

PML-N to consult with allies
F.P. Report

SIALKOT: Defense Minister Khawaja Asif has announced that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will consult its parliamentary allies regarding the potential ban on Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), emphasizing the importance of collaboration in legislative matters. In a press conference held in Sialkot, Asif criticized PTI's political motives, stating, "The only aim of PTI is power."



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ECP calls meeting
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja has convened a meeting of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) officials at 11:00am tomorrow Thursday to discuss the mode of implementing the Supreme Court's (SC) recent judgment in which it ordered the allotment of reserved seats to the PTI.

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PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur talking to media persons.

US addresses concerns over democracy in Pakistan

Julil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: During a recent press briefing at the US State Department, spokesperson Matthew Miller faced pointed questions from a journalist representing *The Frontier Post*. The inquiry focused on the perceived disparity in the US response to political violence and democratic processes in Pakistan compared to its stance on similar issues within its own borders.

The Frontier Post began by noting the State Department's stance on political non-violence, highlighting the parallel inquiries involving former President Donald Trump and former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, both of whom were shot in separate incidents. "But over there in Pakistan, the reaction was not the way that it is in the US. Instead of giving justice to Imran Khan, he was instead put in jail," the journalist stated. He further emphasized that the Supreme Court of Pakistan had largely favored Imran Khan in his party's election petition.

Drawing comparisons between the US and Pakistan, the journalist pointed out that in the US, following the political violence at Capitol Hill, swift justice was administered. "All 1,000 people – 600 pleaded guilty, 400 were charged, punishment was given immediately," he noted. In contrast, in Pakistan, former Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi was charged more than a year after similar political violence occurred. Furthermore, the journalist highlighted the Pakistani government's recent decision to ban Imran Khan's political party and the US Congress's decision to pass a bill declaring Pakistan's elections unfair.

The journalist's question culminated in a direct challenge: "With an ally like

Pakistan, why do you not have the same feelings on either political violence or democracy or the rule of law?"

Miller responded firmly, addressing the perceived inconsistency. "So I think you have missed the very many times I have addressed this exact question from the podium, where I have said of course we abhor political violence in any country, including Pakistan, and have spoken out against it and condemned it," he began.

Miller reiterated the US commitment to supporting the rule of law and democratic principles globally. "We support the rule of law in Pakistan and every country in the world, and we want to see respect for democratic principles and people's fundamental human rights and democratic rights upheld. That's true in Pakistan; it's true everywhere in the world," he emphasized.

He concluded by addressing the core of the journalist's question. "That's been something I've spoken to many times, so I think the premise of the question, with respect, is wrong."

The exchange underscored the complexities of international relations and the challenges in addressing political violence and ensuring democratic processes. Miller's response highlighted the US State Department's consistent stance on condemning political violence and advocating for democratic rights and the rule of law, regardless of the country involved.

As the briefing continued, it was evident that the issues of political violence, democracy, and the rule of law in Pakistan remain significant topics of concern. The US State Department's position, as articulated by Miller, reaffirmed its commitment to these principles globally, striving for justice and democratic integrity in its foreign policy approach.

Reform in health sector vital: KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In order to reduce infant mortality rate and to ensure availability of quality emergency care facilities to children, The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided in principle to establish specialized Children Emergency Rooms and Telemedicine Satellite Centers in public sector hospitals of the province.

The decision was taken at a meeting held here the other day with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair.

Provincial Minister for Health Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Advisor to CM for Finance Muzamil Aslam, Additional Chief Secretary for Planning and Development, Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah, Secretary Health Adeel Shah and high ups of Child Life Foundation attended the meeting.

While briefing the participants about the proposed program for setting up the Emergency Rooms and Telemedicine Satellite Centers, it was told that nine state of the art Emergency Rooms and 100 Telemedicine Satellite Centers would be established with the aim to ensure availability of quality emergency healthcare facilities to children at door their door steps adding that the proposed Emergency Rooms and Telemedicine Centers would be equipped with modern instruments alongside 24/7 availability of specialized doctors and other paramedical staff.

It was agreed in the meeting that an MoU to this effect will be signed between provincial health department and Child Life foundation after the formal approval of the provincial cabinet.

Mushir declines SC ad hoc judge position

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Supreme Court Judge, Justice (retired) Mushir Alam has declined the appointment as an ad-hoc judge. In a letter to the Judicial Commission, Justice (retired) Mushir Alam stated, "God has honoured me beyond my position...I am thankful to the Judicial Commission for the honour of being reappointed as an ad-hoc judge."

Justice (r) Mushir Alam mentioned that he has served the judiciary for 22 to 23 years and is now engaged in welfare work. Given the current circumstances, he is unable to serve as an ad hoc judge, he added. On the other hand, Justice (r) Sardar Tariq Masood has agreed to the appointment as an ad hoc judge of the Supreme Court. Additionally, Justice (r) Mazhar Alam Miankhal has also expressed his willingness for the ad hoc judge appointment. However, Justice (r) Maqbool Baqar has not yet responded to the Supreme Court registrar regarding his nomination.

The Frontier Post

10 terrorists killed, 8 jawans martyred in Bannu Cantt attack

F.P. Report

BANNU: A group of ten terrorists attacked Bannu Cantonment. The attempt to enter the cantonment was effectively thwarted by the security forces personnel, which forced the terrorists to ram an explosive laden vehicle into perimeter wall of the cantonment.

The suicide blast led to collapse of portion of the wall and damaged the adjoining infrastructure, resulting in shahadat of eight brave sons of soil that include: Naib Subedar Muhammad Shehzad (age: 44 years, resident of: District Poonch, AJK), Havildar Zil-e-Hussain (age: 39 years, resident of: District Khushab), Havildar Shahzad Ahmed (age: 28 years, resident of: District Neelum, AJK), Sepoy Ashfaq Hussain Khan (age: 30 years, resident of: District Muzaffarabad, AJK), Sepoy Sobhan Majeed (age: 22 years, resident of: District Muzaffarabad, AJK), Sepoy Imtiaz Khan (age: 30 years, resident of: District Karak), Sepoy Arsalan Aslam (age: 26 years, resident of: District Bahawalpur) of Pakistan Army and Lance Naik Sabz Ali (age: 34 years, resident of: Lakki Marwat) of Frontier Constabulary.

In the ensuing operation, own troops effectively engaged the terrorists as a result of which all ten terrorists were sent to hell. This timely and effective response by the security forces prevented major catastrophe, saving precious innocent lives. The gallant and selfless action of the security forces is a testament of unrelenting resolve in fight against terrorism.

The heinous act of terrorism has been undertaken by Hafiz Gul Bahadur group, which operates from Afghanistan and has used Afghan soil to orchestrate acts of terrorism inside Pakistan in the past as well. Pakistan has consistently raised its concerns with Interim Afghan Government, asking them to deny persistent use of Afghan soil by the terrorists and take effective action against such elements.

Pakistan Armed Forces will keep defending the motherland and its people against this menace of terrorism and will take all necessary measures as deemed appropriate against these threats emanating from Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday expressed his admiration for the security forces for effectively thwarting a major attack on Bannu Cantonment.

Naib Subedar, sepoy, 5 civilians embraced *Shahadat* in D I Khan attack

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Terrorists carried out a cowardly attack on Rural Health Center (RHC), Kirri Shamoza in Dera Ismail Khan District and opened indiscriminate fire on RHC staff. Resultantly, five innocent civilians including two Lady Health Workers, two children and one Watchman embraced Shahadat. Security Forces in vicinity were immediately mobilized for clearance operation in RHC and in ensuing fire exchange, own troops effectively engaged the terrorists as a result of which three terrorists were sent to hell.

However, during intense fire exchange, Naib Subedar Muhammad Farooq (age 44 years, resident of District Narawal) and Sepoy Muhammad Javed Iqbal (age 23 years, resident of District Khanewal) paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced Shahadat. Sanitization of area is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area. The perpetrators of this heinous and cowardly act targeting innocent civilians, especially women and children, will be brought to justice.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday strongly condemned a cowardly terrorist attack on a rural health center (RHC) in Kirri Shamoza, Dera Ismail Khan. The prime minister expressed his deep grief over the shahadat of two children, two lady health workers, a guard and the security personnel including Naib Subedar Muhammad Farooq and Sepoy Muhammad Javaid Iqbal who also embraced martyrdom while fighting with terrorists and sending them to hell. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister prayed for the eternal peace of the departed souls and for the bereaved families to bear the losses with fortitude. He also reiterated the resolve to root out the specter of terrorism from the country, adding the people of Pakistan were standing shoulder to shoulder with their armed forces to eliminate terrorism. The prime minister also expressed that those supporting the terrorist elements would be taken to their logical end, adding such cowardly activities could not deter the strong resolve of the nation.

In his statement, the PM vehemently denounced the terrorists for the assault on Bannu Cantonment and reiterated the nation's steadfast backing of the security forces in their ongoing fight against terrorism. The Prime Minister expressed heartfelt sympathy and sorrow for the families who lost loved ones, underscoring the unmatched sacrifices made by the Pakistan Army and security forces in combating terrorism.

The Prime Minister commended the security forces for their courage in confronting and decisively eliminating ten terrorists, emphasizing his unwavering resolve to eradicate terrorism from the country. The prime minister prayed for the elevation of ranks in paradise for the martyred soldiers of the Pakistan Army, which included Naib Subedar Muhammad Shehzad, Hawaldar Zil-e-Hussain, Havildar Shehzad Ahmed, Lance Naik Sabz Ali, Sepoy Ashfaq Hussain Khan, Sepoy Sobhan Majeed, Sepoy Imtiaz Khan, and Sepoy Arsalan Aslam.

Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party

(PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has strongly condemned the terrorist attack on the Bannu cantonment, resulting in the tragic martyrdom of our brave soldiers.

Expressing solidarity with the families of the martyred security personnel, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari expressed deep grief and vowed to stand shoulder to shoulder in their grief. He commended the security forces for their resolute efforts in thwarting the heinous attack on Bannu checkpost, acknowledging their bravery and determination in combating terrorism.

"Thwarting Bannu attack by the brave soldiers, is a testament to the unwavering resolve of our security forces against terrorism," he said. Highlighting the concerning trend of continuous use of Afghan territory by terrorists, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari urged the Afghan interim government to take effective measures against such elements. He extended appreciation to the security agencies for their relentless efforts in neutralizing terrorist threats and ensuring peace and stability in the region.



NANGARHAR: Local standing in destroyed house after heavy floods in Afghanistan.

PM appreciates Imam Hussain's sacrifices

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif stated that the supreme sacrifices of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) serve as a reminder, inspiring humanity to stand against falsehood and oppression, reaffirming the unwavering commitment to truth on this significant occasion of Youm-e-Ashur.

In his Youm-e-Ashur message, the prime minister highlighted its profound significance, noting that the grandson of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions sacrificed their lives in a decisive battle between truth and falsehood at Karbala, illustrating the eternal strength of truth over falsehood through their martyrdom.

The prime minister emphasized that the tragic events of Youm-e-Ashur resonate deeply within believers, serving as an enduring reminder of the

sacrifices for truth and justice. He highlighted Imam Hussain's (RA) courageous stand against Yazid's oppressive rule in Karbala, illustrating his unwavering perseverance.

The Holy Qur'an states, "Do not think of those who have been killed in the way of Allah as dead. They are alive with their Lord, receiving provision" (Surah Al-Imran, 3:169). This verse captures the essence of sacrifice demonstrated by Imam Hussain (RA) and his companions.

In the contemporary world, it is evident that the people of Palestine endure great hardships and make substantial sacrifices for a just cause. They continue to strive for their rights and freedom, especially to protect Jerusalem, the first Qibla. Likewise, the residents of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir suffer under oppressive forces.

The prime minister underscored that Pakistan

was currently facing substantial economic challenges. In such trying times, exhibiting patience, unity, and brotherhood was essential. The prime minister emphasized that Yazidism embodies a doctrine that aims to enforce oppression and target innocent individuals for its malicious goals. On Youm-e-Ashur, it is crucial to evaluate which groups were working to undermine our social cohesion and unity for their own interests. Therefore, we must rise above racial, occupational, linguistic, and other differences, fostering qualities like selflessness, equality, tolerance, unity, and discipline within our society.

The prime minister encouraged everyone to draw inspiration from the sacrifices of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and his companions, urging them to display bravery and steadfastness in times of adversity.

Ad hoc judges' appointment 'aimed at reserved seats judgment': PTI

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Reacting to the proposal of appointing ad hoc judges at the apex court, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Tuesday said "there is a genuine apprehension the move is aimed at P-TT's reserved seats judgment and its standing as a party".

The PTI chairman argued that not a single ad hoc judge had been appointed in the apex court since 2015. "It was decided in principle that 'adhocism' is prejudicial to the 'independent judiciary,'" Gohar said. Dissenting from the JCP's argument regarding easing the SC's workload, the PTI leader said that the appointment of four ad hoc judges would not reduce the case burden. Instead, he stressed that these appointments would compromise the entire Supreme Court and its judges.

It should be mentioned here that the JCP will meet on July 19 at 3pm in the top court's conference room. The official note for the meeting says that despite best efforts, the cases in the top court continue to accumulate. "In view of the huge number of pending cases and the ever-increasing trend of the institution of cases in the SC, an effective way to ensure that more cases are decided than instituted and to reduce, and hopefully eliminate the cases, which are pending adjudication for several years, it would be appropriate to appoint experienced judges as ad hoc judges of the SC," said the JCP notification. The Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan, in its bi-annual report of judicial statistics, said the number of pending cases in the courts surged to 2.26 million during the second half of the year 2023, increasing the overall pendency by 3.9%.



LAHORE: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar offering Fateha during the 981st annual ghusal of the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh. —APP Photo

Youm-e-Ashur to be observed tomorrow with solemnity

KARACHI (PPI) Youm-e-Ashur, the tenth of Muharram-ul-Haram, will be observed tomorrow across the country with due solemnity to pay homage to the supreme sacrifice rendered by Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) and his devoted companions in Karbala.

Mourning processions and congregations will be taken out in all cities and towns of the country. Ulema and Zakireen will highlight the bright and candid teachings of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.) and various aspects of Karbla tragedy in the congregations.

Meanwhile, mourning processions are being taken out all over the country today to mark 9th of Muharram in which a huge number of devotees of Imam Hussain are taking part to pay homage to the martyrs of Karbala (may Allah be pleased with them).

Taazia and Zuljanah processions are being taken out in different parts of the

country in memory of martyrs of Karbala. In the Federal Capital, the main procession of Taazia and Zuljanah took out from Markazi Imambargah G-6/2 which is passing through its traditional route and will culminate at the same place.

In Karachi, the main procession was taken out from Nishtar Park. The procession, after following its traditional route through Old Numash, Saddar, Empress Market, Regal Chowk, M.A. Jinnah Road and Bolton Market, will culminate at Hussainia Iranian Imambargah in the evening.

In Peshawar, the main procession of 9th Muharram was taken out from Imambargah Hussainia Hall, Saddar Road Peshawar this morning. Several other processions were taken out from different Imambargahs which will join the main procession.

The procession after passing through its traditional routes will terminate at its starting point in the

evening. Similar processions were also taken out in Kohat, Hangu, Dera Ismail Khan and Kurram districts.

The main procession of the 9th of Muharram in Lahore started from Pandu Street, Islampura and proceeded to Khaima-e-Sadaat in which mourners are paying their respects to the martyrs of Karbala. The procession will culminate at Pando Street.

In Gilgit, the main procession took off from Imambargah Qasr Akbar Dakpura. The procession of Alam and Zul-Janah passed through Amir Jahandar Shah Punyal Road culminating at the main Jamia Imamia Mosque Gilgit.

Ulema and Zakireen are highlighting the bright and candid teachings of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A.) and various aspects of Karbla tragedy. Elaborate security arrangements have been made to avoid any untoward incident during the mourning processions.

Home Minister, Mayor visit routes of mourning processions

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Home, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjar along with Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab briefed the mourning procession routes of 9 and 10 Muharram to review security arrangements. Additional IG Karachi and DIG East briefed them about the security measures.

They informed that procession routes had been completely sealed and had been made foolproof. SSP East, SSP South, SSP City, and other police officers were also present on the occasion. Ziaul Hasan Linjar and Barrister Murtaza Wahab also visited Nishtar Park, Tibet Centre and Hosseinian Iraniyan Kharadar.

Modern technology being used to ensure security

LAHORE (APP): Modern technology was being used to ensure security of Muharram processions and Majalis in the province on Tuesday. According to official sources of the Home department, 7,490 modern cameras had been installed to supervise Ashura processions across the province.

Home department was taking live feed from 36 districts of Punjab with the help of these cameras and feed was linked with the central control room of the department. In Lahore division 2,067 cameras had been installed for monitoring of Ashura processions whereas 1,072 cameras in DG Khan division, 863 in Gujranwala.

MPA calls on CM, discusses public issues

LAHORE (APP): Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Saeed Akbar Khan Nawani called on Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday.

Development projects, public issues, suggestions and recommendations to solve public problems were discussed during the meeting.

Saeed Akbar Khan Nawani congratulated Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on successfully completing 100 days of public service. He especially appreciated Field Hospital and Clinics on Wheels programme.

The chief minister said that the government was expanding the scope of Field Hospital and Clinics on Wheels by adding 500 more Field Hospitals to the fleet.

"My dream of bringing health facilities to the doorsteps of people is being realized successfully" she said.

Maryam Nawaz said that 200 Basic Health Units (BHUs) would start providing 24-hour services by the next year, adding that anaesthesiologists, paed and cardiologists would visit remote hospitals once a week. She said that thalassemia centers would be established in district headquarters hospitals, and would be linked with Regional Blood Centers.

MPA Saeed Akbar Khan Nawani said the Punjab government's four-month performance was worth emulating for other provinces. He added the pro-poor initiatives of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif were getting

immense acceptance of the public. The speedy completion of projects under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif was a welcome sign, he mentioned.

CM directs cabinet to monitor security arrangements on Ashura: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed provincial cabinet and the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order to monitor security arrangements for 'Ashura'.

The CM directed the law enforcement agencies to make foolproof security arrangements for 9th and 10th of Muharram. The security plans and standards operating procedures (SOPs) should be implemented in letter and spirit, she instructed and

directed to ensure close cooperation among law enforcement agencies.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said that safety of the participants of 'Majalis' and processions was the responsibility of the government, all necessary measures should be taken for the purpose, adding that no effort should be spared to maintain peaceful atmosphere in every city. Law enforcement agencies should be fully active and diligent, she said.

The CM said that a close watch should be kept on mischievous elements. All resources should be used to ensure law and order in the province. She also directed the authorities concerned to extend sufficient support for 'sabils' and 'langar' of the mourners.

Ghusal ceremony of Data Ganj Bakhsh shrine held

LAHORE (APP): The 981st annual ghusal of the shrine of Al-Shaikh Al-Syed Ali Bin Usman Al-Hajveri popularly known as Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh was held here on Tuesday.

The ceremony started with recitation of the Holy Quran while renowned Naat Khawan, Marghoob Ahmad Hamdani and others presented Naat Rasool-e-Maqbool (SAW).

Later, ghusal of the shrine was performed with rosewater and wreaths were laid besides "Chadar Poshi". Special prayers were offered for peace, stability and prosperity of the country.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar attended the ceremony as the chief guest while Provincial Ministers Khawaja Salman Rafique, Bilal Yaseen and others also attended the ceremony.

Later, talking to the

media, Ishaq Dar said the National Engineering Services Pakistan Pvt Limited had been directed to complete extension project of Data Darbar at the earliest. He added that very soon detail discussion on the project would be held.

Ishaq Dar said from 2013 to 2016 in just a short span of three years and under the dynamic leadership of the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan became the 24th biggest economy of the world. He said that at that time inflation rate was just 2 per cent while general inflation was 3.6 per cent.

Growth rate was 6 per cent and interest rate 5.25 per cent, he added. Ishaq Dar said the 2018 general election were stolen and added that the PML-N was not interested in the PDM government.

He said the PML-N

during the PDM government saved the country from default. Once again, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team was making sincere efforts to ensure development in the country.

Ishaq Dar said with the grace of Allah, The Almighty, Pakistan diplomatic ties with other countries were in a right direction.

The country was an atomic power, he said and added that all-out efforts were being made to make Pakistan an economic power under the able leadership of PM Shehbaz Sharif.

To a question, he said the Election Commission of Pakistan had proof that the PTI was a foreign funded party. Ishaq Dar said things would be discussed with the leadership and allies, adding that each and every step would be taken as per law.

Sabils, Langar arranged across Punjab

LAHORE (APP): On the directions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, 'Sabils' and 'Langar' for people participating in processions on Muharram 9-10 were arranged on a large scale in various districts of Punjab, including Lahore.

The district administration, in collaboration with other agencies, completed these arrangements.

The CM was apprised in a briefing that participants of the processions were being served with cold water, drinks and food packets. Special arrangements have been made to serve women,

the elderly and children. The CM was briefed that ambulances and medical staff were also in the field to take care of the mourners. She emphasised that the 'Sabils' and 'Langar' should continue on Ashura.

CCPO visits procession routes at Pando street

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Bilal Siddique Kamyana on Tuesday visited Majalis places and routes of mourning processions at Pando Street, Islampura and thoroughly inspected the security arrangements.

According to official sources, security personnel and organizers of Imambargahs also met the CCPO. Superintendent of Police (SP) city briefed the CCPO about the security arrangements.

Capital City Police Officer Bilal Siddique Kamyana said that Lahore police was determined to ensure peace during Muharram and added that foolproof security arrangements had been made at Majalis places and procession routes.

Bilal Yaseen for ensuring supply of flour

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Food Minister and Incharge Ashura Arrangements Bilal Yaseen directed officers of the food department to ensure supply of flour across the province on Youm e Ashura.

According to official sources, he said that strict action should be taken if flour

was being sold at high price in any district. He said that flour dealers and retailers of the province should display rate lists properly.

Bilal Yaseen said that field operation of the Punjab Food Authority should remain fully active.

He said that food safety teams should supervise quality of food at food preparing centres while the district administration and teams of the food authority should remain deputed on supervision of quality and arrangements of 'Langar' and 'Milk Sabels'.



LAHORE: Security vehicle patrolling during the procession of 9th Muharram-ul-Haram.

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9th Muharram processions peacefully concluded

PESHAWAR (APP): The ‘Alm and Zuljinnah’ mourning processions of the 9th Muharram was peacefully concluded in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Peshawar amid tight security arrangements by police and law enforcement agencies on Tuesday.

In Peshawar, the main ‘Alm and Zuljinnah’ procession appeared in the morning from Imambargah Hussainia Hall on main Saddar Road and later was joined by many other processions in parts of the provincial capital amid flagellation and chest beating.

The mourners passed through the prescribed routes comprising Saddar Road, Kalabari and Fawwara Chowk where the organisers arranged water, milk and drinks for the Azadars.

The religious scholars delivered special sermon on the importance of 9th Muharram, Ashura Moharram and supreme sacrifice offered by Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) and other martyrs of Karbala for supremacy of Islam.

They said the matchless sacrifices of martyres of Karbala were a great source of strength and inspiration for all Muslims.

After offering ‘zuhra’in’ prayer, the procession culminated back at the Imambargah Hussainia Hall at Peshawar Cantonment.

The 1122 Rescue Service had set up a medical camp to provide timely treatment to the mourners in case of any emergency.

