

Elite cop dead, five injured  
F.P. Report

MARDAN: As many as five policemen including inspector were injured and while one Fazal Hayat was dead due to explosion of tyre of Elite Force vehicle near Colonel Sher Khan Interchange, on Thursday. The injured were shifted to Mardan Medical Complex for medical assistance. The funeral prayer of Fazal Hayat at Elite Force personnel was offered with full official honors at Police Line Mardan.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a review meeting on the reforms and digitisation of Federal Board of Revenue.

## Biden likely to quit presidential race

### Schumer, Pelosi ramp up pressure on US President over 2024 election bid

WASHINGTON: Top Democratic leaders in the United States including Chuck Schumer, Hakeem Jeffries and Nancy Pelosi have expressed concerns to President Joe Biden over his ability to win the presidential election in November, according to media reports.

Schumer, the Senate Democratic leader, and Jeffries, the House Democratic leader, told Biden, who is 81 years old, to withdraw from the presidential race, the ABC News broadcaster reported. Schumer made the appeal during a "blunt conversation" with the president in Delaware on Saturday, "making the case it would be best if Biden dropped out of the 2024 presidential race", ABC said, citing a knowledgeable source close to both men.

Hakeem has also expressed similar views directly to Biden, suggesting he should drop out of the race, ABC said, citing a source familiar with the matter. Pelosi, the former House speaker, was meanwhile reported to have told Biden in a recent telephone call that polling indicates he cannot defeat his challenger, Donald Trump, and could even destroy the Democrats' chance of winning the House in November if he continues seeking a second term, according to the CNN broadcaster.

The network cited four sources briefed on the call.

But it said none of the sources indicated if Pelosi told Biden she believes the president should drop out. The reports came as California Representative Adam Schiff became the highest-profile Democrat to publicly urge Biden to drop his re-election bid and new polling from AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research showed nearly two-thirds of Democrats nationwide want the president to step aside and nominate a different candidate.

Schumer's office responded to the report about his meeting with the president with a statement calling it "idle speculation" and said the Democratic Senate leader "conveyed the views of his caucus directly to President Biden on Saturday".

A Pelosi spokesperson told CNN that the former speaker has not spoken to Biden since Friday. White House spokesman Andrew Bates said Biden told Schumer, as well as Jeffries, that "he is the nominee of the party, he plans to win, and looks forward to working with both of them to pass his 100 days agenda to help working families".

Biden, who tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday, has repeatedly rejected calls from Democrats to drop out of the race following his halting performance in a debate last month against Trump. He told one interviewer

recently that only the "Lord Almighty" could persuade him to quit the race.

The White House said that the president is currently self-isolating in Delaware, but will "continue to carry out his duties fully". Biden has "mild symptoms" and was suffering from "general malaise" because of the infection, the White House said. Arshad Hasan, a Democratic political strategist and the founder of Convey Communications, told Al Jazeera there was "handwringing" behind the scenes at all levels of the party over the president's chances.

"We know as Democrats that the stakes are incredibly high," he said. "The contrast between the vision that these two candidates present could not be greater, could not be starker. We've had four years under Trump and they were disastrous. There was a pandemic, unrest in the streets, terrible economy and we've had four years of Biden, which has seen some of the biggest growth and rebound this country has ever seen," he said from Los Angeles.

"So the contrast is there, not just in the economy, but in the future of what we believe our democratic society has to be. The stakes are very high, so people are very concerned, and very sensitive to our chances, as to whether we win or not." — Agencies

## Retd Justice Baqir declines ad hoc judge offer

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Retired Justice Maqbool Baqir has declined to be part of the Supreme Court as an ad hoc judge. In his statement on Thursday, he stated, "I am not joining SC as an ad hoc judge due to personal reasons."

He is the second judge to have declined the position of ad hoc judge in country's highest court. Earlier, former Supreme Court judge, retired Justice Mushir Alam, refused to accept the ad hoc judge offer. As for Justice Baqir, he asserted that "Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) is working with honesty and pure intentions. CJP's decision to appoint ad hoc judges in the apex court is purely legal and constitutional."

He disclosed that "Qazi Faez Isa had discussed this matter with him as SC is being overloaded with political cases." Baqir stated that thousands of cases were pending with the SC and appointment of ad hoc judges at this juncture was meant to sort out the issue of backlog. He said Justices Tariq Masood Khosa and Mazhar Alam Miankhal were very competent and honest.

Justices Tariq Masood Khosa, Mazhar Alam Miankhal, Maqbool Baqir and Mushir Alam were named for appointment in the apex court as ad hoc judges but Baqir and Alam declined the offer. Retired SC judge Mushir Alam had earlier refused to work as an ad hoc judge for a three-year term.

In a letter to the Judicial Commission, 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." He said he served the judiciary for 22 to 23 years and "is now engaged in welfare work". "Given the current circumstances, I am unable to serve as an ad hoc judge," he added.

## PTI to move SJC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar said on Thursday that banning the PTI would result in the ouster of this government.

Speaking to media alongside PTI leaders Omar Ayub Khan, Shibli Faraz and Asad Qaiser after attending joint parliamentary party meeting of the PTI and Sunni-Ittehad Council (SIC), the PTI chief said that they would move the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) against appointment of ad-hoc judges in the apex court. He said that the PTI was a party of 70% Pakistanis as it is present in every nook and corner of the country, adding that it should not be meted out a treatment like this at all forums.

Slamming the decision of appointment of ad-hoc judges in the apex court, the PTI chief said that simultaneous appointment of four ad-hoc judges was tantamount to dent the freedom of judiciary. "This decision is based on mala fide intentions. This is not the time to take such decisions rather a time for listening to SC verdicts. We demand the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to immediately issue our notifications," he emphasised.

ment of ad hoc judges.

However, the PTI termed the move as "dishonesty," as the party's chairman Gohar Ali Khan, in a statement on X on July 16 said: "There is a genuine apprehension that the move is aimed at PTI's reserved seats judgement and its standing as a party." Earlier on Thursday, PTI Secretary-General Omar Ayub Khan, in conversation with journalists in Islamabad, also said that hiring three or four judges won't address the issue of thousands of pending cases.

## Nawaz to consult allies

F.P. Report

MURREE: PML-N President and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has decided to consult the allies to discuss the political situation in the aftermath of Supreme Court verdict on reserved seats. According to sources, the PML-N supremo wanted to consult the allies before convening the party's meeting of senior leadership.

The former three-time prime minister will consult the President Asif Ali Zardari, PML-Q President Ch Shujaat Hussain and other allies to discuss the current political situation. Meanwhile, the lawmakers who had earlier taken oath on reserved seats, have also decided to move the court in personal capacities.

## Govt may invoke Article 17

F.P. Report

LAHORE: PML-N leader and former federal minister Rana Sanaullah has stated that the government has the authority to issue a declaration to ban any political party under Article 17 of the Constitution.

Speaking to media, Rana Sanaullah explained that if the cabinet approves the declaration, it will be submitted to the Supreme Court within 15 days. If the Supreme Court concurs with the declaration, the party in question will be banned. Sanaullah emphasized that the government has the same rights as the PTI, and it is within their constitutional rights to present their case and strive for success. He added that there is no harm in the government attempting to secure its position if it can constitutionally acquire seats.

"baseless".

Meanwhile, Justice (ret'd) Alam's letter addressed to the JCP chairman, states: "After careful deliberation, under present circumstances, it is with a heavy heart that I regret to inform you that I am unable to accept this esteemed appointment." The JCP, chaired by CJP Isa, is set to meet tomorrow (Friday) to consider the appointment of four retired apex court judges, according to the official note which describes the high pendency of cases as the reason for the appoint-

# The Frontier Post

## Imran challenges remand

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has challenged the physical remand granted by an anti-terrorism court in 12 cases. As per details, the petition filed in Lahore High Court argued that the lower court did not thoroughly review the record while granting physical remand, and that the police have already conducted their investigation while the petitioner was in jail.

# FBR detects Rs800b tax refund fraud

## Shehbaz directs increase of Appellate Tribunals to 100 for accelerated tax case handling

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday instructed that the number of Appellate Tribunals be increased to 100 to expedite the resolution of tax cases. Chairing a review meeting on reforms and digitization in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the prime minister also directed an increase in the number of Appellate Tribunals for Customs cases and the creation of a dashboard to evaluate the performance of Tax Appellate Tribunals.

The prime minister stated that tax refund fraud amounting to Rs 800 billion was uncovered in the past four months, and emphasized further improvements to the tax refund system. The prime minister expressed that increasing revenue was achievable through reforms in the FBR. He lamented the unfortunate and unnecessary delays in many of the FBR's reform projects.

The prime minister emphasized zero tolerance for delays in sales tax refund payments and instructed the immediate formulation of a strategy to recover unlawfully issued refunds. The prime minister directed the complete digitization of the Fraud Detection and Investigation Department of the FBR and the development of a strategy to centralize all ongoing reform projects within the FBR.

The prime minister instructed the relevant authorities to employ the latest technology and the best personnel for the digitization of the FBR. Shehbaz Sharif instructed the implementation of a unified sales tax system for all taxpayers by October 2024. The prime minister was briefed that a unified sales tax return system, successfully implemented by the telecom sector, was being introduced for taxpayer convenience. FBR aimed to integrate with revenue authorities across the country through a unified sales tax platform.

The prime minister assured timely funding for upgrading the customs system and directed the FBR to devise a strategy for designing and implementing the new software system. The prime minister was informed about the reforms in Inland Revenue

and Customs, along with the progress achieved in digitizing the FBR in the last eight weeks.

The prime minister was informed that McKinsey, a globally recognized consultant, was overseeing the digitization process of the FBR, and positive outcomes from this initiative have begun to surface. The PM was informed that there were 83,579 tax-related cases amounting to Rs 3.2 trillion pending in various courts and tribunals.

It was conveyed in the forum that during the current government's tenure, several initiatives have been undertaken to handle tax cases. In the past four months alone, courts have settled 63 cases amounting to approximately Rs 44 billion. The prime minister was briefed that modern technology has identified 4.9 million individuals capable of paying taxes. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif instructed to prioritize bringing wealthy individuals and capitalists into the tax net, ensuring no additional burden on the poor.

During the briefing, the PM was informed that since April 1, 2024, 150,000 retailers have been registered using the FBR Trader Friendly mobile phone application. The PM instructed to maintain consultations with retailers to enhance the effectiveness of this system. The prime minister also instructed to prepare proposals for reforming the Pakistan Revenue Automation Authority (PRAL).

The PM was informed that the implementation of the Integrated Transit Trade Management System (ITTMS) project was scheduled to commence from October 2024. Under the ITTMS initiative, International Standard One-Window Facilitation Centers were being set up at the Pak-Afghan borders of Torkham and Chaman.

The development of the Customs Automated Entry-Exit System (AEES) has commenced. AEES will utilize cutting-edge scanning technology and integrate with the web-based One Customs and Pakistan Single Window platforms. The forum was informed that initially, AES will be rolled out at four ports in Karachi and airports in Karachi, Multan, and Peshawar.

## CM reviews matters of taking over CRBC



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Thursday, chaired an important meeting of Irrigation Department which reviewed matters related to handing/ taking over of CRBC (main canal) from WAPDA to the provincial government, and quarters concerned were directed to come up with viable proposals for this purpose as early as possible.

The chief minister on this occasion, also directed the concerned authorities to immediately float the tender for protection works aimed at safeguarding the CRBC from flash floods,

and said that the provincial government has already approved Rs. 62 million for protection works of CRBC main canal.

The Chief Minister further directed them to take pragmatic steps for rehabilitation and desilting of the CRBC main canal and said that the provincial government will also provide funds required for this purpose on a priority basis.

Briefing the participants about small dams projects nearing to completion, it was told that Latamber Dam, district Karak and Jaroba Dam district Nowshera are ready for inauguration, whereas, 91 % work on Pezu Dam, Laki Marwat and 90 % of work on Khattak Banda Dam district Kohat, has been completed. Similarly, Zamir Gul Dam with 91% and Mukh Banda Dam with 88% of physical progress are also in line of completion.

The Chief Minister said that speedy completion of small dams (Due for Completion) projects is the priority of his government and directed the authorities concerned to immediately release the funds required for this purpose. Provincial Minister for Irrigation Aqib Ullah, Principal Secretary to CM Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Irrigation Tahir Orakzai and concerned WAPDA officials attended the meeting. Commissioner D.I. Khan also attended the meeting via video link.

## Imran, Bushra Bibi move IHC against arrest

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi approached the Islamabad High Court (IHC) against their arrest in the Toshakhana case.

On behalf of Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi, the application was filed in the IHC by Barrister Salman Safdar and Khalid Yusuf Chaudhry. Chairman NAB, DG NAB and other officers have been made parties in the petition. The court is requested to declare the arrest illegal. It is also

requested to issue orders for their release and to make the arrest subject to the orders of the High Court in the future.

According to the petition, Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi were arrested without warrant in fake cases for political revenge. It was said in the petition that both the accused were arrested during the hearing of the petitions.

The political opponents are using NAB for political revenge, it said. The high courts have emphasized in their judgments that an arrest cannot be made mere-

ly on the filing of a case, the petition said. It is further stated in the petition that there was an investigation involving Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi and that there was no need to arrest the PTI founder, Bushra Bibi immediately after the release in the Iddat case. There is also a violation of the orders of the High Court.

It should be noted that after the acquittal in the Iddat Nikah case on July 13, the National Accountability Bureau arrested the former PM and his wife in the new reference of Toshakhana.

## PM wishes US President's swift recovery from virus

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday extended good wishes to United States President Joe Biden for his "swift and complete" recovery after he tested positive for COVID-19.

"Wishing President Biden swift and complete recovery from COVID. Good wishes," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline. President Biden's Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, in a statement, said that the president tested positive for COVID-19 following his first event in Las Vegas, where he was scheduled to address a crucial electioneering event ahead of the presidential poll due in November.

The president, who is vaccinated and boosted, is experiencing mild symptoms. He will self-isolate and will continue to carry out all of his duties fully during that time, the press secretary added. "His symptoms remain mild, his respiratory rate is normal at 16, his temperature is normal at 97.8 and his pulse oximetry is normal at 97%. The President has received his first dose of Paxlovid. He will be self-isolating at his home in Rehoboth," according to a note by President Biden's doctor issued by the White House.

The Prime Minister directed the implementation of the AES system at Gwadar Port as well. Present in the meeting were Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Minister of State for Finance Ali Parvaiz Malik, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Jehanzeb, Khan, Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Inshan Afzal, Chairman FBR Malik Amjad Zubair Tiwana, and other senior government officials.

## COAS lauds Chinese army

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Asim Munir said on Thursday Pakistan-China relations were exceptional and had always weathered the vicissitudes of strategic environment with mutual trust and unwavering belief in each other's support.

The army chief expressed the sentiment at the 97th anniversary of the founding of Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) of China, hosted at the GHQ on Thursday. Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong was the chief guest on the occasion. Maj Gen Wang Zhong, Defence Attaché, Chinese Embassy officials and officers from tri-services of Pakistan attended the event.

COAS Munir, while welcoming the Chinese guests, congratulated the PLA and praised its contribution to the Chinese defence, security and nation development. "Relations between Pakistan Army and Peoples Liberation Army are strong and both militaries continue to engage in bilateral military cooperation, demonstrating the iron clad brotherhood between the two countries," the COAS said.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chinese ambassador thanked the COAS for hosting the event on the 97th anniversary of the founding of the PLA. "Pakistani military has always been at the forefront of countering terrorism and has made great sacrifices for the peace and stability of Pakistan and the region," the Chinese ambassador remarked.

"We stand ready to work with our brethren to combat terrorism and firmly believe that no force can destroy the iron-clad friendship between China and Pakistan and the brotherhood between the two militaries," the ambassador said.





HYDERABAD: Chief Minister of Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah attending mourning procession of Ashura.

## Rain expected in Sindh, other parts of country

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Meteorologica Department said on Thursday that monsoon currents from Arabian Sea are penetrating upper and central parts of the country while a westerly wave is present over upper parts and likely to affect central and upper parts from today (evening/night). Thursday weather: Hot and humid weather is expected in most parts of the country. However, rain-windstorm-thundershower is expected at isolated places in Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir, Potohar region and northeast Punjab during evening-night. However, Rain-windstorm-thundershower is expected at isolated places in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Central-Southern Punjab, Southeastern-Lower Sindh and Northeastern Balochistan during afternoon. Friday weather: Hot & humid weather is expected in most parts of the country. However, rain-windstorm/thundershower is expected in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, Potohar region, Islamabad, Punjab, Southeast/Upper Sindh and Northeast Balochistan. Past 24 Hourd Weather:

Hot and humid weather prevailed over most parts of the country. However, rain-wind-thundershower occurred at isolated places in Punjab, Southeast/Lower Sindh, Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad and Kashmir. Rainfall(mm): Punjab: Jhelum 53, Mangla 38, Mandi Bahauddin 27, Rawalpindi (Chaklala 21, Shamsabad 10), Hafizabad 15, Sialkot (City 15, AP 13), Islamabad (Golra 12, ZP 09, Bokra 06, Saidpur 05, AP 02), Gujranwala 11, Gujrat 07, Chakwal, Narowal 03, Attock 01, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa: Peshawar (AP 40, City 28.), Bacha Khan AP 26, Dir (Upper 05), Malamajbba 02, Balakot 01, Kashmir: Kotli 04, Sindh: Chhor 08, Shaheed Benazirabad 05, Sakrand, Mithi, Chachro, Nagarparkar, Dhali 03, Balochistan: Zbali 08. Yesterday's Highest Maximum Temperatures (°C): Turbat 48, Nokkundi, Dalbandin and Sibbi 46. Meanwhile, last night was the hottest recorded in July in Karachi, citing Met Office. The hottest night of July in Karachi set a new record with a temperature of 32.5 degrees Celsius. This surpasses the previous records, where tempera-

tures recorded to 32 degrees Celsius. Earlier on July 17, the minimum temperature in the city reached 32 degrees Celsius, marking the highest nighttime temperature ever recorded in July for Karachi. Partly cloudy weather prevails in the port city today as sea breeze suspended and the mercury could soar to as high as 39° Celsius today. The hot and humid weather boosting the intensity of severe heat as sea winds are suspended. "Current temperature recorded in the city is 35 Celsius and the "feels like" temperature reaching to 46° Celsius. According to the Meteorological Department, the humidity level in the city is 68%, making the heat feel more intense. While the heat remained intense in the city, there was rain forecast with thunderstorms in certain areas. Monsoon currents were said to be entering into Sindh, which could bring some relief to some regions. Westerly winds are also anticipated on Thursday and Friday, possibly influencing the weather patterns. The Met Office has forecast likely restoration of sea breeze in the evening.

## ‘WhatsApp learning program’ to be launched

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The School Education Department in Lahore has decided to launch WhatsApp learning program for teachers and parents in government schools. As per the details, the program, which is being implemented in collaboration with UNICEF, will initially be launched in 10 schools in Lahore. Under the program, 10 parents and 5 teachers from each school will be selected to participate in a 4-week training session. The training aims to improve the educational standards in public schools. The Education Authority has also requested schools to submit a list of interested teachers and parents. The development came after Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz approved public schools' reorganization programme focusing on rehabilitation of government schools across

the province. The Punjab chief minister said that a target has been set to construct and rehabilitate 1,000 grounds of government schools in a period of six months. She directed to start weekly and monthly competitions in government schools. She directed a comprehensive mapping of schools to determine facilities and needs across Punjab. She also called for a plan to regularize 14,000 AEOs (Assistant Education Officers) and SSEs (Secondary School Educators) in Punjab. The chief minister also approved the launch of the Green School Programme, under which each student will plant at least one sapling, and digital mapping of the plants will be completed. Punjab CM comments admin over arrangements, security on Ashura: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Thursday expressed her satisfaction on Ashura Day arrangements

and security for making the occasion peaceful. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif appreciated the provincial ministers and Cabinet Committee on Law & Order. The Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz commended Chief Secretary and his entire team for the excellent arrangements in this regard. Moreover, the CM also appreciated IG police Punjab and the entire police team for the excellent security arrangements on Ashura Day. She appreciated Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners for organizing Niaz and Sabils for the mourners for the first time in Punjab. Maryam Nawaz said that the administration, police and all other institutions worked together as a team. The CM said that ministers monitoring security in divisions and districts on Ashura Day are commendable. Proud of my team, everyone worked well together, Maryam Nawaz Sharif appreciated.

## MQM leaders call on Sindh governor

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Senior leaders of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) Central Committee, including Dr. Farooq Sattar, Syed Mustafa Kamal, and Anees Qaimkhan, called on Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori at the Governor House. According to a statement issued by the Governor House on Thursday, the meeting covered several key issues, including federal cooperation in ongoing development projects in Karachi, challenges faced by traders, unscheduled load shedding, and complaints of overbilling. Mr Tessori emphasized the federal government's full support for the development of Karachi. He highlighted the urgent need for prioritizing infrastructure restoration and development. Additionally, he assured the MQM leaders that he would address the issues of unscheduled load shedding and overbilling with the K-Electric authorities. Dr Farooq Sattar pointed out that the lack of basic facilities in Karachi is causing significant hardship to the public. Syed Mustafa Kamal echoed concerns about the increasing complaints of unscheduled load shedding and overbilling.

Removal of encroachment: At the outset of the meeting, the CM said that the footpaths are meant for the people to move hassle-free on the city roads, but they have been encroached upon under the nose of the administration. "Now, the green belts of the roads have also been encroached upon by the Dhabas and other such make-shift type of settlements. Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi said that the assistant commissioners have started documenting encroachments on the footpaths, roads green belts and even debris put on the roads for under-construction buildings. He added that the administration would submit a detailed plan to the government for removal of the encroachments. At this, the CM said that it was the job of local bodies, local administration and the police not to allow encroachment on the public spaces but "sorry to say I compelled to take up such issues," he said.

Mayor Murtaza Wahab told the CM that he was working on the plan for the removal of encroachment from the KMC roads in a planned manner. "Due to Muharram activities, the tasks could not be taken up," he said and added now it would be completed by removing all kinds of encroachments. This is the city where parking areas of shopping/commercial plazas have been turned into godowns to

## Karachi lawyers' hold protest

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Lawyers from the Insaf Lawyers Forum staged a protest at the city court, voicing their opposition to the proposed appointment of ad hoc judges in the Supreme Court. The demonstration was led by Barrister Fayyaz Soomro, who called for the Pakistan Bar Council to challenge the proposal legally. Barrister Soomro criticized the political motivations behind the suggestion of ad hoc appointments, emphasizing that the Supreme Court's decision in the Al-Jihad Trust case outlines a clear procedure for appointing judges. He argued that appointing judges on an ad hoc basis undermines the delivery of justice and insisted that judges should be appointed permanently from the High Court. The protest highlights a significant divide within the legal community regarding the best approach to maintaining judicial integrity and efficiency.

## Sindh CM sets timelines for removing encroachments

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over a meeting to follow up on the progress of removal of encroachments from the city, Malir Expressway, TP-4, Hub Canal and the removal of encroachments from the footpaths, green belts and roads from the city. Those who attended the meeting include provincial ministers, Saeed Ghani, Zial Lanjar, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, SMBR Baqaullah Unar, MD SSWMB Imtiaz Shah, Secretary Finance Fayaz Jatoi, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, Secretary Planning Khair Mohammad Kalwar, DG SBCA Rasheed Solangi, Special Secretary Local Govt Aisha Hameed, MC Afzal Zaidi, Karachi CEO Water Board Salahuddin, Zubair Channa and PD Malir Expressway Niaz Soomro.

