern Nepal and the other was en route to Kathmandu from southern Birgunj.

A driver was killed in a separate accident on the same road after a boulder hit his bus. He died as he was being treated at a hospital. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal expressed sadness over the accident in a post on social media platform X. "I direct all agencies of the government, including the home administration, to search for and effectively rescue the passengers," he said. Deadly crashes are common in the Himalayan republic because of poorly constructed roads, badly maintained vehicles and reckless driving. Nearly 2,400 people lost their lives on Nepal's roads in the 12 months to April, according to government figures.

complete viewing flooding in the Lai Nullah.

Viewing the emergency situation, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed the local administration and Wasa authorities to take immediate measures to drain the stormwater in all the cities, including Lahore. The Punjab CM directed the staff and officers to visit the vulnerable areas and remain in the field till the rainwater was completely drained.

She directed Rescue 1122 and other departments as well to brace up for an emergency situation in advance. "Work on drainage of main arteries and low-lying areas should continue uninterruptedly. Emergency measures are required to deal with the situation created in various cities because of continuous rain," she said. Maryam said rainwater should not be seen in streets and markets, while the traffic police should clear roads for easy flow of vehicular traffic.

Meanwhile, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)'s National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) on Friday anticipated that rainfall was expected in various parts of the country over the next 3 days.

60 bodies found after Israeli operation in Gaza

GAZA CITY (AFP): Around 60 bodies were found under the rubble of a Gaza City neighborhood, officials in the Hamas-run territory said, after Israel's military declared an end to its operation there. The upsurge in fighting, bombardment and displacement in the eastern district of Shujaiya came as talks were held in mediator Qatar toward a truce and hostage release deal.

US President Joe Biden told reporters that his administration was "making progress" toward a ceasefire agreement as he called for an end to the Israel-Hamas war. His statement came after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded that Israel retain control of key Gaza territory along the border with Egypt — a condition that conflicts with Hamas's position that Israel must withdraw from all Gaza territory after a ceasefire. Gaza's civil defense agency said around 60 bodies had been found under the rubble in Shujaiya, after some of Gaza City's heaviest combat in months.

Hamas said Israel's operation there had left "more than 300 residential units and more than 100 businesses destroyed." Mohammed Nairi, a Shujaiya resident, said he and others returning to the neighborhood had seen "immense destruction that defies description. All the houses were demolished." Israel's military said on Wednesday it had completed its mission in Shujaiya after two weeks, but bombardments and fighting continued to shake Gaza City.

Witnesses said tanks and troops had moved on to other parts of the city. An AFP correspondent reported air strikes on the Sabra neighborhood while militants engaged in heavy clashes with Israeli forces in Tel Al-Hawa. Hamas reported 45 air strikes in the Gaza City area, as well as in Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah, where Netanyahu had said the intense phase of the war was nearing its conclusion.

Netanyahu's office confirmed that its negotiating team, led by Mossad intelligence chief David Barnea, had returned to Israel following talks with mediators in Doha on Thursday. Speaking after the team's return, Netanyahu said Israel needed control of the Palestinian side of Gaza's border with Egypt to stop weapons reaching Hamas. He added that Israel must also be allowed to keep on fighting until its war aims of destroying Hamas and bringing home all hostages are achieved.

In Washington, Biden acknowledged "difficult, complex issues" remain between Israel and Hamas, but that progress was being made in

Hamas calls for independent Palestinian govt in post-war Gaza

GAZA (AFP): Hamas is suggesting during ceasefire negotiations that an independent government of non-partisan figures run post-war Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank, a member of the Palestinian Islamist movement's political bureau said Friday.

"We proposed that a non-partisan national competency government manage Gaza and the West Bank after the war," Hossam Badran said in a statement about the ongoing negotiations between Israel and Hamas with mediation from Qatar, Egypt, and the United States. "The administration of Gaza after the war is a Palestinian internal matter without any external interference, and we will not discuss the day after the war in Gaza with any external parties," Badran added.

A Hamas official told AFP the proposal for a non-partisan government was made "with the mediators." The government will "manage the affairs of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in the initial phase after the war, paving the way for general elections" said the official, who did not want his name disclosed. Badran's remarks came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded that Israel retain control of the Philadelphia corridor, Gaza territory along the border with Egypt. This condition conflicts with Hamas's position that Israel must withdraw from all Gaza territory after a ceasefire. Netanyahu said on Thursday that control of the Philadelphia corridor is part of efforts to prevent "weapons to be smuggled to Hamas from Egypt." The negotiations are occurring in Doha, Qatar and Cairo, Egypt with the aim of bringing about a ceasefire in Gaza as well as the return of hostages still held there by Hamas.

reaching a ceasefire deal. "There's a lot of things in retrospect I wish I had been able to convince the Israelis to do, but the bottom line is we have a chance now. It's time to end this war," he said after a NATO summit. The Washington Post had reported on Wednesday that both Israel and Hamas had "signalled their acceptance of an 'interim governance' plan" in which neither would rule the territory and a US-trained force of Palestinian Authority supporters would provide security.

The Pentagon has also announced it will soon permanently end its problem-plagued effort to deliver aid to Gaza by sea from Cyprus using a temporary pier that had been repeatedly damaged by weather conditions. The UN's health agency meanwhile said that only five trucks carrying medical supplies were allowed into Gaza last week.

"More than 34 of our trucks are waiting at the Al Arish crossing, and 850 pallets of medical supplies are awaiting collection. A further 40 trucks are waiting at Ismailiya in Egypt," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Friday on social media platform X. Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel that sparked the war resulted in the deaths of 1,195 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures.