The participants were allowed only after body search by the police, law enforcers and volunteers.

Walkthrough gates were installed for screening of participants, and surveillance of processions was carried out through video-recording and CCTV cameras fixed for this purpose.

Besides deployment of policemen and sniper shooters, the personnel of bomb disposal unit remained in high alert position and carried out security check of the routes through equipment.

The entire city was virtually sealed and no vehicle was allowed to enter the area designated for mourning processions. Many other processions of 9th Moharram were taken out from several Imambargahs including Bibi Zekri, and concluded at the originating points peacefully.

The police have blocked all the entry points to the city and Saddar Road to facilitate the mourners and avert any untoward incident.

In Haripur, which had been declared the most sensitive district for Muharram, the mourning processions concluded peacefully at the designated points.

The main procession of 9th Muharram was taken out from Imambargah Imamia Sajjadia Mohallah Motian in Haripur and ended at Imambargah Qadeemia Mohalla Chowki police. The mourners from different parts of the district participated. The route had been cordoned off by the personnel of police and elite force besides law enforcers where participants passed through special security mechanism.

In Kohat, the mourners’ processions concluded peacefully where clerics paid rich tributes to sacrifices of martyrs of Karbala and urged the Muslim Ummah to follow the footprints of the martyrs.

In Lakki Marwat, the 9th Muharram procession ended peacefully in Mohallah Sayyedan in the city. The procession taken out from Imambargah Kashana Bukhari that culminated at the starting point after passing through traditional route.

In Parachinar of Kurram district, the main mourning procession was taken out from Central Imam Bargah and passed through prescribed routes before culminated at the said place.

In Mansehra, DI Khan, Nowshera and other districts, the 9th Moharram processions were peacefully concluded after passing through prescribed routes amid flagellation and chest beating.

The religious scholars paid glowing tributes to the matchless sacrifices offered by Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and his fellows in the scorching heat of Karbala for supremacy of Islam.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur chairing a meeting for establishment of Children Emergency Rooms and Telemedicine Satellite Centers in public sector hospitals.

Peace vital for economic prosperity, says Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday said that establishment of law and order was imperative for peace and economic development of Pakistan.

He said that law and order was a major problem, and that the heights of economic progress and prosperity could be achieved by making Pakistan as per vision of father of the nation Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and national poet Dr Allama Muhammad Iqbal.

He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was passing through difficult time. The important problem is of the law and order and all other problems are linked to it. If the condition of law and order is better then economic situation would be improved and progress would be made.

The Governor said that people of Karachi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan Army, police and children of Army Public School Peshawar had rendered great sacrifices for Pakistan that was unprecedented in the world history.

The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was addressing a function at Al Ghazali university in Karachi.

Earlier, the Governor reached at Jamia Al Rashid where he met with Raes Al Rashid University and Chancellor Al Ghazali University Mufti Abdul Raheem, Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Sohrabgot Lal Raheem and was accorded warm welcome.

The Governor went around different sections of Al Rashid University and received briefing about the organization.

Later, the Governor attended a fuction at Al Ghazali University and received briefing.

The Governor expressed pleasure to see such great institution in the country. He said Quaid e Awam Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had assembled leaders of Muslims Ummah and laid foundation of Atomic power, saying no one can defeat us if we got united.

The Governor stressed for keeping care of minorities rights that were protected under the constitution.

The Governor invited students of Al Ghazali to visit Peshawar saying the doors of Governor House Peshawar were now open for people and stressed on students that they would perform role like the country's Ambassador to highlight Pakistan soft image.

Raees Al Rashid University and Chancellor Ghazali University welcomed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor and urged all stakeholders to shun differences and sit together for progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

They said such organizations should be in all cities of Pakistan and vowed to extend its services in Peshawar.

Govt to start free meal plan in schools

PESHAWAR (INP): The KP government has decided in principle to start free meal program in public sector primary schools.

Under the scheme, free meals will be provided to children in primary schools in urban areas of all divisional headquarters of the province.

This decision was taken in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in Peshawar.

It was decided that initially, the initiative will be started on pilot basis in Abbottabad and Swat which will later be extended to other divisional headquarters of the province.

Under the proposed program, around 70,000 children will be provided with free and quality food daily.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that the proposed program is another important welfare initiative of provincial government.

Foolproof security arrangements made

PESHAWAR (APP): Foolproof security arrangements have been made for peaceful observance of Youm e Ashur in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa today (Wednesday).

‘Alm and Zuljinnah’ processions would be taken out in KP where people will pay homage to the matchless sacrifices of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and his companions at Karbala for the supremacy of Islam.

At Peshawar, over total of 12 mourning processions would be taken out from different Imambargahs amid tight security arrangements made by Peshawar police.

The main ‘Alam and Zuljinnah’ procession of the 10th Muharram would be taken out from Imambargah, Agha Syed Ali Shah Qissa Khawani Bazaar. The processions of other Imambargahs would join it that will pass through prescribed routes.

More than 10,000 policemen were deployed for the security of these processions besides surveillance of its routes through drone cameras.

Closed-circuit cameras were also installed at sensitive points in Peshawar to keep a watch on majalis and processions.

Water and milk stand for mourners were placed at various points on the routes of the processions.

All roads leading to the Imambargahs were blocked by police and anyone who wants to join the mourners had to pass through strict check by police.

Mobile services were partially suspended in Peshawar City to keep the law and order situation under control.

Likewise, big processions of Tazia, Alm and Zuljinnah would also be taken out in Mardan, Kohat, Bannu, Hangu, Lakki Marwat, Mansehra, Haripur, Parachinar, Dera Ismail Khan and other districts.

The Ulema and religious scholars would highlight different aspects of the Karbala tragedy and the great sacrifices offered by Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and his fellows for supremacy of Islam.

Youm e Ashur processions would also be observed in Bajaur, Khyber, Mohmand, South Waziristan, North Waziristan and Orakzai districts.

The police and district administration have deployed thousands of security personnel across the newly merged districts while snap-checking of vehicles at entry and exit points were being carried out.

Formation of joint board solution to all issues

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party emphasized consistent and long-lasting policies crucial to put the economy and country in the right direction.

In a statement issued here on Tuesday, Mr Shah said stable institutions with consistent policies have played a key role in the economic development of the global economies.

He added the institutions collectively contribute to creating a framework that supports economic development and ensures political accountability in a country.

Faiq stressed the need for all quarters to work together for the country's progress for which his party has already proposed a joint platform in the shape of the Board of Wisdom and Honesty.

We struggle for public authority and justice as there is no quest to gain power.

The ATP chief said it is imperative to ensure social and economic justice.

He said his party was making vigorous efforts for public authority and justice.

Shah asked rulers and politicians to join hands for the country and people's best interests.

He sought pragmatic steps to drive people out of the mire of problems.

The party leader made it clear that injustice and corruption couldn't be wiped out until the crafting of a transparent system.

Shah warned that adopting an unjust way and feeble economy were posing a threat to the state, keeping in view its detrimental impacts and seriousness, institutions should play their proactive role.

The ATP couldn't withdraw from provision of public authority and justice.

He vowed to sustain its efforts to bring true public representative government, he added.



PESHAWAR: Police officials standing in front of Hussainia Hall Imambargah during 9th Muharram Zuljinnah procession at Sadar.

PRCS distributes 210 loader rickshaws among flood affected families

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), in collaboration with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), here on Tuesday distributed 210 loader rickshaws among the communities affected by the monsoon floods of 2022. This initiative is a significant component of PRCS's Livelihood Assistance Program under the Flood Recovery Phase.

The loader rickshaws have been distributed among the deserving families in five districts of Sindh, one district of Baluchistan, one district of Punjab and one district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, says a press release issued here on Tuesday.

PRCS Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari emphasized PRCS's firm commitment to restoring normalcy through multifaceted programs, including livelihood assistance, shelter construction, cash assistance, and health and hygiene initiatives.

“We remain dedicated to our mission of serving humanity and stand ready to support communities in their journey towards recovery and resilience,” Chairman Laghari stated.

World youth skills day: Investing in youth vital for sustainable economic development

PESHAWAR (APP): Like other parts of the country, world youth skills day was also observed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where public and private institutions and youth bodies organized functions and seminars highlighting significance of investment in youth's technical education for sustainable economic development and prosperous future of the country.

The civil society and youth organizations also staged a rally in front of the press club in connection with the day, stressing the significance of youth's role in peace, development and economic progress of Pakistan.

Every year, the day is marked on July 15 aimed at promoting empowerment of young people worldwide by focusing on their education and skills development besides employment.

Designated by the United Nations General Assembly in November 2014, the day emphasized the significance of equipping youth with necessary skills to tackle unemployment and poverty besides achieving sustainable development goals.

The theme of the day was ‘Youth skills for peace and development’ which highlighted the role of youth in peace building and resolution of conflicts.

“In an era of rapid technological advancements and evolving economic landscapes, the traditional approach of education is undergoing a profound transformation owing to mushroom growth of digitalization, artificial intelligence and Information technology. This paradigmatic change in the education system reflected a growing recognition to equip young learners with a meaningful knowledge, and inculcate positive energy to navigate an increasingly competitive jobs market,” said Professor Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim, former Director Elementary and Secondary Education KP while talking to APP.

He said that gone were the days when a college or university degree alone guaranteed a secure career path for a youth. “Today, employers prefer graduates, who possess a diverse skills set, adaptability and willingness to perform in comparative industrial and digital markets with a will to innovate and deliver quickly,” he said.

In spite of an enormous significance of higher and technical education in the country's socioeconomic development, majority of public sector universities in KP were facing financial crisis, which are adversely affecting process of learning and research studies besides negatively impacting on MS, M.Phil and PhD programs.

Out of total 34 public sector universities including 24 general and 10 specialized in engineering, technology, agriculture, medical, animal husbandry and management sciences for 40,856,097 population with 1,298,278 persons per university, seven public sector universities including UET Peshawar, Gomal University DI Khan, Agriculture University Peshawar, University of Science and Technology Bannu, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University Peshawar and University of Shangla were facing financial crunch due to pension liabilities, non conduction of actuarial studies and depleting budgets balances.

KP Universities 2021-24 Report has disclosed that the initial balances of budgets of 34 public sector universities and HEIs, which was about Rs6,560 million in 2021-22 was decreased to about Rs5,316 million in 2022-23 and was further slashed to Rs4,740 million in 2023-24.

The substantial decrease of opening of balance budgets of these universities has not only created serious financial implications but also encompassed financial fluctuations as well as economic stagnation for research studies, salaries and pensions.

Likewise, the provincial grant to public sector universities which was about Rs3,962 million in 2022-23 reduced to Rs3,276.125 million during 2023-24, and only Rs1,231.897 million recorded during 2021-22.

The financial crisis in most universities of KP has been further deepened after nonpayment of the promised annual provincial grants of Rs3,000 million, impacting negatively on the universities' abilities to maintain infrastructure, support academic programs, research studies and ensure quality in education disciplines.

Similarly, no provincial grant was received by the University of Agriculture Peshawar in 2021-22 and 2023-24 besides University of Buner and UET Peshawar.

Moreover, University of Engineering and Applied Sciences Swat, University of Chitral, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology Haripur and Gomal University DI Khan had received no provincial grants during 2021-22.

The annual receipts of these universities was about Rs46 billion while annual expenditures remained Rs41 billion in these three years. Despite reforms and interventions, KP's universities saw only modest revenue growth i.e. Rs7 billion in 2021 and Rs2 billion in 2022, thus falling short of the mandatory progressive targets.

As many as 20 out of 34 universities were likely to face budget deficits while 27 universities allocated more than 50pc of their budgets to establishment expenditures, needing realignment of priorities on priority basis.

“The job creators would emerge only by providing financial autonomy to public universities and focus on modern research as per the market's demands,” he said. The opening of new universities at far flung and remote areas for political purposes has negatively impacted on research studies besides MS/MPhil and PhD programs in KP.

The universities in KP was spending about Rs3.2 billion per year by hiring visiting faculty, compensating thesis supervisors, engaging contingent staff and addressing miscellaneous contingencies and this huge amount could be diverted to research work after hiring services of existing staff, better human resource management and financial discipline to produce jobs creators.

The assets of several universities are under performing such as Islamia College Peshawar's 224 shops in Khyber bazaar, market in Charsadda, 4000 kanals each land in Charsadda and Swabi, University of Peshawar's 3.5kilometer Baragali, PUTA Hall and resolution of assets issues of Gomal University DI Khan, Agriculture University Peshawar, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Hazara University Manshera and Bannu University besides improving governance and removing flaws in appointment of the vice chancellors.

Ehtisham Qaiser, a BS graduate of Urdu literature told APP that he had applied for the government and private jobs through various testing agencies and walk in interviews but his applications were rejected due to lack of professional experience.

He urged Govt to increase stipends of national internship program and explore new jobs markets for youth abroad.

The Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) 2021 Report revealed that the number of out of school children (OSC) had swelled to about 4.7 million children aged between 5 to 16 years in KP which was a matter of great concern for educationists and policy makers.

Alarmingly, about 2.9 million girls and one million OSC in merged tribal districts were still out of schools, BISP report said, adding 74.4 percent of girls and 38.5 percent boys are out of schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Investing in education infrastructure, such as schools, libraries, and vocational training centers, is inevitable to ensure access to quality education for all. The curriculum reforms including starting computer science from primary level would help children to take advantage of job opportunities in the IT sector and CPEC projects.

Shahab Khan, senior planning officer of the Education Department told APP that about 200 alternate learning pathways centers would be opened for enrollment of street children while two room schools would be converted into six rooms.

He said construction of 100 new primary schools was proposed while 150 middle schools to be upgraded to secondary schools in settled districts of the province besides establishment of an early childhood education program planned.

Shahab said the students would be trained in digital technology with assistance of technical education and vocational training authority (TEVTA) to take advantage of the IT market in Pakistan.



In brief

Security high alert in Larkana F.P. Report

LARKANA: Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Larkana Nisar Aftab Pathan issued orders on Tuesday for security high alert in all five districts of Larkana Division, including Larkana, Qamber Shahdadkot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Kashmore Kandhkot, on Ashura Day. DIG Larkana Nasir Aftab said that the SSPs of the concerned districts have been issued instructions to continue checking the borders, highways and roads adjacent to the five districts of the Larkana range by tightening the security. He said that on the occasion of Ashura Day, 1148 mourning processions and 1854 gatherings of Majalis from five districts of Larkana are being strictly managed by 15582 police officers, personnel and officials, while soldiers of Pak Army and Sindh Rangers are also on duty. A special control room of CCTV has also been set up in the Larkana along with the SSPs office to monitor the entire situation.

'Jahangir do not find all well' F.P. Report

ATTOCK: Member district monitoring committee and former provincial Minister Jahangir Khanzada has expressed indignation over paucity of health facilities and medicines at tehsil headquarters hospital (THQ) Hazro. Flanked with Tehsil President PML-N Malik Ansar Ahmed, Mr Khanzada visited various departments and wards of the hospital including OPD, Emergency, Medical Wards, medicine counter and testing rooms. On this occasion, men as well as women patients and their attendants burst against paucity of medicine, facilities as well as absences of doctors during their duty. A patient complained that the medical officers after marking their attendance sneaked in to their private clinics located adjacent to tehsil headquarters hospital and carry out their private practice there during official hours. He added that in case of surprise visit, the staff informed them and they rushed back on foot by claiming that they went for food or tea. During his interaction with the patients and their attendants, he was also informed that the post of surgeon has been vacant for a long and in case of fatal emergencies and road accidents, patients are referred to the district headquarters hospital Attock in which most of the critical patients succumbed to injuries on their way to hospital. On this occasion, Mr Khanzada expressed his indignation on the state of the affairs in the hospital. Subsequently the Medical Superintendent tehsil headquarters hospital (THQ) Hazro Dr Shoukat has issued show cause notice to five doctors among them two female for their poor performance.

Security reviewed F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: The Commissioner Hyderabad Division Bilal Ahmed Memon accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Zainul Abedin Memon visited various Imambargahs here on Tuesday checked security and other arrangements. They also interacted with the organizers of mourning processions and majalis and sought their feedback about the arrangements. The Commissioner assured the organizers that optimal security had been put in place for Yom-e-Ashura. He apprised that the control rooms had been set up in the offices of Commissioner, DC and SSP.



MINGORA: PTI leader and former minister Kamran Bangash called on KP Minister for Forests, Fazal Hakeem Khan.

Two killed, five injured in Dir road accident

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Two persons were killed while five others were injured when a heavily loaded container went out of the driver's control while negotiating a sharp turn due to brakes' failure at Shago Kas area in the jurisdiction of Timergara police station here, police of rescuers said.

The truck first hit a motorcycle and then three other cars. As a result two persons identified as Jan Wali 54 of Bajaur and another man were killed on the spot while five others including Zahidullah 33 of Hangu, Akbar Khan 25 of Hangu, Ali Akbar 43 of Faisalabad Punjab, Amir 20 of Faisalabad and Zain 8 of Shago Kas were injured.

The Rescue 1122 emergency and medical teams along with the volunteers of the Al-Khidmat Foundation reached the spot and retrieved the dead and the injured who were shifted to the district headquarters hospital Timergara. The Timergara police registered a case and started investigations.

Meanwhile, traffic on the road remained jammed for hours due to the incident. The district traffic in charge Shad Muhammad along with his staff reached the site and cleared the road for traffic.

Journalists' hold

protest: The Lower Dir journalists held a protest demonstration against the frequent killings of working journalists in the province outside the Timergara press club. Led by president of the press club, Ismail Anjum, the journalists chanted slogans against the government failure to provide security to working journalists.

The rally was addressed by Ismail Anjum, Abdullah Madani, Amjad Ali Shah, Hanifullah and others. They condemned the killing of Hassan Zeb in Nowshera and Khalil Jibran in Khyber district and demanded arrest of the killers.

Govt contractors demand release of funds and withdrawal of withholding tax: The government contractors of Malakand division has announced to launch an agitation campaign against the government if their outstanding bills worth billions of rupees were not cleared.

Speaking at a press conference at the Timergara press club, the All Government Contractors' Association provincial vice president Bahadar Zeb, provincial coordinator Wajid Ali, Nasibullah, Riaz Shuiab and others complained the contractors' community had been facing severe financial problems due to government's failure

to release funds for the ongoing development projects in the region.

Rejecting the withholding tax on contractors, they demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and its concerned departments to take notice of their difficulties and release funds for the development projects. They also demanded withdrawal of the withholding tax on government contractors.

Bahadar Zeb said that work on some of the projects like the Talash bypass road, Mian Kalay to Kambat road, Timergara beautification etc had been in progress since 2016. He said the prices of building materials had increased many fold during the last eight years but the contractors had to complete those projects at the old rates.

The contractors' leaders said the government had failed to release funds for the projects approved in the 2015 and 2018 ADPs. They alleged that funds were released to contractors who agreed to give 15 percent commission to the provincial level officers. The contractors said that ADP funds were being distributed among districts indiscriminately. They demanded equal distribution of funds among districts of the province and said the government contractors would no longer tolerate this discrimination.

Commissioner, RPO check security arrangements

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Commissioner Dera Zafarul Islam and Regional Police Officer (RPO) Nasir Mehmood Satti visited different Imambargahs, processions routes and Command and Control Center to check security arrangements.

According to police spokesman, the commissioner and RPO paid a surprise visit to Tahlla-Yalla Shah, different Imambargahs and routes of mourning processions to ensure foolproof security arrangements. On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Dera Mansoor Arshad, DPO Dera Nasir Mehmood and other officers were also present.

The visiting officers checked the security

arrangements at Imambargahs and surroundings. They also met with the custodians of Imambargahs and members of Peace Committee to discuss the overall security arrangements of Imambargahs during the holy month of Muharram. The organizers of Majalis and processions expressed their satisfaction over the security arrangements made by the police.

They also assured of their full cooperation with the administration for peaceful conduct of Muharram. Earlier, the commissioner and RPO also visited the Police Command and Control Center established in Ejaz Shaheed Police Lines Dera wherein they got briefed by DPO Nasir Mehmood and

Incharge of the center DSP Legal Imran Kundi about the Majalis, processions and other religious rituals to be held in the Imambargahs during Muharram.

On this occasion, the commissioner and RPO also inspected the overall security measures taken for Muharram and monitoring of Imambargahs and procession routes through CCTV cameras. On which, they expressed their satisfaction.

Speaking on this occasion, both the officers also urged upon the citizens to fully cooperate with the administration and security agencies to maintain peace and order during Muharram so that the miscreants do not get any opportunity to disturb the peace of the city.

AJK to commemorate Youm-e-Ashura

F.P. Report

MIRPUR: Azad Jammu Kashmir was all set to commemorate Youm-e-Ashur, the 10th of Muharram-ul-Haram, on Wednesday the sanctified day of global Islamic history and a unique icon of the supreme sacrifices rendered by Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS) and his companions for the cause of Islam.

Processions of Alam and Zuljinnah will be taken out on this day. As usual, it will be an unparalleled manifestation of complete unity, cohesion, and brotherhood, as a result of which absolutes have been evident ever since the first days of Muharram-ul-Haram. Meanwhile, an integrated security plan has been devised by AJK police to ensure maintaining complete peace and security during the sanctified month of Muharram ul Haram across Azad Jammu and Kashmir, official sources said.

"The plan involves the deployment of additional police forces in all major

cities and towns, as well as at all seven entry and exit points of Azad Jammu and Kashmir facing neighboring Punjab and the KPK provinces, the sources told APP here on Tuesday. "A SOP (standard operating procedure) for ensuring complete peace and order at the sensitive key installations across AJK has also been devised," the sources disclosed.

"Ahead of the sanctified day of Ashura, the 10th of Muharram ul Haram, being solemnized on Wednesday, July 17, tomorrow, security has been beefed up across Azad Jammu and Kashmir to deal with any eventuality," according to the official sources. The sources continued that well-alerted police personnel have been posted before almost all 90 Imam Bargahs across AJK to maintain peace and order during the scheduled Majalis (religious meetings) to mark the sanctified month, right from the 1st day to the 10th of Muharram ul Haram, the Youm-e-Ashur, falling on Wednesday.

deliver special speeches highlighting the great essence of the day. The event of Karbala inspires us to uphold the glory of Islam, coupled with the renewed pledge and resolve that we should not hesitate to render any sacrifice for the lofty ideals of Islam. Though the 10th of Muharram, the Ashura, is very important for diverse reasons, nevertheless, it gains special impact as Hazrat Imam Hussain's (AS) martyrdom and the event of Karbala also took place on this day. As usual, it will be an unparalleled manifestation of complete unity, cohesion, and brotherhood, as a result of which absolutes have been evident ever since the first days of Muharram-ul-Haram.

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"The plan involves the deployment of additional police forces in all major

JI raises flag of protest against fuel price hike

MULTAN (INP): Jamaat-e-Islami has rejected the recent increase in petroleum product prices, terming it unjust to the public.

In a statement, JI spokesman, Qaiser Sharif said his party would not tolerate the burden on the public and would stage a sit-in in Islamabad on July 16. He announced the launch of a movement titled "Haq do awam ko (Give people their rights)" to protest against anti-people policies. JI head Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman will lead the sit-in.

He said the JI would approach courts and take to the streets to demand public rights. The protest will continue until their demands are met, he added. Qaiser Sharif claimed that people from all walks of life, including scholars, lawyers, traders, farmers, laborers, and industrialists would participate in the sit-in.