Removal of encroachment: At the outset of the meeting, the CM said that the footpaths are meant for the people to move hassle-free on the city roads, but they have been encroached upon under the nose of the administration. "Now, the green belts of the roads have also been encroached upon by the Dhabas and other such make-shift type of settlements. Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi said that the assistant commissioners have started documenting encroachments on the footpaths, roads green belts and even debris put on the roads for under-construction buildings. He added that the administration would submit a detailed plan to the government for removal of the encroachments. At this, the CM said that it was the job of local bodies, local administration and the police not to allow encroachment on the public spaces but "sorry to say I compelled to take up such issues," he said.

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mint money and the vehicles and bikes were being parked on the roads. "Why the SBCA is silent," he questioned.

DG of the SBCA Rasheed Solangi told the CM that the officers of his authority have started the survey of the commercial plaza where approved parking areas have been converted into godowns. Just after the survey, the plazas would be given notice to restore their parking areas, in case of failure the buildings would be sealed.

The CM said that he had given two weeks to the administration and local bodies to work out a plan for the removal of encroachment and now one week has passed away and the administration has one week left to submit their plan. Malir Expressway: The Chief Minister said that the first segment of the 15-km Malir Expressway from Jam Sadiq Bridge to Shah Faisal would prove to be an alternate road to the airport which was most important for the people of the city.

The PD Malir expressway told the CM that due to some litigation issues the work has been delayed. He requested the CM to give him a month so that he could complete the remaining work of the first segment. The CM directed the PD Malir Expressway to complete all the remaining works by the middle of September so that he could open it for the public in the last week of September.

The CM directed Commissioner Karachi to conduct a detailed survey of the land reclaimed from the Malir Expressway from end-to-end so that it could be documented. He also directed deputy commissioners, local bodies and the police to protect government land and property with heart and soul. "I'll not let anybody grab even an inch of the government land," he said categorically.

TP-4: The CM was told that the water board had mandated the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to be the Transaction Advisor for 120 MIGD Treatment Plant (TP4) along with a recycling plant and pipeline system to be procured under PPP mode.

The Project consists of designing, constructing, and transferring back to KWSC an upstream interceptor sewer of approximate length 22 km; and Designing, Financing, Constructing, Operating, and Transferring

(DFCOT) back to KWSC a wastewater treatment plant with a capacity of up to 120 MIGD, a recycling plant, and a pipeline distribution system to transmit 40 MIGD recycled water to industrial consumers in the Korangi Industrial Area (KIA) for a concession period of 25 years after COD.

The water demand of industries in KIA and Korangi Creek is about 40 MIGD. The Project will help KWSC alleviate the shortage of potable water and bring environmental and public health benefits to Karachi.

The CM directed the DG PPP Unit Asad Zamin to work out a tentative timeline for the TP4 project so that the RFP could be launched in January 2025. "I want you [PPP unit] to complete all the pre-bid to financial close formalities by the end of 2025 to start work.

Hub Canal: Murad Ali Shah reviewed the Hub Canal rehabilitation project and set a timeline for the water board to meet it. He directed the chairman of the Board Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab to mobilize contractor by July 28 and start work in the first week of August. "I'll personally visit the site to witness the start of the work," he said.

The CM said that he wanted to complete work on the new canal by February 2025 and rehabilitate the existing canal and its allied works by the end of April 2025. Similarly, rehabilitation of the pumping station civil, electrical and mechanical works should be done by May 2025, and intersection structures should be completed by the same month.

Mr Shah told the water board to deem it as the commissioning of the pumping stations and canal by June 2025 and "this is the target that it [KWSB] has to achieve.

It may be noted that the Sindh Chief Minister has launched the rehabilitation of the existing canal and construction of a new canal of 100 MGD project for Rs12.72 billion. The rehabilitation of the existing canal would add 35 to 40 MGD water to the system for District West, central and Kemari. The new canal would enhance the capacity of the Hub Canal to 200 MGD.

SSWMB: The CM told the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board to make this city neat and clean. He added that every road, and area of the city must give a hygiene look," he said.

## APHC-AJK seeks Tel's participation in rally

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A delegation of All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter, led by Convener Ghulam Mohammad Safi, met with the team of Tanzeem-e-Islami at Quran Academy in Lahore to request their participation in a rally scheduled for tomorrow.

Besides Ghulam Muhammad Safi, the APHC-AJK delegation included Engineer Mushtaq Mahmood, Sheikh Muhammad Yaqoob, Zahid Safi and Muhammad Shafi Dar. Tanzeem-e-Islami was represented by Nazim-e-Aala Dr Syed Attaur Rahman Arif, Khushaed Anjum, Wasim Ahmed and Raza ul Haq. After introductions, discussions focused on various aspects of the Kashmir dispute.

The APHC-AJK chapter is organizing a rally in Lahore tomorrow in connection with the Accession to Pakistan Day resolution. The event aims to demonstrate the unwavering support of the entire Pakistani nation for the people of Kashmir and to affirm that Kashmir is considered an integral part of Pakistan.

The rally will also honor the sacrifices made by Kashmiris in their struggle for the right to self-determination. It was on 19th July, 1947, when the Kashmir leadership, represented by the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, passed a historic resolution seeking Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. This decision was based on the region's religious, geographical, cultural, and economic ties to Pakistan, as well as the aspirations of the majority population of Jammu and Kashmir.

Meanwhile, an APHC-AJK leaders, Advocate Parvez Shah and Sheikh Yaqoob, met with Dr Sajad Haider, President of Majlis-e-Qaid-e-Azam, in Lahore and discussed with him the prevailing situation of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The leaders emphasized that Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had declared, "Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan," and highlighted the collective responsibility of the Pakistani people to liberate the territory from Indian occupation. Dr. Sajad Haider expressed grave concern over systematic human rights violations in

the occupied territory and the denial of the right to self-determination for the people of Kashmir.

The leaders invited Dr. Haider to attend the rally on July 19, which will commence from Masjid-e-Shuhada and proceed to the Punjab Assembly. Although the ailing president thanked the delegation for their visit, he regretted that his health would prevent him from attending the rally. However, he assured that all party workers would join the rally to show full solidarity with the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

## Ex- PTI MPA arrested

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Former PTI MPA Adeel Khan was apprehended following the cancellation of his bail in connection with three cases linked to the May 9 tragedy, as ordered by the Special Anti-Terrorism Court.

During proceedings at the Anti-Terrorism Complex in Karachi Central Jail, the court mandated Khan's arrest for non-appearance.

## 9-year-old girl allegedly raped

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A disturbing incident has shaken the Surjani area of Karachi, where a 9-year-old girl was allegedly raped. The victim's family reported the crime to the police, who have registered a case against the accused, quack Barkat.

According to the girl's statement to the police, she was forcibly held and made unconscious. When she regained consciousness, she found herself without clothes.

The police have taken the accused into custody, but only after local residents had already caught and tortured him.

The police are now conducting a thorough investigation, including a medical examination of the victim, to determine if a rape occurred.

The authorities are working to ensure justice for the young girl and her family.

Professor passes away: The founder and former chairman of the Department of Mass Communication at the University of Karachi (KU) Professor (retired) Zakaria Sajid passed away on Thursday morning.

## Pakistan hit hard by climate change as temperature rise alarmingly

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan emerges as a nation grappling with the disproportionate impact of climate change despite its relatively minor contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions as the average temperature in Pakistan has increased by 1°C since the 1980s and is projected to continue rising. As one degree Fahrenheit temperature rise in human body causes fever, hence, same way 1°C temperature rise damages agriculture, public health, soil, climate and socio-economic development. According to a report by the Ministry of Finance, climate change has significantly affected the Indus River Delta, situated at the confluence of the Indus River and the Arabian Sea. With increased temperatures and rising temperature volatility, Pakistan will

see increased climate related severities in the future. The most serious effects of climate change in Pakistan are expected to increase severe drought and volatility in extreme precipitation events, leading to more mudslides and landslides. Beyond its NDCs, Pakistan has exceeded mitigation efforts, resulting in an 8.7 percent reduction in emissions between 2016 and 2018.

The government, adhering to the GHG emissions trajectory outlined in Pakistan's NDCs 2016, aims to limit emissions to 1,603 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO2e) by 2030. Pakistan also aims to shift to 60 percent renewable energy and 30 percent electric vehicles by 2030 and altogether ban imported coal.

Pakistan, recognizing the role of nature in climate adaptation and mitigation,

has developed robust natural capital restoration efforts, including the Green Pakistan-Upscaling and Protected Areas Initiative (PAI). These programmes have also enhanced livelihood opportunities for the most vulnerable, including women and youth. In addition, Pakistan has introduced several policy actions focused on mitigating greenhouse gas emissions from high emission sectors like energy and industry.

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Climate change is one of the most significant environmental challenges facing the world. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions resulting from human activities, particularly fossil fuel consumption and deforestation, have increased the concentration of these gases in the atmosphere, leading to irreversible damage to natural resources and ecosystems. Climate

change is expected to devastate the world's poor, as they are both geographically and economically vulnerable, making it more difficult for them to adapt. Despite contributing the least to the problem, developing countries are expected to bear the brunt of the impact of climate change.

Despite accounting for only 0.9 percent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, Pakistan is one of the world's most vulnerable nations to the impacts of climate change. The country faces unpredictable weather patterns, resulting in flash floods, droughts, glacial lake outbursts, intense heat waves, and erratic rainfall.

As a result, its ecosystems and landscapes are deteriorating. Forest fires are increasing, plant and animal species are migrating, and water bodies and wells are depleting due to intensified human activities. In addition, rising sea levels and more intense storms could lead to coastal flooding and erosion, causing the loss

of crucial coastal habitats such as mangroves, which serve as

important nurseries for many fish species.



**GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA**  
**The Khyber Institute of Child Health & Bashir Bikour Memorial Children Hospital**  
**Hayatabad Peshawar**

**CORRIGENDUM / ADDENDUM**

Reference Advertisement INF(P)974/24 dated: 16.05.2024 and 1402/24, appearing in different newspapers. The submission date of the same tender is hereby extended to 08-08-2024 for all Bids at 11:00 AM and Bids will be open at 11:30 AM on the same day in the presence of Tender Opening Committee & bidders.

**Note:** The remaining Terms & Conditions of the previous advertisement shall be same.

**Project Director**  
**KICH & Children Hospital, Hayatabad**  
**Phase V Near Passport Office,**  
**Hayatabad Peshawar**

**INF(P)1735/24**





**PESHAWAR:** Provincial Minister for Libraries and Archives, Meena Khan Afridi Thursday chairing meeting to inaugurate Integrated Library Management System.

## Training for excellence of Anti-Terrorism Courts started

PESHAWAR (APP): A three-day specialized training for excellence of Anti-Terrorism Courts commenced at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Judicial Academy on Thursday.

Twenty six participants including Judges of Anti-Terrorism Courts, District and Sessions Judges, Prosecutors, Police Officers, Investigators and other stakeholders connected with performance of Anti-Terrorism Courts are participating in the training program.

Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, Chief Justice Peshawar High Court/Chairman BoG, graced the inaugural ceremony as the chief guest.

Barrister Ikhtiar Khan, Registrar, PHC, Jehanzeb Shinwari, Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Judicial Academy, Zia ur Rehman, Dean Faculty, and all the Directors of the Academy attended the event.

The Director General of the Academy, in his welcome note, highlighted the concept, objectives and significance of the specialized training program.

He expressed that Anti-Terrorism Courts and the Counter Terrorism Department, with the assistance of Prosecution, play a crucial role in combating terrorism. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the system seems hindered by low rate of convictions and delayed trials.

These issues stem from systemic deficiencies, including poor investigation and poor evidence collection, inadequate skills and resources, witness intimidation, judicial inefficiencies and prosecutorial challenges.

These factors seem contributing to low rate of convictions.

Ultimately, these challenges undermine public confidence in the criminal justice system and hinder the counter-terrorism efforts. Director General Academy further highlighted that the Academy has designed this comprehensive training program with aim and objective to enhance the participants' understanding of terrorism laws, develop their expertise in handling complex evidences, conduct fair and effective trials, foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing amongst the stakeholders, and to promote uniformity in the application of terrorism laws, which would ultimately strengthen the province's counter-terrorism efforts.

Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, the Chief Justice, Peshawar High Court, in his remarks, spoke about the history and need for establishing the Anti-Terrorism Courts in 1997.

As Chief Justice, he assured his commitment in strengthening the courts in terms of capacity building and resources. He applauded the Academy for arranging and conducting the activity.

He encouraged the participants to actively participate in the training to effectively deal with the emerging challenges of deeply organized enterprises of terrorism.

Highlighting the peculiar circumstances of cases of terrorism, the Chief Justice, placed great emphases on the significance of accurate collection of circumstantial evidences by the Investigating officer, and required appreciation of circumstantial evidences by the Anti-Terrorism Courts. The training would conclude on 20th July, 2024.

## Authorities directed to finalize arrangements for plantation drive

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: In a meeting chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) Home & Tribal Affairs Department, Abid Majeed, who also holds the additional charge of the Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, directives were issued to finalize arrangements for an extensive seasonal plantation drive across the province.

The meeting, held at the Civil Secretariat Peshawar, was attended by Secretaries to the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, and officials from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police.

The ACS Abid Majeed emphasized that all government departments and segments of society should be involved in the plantation drive.

He instructed the concerned departments, divisional and district administrations, and the police to mobilize resources and take necessary steps for plantation in their respective jurisdictions. Digital tools, including apps and GPS, will be utilized for timely and accurate reporting and monitoring of plantation activities under the Green Growth Strategy.

The Green Growth Strategy includes an extensive plan to plant trees in schools, colleges, university campuses, judicial complexes, police station premises, industrial estates, and roadside green belts. Public participation will be encouraged and facilitated during the mass plantation drive.

The seasonal plantation drive, scheduled for July, August, and September this year, will focus on planting 35 type of forest, 26 type of ornamental, and seven type of fruit trees, with a priority on fruit tree plantation.

The Forest Department will use 5.726 million seedlings in the drive. Other departments will utilize 1.010 million seedlings through their own programs.

The meeting was informed that 1.733 million seedlings will be distributed to farmers free of cost. A total of 0.469 million seedlings will be planted through mass planting events.

Around 0.252 million seedlings will be planted through VDCs. Defense institutions will plant 1.191 million seedlings.

A target of 0.346 million seedlings has been set for educational, religious, and other specified institutions.

Additionally, planting, sowing, and dibbling will be carried out over an area of 64 acres in the Central Southern Region-I, Hazara Forest Region-II, and Malakand Forest Region-III. A total of 248,717 events will be organized for the plantation drive.

The ACS Home Abid Majeed reiterated the importance of this initiative and urged all stakeholders to actively participate to ensure its success, contributing to green growth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Police praised for maintaining peace during Muharram

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Former Provincial Assembly candidate for PK-74 and former Chairman of Mohmandzai, Haji Malik Lal Sher, has commended the Peshawar police for their tireless efforts in maintaining law and order during the Muharram duties. He expressed his gratitude, stating that it is due to the dedication of the police officers that citizens can sleep peacefully in their homes. In a statement, he further mentioned that the police department is the first and foremost barrier against terrorism and crime. He also appreciated the foolproof arrangements made by the police for Ashura as the situation remained peaceful without any unpleasant incidents, and law and order were maintained. He emphasized that the message of the martyrs of Karbala is to stand firm against oppression, and the Peshawar police are currently upholding this principle. He added that the IG, CCPO, SSP Operations, and other officers and personnel are clearly deserving of praise and government encouragement.

# 3 Mughal era gardens spoiled by encroachment

PESHAWAR (APP): The days were gone when joy of small kids was boundless while seeing colourful butterflies hovering over flowers and dense pipal trees in Wazir Bagh, Shahibagh gardens and Jinnah park where greenery started dying due to improper upkeeping and encroachment besides increased urbanization with scattered plastic bags undermining its beauty.

The chasing butterflies and hide and seek of small children among the seasonal flowers and thickly grown pipal trees used to be a great fun and laughter but all these charms wore off as the time passed by and today Wazirbagh and Shalimar gardens were giving almost a deserted look.

Riaz Khan, a former PST teacher and a resident of Pabbi Nowshera told APP on Thursday that it was heartening to see that Wazir Bagh had lost its pipal trees that were so thick that one would get the impression of night even during broad daylight of summer with children playing around their parents and guardians.

Marred by encroachment and plastic pollution, he said all the three Mughal era gardens in Peshawar City including Jinnah Park have started losing its original grandeur owing to long neglect and urbanization.

The beauty of historical gardens of Shalimar, Wazirbagh and Jinnah Park, which were established during Mughal era in the heart of Peshawar City, were badly affected due to long neglect by the authorities concerned, depriving Peshawarties of the much needed recreational facilities after closure of several cinema houses for business.

The blossom roses, flowers and greenery for which Wazir Bagh, Shalimar Gardens and Jinnah Park (old Canningum park) were known, has started losing its charm with dirt everywhere.

Tourists and historical parks lovers could be extremely disappointed to see the scattered plastic, garbages and dirt pollution at Wazir Bagh that was once known for lush greenery with abundance of flowers and pipal trees besides seasonal flowers that once attracted visitors enjoying its soothing environment during hot weather.

Located at Yakatooth in South of Peshawar City on vast land, Wazirbagh is a great source of recreation for Peshawarties over centuries.

He said the oldest garden used to be comfortable place for senior citizens while sitting under the cold shade of pipal trees in soothing environment coupled with chirping of birds and exchanged views of their life experiences and day to day happenings.

Wazir Bagh was used for morning exercises by Peshawarites due to its awesome walking tracks, lush green lawns and became a unique source of recreation and picnic spot.

"Today, it is disappointing to see missing chirping birds, colourful butterflies and ladybirds due to vanishing of the canopy pipal trees at Wazir Bagh due to lack-luster approach of the local communities, past government, deforestation and improper up keeping."

"Since my childhood, I used to visit this historic park along with my father for exercise on its beautiful tracks snaking through its thickly grown tall pipal trees with people sitting around in sprawled lawns in its pleasant environment," Haseeb Khan, a resident of Peshawar while talking to APP.

Recalling his past memories, he said, tourists were highly impressed by its sprawled lawns, fountains, pods, apricots, peaches, pomegranates trees and colourful flowers.

Shinwaris, Afridis, Mohmands, Shalmani, Bangash, Bajauris and Khattaks besides domestic and foreign tourists used to come here in droves during summer to spend sometime in a relaxed environment under its shady trees.

It was also a great source of study for students of nearby Government Superior Science College due to its conducive environment for sports athletes.

"I came to my favorite garden after 30 years where I was disappointed to see the pathetic condition of its two vast lawns, fountains' pool, dying greenery and withered pipal trees at Wazir Bagh," Riaz said.

He urged the KP government to take cogent measures for its complete rehabilitation, planting of pipal trees and impose complete ban on free movement of people inside the historic garden.

Fixation of entry fee would help check free movement of people besides closing of its football ground to help protect its greenery from further degradation.

Wazir Bagh garden was constructed in 19th century when Prince Shah Mahmood Durrani sent his forces under the command of Sardar Fateh Muhammad Khan Barkzai alias Wazir against his cousin Shah Shuja, who was the ruler of Peshawar.

In 1810, Sardar Fateh Muhammad had toppled Shah Shuja rule and laid the foundation of Wazir Bagh garden.

It has a Royal Durrani graveyard in its South and Tomb of Beejo Bibi, a Mistress son of Emperor Ahmad Shah Abdali nearby, which are attracting tourists and archology lovers. Peshawar is one of the oldest city of South Asia having about 3,000 years old civilization where international merchants of the subcontinent, Afghanistan and Central Asia had stayed in its ancient Qissa Khwani bazaar at nights and swapped tales of love, culture, art & architecture, music and each others' traditions.

They also visited nearby Wazir Bagh, Jinnah Park and Shahi Bagh gardens before their departure to Afghanistan and onward Central Asian Republics through historic Khyber Pass.

British diplomat Sir Alexander Burnes had special love for Wazir Bagh by visiting it in 1832 and rested here. He was highly impressed by its breathtaking natural beauty and lush green lawns.

He said Jinnah Park garden has been restricted due to ill planned construction of BRT where greenery started dying with no flowers these days.

The encroachment land of Wazir Bagh, Jinnah Park and Shalimar gardens need to be retrieved for provision of better environment to Peshawarities.

City Government authorities said under the 'new Peshawar old charm' project, refurbishment of Wazir Bagh garden had been completed.

Under the project, its walking tracks and lawns were improved and a special corner for women and a cafeteria established. Four main enclosures of Wazir Bagh including pavilion, lawns, crisscrossing pavement and fountains' pool refurbished.

Funland and Parda Bagh at Shalimar Gardens on about 176 kanal land at historic Shahi Bagh garden were removed.

Slip roads were built to ensure smooth flow of traffic on roads leading to Wazir Bagh and Shahi Bagh gardens for facilitation of tourists besides revival of centuries-old traditions of Qehwa Khanas (tea rooms) at ancient Qissa Khwani bazaar and installation of heritage plaques and photos in main squares.

The issues of illegally installed billboards, debris of buildings' materials, encroachment, redundant poles, iron structures, rusted vehicles, dysfunctional streetlights, missing lane cat eyes, jumbled up wires of various utilities and poor civic conditions in the vicinity of Wazir Bagh and Shahi Bagh gardens were addressed.

The experts said these Mughal era parks were identity of Peshawar and its upkeeping was imperative to make it again city of flowers.

## Cantonment Board Peshawar ensures smooth Muharram proceedings

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Cantonment Board Peshawar (CBP) provided extensive services to facilitate the Muharram Ul Haram processions and gatherings in the Peshawar Cantt area, showcasing their commitment to public service. The board undertook repair and maintenance work on routes leading to Imambargah Hussainia Hall wa Imamia Masjid, installed additional lights, and conducted road marking and cleanliness activities.

In addition, the fire brigade crew was deployed with three vehicles to tackle any emergency situation. The fire brigade crew was equipped with necessary equipment and personnel to respond to any emergency situation that may arise.

Medical and para-medical staff were also on standby with ambulances to handle any emergent situations. Irfan Ahmed, Cantonment Executive Officer, developed a comprehensive plan to ensure seamless services.

Earlier On the eve of Muharram Ul Haram, Station Commander Peshawar and President of the Cantonment Board, Brigadier Omer Saeed, had given directions to the CBP to ensure the smooth execution of Muharram Ul Haram proceedings in the Peshawar Cantt area. Irfan Ahmed cantonment executive officer framed a comprehensive plan for executing all the activities in efficient manner by assigning responsibility to different officers and officials.

In this connection Mr. Yaddullah Khan Bangash, Vice President of the Cantonment Board, along with elected members Osaid Sethi and Naem Bakhsh, paid visits to Imambargah Hussainia Hall wa Imamia Masjid to ensure the needs of the community were being met. Bibi Amna Zafar, Additional Cantonment Executive Officer, remained in the field to ensure activities were carried out as planned.

The community widely appreciated the CBP's dedication to ensuring a peaceful and smooth Muharram. The successful execution of the proceedings was a testament to the CBP's commitment to public service and their ability to work under pressure.

In a statement, Irfan Ahmed, Cantonment Executive Officer Peshawar, said, "The CBP is committed to providing basic facilities to the community, particularly during significant religious events like Muharram. Our team worked tirelessly to ensure that all necessary arrangements were in place, and we are proud of our efforts in making this event a success."