The militants also seized hostages, 116 of whom remain in Gaza, including 42 the military says are dead. Israel responded with a

military offensive that has killed at least 38,345 people in Gaza, also mostly civilians, according to figures from Gaza's health ministry.

The Israeli army dropped leaflets on Wednesday warning "everyone in Gaza City" that it would "remain a dangerous combat zone." The leaflets urged residents to flee, and set out designated escape routes from the area where the UN humanitarian office said up to 350,000 people had been sheltering. The UN said the latest evacuations "will only fuel mass suffering for Palestinian families, many of whom have been displaced many times," and who face "critical levels of need."

Hamas official Hossam Badran said that Israel was "hoping that the resistance will relinquish its legitimate demands" in truce negotiations. But "the continuation of massacres compels us to adhere to our demands," he said. Israel's military said operations were also continuing in the Rafah area where "dozens" of militants were killed over the past day.

The military said it responded with air and ground strikes after five rockets were fired from the area toward Israel on Thursday. The military separately acknowledged Thursday it had "failed" to protect Kibbutz Beeri, where more than 100 people died during Hamas's October 7 attacks. A summary of the inquiry, made public after being presented to kibbutz residents, said there had been a "lack of coordination" in the military response.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Gohar Ali Khan talking to media persons outside Supreme Court.

CM KP decides to establish 'Quran Mahal'

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Friday decided to establish a "Quran Mahal" in Peshawar in order to preserve the old copies/pages of the holy Qur'an and directed the Peshawar Development Authority to provide a suitable plot for this purpose.

He further directed that the proposed Qur'an Mahal should be a masterpiece of Islamic architecture, adding that the shahed copies/pages of the holy Qur'an from across the province would be preserved in the above mentioned Qur'an Mahal.

He was chairing the first meeting of the Auqaf department, held here at Chief Minister's House. Provincial Minister for Auqaf, Adnan Qadri, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Auqaf and other relevant officials attended the meeting. The Chief Minister on this occasion directed the authorities concerned to identify suitable land for government graveyard so as to meet the requirements of Peshawar City in this regard. The meeting has also decided the establishment of Assets Management Unit and GIS mapping of the Auqaf properties across the province. Similarly, it was decided to hire a reputable law firm for better follow-up of the cases pending in various courts related to the waqf properties of the Auqaf Department.

grand and impressive manner across the province at official level. He directed the quarters concerned to make arrangements for holding these conferences at provincial as well as divisional and district headquarters level throughout the province.

He announced that Rs. 5.00 million would be provided for holding Rahamtul lil Alameen Conference events at the provincial level, whereas Rs. 2.00 million would be provided to each provincial headquarter for this purpose.

Similarly, district headquarters would also be provided with Rs. 1.00 million each to hold such conferences/events. The Chief Minister further decided that U l e m a - o - M a s h a i k h Conference would also be held in the province.

He on this occasion, directed the authorities concerned to identify suitable land for government graveyard so as to meet the requirements of Peshawar City in this regard. The meeting has also decided the establishment of Assets Management Unit and GIS mapping of the Auqaf properties across the province. Similarly, it was decided to hire a reputable law firm for better follow-up of the cases pending in various courts related to the waqf properties of the Auqaf Department.

WB team visits BISP HQs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank (WB)/ Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Implementation Support Mission for the Crisis Resilient Social Protection (CRISP) project, led by Senior Social Protection Specialist Amjad Zafar Khan, visited the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Headquarters. The mission included key participants such as Melis U. Guven (Lead Economist/Co-Task Team Leader) and Zaineb Majoka (Economist), among others. During the wrap-up meeting with Senator Rubina Khalid, Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme, and Secretary BISP Amer Ali Ahmad, the mission presented its findings for the period Jan-June 2024.

Amjad Zafar Khan highlighted the successful achievement of all targets related to various initiatives including innovations to the Social Registry, Biometric Payment Systems, Hybrid Social Protection Schemes, Health and Nutrition Improvements, and School Enrollment Incentives.

Nigeria school collapse kills 16 students

ABUJA (AFP): At least 16 students were killed on Friday when a school in central Nigeria collapsed on pupils taking exams, according to an AFP correspondent. Trapped students were heard crying for help under the rubble after the Saint Academy school in Jos North district of Plateau State fell in on classrooms.

Mechanical diggers tried to rescue the victims while parents desperately looked for their children. Officials have so far only said "several students" were killed but an AFP reporter saw five dead bodies in one hospital morgue and 11 in another. All were wearing school uniforms. With his mother at his hospital bedside, injured student Wulliyya Ibrahim told AFP: "I entered the class not more than five minutes when I heard a sound, and the next thing is I found myself here."

"We are many in the class, we are writing our exams," he said. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) said the two-storey building housing Saint Academy collapsed killing "several students" without giving details. "NEMA and other critical stakeholders are presently carrying out Search and Rescue operations," it said.

A resident at the scene Chika Obioha told AFP he saw at least eight bodies at the site and that dozens more had been injured. "Everyone is helping out to see if we can rescue more people," he said. The AFP correspondent said he saw 11 bodies in the morgue at the Bingham University Teaching Hospital and five dead taken into the mortuary at the Our Lady of Apostles Hospital in Jos.

At least 15 rescued and injured students were admitted, officials at the Our Lady of Apostles Hospital said. Officials at the Bingham University Teaching Hospital did not comment. It was not immediately clear what caused the collapse but residents said it came after three days of heavy rains in Plateau. Building collapses are fairly common in Africa's most populous nation because of lax enforcement of building standards, negligence and use of low-quality materials.