Cop martyred in encounter

FEROZWALA (INP): An assistant sub-inspector (ASI) was martyred and a dacoit was killed in a police encounter in Ferozwala near Lahore.

The Ferozwala police said, while patrolling, cops signalled two robbers on a motorcycle to stop in Khanpur area of Ferozwala but the robbers opened indiscriminate firing at the police patrol vehicle. As a result of firing, ASI Mohammad Nawaz received bullets and breathed his last on the spot.

However, in retaliatory firing by police, one robber was also killed but the other escaped. The dead bandit was identified as Imran, a resident of Rawalpindi. The police took the pistol, mobile and motorcycle of the robbers in custody.

45 injured as high-speed bus overturns

NANKANA SAHIB (INP): A high-speed passenger bus overturned on Bachiana Road in Nankana Sahib, leaving 45 people injured. Among the injured were 17 women.

The accident occurred due to the bus's high speed, which caused it to lose control and overturn. The bus was travelling from Sialkot to Fort Abbas at the time of the incident.

Emergency services were quickly dispatched to the scene, and the injured were rushed to nearby hospitals for medical treatment. Authorities are investigating the exact cause of the accident, and measures are being taken to ensure the safety of passengers on the route. This incident underscores the importance of adhering to speed limits and maintaining caution on the roads to prevent such unfortunate events.

Four arrested F.P. Report

KHANEWAL: Khanewal police claimed to have arrested four dangerous dacoits and seized arms and valuables worth Rs one million from their possession.

The arrested dacoits were identified as Tasawar alias Bhora, Saqlain son of Muhammad Khan, Nadeem son of Ramzan Naich and Shehzad alias Shadda. Four pistols, tubewell motor, rikshaw and some other articles including cash were recovered from their possession.

Sindh CM given detailed briefing about processions

F.P. Report

SUKKUR: The Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday visited Sukkur to review the security arrangements for the 9th Muharram and Yaum-e-Ashoor.

During a meeting, the chief minister was given a detailed briefing about the 9th and 10th processions of Muharram at Mayor House Sukkur here. SSP Sukkur Amjad Ahmed Shaikh and Deputy Commissioner Sukkur Dr Raja MB Dharejo gave briefings to the CM.

Home Minister Sindh Zia Lunjari, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah Spokesperson to Sindh Government Barrister Arslan Sheikh, MNA

Noman Islamuddin Shiekh, DIG Sukkur Range Peer Muhammad Shah, Divisional Commissioner Fayyaz Hussain Abbasi and others were also present on the occasion.

In a briefing, the SSP Sukkur said that all arrangements had been finalized in the Sukkur district to observe 'Ashura' on Wednesday, amid tight security arrangements while over 2800 cops would be deployed. He said that the district police had finalized all the security arrangements to provide a foolproof security cover to 145 mourning processions and 74 Imambargahs.

Divisional Commissioner Sukkur Fayyaz Hussain Abbasi in his brief-

ing, informed that apart from monitoring loudspeakers and social media, the audio and video recordings of Majalis and processions were being compiled. He said that the procession routes were cleaned, patchwork and road repair work was carried out, and hanging electric wires were fixed.

Apart from this, he said coordination with scholars of all schools of thought had also been ensured. The chief minister directed the authorities concerned to adopt zero-tolerance policy towards any violation of the code of conduct of Muharram, adding that the scheduled time and route of the procession should be followed strictly.

No compromise on law, order: Punjab Minister

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Provincial Minister for Transport Punjab Bilal Akbar Khan said that it is need of hour to maintain law and order situation during Holy Month of Muharram-ul-Haram and the Punjab government has made ideal security arrangements to ensure peace of Ashura Muharram in the province including district Hafizabad. He expressed these views while visiting Hafizabad to review security and other arrangement finalised by the district administration and police.

The Minister Bilal Akbar Khan visited routs of mourning processions,

Markazi Imam Bargah Fawara Chowk, control rooms, medical camp arranged by the Rescue 1122 and health departments to provide first aid to participants of processions and majalis, food and water points (sheels) setup to provide food and sweet water to people.

The Commissioner Gujranwala Naveed Haider Sharazi, Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Sundas Irshad, former Federal Minister Saira Afzal Tarar, prominent social worker and President Awami Mahaz Hafizabad Rana Khalid Mehmood, DPO Faisal Gulzar and other concerned officers were also accompanied by

the Minister.

Earlier, addressing the meeting, Bilal Akbar Khan said that on the directions of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, special arrangements were made to provide meal and sweet water for mourners first time.

He said that Ulema, Zakreen, prominent personalities, civil society could play vital role in keeping peace and holding of mourning processions and majalis in peaceful atmosphere as well as to foil nefarious designs of antisocial elements and miscreants. DC and DPO gave briefing to the Minister regarding security and other arrangements.

Sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain emblem of courage

MULTAN (INP): Speakers paid rich tribute to martyrs of Karbala and termed the sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) an emblem of courage and bravery against injustice and oppression, here at the 46th Hussainia Conference held at Raza Hall, on Tuesday.

Politician Makhdoom Zain Hussain Qureshi chaired the conference and stated that martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) would be remembered for-

ever. Hazrat Imam Hussain faced oppression with patience, he stated adding that Multan always promoted the message of interfaith harmony, unity and peace. He hinted that most of the "Tazias" were taken out by Sunni school of thought.

The message of Hazrat Imam Hussain, he said is not only for one religion or region but it was a universal message. He also lauded the unity demonstrated by

Ulema from various schools of thought. He stated that the message of sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) would continue to guide the people to stand against cruels.

On this occasion, Zain Baloch, Ishaq Baloch, Sabtain Lodhi, Syeda Zahra Zaidi, Khawar Shafqat Bhutta, Makhdoom Hassan Raza, Naem Kazmi, Syed Zahid Gardezi Tariq Qadiri and many others were also present.



HARIPUR: DIG Tahir Ayub Khan and DPO Salman Zafar inspecting security of routes for Muharram processions.

Processions of 9th Muharram conclude

F.P. Report

MULTAN: About 82 processions of Alam and Zuljinnah were taken out by faithful from different areas of Multan on Tuesday, the 9th of Muharram, which assembled up in Mumtazabad to constitute historic 9th Muharram procession.

The participants of the processions commemorated the sacrifices of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA), family members and companions and dispersed peacefully. The law enforcing agencies offered a three-layer security shield to the processions to avert any untoward incident as heavy contingents were deployed on the routes of all processions while roads leading to the venues of congregations (majalis) were also blocked by the district police.

Dozens of mobile cameras connected to a central control room set up at the

CPO office were installed at different spots in Multan district to keep secret eye on the anti social elements. The historic 9th Muharram procession came out of Imam Bargah Mumtazabad. Out of total 82 processions, as many as 40 were brought out by the license holders while remaining 42 were historic ones. The participants of the processions carried out self-flagellation with sharp knives mounted on chains, swords and blades besides beating their chests.

Meanwhile, the historic Ustadwala and Shagirdwala tazias were also put on display at Inside Pak Gate and Khooni Burj respectively. The Ustadwala tazia is over 200 years old and Shagirdwala 70 years. Similarly, the other historic tazias of Multan including Pir Laal Bakhsh, Allah Bukhshwala and others were also put on display.

They day past peacefully as no untoward incident took place anywhere in the district. The district administration said that the routes of the Muharram 10th, processions were being swept with the help detection gadgets. Similarly, Rangers will also be available in case of any emergency.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Maryam Khan, RPO Chaudhary Suhail, Deputy Commissioner Wasim Hamid Sindhu, and CPO Sadiq Dogar visited the procession route. According to RPO Chaudhary Suhail the situation remained peaceful as no untoward incident was reported in any area of the region. Later on, provincial minister for education Sikandar Hayat also visited Multan and inspected the security arrangements. He expressed satisfaction over the security and other arrangements.



Wednesday, July 17, 2024



NAIROBI: A tear gas canister explodes during renewed demonstrations in Kenya.

Leaving Syria's civil war to be a mercenary in Africa

IDLIB (BBC): For more than 10 years, Abu Mohammad has been living in a tent with his family in northern Syria, displaced by the long-running civil war. Unable to earn enough to support them, he, like hundreds of others, has decided to travel via Turkey to Niger to work as a mercenary.

Abu Mohammad (not his real name), who is 33, and his wife have four young children - they have no running water or toilet and rely on a small solar panel to charge his phone. Their tent is sweltering in summer and freezing in winter, and leaks when it rains. "Finding work has become extremely difficult," he says. He is a member of Turkish-backed opposition forces that have been fighting President Bashar al-Assad for more than a decade.

The faction he works for pays him less than \$50 (£40) a month, so when Turkish recruiters appeared offering \$1,500 a month to work in Niger, he decided it was the best way to earn more money. He says Syrian faction leaders help facilitate the process and after "faction taxes and agents" he would still be left with at least two-thirds of the money. "And if I die in battle [in Niger], my family will receive compensation of \$50,000," he adds.

Violence in West Africa's Sahel region has worsened in recent years as a result of conflict with jihadist groups. Niger and its neighbours Mali and Burkina Faso have all been affected - and all three countries have experienced military coups in the past few years, partly as a result of the instability. Abu Mohammad is not alone in wanting to go to Niger.

Ali (not his real name), who lives in a tent in rural Idlib, joined Syria's

opposition forces 10 years ago when he was 15. He says he is paid less than \$50 a month too, which lasts him five days. He has had to borrow to support his family and sees Niger as the only way to pay off his debts. "I want to leave the military profession entirely and start my own business," he says. And for Raed (not his real name), another 22-year-old opposition fighter, going to Niger feels like the only way to build up enough money to "achieve my dream of marriage and starting a family".

Since December 2023, more than 1,000 Syrian fighters have travelled to Niger via Turkey, according to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), which monitors the conflict in Syria through a network of sources on the ground. They tend to sign up for six months, but some have now extended the contract to a year. Before they go, the official line is that the men will be protecting Turkish projects and commercial interests in Niger.

Turkey has extended both its political influence and business operations in the region, selling equipment such as drones to Niger to help it combat militant jihadist groups. It is also involved in mining the country's natural resources, which include gold, uranium and iron ore. But the recruits know that despite what they are told, when they arrive in Niger, the reality can be very different.

The SOHR and friends of mercenaries who have already worked in Niger told the BBC that Syrians had ended up under Russian command fighting militant jihadist groups in the border triangle between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. Niger's democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum was overthrown a

year ago, and since then the junta has cut Western ties.

"Niger started looking for new allies and found a suitable alternative in Russia," explains Nathaniel Powell, a researcher on the Sahel at Oxford Analytica. "Russian weapons are cheaper than Western ones. Russia also offers military resources and training and shows a willingness to adapt to local requirements without imposing strict conditions, unlike its Western counterparts." The prospect of fighting under Russian command poses a dilemma for Syrian fighters who are opposed to the Syrian regime because Russia has been a staunch supporter of President Assad.

"We are mercenaries here and mercenaries there," says Abu Mohammad, "but I am on a Turkish mission, I will not accept orders from the Russians." But he may not have a choice, as Raed acknowledges. "I hate these forces but I have to go for economic reasons," he says. They are all still waiting to sign their contacts which they will do "just before or during travel", says Raed. He explains that the process is secretive and he knows one man who was imprisoned by a Syrian opposition faction "for leaking some details of the operation in Africa and the registration mechanism".

The recruits we spoke to said their faction leaders had told them that a Turkish company called SADAT would look after them once the contracts were signed and would be involved in arranging their travel and logistics. About five years ago, Abu Mohamad went to Libya where he worked as a mercenary for six months and says that was also arranged by SADAT.

Police hunt mayor accused of being Chinese spy

MANILA (BBC): A small town mayor in the Philippines who has been accused of being a Chinese spy has gone into hiding, officials said. Police could not carry out a warrant for the arrest of Alice Guo over the weekend as she was not at any of her known addresses.

Scam centres were uncovered in Ms Guo's town of Bamban in March, concealed in online casinos that cater to mainland Chinese. Her story has played out like a TV drama, as she had also been questioned on her Chinese parentage and suspicions that she was working as an "asset" or spy for Beijing. Ms Guo's case has gripped the nation as Manila and Beijing continue to spar over reefs and outcrops in the South China Sea.

The Senate ordered the arrest of Ms Guo and some members of her family last

Friday after she twice snubbed summons to appear in hearings on the scam centres. "Show yourselves. Hiding will not erase the truth," Senator Risa Hontiveros, who is leading parliament's investigation on Ms Guo, said in a statement. Ms Guo has denied wrongdoing. She claims her Chinese father and Filipina mother raised her on their pig farm.

But Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, who is part of the investigation, claims Ms Guo is a Chinese national whose real name is Guo Hua Ping, based on immigration records. "She is hiding to evade arrest," Mr Gatchalian told local radio. "Our tracker teams will continue looking for her." On the day the arrest warrant was signed, Ms Guo posted a statement on Facebook, addressing her constituents and alluding to the fact that she would not be around.

"Sorry for not being physically present with each one of you. I miss you all," she said, adding her absence would be "temporary". In the post, she added that she did not regret joining politics, even if it hurt her so much that she "almost lost myself". "I am a Filipino with a big heart for Bamban. I love the Philippines very much," she said.

Ms Guo's lawyer, Nicole Jamilla, told local television that her client would "definitely" cooperate with official investigations. Aside from the investigation by the Senate, Ms Guo is the subject of a separate anti-graft probe that has led to her suspension. The scam centres in Bamban have underscored how online casinos or Pogos (Philippine Online Gaming Operations) have been used as cover for text scams, human trafficking and other criminal activities.

Crime rings hiding beneath Pogos have even gone to the extent of building hospitals that provide cosmetic surgery to fugitives who want new faces. Pogos flourished during the tenure of Rodrigo Duterte, whose presidency, which ended in 2022, was marked by close ties to China. But under current president Ferdinand Marcos, Pogos have come under close scrutiny.

If proven that she is a Chinese citizen, Ms Guo would be not be eligible to serve as mayor. Only Filipino citizens are allowed to hold elective office. But this does not matter to her constituents who benefit from her social outreach programmes, that are widely documented on her social media pages. Ms Guo "brought change" to Bamban, and its people are thankful, resident Erica Miclat told ANC television.

Four killed as fighting in DRC continue

DR CONGO: Two children and two teenagers have been killed in a bombardment in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), local sources have told AFP news agency. The United States announced a humanitarian truce on July 5 between Kinshasa and the M23 rebel group operating in eastern DRC. It was supposed to last until July 19, but fighting erupted.

A spokesman for one of the armed groups backing the DRC forces said the fighting occurred 70km (43 miles) northwest of the North Kivu provincial capital, Goma. The fighting had reached the town of Bweremana, around 15km (9.3 miles) west of Goma, where the deadly bombardment struck.

The dead included two children from the same family, according to Innocent Mwitohofu Mumbara, a local civil society leader. The four victims were aged two, three, 16 and 18, Mumbara added. A mother and her four-year-old child were among the wounded, said Bweremana Police Commissioner Paulin Ilunga, claiming that the shell had "come from the hills where the M23 is".

Confirming the deaths of four people in the attack, a hospital source told AFP that five more had been admitted with serious injuries. The DRC has been facing political instability and armed violence since 1996, with an estimated six million people killed since the conflict began.

Since the end of 2021, the M23, supported by units of the Rwandan army, had seized vast swathes of territory in North Kivu, going so far as to almost completely encircle Goma. According to a Human Rights Watch report, M23 allegedly executed scores of villagers and militia members between November 2022 and April 2023, burying them in mass graves in the village of Kishishe, North Kivu.

The report says that M23 has committed unlawful killings, rape, and other war crimes since late 2022, exacerbating the dire humanitarian crisis in the country. A total 171 civilians were executed in the last 10 days of November alone, according to the UN Human Rights Office. At the end of June, the M23 and the Rwandan army seized several towns in Lubero territory, in the north of North Kivu, following the collapse of the Congolese army and its auxiliary militias. Nearly 50 soldiers were sentenced to death in the following days for "fleeing the enemy". — Aljazeera

Azerbaijan reopens embassy in Iran

TEHRAN (AP): The embassy of Azerbaijan in Tehran resumed its work after more than a year of negotiations between the two countries to ease tensions, media reports said.

An official at the embassy told The Associated Press that it had resumed operations but the formal announcement by the Iranian Foreign Ministry was still pending. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the person wasn't allowed to discuss the matter publicly. The Azeri website news.az quoted Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry as saying that its embassy in Iran had started work at a new address in Tehran. The report said that the embassy reopened following negotiations between the two governments.

Relations between Tehran and Baku soured after a gunman in January 2023 stormed Azerbaijan's Embassy, killing its security chief and wounding two guards. Iran said the attack was a personal dispute after the gunman's wife disappeared on a visit to the embassy, but Azeri President Ilham Aliyev called it a "terrorist attack." Baku accused Tehran of supporting hard-line Islamists who tried to overthrow its government, a charge Tehran denied. In April 2023, Azerbaijan expelled four Iranian diplomats. A month later, Iran expelled four Azeri diplomats. Azerbaijan's decision in March 2023 to open an embassy in Israel, Iran's archenemy, also contributed to the deterioration in ties.

Nepal's new prime minister has taken oath of office

KATHMANDU (AP): Nepal's newly appointed prime minister took the oath of office at a ceremony in Kathmandu. Khadga Prasad Oli, the leader of Nepal's largest communist party, was named prime minister following the collapse of a previous coalition government.

Oli, 72, will be leading a coalition government made up of his Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) and the Nepali Congress party, the two largest parties in Nepal. This is his fourth time serving as prime minister of the Himalayan nation. Two deputy prime ministers and 19 ministers appointed by him also took the oath of office. He is expected to further expand the Cabinet, including members from coalition partner parties.

The last government headed by Pushpa Kamal Dahal collapsed after Oli's party, which had been part of the coalition, withdrew its support to join the new partnership. Oli will have to seek a vote of confidence in parliament within a month to continue in office. The two parties in the new alliance have more than half the members in parliament, giving them enough votes to pass a vote of confidence.

Oli's biggest challenge as prime minister will be balancing Nepal's relationship with its giant neighbors India and China, as both



seek to wield influence over the small nation. Landlocked Nepal is surrounded by India on three sides and imports all of its oil and most supplies from India. It also shares a border with China. "Among other challenges, the new government has the task to re-establish Nepal's diplomatic credibility and balance between the powers in the north (China) and south (India)," said Bhoj raj Pokhrel, an independent analyst.

Relations between Nepal and India had sunk to their lowest level during Oli's first term as prime minister in 2015, when India was unhappy with a new constitution adopted by Nepal. India imposed an unofficial economic blockade on Nepal, blocking supplies of oil, medicine and other goods that created severe shortages in the country.

But relations calmed after Oli visited New Delhi in February 2016.

Oli was credited with opening doors with China and boosting trade and joint infrastructure projects including a highway through the mountains. Oli's relations with China have annoyed New Delhi. Oli was born in a village in east Nepal and has been involved in politics since he was young.

He worked his way up the ranks of the communist party and was jailed a total of 14 years for opposing the autocratic rule of Nepal's monarchs. The royals banned political parties until 1990, when street protests forced then-King Birendra to hold free elections that turned Nepal into a constitutional monarchy, which was formally abolished in 2008. Oli has had two kidney transplants.

Germany's security official bans a far-right magazine

BERLIN (AP): Germany's top security official on Tuesday banned a far-right magazine, accusing it of stirring up hatred against Jews, people with immigrant roots and parliamentary democracy. Interior Minister Nancy Faeser banned Compact magazine and the company that publishes it, Compact-Magazin GmbH, as well as a film production company, Conspect Film. Police raided properties and apartments in four German regions linked to the organizations, their management and shareholders, her ministry said.

Faeser described Compact as "a central mouthpiece of the right-wing extremist scene." She said in a statement that "this magazine agitates in an unspeakable way against

Jews, against people with a history of migration and against our parliamentary democracy." "Our signal is clear: We will not allow who belongs in Germany and who doesn't to be defined by ethnicity," Faeser added.

Compact is run by far-right figure Jürgen Elsässer and produces the monthly magazine of the same name, which has a circulation of about 40,000, as well as an online video channel, Compact TV. It also runs an online shop selling books, CDs, DVDs and other merchandise. Compact has been published since 2010. In its annual report for 2023, Germany's domestic intelligence agency said that it "regularly disseminates ... antisemitic, anti-minority, historically revisionist and

conspiracy theory content."

It said a main feature is agitation against parliamentary democracy in general and the German government in particular, and quoted Elsässer as saying on Compact's home page last year that "we want to topple this regime." The strength of the far right has caused increasing concern in Germany in recent months. Last month, the far-right Alternative for Germany party took 15.9% of the vote to finish second in the European Parliament election, despite recent scandals and setbacks. The co-leaders of the party, Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla, decried the ban on Compact as "a serious blow to press freedom." They alleged that Faeser "is abusing her authority in order to suppress critical reporting."

Romania to cull 500 bears to curb overpopulation

BUCHAREST: Romania's government has more than doubled the number of bears that park rangers can legally kill, approving the culling of almost 500 bears this year following a deadly attack on a hiker that caused a nationwide outcry. The law adopted in an emergency meeting of parliament authorises the culling of 481 bears in a bid to control "overpopulation" in the protected species, a figure that is more than twice last year's total of 220 bears culled.

As well as adopting the new legislation, the parliament held a moment of silence in memory of the 19-year-old hiker who was mauled to death last week on a popular trail in Romania's Carpathian Mountains. Romania's Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu had summoned lawmakers back from their summer recess to attend the emergency session of parliament. Bears have killed 26

people and severely injured 274 others over the last 20 years in Romania, according to the country's environment ministry. The ministry estimates there are up to 8,000 bears in the country, which has Europe's largest population of brown bears outside Russia. Environmental groups denounced the new measure.

Wildlife experts say the animals that cause problems - dubbed "trash-bin bears" in Romania - will continue to scavenge in cities as urban sprawl eats into their natural habitat, and as climate change limits their food sources. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) biologist Calin Ardelean told the AFP news agency that "the law solves absolutely nothing", arguing that the focus should be shifted towards "prevention and intervention".

According to WWF, the increased cull will not solve the problem in Romania

unless measures are put in place to keep bears away from communities, waste management is improved and people are prevented from feeding the bears. Foundation Conservation Carpathia, a private conservation group, said "the number of problem bears and the damages they cause fluctuates yearly and is not directly proportional to the rise in bear density".

"Unfortunately, nobody knows the exact population of bears in Romania nor how many specimens the habitat can take," the group added. With hundreds of bear sightings each year, authorities in Romania are struggling to keep residents and tourists in mountain towns safe from the animals. Bears approaching cars on mountain roads seeking food or scavenging through rubbish cans are common occurrences. Local media also regularly report bear attacks on people and livestock. — Aljazeera

9 people hospitalized after Spanish highway tunnel accident

BARCELONA (AP): A dramatic bus accident at the mouth of a highway tunnel in northeast Spain left nine people injured, three of them critically, officials said Tuesday. The bus was carrying 50-60 textile workers to a nearby factory when the accident occurred on the C-32 highway about an hour north of Barcelona, according to emergency services and local officials.