## KP Govt to establish 400 community schools in selected districts

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: KP Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education, Faisal Khan Tarakai has said that 400 community schools are being set up under Human Capital Investment Project in selected districts of the province.

He was presiding over a progress review meeting on Human Capital Investment Project here on Thursday. Besides, Special Secretary Elementary & Secondary Education, Asfandyar Khattak, Additional Secretary General Abdul Karam, Director Samina Altaf and Project Director Hashmat Ali, other authorities of the department also attended the meeting.

The Provincial Minister said that over 26000 boys and girls would be enrolled in these schools while 500 Early Age Childhood Education Classrooms would also be established wherein over 32000 more boys and girls would be enrolled. Similarly, 150 schools are also being established in selected districts, which will have the capacity of the enrollment of 9000 girls and boys while 11000 more boys and girls would be enrolled under Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) project to benefit 0.3 million boys' and girls' in the province.

Faisal Tarakai said that under the project 0.1 million teachers would be imparted CPD training beside 1500 new selected school leaders, saying all arrangements in this regard have been completed. A digital lab will also be established soon for online courses.

Under the Induction Programme, he said beside imparting training to 9500 teachers, 500 science labs are also been established in the Regional Professional Development Centres while construction work on 872 additional classrooms is in progress. Furthermore, he said that 120 primary schools would be upgraded to middle standard level and 42 middle standard schools to the level of the secondary level. He said that the process of the solarization of the schools and offices of the department and provision of furniture to them is also continue. He said that the rehabilitation of 532 flood affected schools is also part and parcel of the programme. The minister said that beside meeting all requirements of education, the problems of both students and teachers would also be resolved under the project.

## Mineral Association demands withdrawal of mineral tax summary

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Mineral Association of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has demanded that the Chief Minister of KP withdraw the summary on mineral taxation and form a committee comprising stakeholders with the authority to make decisions on all matters related to mines and minerals.

In a letter to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, President of the Mineral Association, Afsar Khan, stated that casting a vote means that the MPA we elected represents our opinions. Therefore, before any law is discussed in Parliament, the concerned MPA should consult with their constituency. Any MPA who gives an opinion without consulting their constituency and participates in decisions affecting people's lives and destinies acts undemocratically within a parliamentary democracy.

The letter further mentioned that provincial legislation had been passed imposing higher taxes on minerals without consulting the leaseholders and investors' MinRel Association. Our elected MPA voted for this legislation without consulting us or their constituencies, which raises concerns.

Additionally, on July 12, 2024, the KP cabinet approved a summary for







## In brief

### Five tourists dead in mishap

ZIARAT (INP): At least five tourists were killed and two sustained injuries on Wednesday when their vehicle met with an accident in Ziarat city of Balochistan. According to police officials, rescue workers arrived at the scene upon receiving information that the tourists' vehicle met with the accident on Domera-Ziarat road. Rescue workers moved the bodies and the injured to the nearby District Head Quarters (DHQ) Hospital. All the victims and injured hailed from Quetta city of Balochistan and had arrived in Ziarat on a tour, police said. Earlier this month, at least two tourist died, while three others injured in a car accident in Chitral. As per details, the incident which claimed the lives of two tourists occurred in Ashrit due to damaged road. According to the locals, the 18 kilometer unfinished road of Lowari tunnel has caused several accident in recent past. On July 12, at least 10 people sustained injuries as tourist van crashed in Daman-e-Koh area of Islamabad. As per details, the incident occurred in Daman-e-Koh where the van carrying tourists from Gujrat overturned due to brake failure, however, miraculously the van didn't plunge into the ravine. The injured were shifted to the nearby hospital where they were given the necessary treatment.

### Residents facing load shedding

**F.P. Report**

SHANGLA: The residents of Shangla are facing 15-hour power outages, and the situation has worsened due to the non-availability of electricity despite providing 100 megawatts from the Khan Khwar Dam. This was claimed by protesters under banner of Shangla youth Forum while claimed the incomplete Kuro Hydropower Project will increase shares of the district in the national grid. The protesters claimed that the load shedding is a form of revenge by the federal government, especially Federal Minister Emir Muqam against the people of Shangla for not supporting them in the recent elections. The residents and business owners are severely affected, and the protesters demanded from the government to take immediate action to resolve the issue. They also mentioned that the electricity infrastructure in Shangla is outdated and needs to be upgraded.

### PPP to mobilize party

**F.P. Report**

MARDAN: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Mardan chapter newly elected president and former National Assembly candidate Asad Khan claimed that mobilizing party workers at ground level is his top priority. PPP president expressed these views while talking to the journalists of Baizi Press Club Shergarh at his residence Hatian House yesterday. Congratulating him, he said that workers are a valuable asset of the party, workers will be respected in the party and the organization will be organized with their suggestions. People's Party has won the hearts of the poor by starting the Benazir Income Support Program for the poor during their government period, which is benefiting marginalized segments in the society.

### Tourists die in road accident

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): Two tourists died and three others injured when their car skidded off the road and fell into a deep gorge near Muzaffarabad in Azad Kashmir on Thursday.



HYDERABAD: A view of sewerage water accumulated on road at Liaquat colony.

## PML-N wishes to finish PTI: Fawad

**F.P. Report**

JHELUM: Former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry said that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders were taken by surprise after the government announced decision to ban the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

Speaking to media, he said that the government will have to state reasons to justify the ban on the Imran Khan-founded party. "Even PML-N leaders were surprised by the announcement of banning the PTI," he said, adding that the country's politics cannot move forward without the PTI founder.

Responding to a question regarding the political environment of Pakistan, he said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz wished to finish the PTI and its founder. However, the former ruling party

managed to secure majority in the election, he added. For Fawad Chaudhry, the country's politics cannot move forward without Imran Khan as majority of Pakistanis stand with the former prime minister.

However, he criticised the PTI's strategy which, according to him, has not helped in releasing Khan from jail. "My criticism is not on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leadership, but on strategy. PTI is a big party but the strategy adopted is not right," he added. Fawad Chaudhry said that the PTI lacked political strategy and was only relying on lawyers.

The politico said that the former ruling party should have made alliance with parties who object the February 8 election. "The political strategy shows what will you do in future. The PTI should have talked to JUI-F, Jamat-e-Islami

and GDA. Even if you don't need to talk, at least give an agenda," Chaudhry added.

According to the former minister, the Imran Khan-founded party should have made an alliance with JUI-F to unit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on a single platform. "JUI-F and PTI have street power to jointly hold protests. The two parties will be able to exert pressure for Imran Khan's release from jail," Fawad Chaudhry said.

It is pertinent to mention that the former minister had earlier asserted that he is still a member of the PTI. "Had I left the party, I would have been minister today on basis of the Forms 47," Chaudhry said. Criticising the current leaders of the PTI, the former federal minister said that Shibli Faraz did not handle the party's affairs and stay at his house for six months.

## Residents demand replacement of wooden bridge

**F.P. Report**

LOWER DIR: The residents of Banr Munda on Thursday complained that the hanging wooden bridge was presenting a dangerous look due to its dilapidated condition and could cause a major human loss if not replaced by a reinforced cement concrete (RCC) bridge.

Talking to local journalists during a visit to the site, the area elders Haji Ibrahim Syed, Muhammad Din, Jamshid and others said the bridge was built by former MPA Haji Bahadar Khan with a cost of Rs 2.4 million during his tenure. They said the concerned contractor and the tehsil municipal administration did not utilize the fund properly. The elders said that dozens of passengers' vehicles passed through the bridge daily. They said that vehicles bound for the Salazro Bajaur also passed through the bridge. The elders said the bridge was rebuilt when it was washed away by floodwater in 2021 but now it presented a dangerous look as the wooden logs had broken and cracked.

The elders said that the PTI MNA Muhammad Bashir Khan was contacted several times in his previous term but he did nothing to replace the wooden bridge to RCC one. They said the bridge was the only source of communication of thousands of the population. They demanded the MNA Bashir Khan and MPA Ubaidur Rehman to approve funds for the RCC bridge so that the issue could be resolved once forever.

## Muharram processions concluded peacefully

**Sahibzada Afridi**

KOHAT: Like other parts of the country, the mourning processions of 10th of Muharram in the entire Kohat division including Kohat, Orakzai, Kurram and Hangu districts concluded peacefully, last day.

Throughout the Muharram ul Haram, Commissioner Kohat Division Muhammad Abid Khan Wazir and Deputy Commissioners of the respective districts were diligent and monitored the security and other arrangements on daily basis and remained in close contact with the people of all schools of thought including the members of peace committees.

Similarly, besides security, drinking facilities were also ensured for the mourners in view of the extreme heat. Commissioner Kohat Division paid special tributes to the Officers, Jawans and personnel of Police, Pak Army and other related departments and institutions including Deputy Commissioners for their exemplary work during Muharram ul Haram and hoped that they would continue to do the same on other important occasions and religious festivals also with the national spirit and passion.

# Illegal travelling agents risks lives of local youths'



**F.P. Report**

LANDI KOTAL: Human activists demanded the government to take stern action against those unlawful travelling agents who put the lives of local youths in danger by sending them illegally abroad in search of jobs. Addressing to a press conference here in Landi Kotal press club district Khyber on Thursday human rights activists Samiullah Afridi, Najeeb Khwarichan, Kitab Shah and Zahir Hussain said that allegedly local illegal travel agents started fleecing the poor youths with their both hands by sending them abroad illicitly.

They maintained that due to excessive unemployment, the local youth community preferred to go

abroad in the search of their best future; however, the majority of locally functional travel agent companies risked youths' lives by sending them without fulfilling international work travelling formalities.

Most of the willing youths were sent abroad on visit visa deceiving by false promises although on their arrival to their destinations, the visitors could not work as he was ineligible due to lack of work permit and as result they engaged in tough jobs where many had suffered a lot, they remarked.

They maintained that overseas Employment Promoters active in major cities of the country were the authorized ones to send the citizens abroad, keeping in view their work efficien-

cy as per demand. The Constitution of the country ensures provision of jobs opportunities and technical education to its citizens but ironically who have no such facility therefore it binding on the State to action against human traffickers, they added.

They urged the parents of the youths, willing to go abroad not to endanger the lives of their children and sent them overseas legally for jobs. They demanded of the Federal Intelligence Agency (FIA) human trafficking wing and other concerned authorities to adopt necessary steps to thwart illegal activities of the unauthorized travelling agents that not only risks lives of the citizens but earns a bad name for the country.

## Tehsil Nazim presents more than Rs39 crore budget

**F.P. Report**

BUNER: Tehsil Nazim Gadezai Salarzai Sher Alam Khan presented Rs39 crore 16 lakh 52 thousand and 214 in the council session for the year 2024-25. In which the non-development budget is 24 crore 42 lakh 10 thousand 9 hundred and 40 rupees while 14 crore 49 lakh 32 thousand rupees have been allocated for development work.

During the budget speech, Tehsil Chairman Sher Alam Khan mentioned the establishment of camp office of TMA in Salarzai at Jowar to solve the problems of the people of Salarzai sub tehsel at their

doorsteps. He also announced the allocation of funds in the budget for the camp office at Jowar in Salarzai.

According to the details, the annual budget meeting of Tehsil Council Gadezai /Salarzai was held under the chairmanship of Convener Salman Khan Yousafzai. The meeting was attended by TMO Gadezai /Salarzai Anwar Shamim Khan and other TMA staff members.

Tehsil Nazim Sher Alam Khan said in his address that the budget will be passed after mutual consultation of all the council members. He shared that

the provincial Finance Department has allocated Rs 10 crore, 59 lakh 32 thousand rupees in the PFC award to Tehsil Gadezai and Rs 7 crore to 23 village councils for public utilities. He said that the development budget will be spent on the welfare of the people.

The convener and the members unanimously demanded from the provincial government to increase the fund of the tehsil council Gadezai Salarzai and village councils too. The presiding officer Salman Khan Yousafzai adjourned the meeting till Friday. On Friday, the members will discuss the budget.

## Police recovers hostage from Kacha area

**F.P. Report**

SHIKARPUR: Police recovered one hostage after heavy cross firing with bandits at Garhi Tegoo in Kacha area of Shikarpur district, on Thursday.

The rescued hostage has been identified as Kamran Pathan son of Hamidullah, a resident of Pashin area of the Balochistan. As soon as the incident was reported, the Deputy Inspector General of Police Range Larkana, Nasir Aftab Pathan issued orders to issue certificates of appreciation for the brave action of the Shikarpur Police Party for the safe recovery of the hostage.

**Cattle grazer killed, 20 buffaloes taken away:** A cattle grazer was shot dead and his livestock stolen by armed assailants in Shikarpur district, police said on Thursday. The inci-

dent occurred in village Ghulam Sarwar Jatoi near Rustam. Assadullah Rajani Jatoi was grazing his cattle when a group of armed men attempted to seize his livestock at gunpoint, police said.

When Jatoi resisted, the assailants opened fire, killing him instantly, and made off with approximately 20 buffaloes, witnesses and police officials reported. Villagers and relatives, alerted by the gunfire, rushed to the scene and transported Jatoi's body to Taluka Hospital Khanpur for an autopsy. The body was later handed over to his family. The family accused members of the Kührani Jatoi tribe of the attack. Police have yet to register a First Information Report (FIR) regarding the incident.

**Minor boy drowns in pond:** An eight-year-old boy drowned in a pond on

Thursday in village Jindodero near Shikarpur, police said.

The boy, Mussab, son of Khadim Punjabi, slipped into the pond while playing near his home, according to a police report. Relatives and villagers pulled him out the water and rushed him to Government Hospital Madeji, where doctors pronounced him dead on arrival.

The boy's parents requested an ambulance from the hospital to transport his body home but were denied, forcing them to carry the body on a motorcycle. A video of the incident went viral on social media, sparking public outrage and criticism of the hospital's management. Local residents and social media users condemned the hospital for failing to provide an ambulance, calling the incident a disgrace.

## Dead body recovered from Shankay dam

**F.P. Report**

KARAK: The dead body youth recovered after 24 hours from Shankay dam by special rescue team called from Peshawar. Taking a selfie in the Shankay dam was fatal. The young man slipped and lost his life. After 24 hours, the body was exhumed. Despite this, the body has not been found.

The teams from Karak have failed to return. All efforts at the local level have been futile. Former Chairman Shaukat Khattak continued searching in the water throughout the night. A special team from Peshawar also came and recovered the body after 24 hours.

**Sexual assailant held:** The accused who sexually assaulted a young boy in the suburbs of Sabirabad police station was arrested

within an hour and the pistol was recovered. Accused's confession of his heinous crime.

According to the details, a local person named (AS) belonging to the suburbs of Sabirabad police station reported to the police that the accused (AR) sexually assaulted his young nine-year-old son (AS). As soon as the incident was reported, District Police Officer Karak Khan Khel directed the police of the concerned police station to register a case and arrest the accused immediately.

On which police conducted raids at various places to arrest the accused, arrested the accused (R) and also recovered a pistol from him. The arrested accused confessed his heinous act. He told the police that when the victim, a nine-year-old boy,

came to buy goods at his shop in the suburbs of Sabirabad, I took advantage of the opportunity and sexually assaulted him by controlling him inside the shop.

## Man found killed

PISHIN (PPI): A man was found killed in Dori Sulemankhail area of Pishin in Balochistan province on Thursday.

The bullet riddled body of the man namely Mula Abdul Ghafar was found lying in Dori Sulemankhail area of Pishin. His body was shifted to Civil Hospital Pishin for completion of necessary medico-legal formalities.





## Toronto cleans up after storm



TORONTO (AP): Cleanup crews worked to get Canada's largest city back to normal, a day after a torrential downpour flooded Toronto's major roadways and left thousands without power. Around Toronto, flooding temporarily closed several major roads and left drivers stranded. Authorities said they rescued at least 14 people from flooding on the Don Valley Parkway.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called flooding "a significant event," and said the city and surrounding area need to be prepared for similar disruptions in the future with better infrastructure. "With climate change there are going to be more extreme weather events," he said at a news conference in Toronto.

Deluge also caused commuter havoc, with massive flooding shutting down several major routes as well as Toronto's Union Station, Don Valley Parkway, and Lake Shore Boulevard. All have since reopened after the floodwaters dispersed. There were no reported injuries, but the scale of the disruption was evident in a

series of images showing washed out roads with cars nearly submerged in water. In Mississauga, flooding forced the evacuation of about 113 residents from the Tyndall nursing home, the fire service said.

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority said water levels in the Don River are falling as the cleanup continues, but caution is still required around all bodies of water. The authority said in a statement that some rivers within the greater Toronto area are still experiencing higher flows of water due to heavy rainfall, causing hazardous conditions including slippery and unstable river banks. At the height of the storm, more than 100 millimeters (4 inches) of rain fell in certain areas, it said. The influential Canadian rapper Drake was among the many Toronto residents impacted by the extreme weather, taking to Instagram to share a video of ankle-deep brown water flooding a room in his mansion.

## Ex-NK diplomat appointed a vice minister in S Korea

SEOUL (AP): South Korea's president on Thursday appointed a former North Korean diplomat as a vice minister, the highest-level government job for any of the thousands of North Koreans who have resettled in South Korea.

Tae Yongho was a minister of the North Korean Embassy in London when he defected to South Korea in 2016. Tae is the highest-ranking North Korean who has resettled in South Korea in recent years. He has said he did so because he didn't want his children to live "miserable" lives in North Korea and he fell into "despair" over leader Kim Jong Un's executions of officials and nuclear ambitions. North Korea called him "human scum" and accused him of embezzling government money and committing other crimes.

President Yoon Suk Yeol appointed Tae secretary general the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council, which gives the

president policy advice on peaceful Korean unification. The appointment made Tae the first North Korean defector appointed to a vice-ministerial job in South Korea, among about 34,000 North Koreans who have resettled in South Korea, according to Seoul's Unification Ministry.

In 2020, Tae was elected to South Korea's parliament. There have been other North Korean defectors who have served as lawmakers in South Korea. Yoon's office said in a statement that Tae was the right person for the post because he can utilize his living experience in North Korea and work experiences as a member of South Korea's parliament's committee on foreign policy and unification issues.

Most of the defectors left North Korea after a devastating famine in the mid-1990s. Upon arrival in South Korea, North Korean defectors are given citizenships, almost-free apartments, resettlement money

and other benefits. But coming from authoritarian, impoverished and nominally socialist North Korea, many experience diverse discrimination and severe difficulties in adjusting to new lives in capitalistic, highly competitive South Korea, according to their interviews and surveys. Yoon promised to provide greater government support to improve the lives of North Korean defectors on the inaugural "North Korean Defectors' Day". Most of the North Korean defectors are women from the North's poorer northern regions along the a long, porous border with China. But in recent years, the number of North Korean elites to flee to South Korea has steadily increased, according to the Unification Ministry.

South Korea's spy agency said that Ri Il Kyu, a counselor of political affairs at the North Korean Embassy in Cuba, had defected to South Korea last November.

## Russia denies offensive in Kharkiv failing

MOSCOW: Russia has denied its ground offensive on Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region is failing after an official said he would seal off border villages to shield them from Ukrainian shelling. Belgorod's regional governor, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said that civilian access to 14 Russian border villages would be restricted given the ongoing intensity of the attacks.

Asked if this meant that the Kharkiv operation had failed, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "No, it doesn't." "This operation is ongoing, it will continue until it has been successfully completed," he told reporters. "But while it has not been completed, barbaric attacks by the Kyiv regime on civilian infrastructure continue. In order to take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of the population, new practices are being introduced," he said. In May, Russia launched a surprise attack on Kharkiv, which neigh-

bours Russia's Belgorod region, in a bid to push Ukrainian forces back and establish what Russian President Vladimir Putin called a "buffer zone". But the Institute for the Study of War, a United States think-tank, said Ukrainian forces are largely holding back the Russian push around Kharkiv city. City officials announced that they will build a series of underground schools to protect children from Russian shelling. Announcing the safety measures, Belgorod's governor said that more than 200 people had been killed and hundreds more wounded in the region due to Ukrainian shelling. He said entry to the border area would be limited from next Tuesday, with only adult men wearing bullet-proof vests and helmets permitted to pass through checkpoints.

"I hope you will agree that it is unacceptable to let women and children into settlements that are shelled

every day," Gladkov said. Last week, Ukrainian strikes in the Belgorod region also killed four people in a 24-hour period and injured 20 others. Ukraine has argued that it is justified in its responses to Russia's attacks and increased targeting of Russian territory throughout the conflict. Ukraine was also forced to scramble troops to reinforce the area after Russia launched its new offensive. Both countries exchanged 95 prisoners of war (POWs) each, said Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russia's Ministry of Defence. The swap was the 54th since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and it was brokered by the United Arab Emirates. Neither side has disclosed how many POWs there are in total, but they have carried out periodic prisoner swaps via intermediaries since the war began nearly two years ago, despite the absence of any peace talks. — Aljazeera

## White House hails DR Congo truce extension

WASHINGTON (Reuters): A humanitarian truce in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has been extended by 15 days until 11.59 p.m. local time on Aug. 3, the White House said, amid efforts to end the conflict between government troops and Rwanda-backed M23 rebels.

North Kivu province has been battling the M23 insurgency for more than two years as well as other militia violence. Congo, the United Nations and Western powers have repeatedly accused Rwanda of supporting M23 with its own troops and weapons, which it denies. Rwanda accuses Congo of financing and fighting alongside a Hutu rebel group, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), which has attacked Tutsis in both countries.

M23 says it is fighting to protect Tutsis from rivals like FDLR, whose ranks include Hutu extremists who fled to Congo after participating in the 1994 genocide targeting Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda. "We commit to working with the Governments of the DRC, Rwanda, and Angola to use this truce extension to outline a series of steps to reach a durable cessation of hostilities..." White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said in a statement.

## Russia and Ukraine swap 95 prisoners of war

KYIV (AP): Ukraine and Russia exchanged 95 prisoners of war each, officials in both countries said, three weeks after their last swap and as part of what have been occasional agreements to send captured troops home. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Russian Defense Ministry reported the exchange.

The POW swap was the 54th since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbor in February 2022. Officials from the warring countries meet only when they swap their dead and POWs, after lengthy preparation and diplomacy. Neither Ukraine nor Russia discloses how many POWs there are in total. Zelenskyy said in a post on the Telegram messaging service that the United Arab Emirates had again brokered the agreements. The UAE has said it maintains friendly relations with both Moscow and Kyiv.

Zelenskyy posted photos of mostly gaunt servicemen with shaven heads and wrapped in Ukrainian flags standing in what appeared to be an open area of countryside. "No matter how difficult it may be, we are looking for everyone who may be in captivity. We have to return everyone," Zelenskyy wrote in the post.

Among the released Ukrainians were some who had spent more than two years in captivity. They were captured in Mariupol, during Russia's early offensive in the Kyiv region and battles in the eastern Luhansk region, the country's Coordination Headquarters for POWs said. It said just over 3,400 people, both civilians and military, have returned from Russian captivity since the outbreak of the war. The Russian Defense Ministry said the freed Russian soldiers will be flown to Moscow for medical treatment and rehabilitation.

According to the UN, most Ukrainian POWs suffer routine medical neglect, severe and systematic mistreatment, and even torture while in detention. There have also been isolated reports of abuse of Russian soldiers, mostly during capture or transit to internment sites.

## Impeached judge itching to take on S African president

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): In a sign of the seismic political changes in South Africa, John Hlophe, a once-celebrated judge whose career ended ignominiously with his impeachment just five months ago, has been parachuted into parliament to lead the official opposition.