The bus appears to have hit the sloped edge as it was entering the tunnel and it was vaulted upward until its front came to a rest at the top. That left it propped diagonally across the entrance to the tunnel. Police are investigating the cause. Emergency authorities for the Catalonia region said two people in critical condition were flown by helicopters to hospitals. A third person

also in critical condition, along with six with less serious injuries, were taken to nearby hospitals in ambulances. A further 33 people received medical attention at a nearby municipal pavilion.

The accident took place near the town of Pineda de Mar, a Mediterranean coastal town. Traffic authorities closed the highway to all vehicles heading north.

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A nation under strain

IN the heart of the American political landscape, a shocking event has unfolded, sending tremors through the very core of the nation's identity. On July 13, former President and presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump was shot while speaking at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania. The attempted assassination on the former President, a figure both prominent and polarizing, has left a visible mark not only on the man himself but also on the collective consciousness of a society already grappling with deep divisions.

Immediately after the incident, the incumbent President Biden said, "The idea that there's violence in America like this is just unheard of." Well, no. The United States was born out of violence and has been shaped by it. From the brutal slaughtering of Native Americans, to the senseless deprivation and displacement of them during the Westward Movement, and to the ruthless accumulation of wealth based on the evil of slavery, violence has been a constant undercurrent.

From Lincoln to Kennedy, the specter of political violence has loomed over America's highest office for more than two centuries since its founding, claiming the lives of four presidents and injuring three. Of the 45 individuals who have served as president, 13 were subject to actual or attempted assassinations. Each time, indignant condemnations followed and resolute vows against political violence were renewed, but to no avail.

Today, this violent tradition continues. Gun violence has reached epidemic proportions. Almost half of the world's guns were owned by the country with less than 5 percent of the world's population. The year 2023 alone saw 655 mass shootings nationwide, an average of more than 10 each week. Firearms are now the leading cause of death for American children and teenagers, including gun-related assault, suicide and accidents.

Attempts by states and local governments to control guns have been anything but effective. With polarizing party strife and constant lobbying by gun associations, it is rare for gun control bills to pass through Congress. Even if they do, a conservative Supreme Court can hand out verdicts that roll back progress. Gun violence has become a magnifier to social unrest of all forms and an incurable cancer ravaging the US society.

The extreme political polarization and division manifested by the Trump assassination attempt again points to the deep-seated illness of the country. The most intrinsic reason is the comprehensive wane of its economic, technological and industry edges compared to growing global competitors. Once a "country on wheels," the United States is now falling far behind in electric and smart vehicles. Even its much-prided military industry now seems to be much-strained in producing its "generously" promised ammunition for Ukraine. The drop in economic competitiveness spells out a decline in employment and income, and a rise in the discontent of the people.

The political system is not helping. The democratic process, once a beacon of hope, has devolved into a spectacle of partisanship and division, ineffective in delivering for the people but effective in securing the privileges of the elites and the interest groups, who pockets the legislative, executive and judicial powers with their disproportionate influence. Ballots that once reflect the will of the people no longer do. The voice of the people is barely audible. The US society has regressed from a democratic system to an oligarchy that serves the interests of the few.

Take the presidential election for example. Once a pivotal moment in the nation's political journey, it now seems like a sideshow to the main drama of national chaos. The upcoming presidential election, featuring a septuagenarian and an octogenarian, is a testament to the gerontocracy that has taken hold of American politics. It is a stark reminder that the nation's leadership is out of touch with the vibrancy and innovation that the country once represents. An ill and confused old man insisting on proving himself capable and a populist and protectionist old man being shot in public, a presidential debate fraught with personal attacks and a slew of criminal investigations to throw dirt on the political opponent—the farce of the 2024 election disappoints and infuriates the American people and shocks the world.

These deep-seated issues cannot be resolved by tinkering at the edges. It takes, among other, consistent investment in infrastructure, industries, education and innovation to rekindle economic vitality and shore up competitiveness, and an overhaul of the political system to return the democratic power to the people. Easier said than done. It is hard to maintain the necessary consistency in government policies where party politics is the priority, and quite impossible for the well-established elite class to unseat themselves from a privileged position. The American people thus protested angrily yet helplessly in every way as the economic inequality widens and social unrest worsens.

With falling economic competitiveness, increasing political chaos, and unbridled social violence, the American dream has turned into a nightmare for many. The attempted assassination is more than a political event; it is a tragic episode of the farcical election, and a symptom of a nation in turmoil. Donald Trump may recover from his injuries very quickly, but it will take much longer to make America great again.

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Israeli courts cannot and will not prosecute Israel's war crimes

Taj Hussain & Laurent A Lambert

FOR over nine months now, the United States and other close allies of Israel have repeatedly defended the conduct of the Israeli army in Gaza and the West Bank. They have rejected or ignored accusations of genocide, torture, collective punishment and other war crimes against humanity, despite numerous reports by UN experts and human rights organisations detailing various atrocities.

In defending the Israeli army, Israeli allies often refer to the opportunity to seek justice for crimes in Israeli courts. In its response to International Criminal Court's Prosecutor Karim Khan seeking arrest warrants for Israeli officials, the US State Department, for example, has claimed that the prosecutor did not defer to a national investigation first. The Israeli government has also made the same argument.

But a closer look at the Israeli judicial system reveals that such prosecution of justice for war crimes committed by Israeli officials is unlikely to yield results. Israel's legislative and judicial authorities do recognise international law and conventions.

However, through legal exceptions, they also create spaces for the total disregard of international law by Israeli officials and security and military forces. This erodes the prohibitions from international law on matters of grave importance.

Two examples of crimes that illustrate this legal contradiction between Israeli jurisprudence and international law are torture and collective punishment. Torture is unequivocally illegal under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. This prohibition derives from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols, the Convention against Torture, etc.

Based on paragraph 277 of the 1977 Israeli Penal Code and the 1991 Israeli ratification of the Convention Against Torture, the Israeli legal system recognises torture as illegal. But in reality, the practice of torture has been extensively documented by Israeli NGOs and Israeli media, and it remains without any legal repercussions. In the past nine months, this illegal practice has even intensified, according to human rights activists.

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) has documented that between 2001 and 2022, more than 1,400 claims of torture by Israeli authorities were made, but only two were investigated and none resulted in indictments. That is because agents of the Shin Bet (internal security services) and Israeli soldiers are protected by a legal loophole which allows for "necessity" to determine if torture can be used in all so-called "ticking bomb situations". These scenarios are loosely defined and justify the use of torture to extract information from a suspect that can supposedly help avert imminent danger to life and national security. Despite how open to interpretation a "ticking bomb situation" can be, this exception was upheld by two rulings by the Israeli Supreme Court in 1999 and then again in 2018.

The loophole has actually been recognised as problematic by the Israeli authorities who have promised to create an explicit law against torture, but nothing has materialised. PCATI even referred 17 of its cases to the ICC in 2022 as it realised that any justice for torture victims would be impossible in Israeli courts. This is because most cases are rapidly dismissed on the grounds that, supposedly, "there is no evidential basis supporting the interrogatees version".

The matter of collective punishment shows a similar pattern. Collective punishment is the infliction of penalties on multiple civilians based on the acts of one or several individuals. Its international prohibition dates back to the Hague Convention in 1899, reaffirmed by the Geneva Convention and has become customary international law.

The Israeli judiciary has repeatedly affirmed its commitment to the ban on collective punishment. Furthermore, section 16 of the Penal Code facilitates prosecutions based on international agreements. However, in practice, the Israeli army regularly exercises collective punishment on a large scale. This includes the demolition of family homes of suspected "terrorists" in the occupied Palestinian territory and the 17-year-long siege on the Gaza Strip.

Israeli courts have consistently rejected the claim that these two policies amount to collective punishment. Regulation 119 (1) of the Israeli Emergency Laws allows for the demolition of houses as punishment for committing illegal actions or if there is a suspicion that an illegal action is taking place in that home, even if multiple generations live in it. This is directly contradictory to Article 33 of the Geneva Convention as the policy disregards any non-involved people living in the house and therefore constitutes collective punishment.

Nevertheless, in 1986, an Israeli court ruled that demolitions were not collective punishment, based not on the impact of home demolitions (which do affect whole families), but instead based on the odd consideration that it would make Regulation 119 (1) redundant as it would only be applied to "terrorists" who supposedly live alone. More surprisingly, the same court argued that demolitions are a "deterrent" rather than a "punishment", and that the collective impact (of the punishment) actually enhanced the deterring effect.

Judges have also been unwilling to "intervene", as they are reluctant to infringe on the authority of Israeli field commanders, leaving these decisions entirely to their discretion, in violation of Article 71 of the Geneva Convention. These rulings have effectively closed the door on judicial accountability for this crime. To this day, no Israeli soldier has been prosecuted for the demolition of Palestinian family homes.

In the case of the Israeli siege on Gaza – which has been widely recognised as a form of collective punishment – Israel has also sought to dodge international law provisions. Before October 7, Israeli officials and legal pundits argued that the siege was a set of economic sanctions. After October 7, the Israeli government imposed a total blockade, cutting off water, electricity, food and medical supplies. Despite the UN and various human rights organisations pointing out the clear evidence of collective punishment, including starvation, Israeli officials claimed that its forces are allowing enough aid "to prevent a humanitarian crisis". According to Oxfam, the calorie count in Gaza currently stands at 245 per day, roughly a quarter of the bare minimum needed to avoid starvation.

Against this background of internationally prohibited practices, authorised by judicially created legal exceptions that contradict international law, the Israeli legal system has consistently failed to hold the Israeli authorities accountable for violations of international law. In fact, by upholding loopholes, Israel's judiciary has systematically enabled torture and authorised instances of collective punishment. Over the years, Israel has put a lot of effort into covering up the abyssal gap between international standards and Israeli army policies, facilitated by a convoluted system of legal exceptions. Now, the house of cards has come tumbling down.

Aljazeera

What it will take to calm America

Julian Zelizer

ON Sunday evening, President Joe Biden spoke from the Oval Office, calling on Americans to temper their passions. In the aftermath of the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump, Biden reiterated his message that there is no room for violence in our politics and that everyone needs to take a breath and calm down. The nation needs to "lower the temperature," he said. "No matter how strong our convictions," Biden added, we must "never descend into violence."

Will the message work? Coming at a pivotal moment in his own reelection campaign against Trump, Biden's address is something of a stress test for what presidents can accomplish when political tensions spin out of control. Biden's appeal is not coming in a vacuum; many political leaders across the spectrum have denounced the attack on Trump and called for calm. House Speaker Mike Johnson said on CNN Sunday.

"The rhetoric has consequences. When you have a heated environment and you have political division in this country, like we have in the age of social media, everything is amplified, and everyone can go on and turn the dial. So we need to work on bringing that down so that we can have thoughtful debate and we can have policy discussions."

By virtue of his office, Biden is singularly positioned to attempt to soothe America. But sadly, even if Biden was not in such a fragile political position, the odds would be stacked against the president, as history suggests. Americans lived through a horrendous moment on November 22, 1963 when a gunman, Lee Harvey Oswald, shot and killed President John F. Kennedy. The event, which was of greater magnitude given the fatal outcome, traumatized the nation. A president who embodied the promise of a new generation had been slain. All sorts of theories swirled about what happened in Dallas, most of which were connected to the divisive issues of the era — civil rights, anti-communism, right-wing extremism and more.

As soon as Lyndon Johnson took over the presidency, he too appealed to the nation to restore its better angels. Let us continue, he said, urging Americans to move forward with Kennedy's agenda as the best memorial to the fallen leader. He said: "Our American unity does not depend upon unanimity. We have differences; but now, as in the past, we can derive from those differences strength, not weakness; wisdom, not despair. Both as a people and a government we can unite upon a program, a program which is wise, and just, enlightened and constructive."

But Johnson soon learned that presidential appeals to moderation often fall flat. The huge fault lines created by divisive issues that predated

Kennedy's assassination only widened. The civil rights movement intensified its effort to achieve racial justice through legislation while the White backlash grew worse and more violent. The pressure from America's youth to abandon traditional social and cultural values involving matters such as sexuality and style only grew stronger, as was on display at the Woodstock concert in 1969. At the same time, the growing culture wars between college students and the people whom President Richard Nixon would call the "silent majority" intensified.

And Johnson made things worse himself, as he accelerated a war in Vietnam that turned into one of the most divisive issues the nation ever faced. Americans fought bitterly over the military conflict, driving many further and further apart by the time Johnson stunned the political world when he announced that he would not run for reelection on March 31, 1968. Throughout the 1960s, political violence flared. President Kennedy's tragic death did not become a basis for reconciliation. Instead, Americans endured more assassinations that created shock and dismay. Malcolm X was slain in February 1965. In 1968, the horrors intensified with the killing of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in April and the killing in June of Senator Robert F. Kennedy after he won the California Democratic primary.

The bloody police crackdown on protesters in the streets of Chicago during the Democratic Convention in 1968 symbolized how deep the anger had become in the body politic. In his 1968 campaign, Nixon stoked the divisions with his appeal to "law and order" and blasts against the protesters who had taken to the streets. Of course, the decades that followed the 1960s have been characterized by intense division, polarization and political warfare. Americans moved further and further apart after 1963, not closer together.

The history of the 1960s should remind us today that after Saturday's shocking attempt on the life of Donald Trump, Biden has an uphill battle to calm the nation. The issues that divide the parties remain deep, the political processes will continue to foster discord, and many political leaders are likely to return to the toxic rhetoric that has been normalized in recent years. Fighting against political violence will require much more than a speech. It will depend on a new generation of leaders willing to establish guardrails on what is permissible, it will require policies to address guns and psychological problems, it will require institutional reforms to create more room in the political system for pulling back from the extremes. Unless the country is willing to take bold steps, presidential speeches won't do much to bring us back from the precipice we stand on in 2024.

CNN

Is America's gun fixation backfiring on its pushers?

Belén Fernández

IT was a shot heard round the world – but most of all by presidential candidate Donald Trump, the victim of Saturday's assassination attempt at a presidential rally in the US state of Pennsylvania.

A bullet grazed Trump's right ear as he was filling the audience in on his plans to make United States immigration policy even more hellish for refugee seekers. One crowd member was killed in the gunfire and two others wounded. The shooter, identified by the FBI as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks, was shot and killed by Secret Service officers. The episode will no doubt earn Trump substantial points among supporters, who will be ever more convinced that their hero is under existential attack in his sociopathic quest to "Make America Great Again".

And while much of the analysis in the aftermath of the Pennsylvania rally has focused on the "polarisation" of the US citizen-

ry, it is also worth pointing out the bleeding obvious – that firearms-related bloodshed would not transpire with such regularity if the country did not have more guns than people. Earlier this year, Trump himself addressed an event held by the National Rifle Association – in none other than Pennsylvania, it so happens – during which he promised attendees that, if he is re-elected, "no one will lay a finger on your firearms".

He went on to declare that he would reverse the damage allegedly done by President Joe Biden to America's gun landscape: "Every single Biden attack on gun owners and manufacturers will be terminated on my very first week back in office, perhaps my first day". Not that Biden's, um, "attack" has been going so well. Recall the May 2022 massacre of 19 children and two adults at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, which was merely one of numerous domestic bloodbaths to take place on the current president's watch.

The US continues to average more than one mass shooting per day – with "mass shooting" indicating an incident in which four or more people are injured or killed from gunfire, not including the shooter.

On Saturday, the same day as the Trump rally, four people were killed and at least 10 were injured in a mass shooting at a nightclub in Birmingham, Alabama. Then, of course, there is the US's lengthy history of shooting up people en masse across the world, which only adds fuel to the (gun)fire at home by teaching Americans that human life is of negligible value and that everything is just one big video game anyway.

In addition to the more hands-on, do-it-yourself killing spree in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US is also a key player in Israel's ongoing efforts to annihilate the population of the Gaza Strip. The latest genocidal assault has

officially killed nearly 40,000 Palestinians in Gaza in just over nine months, although a recent Lancet study found that the true death toll could exceed 186,000 people. Despite Biden's threats to withhold delivery to the Israeli military of certain offensive weapons, a Reuters exclusive published on June 28 revealed that the US had thus far "transferred at least 14,000 of the MK-84 2,000-pound bombs, 6,500 500-pound bombs, 3,000 Hellfire precision-guided air-to-ground missiles, 1,000 bunker-buster bombs, 2,600 air-dropped small-diameter bombs, and other munitions". How's that for gun control?

At the end of the day, America's gun fixation and shoot-'em-up mentality have predictable repercussions on the country's political culture. In a 2009 report, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) tabulated 15 occasions on which direct assaults had

been perpetrated against US presidents, presidents-elect, and presidential candidates. Four such assaults had resulted in death, as in the cases of Presidents Abraham Lincoln, James A. Garfield, William McKinley, and John F. Kennedy.

The first recorded assault took place on January 30, 1835, and targeted President Andrew Jackson, who survived when the pistol misfired. As per the explanation provided by CRS, Jackson's assailant Richard Lawrence "said Jackson was preventing him from obtaining large sums of money and was ruining the country".

Another failed assault occurred on October 29, 1994, when assailant Francisco M Duran fired a semiautomatic assault rifle at the White House while President Bill Clinton was inside. The CRS report does not provide a motive in this case, but a 1995 New York Times article specifies that the jury for Duran's trial had "rejected defense arguments that

Mr. Duran was suffering from paranoid schizophrenia and thought he had been chosen to shoot and kill an evil 'mist' that was enveloping the White House".

To be sure, psychological instability is often invoked as a factor in US shootings – whether political or otherwise – although the official discourse tends to avoid mentioning the outsized role of US capitalism in literally fuelling mental illness in the country. And yet it is hardly far-fetched to argue that America's toxic cult of individualism might on some occasions lead folks to believe that the only way to accomplish anything is by taking matters – and guns – into their own hands. Following Trump's own brush with death, one wonders whether he'll think back on his advice to Iowa residents devastated by a January school shooting: "Get over it". As they say, you reap what you sow. And if there is one thing the US needs to get over, it is the "right to bear arms".

Pezeshkian likely to take cautious foreign policy approach

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami

THE election of reformist candidate Masoud Pezeshkian as Iran's president has sparked numerous questions about his approach to foreign relations. Observers are keen to see the extent of both the change and the continuity in his foreign policy, particularly toward regional and international stakeholders, over the next four years.

The potential impact on cooperation and tensions with Arab and Gulf countries is of particular interest. This comes at a time when hard-liners hold significant control over the Iranian state and the influence of reformists has waned since the end of former President Hassan Rouhani's term. The new president will also face a challenging inheritance of domestic crises, which have led to widespread popular protests, as well as escalating disputes with Europeans and the US over the nuclear issue.

Literature on the foreign policy of states suggests that a change in leadership affects four key areas: the content of foreign policy, the policymaking process, the tools and management of policy implementation and the outcomes of foreign policy. The extent of this impact varies based on the nature of the regime, the powers granted to the president in foreign affairs and the influence of the president's party within the political landscape.

Iran operates under a theocratic system in which ultimate authority rests with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. The president, whether reformist or hard-liner, oversees the executive branch, implementing the broad directives set by Khamenei both domestically and internationally, in line with the jurisprudence enshrined in the constitution. The constitution grants the supreme leader absolute authority, giving him overarching control over all Iranian institutions. Consequently, significant changes in the content of foreign policy and the policymaking process are unlikely, as these are tied to the regime's primary goals and interests, which center on establishing the alleged global Iranian state under the supreme leader's guidance and leadership.

Supporting the supreme leader's policies is a near-constant rule in Iran, regardless of whether the president is a reformist or a hard-liner. Pezeshkian recognizes the stability of Iran's foreign policy content and its formulation process. During his debates, he

emphasized the importance of adhering to the supreme leader's policies and directives to advance the country and address its issues. Therefore, Pezeshkian will follow his government program both domestically and internationally based on the foundational principles of the regime and the broad directives set by the supreme leader in the country's foreign relations.

There are conflicting views

There is a potential for tensions akin to those seen during Rouhani's tenure between the Foreign Ministry and the Revolutionary Guards, possibly stemming from the Guards' involvement in diplomatic affairs.

regarding Pezeshkian's approval by the Guardian Council to run in the presidential election as the sole reformist candidate alongside five conservatives. Some argue that this was not a coincidence or a miscalculation by Iran, nor was it due to the strength of Pezeshkian and his movement, which has been divided since the end of Rouhani's term. Instead, it may have been a strategic move by the regime to present a new, more acceptable reformist figure to Western European and American leaders, in contrast to the conservative candidates. This strategy could help the regime neutralize potential pressure campaigns, especially given the high likelihood of former US President Donald Trump returning to office in January.

This perspective aligns with interpretations of Pezeshkian's presidential victory and the leader's pre-election statements suggesting that the results would bring about global change. This implies that the outcome was anticipated, but the Guardian Council did not endorse a candidate who could not be controlled or who might challenge the regime's policies. This is evidenced by Pezeshkian's pledge during the debates to follow the supreme leader's directives, his praise of Khamenei as a wise leader and the supreme leader's encouragement of the new president to continue the path of the late Ebrahim Raisi. The latter had earned the guide's trust through his absolute obedience and he maintained stable rela-

tions with all government institutions, in contrast to the tensions during Rouhani's tenure, especially in foreign affairs.

The previous parameters, along with the supreme leader's tools of control — such as the dominance of hard-liners over state institutions, parallel institutions and parliament, as well as the supreme leader's broad and absolute powers — indicate the regime's ability to impose control over the reformist

president, allowing only managed change. Externally, this pertains to the third level, involving the tools and management of foreign policy implementation, and the fourth level, which concerns the results of foreign policy. Consequently, it is expected that foreign policy will follow these trajectories:

Regionally, Pezeshkian may continue Raisi's policy of improving relations with neighboring countries, guided by the supreme leader's directives. This could involve strengthening ties with Arab and Gulf nations, which is consistent with Pezeshkian's stated vision of openness to the world, starting with neighboring states. However, his stance on the so-called axis of resistance, which is pivotal to Iran's regional strategy and a regime red line, was evident in his communications with Syrian President Bashar Assad and his correspondence with Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah and Hamas' political bureau chief.

Pezeshkian affirmed his strong support for resistance movements, particularly against Israeli occupation and notably during the Gaza conflict. There is a potential for tensions akin to those seen during Rouhani's tenure between the Foreign Ministry and the Revolutionary Guards, possibly stemming from the Guards' involvement in diplomatic affairs.

Internationally, Pezeshkian is likely to continue the Rouhani-Javad Zarif approach of advocating for openness to the world through

diplomacy and dialogue with the West. This strategy aims to facilitate Iran's return to negotiations, which is seen as a more effective and expeditious solution to addressing internal challenges and enhancing Iran's international standing.

Pezeshkian's supporters argue that relying solely on economic diplomacy to neutralize the impact of sanctions and improve living conditions may not suffice in the short term, necessitating swift negotiations, sanctions relief and potential accession to the Financial Action Task Force. Zarif's endorsement of Pezeshkian underscores potential alignments on nuclear agreement strategies with the West, although ultimate decisions will rest with the supreme leader and institutional frameworks.

Challenges include uncertainties surrounding US political dynamics, particularly the possibility of Trump's return, and right-wing ascendancy in Europe. Concurrently, Pezeshkian may bolster cooperation with China and Russia, given their pragmatic roles in enhancing Iran's negotiation positions vis-a-vis the West.