Dr Hlophe is expected to be in full flight on Friday, when he will open the debate in response to President Cyril Ramaphosa's speech on Thursday, setting out his new coalition government's plans to tackle South Africa's myriad problems - including an unemployment rate of 32%, high levels of crime, deteriorating infrastructure, and land ownership in a nation bedevilled by racial inequality. "Watch this space. See him perform on Friday," Dr Hlophe's lawyer Barnabas Xulu told the BBC.

Dr Hlophe's dramatic fall as a judge - and meteoric rise as a politician - can both be traced to former President Jacob Zuma, South Africa's most polarising politician who defied the odds by making his own stunning comeback in the 29 May general election. Less than three years after he became the first South African president to be jailed for an offence - contempt of court - Mr Zuma led his newly formed party, uMkhonto weSizwe (Spear of the Nation) into third spot in the election. But as he was barred him from taking up his seat in parliament because of the 15-month jail sentence he had received, Mr Zuma turned to Dr Hlophe to take up the all-important post of Leader of the Opposition.

The post comes with an annual salary of just under 1.7m rand (\$94,000; £73,000), which Dr Hlophe is likely to appreciate after reportedly losing his judge's pension because of his impeachment for gross misconduct. MK has become the official opposition because the second-biggest party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), has joined President Ramaphosa's coalition government after his African National Congress

(ANC) lost its majority in the election for the first time since the end of the racist system of apartheid in 1994. Born in 1959, Dr Hlophe, who grew up as a child labourer in a family where his mother was a domestic worker and gardener and his father a security guard and traditional healer, went on to study law locally and abroad, acquiring a PhD from the UK's prestigious University of Cambridge. As a lawyer in South Africa, he took part in court battles challenging the draconian laws of the apartheid regime, before forging a career as an academic, returning to Cambridge as a Roman law tutor in 1987. Despite this, Dr Hlophe is a fierce advocate for the "Africanisation" of South Africa's legal system, saying it was "imposed on us" by colonisers, and which "we have mastered, by the way, even better than them" - a comment he made in an address to the African Legal Professionals Association in the coastal city of Durban soon after he joined MK in June.

"African law has never been allowed to develop and take its rightful place," he added. Dr Hlophe returned to the theme after being sworn in as an MP, saying MK was not "apologetic in our call for the law to be Africanised". "By that, we mean we bring back the laws that used to govern the African people. One of those laws is this: the land in Africa can never be the subject of private ownership. The land belongs to the nation," he said.

Some critics saw Mr Zuma's decision to appoint him as MK's parliamentary leader as returning a political favour. His impeachment in February ended a long-running saga that started in 2008 when two judges of South Africa's highest court sent shockwaves through legal and political circles by accusing him of trying to improperly influence them to rule in favour of Mr Zuma in a corruption-related case that the controversial politician was fighting at the time. Dr

Hlophe denied the charges, with Mr Xulu telling the BBC that he simply had a "casual conversation" with the two judges about "legal principles" in what was a "novel" case - something that judges often do among themselves. Mr Xulu said that with the state no longer prepared to pay his legal bills, Dr Hlophe decided to drop the battle to clear his name in favour of a career in politics, joining MK as it was his "ideal" political home. "He was not going to sit at home and be idle," Mr Xulu said. "He'll continue the fight for justice and transformation in a different platform, the National Assembly, where he will have more freedom, more protection," Mr Xulu added.

Dr Hlophe's impeachment marked a sad end to his judicial career, as he was once among the cream of South Africa's judges, or, as constitutional law expert Nania Bohler-Muller put it in The Conversation magazine, he was "both brilliant and controversial, on and off the bench". At the age of 35, in 1995, just a year after the end of apartheid, he made history by becoming the first back judge in South Africa's Western Cape province, and five years later its Judge President. But his leadership there was turbulent, as he accused some of his colleagues of treating him as a "legal non-entity" and undermining him because he was black. He faced counter-claims of being verbally abusive and even assaulting a judge, which he dismissed as a malicious allegation based on rumour and gossip.

He was also embroiled in numerous other controversies - including allegations that he served as a non-executive director at a financial company, and was paid about \$26,000 over three years in consultancy fees. He denied any wrongdoing, saying he had declared his links with the company to the then justice minister. The Judicial Services Commission (JSC) dismissed a case against him over the issue, saying there was a lack of evidence.

## Ex-CIA analyst charged with spying for South Korea

NEW YORK (BBC): A New York grand jury has indicted a former US Central Intelligence Agency analyst on charges of acting as a spy for the South Korean government in exchange for luxury goods, bags and fancy meals. Sue Mi Terry, who previously worked as a senior official for the White House National Security Council, faces two counts of failing to register as a foreign agent and conspiracy to violate the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

Federal officials say Ms Terry - a prominent US expert on North Korea - acted as an agent for the South Korean government for over a decade, but she did not register as a foreign agent with American officials, according to court documents made public in the Southern District of

New York. The Council on Foreign Relations, a think tank where Ms Terry works as a senior fellow on Asia, has placed her on unpaid leave, a spokesperson told US outlets. The organisation has also removed her biography from its website. Ms Terry, 54, denies the charges and her attorney, Lee Wolosky, told the BBC the allegations against her were "unfounded". The charges "distort the work of a scholar and news analyst known for her independence and years of service to the United States", Mr Wolosky said. "In fact, she was a harsh critic of the South Korean government during times this indictment alleges that she was acting on its behalf." Born in South Korea, Ms Terry moved to the US at age 12, according to her previous employer at Columbia

University. In 2001, she earned her doctorate from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, a prominent international relations school in Massachusetts. She is known to lecture in English and Korean. Ms Terry, 54, then went on to work as a senior analyst for the CIA from 2001 to 2008, before holding a variety of posts in the federal government, including as Director for Korea, Japan, and Oceanic Affairs at the National Security Council during the George W Bush and Barack Obama administrations. Prosecutors say Ms Terry's work as an agent for the South Korean government began in 2013, about five years, after she stopped working for the CIA and the National Security Council. In the 31-page indictment,

officials say Ms Terry admitted to FBI agents in a voluntary interview in 2023 that she was a "source" for South Korea's National Intelligence Service. The indictment alleges that the South Korean government gifted Ms Terry a \$2,845 (£2,100) Dolce & Gabbana coat, a \$3,450 Louis Vuitton handbag and meals at upscale restaurants. Officials say the government also gave her \$37,000 and came up with a plan to hide the source of the funds, ultimately placing them in a gift fund at the think tank where she worked. Ms Terry's indictment comes just a day after Democratic Senator Robert Menendez was convicted of helping foreign governments in exchange for luxury items including gold bars and a Mercedes car.

## Haitian women and girls face 'alarming' violence in displacement camps: UN

PORT-AU-PRINCE (AFP): Haitian women and girls are facing an "alarming" level of violence, including threats of rape, in makeshift displacement camps that have sprung up as a result of a surge of gang violence in the Caribbean nation, the United Nations says. In a report released, UN Women said the camps lack basic necessities, such as lighting and locks for bedrooms and toilets, which leaves women and girls "particularly at risk of sexual and gender-based violence".

"Gender-based violence has reached alarming levels, with aggression against women and girls, and more specifically rape, being used in most camps as a deliberate tactic to control access to humanitarian assistance," the agency said. The report comes as a second contingent of Kenyan police landed in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince this week as part of a UN-backed mission that aims to tackle a surge

in gang violence. Haiti has reeled from years of violence as armed groups - often with ties to the country's political and business leaders - have vied for influence and control of territory.

An uptick in attacks across Port-au-Prince at the end of February prompted the resignation of Haiti's unelected prime minister, the creation of a transitional presidential council and the Kenyan police deployment. More than 578,000 Haitians have been internally displaced as a result of the violence, according to the UN, and just over half of that figure are women and girls. Philomene Dayiti is among about 800 people living in a makeshift camp in a church courtyard in Port-au-Prince's sprawling metropolitan area, surrounded by personal belongings hanging on walls or clotheslines. "The only thing I'm asking for: I'd like to go home, find a place to rest," the 65-year-old told the AFP news

agency. "I can't stay here indefinitely." Despite the presence of 400 Kenyan police officers in the country, the security situation remains shaky, and displaced Haitians have been forced to live in squalid conditions as they wait to safely return to their homes. The UN-backed security mission ran into numerous delays and has been met with criticism, including in Kenya, where President William Ruto has faced questions over a deadly police crackdown on protests.

Haitian human rights advocates have said the deployment alone cannot solve systemic problems in the country, and they have urged safeguards to be put in place to prevent possible abuses by the international police force. In the meantime, Haitian civil society leaders have tried to respond to the displacement crisis. Meus Lotaire, the 61-year-old pastor at the crowded International Primitive Church, where Dayiti has sought refuge,

said it was a major task managing the hundreds of people living there. "There are so many people here. ... It's swarming with people," Lotaire told AFP.

"We have all kinds of problems," he added, noting a serious shortage of toilets. In report, UN Women also spoke to displaced Haitians across six makeshift displacement camps who decried a lack of healthcare, education and other services. Only 10 percent of the women surveyed said they had access to health services at the internal displacement sites while more than three-quarters of all those surveyed said they had not received any aid since arriving at the camps. "Our report tells us that the level of insecurity and brutality, including sexual violence, that women are facing at the hands of gangs in Haiti is unprecedented," UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous said in a statement accompanying the report. "It must stop now."

## Guinea lawyers on strike over military crackdown

GUINEA (BBC): Courts in Guinea are paralysed after lawyers embarked on a nationwide strike to protest against the military regime carrying out "arbitrary arrests" and "secret detentions", the bar association has said. The strike is the latest sign of growing outrage over the arrest of two prominent activists campaigning for a return to democratic rule.

France's far-left leader Jean-Luc

Mélenchon, whose coalition won the most seats in parliamentary elections last week, has also called for their release. Guinea's military toppled President Alpha Condé in 2021, following mass protests against his rule after he won a controversial third term in elections. Many Guineans welcomed the coup, but now accuse the military of cracking down on dissent and reneging on its promise to

hand back power to a democratic government. The bar association said lawyers would boycott court sessions for the next two weeks, until 31 July. "The courts are not closed, but their activity is rather paralysed," said its spokesman Gabriel Kamano. Lawyers plan to return to court on 1 August - a day after a verdict is due to be given in the trial of former military ruler Dadis Camara on charges of

crimes against humanity. The case has been closely followed in Guinea, as it covers one of the worst massacres in the nation's history - the killing of more than 150 people during a protest against military rule in 2009. Scores of women were also raped. Mr Camara, the country's leader at the time, is accused of many counts of murder, sexual violence, torture, abduction and kidnapping,

along with other officials implicated in the massacre. They all denied the allegations against them. Authorities have insisted the trial will proceed, but it is unclear if the verdict will be read on that date because of the strike. The strike follows the arrest on 9 July of Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Bah, the leaders of a citizens' movement that has been critical of the junta-led government.

Rights group Amnesty International has called on the government to "immediately" release them. It said the authorities should disclose where they are being detained, and allow them access to lawyers and family visits. Mr Mélenchon has also weighed in on the arrests in the former French colony. "France is heavily engaged with the power in place.



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# Divisiveness root cause of global crises

**THE fierce contestation in the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on Multilateral Cooperation in the Interest of a More Just, Democratic and Sustainable World Order served to demonstrate the necessity of this event, which was convened at the UN Headquarters on Tuesday.**

An opportunity for the countries to have an in-depth exchange of views on the core issues related to the subject of the debate, the event instead exposed why the world body has been so ineffective in addressing so many hotspot issues.

These acute issues would not have become what they are today had all the UN members upheld the UN Charter as the bedrock of the world order.

That the activity was convened at the initiative of Russia, presided over by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, prompted representatives of some countries to turn the open debate into a collective attack on Russia over the Ukraine crisis. The beleaguering of one country by a group of "like-minded" countries in the UNSC epitomizes the root cause of the crises the UNSC is supposed to find solutions to.

It is not a coincidence that most of these all-your-fault accusers are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO allies, as the United States-led alliance has been trying to divide the world into us and others. Not content with attacking Russia for being responsible for the crisis, this NATO clique tried again to drag China into their game, claiming it is enabling Russia's "special military operation".

This flies in the face of China always upholding a neutral stance on the Ukraine crisis, and it working with all peace-loving nations to promote a political settlement of the crisis, and the establishment of a workable and balanced mechanism for lasting peace in Europe.

But the UNSC debate was not supposed to be about the Ukraine crisis, as Chinese Ambassador to the UN Fu Cong hinted on Tuesday, it was intended to pool efforts to build a more just and equitable international order that can promote the common development of all countries, take care of the rational security concerns of all parties and foster equality and mutual learning of different cultures and civilizations.

China has put forward initiatives for global development, security and dialogue among civilizations as prompts for collective actions that can address the development, peace and trust deficits that plague the world. It is these deficits and the global governance deficit that are causing most of the conflicts in today's world.

Acting on these proposals in alignment with the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, China has formed many partnerships with other countries, regions and international organizations in a bid to encourage efforts to establish a community with a shared future for humanity.

Wednesday marked the 10th anniversary of the vision of a community with a shared future between China and Latin America and the Caribbean states. Although the "like-minded" countries in the US club try to smear that as a geopolitical tool of Beijing to make trouble in the US' "backyard" and a threat to the "rules-based international order", that vision has resulted in a practical framework for the two sides to strengthen their cooperation and bring tangible benefits to their peoples.

Representative of the fruits of China's South-South cooperation, the building of a China and Latin America and the Caribbean states community with a shared future is an important contribution to the formation of a just, democratic and sustainable world order, which upholds sovereign equality, mutual respect, common security and common development, and enhances the representation and the voice of developing countries. All countries should uphold fairness and justice, and embrace openness and inclusiveness, and dialogue on an equal footing. They should reject and discard the practice of upholding "rules" and "values" that are selective and exclusive.

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# US election campaign heats up, alarming partners

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

**THE Republican Convention gave Donald Trump's campaign a boost on Monday as it endorsed him as expected. The pomp and circumstance of party solidarity was especially enthusiastic coming just days after the attack on the former president.**

Saturday's attempted assassination was the latest sign of the extreme polarization of American politics during this election campaign, bringing the country dangerously close to a serious political crisis.

I witnessed these divisions up close in Washington recently. I was witness to history, not in the most glorious way, on June 27, when the two main contenders, Joe Biden and Trump, debated each other. I had spent days in the US capital prior to the debate and noticed the deep fissures in the way people anticipated the event.

The debate was a let-down, to say the least. Having lived in the US for some 24 years and followed its presidential debates for much longer, I had seen many that were below par, but this one was much more so. Some historians have already dubbed it the worst presidential debate ever.

Conservative media outlets relished Biden's poor showing. The New York Post, for one, led the next day by blaring, "Time to Go, Joe!" on its front page. Other reactions included "it made me weep," "a total and unmitigated disaster," and so on.

The pressure piled on as usually pro-Biden media and opinion writers excoriated the president. "Joe Biden, a good man and a good president, has no business running for reelection," New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman wrote the next day. "Biden has been a friend" for decades, Friedman added, but "he should preserve his dignity and leave the stage at the end of this term."

Wall Street Journal

columnist Peggy Noonan wrote: "This can't continue. I am sorry to say this harsh thing, but allowing him to go forward at this point looks like elder abuse." She called on Democrats to choose a different candidate before it is too late. This idea was supported by others. The Financial Times' Edward Luce said: "The best that can be said of Joe Biden's stumbling debate performance was that it took place in June." This idea was echoed by Mark Leibovich in The Atlantic.

Other former Biden supporters chipped in. Actor George Clooney, who had earlier hosted a fundraiser for the president, wrote an Op-Ed in The New York Times that was titled, "I love Joe Biden. But we need a new nominee." He called on Biden to step aside and allow another candidate to lead the party in the November election. Filmmakers Stephen King and Rob Reiner echoed Clooney's call, as did a slew of Hollywood celebrities who have been ardent supporters of the Democratic Party.

Senior party leaders kept their distance from these public calls, preferring to discuss the matter privately with the president. But there were dozens of members of Congress, fundraisers and activists who supported calls for the president to step aside and for the Democrats to quickly regroup under a different leader.

Going into the debate, polls showed that about 70 percent of Americans thought Biden was too old to serve a second term, but Democrats had largely lined up behind him as the most likely nominee to win, dismissing concerns about his frequent gaffes and inarticulate answers. But last month's 90-minute debate confirmed their worst fears. His performance failed to reassure Democrats that he can retain the White House and avoid a defeat in the

congressional elections.

Nevertheless, key Democratic leaders maintained a united front, at least publicly, supporting the president's wish to run for a second term. Some supporters recalled previous times in American history when a nominee was able to recover, citing Ronald Reagan's comeback to win a second term in 1984 after a disastrous first debate.

However, their hopes of winning the November polls under Biden's leadership appear to have been dampened after the upsurge in Trump's support following the attempt on his life on Saturday and the following celebratory Republican Convention, where Trump, bandaged but defiant, accepted his party's nomination and picked a running mate. While such surges can be transitory, the Trump campaign appears to be seizing the momentum and he now appears to be the most likely winner in November, if the Democrats are unable to reverse Trump's winning streak.

Trump appears to be on a roll. Besides the debate, in which his opponent stumbled, and the convention, where Trump shone, he garnered genuine sympathy after he was nearly killed by a would-be assassin's bullet. His courage and defiance in the face of danger were not lost on observers.

In addition, the courts have also helped him stay at the top of his game. There was a low point in May, when a New York court convicted him of 34 felonies for falsifying business records related to a hush money payment ahead of the 2016 presidential election. However, more recently, the courts have been kinder to the former president. On July 1, the US Supreme Court ruled that he cannot be prosecuted for actions that were within his constitutional powers as president, throwing out a

lower court's decision to the contrary. And this week, a federal judge in Florida dismissed the classified documents case against Trump, siding with his defense lawyers, who said the special counsel who filed the charges was illegally appointed by the Justice Department.

While Biden's adversaries are naturally exaggerating his frequent faux pas, such as introducing President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine as "President Putin" at the NATO Summit in Washington last week, the question should not be whether the president is lucid or if he has some cognitive challenges, but whether he is the best candidate to lead the US in the next four years. In other words, an incumbent need not get a second term if the voters find someone better to lead the country. In American history, there have been about a dozen one-term presidents.

American elections are largely a domestic affair and the rest of the world will deal with whoever is chosen by US voters. However, the geopolitical repercussions of these elections should not be underestimated. US decisions on global issues are extremely important.

Take the war in Gaza, which the US has failed to stop despite the fact that it is Israel's main supporter and provider of the arms it uses in conducting the war and, as such, is the only country with the ability to end the war and start the region on the path toward peace. Whether it is fighting terrorism, piracy or maintaining maritime security, the US is a key player. The EU and NATO will be equally concerned if the next president does not share their priorities.

With the unparalleled powers of American presidents, it matters to the world who occupies the White House. It would be wise to start planning for the different scenarios come Jan. 20, 2025, when a new presidential term commences.

# Europe seeks elusive unity as its adversities pile up

Mohamed Chebaro

**IT would not be an exaggeration to suggest that last week's NATO Summit in Washington showed that the 75-year-old alliance is at a perilous juncture. Despite the pomp surrounding its meetings, the summit failed to ring fence support for Ukraine or show any indication that its leaders would be capable of facing up to Russia's threat, which takes many shapes and forms and is not just a mere challenge at the alliance's eastern border.**

The European Political Community Summit, which is convening in the UK on Thursday, will have more to contend with, despite it being a relatively young grouping that was only formed in 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine. In a fragile and dangerous era, the leaders from mainly EU nations, along with other European nations aspiring to join the bloc, in addition to many outside it like the UK, will hope to strengthen their ties and visions to deal with the most urgent challenges.

The venue of Blenheim Palace, near Oxford, was the birthplace of Winston Churchill and was maybe chosen to inspire. But it will also remind everyone of the need for common resolve to deal with the adversities that the leaders of the liberal democratic world are today having to grapple with.

Criticism has often been leveled at the European Political Community for being merely a fig leaf to appease EU candidate nations as they go through the painfully slow accession process. But it also serves a unique function, allowing non-EU countries such as Ukraine, some of the Balkan states and Türkiye to engage in neutral, equal discussions with their EU counterparts in the hope that this level playing field is conducive to a more unified, cohesive continent.

Ukraine will no doubt dominate the discussions of the 40-plus heads of government, as the trajectory of the war has now changed and the initiative is increasingly in the hands of Vladimir Putin and his generals. Ukraine's backers' hesitance, due to domestic and geostrategic calculations, is emboldening Moscow, which believes its strategy of wearing down Ukraine and its Western allies is working.

Another pressing issue facing the gathering is the Gaza conflict, which has imposed itself for the past nine months. With no end in sight and fears piling up that it might still be raging come 2025 or even expanded, the leaders will need to discuss its ramifications. Peace plans keep being shot down by an intransigent Hamas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who though traditionally friendly with the West, is now increasingly at the mercy of his anti-ceasefire, anti-peace plan, far-right Israeli political partners.

The list of foreign policy challenges for those gathering in the UK is very long and contains a host of complex and intractable issues, such as the continued civil strife and wars in the Horn of Africa, Myanmar and Sudan. There is also the weaponized, state-induced migration toward Europe and the West and the deteriorating relationship between the Global South — or, as the Chinese and Russians like to call it, the "global majority" — and the West.

The outgoing NATO secretary-general recently warned Western leaders of an "alliance of authoritarian powers" working more closely together and against Western democracies.

However, these conflicts and discords are likely to be dominated by further uncertainty come Nov. 5, should Donald Trump get a second chance to sit in the White House.

Parallel to the geostrategic adversities, the leaders convening in the UK are increasingly under pressure at home, as sluggish economic growth for many, coupled with rising demands on the welfare state, are putting pressure on public purses throughout the continent. There is only a limited range of options and maneuvers available for states to meet the daunting challenges.

All that is throwing democratic processes into jeopardy, as electorates are driven further into the lap of the extreme and populist voices, as seen in France recently and in the European Parliament elections before that.

Playing the role of host of the summit, new UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his government will be in the spotlight too, as leaders new and old will be seeking to see if Britain can be relied upon again after years of political chaos that damaged its reputation.

The European Political Community aims to fill a void felt on the European level, as the tools of diplomacy and multilateralism have waned in an increasingly splintered world. The test for the fourth summit is whether it will offer tangible support for Ukraine and those Europeans feeling threatened by Russia.

Though the community remains a nonexecutive assembly to rally those who believe in freedom and democracy, one fears that it might just be a talking shop, unable to overcome the deficits in cooperation and policy coordination across Europe beyond the EU.

This dangerous era for Europe might need a Churchill-like leadership figure. Despite the war within its borders, growing and divisive migration challenges, a continent-wide cost-of-living crisis, higher-than-usual leadership turnover, electoral shocks and the rise of right-wing nationalist parties, the existing joint and individual state efforts in Europe are not measuring up. They need to induce the stability needed amid a failure of leadership and an increasingly impatient electorate, whose trust in the state and its institutions is dwindling.

This summit and those that are to follow are unlikely to dispel the questions that have and will continue to linger over the efficacy and usefulness of the European Political Community. Will the summit's ambitions to protect democracy, deal with migration and restore energy security come to fruition or will the group be mired in bureaucracy, political grandstanding and division, especially at a time when domestic politics across Europe is defining and overshadowing states' international commitments? The European Political Community has a mountain to climb in its efforts to build consensus across increasingly politically divergent nations. And, where such consensus is achieved, it risks being vague, since it has to accommodate a wide range of specific interests.

# The Kingdom's critics can't have it both ways

Faisal J. Abbas

Much attention has been devoted to recent international media reports that some of the projects planned as part of the Kingdom's ambitious Vision 2030 program of social and economic reforms are being reassessed, and budgets reallocated accordingly. What I find surprising is that some "analysts" seem to find this surprising.

One of the key advantages of the way in which the Saudi government now operates is that, from the moment these projects were launched, there have been targets, key performance indicators and regular "pulse checks" to determine progress, with revisions and adjustments where and when required.

And by no means all such revisions are nega-

tive. For example, in 2022, when Saudi Arabia had the G20's fastest growing economy after the coronavirus pandemic, the Kingdom recorded a budget surplus of SR104 billion (\$28 billion); this enabled some projects to be fast tracked and new ones to be created, including a \$1.5 billion fund for start-ups, with a particular focus on high tech areas. This year, although the Kingdom's economy continues to grow, there is a projected budget deficit of SR79 billion, and cloth must be cut accordingly: it's called fiscal responsibility.

Moreover, let us not forget that there are key areas where the Kingdom's targets have not only been met, but surpassed. One was the aim to welcome 100 mil-

lion tourists by 2030, which was actually achieved last year and has now been increased to 150 million. Another was the target of 30 percent female participation in the workforce by 2030: in fact it reached 37 percent by the end of 2022, and is still growing.

Nor let us forget that at the launch of projects such as NEOM, staggering in the scope of its ambition, the Kingdom was criticized for hubris and ridiculed for aiming to venture where nobody had gone before. Now that some projects are to be completed in different phases, with adjusted deadlines to allow more time, the same naysayers are still carping on the sidelines. Well, excuse

me, but which is it? Is the Kingdom too ambitious, or too conservative? The critics can't have it both ways.

Financial considerations are inevitable, and to ignore them would be irresponsible. In many Western countries, the advertisers of financial products are required by law to warn prospective purchasers: "The value of your investment can go down as well as up." The same applies to national finances, and it would be insane to assume otherwise.

Moreover, the Kingdom is achieving global prominence in areas that could not have been foreseen when Vision 2030 was launched eight years ago. For example, when the

world's top boxing promoters seek a venue for the next world title fight, they do not think first of London, New York or Las Vegas, as they once did — they think of Riyadh. Saudi Arabia is now an annual fixture on the Formula One grand prix circuit, with a purpose-built track under construction at Qiddiya. The Saudi capital, currently hosting the Esports World Cup, will be the venue for the inaugural Esports Olympics in 2025.

The Asian Cup football tournament will take place in Saudi Arabia in 2027, Expo 2030 will be held in Riyadh, and Saudi Arabia will host the football World Cup in 2034.

All these events, drawing millions more visitors to the Kingdom,

require phenomenal investment in infrastructure development, and it is inevitable that the government will reallocate some resources to ensure that every single one of those visitors leaves with a positive experience. But none of that features in the analysis and speculation by some of our colleagues in international media, who seem to think it all happens by magic.

Of course, international credit ratings rise and fall, government spending rises and falls, all influenced by a variety of factors. But do the revisions and reassessments of government spending and projects sap my confidence that the Kingdom is heading in the right direction? On the contrary — they enhance it. — Arab News



# African elections show democracy should not be taken for granted

**R**WANDA'S Paul Kagame has won a landslide victory in the presidential elections held on July 15. His Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) party also emerged victorious in the legislative vote, retaining its parliamentary majority. With more than 99 per cent of the vote in Kagame's favour, this presidential election appears to be a repeat of the previous three, where the incumbent secured expected victories.

Kagame's re-election unfolds against a broader context of many other important electoral races across Africa this year. Presidential elections have already taken place in the Comoros, Senegal, Chad and Mauritania. South Africa held a parliamentary poll in May.

Elections are now coming up in Algeria (September), Mozambique, Tunisia and Botswana (October), Somalia's breakaway region of Somaliland, Mauritius, and Namibia (November); and Ghana, South Sudan, Guinea Bissau and Guinea (December).

With this high concentration of national votes, 2024 can serve as an indicator of where democracy in Africa is heading and offer important lessons.

## Two victories for democracy

Senegal and South Africa saw two of the most stunning election outcomes so far this year. In March, Senegalese voters elected 44-year-old Bassirou Diomaye Faye as the country's youngest president ever. Just 10 days prior, he was a political prisoner and Senegal's democracy appeared on the edge of a precipice.

In May, South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) lost its majority in Parliament for the first time since the end of apartheid and the beginning of free elections in 1994. This forced the party to negotiate its first coalition government ever with the Democratic Alliance (DA) party, its ideological opposite, which came second in the polls. This is untested waters for the country's political system and democracy.

Given that in both cases ruling parties with a strong incumbency advantage suffered major losses, Senegal and South Africa's elections can be considered two victories for democracy. Yet they also illustrate the fragility of democracy as neither was a smooth sail.

Months before the election, Senegal was experiencing a major political crisis as retiring President Macky Sall engaged in political manoeuvring, presumably to extend his tenure or at least influence the polls' outcome. In South Africa, after the vote, at least 20 parties claimed rigging and called for a recount of the vote. Meanwhile, former President Jacob Zuma, leader of the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) Party, ominously warned

against "starting trouble where there is no trouble".

Like in Mali, Benin, Niger and even Kenya, democracy in Senegal and South Africa has often been taken for granted. These cases show the limits of American political scientist Samuel Huntington's "two turn-over" test for assessing the stability of a polity's democracy – that is having two consecutive political transi-

Yuhniwo Ngenge

like presidential elections can be problematic, and even more so in cases of so-called incumbent polls where sitting presidents are also candidates.

Given their personal stake in the process, sitting presidents are likely to leverage the full advantages of incumbency such as state resources and the administrative machinery for their bene-

other presidential contests where this unfortunate reality – or much worse – may unravel. These will unfold in contexts of extreme democratic fragility like Tunisia, Guinea Bissau, the breakaway region of Somaliland, South Sudan, Guinea and Algeria.

## Coups and conservative resurgence

It is also important to point out that these 2024 electoral contests are

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tions without the democratic constitutional order collapsing. They illustrate that democratic complacency is a luxury we cannot afford yet. The same conclusion can be reached also from the contested outcomes in the Comoros and Chad votes.

The Comoros' President Azali Assoumani and Chad's President Mahamat Deby, both incumbents with a military pedigree, were re-elected amid claims of fraud. Violent demonstrations against the results in the Comoros reportedly resulted in at least one death and 25 injured. In Chad, at least 12 people were killed in pre- and post-election violence amid threats and intimidation.

## The risks of an incumbent race

While positive trends could be observed in some African electoral races, elsewhere there are reasons for concern, especially in countries where incumbents are running. High-stakes, winner-takes-all races

fit. This – as Rwanda's elections illustrate – reduces the prospects of an opposition win. In principle, Kagame has never run unopposed. Yet, a tightly controlled state machinery has consistently ensured an uneven playing field that favours him by weeding out candidates who, arguably, could pose the greatest challenge to his rule.

Ahead of the July 15 vote, for example, the election commission rejected the candidacy of Diane Rwigara – possibly one of Kagame's most vocal critics today – citing irregular paperwork. During the 2017 race, she was subjected to systematic intimidation and eventually barred from running over alleged signature irregularities. In April, a Kigali court also blocked the candidacy of another fierce Kagame critic, Victoire Ingabire, citing past convictions for genocide denial and terrorism charges.

By the end of the year, there will be several

unfolding in a broader regional context, with less-than-ideal dynamics. More specifically, there has been a resurgence and normalisation of military coups in Africa, with putschists who are obviously in no hurry to return to the barracks.

Mali and Burkina Faso's military leaders have indefinitely iced polls initially scheduled for February and July this year, promising a later date but leaving no doubt about their intention to be candidates whenever polls take place.

In Guinea, it is very likely that Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, who took power in a coup in 2021 and recently minted himself as a general, will be a candidate in the December election. In Niger and Gabon, putschists are also running the show while the government in the Democratic Republic of Congo recently averted a coup.

Worrying developments elsewhere in the world may also have a negative impact on the

African continent. The United States, with more than 200 years of liberal democratic traditions, risks a democratic retreat as it looks set to re-elect Donald Trump, a convicted felon, with openly authoritarian tendencies and an unapologetic "America First" agenda.

Labour may have returned to power in the UK and France narrowly escaped a far-right takeover, but the far-right surge – with its threat to liberal democracy – is an undeniable reality in Europe.

For Africa, the constellation of these dynamics is both harrowing and alarming. The (re-)election of far-right, populist, inward-looking regimes in the West impugns its claims as a global model, especially to those in Africa and beyond who already challenge the Euro-American conceptualisation of democracy.

Supporting civil society and institutions

Thus, while Senegal and South Africa's electoral experiences inspire hope, regional and global realities and dynamics underscore why we must double down efforts to promote and protect democracy.

Consolidated or not, democracy is more than a prize to capture and sit back. Rather, it must be conceived as a permanent process to constantly nourish and cater to even when, on the surface, there might be no imperative for it.

This demands creativity, innovation, concertation, constant revision of approaches, and, above all, resolute action. The potential, for example, of nonincumbent polls to increase the likelihood of political alternation through the ballot box cannot be overemphasised. Yet, this is only possible when safeguards, such as term limits, are constitutionally entrenched and respected. A compelling incentive thus exists to exact consequences when these are disregarded.

Senegal and South Africa also provide lessons on curbing assaults on democracy and the values that underpin it.

The Senegalese case illustrates how fearless pushback from a strong civil society, resilient political opposition and a courageous constitutional court can be ultimately instrumental in triggering spectacular outcomes in a complex political and electoral context.

The South African case demonstrates how an informed citizenry and a robust and resilient political opposition can gradually chip away the power of a once dominant party.

A robust and informed civil society, political parties, strong institutions and political dialogue processes are clearly sine qua nons for sustainable democracy. Indeed, this applies not only to Africa but also beyond, considering – for example – the worrying trends emerging in old democracies in the West. They must be strengthened and supported at all cost.

# Divisive politics has brought nothing good to Slovakia or the US

**A**TTEMPT on US presidential candidate Donald Trump's life sent shockwaves across the world. In its aftermath, commentators have pointed to the growing polarisation in the United States and the former president's divisive rhetoric.

Playing on people's fears and encouraging hatred may be effective populist tools, but they also tend to backfire. Slovaks know this all too well, having experienced the shock of their own Prime Minister Robert Fico's assassination attempt, amid his polarising third term in office.

Just two months ago, a 71-year-old self-described poet and security guard fired several shots at the prime minister at close range in the town of Handlová as he was walking out of a meeting. The assailant was reportedly motivated by his disagreement with the Fico government's media and foreign policies.

In the aftermath of the incident, cross-party condemnation of political violence was not enough to bridge the deep divide between Fico's conservative, pro-Kremlin base and the opposition's pro-Ukraine, progressive-liberal supporters.

Just like in the US, where now Republicans are blaming Democrats for the attempt on Trump's life, high-level government officials in Slovakia were quick to accuse the media and the opposition of inciting the assailant. The ruling coalition used the incident as a pretext to double down on policies it was already pursuing despite the fact that they were polarising society. This, combined with continuing divisive rhetoric from Fico and his allies, threatens Slovak democracy and political stability.

In February, the government passed controversial amendments to the Criminal Code, eliminating the Special Prosecutor's Office responsible for investigating serious criminal offences of corruption and collusion with criminal groups. Other provisions shortened the statute of limitations on economic crimes and abolished some economic offences. This move was largely perceived as an attempt to undermine the rule of law to protect figures close to Fico.

In March, the cabinet took bold steps to restructure public broadcasting, undermining media independence and flouting European Union rule of law standards.

In an express legislative procedure, it proposed a novel media bill to replace the existing public broadcasting group with a new entity, whose director-general and programme content could be influenced by the government. These policies were seen as a major blow to the country's democratisation process and sparked large protests in Bratislava as civil society and the opposition expressed concerns that Fico was steering the country in the direction of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Hungary.

After the assassination attempt, Fico and his government continued in the same polarising direction.

In early June, while still recovering, the prime minister made a video address blaming the assassination attempt on the "unsuccessful and frustrated" opposition, warning that if his political rivals continue "on their current path", there would be "more victims".

His allies and coalition partners have also continued

Sona Muzikárová

to attack the opposition and its supporters. Recently, for example, government officials accused former Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad of "treason" and "sabotage" and launched an investigation against him for providing fighter jets and air defences to Ukraine.

Fico's government has also sought to further curb popular protests. In June, it introduced to parliament a set of legislative changes known as "Lex Assassination", which prohibit protests near public figures' homes and the various seats of power or in the cases where an individual's privacy would be infringed. The legislation also endows certain officials, including the serving prime minister, with a lifetime financial annuity,

also be alarming that in a recent survey, about 20 per cent of respondents said they did not believe the Earth is round.

Polarising rhetoric can also be dangerous. The assassination attempt illustrates the extent to which political discourse in Slovakia has degraded, teetering on the edge where violence is deemed a legitimate form of expression.

Meanwhile, the opposition is in a delicate position to challenge Fico's power-grabbing ambitions and freedoms-curbing policies. Having been blamed for the assassination, it has to tread carefully as any criticism of the prime minister and his allies may be spun as further attacks on the nation.

But domestic polarisation and political violence are dangerous not just within the

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use of state property, security and other benefits.

The Lex Assassination, which was passed in a hurried fashion, de facto increases the personal gain of public officials and stifles citizens' right to free assembly under the pretence of improving public order and national security.

Fico's cabinet has also maintained polarising rhetoric even at international fora. At the end of May, it refused to endorse amendments to the International Health Regulations that were negotiated under the sponsorship of the World Health Organization (WHO) to help boost the world's pandemic preparedness. Slovakia is the only country to reject them. In June, National Party MP Peter Kotlík, who represented Slovakia at the WHO negotiations, declared there had been no pandemic.

In a country that is already prone to polarisation and belief in conspiracy theories, the policies and rhetoric of Fico's government only fuel them further. The consequences can be dire. Pandemic denialism feeds into the erosion of trust in scientific and medical institutions, which can have deadly repercussions come the next pandemic. It should

borders of the country, as the cases of both Slovakia and the US illustrate. They can also have a destabilising effect on allies and neighbours.

Populists like Fico and Orbán undermine the EU's strength and effectiveness in pushing through critical policies. That the Orbán-led hard-right political faction Patriots for Europe has become the third leading force in the European Parliament hardly bodes well for the union.

That is why the EU should play a more proactive role in challenging Fico's media policies, changes to the penal code and judiciary reforms. It can do so by applying the same tactics it has with Hungary – withholding funds.

Brussels should also support Slovak media and civil society in combating misinformation, falsehoods and hate speech online and offline. Support from European partners and the global community will be indispensable in ensuring that the current political turbulence is merely a temporary setback on the path to Slovakia's long-term democratisation, rather than a permanent and dangerous deviation.

# Why Tesla and TikTok have different fates?

**R**ECENT news about Tesla and TikTok has puzzled many. In China, there came an official announcement that Tesla models produced by its Shanghai Gigafactory have met China's data security requirements, a green light for Tesla's new products to the Chinese market. The company's stock surged, with a 15.31% jump on the first trading day, adding US\$82.6 billion to its market capitalization. Whereas in the US, amidst public opposition, a bill was signed into law that forces TikTok's Chinese parent company either to sell the app's US operations or face a ban, over alleged data security concerns.

When it comes to information and data security, Tesla and TikTok, the two

global tech giants, facing completely different fates in China and the US.

The contrast raises the question: Who truly champions fair competition and an open market? Who is against protectionism and technological barriers? Who is leading the way in addressing the challenges posed by new technologies? And what actions should other countries take?

Humanity has faced similar dilemmas and choices time and again throughout the history of technological advancement. Every technological breakthrough, be it papermaking, gunpowder, atomic energy, nuclear power, computers or the internet, have brought tremendous progress as well as unprecedented challenges.

Fortunately, each time, mankind has made the right

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Vox South

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have both made the right choices for the sake of humanity's security and progress.

Today, we are once again

**Humanity has faced similar dilemmas and choices time and again throughout the history of technological advancement. Every technological breakthrough, be it papermaking, gunpowder, atomic energy, nuclear power, computers or the internet, have brought tremendous progress as well as unprecedented challenges. Fortunately, each time, mankind has made the right choice: to cooperate with an open mind while fending off risks at the same time. This has enabled humanity to always move forward along the right path. Major countries play a crucial role in this process. They are usually the ones who first make technological breakthroughs and discover the benefits and risks of new technologies.**

the right path. Major countries play a crucial role in this process.

They are usually the ones who first make technologi-

sense, they bear the responsibility of making the right choice to strike a balance between their own national interests and the common

monopoly.

China and the US have both been the leading players in technology at different historical stages. And they

at a crucial juncture in the new round of technological innovation.

This wave of technological breakthroughs has

brought about unprecedented convenience and transformation to our ways of production and life, accompanied by potentially destructive risks.

Now both China and the US are world leaders in technological advancement, each excelling in different areas. The world is closely watching their attitudes and decisions which bear on not just the competition between the two, but also the interests of all countries.

The contrasting fates of Tesla in China and TikTok in the US highlight this underlying logic: The way the two countries treat each other's high-tech companies reveals their views of new technologies and associated risks. Embracing openness and cooperation will allow countries to share the benefits and conveniences of technological advancement

ments. Resorting to isolation and monopoly, on the other hand, means countries will be forced to pick sides and accept technological monopolies and ensuing monopolies on markets and prices.

That's why many countries resent protectionism and monopoly of the US under the pretext of security concerns but welcome China's approach to open cooperation and sensible actions to balance security and development.

The international community calls on the US to act for the common interests of humanity, shoulder its responsibilities as a major country, and engage in rational dialogue and consultations with China. The ultimate goal is to make the right decisions about using technologies while controlling possible risks.





# Commerce reviewed TDAP progress and plans future initiatives

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Senate Standing Committee on Commerce, chaired by Ms. Anousha Rahman, convened on Thursday at the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) to assess the progress and future strategies of the organization.

Presiding over the session, Ms. Anousha Rahman was joined by committee members Mr. Samad Ali, MNA, Muhammad Talal Bandar, MNA and other prominent members. Representing TDAP, CEO Zubair Motiwala, DG Aasim Tiwana, and senior management were in attendance.

The committee inquired "what are advancements in the textile, agro, food, minerals and other key sectors, with a specific emphasis on

enhancing support for the business community and facilitating them in organizing international trade fairs". The committee was told by Zubair Motiwala, "AGRO and food has experienced high growth this year particularly due to rice exports and sesame seed". For textile sector, DG Aasim Tiwana said, "the main problem is high cost of electricity in Pakistan compared to other countries in the region like Bangladesh due to which Pakistan has lost its competitive advantage in them. For leather, there is a specific raw material which has reduced the cost of production worldwide which is being imported in Pakistan".

The Convener Ms Anousha Rahman specifically asked "what are the

functions of mineral division and has it been able to fully evaluate the potential of minerals in Pakistan". Upon questioning, she was told, "there's still untapped resources which are not evaluated in Baluchistan and KP".

She was told by one of members of committee "there is still lot of room and there could be ten more projects like Reko Diq only in Baluchistan".

The meeting provided a platform for TDAP to showcase its recent achievements in terms of promotion of Pakistans trade in various sectors and discuss challenges faced in promoting Pakistan's trade sectors. Strategies for further facilitating the business community, particularly in the organization of international trade fairs,

were thoroughly examined.

In the end, Ms. Anousha Rahman recommended that in areas like Baluchistan where there is a lot of potential but due to fact that it is not managed by local DG of TDAP, many key resource sites are unknown and untapped. Therefore, a local DG of TDAP from Baluchistan should be appointed to tap these resources. Further, she commended TDAP's efforts and emphasized the importance of continuous improvement and innovation to keep pace with global trade dynamics.

The committee pledged its support to TDAP in enhancing Pakistan's export potential and economic growth and TDAP assured its support to business community in different sectors and trade fairs.



KARACHI: Chairperson Senate Standing Committee on Commerce Anousha Rahman presiding over a committee meeting at Trade Development Authority of Pakistan.

## Gram to be cultivated over 856 thousand hectares

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has set a target to produce about 410 thousand metric tons of gram and 4.56 thousand tons of lentil pulses during financial year 2024-25 to fulfill the domestic requirements of legumes as well as for exporting.

During the year 2024-25, chillies to be cultivated over 73.40 thousand hectares as the crop output has fixed over 191.10 thousand tons, he added.

Meanwhile, the output of other pulses including mung bean and mash have been fixed at 178.80 thousand tons and 8.60 metric tons respectively, said an official in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research.

Talking to APP here on Thursday, he said that during the season 2024-25, gram crop to be cultivated over 865 thousand hectares, where as the lentil pulse would be sown over 6.64 thousand hectares.

He said that the mung bean to be cultivated over 214.80 thousand hectares and mash over 11.05 thousand hectares during the period under review to fulfill the domestic requirements of leguminous vegetables.

It is worth mentioning here that over 269 metric tons of leguminous vegetables (pulses) worth \$239,000 were exported during the period from July-May, 2023-24 as exports of the commodity recorded about 409.13 percent growth as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships, X-press Antaila, Zhong Gu Bo Hai, Maya Gas-1, Horizon-1 and Fair Star carrying container, LPG and Gas oil, berthed at QICT Terminal, Engro Terminal, Sui Southern Gas Terminal and Oil Terminal respectively on Wednesday. Meanwhile four more ships, Lucky Chem, Silver Heba, Naeba Galaxy and Milaha Qatar are also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on during last 24 hours.

Eight ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them six ships, X-Press Antaila, Zhong Gu Bo Hai, Ardmore Cherokee, Maya Gas-1, Sea Destiny and Horizon-1 are expected to sail on Thursday.

Cargo volume of 59,341 tonnes, comprising 51,351 tonnes imports cargo and 7,990 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,119 Containers (649 TEUs Imports and 470 TEUs exports) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 06 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them four ships, Cosco Kunlunshan, Lucky Chem, Milaha Qatar and Naeba Galaxy scheduled to load/offload Iron Ore, Palm oil, LNG and Chemicals are expected to take berths at MW-1, LCT, EETL and EVTL on Thursday.

## PSX stays bullish, gains 684 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 684.25 points, a positive change of 0.84 percent, closing at 81,839.86 points against 81,155.61 points on the last working day.

A total of 470,310,927 shares were traded during the day as compared to 441,338,958 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 25,349 billion against Rs 27,228 billion on the last trading day.

Around 457 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 242 of them recorded gains and 155 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 60 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Pak Elektron with 47,990,977 shares at Rs 28.65 per share, PIA Housing Company with 25,362,682 shares at Rs 19.25 per share and PTCL with 25,028,450 shares at Rs13.70 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase

of Rs 130.00 per share price, closing at Rs 7,730.00, whereas the runner-up was PIA Holding Company Limited with a Rs 80.87 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,037.30.

Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 69.75 per share closing at Rs 944.50, followed by Data Agro Limited with a Rs34.90 decline to close at Rs.332.49.

**Rupee gains 07paise against dollar**  
Pakistani rupee on Thursday witnessed an increase of 07 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.17 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.10.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279 and Rs280.50 respectively.