In conclusion, it is evident that Iranian presidents face red lines they cannot cross. They lack the authority to alter fundamental policies but play a prescribed role in implementing and managing policy tools and outcomes. Presidents operate within the constraints imposed by the institutions and councils aligned with the supreme leader. However, despite these limitations, Pezeshkian could potentially influence Iranian political life by recognizing the regime's imperative to engage with the outside world during challenging times. His proposals, praise for the supreme leader, declaration of loyalty to his guidance and alignment with figures like Hassan Khomeini indicate his cautious approach and desire to avoid provoking early clashes with the regime. Unlike some reformists who are critical of the regime, Pezeshkian supports its revolutionary principles and seeks backing from the supreme leader, Iran's institutions and the public.

What is more, recent developments suggest the regime has the capacity for flexibility and innovation, aiming to bridge the widening gap with citizens, as highlighted by the low turnout in the first round of the presidential election. Externally, Iran seeks to alleviate its isolation amid ongoing protests.

Gaza plays its part in Europe's political quakes

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

MUCH has been written about this month's political earthquakes in the UK and France, the former resulting in the crushing defeat of the Conservative Party and the latter in the overpowering of the far right by a leftist coalition. But these were not the only important outcomes of the general elections in two of Europe's most influential countries.

One other important, if not unprecedented, outcome was the centrality of the Palestinian cause to the political discourses in London and Paris. This is a reflection of the great changes that are underway on the entire European continent and its body politic.

For a long time, we have been told that outward advocacy of Palestinian rights is a lost political cause in Europe, where Israel holds a special status due to the West's historical role in creating, sustaining and defending Israel. This affinity was cemented by more than mere political traditions. In countries like the US — but also the UK and France — the pro-Israel lobby has played the role of a powerful constituency. Using money, media influence and alliances with influential political and religious circles, it has often determined the future of politicians.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee is an illustration of the power of the lobby. Each US election cycle is associated with stories that demonstrate the disproportionate political power wielded by AIPAC. The latest example was last month's Democratic primary defeat of progressive Rep. Jamaal Bowman, a New York congressman who was unseated by a pro-Israel candidate. It is believed that AIPAC spent a whopping \$15 million in its campaign to have Bowman replaced.

However, the support of the lobby no longer offers a guarantee of political success. This is due to the growing awareness among ordinary Americans of the Palestinian struggle for

freedom, the successful counterstrategies of some progressives and the changing political demographics of the Democratic Party.

The Israeli war of "extermination" in Gaza, as per the words of International Criminal Court prosecutor Karim Khan, has made the cause of Palestinian freedom a global one. No amount of media disinformation or lobby money can help Israel redeem its tarnished image. Many Israelis have also reached that conclusion.

The horrific war, the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and the global solidarity efforts have all pushed governments around the world to adopt stronger stances in support of Palestine. The recent volley of recognitions of a Palestinian state attests to this claim.

Moreover, the rising power of the Palestinian political brand has recently allowed countries like Spain, Ireland, Norway and Slovenia to defy the US position, which discourages the recognition of Palestine outside the realm of the so-called peace process. The political discourses associated with the recent decisions are as important as the recognitions themselves. Spain's socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez linked Madrid's decision to the "legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people." The country's deputy prime minister, Yolanda Diaz, went further on May 23, when she said that Madrid "will continue pressuring ... to defend human rights and put an end to the genocide of the Palestinian people," before signing off her statement by declaring: "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

If such an attitude were confined to a single country, that state would be seen as the "radical" exception. But Spain is only one example. Even before the official results of the French election were declared, the president of the France Unbowed parliamentary bloc, Mathilde

Panot, had stated that the winning alliance would seek to recognize the state of Palestine within two weeks. What was particularly interesting about Panot's declaration was that she did not consider the recognition of Palestine to be a symbolic gesture, but rather "one of the available means for us to exert pressure (on Israel)."

For the left in France, supporting the Palestinian cause was not a liability during the hotly contested election. It was one of the secrets to its success. Despite the right and far-right parties' relentless attempts to stain the left over its stance on the Gaza war, they failed miserably.

A somewhat similar scenario was repeated in Britain. The Conservatives' hardcore support for Israel proved worthless, if not a disadvantage. Even some pro-Israel members of the victorious Labour Party were beaten by independent candidates, mainly because of their positions on the war on Gaza. One of the victorious independents, Adnan Hussain, who defeated Labour's Kate Hollern in Blackburn, promised voters he would "make your concerns against the injustice being inflicted against the people of Gaza be heard in the places where our so-called representatives failed."

The political shift in Europe to a pro-Palestine position, or at least a less emphatically pro-Israel position, is happening at a much faster rate than anyone had hoped for or anticipated. Though the Gaza war has played a big part in this, the shift is expected to grow in the coming years because European voters are clearly fed up with their governments' blind support of Israel.

The people are using their democratic systems to effect real changes in government, thus their policies, with the aim of ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Responsible governments, like those in Spain, Norway and Ireland, are responding to the wishes of their people accordingly. Others, including the US, should follow suit.

Lebanon should not count on Netanyahu's 'good' intentions

Ali Hamade

DESPITE the bloody episode of the latest Israeli strike in Gaza aimed at eliminating Mohammed Deif, who is No. 2 in the chain of command in Hamas, there is still hope of a temporary truce between the Israeli army and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. This could begin with agreement on a first phase of prisoner and hostage exchanges between the two sides.

But on the front with Lebanon, the question arises: what about US-French efforts to put an end to the war of attrition that Hezbollah, the pro-Iranian militia, is waging against Israel from Lebanese territory? It is a question that remains unanswered, especially since the proposals that US presidential envoy Amos Hochstein has been carrying for some time and distributing between Paris, Tel Aviv and Beirut have hit a brick wall, as the pro-Iranian party absolutely refuses to consider any proposal before a definitive ceasefire in Gaza.

As a result, the hopes of putting an end to this mini-war initiated by Hezbollah are fading. This is because what is being proposed in Gaza is a truce with no further obligations for Israel and with the absence of a definitive ceasefire, followed by a complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. This means

that the US proposals, which were based on a series of earlier French and American proposals aimed at convincing Hezbollah to halt the military escalation in southern Lebanon, will remain mere words for the time being.

In practice, the proposals revolve around a return to what looks like compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1701, modified in terms of the extent of the Hezbollah militants' withdrawal and the evacuation of the area between the border with Israel and the Litani River. In exchange, Israel undertakes to respect the ceasefire and halt its violations of Lebanese airspace. Finally, the two parties will enter into negotiations aimed at settling all disputes between Lebanon and Israel relating to the demarcation of the temporary Blue Line that was established in 2000.

However, since the possibility of a truce in the Gaza Strip does not mean the end of the war, it does not meet Hezbollah's conditions. Does this mean that Hezbollah will respond to the truce in Gaza with a truce in Lebanon? If not, how could the Israeli side manage a truce with Lebanon? Moreover, would it be realistic to attempt to build a long-term sense of stability

on this basis?

Some observers believe that Israel could blame the diplomatic card and blame Hezbollah for a possible open war, accusing it of igniting the front. Let us not forget that Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant's recent statements, in which he separates the situation in Gaza from that in southern Lebanon, reflect a clear commitment to continuing the war against Hezbollah until one of the two following scenarios happens: One, the reality in southern Lebanon changes and Hezbollah is forced to return to Resolution 1701, withdrawing from the border. Or, two, Israel accepts the new reality of Hezbollah taking over southern Lebanon and thus putting an end to the implementation of Resolution 1701 by being deployed at zero distance from northern Israel.

In another scenario, the fighting stops at the end of the war in Gaza. The pro-Iranian party succeeds in burying Resolution 1701 and negotiating a new demarcation of the Blue Line under the weight of its bombardments. Unfortunately, this would mean the end of Resolution 1701, that the French and US idea of amending it had fallen through and that Iran had openly become a neighbor of Israel.

However, it is not certain that the mediators will succeed in imposing a truce in Gaza any time soon. It is very likely that, pending the US presidential election on Nov. 5 and following the assassination attempt on Donald Trump, Benjamin Netanyahu is maneuvering to gain time against a US administration at half-mast.

Indeed, President Joe Biden's disastrous debate performance and the growing calls within the Democratic camp for his withdrawal from the presidential race play in the favor of the Israeli prime minister's plan to continue the war against Hamas for as long as it takes for its total annihilation.

July 24, the date of Netanyahu's visit to Washington, during which he will deliver a speech to the US Congress, should also be remembered, as the Israeli PM will have no hesitation in embarking on a visit to the federal capital while it is overwhelmed by a major crisis with Biden and the progressive wing within the Democratic Party. So, we do not think we can count on a truce in Gaza, still less on the intentions of Netanyahu and Gallant toward Hezbollah, which from the top of its tree stubbornly defies the principle of gravity.

Arab News

Syrian refugees face uncertain future

Chris Doyle

THE future for refugees is never easy, not least in a world where richer states are ever more hostile to hosting them and even indifferent to their safety. As wars are also so often never-ending, so too refugees face never-ending exile. Yet arguably an even worse fate is being forcibly being sent back to the countries from which they fled.

This is a fate that many Syrians are now facing in Lebanon and, perhaps more alarmingly and on a greater scale, in Türkiye. This came into focus at the start of this month, when violence against Syrian refugees erupted in a number of Turkish cities, especially Gaziantep, Istanbul and Kayseri. Syrians have told me they now fear leaving their homes or showing anything written in Arabic. One said that Syrians have taken to saying they are Palestinians, tapping into the Turkish solidarity with Gaza.

Why is this happening now, given that Syrian refugees have been in Türkiye for years? Let us be clear. Racism against Syrian refugees in Türkiye is not new, particularly since 2019 and with an escalation since 2022. The earthquake of February 2023 also triggered a sharp rise in hate crimes

against Syrians.

Past attacks on Syrian refugees tended to not necessarily be part of a pattern. What terrifies Syrians now is that there is planning to some of the attacks, with several stores being targeted by ultranationalist Turks. Syrians complain that there has been no restitution for the destruction or vandalism of their property. They seek accountability and guarantees for their future safety. They want Turkish authorities to take a clear stand against hate speech in Türkiye.

Scarily, last week there was a huge data leak of all the names and addresses of Syrians in the country. Opinions are divided as to why. Was this just because Türkiye has weak data protection, allowing the details to be hacked, or was it a deliberate strategy? What is true is that people specifically started sharing the data, including addresses and passport and banking details, of 3.6 million Syrians.

Will this spiral out of control inside the country? It is quite possible. The popular mood in Türkiye is certainly in support of action to see the back of the refugees. The burden of hosting 3.6 million

Syrian refugees has exhausted patience among the Turkish population. More Syrian refugees are now looking to cross into Europe, usually on boats to Greek islands. Here too, tensions with host communities are heating up.

All Syrians believe Türkiye wants to send them back to Syria. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has drawn up plans to resettle up to a million refugees in a "safe zone" inside Syria. Reports of tens of people being deported five years ago have now turned into hundreds every day. Those Syrians affected are compelled to sign a "voluntary" return form in Turkish. One told me that the document was neither explained nor translated for them.

This also impacts the situation inside northern Syria, in the areas directly or indirectly controlled by Türkiye. In areas where Turkish support had once been welcomed, Turkish military points have been attacked and Turkish soldiers have fired at protesters, on occasion killing them, for example in Afrin.

All of this comes against the backdrop of a slight realignment of Syrian-Turkish relations. Slowly but surely, the Syrian leadership has worked its way back into the

lifeblood of Middle Eastern politics. Accepted back into the fold of the Arab League in 2023, relations have been restored, if not fully healed, with most of its neighbors and it looks like Türkiye could be next. The signs are that a thaw is on its way. Erdogan's priorities have changed. For years, Türkiye was the center of armed opposition to the Assad regime. Recently, other issues have dominated his horizon, not least the Kurdish issue and, of course, the Russia-Ukraine war.

Rapprochement hints started in about 2022. Erdogan is aware that there is public pressure to start negotiations with the Syrian authorities. The opposition Republican People's Party has been very vocal about this. Russia and Iraq are also pushing for it. Many see this as being more serious than it was in the past.

It will not be a smooth path. Bashar Assad and Erdogan are not likely to have a summit just yet, despite Erdogan declaring this month that he could invite Assad to Türkiye "at any moment." Assad has made it clear that all Turkish forces will need to leave Syria. Yet the direction has been set and, with every step closer, millions of Syrian refugees will be fearing the consequences.

MOST people probably don't know this, but Wikipedia has a page called "List of Israeli assassinations". It begins in July 1956 and stretches over 68 years until today. The majority on the list are Palestinians; among them are famous Palestinian leaders including Ghassan Kanafani of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; Fatah's Khalil Ibrahim al-Wazir — also known as Abu Jihad; Hamas's Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Fathi Shaqaqi.

When looking at the long list, it is impossible not to notice that the number of assassinations and assassination attempts Israel has carried out over the years has increased exponentially: from 14 in the 1970s to well over 150 in the first decade of the new millennium and 24 since January 2020. I was reminded of this list when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called a news conference on July 13 to celebrate Israel's attempt to kill Hamas's military commander Mohammed Deif in Gaza. Israeli fighter jets and drones had just hammered al-Mawasi camp, which now houses an estimated 80,000 displaced Palestinians living in densely populated tents.

Within just a few minutes of the fusillade, the pilots had massacred at least 90 Palestinians, including scores of women and children, while injuring an additional 300 people. All of this occurred in an area Israel had previously designated a "safe zone". As gruesome images of dead bodies charred and shredded to pieces filled social media, reports surfaced that Israel had used several United States-made guided half-tonne bombs.

In his news conference at the Ministry of Defence headquarters in Tel Aviv just a few hours after this bloodbath, Netanyahu admitted that he was "not absolutely certain" that Deif had been killed but maintained that "just the attempt to assassinate Hamas commanders delivers a message to the world, a message that Hamas's days are numbered". Yet even a quick perusal of the "List of Israeli

Neve Gordon

assassinations" makes clear that Netanyahu was speaking with a forked tongue. He knows all too well that Israel's assassination of Hamas's political leaders Sheikh Yassin and Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi or military leaders Yahya Ayyash and Salah Shehade have done very little to weaken the movement and may well have increased its following.

The commission's findings are in line with the laws of armed conflict, which allow, or at least tolerate, the killing of civilians not directly participating in hostilities so long as these killings are not "excessive" in relation to the "concrete and direct" military advantage that the belligerent expects to gain from the attack. This rule, known as the principle of proportionality, is designed to ensure that the ends of a military operation justify the means by weighing the anticipated military advantage against the expected civilian harm. Today, however, we are light years away from the commission's conclusions both with respect to the repertoires of violence Israel has adopted and the legal justifications it now provides.

First, Israel's forms of war-making have changed dramatically since 2002. According to the Israeli organisation Breaking the Silence, which is made up of military veterans, two doctrines have guided the Israeli assaults on Gaza since 2008. The first is the "no casualties doctrine", which stipulates that, for the sake of protecting Israeli soldiers, Palestinian civilians can be killed with impunity; the second doctrine recommends intentionally attacking civilian sites in order to deter Hamas. These doctrines have unsurprisingly led to mass-casualty attacks, which, according to the laws of armed conflict, constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. As a consequence, Israel's military lawyers have had to modify the way they interpret the laws of armed conflict so that they align with the new warfare strategies.

If two decades ago killing 14 civilians when assassinating a Hamas leader was con-

sidered disproportionate and thus a war crime by the Israeli commission of inquiry, in the first weeks after October 7, the military decided that for every junior Hamas operative, it was permissible to kill up to 15 or 20 civilians. If the target was a senior Hamas official, the military "authorised the killing of more than 100 civilians in the assassination of a single commander". This might seem egregious, but an officer in the International Law Department of the Israeli army was very candid about such changes in a 2009 interview for the newspaper Haaretz: "Our goal of military is not to fetter the army, but to give it the tools to win in a lawful manner."

The former head of the department, Colonel Daniel Reisner, also publicly stated this strategy was pursued through "a revision of international law".

"If you do something for long enough, the world will accept it," he said. "The whole of international law is now based on the notion that an act that is forbidden today becomes permissible if executed by enough countries." In other words, the way we calculate proportionality is not determined by some a priori moral edict but rather the norms and customs created by militaries as they adopt new and most often more lethal forms of war-making. Again, Netanyahu knows this all too well. He has stated that he personally approved the al-Mawasi strike after receiving satisfactory information on the potential "collateral damage" and the type of ammunition to be used. What is clear is that as Israel decimates Gaza and kills tens of thousands of people, it is also attempting to recreate the norms of war-making and significantly transform interpretations of the laws of armed conflict.

If Netanyahu and his government succeed in rendering Israel's version of proportionality acceptable among other state actors, then the laws of armed conflict will end up justifying rather than preventing genocidal violence. Indeed, the very architecture of the entire international legal order is now in the balance.



Iftikhar says Pakistan can earn billions by tapping mineral wealth

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President, Iftikhar Ali Malik has said Pakistan can comfortably fetch billions of dollars foreign exchange by fully exploiting its minerals wealth estimated at \$6 trillion dollars.

Talking to delegation of industrialists led by Taimoor Ali, here on Tuesday, he said this immense wealth, if effectively harnessed, has the potential to transform the country's economic landscape. Currently, Pakistan's mining sector is underdeveloped, contributing only a small fraction to the national GDP. To unlock this potential, several strategic measures need to be implemented.

He said investment in geological surveys and

exploration activities was crucial. Comprehensive mapping of mineral resources can attract both domestic and international investors. Pakistan can benefit from collaborations with countries that have advanced mining technologies and expertise, such as Australia and Canada. By creating a favorable investment climate, the government can encourage multinational companies to invest in the exploration and extraction of minerals, he added.

He said developing infrastructure was vital for the mining sector's growth. Efficient transportation networks, including roads and railways, are necessary to transport minerals from remote mining sites to processing facilities and export hubs. Investing in power generation and distribution

infrastructure was also crucial, as mining operations are energy-intensive. Public-private partnerships can play a significant role in developing this infrastructure.

Iftikhar Ali Malik said building a skilled workforce was essential. Establishing training centers and vocational institutes focused on mining-related skills can equip the local population with the necessary expertise. This not only creates job opportunities but also reduces dependency on foreign labor. He said the government must ensure that the benefits of mining are equitably distributed.

Revenue generated from mining should be reinvested in local communities, improving healthcare, education and overall living standards. By adopting

these strategies, Pakistan can fully exploit its mineral wealth, driving economic growth and improving the livelihoods of its citizens. Leader of the delegation Taimoor Malik was of the view that regulatory reforms are essential.

The existing legal and regulatory framework governing the mining sector needs to be streamlined to ensure transparency and efficiency. Simplifying the process for obtaining mining licenses and ensuring clear property rights can significantly reduce bureaucratic hurdles. Additionally, implementing stringent environmental and labor standards will ensure sustainable and ethical mining practices, making the sector more attractive to responsible investors, he concluded.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor arranging and displaying clay pottery on handcart to attract customers at his roadside setup.

Saudia's annual inflation rate rises to 1.5%

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia's annual inflation rate reached 1.5 percent in June compared to the same month last year, driven primarily by rising housing costs, according to the latest data.

The report from the General Authority for Statistics highlighted that the 8.4 percent increase in the prices of housing, water, and electricity, as well as gas, and other fuels significantly contributed to the inflation rate.

Actual housing rents saw an increase of 10.1 percent, with villa rentals rising by 7.9 percent.

This category's substantial weight in the overall index had a considerable impact on the inflation rate.

Saudi Arabia's inflation rate, while influenced by domestic factors such as housing and fuel costs, remains relatively moderate compared to other Gulf Cooperation Council countries, which have faced varying inflationary pressures due to different economic policies and market conditions.

According to the GAS-TAT report, food and beverage prices also saw an increase of 1.1 percent, influenced by a 6.5 percent rise in vegetable prices. The prices of restaurants and hotels rose by 2.4 percent, driven by a 9.8 percent increase in accommodation services.

The education sector witnessed a 1.1 percent increase, mainly due to a 4.1 percent rise in fees for intermediate and secondary education.

Conversely, the prices of furnishing and home equipment decreased by 3.7 percent, influenced by a 6.0 percent decline in furniture, carpets, and flooring prices.

Clothing and footwear prices dropped by 3.6 percent, with ready-made clothing prices falling by 6.3 percent.

Transportation costs also decreased by 2.7 percent, primarily due to a 4.6 percent reduction in vehicle purchase prices.

Communication services saw a slight drop of 0.1 percent.

‘Technology crucial for Pakistan’s sustainable growth’

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer, Mian Kashif Ashfaq has said that technology for development was an urgent need for Pakistan to address its multifaceted challenges and pave the way for sustainable growth.

Talking to overseas Pakistanis investors delegation led by Sheheryar Khan Investment Consular to Milano Italy, here on Tuesday, he said Pakistan faces significant hurdles in education, healthcare, agriculture sectors and governance. Leveraging technology can transform these sectors, enhancing efficiency, accessibility and quality of services.

He said the integration of renewable energy technologies can also address Pakistan's chronic energy shortages and reduce its reliance on fossil fuels.

Investment in solar, wind,

and hydropower can ensure a sustainable and environmentally friendly energy supply. He said the urgent need for technology in Pakistan spans various sectors, offering solutions to pressing issues and opportunities for development. By embracing technological advancements, Pakistan can drive economic growth, improve the quality of life for its citizens, and secure a sustainable future.

He said governance and public service delivery can also be significantly improved through technology. E-governance initiatives can increase transparency, reduce corruption, and streamline administrative processes. Digital platforms for citizen engagement can foster a more inclusive and participatory governance model.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq said agriculture, a backbone of Pakistan's economy, can

benefit immensely from technology. Precision farming techniques, IoT (internet of things) devices, and data analytics can enhance crop yields, optimize resource use, and predict pest infestations. These innovations can lead to increased productivity and food security, crucial for a country with a rapidly growing population. He said in education, technology can bridge the gap between urban and rural areas.

E-learning platforms and digital classrooms can provide quality education to remote regions, reducing disparities. By incorporating digital tools in the curriculum, Pakistan can improve literacy rates and equip its youth with skills relevant to the modern job market. Digital health records can streamline patient management and improve the quality of care, he concluded.

Russia firm Kaspersky quits US after ban

MOSCOW (BBC News): Russian antivirus giant Kaspersky Labs has told BBC News that it is leaving the US after the Biden administration banned sales and distribution of the firm's software.

Kaspersky said it had made the "sad and difficult decision" to leave "as business opportunities in the country are no longer viable".

It comes after Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said last month that Moscow's influence over the company posed a significant risk to US infrastructure and services.

Kaspersky, which had been operating in the US for two decades, has denied the allegations.

"Starting from July 20, 2024 Kaspersky will gradually wind down its US operations and eliminate US-based positions," the firm said in a statement.

Its US website has already stopped selling its antivirus and cybersecurity tools, with a message reading "purchase is unavailable for US customers".

The announcement came after sales and distribution of Kaspersky products were banned in the US.

Ms Raimondo said the US was compelled to take action due to Russia's "capacity and... intent to collect and weaponise the personal information of Americans".

"Kaspersky will generally no longer be able to, among other activities, sell its software within the United States or provide updates to software already in use," the Commerce Department said.

The ruling used broad powers created by the Trump administration to ban or restrict transactions between US firms and technology companies from

"foreign adversary" nations like Russia and China.

It effectively barred downloads of software updates, resales and licensing of the products from 29 September, while new business was to be restricted within 30 days of the announcement.

Sellers and resellers who violate the restrictions will face fines from the Commerce Department.