The price of Euro increased by Rs1.1 to close at Rs 304.94 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.94, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen gained 02 paise and closed at

Rs1.78, whereas an increase of 60 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs361.56 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs360.96.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 paise each to close at Rs75.73 and Rs74.16 respectively.

**Gold rates up by Rs4,600 per tola to Rs254,000**

The price of per tola of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.4,600 and was sold at Rs.254,000 on Thursday against its sale at Rs. 249,400 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.3,944 to Rs.217,764 from Rs. 213,820 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.199,617 from Rs.196,002, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

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

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$60 to \$2,470, the Association reported.

## CDNS set an annual target of Rs1650 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has set an annual target of Rs 1650 billion for the current Fiscal Year, 2024-25, which will promote the saving culture in the country.

Similarly, the CDNS has set a target of Rs 170 billion investment in Islamic finance for the Current Fiscal Year, which will lead to growth in the Islamic economy in the country, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Thursday.

Replying to a question, he said that the CDNS has realized a target of Rs1.742 trillion in fresh bonds and exceeded 100 percent of the annual target in the last fiscal year 2023-24, from July 1 to June 30th.

The National Savings has set an annual target of Rs 1.7 trillion for the year

2023-24; it is encouraging that this year, "We surpassed the 100 percent of the annual target."

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the previous fiscal year 2022-23, he said.

He said this was an Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22.

The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the financial year (2021-22) which will promote savings culture in the country, he said, adding that given the current market trend in the country the ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further.

The official said that

work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced. At this time Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS which will provide enough facilities to the users," he added.

The official added that the directorate had set a target of Rs 75 billion for the new financial year 2023-24 for Islamic finance bonds. Replying to a question; he said the CDNS aimed to introduce new dimensions in the Islamic finance sector.

Islamic finance has a very important role in the global financial sector at this time and a large part of the economy of many major countries currently includes Islamic finance," he added.

## Europe stocks shrug off Wall Street retreat

LONDON (AFP/APP): Europe's major stock markets rose Thursday, with London energised by the previous day's oil price surge, while Asia stumbled after Wall Street retreated on growing tech sector concerns.

London's FTSE 100 index rallied with BP and Shell shares gaining more than one percent, as investors also digested steady UK unemployment data.

Oil prices had vaulted two percent higher Wednesday after signs of strengthening crude demand in top consumer the United States, though the market stabilised Thursday.

"The FTSE 100 has outperformed its mainland European counterparts... with energy names leading

the way thanks to a fresh surge in crude prices," said Shore Markets analyst Joshua Mahony.

Energy majors tend to win a shot in the arm from rising crude futures that boost their revenues and profits.

The dollar firmed following losses caused by growing expectations the US Federal Reserve would cut interest rates at least once this year.

In Asia, tech firms took a hit Thursday following big losses for their Wall Street-listed counterparts after a report said US President Joe Biden would target firms supplying China with key semiconductor technology.

Biden is reportedly looking at imposing strict curbs on companies including Tokyo Electron and Dutch

firm ASML if they continued allowing Beijing access to their chip tech.

Sentiment was also dented by Donald Trump's comments that crucial chip supplier Taiwan -- home to TSMC and other major producers -- should pay the US for helping the island defend itself militarily against China.

Nvidia shares slumped more than six percent Wednesday, while Tokyo Electron dived 8.8 percent Thursday.

"An interview with Donald Trump, for Bloomberg Businessweek, saw the former president casting doubt on US willingness to defend Taiwan, should he be (re)elected in November," said Steve Clayton, head of equity funds at Hargreaves Lansdown.

"With much of the world's most advanced chip manufacturing capabilities located within Taiwan... that was not a message the market wanted to hear.

"Nor did it want to hear the Biden administration talking about tougher trade restrictions against China," Clayton said.

## HESCO alert: Enhancing user-friendly services, power supply



## F.P. Report

KARACHI: Under our user-friendly service initiative, HESCO is committed to providing better power supply and addressing consumer complaints efficiently.

HESCO is conducting daily open kitchens in each

sub-division office from 11 am to 1 pm.

This initiative aims to listen to all electricity-related complaints from consumers and resolve them promptly. Senior officers will be present in these open courts to ensure timely resolution.

In a meeting held on Thursday in the conference hall, Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Roshan Otho, along with all central officers and operation circle KSEs, as well as M&T Commercial Computer MM managers, emphasized the following

key points:

HESCO is committed to eradicating electricity theft with the help of police and recovery magistrates providing legal assistance.

Ensuring the complete recovery of dues from defaulters is a top priority.

Under the user-friendly service initiative, all problems of electricity consumers are being heard and resolved through open offices.

As a commercial organization, HESCO relies on regular bill payments from consumers. Regular payments will help reduce line losses, improve recovery, and reduce load shedding.

HESCO remains dedicated to enhancing the quality of service and ensuring a reliable power supply for all consumers. Your cooperation is essential in achieving these goals.

## Canadian inspectors commend PCAA airport's security protocols

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: The four-day aviation security assessment of JIAP, Karachi, conducted by the Transport Canada Assessment Team, was completed on Thursday. Transportation Security Inspectors Ms. Barbara Durette and Mr. Abdel Tahir led the assessment, hosted by PCAA and

overseen by Director Avsec, Air Commodore (Retd.) Shahid Qadir.

Various security measures were evaluated, including passenger and baggage screening, perimeter protection, cargo, and catering security, as well as security protocols for direct flights to Canada.

The assessment team also monitored security

measures for PIA flights to Toronto, assessing access control, aircraft protection, security searches, and related procedures.

A debriefing session was held at HQ CAA, where the team received crests and gifts from Mr. Nadir Shafi Dar, Deputy Director General, on behalf of Secretary Aviation, Capt (R) Saif Anjum.

The team expressed gratitude to PCAA for hosting them and commended the airport's security protocols for aligning with international standards and best practices.

The Avsec assessment of JIAP Karachi was deemed successful, following the ICAO USAP Audit and GCAA-UAE assessment.

## FCCI stresses equipping youth with emerging skills

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) President Dr Khurram Tariq has stressed equipping the youth with emerging skills so that they can help resolve national and domestic issues and bring foreign exchange in the country.

Addressing a session on 'World Youth Skills Day, he said the FCCI had been

considering imparting IT (Information Technology) and AI (Artificial Intelligence) skills to the educated youth with a competitive edge in the global markets. He said that in his maiden speech as the Chamber president, he had categorically mentioned transforming Faisalabad from textile to a hub of "Tech & Style" and in this connection positive and practical steps have been taken.

He said that arrange-

ments have now been completed to launch the most ambitious "Cyberabad" project to educate youth with the latest AI technologies and this program is expected to be launched from next month.

He was optimistic that this young lot equipped with AI skills would open new avenues from the comprehensive and sustained development of Faisalabad in addition to ushering a new era of progress and prosperity in Pakistan.

He further said that he

had already adopted all "Workers Welfare Schools" in Faisalabad with an objective to provide them new opportunities to earn hundred dollars per hour instead of fetching only \$ 5 per hour by working as freelancers.

Senior Vice President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad has also stressed the need to upgrade the syllabus and curriculum of government schools by replacing old and redundant courses with latest AI and IT technologies.

## Uplift of capital market discussed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The top management of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) met with the Board of Directors of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) to discuss the strategy for the development of the capital market.

The participants from SECP included Akif Saeed (Chairman), Abdul Rehman Warraich (Commissioner - Securities Market Division) and other senior members of the management, said press release issued here on Thursday. The participants discussed the challenges faced in the capital market and deliberated ways to address them. The meeting

was focused on areas such as enhanced governance, operational compliance, increasing the stock market investor base, and striving for continuous digitalization in the capital market.

The need for coordination among various stakeholders for development of the market, as well as creating awareness among potential investors, was keenly emphasized during the meeting.

In addition, the participants explored ways to strengthen connections between the capital markets of Pakistan and China, and attract greater Chinese investment in the companies listed at PSX.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Ehsan, Civil Judge-II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No. 23/1, Institution 23-01-2024, ate of hearing 04-09-2024. Hazrat Ali vs. Norul Hadi etc. Notice to No. (1) Norul Hadi s/o Fazal Hadi, (3) Shamsul Hadi, (4) Husain Ali sons of Abdul Hadi resident of Torwarsak, (9) Husain Ali s/o Shukat Ali resident of Hashim Sar Elai, Tehsil Daggar, District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:00 a.m. dated 04-09-2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

## Court Notice

In the Court of District Judge/Zilla Qazi Buner at Daggar. Civil Appeal No. 07/14, Institution 13-01-2024, date of hearing 23-09-2024. Sirmer Khan vs. Abdul Wadod etc. Notice to No. (3/2) Abdul Mehmood, (3/4) Hazrat Umer, (3/5) Ehsan sons of Ismail (late) resident of Mulla Yusaf, Tehsil Daggar, District Buner at present abroad. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:00 a.m. dated 23-08-2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.





# Nida Dar-led Pakistan gear up for ACC T20 Asia Cup



DAMBULLA (APP): Pakistan women's cricket team is all geared up to feature in the ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup 2024 in Sri Lanka following a training camp for the 15-member squad held in

Karachi from 5 to 16 July. The eight-team tournament will run from 19 to 28 July at Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium, Sri Lanka. The tournament's eight

teams are divided into two groups. Group A comprises Pakistan, India, Nepal, and the UAE, while Group B includes Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, and hosts Sri Lanka. The top two teams

from each group will advance to the semifinals, with the final set for 28 July. Pakistan will open their Asia Cup campaign against arch-rivals India on the evening of 19 July with Nepal

and United Arab Emirates playing the tournament opener earlier in the day. Pakistan's subsequent matches are scheduled against Nepal on 21 July and the United Arab Emirates on 23

July. Pakistan were among the top four teams, losing to Sri Lanka by one run in the semi-final of the last edition of the ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup held in Sylhet, Bangladesh in

October 2022. Pakistan captain Nida Dar sounded confident about her team's preparations and expressed her belief to do well in the tournament. She said: "As a captain I am looking forward to give my best. We have worked very hard in the camp and tried to overcome all the weaknesses in the team."

"Our aim is to play positive and fearless cricket. We intend to remain positive in our approach and showcase our abilities according to the requirements of the conditions here."

Pakistan Cricket Board confirmed changes in the team management ahead of the tournament with Muhammad Wasim serving as the head coach, while Junaid Khan and Abdur Rehman were appointed as the assistant and spin-bowling coaches, respectively.

**Squad: Nida Dar (capt), Aliya Riaz, Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Gull Feroza, Iram Javed, Muneeba Ali, Najiha Alvi, Nashra Sandhu, Omaisah Sohail, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Syeda Aroob Shah, Tasmia Rubab, Tuba Hassan**

Pakistan's Group A fixtures (all matches to be played in Dambulla)

19 July: India vs Pakistan (1830 PKT)  
21 July: Pakistan vs Nepal (1830 PKT)  
23 July: Pakistan vs UAE (1330 PKT)

## Potter ready for next job as he salutes Southgate

LONDON (BBC): Graham Potter says he is "ready" to return to football management amid reports he is being considered for the England job.

Gareth Southgate resigned as manager on Tuesday, less than 48 hours after England lost 2-1 to Spain in the Euro 2024 final.

Potter, 49, is being tipped as a viable successor to Southgate, with other possible contenders including Newcastle's Eddie Howe and England Under-21 coach Lee Carsley.

Potter has not managed in football since he was

sacked by Chelsea in April 2023.

The former Ostersund, Swansea and Brighton boss said he had spoken to a number of clubs but was waiting for the "right opportunity".

"Now I'm in that good place where I'm happy to be ready and looking forward to the next challenge," Potter told Sky Sports, external.

"I've had a great break. The journey from where I started to where I finished doesn't come for free. It involves moving three countries, with a young family, and all that comes with being a football manager."

"It was important for me to take a break, reflect and re-energise."

"It's been a good time to look at other things, other sports, other teams and visit places."

"I feel really ready, really excited to be back when the right opportunity comes."

Potter's first managerial appointment came in 2008 at Leeds Carnegie.

Potter was asked directly about the England job when he received an honorary doctorate from Leeds Beckett University on Thursday.

He told BBC Radio Leeds "today was not the

day" to discuss it but that Southgate had "done a fantastic job" and "there isn't anyone in the country more respected in football than Gareth".

Southgate was England manager for almost eight years. In that time he led the men's team to a World Cup quarter-final and semi-final and back-to-back Euros finals.

Southgate said when he resigned: "It's time for change, and for a new chapter." The Football Association has begun its search for a replacement and intends to have a new figure in place "as soon as possible".

## Euphoria no excuse - Lloris on Argentina race row

PARIS (BBC): Former France captain Hugo Lloris has described the controversial song sung by some Argentina players as an "attack on French people" but hopes it was a mistake that the players involved will learn from.

Chelsea midfielder Enzo Fernandez is facing sanctions from the Premier League club after posting a video on social media that the French Football Federation said included alleged "racist and discriminatory language".

World governing body Fifa is also investigating the video, in which several members of the Argentina squad - celebrating their 1-0 win over Colombia in the Copa America final - take part in a song originally sung by Argentina fans questioning the heritage of France's black and mixed-race players.

Fernandez has since issued an apology on social media.

Lloris, France's most

capped player and their captain when they won the 2018 World Cup, said he was shocked by the behaviour.

"It doesn't matter if you are in a moment of euphoria because you have won an important trophy," he said. "It demands even more responsibility when you are a winner."

"You don't want to hear or see this kind of thing in football. We all stand against discrimination and racism. I just think and hope it is a mistake. We all make mistakes sometimes and hopefully they will learn from it."

Former Tottenham captain Lloris, 37, signed for Major League Soccer outfit Los Angeles FC in December and was in the United States as Argentina won the Copa America in Miami.

He was on the losing side in the 2022 World Cup final as France lost on penalties to Argentina.

"They [Argentina] are

the face of football right now, in South America, in the world. They deserve a lot of credit for what they have done on the field for the last four or five years," Lloris said.

"But when you win, you are an example for others, especially kids."

"It was a proper attack about the French people, especially for the French people who have some African origin and family."

**Mascherano defends Fernandez**

Former Argentina midfielder Javier Mascherano defended Fernandez and said "everything has been taken out of context".

In an interview with Ole, external, Mascherano, who won 147 caps, said: "If there is something that we Argentines are not, it is racists, far from it."

"If there is something that we are as a country, it is totally inclusive. In Argentina, people from all

over the world live and we treat them as they should be treated."

Fernandez has been unfollowed on Instagram by Chelsea team-mates Wesley Fofana, Benoit Badiashile, Lesley Ugochukwu, Christopher Nkunku, Axel Disasi, David Datro Fofana, Romeo Lavia and Malo Gusto.

Former Liverpool, West Ham and Barcelona player Mascherano, who is now Argentina Under-23s manager, said: "I know Enzo. He's a great guy and he has no problem with that."

"You have to understand the culture of each country and know that sometimes what we perceive as a joke can be misinterpreted in other places."

Victoria Villarruel, the vice-president of Argentina, launched a staunch defence, external of her country on social media and said: "No country will intimidate us."

## Team USA dominates Serbia 105-79 in pre-Olympics exhibition

ABU DHABI (Yahoo News): The Team USA men's team rolled to a 105-79 win over Serbia in an Olympic basketball tune-up in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

Stephen Curry led all players with 24 points, while Bam Adebayo scored 17 points and Anthony Davis contributed 7 points, 6 blocks and 6 rebounds.

Denver Nuggets star Nikola Jokic had 16 points and 11 rebounds for Serbia.

The game was tied after the first quarter, but Team USA pulled away in the second, thanks to Curry's sharp shooting. The Golden State Warriors guard helped the Americans take control of the game by scoring nine of his 18 first-half points in a little over a minute, which included a four-point play.

Team USA finished the first half on a 19-5 run to take a 59-45 lead into the break. That stretch continued into the second half with the Americans outscoring Serbia 24-13 in the third quarter for a commanding 25-point lead.

The final quarter was a show of dominance by Team USA as it built on its big lead and let the dunks commence, led by Anthony Edwards and LeBron James.

This was Team USA's third straight exhibition win after topping Canada and Australia.

Team USA will now travel to London to finish up its exhibition schedule against South Sudan on Saturday and Germany on Monday. The American men will open Olympic group play July 28 against Serbia in Lille, France, as they look to secure a fifth straight gold medal.

**Team USA gets a scare from Australia before pulling out 98-92 exhibition win in Abu Dhabi**

Perhaps the time difference in Abu Dhabi was a factor, but Team USA had a closer game versus Australia on Monday than many would have predicted.

The Americans eventually prevailed, 98-92, but an Australian squad with several NBA players provided some impressive opposition in its exhibition matchup at Etihad Arena. Jock Landale scored 20 points with seven rebounds and six assists, while Josh Giddey tallied 17 points, eight rebounds and seven assists. Dyson Daniels added 14.

It was a four-point contest with 30 seconds remaining before Devin Booker put the game away with a jumper in the lane and two free throws at the end. Tyrese Haliburton also hit two clutch 3-pointers to keep Australia from closing the margin to within two points or tying the score.

That salvaged a relatively sluggish offensive Team USA performance, which seemed content to rely on its star players' talents rather than execute plays throughout the game. Yet Australia has been a tough matchup for the Americans before, winning exhibition contests in 2019 and 2021. Landale had success inside, while Australia's guards frequently scored on drives to the basket.

Anthony Davis led Team USA with 17 points, 14 rebounds and two blocks in a dominating performance in the paint. Until the very end, Anthony Edwards looked as if he might lead the Americans and establish himself as the No. 1 option. He scored 14

points, hitting 3-of-5 3-point shots. As a team, USA shot 41% from 3-point range.

Booker eventually finished ahead of Edwards with his late baskets, tallying 16 points. LeBron James, Joel Embiid and Bam Adebayo each scored 10 points. Jayson Tatum led Team USA with five assists. However, 18 turnovers demonstrated that these players are still learning how to play with each other, leading to mistakes upon which opponents may capitalize.

Kevin Durant missed his second consecutive exhibition game, sidelined again with a calf injury. Head coach Steve Kerr told reporters on Saturday that the plan is to monitor Durant day by day and utilize the next couple of weeks before making a roster decision. The team has already lost Kawhi Leonard and replaced him with Derrick White.

Up next for the USA is an exhibition matchup with Serbia and NBA MVP Nikola Jokic — against whom they will open Olympics play — on Wednesday in Abu Dhabi. That game will tip off at 12 p.m. ET and be televised on FS1.

**Bronny James posts best performance of Summer League career: 12 points**

Bronny James is trending back up in NBA Summer League, to the tune of 12 points. Plus a Los Angeles Lakers win.

The son of LeBron James posted the highest point total of his time in Summer League on Wednesday in an 87-86 win over the Atlanta Hawks, along with a rebound, a steal and a turnover. Big man Colin Castleton led the way for

the Lakers with 17 points, 12 rebounds and six assists.

The performance included James' first Summer League 3-pointer, breaking a streak of 16 misses to open his professional career. The 19-year-old finished the night shooting 5-of-11 from the field and 2-of-5 from 3-point range. The 55th overall pick of the 2024 NBA Draft is now averaging 5.8 points, 3.2 rebounds and 1.2 assists in 25.4 minutes across five Summer League games, with 28.6% shooting and 10% from 3-point range.

The Lakers played the game without first-round draft pick Dalton Knecht, whom the team rested amid a stretch of six games in 11 days. Also in attendance were Lakers head coach JJ Redick and recently hired assistant coach Lindsey Harding. The performance is a decent bounce back for James, who drew ridicule and mockery after struggling heavily to begin his career as a pro. Nearly every time he touches the ball, and many times he doesn't, would become a referendum on his place in the NBA and whether he even deserved it. It is as high-pressure a position as any player in Summer League, made possible by a team doing everything it can to keep James' father happy when he opted out of his contract and a camp that maneuvered its young charge into the Lakers' lap in the draft, with a guaranteed four-year, \$7.9 million deal awaiting him.

Summer League should never be a full referendum on a player's potential, but James at least got to experience a win Wednesday. He'll get his next and final chance at another win on Thursday against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

## Rohit and Kohli to play ODI series in Sri Lanka

NEW DELHI (Cricinfo): Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have been selected in India's ODI squad for the upcoming series in Sri Lanka, which is one of their two 50-over assignments scheduled before the 2025 Champions Trophy.

Both Rohit and Kohli have spent time abroad with their families after the T20 World Cup felicitation event in Mumbai on July 4. There was speculation they would skip the tour of Sri Lanka and only return for the start of the home season in September, but they are now part of the 15-man squad for the series.

Jasprit Bumrah has been rested for the entire tour, while Hardik Pandya - who missed out on the T20I captaincy - will feature in just the T20I-leg.

Shreyas Iyer, who lost out on a BCCI central contract earlier this year, has been picked in the

ODI squad. KL Rahul also returns after a long injury layoff, one of two frontline wicketkeepers along with Rishabh Pant, who last played an ODI prior to his car accident in December 2022.

**Shubman Gill named India's vice-captain**

Shubman Gill has been elevated to vice-captaincy in both white-ball formats, following his captaincy stint with a second-string squad in Zimbabwe, where India won 4-1. Gill's also been prolific with the bat in ODIs of late - he's the second-highest run-getter worldwide in the format since the start of 2023.

With Hardik absent from the ODIs, seam-bowling allrounder Shivam Dube, whose only ODI so far was in 2019, earns a recall. Dube's stocks in T20 cricket have grown considerably since IPL 2023, when he made a name

for himself as an enforcer against spin for Chennai Super Kings.

The selectors also rewarded Riyan Parag by picking him in both formats. His one-day elevation can be looked at as a reward for his domestic form - he was the leading run-getter in the Deodhar Trophy as well as the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20s, where he made seven straight half-centuries while leading Assam to their first-ever semi-final.

Fast bowler Harshit Rana was also handed a maiden ODI call-up. Rana was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders' IPL-winning side of 2024 and finished as his side's joint second-highest wicket-taker with 19 scalps in 13 outings.

The pace attack will be spearheaded by Mohammed Siraj, with Arshdeep Singh and Khaleel Ahmed completing it. Washington Sundar's Player-of-

the-Series performance in Zimbabwe earned him a berth in both squads for Sri Lanka; he's one of two spin-bowling all-rounders alongside Axar Patel.

Ravindra Jadeja, who (like Rohit and Kohli) is now retired from T20Is, did not make the ODI squad.

**No Kuldeep, Abhishek for T20Is**

As many as nine members from the young squad that won 4-1 in Zimbabwe earlier this month have been picked for the Sri Lanka T20Is, led by new captain Suryakumar Yadav.

Gill, who led in Zimbabwe, is likely to open the batting alongside Yashasvi Jaiswal, part of India's T20 World Cup-winning squad.

Sanju Samson retained his place (a second option with the gloves alongside Pant), but there was no room for Ruturaj Gaikwad or Abhishek Sharma,

who struck a 46-ball hundred in just his second T20I in Zimbabwe. Rinku Singh and Dube are likely to be options as finishers.

Kuldeep Yadav will play the ODIs but was not picked for the T20Is, leaving Ravi Bishnoi as the frontline wristspinner. There was no place for Yuzvendra Chahal, who didn't feature in a single game during India's World Cup campaign, in either squad.

India's tour of Sri Lanka is the first assignment for new coach Gautam Gambhir, who was appointed after Rahul Dravid's tenure ended with the T20 World Cup. The tour begins with three T20Is in Pallekele on July 27, 28 and 30, followed by three ODIs in Colombo on August 2, 4 and 7.

**India squad for Sri Lanka ODIs**

**Rohit Sharma (capt), ?hubman Gill (vice-capt), Virat**



**Kohli, KL Rahul (wk), Rishabh Pant (wk), Shreyas Iyer, Shivam Dube, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Washington Sundar, Arshdeep Singh, Riyan Parag, Axar Patel, Khaleel Ahmed, Harshit Rana.**

**India squad for Sri Lanka T20Is**

**Suryakumar Yadav (capt), ?hubman Gill (vice-capt), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rinku Singh, Riyan Parag, Rishabh Pant (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Khaleel Ahmed, Mohammed Siraj.**





## In brief

### Police official dies, three hurt

ISLAMABAD (APP): One Police official died and three others were injured when a Police van met an accident at Colonel Sher Khan Interchange on M-1 here on Thursday. According to National Highways and Motorway Police North Zone spokesman, Muhammad Saqib, the police van was coming to Islamabad from Peshawar when it overturned as one of its back tyres burst. The six police officials present in the van were shifted to Mardan Medical Hospital of which police constable Fazal Hayat succumbed to his injury while three others were reported to be in serious condition.

### 321,200 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): IRSA on Thursday released 321,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 295,400 cusecs. Water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1520.02 feet and was 122.02 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 150,600 cusecs and 190,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1196.15 feet, which was 148.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 28,600 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 214,600, 195,700, 138,000 and 75,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 62,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 28,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### IESCO notifies power shutdown

ISLAMABAD (APP): IESCO on Thursday issued 2-day power suspension programme for Friday and Saturday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. The power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period on Friday from 06:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Rawalpindi City Circle, Ameer Hamza Colony, Noon, Range Road, F-Block Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, PWD-II Feeder, Chakwal Circle, Karsal Feeder, from 05:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Attock Circle, Chhab, Mahfuz Shaheed Feeders On Saturday from 06:00 AM to 10:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Isolation Hospital, Rahara, CM Pak Zong Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Bagh Sardaran, Eid Gah, Dhok Najo, Ali Market, Khayaban Sir Syed, Raja Sultan, Mohammad Chowk, Lakhoh, Raja Sultan Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Mehboob Shaheed, Park View, Pindi Board, Jail Park, Car Chowk, Morgah, Fuji Foundation, Mohra Nagyal, Wilayat Complex, X-Liar, AOWHS, Dhamiyal, UC Lakhnan, Gulshan Saeed, Jail Park-I feeders from 08:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Chakwal Circle, Dhoda feeder and surrounding areas.

### Conference to be held on 22

ISLAMABAD (APP): PAS, in collaboration with the other partners, is organizing the 25th Conference of IAS on "Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus for the Security of the OIC Countries" from July 22-24. The conference, to be held in Islamabad, will be arranged in collaboration with IAS, HCST and HEC. The conference intends to address the linked concerns of water, energy, food, and ecosystem security, all of which are vital to the long-term growth of OIC member nations.

# Rubina emphasizes introducing training programmes

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid has underscored the importance of introducing a quality, international-standard skill training programme for BISP's beneficiaries and their family members.

During a meeting with a delegation from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) led by Sofia Shakil, Director of Human and Social Development, Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized that this initiative aims to facilitate the poverty graduation of beneficiary families, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the national economy.

The meeting, held at the BISP Headquarters on Thursday, included notable participants such as Co-Mission Leader/Principal

Social Protection Specialist, Xin Long and Senior Social Protection Officer, Omer Bin Zia.

Senator Rubina Khalid also highlighted the critical need for human resource development, emphasizing the skills and certifications that are in high demand internationally, such as healthcare and hospitality management.

"By equipping our beneficiaries with these skills, we aim to open up employment opportunities abroad, thereby enhancing their socio-economic prospects," she stated.

Sofia Shakil acknowledged the significance of skill development, praising BISP's dynamic and institutionalized mechanisms. She expressed Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s commitment to expanding its support on the supply

side and looked forward to enhancing collaboration with BISP on education, health and nutrition particularly at the provincial level.

Earlier, the Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s fact-finding mission also met with Secretary Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Amer Ali Ahmad, to discuss the modalities for additional financing of the Integrated Social Protection Development Programme. Principal Public Sector Specialist, Laisiasa Tora gave a detailed briefing on the programme.

The Secretary Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) emphasized the importance of utilizing the BISP's National Socio-Economic Registry database and expansion of the Adolescent Girls' Programme.

## Minister reaffirms commitment to growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb here on Thursday reaffirmed the government's commitment to foster export-led growth and providing a conducive environment to local manufacturers.

The minister was talking to the delegation of Pakistan Mobile Phone Manufacturers Association (PMPMA) that called on him here, said a press release issued by the finance ministry.

He emphasized the importance of maintaining policy continuity and increasing the focus on the

policy framework for exports.

The minister acknowledged the valuable feedback and underscored the government's commitment for expanding the entire digital ecosystem in the country.

Earlier, the Pakistan Mobile Phone Manufacturers Association (PMPMA) delegation thanked the minister and highlighted the necessity for a stable and supportive policy environment that encourages local manufacturers.

They advocated for measures to ensure that international brands support the domestic industry

and consequently, the national economy.

The delegation also presented proposals aimed at promoting the growth of the local industry and increasing the exports of the mobile phone manufacturing industry.

According to the statement, the meeting concluded with a mutual agreement on the need for a strategic and supportive policy framework aimed at fostering local manufacturing and enhancing export potential, thereby contributing to the broader goals of national economic growth and digital transformation.

## Rescue 1122 provided first aid to 596 mourners

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Emergency Service Rescue 1122 remained on high alert during Ashura Day in Rawalpindi, provided first aid to 596 mourners, and shifted 9 injured to hospitals.

Special duties were assigned to rescue stations and the holidays of the rescuers were canceled.

Spokesman 1122, Usman Gujjar informed that timely medical assistance was provided to the injured mourners of the processions from the Old

Imam Bargah Hussaini Irania, Imam Bargah Qasr e Sajjad, Imam Bargah Qasr e Abbas, Imam Bargah Qasr e Hussain, Imam Bargah Darbar e Hussaini, Imam Bargah Old Kahota and the main Imam Bargah Gujarkhan.

The paramedical staff of Rescue 1122 accompanied the mourners all the time. Along with medical cover to the Ashura processions, Emergency Rescue Service 1122 also responded promptly to general emergencies.

District Emergency Officer Engr. Sibghatullah said that the rescuers are working on a mission of saving precious human lives and creating a safe society by reducing the suffering of the victims.

Advance preparedness and safety measures to deal with emergencies and protect lives and property not only reduce the impact of accidents and tragedies but also help deal with accidents in an organized and professional manner, he said.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja chairing 60th Board of Directors meeting of Pakistan Software Export Board.

## Ashura processions provided foolproof security cover: CPO

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Bohar Bazar, first gathered at the Imambargah Magbool Hussain and after passing through traditional routes of the main procession culminated at the 'Qadeemi' Imambargah.

Syed Khalid Hamdani said, strict security measures were adopted for the security of the main mourning procession which passed through the traditional route.

Over 2900 police personnel were deployed to ensure security of the main mourning processions. Security officials were deployed on the rooftops of nearby buildings and along roadsides to avoid any untoward incident.

Besides air surveillance during Zuljinhah processions, 6000 police personnel were deployed in the district for the security of the processions and wor-

ship places already declared 'highly sensitive' on Ashura.

Special checking of the routes was completed before start of the processions and bomb disposal squad cleared the routes.

The route of the main procession of Ashura was sealed completely and streets on the route of the processions were also barricaded.

The main Zuljinhah processions of the city were given a 'box formation' security. Police personnel, including Elite Force commands, special branch personnel, bomb disposal experts, women police personnel and Dolphin Force were deployed for the security of Ashura processions.

The entry of the participants of the processions was allowed through walk-through gates while no vehicle was permitted entry

into the processions. Parking of vehicles was allowed 200-meter away from the processions and imambargahs.

Mobile phone service and Metro bus service remained suspended on Ashura. Mobile service restored after the Ashura main procession culminated.

According to CPO, a special central control room was set up to monitor the processions and coordinate with the police deployments.

He informed that senior police officers and experts of law enforcement agencies remained present in the control room and monitored the city situation.

Meanwhile, the City Traffic Police had chalked out a separate traffic plan to facilitate the mourners and Ashura processions. A control room was also set up at the traffic headquarters.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi chairing a meeting of Committee regarding National Drug Survey.

### Romanian embassy, PRBC sign MoU

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Embassy of Romania to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Pakistan Romania Business Council (PRBC) to strengthen bilateral trade and economic cooperation between Romania and Pakistan.

The MoU signed by Eduard-Robert PREDĂ, Charge D'Affaires, Embassy of Romania to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and Chairman of PRBC, Sohail Shamim FIRPO, and recognized the outstanding services rendered by PRBC since 2011 in promoting bilateral trade between the two countries.

The agreement establishes a framework for cooperation between the Embassy of Romania and PRBC, with the Embassy extending full support to PRBC's endeavours to promote and strengthen bilateral trade. Additionally, the protocol acknowledges the recent expansion of PRBC through the formation of its North Chapter.

The embassy and PRBC have agreed to collaborate in enhancing economic cooperation and bilateral trade between Romania and Pakistan. This partnership aims to foster greater economic ties and mutual benefits for both nations.

The signing of this protocol marks a significant milestone in the bilateral relations between Romania and Pakistan.

### ANF recovers drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations managed to recover 8.8 kg drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 55 ice-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Qatar at Islamabad Airport.

2.6 kg ice and 235 grams heroin were recovered from a passenger going to Saudi Arabia at Lahore Airport.

In third operation, 3 kg heroin was recovered from two accused arrested in Ferozepur Road Kasur.

2 kg heroin and 1 kg ice were recovered from a parcel sent from Peshawar at a cargo office in Lahore. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

## Azerbaijan, Pakistan join hands

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a landmark initiative to enhance the beauty of the Federal Capital, Chairman Horticulture Experts Team of Azerbaijan recently met with CDA Chairman, Mohammad Ali Randhawa, to kickstart the implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding between Baku and Islamabad.

Under this collaboration, horticulture experts from Azerbaijan will initially focus on renovating and landscaping four key locations including Srinagar Highway, Shakar Parian, Saidpur Village, and Melody Food Park.

This effort is part of a

larger plan by the CDA's environment teams, which are already carrying out landscaping work in various other areas of the city.

Randhawa, emphasized the urgency of the project, directing that work on the Islamabad beautification plan should commence immediately.

He stressed that horticulture work should be conducted simultaneously at all sites across the city to ensure a cohesive and swift transformation.

In addition to the landscaping efforts, the Engineering Wing of Baku will provide expert technical advice and support,

enhancing the project's overall efficiency and effectiveness.

Azerbaijan will also gift various horticulture tools and machinery to Pakistan, significantly boosting the local capability for such endeavours.

Moreover, the horticulture experts from Baku will establish a nursery in Islamabad, further contributing to the city's green initiatives.

Chairman Randhawa highlighted the importance of setting clear timelines for the renovation of all targeted areas, ensuring that the project proceeds smoothly and punctually.

## PR collect over Rs76m from ticketless passengers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has collected an amount of over Rs 76 million from ticket-less passengers in a crackdown during the last six months with the help of railway police and train staffers.

"Around 59,143 passengers found travelling without tickets in different trains and collected the said amount from them, which is deposited in the official bank account of the department," sources in the Ministry told APP.

They said that it was not the first time that action was taken on a large scale against ticket-less passengers, adding that these types of crackdowns had taken place daily.

The sources said that ticketless travelling was illegal, and those who were caught without a ticket were charged a ticket price for the whole journey of the train besides the penalty. Those who do not pay are handed over to the railway police.

To a question, they said that Pakistan Railways Police claimed to have arrested a total of 43,84 accused due to their involvement in violations of rules and laws and also registered some 3,803 cases against them in eight Railways divisions in one and half year.

"Around 688 cases were registered in Peshawar Division, 584 in

Rawalpindi, 11,03 in Lahore, 369 in Mughalpur workshops, 378 in Multan, 238 in Sukkur, 365 in Karachi, and 78 in Quetta Division," they added.

They said the Railways Police Help Desks had been established at all the major railway stations across the country, and the performance of the Railways Police has been quite satisfactory during the last year.

Regarding the performance of the railway police, they said, "Police are performing duties efficiently despite the limited resources, and the performance of the railway police will be further improved to the optimum level during the next year."

## Rain likely at isolated places, says PMD

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast mainly hot and humid weather for most parts of the country.

However, rain-windstorm/thundershower is likely at isolated places in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, Potohar Region, Islamabad, Punjab, southeastern/upper Sindh and northeastern Balochistan.

As per the synoptic situation, monsoon currents from Arabian Sea were penetrating upper and central parts of the country.

A westerly wave was present over upper parts

and likely to affect central and upper parts from today.

During the last 24 hours, rain-windstorm/thundershower occurred in Punjab, Islamabad, upper Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, southeast/lower Sindh, northeastern Balochistan and Kashmir, while heavy-falls also occurred at isolated places.

Hot and humid weather prevailed over other parts of the country.

The rainfall recorded was Punjab: Jhelum 54mm, Sialkot (City 47, Airport 25), Hafizabad 40, Mangla 38, Gujranwala, Mandi Bahaudin 27, Rawalpindi (Chaklala 21, Shamsabad

10, Kacheri 06), Sheikhupura 21, Islamabad (Golra 12, Zeropoint 08, Bokra 06, Saidpur 05, Airport 02), Gujrat 10, Khanewal 04, Chakwal, Narawal 03, Attock, Multan City, Mangla, Lahore A/P 01, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa: Peshawar (A/P 40, City 28), Parachinar 38, Bacha Khan A/P 26, Balakot 01, Sindh: Chhor 08, Shaheed Benazirabad 05, Sakrand, Kashmir: Kotli 04 and Garhi Dupatta 01mm.

The highest maximum temperatures recorded were Sibbi 47C, Khairpur, Dadu, Jacobabad and Rahimyar Khan 45C.



Floods likely in 17 provinces

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation (MoTCA) has predicated heavy rains, windstorms and flash floods in 17 provinces of the country. MoTCA wrote on X handle heavy rains could possibly unleash flash floods today (Saturday) in Badakhshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Panjsher, Nuristan, Kunar, Lahman, Kapisa, Parwan, Wardak, Nangarhar, Kabul, Logar, Ghazni, Paktia, Paktika and Khost provinces.

124 shops closed in Helmand

LASHKARGAH (Pajhwok): The License Evaluation Commission has closed 124 currency exchange shops over the non-availability of authentic licenses on Thursday. Mawlawi Sher Mohammad Wahdat, assistant head of the Information and Cultural Affairs Department, said: "The currency exchange shops were closed in Lashkargah City in order to force its owners to renew their licenses, do their business in a transparent manner and make sure the money people send are not lost."

Int’l aid pledged for Nangarhar’s victims

JALALABAD CITY (TOLONews): Save the Children Fund, the International Rescue Committee, and the European Union have announced in their reports that they will provide necessary assistance to those affected by the storms and floods in Nangarhar.

The International Rescue Committee states that its mobile teams have gone to the affected areas to deliver emergency aid to the victims.

Mohammad Nabi Afghan, an economic affairs expert, said: "They should tell the UN and global organizations to create a strategy to ensure that aid reaches those in need."

Despite Afghanistan still being a country facing an economic crisis, with over 23 million people in need

of humanitarian assistance, droughts, floods, storms, and earthquakes have caused significant damage to the country's citizens.

Meanwhile, the World Food Programme says that in the past two months, it has provided continuous assistance to more than 125,000 flood victims in Baghlan, Faryab, Ghor, Kunar, Laghman, and Nangarhar.

Ziauddin Safi, Communications Officer of the World Food Programme, said: "The flooding caused by heavy rains in eastern Afghanistan has affected dozens of families and harmed hundreds more. Our assessment teams are currently on the ground, and their reports will help us send the necessary aid to the victims."

At the same time, the Ministry of Economy assures that in coordination with non-governmental organizations, they are striving to deliver essential aid, including food and shelter, to the victims in Nangarhar.

Abdulrahman Habib, spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy, said: "The Ministry of Economy has coordinated with non-Emirati and aid organizations, surveyed the affected areas, and ensured immediate aid and health services are provided."

This comes as heavy rain, storms, and floods in the provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar, Kapisa, Panjshir, and Badakhshan have resulted in significant financial losses in addition to the loss of lives.

Permits holders Afghans deported

KABUL (TOLONews): Iranian forces are deporting Afghan migrants who have short-term residency permits back to their country.

Some Afghan migrants who were returned to Nimruz say they had provincial residency but were still expelled from the country.

Gulbuddin, a deported migrant, says: "In the Bushehr camp where I lived for 14 years when I showed this card, they said it has no value to us. This time I caught you, but next time I will deport you with your family."

Gulbuddin, along with his family members, was returned to the country after living in Iran for 14 years. He says that despite having a short-term residency permit for Bushehr province, he was still deported by Iranian forces.

Kazem, a deported migrant from Iran, says: "When they arrested us, they started with pressure and physical assault, and they do whatever they want and can."

Local officials in Nimroz said that in the past two months, at least 120,000 Afghan migrants have been returned from Iran to the country.

Abdullah Riaz, the head of the Nimroz Directorate of Refugees and Repatriations, told TOLONews: "In the past two months, about 120,000 migrants have returned to the country, and daily 2,500 to 3000 Afghans return to the country."

If there are needy families among them, they will be provided services by the Islamic Emirate and international aid organizations."

Despite repeated attempts, TOLONews could not obtain a comment from the Iranian consulate officials in Kandahar. According to statistics, at least 3,000 Afghan migrants are returned to the country daily from the Milak border of Nimruz.

Trade volume climbs to \$3b a year: Iran

HERAT (Ariana News): Trade volume through Islam Qala-Dogharoun border crossing in Afghanistan's Herat province now totals \$3 billion a year, an Iranian official confirmed this week.

According to Mahdi Shirdel, governor of Taybad city in Iran, this total is indicative of the strong economic relations between Iran and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA).

IRNA news agency reported Iranian officials and members of the private sector met Thursday with Shirdel, who told them: "Dogharoun is the most important economic center [between] Iran and Afghanistan."

According to him, the export goods of Iran and Razavi Khorasan state in Iran are "suppliers of the market of 30 million people" of Afghanistan. Shirdel said the removal of the economic obstacles of Dogharoun has led to the satisfaction of the Islamic Emirate.

According to him, currently 1,200 trucks cross the border daily.

Iranian media have meanwhile reported that about 400 trucks from Iran have been stranded at the border in Afghanistan for more than 20 days.

lysts said that to improve its relations, the Islamic Emirate needs to make some changes in its domestic and foreign policies.

"They should decide on the employment of the youth, and on preventing the youth from fleeing the country. In this way, we can have a proper and strong system, and the world will undoubtedly support us," Salim Paigir, a political analyst, told TOLONews.

This comes as the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs yesterday discussed the closeness of relations between the government and the people in a meeting with some former governors in Kabul.

Nadim: Afghanistan’s affairs guided by Islamic and cultural principles

KABUL (TOLONews): The Acting Minister of Higher Education, during a meeting with the Uzbek Ambassador in Kabul, stated that Afghanistan, as an independent country, conducts all its internal and external affairs based on Islamic and cultural values.

Neda Mohammad Nadim also discussed the expansion of academic and cultural relations between the two countries with Yadgar Shadmanov.

Ziaullah Hashemi, the spokesperson for the ministry, mentioned that Mr. Nadim added that Uzbekistan is among the countries that cooperate with Afghanistan in various fields, especially higher education.

The spokesperson for the Ministry of Higher Education said: "Uzbekistan is one of the countries that cooperates with Afghanistan in various fields, particularly in higher education. The minister added that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, as an independent country, regulates



and advances all internal and external affairs in light of religious and cultural values."

During this meeting, the Uzbek Ambassador invited the Acting Minister of Higher Education to visit Uzbekistan to see the country's scientific and cultural centers.

Some university profes-

sors also consider the expansion of cooperation in the field of higher education between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan important.

Naqibullah Noori, a university professor, said: "Diplomatic relations, especially those that are academic and scientific, are beneficial for both countries and can be helpful for

students who want to pursue scholarships in neighboring and friendly countries."

Previously, the Acting Minister of Higher Education, in a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador, had requested China to provide more scholarships for Afghan students.

Carpet, rug exports exceed 9 million dollars in six months

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce states that in the first six months of this year, carpets and rugs worth more than nine million dollars have been exported abroad.

According to Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesperson of this ministry, most of the carpets were exported to Austria, India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Australia, Italy, China, and Turkey.

Jawad added that the Ministry of Industry and Commerce has provided the necessary facilities for

traders to export carpets abroad.

The spokesperson of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce said, "In the first six months of 2024, over 2.4 million kilograms of carpets worth 8.7 million dollars were exported to Austria, Pakistan, India, Uzbekistan, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Turkey, China, and other countries."

Khanjan Alokozai, a member of the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said, "Carpet is one of our

main export items, and besides that, it provides job opportunities for both men and women."

Meanwhile, some carpet sellers say that organizing exhibitions inside and outside the country will increase carpet sales and exports.

Mustafa Sakhi Zada, a carpet seller, said, "Unfortunately, our sales inside the country are less than before, and we request the current government officials to provide more facilities so that our sales increase."

Firoz Afqar, another carpet seller, said, "In order to transfer quality carpets outside Afghanistan and to showcase and introduce the authentic Afghan culture, which is carpet weaving, to the world, it is necessary to open direct and fast air corridors."

Previously, the United States Agency for International Development stated that with the support of this organization, the Afghan carpet sector has increased its processing capacity to 500,000 square meters per year.

Energy ministry signs agreement with local firm for three projects

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW) says it has signed an agreement with a domestic company for three major solar power projects worth \$25 million dollars.

The acting Minister of Energy and Water Abdul Latif Mansoor said that these projects have a total capacity of eight megawatts of electricity and will cover the electricity needs of 5,000 families.

These projects will be implemented in Farah, Uruzgan and Paktika provinces.

Mansoor added that despite the limited facilities of this ministry, it has been able to make good progress in the electricity production sector, which was unheard of under the former government.

Noorullah, the representative of the contracted company, said that they are committed to completing these projects in a standard and transparent manner.

The ministry officials added that they are trying to



increase the capacity of Naghlu dam from 10 megawatts to 20 megawatts to solve the problem of electricity outages and to provide facilities to industrialists in Kabul.

SIGAR finds US aid vetting failures benefited militants in Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): Two State Department bureaus could not prove compliance with internal policies for vetting aid groups in Afghanistan that received \$293 million in funds, Washington's Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) said.

"It is critical that State knows who is actually benefiting from this assistance in order to prevent the aid from being diverted to the Taliban (Islamic Emirate) or other sanctioned parties," said the latest SIGAR report.

According to the report, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has tried to obtain US aid funds "through several means, including the establishment of humanitarian organizations," underscoring the need for the department to "fully and consistently assess the risks posed by its implementing partners."

SIGAR said three of five State Department bureaus were found in compliance with department regulations requiring vetting of aid fund recipients.

But the Bureau of

Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs could not provide enough documentation to prove their adherence, Reuters reported.

"State could not demonstrate compliance with its partner vetting requirements on awards that disbursed at least \$293 million in Afghanistan," the report stated.

For that reason, "there is an increased risk that terrorists and terrorist-affiliated individuals and entities may have illegally benefited," it said.