According to the Commerce Department, the Moscow-headquartered multinational company has offices in 31 countries around the world, servicing more than 400 million users and 270,000 corporate clients in more than 200 countries.

At the time Kaspersky said it intended to pursue "all legally available options" to fight the ban, and denied it engaged in any activity that threatened US security.

Cartier-owner Richemont says China sales tumble 27 per cent

ZURICH (AFP/APP): Cartier-owner Richemont said Tuesday its quarterly sales in China tumbled by 27 percent as the deepening economic malaise in the world's second-largest economy lashes luxury firms.

The Swiss luxury group said overall sales dipped one percent to 5.27 billion euros (\$5.74 billion) in its first quarter that ended June 30, with growth seen in the Americas, Japan and Europe.

But sales in the Asia Pacific region excluding Japan -- Richemont's top sales area -- fell by 19 percent to 1.8 billion euros, and by 27 percent in China, Hong Kong and Macau.

"The decline reflected both the low level of consumer confidence and the strong comparatives ranging from double-digit growth in the mainland to triple digits in Hong Kong and Macau over the prior-year period," the company said in a statement.

Bernstein analyst Luca Solca said the company's performance "confirms lacklustre demand in Mainland China".

Data released Monday showed the Chinese economy's growth slowed to 4.7 percent in the latest quarter that ended June 30, while retail sales growth dropped to two percent in June.

China has become a key market for luxury firms in recent years thanks not only to its rising ranks of millionaires but also the swelling middle class.

But a property market crisis and slowing overall economic growth has chilled luxury spending.

Burberry switched chief executives on Monday as it seeks to stem "disappointing" sales, including a 21 percent drop in comparable stores sales in mainland China last quarter.

Swiss watch group Swatch, which owns a number of luxury brands including Omega, reported

a "sharp drop in demand for luxury goods in China".

Richemont's quarterly performance was carried by its main jewellery division, which saw its growth edge two percent higher to 3.65 billion euros.

That beat the consensus analyst forecast of 3.63 billion euros compiled by Swiss financial news agency AWP.

Analysts viewed Richemont's performance as good given the context and the fact that the same period last year provided a difficult base for comparison.

"Reassuring, robust sales performance from Richemont, given the shock of Burberry and Swatch Group yesterday," said analyst Jean-Philippe Bertschy at Vontobel. "Once again, the Jewellery Maisons are showing great resilience with strong demand across the board," he added.

RBC Capital Markets said "should offer some relief, particularly in a chal-

lenged luxury sector that is showing accelerating signs of divergent brand and category performance."

Richemont shares rebounded from initial losses to stand 1.2 percent higher in late morning trading while the Swiss market was down 0.4 percent overall.

Analyst Jon Cox at asset manager Kepler Cheuvreux told AFP that while the China sales figures are disappointing "the Chinese are buying when they travel as can be seen with strong growth in Japan on the back of tourism".

For Richemont, Japan posted the largest percentage gain in sales, soaring 42 percent to 603 million euros.

Sales rose by 11 percent in the Americas to 1.2 billion euros and added four percent in Europe to 1.2 billion.

"Richemont is one of our preferred picks in luxury amid its jewellery resilience," Cox said.

Royal Mail will deliver letters forever, vows buyer

LONDON (BBC News): The prospective new owner of Royal Mail has said he will not walk away from the requirement to deliver letters throughout the UK six days a week, as long as he is running the service.

"As long as I'm alive, I completely exclude this," Czech billionaire Daniel Kretinsky told the BBC.

Mr Kretinsky has had a £3.6bn offer for Royal Mail accepted by its board.

Shareholders are expected to approve the deal in the coming months, but the government also has a say over whether it goes ahead.

Currently the Universal Service Obligation (USO) requires Royal Mail to deliver letters six days a week throughout the country for the same price. But questions have been raised over whether the service could be reduced in the future.

In an exclusive interview with the BBC, Mr Kretinsky also said he would be willing to share profits with employees, if given the go-ahead to buy

the group.

However, he appeared to reject the idea of employees having a stake in Royal Mail, which unions have called for in exchange for their support.

The Royal Mail board agreed a £3.6bn takeover offer from Mr Kretinsky in May for the 500-year-old organisation, which employs more than 150,000 people. Including assumed debts, the offer is worth £5bn.

But because Royal Mail is a nationally important company, the government has the power to scrutinise and potentially block the deal.

As well as keeping the new government on side, Mr Kretinsky also faces the task of convincing postal unions that the proposed deal will benefit employees.

The USO is a potential sticking point for both the government and unions.

Royal Mail is required by law to deliver letters six days a week and parcels five days a week to every

address in the UK for a fixed price.

How well this has actually been working in practice is a different matter. Ten years ago, 92% of first class post arrived on time. By the end of last year it was down to 74%, according to the regulator Ofcom.

Last year the regulator fined Royal Mail £5.6m for failing to meet its delivery targets.

Royal Mail has been pushing for this obligation to be watered down. It wants to cut second class letter deliveries to every other weekday, saying this will save £300m, and lead to "fewer than 1,000" voluntary redundancies.

'Unconditional commitment'

Mr Kretinsky has committed in writing to honouring the USO, but only for five years.

And after that, in theory, the new owners could just walk away from it.

However, Mr Kretinsky told the BBC: "As long as I'm alive, I completely exclude this, and I'm sure

that anybody that would be my successor would absolutely understand this."

"I say this as an absolutely clear, unconditional commitment: Royal Mail is going to be the provider of Universal Service Obligation in the UK, I would say forever, as long as the service is going to be needed, and as long as we are going to be around."

Mr Kretinsky added that the written five-year commitment was "the longest commitment that has ever been offered in a situation like this".

Another potential stumbling block for the deal, however, is how the company will be structured. Unions would like to see the company renationalised, but Dave Ward, general secretary of the Communication Workers Union (CWU), told the BBC that would be "difficult in the current political and economic environment".

Instead, what the CWU is pushing for is "a different model of ownership" - that

is, where the employees part-own the business.

To get its support for the takeover, the union wants employees to share ownership of the company, along with other concessions including board representation for workers.

It says profit sharing is "not going to be enough to deliver our support and the support of the workforce".

More strikes possible

If the union doesn't get what it wants, it won't rule out industrial action, Mr Ward said. Its members went on strike in 2022 and 2023.

Although Mr Kretinsky said he is "very open" to profit sharing, he is not in favour of shared ownership.

"I don't think the ownership stake is the right model," he said. "The logic is: share of profit, yes, [but an] ownership structure creates a lot of complexity."

"For instance, what happens if the employee leaves? He has shares, he is leaving, he is not working for the company, he [still]

needs remunerating."

Mr Kretinsky said he didn't want to create "some anonymous structure" but instead "remunerate the people who are working for the company, and creating value for the company".

The union is also concerned about job losses and changes to the terms and conditions of postal workers' contracts.

Mr Kretinsky has guaranteed no compulsory redundancies or changes in terms and conditions but only until 2025.

"If we are more successful, and we have more parcels to be delivered, we need not less people, but we need more people," he said. "So really, job cuts are not part of our plan at all."

He said if the management, union and employees work together, "we will be successful".

Another concern is the potential break-up of the business.

The profit for Royal Mail's parent company last year was entirely generated by its German and

Canadian logistics and parcels business, GLS. Royal Mail itself made a loss.

Mr Kretinsky has promised not to split off GLS or load the parent company with excessive debt, although borrowings will rise if the deal goes through.

But he has a way to go to convince the CWU.

"I can't think of any other country in the world that would just hand over its entire postal service to an overseas equity investor," Mr Ward of the CWU said.

However, Mr Kretinsky said that the postal unions "do understand that we are on the same ship, and that we need this ship to be successful, and that if we are there, we don't have any real problems to deal with, because the sky is blue, and it's blue for everybody."

The union cannot stop this deal but the government can block it under the National Security and Investment Act.

Business Secretary

Jonathan Reynolds has said he will scrutinise the assurances and guarantees given and called on Mr Kretinsky to work constructively with the unions.

Mr Kretinsky may say that he and the unions are ultimately on the same ship but, as things stand, they are not on the same page.

Who is Daniel Kretinsky?

Daniel Kretinsky started his career as a lawyer in his hometown of Brno, before moving to Prague.

He then made serious money in Central and Eastern European energy interests.

This includes Eustream, which transports Russian gas via pipelines that run through Ukraine, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

He then diversified into other investments, including an almost 10% stake in UK supermarket chain Sainsbury's and a 27% share in Premier League club West Ham United.

The Czech businessman is worth about £6bn, according to reports.



In brief

Lara names THIS player better than himself, Tendulkar
JAMAICA (Agencies): West Indies legend Brian Lara, who has broken several records during his time as a cricketer, named a player who is believes more gifted than him and even India's Sachin Tendulkar. Lara holds the record for the highest score by a batter in Tests (400) and First Class Cricket (501) while Tendulkar is the all-time leading run-scorer in both Tests (15,921) and ODIs (18,426). However, Lara named his former teammate Carl Hooper the best player he has ever seen in terms of raw talent. "Carl was easily one of the best players I've ever seen. I would say that not even Tendulkar and myself would come close to that talent. Separate Carl's career from playing to captaining and his numbers are very different. As a captain he averaged near to 50, so he enjoyed the responsibility. It's sad that only as a captain did he fulfil his true potential," Lara wrote in his new book, as quoted by ESPNcricinfo. Lara also picked two players each from England and India who he believes can break his record of 400 runs in a Test innings. "There were players in my time who challenged, or at least went past the 300 mark — Virender Sehwag, Chris Gayle, Inzamam-ul-Haq, Sanath Jayasuriya. They were pretty much aggressive players," Lara told The Daily Mail. "How many aggressive players do you have playing today? Especially in the England team. Zak Crawley and Harry Brook. Maybe in the Indian team? Yashviji Jaicwal, Shubman Gill. If they find the right situation, the records could be broken — both of them," he added.

Australia cricketer backs Gautam Gambhir
SYDNEY (Web Desk): Former Australia pacer Brett Lee threw his weight behind the newly-appointed India head coach Gautam Gambhir, stating that the team is "in safe hands" with him. Former opening batter Gambhir, earlier this month, was confirmed as the new India head coach, preceding Rahul Dravid, who stepped down after overseeing the team's perfect T20 World Cup 2024 campaign. The announcement was made by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Honorary Secretary Jay Shah on X, formerly Twitter. "It is with immense pleasure that I welcome Mr [Gautam Gambhir] as the new Head Coach of the Indian Cricket Team," wrote Shah.

Meanwhile, Brett Lee lauded the decision of Gautam Gambhir's appointment as the India head coach while highlighting his successful tenure with the Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR). "He's [Gautam Gambhir] done a terrific job every time he's had an opportunity. The Indian Premier League title with KKR is the best example. He's always been there, always at the top of his game. He finds a way to unite his players and graft his team together," Lee told Times of India. "He builds a solid structure. He has been a terrific player, and his aggression and winning attitude will help India. He has shone internationally as a player. India is in safe hands with Gautam Gambhir as coach. Congratulations to Rahul for finishing on a high."

Gautam Gambhir played a pivotal role in India's success in the 2007 World T20 and ICC Men's ODI World Cup 2011, top-scoring in the finals of both tournaments.



MADRID: (Left to right) Zinedine Zidane, Wilfried Mbatpe, Kylian Mbatpe, Fayza Lamari, Florentino Perez and Pirri during his presentation as new player of Real Madrid at Santiago Bernabéu Stadium.

Mbatpe says dream has come true at Real Madrid unveiling

MADRID (AFP): French superstar Kylian Mbatpe was officially unveiled as a Real Madrid player on Tuesday, telling 80,000 fans "my dream has come true". "I've slept for many years with the dream of playing for Real Madrid and today my dream has come true," Mbatpe told fans gathered in record numbers to greet him at the club's Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

The striker, who had completed his medical earlier on Tuesday morning, signed a five-year contract and was handed a No. 9 shirt by club president Florentino Perez.

Accompanied by his parents watching from the crowd and with a former French hero of the club, Zinedine Zidane, in attendance, Mbatpe was emotional as the crowd chanted his name, and at one point kissed the jersey of the reigning Spanish and European champions.

"My family is happy and my mum is crying," said the 25-year-old former Paris Saint-Germain player. "My dream is to measure up to this club, the greatest club in history," he told the fans. "I will give my life for this club and this crest."

"I'd like to send a message to the children," he continued. "I was like you, I had a dream and today I have fulfilled it. I want to give some advice and that is that with passion you can do anything you want. Today I'm here and next

time it could be one of you."

The unveiling of Real's latest Galactico allowed its fans to continue celebrating following Spain's Euro 2024 triumph on Sunday.

"We would like to welcome an exceptional player who has come to help us continue our winning ways," said Perez. "Welcome to your home."

Real had courted Mbatpe since his early teens. "I know you will never forget that day in December 2012, when Zinedine Zidane invited you to visit Real Madrid City and meet the players you admired so much," said Perez.

Exciting offensive trio Tens of thousands gathered to catch a glimpse of the new signing, matching the record numbers 15 years ago when Cristiano Ronaldo was unveiled.

The free tickets were snapped up rapidly with some fans reportedly trying to resell them to take advantage of the hype surrounding the arrival of arguably the world's best striker.

At Real, Mbatpe will form part of an offensive trio alongside England midfielder Jude Bellingham and Brazil attacker Vinicius Junior under the watch of veteran Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti.

That prospect is already exciting fans of the club who won their 15th Champions League title in June.

Although his new team-

mates began training on Monday, the forward, who captained France during their unsuccessful Euros campaign, will have a few more days off before kicking off his season in the Spanish capital.

Los Blancos begin the defence of their La Liga crown with a match against Real Mallorca on the weekend of August 17-18.

Mbatpe's debut might have to wait until the following week when Real Madrid face Real Valladolid who were recently promoted from the second division.

Number 9 Mbatpe shirts went on sale last Thursday in Real's club shops which are covered with his image.

Mbatpe arrives after a personally disappointing Euros campaign, where he was overshadowed by Spain's new teenage sensation Lamine Yamal of Madrid's rivals Barcelona and France lost to the Spanish in the semi-finals.

That followed a difficult season with PSG following his decision not to renew his contract.

The club is hoping to offset the costs -- a salary of at least 15 million euros (\$16.3 million) per season and a signing bonus of more than 100 million euros -- through sponsorship deals and ticket and merchandise sales.

Mbatpe is hoping the move will finally see him win a Champions League and the Ballon d'Or, two of his lifelong objectives.

Atiq slams Shaheen Afridi over alleged altercation

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan Test cricketer Atiq-uz-Zaman commented on the reports regarding Shaheen Afridi's altercation with batting coach Mohammad Yousuf during the team's tour to Ireland and England before the T20 World Cup 2024.

Atiq, a qualified coach, expressed his disappointment with Shaheen Afridi and emphasized that the pacer should have put his head down and tried not to bowl no-balls in the nets.

"If Mohammad Yousuf bhai said that, Shaheen Afridi shouldn't have made the comments he did. I'm not sure if he made them or not, as these are just rumours. If he did, I'm really disappointed because Yousuf Bhai is a bigger name than Shaheen Afridi," said Atiq-uz-Zaman.

"So, he got to understand that there is something called respect. If the coach instructs you, you should just put your head down and try not to bowl no-ball in the nets," he added.

According to recent reports, Shaheen engaged in a heated argument with batting coach Mohammad Yousuf during the team's tour ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024.

Sources asserted that the incident occurred during Pakistan's net practice at Headingley when Shaheen engaged in a verbal exchange with the former batter.

The batting coach pointed towards Shaheen Afridi's continuous no-balls in the nets, they added. However, the pacer got furious and told Mohammad Yousuf to let him practice and not intervene in his bowling.

According to sources, Shaheen later apologised to the batting coach while the team management also reprimanded him for his misconduct.

However, the incident was termed the heat of the moment and the chapter was closed after Shaheen Afridi apologised to Mohammad Yousuf.

Shadab opens up on recent struggles in int'l cricket

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan all-rounder Shadab Khan commented on his recent struggles with both bat and ball in international cricket but termed it "the beauty of cricket".

Shadab, who is representing Colombo Strikers in the Lanka Premier League (LPL) 2024 has been in a phenomenal touch as the leg-spinner is the leading wicket-taker of the ongoing season with 16 scalps in seven matches.

He has taken three four-wicket hauls in the tournament, with the latest coming in the Strikers' victory over Jaffna Kings.

However, the same was not the case for Shadab Khan in the international circuit as the 25-year-old all-rounder played 12 T20I matches this year, but bowled in only eight

matches, taking a mere three wickets at an average of 73.66. With the bat, he has scored 110 runs in nine outings at an average of 13.75. The only positive is his strike rate, which is slightly over 150.

The all-rounder acknowledged that his recent performances for Pakistan were not up to the mark but reiterated that sometimes a player goes through a rough patch.

"I was struggling for three months. I hadn't taken a wicket in the last seven international games. I came here, started bowling and am now always taking wickets. That is the beauty of cricket," stated Shadab. "You have to enjoy these types of scenarios as well... sometimes you perform, sometimes you don't. But

the process that you follow has to be consistent," he added. Shadab Khan then went on to recall his first outing in the LPL 2024, highlighting the pitch's helpfulness for the spinners before emphasizing the need for variations to flourish in the shortest format.

"The pitch was helping us as it was a bit slow and gripping a bit... But T20 cricket is very hard nowadays, as 200 is easily changeable. As a spinner, you have to have your variations because on flat tracks, if you don't have variations, you can go for runs," Shadab stated.

"But if you have variation, you can take wickets as well as contain runs. So that is very important, and it is also important that you land it in a good area," he added.



TRENT BRIDGE: Brendon McCullum and Ben Stokes share a joke, England vs West Indies training, Mens Test series.

England expect Windies response - Crawley

TRENT BRIDGE (Agencies): Opener Zak Crawley says England are expecting a strong response from West Indies in the second Test after hammering the tourists in the series opener last week.

England went 1-0 up with an innings-and-114-run win at Lord's and can seal the three-match series at Trent Bridge, beginning on Thursday. But West Indies have form for producing shock results, in particular a stunning defeat of Australia in Brisbane earlier this year.

"We know they're a good side," Crawley, 26, told BBC Sport. "They've got some really, really good players in that team, so we're going to have to perform well to beat them."

"We don't take anyone for granted. We have to be sharp and perform like we did at Lord's. It was a really good performance and we want to back that up again."

Nottingham will be England's first Test since the retirement of James

Anderson, who ended his legendary international career at Lord's. England's all-time leading wicket-taker has joined the coaching staff as a bowling mentor and was part of a rain-shortened training session on Tuesday.

Mark Wood has been added to the hosts' squad for the second Test and is vying with Matthew Potts and the uncapped Dillon Pennington to take Anderson's place in the XI.

"He's going into his new role pretty seamlessly," said Crawley of Anderson. "It's normal and he's the same bloke. "I always found he was really helpful to my game anyway, talking to him about how he bowled at me and certain things like that."

West Indies' wicket-keeper Joshua da Silva was the 704th and final wicket of Anderson's Test career when he edged behind in the closing stages of the first Test. "I tried my hardest not to be one of those wickets but unfortunately I

got a good Jimmy seed," said the 26-year-old.

"I told him after the game I was trying really hard, and he had a good laugh. What a legend he is, and I'm happy I don't to have to see him again."

Da Silva was part of the West Indies team that pulled off the victory over Australia at the Gabba, one of the all-time great surprise results to seal a 1-1 series draw. West Indies also bounced back from a huge defeat by England on their tour of 2017 when they secured a memorable victory at Headingley.

"Brisbane is something we can look at. We came back and we won the Test. If we can replicate that, all of us will be really happy," added Da Silva. "It's not going to be easy again. We need to do the right thing, bat for long periods of time and take wickets." West Indies are hopeful Shamar Joseph will be fit for the second Test after the pace bowler struggled with a left hamstring problem at Lord's.

Pakistan Women Cricket squad flies to join Asia Cup

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Women's Cricket Team flew from Jinnah International Airport to Colombo via Dubai to participate in the Asia Cup here on Tuesday.

The Team will play their first match in the Asia Cup against arch-rivals India in Dambulla on July 19.

Pakistan Women's Cricket Team Squad: Nida Dar (captain), Alia Riaz,

Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Gul Feroza, Iram Javed, Muniba Ali, Najiha Alvi, Nashera Sindhu, Umima Sohail, Sadia Iqbal, Sudra Amin, Aroob Shah, Tasma Rabab and Toubha Hasan.

Southgate resigns after England's Euro 2024 loss

LONDON (Agencies): England manager Gareth Southgate has resigned two days after defeat by Spain in the 2024 European Championship final.

The Three Lions lost 2-1 in Berlin on Sunday - their second consecutive Euros final defeat, having been beaten on penalties by Italy at Wembley three years ago.

Southgate, 53, managed his country for 102 games in eight years in charge. His contract was set to expire later this year.

"As a proud Englishman, it has been the honour of my life to play for England and to manage England," said Southgate. "It has meant everything to me, and I have given it my all. "But it's time for change, and for a new chapter."

Football Association chief executive Mark Bullingham said the process to appoint Southgate's successor has started and "we aim to have our new manager confirmed as soon as possible". He added the FA "have an interim solution in place if it is needed" and will not comment further on the process until a new boss is appointed.

England's next match is against the Republic of Ireland in the Nations League on 7 September. BBC sports editor Dan Roan said FA sources sug-

gested they were "very unlikely to restrict the selection process to just English managers".

Under-21 boss Lee Carsley could be a candidate for an interim solution.

Newcastle manager Eddie Howe, former Brighton and Chelsea boss Graham Potter, and ex-Chelsea and Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino are among the early favourites. There is also some speculation around ex-Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp and Thomas Tuchel, who left Bayern Munich at the end of last season. Southgate is the only manager bar 1966 World Cup winner Sir Alf Ramsey to lead the England men's team into a major tournament final.

He managed England at four major tournaments, also reaching the World Cup semi-finals in 2018 and quarter-finals in 2022. In the major tournaments between 1966 and Southgate taking over in 2016, England won six knockout games in total. Under Southgate, England won nine such matches, including two penalty shootout victories.

Pressure mounted on him this summer, with many fans believing he was not getting enough out of a talented group of attacking players. Some supporters threw plastic cups at him after the 0-0 draw with



Slovenia in the final match of the group stage at Euro 2024.

However, he got many of them back outside with their run to the final. "The squad we took to Germany is full of exciting young talent and they can win the trophy we all dream of," added Southgate. "We have the best fans in the world, and their support has meant the world to me. I'm an England fan and I always will be."

"I look forward to watching and celebrating as the players go on to create more special memories and to connect and inspire the nation as we know they can."

"Thank you, England - for everything." The Prince of

Wales, who is president of the FA, thanked Southgate for "creating a team that stands shoulder to shoulder with the world's finest in 2024".

"Thank you for showing humility, compassion, and true leadership under the most intense pressure and scrutiny," he added. "And thank you for being an all-round class act. You should be incredibly proud of what you've achieved."

England and Real Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham said his time playing under Southgate has been "a roller-coaster of amazing emotions that has instilled hope and joy back into our country."

He added: "It was a privilege

being led by someone who is so dedicated and passionate, not only is Gareth easily one of the best coaches in the history of the national team but also an unbelievable human being."

England and Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice said: "Thank you gaffer. It's been a privilege to play for England under your guidance."