The department agreed with the report's conclusions and would "work to ensure compliance" with vetting requirements, it said.

The US remains the largest aid donor to Afghanistan nearly three years after the IEA regained power.

Since the US withdrawal was completed on Aug. 30, 2021, Washington has provided more than \$17.9 billion in assistance to Afghanistan.

The Islamic Emirate

rejects claims of misuse of aid from the international community, including the United States of America.

The Ministry of Economy has also rejected the misuse of humanitarian aid and says that the aid is provided to deserving and needy people in a transparent and trustworthy manner.

The United States remains the largest donor to Afghanistan.

Previously SIGAR reported that during the last three years, US aid implementation partners in Afghanistan have paid at least \$10.9 million in taxes and money for water and electricity to the current Afghan government.

ACF president suspended from office for 15 months

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Union Cycliste Internationale's (UCI) has suspended the President of the Afghanistan Cycling Federation (ACF) Fazli Ahmad Fazli for a period of 15 months from all cycling-related activities for abuse of power, a statement said on Thursday.

The UCI Ethics Commission has found that the President of the Afghanistan Cycling Federation had, on several occasions, sent messages to members of the Afghan cycling community which were deemed to be in breach of Articles 5, 6.4 and 2.1 of Annex 1 of the UCI Code of Ethics due to their abusive and/or threatening nature, and the fact that he therefore abused his position.

In the case involving the President of the Afghanistan Cycling Federation, Mr Fazli Ahmad Fazli, the UCI Ethics Commission has decided to impose a period of suspension from all cycling-related activities for a period of 15 months, as from notification of the operative part of the decision.

Patients resent lack of medicine, beds in hospital

GARDEZ (Pajhwok): Some residents of south-eastern Paktia province complain about the lack of medicine and beds at the zonal hospital. Visitors say they are facing a whole host of problems.

On the other hand, local government officials say efforts are underway to address the issues as soon as possible and put in place all possible facilities.

Sabir Gul, relative of one of a patient, told Pajhwok Afghan News there was a shortage of medicine and patients had to purchase them in the market.

He also grumbled there was no facility at the hospital for key tests, which had to be carried out at private hospitals and clinics.

Gul added: "There is a shortage of medicines, beds and most of drugs are purchased in the market. People with economic woes cannot bring everything

from the market. These problems must be addressed by the government."

Mohammad Ayub, who brought a patient, also claimed there was a shortage of medicine at the zonal hospital. He has to buy the required medicine in the market.

He cited lack of beds at the hospital as another issue that needs to be sorted out on a war footing. Other patients and attendants held similar views.

Mohammad Nader Rahmani, director of the zonal hospital, said they could meet the needs of Paktia inhabitants only. But the hospital is also visited by patients from Khost, Paktia and Logar provinces.

He acknowledged there were fewer beds in the children's ward. Most of the time, he said, one bed was shared by two or three children.

"Formally speaking, the hospital has 150 beds but people from other provinces also come here. Our 150 beds remain occupied all the time.

"We have to accommodate two or even three patients on one bed in the children's ward. Our request is to upgrade the hospital to 300 beds."

Public Health Director Maulvi Khair Mohammad Mansoor said they were striving to upgrade the hospital and increase the number of beds and other facilities.

The director believed with formal upgrading of the hospital, most of the problems would be resolved.

Officials say health centres in Zurmat, Syed Karam, Dand-i-Patan, Chamkani and Ahmadrhel districts have been upgraded, but they have not been given the facilities required.

IEA complete authority in 34 provinces, says Mawlawi Kabir

KABUL (TOLONews): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the political deputy Prime Minister, said in a meeting with the heads of public universities and the Ministry of Higher Education that the Islamic Emirate has authority over all parts of Afghanistan. According to the political deputy PM, currently no village in the country is outside the government's control.

Mawlawi Abdul Kabir said in this meeting: "There is complete authority in the 34 provinces and 421 official districts. Not a single village is in the hands of the enemy. This is not an exaggeration, it is the truth."

In this meeting, this senior interim government official also pledged that



with the Islamic Emirate's return to power, the wars for gaining power in Afghanistan have ended. The political deputy PM added: "There is no war of factions, languages, or ethnicities. The destruction of cities to gain power no longer exists."

Meanwhile, some political ana-





DHAKA: Police fire tear gas shells and rubber bullets to disperse students in Bangladeshi capital.

## Israel bombards central Gaza

CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli forces bombarded the Gaza Strip's historic refugee camps in the center of the enclave and struck Gaza City in the north on Thursday, killing at least 13 people, and tanks pushed deeper into Rafah in the south, health officials and residents said.

One Israeli airstrike killed six people in Zawayda town in central Gaza and two other people were killed in a strike on a house in Bureij camp. An Israeli air strike killed three people in a car in Deir Al-Balah, a city packed with people displaced from elsewhere in Gaza, health officials said. In Gaza City in the north, medics said two Palestinians were killed in another airstrike.

The Israeli military said in a statement its forces killed two senior Islamic Jihad commanders in two airstrikes in Gaza City, including one whom it said had taken part in the Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel that triggered the Gaza war. In Rafah, residents said Israeli tanks advanced deeper in the western side of the city and took position on a hilltop there. The Israeli military said forces located several tunnels and killed several gunmen.

The armed wing of militant group Hamas and its allies said they fired mortar bombs at Israeli forces in southwest Rafah on Thursday. More than a million people had sought shelter in Rafah from fighting further north, but most have scattered again since Israel launched an offensive in and around the city in May.

The fighting has pushed the 60-bed Red Cross field hospital in Rafah to the brink of capacity, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said in a statement on Thursday.

## 7 Pakistanis among 100 executed by S Arabia in 2024

MAKKAH (AFP): Saudi Arabia executed two people convicted of drug trafficking, the interior ministry said on Thursday, bringing the total number of executions carried out this year to at least 106, according to an AFP tally.

The official Saudi Press Agency reported the ministry's announcement, saying one was a Saudi national executed for trafficking amphetamines and the other a Pakistani for trafficking heroin, both in Makkah.

### Israel parliament votes to oppose Palestinian state

JERUSALEM (AFP): An Israeli parliament vote to oppose a Palestinian state as an "existential threat," just days ahead of a visit by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Washington, brought Palestinian and international criticism on Thursday.

The 120-member Knesset late on Wednesday passed by 68 votes to nine a resolution that said a Palestinian state on land occupied by Israel would "perpetuate the Israel-Palestinian conflict and destabilize the region." The resolution is symbolic but lays down a marker before Netanyahu's Washington trip as well as an opinion to be issued by the International Court of Justice over the legality of Israel's occupation of the West Bank. "The Knesset firmly opposes the creation of a Palestinian state (on land) west of Jordan," said the resolution, referring to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which has been devastated by the war unleashed by the October 7 Hamas attacks. "The creation of a Palestinian state in the heart of the land of Israel would constitute an existential danger for the state of Israel and its citizens, would perpetuate the Israel-Palestinian conflict and destabilize the region."

"The repeated mass casualty events resulting from the unrelenting hostilities have stretched to breaking point the response capacity of our hospital — and all health facilities in southern Gaza — to care for those with life-threatening injuries," said William Schomburg, head of the ICRC's subdelegation in Gaza.

More than nine months into the war, Palestinian fighters led by Hamas are still able to attack Israeli forces with anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs, occasionally firing rocket barrages into Israel. Israel vowed to eradicate Hamas after its militants killed 1,200 people and took more than 250 hostages in the Oct. 7 attack, according to Israeli tallies. More than 38,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's retaliatory offensive since then, Gaza health authorities say.

On Tuesday, Israel said it had eliminated half of the leadership of Hamas' military wing and killed or captured about 14,000 fighters since the start of the war.

Israel says 326 of its soldiers have been killed in Gaza. Hamas doesn't release figures of casualties among its ranks and said Israel was exaggerating to portray a "fake victory." Diplomatic efforts by Arab mediators to halt the hostilities, backed by the United States, appear on hold, though all sides say they are open to more talks, including Israel and Hamas.

A deal would aim to end the war and release Israeli hostages in Gaza in return for many Palestinians jailed by Israel. Hamas was awaiting an Israeli response to a ceasefire offer drafted by the United States based on ideas announced by President Joe Biden, a Palestinian official close to the mediation effort said. "The feeling in Hamas is that (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu is stalling and that he might not say anything before he goes to the United States next week," said the official, who asked not to be named.

### Fitch predicts technocrat setup in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Global credit rating agency Fitch has predicted the possibility of a technocrat setup in Pakistan in case the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government is ousted. In its report on Pakistan, the rating agency predicted that the PML-N led coalition government will remain in power for the next 18 months with no immediate plans for fresh elections.

The incumbent government will continue to implement the reforms mandated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that will enable the economy to grow. However, Fitch mentioned that the political upheaval might affect the economic activities in Pakistan along with the impacts of climate change including floods and drought.

According to the rating agency, former prime minister Imran Khan is unlikely to get released from jail in the foreseeable future despite getting relief in a number of cases. The agency went on to predict that the next general elections in Pakistan will be held in 2029. On the economic front, Pakistan's current account deficit is projected to remain 1% in FY2024/25.

The Fitch report suggested that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) might reduce its key policy rate from 22% to 16% in 2024. A day earlier, Moody's said that Pakistan's recent staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will improve funding prospects for the cash-strapped South Asian nation. The Shehbaz Sharif-led government and the IMF reached a three-year, \$7 billion aid package deal on Saturday, providing much-needed respite to the nation. This agreement marks a critical step towards stabilizing Pakistan's economy, which has been under severe strain.

Moody's commented that the new IMF programme would enhance Pakistan's (Caa3 stable) funding prospects.

However, Moody's cautioned that the government's ability to sustain reform implementation is crucial for Pakistan to continually unlock financing throughout the IMF programme's duration, thereby easing government liquidity risks durably. Moody's also acknowledged potential challenges, noting that social tensions arising from the high cost of living could impede reform implementation, especially with higher taxes and future adjustments to energy tariffs.

Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan and petitioner's counsel Barrister Mian Ali Ashfaq appeared before the court. Sanam Javed was also present. The attorney general informed the court that Sanam Javed was needed in any case. He added that the Balochistan police hadn't requested a transitory remand

## 32 dead as riots against job quota continue in Bangladesh

DHAKA (AFP): Bangladeshi students set fire to the country's state broadcaster on Thursday, a day after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina appeared on the network seeking to calm escalating clashes that have killed at least 32 people.

Hundreds of protesters demanding reform of civil service hiring rules fought back and overwhelmed riot police who had fired at them with rubber bullets, chasing the retreating officers to BTV's headquarters in the capital Dhaka. The incensed crowd then set ablaze the network's reception building and dozens of vehicles parked outside, a BTV official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The broadcaster said "many people" were trapped inside as the fire spread but another official from the station later told AFP that they had safely evacuated the building. Hasina's government has ordered schools and universities to close indefinitely as police step up efforts to bring the country's deteriorating law and order situation under control.

The premier appeared on the broadcaster on Wednesday night to condemn the "murder" of protesters and vow that those responsible will be punished regardless of their political affiliation. But violence worsened on the streets despite her appeal for calm as police again attempted to break up demonstrations with rubber bullets and tear gas volleys. At least 25 people were killed on Thursday in addition to seven killed earlier in the week, according to a tally of casualty figures from hospitals compiled by AFP, with hundreds more wounded.

Police weaponry was the cause of at least two-thirds of those deaths,

based on descriptions given to AFP by hospital figures. "We've got seven dead here," an official at Uttara Crescent Hospital in the capital Dhaka, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisal, told AFP. "The first two were students with rubber bullet injuries. The other five had gunshot injuries."

Nearly 1,000 others had been treated at the hospital for injuries sustained during clashes with police, the official said, adding many had rubber bullet wounds. Didar Malekin of the online news outlet Dhaka Times told AFP that Mehedi Hasan, one of his reporters, had been killed while covering clashes in Dhaka. Several cities across Bangladesh saw violence throughout the day as riot police marched on protesters who had begun another round of human blockades on roads and highways.

Helicopters rescued 60 police officers who were trapped on the roof of a campus building at Canadian University, the scene of some of Dhaka's fiercest clashes on Thursday, the elite Rapid Action Battalion police force said in a statement. Nearly daily marches this month have demanded an end to a quota system that reserves more than half of civil service posts for specific groups, including children of veterans from the country's 1971 liberation war against Pakistan.

Critics say the scheme benefits children of pro-government groups that back Hasina, 76, who has ruled the country since 2009 and won her fourth consecutive election in January after a vote without genuine opposition. Her administration is accused by rights groups of capturing

state institutions and stamping out dissent, including by the extrajudicial killing of opposition activists.

Mubashar Hasan, a Bangladesh expert at the University of Oslo in Norway, said the protests had grown into a wider expression of discontent with Hasina's autocratic rule. "They are protesting against the repressive nature of the state," he told AFP. "Protesters are questioning Hasina's leadership, accusing her of clinging onto power by force," he added. "The students are in fact calling her a dictator."

Bangladeshis reported widespread mobile internet outages across the country on Thursday, two days after internet providers cut off access to Facebook — the protest campaign's key organising platform. Junior telecommunications minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak told AFP that the government had ordered the network cut off. He earlier told reporters that social media had been "weaponised as a tool to spread rumours, lies and disinformation", forcing the government to restrict access.

Along with police crackdowns, demonstrators and students allied to the premier's ruling Awami League have also battled each other on the streets with bricks and bamboo rods. Hasina's national address did not assign responsibility for the deaths, but descriptions from hospital authorities and students suggest at least some died when police used supposedly non-lethal weapons on demonstrations. Rights group Amnesty International said video evidence from clashes this week showed that Bangladeshi security forces had used unlawful force.

## 36 thousand kanal Awqaf land case PHC gives 15 days deadline to KP Chief Secy

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court granted 15 days deadline to Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Abid Majeed for resolution long-standing dispute over 36 thousand Kanals of Awqaf land in Kalu Shah area of Mardan by either providing lease the land to the occupants or removal them from the land, in accordance with the Supreme Court's verdict, on Thursday.

During hearing Justice SM Attique Shah observed that not a single rupee has been received by the government from the land's income during 40 years due to dispute and annoyed delaying tactics. The court has emphasized that the income from the land should be spent on the poor and needy, as per the law.

Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Chief Secretary Abid Majeed, Secretary Awqaf Adil Sadiq, Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Ayaz, Department of Awqaf lawyer Salim Yasir and ten-

ant's counsel Amin-ur-Rehman Yousafzai advocate appeared before the court.

PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Dr. Khurshed Iqbal inquired from Advocate General Shah Faisal Ottomankhel regarding implementation report on Supreme court verdict during initiation of Contempt of Court plea. However, Advocate General informed that Chief Secretary is appearing before PHC personally and added that he would provide details in this regard to the court.

Chief Secretary informed PHC that he has put the issue before provincial cabinet on receiving of court's orders in this regard. He added that a committee has been formed to resolve the issue, which will negotiate with the occupants and offer them a lease agreement. If the occupants refuse, the committee will take steps to remove them from the land

as per law.

Chief Secretary added that the constituted under Deputy Commissioner Mardan will submit report within 14 days this regard while added that lease would be offered to the occupants as per Supreme Court of Pakistan verdict. The court has directed the committee to submit a report on the matter within 14 days and has made it clear that it will not tolerate any further delays in the resolution of the dispute. The court has also emphasized the need for all stakeholders to play their role in resolving the dispute peacefully.

The occupants of the land, represented by Advocate Aminur Rehman, have expressed their willingness to lease the land but have also raised concerns about the disputes with the Awqaf Department. The court has directed the parties to resolve their differences and has made it clear that it will not allow any further delays in the matter while adjourned further hearing.

## Sanam Javed walks free after IHC declares her arrest illegal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday disposed of PTI social activist Sanam Javed's release application by declaring her arrest illegal. IHC's Justice Mianqul Hassan Aurangzeb heard the petition filed by Sanam Javed's father.

Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan and petitioner's counsel Barrister Mian Ali Ashfaq appeared before the court. Sanam Javed was also present. The attorney general informed the court that Sanam Javed was needed in any case. He added that the Balochistan police hadn't requested a transitory remand

of Sanam Javed.

"Sanam Javed is free and she can move in her native province freely," Attorney General Mansoor Awan stated. Justice Mianqul Hassan remarked that, "I witnessed on the internet Sanam Javed used inappropriate language." He inquired from the petitioner's counsel, "Do you guarantee that Sanam Javed will not use inappropriate language again?"

Counsel Mian Ashfaq assured the court that she wouldn't use inappropriate language in future. Consequently, the IHC disposed of Sanam Javed's release petition after declaring her arrest illegal. On July 16, Sanam Javed and her family were shifted to KP

House, a guest house in Islamabad, following the IHC direction restraining her arrest till July 18. The court also summoned records of the cases registered against her.

This development came when Sanam Javed was rearrested by the Islamabad police shortly after her acquittal in an FIA case by the district and sessions court in Islamabad. Sanam Javed was to be handed over to the Balochistan police pertaining to the case of posting anti-state content on X. Her father Javed Iqbal filed an application in the IHC for her release, making the federal government, the FIA, the Islamabad IG and others respondents.

### China shopping mall fire: 16 killed

BEIJING (Xinhua): At least 16 people have been killed in a fire at a shopping mall in southwestern China, state media reported. The blaze started in the 14-storey commercial building in the city of Zigong, in Sichuan province, on Wednesday night and firefighters were working at the site until early on Thursday, according to the Xinhua news agency.

Firefighters and rescue teams pulled 75 people to safety. The fire started at the bottom of the building, which houses a department store, offices, restaurants and a movie theatre, state broadcaster CCTV reported. A preliminary investigation found that construction operations triggered the fire, but a more detailed inquiry to determine the specific cause was under way, the authorities said.

Videos of the fire spread on social media, showing clouds of thick black smoke coming out of the windows from the building's lower levels and engulfing the entire structure as they rose into the sky. The emergency department called on the public "not to believe or amplify rumours" about the incident. Local media reported that firefighters used several drones and water sprays to extinguish the flames. Fire hazards remain a problem in China, which reported 947 fire-related deaths from January to May 2024, up 19 percent from the same period of the previous year, said Li Wanfeng, a spokesman for the National Fire and Rescue Administration.

According to Li, the number of fires in public places such as hotels and restaurants rose to 40 percent, with the most common cause being malfunctioning electrical or gas lines and carelessness. In January, a fire killed 39 people in a commercial building due to unauthorised welding in the basement. The next month 15 people were killed in a residential building in the eastern city of Nanjing after an attached car park that had electric bikes caught fire.

## Russia advances in Ukraine but suffers losses

MOSCOW: A war of words over Ukraine took centre-stage in the past week, as the European Union sought to bolster its defence readiness, NATO celebrated its 75th birthday and Russia issued threats and promises.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told the European Parliament she would pursue a defence union if re-elected for another five years, which she ultimately was. "We will propose a number of Defence Projects of Common European Interest starting with a European Air Shield and cyber-defence," she said on Thursday, triggering warning shots from Russia a day later.

Von der Leyen's single market commissioner, Thierry Breton, earlier this year promised a 100-billion-euro (\$109bn) investment fund for European defence industries. It has yet to materialise, but von der Leyen promised to create a dedicated defence portfolio and to pursue innovation and investment. "It is astonishing. The European Union, which was created to ensure the wellbeing and

stability of all its members, has now evolved into a NATO appendage," said Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the UN a day earlier. "And [now the EU] is no less aggressively and, perhaps, sometimes even more aggressively demanding to inflict a defeat on Russia. What kind of strategic or any other dialogue could there be?" he asked.

Lavrov was explaining to reporters why Russia refused to attend a Ukrainian-organised peace summit in Switzerland last month, and so far refuses to attend three more mini-summits Ukraine plans — one on energy in Qatar by early August, one on freedom of navigation in Turkey next month, and one on prisoner of war exchanges in Canada in September. All three are to contribute to a second peace summit in November. Ukraine has been stealthily building an international consensus on piecemeal aspects of a final peace deal with Russia.

On July 11, the General Assembly voted 99-to-9 in favour of a motion calling on Russia to unilaterally end its war of aggression and withdraw its

soldiers from Ukrainian territory — releasing the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station from its grasp. A year into the war, 141 nations backed a similar call. In September 2022, 143 nations condemned Russia's formal annexation of four Ukrainian regions.

Russia blames NATO for its aggression. Deputy head of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev said in an interview on Wednesday that "Ukraine's admission [to NATO] ... in essence is a declaration of war, albeit a deferred one." Moscow has demanded onerous conditions for talks — recognition by Ukraine of Russia's annexation of the four regions it partly occupies, curtailment of its defence forces and refusal to join NATO.

Medvedev said a week earlier that "even this will not be the end of Russia's military operation", because "even after signing the papers and accepting the defeat, the rest of the radicals will sooner or later return to power, inspired by Russia's Western enemies. And then it will be time to finally crush the viper." In fact, he seemed to prepare Russians for

perennial war, saying there would be "future battles to defend the Fatherland."

In Wednesday's interview, he responded to NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg's hope that Ukraine may join the alliance in a decade saying that by then, "it's quite possible that... [Ukraine] will no longer exist." NATO reflected on none of this during celebrations of its 75th anniversary in Washington last week.

Italy, Germany and Romania pledged five additional Patriot air defence systems to Ukraine, and the US, Netherlands and Denmark promised that "Ukraine will be flying operational F-16s this summer." Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands have promised to deliver 60 decommissioned aircraft to Ukraine this year. Greece is conditionally offering another 32.

This war of words took place against a backdrop of incremental Russian advances in the Donetsk region. Between July 9 and July 12, Russian troops completed the conquest of Kanak Microrraion, the eastern extremity of Chasiv Yar, which

has been particularly fiercely fought over. The reason is that Chasiv Yar is key to advancing against the last remaining bastions of Ukrainian defence in western Donetsk — the cities of Konstantynivka, Kramatorsk and Sloviansk.

To capture Kanak Microrraion, an area three blocks wide and three blocks deep, Ukrainian Deputy Defence Minister Ivan Havrylyuk said Russian forces suffered 5,000 casualties. Their task now becomes harder, because the rest of Chasiv Yar lies on elevated ground and across a canal. Russian forces have proven in the past that they are capable of capturing even strongly defended positions, notably at Bakhmut and Severdonetsk, but only after suffering very high loss of life and equipment.

"In June, the Russian army lost more than 1,400 artillery systems, more than 600 armoured fighting vehicles, almost 360 tanks. These are unprecedented losses. And what are the achievements on the battlefield?" wrote Deputy Defence Minister Ivan Havrylyuk in a July 9 article. "These figures are evidence of the fact that

we are winning the counter-battery struggle ... Russians shoot more often, but the results are better with us."

Russian forces also advanced northwest of Avdiivka, a city they captured in February, and in the direction of Toretsk. Along with Chasiv Yar, these three fronts lie within 40km (25 miles) of each other, and form the main thrust of Russian advance in Ukraine. Elsewhere on the thousand-kilometre front, the Russians were stalemated, but that does not mean they didn't suffer heavy losses.

Kharkiv, a front they opened in May likely to drain Ukrainian forces away from Chasiv Yar, has ended up draining Russian reserves. Viktor Solimchuk, commander of the tactical group "Kharkiv" defending the area, told reporters that Russian casualties since May amounted to 2,939 killed and 6,509 wounded. "That is, the estimated losses of the enemy in our direction are about 91 percent," Solimchuk said. Al Jazeera could not independently verify the toll. — Al Jazeera