"Memories that will stay with me forever. All the best in your next adventure."

England and Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford thanked Southgate for "always believing" in him, adding: "I would like to wish him all the best in his next steps." Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer said Southgate will be "remembered for bringing back the hope and belief the country had been crying out for for so long."

He added: "At every step of the way, he has shouldered the dreams of the country with dignity and honour."

Southgate, who replaced Sam Allardyce after his short-lived spell, won 61 of his 102 games in charge of England, drawing 24 and losing 17.

The former defender, who won 57 caps for England between 1995 and 2004, has been involved in the England set-up since 2013, having managed the under-21s for three

years prior to taking the top job.

His only experience in club management was at Middlesbrough from 2006-2009. Southgate thanked his players and backroom staff, calling assistant Steve Holland "one of the most talented coaches of his generation".

"I joined the FA in 2011, determined to improve English football," he added.

"I hope we get behind the players and the team at St George's Park and the FA who strive every day to improve English football, and understand the power football has to drive positive change."

Bullingham said Southgate had made "the impossible job possible and laid strong foundations for future success".

"We are very proud of everything Gareth and Steve achieved for England, and will be forever grateful to them," added Bullingham. "Over the last eight years they have transformed the England men's team, delivering unforgettable memories for everyone who loves the Three Lions."

"We look back at Gareth's tenure with huge pride — his contribution to the English game, including a significant role in player development, and in culture transformation has been unique."



In brief

Death anniversary of Himayat Ali being observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 5th death anniversary of famous Urdu poet, writer and actor Himayat Ali Shair is being observed on Tuesday. Born in Aurangabad, India on July 14, 1926, he worked for All India Radio and migrated to Pakistan in 1951 to begin his remarkable career with Radio Pakistan at Karachi. His first poetry book was published in 1956 "Aag Main Phool" which received the Presidential Award in 1958. His other collection of poetry includes Mitti Ka Qarz, Tashnagi Ka Safar and Haroon Ki Awaz. In 2007, he published collection of all of his poetry as Kuliyat-e-Shaer. Himayat Ali Shair received the Pride of Performance Award in 2002 for his services for the promotion of art and was also given the Nigar Award for his contribution to films. He died on 16 July 2019 in Toronto, Canada.

Housemaid held over robbery charges

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a significant breakthrough, the police have solved a major heist involving a housemaid, recovering 42 tala gold ornaments valued at over Rs 10 million, as well as domestic and foreign currency totaling Rs 4,64,820 from her possession. The stolen items also included imported shoes, watches, perfumes, hairdressing tools and clothes. According to police spokesman, the incident came to light when the housemaid, Amina Bibi, conspired with her brother Shahzad to rob the house where she worked. Amina, who had the house keys, informed her mother and brother when the homeowners were away. They then broke into the house, stealing the gold, money and other valuables. Due to diligent efforts and human intelligence, the Westridge Police arrested Amina Bibi and Shahzad. SP Potohar Nasir Nawaz stated that efforts are ongoing to apprehend their mother, who is still at large. City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani praised SP Potohar, SDPO Cantt, and the Westridge Police team for their swift action and successful arrest. He emphasized that protecting citizens' life and property was the foremost duty of the police, and they were committed to ensuring all legal measures to bring the culprits to justice.

Pakistani universities join int'l alliance

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a significant move towards advancing agricultural technology through international collaboration, four Pakistani universities—Quaid-i-Azam University, Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University, Sindh Agriculture University, and Ayub Agricultural Research Institute joined the Silk Road Agricultural Education and Research Innovation Alliance. The Alliance came into being at the 9th Silk Road Agricultural Education and Research Cooperation Forum held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from July 9-12, China Economic Net reported on Tuesday. This collaboration aims to foster cooperation between leading institutions in China and Pakistan, focusing on the exchange and joint development of new food crops, vegetable varieties, and medicinal crops. Abdul Ghaffar Shar, a Post-doctoral Research Fellow at Northwest A&F University in China, a founding institution of the alliance, shared insights with China Economic Net.



ISLAMABAD: Women mourners attend the main procession on 9th Muharramul Haram at G-6, in remembrance of the martyrdom (Shahadat) of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA), the grandson of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). —APP Photo

NA Speaker calls for unity on Ashura Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the solemn occasion of Ashura Day, Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq emphasized the significance of Muharram-e-Haram's message, urging scholars and religious leaders to promote peace, self-sacrifice, tolerance, and unity. He highlighted that the Muslim Ummah can overcome its current challenges by embracing the spirit of self-sacrifice exemplified by the martyrs of Karbala. In his message, Sadiq described the incident of Karbala as an enduring testament to faith, bravery, and martyrdom, values

upheld in the Holy Quran.

He called on the Muslim Ummah to foster unity, stressing that only through solidarity and brotherhood can the community address its pressing issues.

Referring to the ongoing aggressions in Kashmir and Palestine, Sadiq condemned the severe state terrorism inflicted upon innocent civilians. He noted that over the past nine months, more than 40,000 Palestinians, including children, women, and the elderly, have been martyred due to Israeli actions.

Similarly, he highlighted the dire situation in

Kashmir, where residents face relentless oppression.

He urged Muslim countries to unite and voice strong opposition against these human rights violations. Sadiq reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast support for the establishment of independent states of Palestine and Kashmir in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

He pledged that Pakistan will continue to provide political, diplomatic, and moral support until these goals are achieved. Deputy Speaker Syed Mir Ghulam Mustafa Shah echoed Sadiq's sentiments, remind-

ing the nation of the unparalleled sacrifices of the martyrs of Karbala.

He praised Hazrat Imam Hussain (a.s.) and his companions for their unwavering stance against falsehood and emphasized that their legacy teaches the importance of fighting against oppression and upholding the truth.

Both leaders called on the nation to honor the martyrs of Karbala by embodying the principles of selflessness and sacrifice for the greater good of humanity, urging a renewed commitment to unity and peace within the Muslim community.

Gillani condemns terrorist attack on Bannu cantonment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani condemned the terrorist attack on Bannu Cantonment and expressed deep condolences and sympathy to the families of the martyred soldiers.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Chairman wished for the speedy recovery of the injured personnel.

Yousaf Raza Gillani praised the effective response of law enforcement agencies, highlighting it as evidence of their selfless and unwavering commitment to the fight against terrorism.

He asserted that anti-state elements would never succeed in their nefarious plans, reaffirming that terrorists would not be allowed to destroy the peace of Pakistan.

He further said that the unparalleled sacrifices made by Pakistan's security forces and citizens in the war against terrorism would not go in vain.

Mohsin Naqvi reviews security for 9th Muharram procession in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi here on Monday visited the main procession of the 9th of Muharram and personally reviewed the security arrangements put in place to protect mourners.

The interior minister inspected the procession route, met with organizers to inquire about arrangements and gave instructions to IG Islamabad Police Ali Nasir Rizvi and CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa regarding security protocols.

He also conducted an aerial inspection of the entire procession route, ensuring that all necessary

measures were in place.

The minister emphasized the importance of maintaining a high level of security throughout the mourning period, instructing the security personnel to remain on duty until the procession's conclusion.

He also issued directives for the implementation of a special security plan across all four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir, ensuring strict adherence to the plan.

The use of drones in processions and gatherings has been banned nationwide.

Mohsin Naqvi highlighted the collaborative efforts of police, administration and law enforcement agen-

cies in ensuring peace and order including the deployment of snipers on rooftops along procession routes.

He assured the public that the federal government was providing all necessary support to maintain peace in Islamabad, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

The minister also instructed the officials to implement an alternative plan for rallies and gatherings in case of rain and to strictly enforce the code of conduct across the country.

Federal Interior Secretary Khurram Ali Agha, DIG and the Deputy Commissioner were also present during the inspection.

Ashura teaches great sacrifices for big causes: Aleem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Privatisation, Abdul Aleem Khan has said that the martyrdom of Shahuda-e-Imam Hussain (RA) is a great and universal lesson for the Muslim Ummah.

In his message on Ashura, he said Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A) stops us to bow before falsehood and gives courage to speak the truth.

Abdul Aleem Khan said that the grandson of the Prophet (PBUH) created the history of courage and bravery in Karbala which humanity will always be proud of because he is a torchbearer for everyone.

He said Ashura teaches us that great sacrifices have to be made for great purposes and we have to pledge mutual unity, inter-faith, harmony and brotherhood on this day.

Themister prayed that

Allah Almighty may give us the opportunity to follow the teachings of Imam Hussain (R.A) in real sense and this day of 10th Muharram has great significance in this regard.

Meanwhile, President Isteqam-e-Pakistan Party Punjab Rana Nazir Ahmed, MPA and General Secretary Shoaib Siddiqui and Central Additional General Secretary Mian Khalid Mehmood have also offered their gratitude to the "Ehl-e-Bayt" who conveyed us the message that we should be guided by the sacrifices of the martyrs of Karbala.

They added that the Prophet's family sacrificed their lives for the survival of Islam and it was the best and brightest example of attaining the will of Allah Almighty. Provincial President Rana Nazir Ahmad Khan, while paying

his regards to the martyrs of Karbala, said that Imam Hussain and his companions were martyred in the field of Karbala and made mankind proud to bear any kind of evil doings.

General Secretary and MPA Shoaib Siddiqui said that without a doubt, the philosophy of "Islam lives after every Karbala" guides our practical life eternally for improvement, while the incident of Karbala teaches us that will of Allah is in the way adopted on 10th Muharram ul Haram.

Central Additional General Secretary Mian Khalid Mahmood said in his message that humanity will always be indebted to the eternal sacrifice of the Prophet's grandson for Islam. He said that today we all have to promote brotherhood and religious tolerance so that we can establish peace in the country.

'Emerging Technologies Centers' to be established at 350 schools soon

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to transform Pakistan into a global IT hub, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training is all set to launch a landmark project aimed at equipping school children with cutting-edge skills in emerging technologies.

According to the Ministry of Education and Professional Training, the project will establish "Emerging Technology Centres" in 350 schools across Islamabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

The initiative is part of the government's strategic planning to strengthen its initiative to make Pakistan a global IT destination.

The centres will serve as catalyst for introducing children to emerging technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and data analytics, preparing them for the increasingly digital landscape they will encounter in their future endeavors.

The project is aimed at developing skills and capacity in the IT sector, preparing students for a digital future, enhancing Pakistan's export and capability in the IT sector, and making Pakistan a global IT destination.

The Emerging Technology Centres will be divided into two facilities - Class A and Class B. Class A facilities will provide

state-of-the-art spaces for co-working and will also function as co-working spaces during off hours to address the challenges faced by freelancers and professionals locally.

Class B facilities will provide STEM, entrepreneurship, and computer science education to 40,000 students in 320 middle, and high schools.

The project is set to revolutionize Pakistan's IT landscape and pave the way for a brighter future for the nation's youth.

This project will be executed by highly trained 175 Tech fellows hired and trained by service providers hired through Open competitive process.

All set to observe 'Ashura' under tight security; 6000 cops, 900 Traffic Wardens to be deployed

RAWALPINDI (APP): All arrangements have been finalized to observe 'Ashura' here on Wednesday, July 17, amid tight security arrangements while over 6000 cops with 900 traffic wardens and 500 rescuers would be deployed.

Rawalpindi district police have finalized all the security arrangements to provide fool-proof security cover to 65 mourning processions and 113 majalis of the district while six main processions of Zuljinnah, Alm, and Tazia would be taken from different areas of Rawalpindi city.

Ashura would be observed with religious fervor and reverence to commemorate the supreme sacrifices rendered by Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and his companions for the cause of Islam. Clerics and religious scholars would highlight the teachings of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and various aspects of the tragedy.

Over 6000 cops would guard 65 mourning processions and 113 majalis of the district. As many as 2900 cops guard the main Ashura procession of Rawalpindi city.

As many as 10,000 security personnel were deployed in Rawalpindi region for Ashura. A total of 209 mourning processions would be taken out in the

Rawalpindi region including 65 in the Chakwal district, 49 in the Attock district, and 30 in the Jhelum district. Special checking of the routes would be completed before the start of the processions and the bomb disposal squad to clear the routes.

The district administration and law enforcers have finalized all necessary arrangements to facilitate the mourners.

The foolproof security arrangements have been finalized for the main 10th Muharram procession of the city which would start from Satellite Town and culminate at Imam Bargah Qadeemi.

The administration on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak had finalized all the arrangements for Muharram including security for 3958 Majalis and 714 processions of Rawalpindi Division.

According to a Commissioner's Office spokesman, six companies of Army, Rangers, and extra police would be on duty in Ashura to deal with any emergency.

He informed that close circuit TV (CCTV) cameras had been installed for full monitoring of category A processions.

He said that a delegation of the Punjab Cabinet Committee on Law and Order, during a

visit was briefed that three-tier security had been laid out to protect processions, including metal detectors, walk-through gates, and physical checking.

The delegation of the cabinet committee, headed by Cabinet Committee Chairman and Punjab Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique, reviewed all the arrangements.

Khawaja Salman Rafiq directed the authorities concerned that a zero-tolerance policy should be adopted towards any violation of the code of conduct of Muharram, adding that the scheduled time and route of the procession should be followed strictly.

He said on the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, the government was making special arrangements for 'Sabeels, Niaz and Langar.' The health authorities had been directed that the best possible arrangements should be made to deal with any emergency.

He informed that apart from monitoring loudspeakers and social media, audio and video recordings of Majalis and processions were being compiled.

He said the procession routes were cleaned, patchwork and road repair work was carried out, and hanging electric wires were fixed.

Apart from this, he said coordination with scholars of all schools of thought had also been ensured, adding that arrangements had been finalized by conducting division-wise tours.

The spokesman further informed that the delegation of the cabinet committee also visited the route of the Ashura procession and inspected the Safe City Centre. The RPO gave a briefing to the cabinet committee and informed that a total of 1,600 cameras in the Safe City had been installed.

On the directives of the CM, an extensive security plan had been put in place for Muharram-Al-Haram, particularly for Ashura. A police spokesman informed that over 2900 security personnel would be deployed to guard the main procession while 3100 cops would provide security cover to other processions and majalis of the district.

Rawalpindi District Police, City Traffic Police (CTP), Rescue-1122 Rawalpindi, and other departments concerned have finalized all the arrangements for 'Youm-e-Ashura.' A special 24/7 control room had also been set up to monitor the security, he said. He informed that strict monitoring of Ashura processions would be conducted as close circuit television

(CCTV) cameras had been installed at routes of main Zuljinnah processions and places where majalis would be held.

He said special contingents of commandos and police officials would also be deployed at trouble points. According to the security plan formulated in this regard, aerial surveillance of 'Ashura' processions would also be conducted to ensure the security of the mourners.

An additional force of Special Branch police, Elite Force, Punjab Constabulary, Women police along with district police would be deployed to ensure security on the 10th of Muharram. Senior police officers were visiting all the routes of the Muharram processions to review the security arrangements, he added.

As many as 51 processions and 185 majalis were also organized on 7th Muharram while all available resources were utilized to ensure security.

According to City Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan, the traffic would be diverted on 48 different routes of the city on 'Ashura'. According to the district emergency officer of Rescue-1122, all the rescuers would remain on special duties in the Rawalpindi district control room, emergency rescue stations with fully equipped

emergency ambulances, fire vehicles, special vehicles, and water bowsters. 20 mobile rescue teams would move with Ashura processions.

A comprehensive plan has been formulated to provide first aid and on-the-spot pre-hospital medical care to the mourners while serious persons would be shifted to nearby hospitals, he added.

He urged the mourners, volunteers, and custodians of Imam Bargahs to cooperate with Rescue-1122 staff.

Emergency officers including trained doctors would supervise the arrangements. Nearly 300 volunteers of Civil Defence would also perform duties on 10th Muharram, said Civil Defence's District Officer.

The Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) has also completed all the arrangements for Ashura.

The spokesperson informed that the board had completed cleanliness work on the route of the main processions and repaired all faulty street lights.

Moreover, leaves of the board staff had been canceled, he said adding that Cantonment General Hospital would remain open round the clock to provide medical assistance to the mourners.

NSIA to establish centers

KABUL (BNA): Officials from the National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) have announced plans to establish offices for the distribution of electronic ID cards in several countries abroad. Mohammad Haleem Rafi, the spokesman for the authority, told Bakhtar News that recently, a team from the NSIA began the process of issuing electronic ID cards to Afghans in the UAE. There are also plans to open offices in Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and several other countries.

The Frontier Post

Muharram 10 1446 — Wednesday, July 17, 2024

Foundation stone laid

FARYAB (BNA): The Ministry of Education has announced the initiation of construction for three fully-equipped schools in the Dawlat-abad and Sabz-Posh districts of Faryab province. In a statement released, the Ministry detailed that the foundation stones for these schools were laid in the aforementioned districts. The total investment for the schools, including essential equipment, is valued at 46 million Afghanis.

Telecom network shuts down during Ashura

KABUL (Khaama Press): Simultaneous with the observance of Ashura ceremonies, reports indicate that the Taliban have completely shut down all telecommunications networks in Kabul, the capital city. According to the reports, Taliban forces have also blocked all roads in western Kabul, claiming to ensure security. The telecommunications networks have been down

in Kabul since Tuesday morning, according to sources. Meanwhile, the Taliban forces have prohibited the movement of residents in western Kabul along with the telecom shutdown. In previous years, the Taliban have also disrupted telecommunications networks in some Afghanistan cities during Ashura. The Taliban have not officially commented on the

telecommunications and internet services shut down. Meanwhile, the Taliban's actions during Ashura underscore ongoing security challenges in Kabul, impacting communication and movement in the capital. The situation raises concerns about broader implications for civilian life and operations in the city amid escalating tensions and security measures.

Afghanistan issues 2m passports in one year

KABUL (Ariana News): As many as 12,000 passports are currently distributed on a daily basis in Afghanistan, which is unprecedented, an Interior Ministry official said on Tuesday. Addressing a press conference in Kabul, the Interior Ministry's director of the passport department, Abdul Karim Hasib, said the process of distributing passports has returned to normal in 15 provinces. He said that in the past year, around two million passports were distributed to citizens in the country.

Hasib also announced that three new passport branches will be inaugurated today (Wednesday) in Kabul. The facilities are located in Darul Aman, Qala-e Zaman Khan and Tangi Tarakhel areas, and each will provide services for 2,000 applicants daily. He also said that medical patients, traders, students seeking scholarships, Umrah pilgrims, truck drivers who cross borders, disabled people, pilots, citizens having foreign resident permits and visas, government officials and national sportspeople can receive emergency passports.

Women give birth outside health facility

KABUL (Ariana News): One-third of pregnant women in Afghanistan give birth outside of a health facility, the United Nations' children agency said. Just over 67 percent of births are attended by a skilled health professional, UNICEF said. Although expectant mothers should have at least four antenatal visits with a skilled provider before giving birth, only one-third of women in Afghanistan do, the agency said.

"When mothers give birth outside a health facility, or without a healthcare professional to assist them, the mother's life is at serious risk," UNICEF said. "If she has a birth complication, such as haemorrhage or fetal distress, there is little chance for a medical professional to intervene." Last month, the World Health Organization reported that Afghanistan faces a staggering daily toll of 24 maternal deaths and 167 infant deaths due to preventable causes.

Bus crash kills 17, injures 34 in Baghlan



BAGHLAN (Ariana News): On Tuesday, officials said. The incident occurred in Takhta Sang area of Khenjan district of Baghlan province on Tuesday morning. Those killed included 12 men, two women and three children, said Ghayour Khadim, head of the intelligence department of the provincial police. He said the bus was travelling from Kabul to Mazar-i-Sharif when it crashed.

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Storms leave at least 35 dead and 230 injured



JALALABAD (Ariana News): Heavy rains and hail have left at least 35 people dead and over 230 injured in Jalalabad city and surrounding districts, in Nangarhar province. Officials from Nangarhar's department of information and culture confirmed the death toll and said the bodies and the injured people have been

taken to Nangarhar Central Hospital and to Nangarhar Provincial Hospital. Early reports indicate at least 400 houses have been destroyed and heavy financial losses have been incurred to local residents and business owners. Officials have however said these figures could rise. Zabihullah Mujahid, the Islamic Emirate's spok-

esman, has expressed his condolences to the affected families of the deceased and said various departments have been ordered to assess the damage, help transport the injured to hospitals, and arrange shelter and food for the affected families. Mujahid said the security forces have also been sent in to assist.

Floods claim five lives, cause damages

KABUL (TOLONews): Floods in the provinces of Kunar, Badakhshan, and Panjshir have claimed the lives of five people and caused significant financial losses. According to officials, dozens of houses, hundreds of acres of agricultural land, and several bridges and roads have been destroyed as a result of these floods. These five people lost their lives in Kunar province. Mohammad Kamgar, the head of the Natural Disasters Management Depart-

ment in Badakhshan, told TOLONews: "The roads for people's movement have been completely destroyed, and no village has open access. Overall, extensive damage has occurred to agricultural lands." Mahboobullah Hamed, an official of the Omar-Saileth Division, said: "People here are in danger, they should be provided with a place to stay. Today or tomorrow, the next flood might come and take away houses and people." Meanwhile, some flood-affected people are request-

ing immediate assistance from the interim government and aid organizations. "Our request from the government is to help the poor and destitute and provide some aid. Remove the mud and silt inside the houses," said Hedayatullah, a flood victim. "Approximately over eighty or ninety residential houses have been completely destroyed, and about eighty to ninety residential houses have been partially destroyed," said Tajuddin, head of the Community Council.

First national labor conference to be organized in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs announced that the first national labor conference, with the participation of caretaker government institutions, the private sector, and international organizations, will be held in Kabul next week. Samiullah Ebrahimi, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, told TOLONews that the factors of unemployment and discussions on practical strategies to create job opportunities in the country will be examined in this conference. The spokesperson for the

Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs added: "This conference will review policies and strategies and strive to implement policies in organizations that provide the necessary facilities for investors. Additionally, these policies and strategies should be job-creating to generate employment." "We consider the rights of workers, and all the laws related to labor and social affairs by the Islamic Emirate, from insurance to the health issues of workers, have been taken into account," Khanjan Alokzay, a member of the board of directors of the Chamber

of Commerce and Investment, told TOLONews. Meanwhile, some experts consider the organization of the national labor conference a significant step towards poverty alleviation and job creation in Afghanistan. But can this conference solve the existing challenges in the country? "Without the movement of the private sector, as well as foreign investment and the help of international organizations, it is difficult to create jobs," said Seyar Quraishi, an economic analyst. Usman, a computer sci-

ence graduate currently engaged in tailoring, said about unemployment: "I applied to government departments but couldn't get a job; finally, I came to this tailor shop." According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in 2024, 23.7 million people in Afghanistan need humanitarian aid, and aid organizations are striving to assist 17 million people. OCHA has also requested a budget of \$3.06 billion from donor countries to assist needy individuals in Afghanistan this year.

Only Afghan Sikh in Khost province

KHOST (TOLONews): Jacked Singh is the only Sikh citizen who is currently living in Khost province. 60-year-old Singh, who has three daughters and one son, is happy to be in the country and says that he has no desire to go abroad. He said if Afghan Sikhs who have gone abroad are given their rights, they will return to the country. Jacked Singh told TOLONews: "Whenever the rights of the people who left the country are secured, they will return to Afghanistan because they have lived in European countries and in Afghanistan, especially in Kabul, it is very good. In Karte Parwan and other areas of Kabul, our people lived in the past."



Singh, who has been selling cooking ingredients on the side of the road in Khost for 40 years, is asking for cooperation in expanding his business. He told TOLONews: "I am asking the government to expand our business, it would be very good because now our work is very limited and there are not many things in this shop, nor do I have the money to build it." In addition to remembering their good memo-

ries of Sikhs and Hindus, the residents of Khost emphasize the need for the protection of their rights. Eidmarjan, a resident of Khost, said: "Lands that were usurped from Hindus should be returned to them, because it is their right. We should not violate the rights of anyone, including Hindus. Hindus and Sikhs, who are few in number and belong to the minority, should be given good service and should be treated properly." The directorate head of information and culture of Khost said that Afghan

Sikhs and Hindus have equal rights with other citizens of the country and in order to return to their properties, a special commission has been appointed in Kabul to return their properties in all provinces. Shabir Ahmad Osmani, the head of Khost's information and culture directorate said: "Hindus and Sikhs who have been living in Afghanistan since the past are citizens of Afghanistan and have equal rights with other Afghans." To restore their rights, the Islamic Emirate has appointed a special

commission. This commission has decided that the lands of Hindus, Sikhs and other minorities in Kabul and other provinces will be freed from land-grabbers and returned to them. He also announced that Hindus and Sikhs returning from other countries should present their documents so that their lands will be handed over to them. An alley in Khost city is known as Old Market. In the past, this bazaar was home to around 620 shops owned by Afghan Sikhs and Hindus.

Drug addicts receiving treatment hopeful to restart normal life

KABUL (Pajhwok): A 29-year-old drug addicted youth has arrived in Afghanistan all the way from the United States of America (USA) and said the process of rehabilitation was simple in Afghanistan compared to the USA. Habibullah Hameed, 29, a resident of Kabul province migrated to the USA 24 years ago, six months earlier he arrived in Afghanistan to undergo anti-drug addiction treatment, he is hospitalized in the Kabul Jangalak Hospital now. Habibullah is student in one of the California University and part time he works in one of the hotels in the city.

He said: "I started taking Hashish when I was 17 years old, I have some friends with them I went out and together we smoked hashish, sometimes we took drinks as well." He said the use of Hashish and alcohol was allowed in the USA and every individual could use them. He said his brother also took drugs and alcohol but he ensured to maintain a proper limit. "I was always thinking to quit taking drugs one day because it gets more and more if not stopped." He said: "May I not be able to give up drug addiction in America, because it was very easy to buy drugs,

it can be found everywhere, so my brother decided to bring me to Afghanistan because I am far away from him, nobody sells, I can't buy from anywhere." In less than six months under treatment, he was feeling better and was assured to control himself against drugs. Habibullah hailed the way of anti-drug treatment in Afghanistan and asked a number of other youths to start anti-drug addiction treatment. But it is not only Habibullah whose shadow of addiction has darkened his life and he is looking for peace and freedom from addiction to regain his life, but Harun

Ahmadi, 27, is also trying to quit addiction. He said: "It's been seven years since I became addicted to drugs because of my bad friends. I started with hashish, then I got to shisha, and finally I started using opium, in the past I tried to quit it but during holidays again I started." Harun studied school until lass 11th was trainee with a mechanic and had a very good life. "Before addiction I had a good life, but after addiction I quit everything, addiction impacted my life to the greater extent, my body got weak and my life was destroyed, but now I have decided to stop drug

and earn Halal bread, I will get married and have a peaceful life." He said that daily he give 300 afs for drugs. Nazar Dad, another drug addict getting treatment in this hospital, said: "I was on duty when I got injured, I received treatment at the hospital but when I went to Badakhshan province I cannot find medicine there so they gave me opium and I was getting relieve, slowly I started opium and shisha, it continued for two years and then I fought with my family and my condition deteriorated." He also termed the use of drug an illicit act and said: "I have experienced

with addiction everything destroys, your family, children everyone hit you, now I have 100 percent decided to stop addiction and regain my life." He said after 45 days of treatment now my health condition has improved. These interviewed persons hailed doctors and hospital workers and said with the support of doctors and hospital staff his health condition improved. It is pertinent to mention that in the 450-bed Jangalak drug addicts hospital 260 addicts are hospitalized. Mohammad Wamq Sharifi, one of the hospital's doctors, said currently 260 addicts are hospitalized

in the hospital. Pointing to the improvement of the quality of treatment for drug addicts in the last three years, he said that every drug addict is hospitalized for 45 days, but if he is unable to quit addiction during this period, he will be hospitalized for 90 days. In the past, when addicts completed their treatment, they were introduced to the Ministry of Labor and Community Affairs to learn a skill, but after graduating from the vocational training courses, they went back to the streets. He added: "Since the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan takeover camps have been created by

the Ministry of Interior in Kandahar and at some places in Kabul, drug addicts during treatment also learn skills." Public Health Ministry's Spokesperson Dr. Sharafat Zaman said that currently 61 drug addiction hospitals were functional in the country in which 20,000 addicts, including women and children, received treatment. He said last year 55,000 drug addicts, including women and children, have been rehabilitated. He said according to a survey in 2017, there were 3.5 million addicts, including 85,000 women, existed in the country.



GAZA: Palestinians looking at the damage following Israeli bombardment of Abu Oraiban school.

Four Pakistanis among 9 killed Oman shooting

MUSCAT (AFP, Reuters): The death toll from a shooting near a Shiite mosque in Oman's capital has climbed to nine, police said Tuesday, adding that the three attackers were also killed.

Earlier, Omani police issued a statement that said Monday's shooting had resulted in the death of at least six individuals. It had also resulted in the "martyrdom of one policeman, and the death of the three perpetrators," with at least 30 other people of other nationalities wounded, Omani police and Pakistani authorities said. Describing the incident in the Wadi al-Kabir district of Oman's capital Muscat as a "terrorist" attack, the Pakistani foreign ministry said 30 injured people were in hospital.

Police have not said whether they have identified a motive or if they had made any arrests related to the attack. "We are heartened that the government of Oman has neutralized the attackers," Pakistan's foreign ministry said in a statement. Pakistan's ambassador to Oman, Imran Ali, visited some of the wounded in the hos-

pital, the embassy posted on social media platform X. In a video message posted on X, he urged Pakistanis in Oman to cooperate with local authorities and avoid the area where the shooting occurred.

One Indian was killed and another was wounded, India's embassy in Oman said on social media platform X. Footage verified by AFP shows people fleeing the Imam Ali Mosque, its minaret visible, as gunshots ring out. The US embassy in Muscat issued a security alert following the shooting and canceled all visa appointments Tuesday.

"US citizens should remain vigilant, monitor local news and heed directions of local authorities," the embassy wrote on social media platform X. Footage verified by AFP shows people fleeing near Imam Ali Mosque, its minaret visible, as gunshots ring out. Police said "all necessary security measures and procedures have been taken to handle the situation" following the attack.

"The authorities are continuing to gather evidence and conduct investigations to uncover the circumstances

surrounding the incident," police added on X. The area was still cordoned off later on Tuesday, with journalists unable to access the mosque, according to an AFP photographer there. Oman has a population of over four million people, more than 40 percent of whom are expatriate workers, according to government statistics. The sultanate has maintained its neutrality in the turbulent region and mediated in disputes, including between the US and Iran.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday expressed his deep grief over the terrorist attack on Imam Bargah Ali bin Abu Talib in Muscat, Oman, resulting in the loss of precious lives, including four Pakistani nationals.

In a post on X, the prime minister posted, "My heart goes out to the families of the victims. I have instructed the Pakistan Embassy in Muscat to extend all possible assistance to the injured and visit the hospitals personally." Pakistan stood in solidarity with the Sultanate of Oman and offered full assistance in the investigation, he further added.

Shabana sworn in as UK's first woman Muslim Lord Chancellor

LONDON: Shabana Mahmood, the United Kingdom's new Lord Chancellor, can be seen dressed in formal court attire at oath-taking ceremony at the Royal Courts of Justice in London.

Shabana Mahmood, a British-Pakistani Kashmiri-origin Birmingham MP, has been sworn in as the United Kingdom's new Lord Chancellor at a ceremony at the Royal Courts of Justice in London. According to the Lancashire Telegraph, Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood has pledged to continue "defending the international rule of law and upholding human rights".

The 43-year-old Labour Party member took to social media to share the news with the world on X and wrote: "Today I was honoured to be sworn in as Lord Chancellor, promising to defend our independent judiciary from interference and undue pressure. 'I will be a champion of the Rule of Law. 900 years into this ancient role, it is more vital than ever before.' Mahmood, who is from Small Heath, Birmingham, became the first first Muslim woman to be appointed to the post, taking her oath of allegiance on the Holy Quran and said in her speech that she was "the first Lord Chancellor to speak Urdu".

She took oath in the presence of Lady Chief Justice Sue Carr, the President of the Supreme Court Robert Reed and the Chancellor of the High Court Julian Flaux. In her speech, Mahmood said the new Labour government would continue "defending the international rule of law and upholding human rights" in line with the European Convention on Human Rights, drawn up after the Second World War. She also acknowledged the challenges faced by the justice system, adding that more should be done to provide access to justice for women and girls "who are the victims of violence and abuse".

Addressing the Lord Chancellor, Carr said: "There will no doubt be challenges and choices to be made today and tomorrow. That is an inevitable feature of governing. 'We will work with you and your ministers as you face these demands. I very much look forward to forging a stable, long-term partnership with you as Lord Chancellor within, of course, constitutional bounds, in the service of justice and the achievement of justice.'" — Agencies

PPP not consulted on PTI's ban: Marri F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Central Information Secretary Shazia Marri said that the PPP was not consulted regarding ban on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Shazia Marri, in a statement in response to the federal government's decision to ban the PTI, said that the PPP was not taken into confidence on this decision. She said that the PPP will soon hold a consultative party meeting over the issue. Shazia Marri was of the view that PTI has to politicize its behaviour and attitude if it calls itself a political party.

It is pertinent to mention here that the federal information minister Ata Tarar has announced that government's decision to ban PTI. Pakistan and PTI cannot co-exist, Tarar said.

Bangladesh shuts schools after six killed in protests

DHAKA (AFP): Bangladesh ordered schools around the country to close indefinitely on Tuesday after six students were killed in violent protests that prompted the mobilisation of paramilitaries to keep order.

Every high school, Islamic seminary and vocational education institute around the country was told to remain shut until further notice following weeks of escalating demonstrations against civil service hiring policies. Tuesday saw a significant escalation in violence as demonstrators and pro-government student groups attacked each other with hurled bricks and bamboo rods, and police dispersed rallies with tear gas and rubber bullets.

Education ministry spokesperson MA Khair told AFP the shutdown order was issued in consideration of "the security of the students". The order does not include Bangladesh's universities, where most students participating in the protests are enrolled, as the education ministry ordinarily does not have the authority to demand their closure.

At least six people were killed on Tuesday as demonstrators mobilised for another day in cities around the country, defying earlier calls by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the supreme court to return to class. Three died in Chittagong and had signs of

"bullet injuries", hospital director Mohammad Taslim Uddin told AFP, adding that another 35 had been injured during clashes in the port city.

Another two died in Dhaka, where rival student groups threw bricks at each other and blocked roads in several key locations that ground traffic to a halt in the megacity of 20 million. Police inspector Bacchu Mia confirmed the deaths to AFP, saying one had succumbed to head injuries, while at least 60 people were also injured. In the northern city of Rangpur, police commissioner M o h a m m a d Moniruzzaman told AFP that a student had been also killed in clashes there.

He did not give details as to how the student died, but said police had fired rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse protesters. Rangpur Medical College hospital director Yunus Ali said "student was brought dead to the hospital by other students". Tauhidul Haque Siam, a student reporter from the city's Rokeya University, told AFP that ruling party supporters had attacked anti-quota protesters, while police fired rubber pellets from shotguns.

"Police opened fire from their shotguns on the protesters," Siam said, adding he had been injured. He said the dead student had been "killed in the firing", but it was not possible to independently verify his

account. As the day wore on and with some key highways around the country blocked by the protesters, authorities deployed the paramilitary Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) force in five major cities including Dhaka and Chittagong. They had been tasked with controlling "the law and order situation in view of the quota protests", a BGB spokesman said.

Tuesday's clashes came a day after confrontations between anti-quota demonstrators and members of the ruling Awami League's student wing that left more than 400 people injured in Dhaka. "We are not here to do violence," one protester in Dhaka, who declined to give their name for fear of reprisal, told AFP. "We simply want our rights. But the ruling party goons are attacking our peaceful protests."

Critics say the scheme benefits children of pro-government groups that back Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, 76, who won her fourth consecutive election in January after a vote without genuine opposition. Amnesty International urged Bangladesh to "immediately guarantee the safety of all peaceful protesters". US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller also denounced the "violence against peaceful protesters", prompting a rebuke from Bangladesh's foreign ministry.

US military destroys five Houthi drones

AL-MUKALLA: US naval forces in the Red Sea destroyed a barrage of drones launched by Yemen's Houthi militia increased drone, boat and missile strikes on ships in international commercial channels.

The US military said in a statement on Tuesday that its forces intercepted three Houthi unmanned aerial vehicles over the Red Sea and two more over Houthi-held areas of war-torn Yemen during the past 24 hours, all of which were aimed against international commercial and navy ships.

"It was determined these UAVs presented an imminent threat to US, coalition forces and merchant vessels in the region. These actions were taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure," US Central Command said on X. During the last 24 hours, the Houthis targeted a Panama-flagged, Israel-owned, Monaco-operated tanker vessel, MT Bentley I, which was transporting vegetable oil from

Russia to China. The militia deployed three surface ships, one explosive-laden drone boat and two small boats, causing no damage to the ship or casualties, according to the US military.

The Houthis subsequently launched a ballistic missile from Yemeni territory toward the same ship in the Red Sea. The Houthis also fired an explosive and remotely controlled boat at the MT Chios Lion, a Greek-operated, Marshall Islands-owned crude oil tanker operating under the Liberian flag in the Red Sea, inflicting damage to the ship but no reported casualties.

The US statement came hours after Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea claimed in a televised statement that the militia's naval, drone and missile forces launched a joint attack against MT Bentley I in the Red Sea, and struck the Chios Lion oil tanker ship with a drone boat. The two ships were targeted because their owners defied the militia's warnings against travel-

ing to Israeli ports.

Sarea said that a third operation was carried out with the assistance of the Iraqi Islamic Resistance, targeting the Olvia ship in the Mediterranean. Olvia was recognized by ship monitoring apps as a crude oil tanker flying the Cyprus flag when it left the Israeli port of Haifa on Saturday.

Since November, the Houthis have fired hundreds of ballistic missiles, drones and drone boats at more than 100 ships on international trade routes near Yemen, forcing major commercial firms to divert ships away from the Red Sea and on to longer and more costly routes via Africa. The Houthis maintain that they solely strike Israeli-linked and Israeli-bound ships to put pressure on Israel to lift its blockade of Gaza. Critics say the Houthis are using Yemenis' fury over Israel's war in Gaza to silence vocal voices calling for salary payments and public service improvements, as well as to recruit fighters. — Arab News



DHAKA: Students carrying a wounded woman at the Dhaka University campus.

Iran open to resuming nuke accord talks: Acting FM

TEHRAN (Reuters): Tehran remains open to resuming negotiations with Washington on restoring their participation in a nuclear agreement, Iran's acting foreign minister told Newsweek magazine in an interview published on Tuesday.

Ali Bagheri Kani's remarks come as he prepares to address the United Nations Security Council in New York. The United States under then-president Donald Trump withdrew in 2018 from the nuclear accord between Iran and six world powers which restricted Tehran's nuclear programmes.

Indirect talks between the US and Tehran to revive the deal have stalled. Iran is still part of the agreement but it has decreased its commitments due to US sanctions imposed on it. Newsweek said: "On the foreign policy front, he (Bagheri Kani) said that Tehran remained open to resuming negotiations with Washington toward restoring mutual participation in a nuclear deal."

However, Iran also intended to foster its deepening ties with China, Russia and neighbouring nations, it quoted him as saying. Iran will also call for greater action against Israel in view of the Gaza bombardment, he said. The Biden administration said last week the United States was not ready to resume nuclear talks with Iran under its new president.

Israeli strikes across Gaza kill 17

CAIRO/GAZA (Reuters): Israeli forces battled Hamas-led fighters in several parts of the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, and Palestinian health officials said at least 17 people were killed in Israeli bombardments of southern and central areas.

The Palestinian Islamist militant group Hamas has accused Israel of stepping up attacks in Gaza to try to derail efforts by Arab mediators and the United States to reach a ceasefire deal. Israel says it is trying to root out Hamas fighters. In Rafah, a southern border city where Israeli forces have been operating since May, five Palestinians were killed in an airstrike on a house. In nearby Khan Younis, a man, his wife and two children were killed, they said.

In the historic Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, at least four Palestinians were killed in separate shelling and aerial strikes in central Gaza, medics said. An Israeli airstrike killed four in Sheikh Zayed in northern Gaza, they said. The Israeli military said troops continued "intelligence-based" activities in Rafah, and that airstrikes had targeted militants, tunnels, and other Hamas military infrastructure.

It said the Israeli air force had struck around 40 targets across the enclave, including sniping and observation posts, military structures, and buildings rigged with explosives. The armed wings of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, a Hamas ally, said their fighters had

attacked Israeli forces in several locations with anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs.

Islamic Jihad's armed wing said it had fired missiles at Sderot in southern Israel. There was no word of any deaths or serious damage. Israel vowed to eradicate Hamas after its militants killed 1,200 people and took over 250 hostages in an attack on southern Israeli communities last Oct. 7, according to Israeli tallies. More than 38,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's retaliatory offensive, according to health authorities in Gaza, much of which has been devastated. Israel also says 326 of its soldiers have been killed in Gaza.

Relatives visited Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza to say farewell to relatives before funerals. "This is so unfair the number of martyrs (victims), every minute there is a martyr," elderly Palestinian Sahar Abu Emeira said. "We're exhausted, we're devastated, we are extremely tired, our patience is over. Whether Hamas or the others (Israel) they need to agree as soon as possible."

Efforts mediated by Egypt and Qatar to end the conflict and release the hostages, as well as Palestinians in Israeli jails, had appeared to be making some progress, negotiators had said. The talks stalled on Saturday after three days of intense negotiations failed to produce a viable outcome, Egyptian security

sources said, and after an Israeli strike targeting Hamas' top military chief, Mohammed Deif.

The attack in the Khan Younis area killed more than 90 people and wounded hundreds, Gaza health authorities said. A Palestinian official close to the negotiations told Reuters Hamas was keen not to be seen as halting the talks despite the stepped-up Israeli attacks. "Hamas wants the war to end, not at any price. It says it has shown the flexibility needed and is pushing the mediators to get Israel to reciprocate," said the official.

Sanam Javed, family shifted to KP house F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Sanam Javed and her family have been shifted to KP House, a guest house in Islamabad.

Sanam Javed is currently enjoying her freedom following a direction of the Islamabad High Court that restrained her arrest till Thursday. The court has also summoned records of cases registered against her. The PTI leader and her family members were welcomed at the KP-House following the direction of Chief Minister KPK, Ali Amin Gandapur. The CM was in contact with the husband and father of Ms Javed.

Trump appears with bandaged ear at Republican convention

WASHINGTON (BBC): With a bandage strapped over one ear, Donald Trump made a triumphant return to the public eye on Monday evening at the Republican National Convention, receiving a rapturous welcome from thousands of supporters two days after an attempt on his life.

The former president entered the convention arena in Milwaukee with a fist raised and to the strains of a live performance of "God Bless the USA". He then slowly walked through cheering crowds of delegates - some with tears in their eyes - before greeting key political allies and members of his family, including three of his children, but not his wife Melania. At moments, the audience pumped their fists and called out "Fight! Fight! Fight!" - echoing Trump's cry after a bullet grazed his ear at a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday.

The Republican nominee for November's presidential contest is riding a wave of political momentum. The Democratic Party has been questioning 81-year-old Joe Biden's candi-



dacy following a poor debate performance last month, while Trump's team has celebrated recent legal victories. At the Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee, the former president listened to about an hour of speeches while sitting next to his running mate and vice-presidential candidate Ohio Senator JD Vance, whose place on the ticket for November's election was announced

only hours before.

Trump did not make a speech but at times appeared moved by the crowd of thousands. He bowed his head in prayer, and mouthed several times: "Thank you, everybody". Supporters and Republican delegates had been waiting for hours for the former president's appearance, which was not officially listed on the schedule for the opening day of the convention, but was widely expected. Among Monday's range of other speakers were the head of the Teamsters labour union Sean O'Brien, who said he was not endorsing any specific party but praised Trump as being "tough" and willing to hear critical voices.

The conference also heard from an ex-Trump critic, the model and rapper Amber Rose, who described her political journey towards the ex-president. She added: "Trump supporters don't care if you're black, white, gay or straight - it's all love." Donald Trump's appearance was the highlight of an eventful first day of the Republican gathering in Wisconsin, one of six bat-

tleground states that will decide the election. Before the convention officially opened, news broke that a federal judge had dismissed criminal charges against Trump for stashing more than 300 classified documents at his Florida resort after his first term in office.

Aileen Cannon, a Trump appointee, ruled that special prosecutor Jack Smith was unlawfully appointed to his role and did not have the authority to bring a 37-count indictment against the former president. It was another victory for the Republican candidate, who now faces no prospect of another criminal trial before Americans go to the polls on 5 November. Soon after the convention opened, nearly 2,500 Republican delegates formally nominated Trump as their presidential candidate during a roll call vote.

In a break with recent tradition, Trump waited until the convention to announce Mr Vance as his vice-presidential pick, and revealed his choice on his Truth Social network on Monday afternoon. The Ohio senator

and author of best-selling memoir Hillbilly Elegy reportedly heard he was selected just minutes before the announcement. He smiled and looked slightly in awe as he walked into the crowd along with his wife Usha, and chatted with the throngs of delegates who surrounded him.

"Of the three [contenders] on the shortlist, I don't think you could have done better," said Greg Simpson, a Republican delegate who lives not far from Vance's childhood home in Middletown, Ohio. But Democrats indicated they would make an issue of Mr Vance's anti-abortion views and connections to big tech during his career as a venture capitalist. Democratic President Joe Biden said in a message posted on X that Mr Vance "talks a big game about working people" but would raise taxes on ordinary Americans while cutting taxes on the rich.

Speaking to reporters he called Mr Vance "a clone of Trump". The president also sat for an interview with NBC News, saying it was a mistake to

have said it "time to put Trump in the bullseye" during a call with donors days before his political rival was nearly killed. But he blamed his opponent for ratcheting up political rhetoric for his denials of the 2020 election result, promises to pardon the rioters who attacked the Capitol on 6 January 2021 and for joking about a serious assault on the husband of Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi.

As Trump remains in Milwaukee and prepares to deliver his closing night convention speech on Thursday night, Mr Biden has resumed his election campaign, flying to Las Vegas for events after a brief pause in rallies following the attack. The first day of the convention was filled with speeches from Republican officials and ordinary supporters selected to bolster the day's theme, the economy. Bobby Bartels, a union leader from New York, told the crowd: "Out of control inflation is squeezing budgets and both violent crime and drug epidemics are pushing people out of our cities, all while Democrats do nothing."