

PM summons CCI meeting
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has summoned a meeting of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) on Monday (July 22) to ponder over key energy projects and issues relating to the power sector. The meeting will be attended by the four chief ministers and the federal ministers, in which CMs will put up issues relating to their provinces in the meeting.

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First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

Jawan killed in blast
F.P. Report

TURBAT: One Jawan of a security force was killed and seven others were injured in a roadside bomb explosion in Buleda area of Turbat in Balochistan province on Friday. According to police, a roadside bomb exploded near the convoy of security forces in Buleda area of Turbat, resultantly, one jawan of security forces was killed while seven others personnel sustained injuries in the blast.

Vol. XXXIXI No. 175 Regd. No. 241 MUHARRAM 13 1446 -- SATURDAY, JULY 20 2024 PESHAWAR EDITION 12 PAGES PRICE. 30

Many dead in Bannu protest firing: Saif

F.P. Report

BANNU: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's spokesperson Barrister Mohammad Ali Saif on Friday said that a protest staged by people in Bannu escalated and turned unpleasant, resulting in gunfire which led to "some" deaths and injuries.

In a video statement posted by the KP government on the X platform on Friday, Saif said a protest rally was organised in Bannu demanding peace in the area which was attended by large number of people, social organisations, traders, and political parties.

According to foreign news agency, over 10,000 people waving white flags and calling for peace gathered for the rally in Bannu. Protesters told the news agency they rallied because "despite 20 years of military operations, stability had not been achieved, therefore, military actions could never be a substitute for peace".

Saif said Pakistan was a democratic country where everyone had the right to protest peacefully, including the people of Bannu, to demand peace and deliver a message to those in power. He, however, added that no one could be allowed to take the law into their own hands. "Unfortunately, some unpleasant events occurred [at the protest on Friday], which escalated and resulted in firing," he said. "Consequently, some people were killed and some were injured."

The spokesperson did not provide details about the number of casualties, the parties responsible for the gunfire, or the cause of the incident. Saif said that KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur took "immediate notice" of the events and instructed the local administration to take steps in this regard. The spokesperson added that the Bannu commissioner, deputy commissioner, and other officials engaged the protest leaders and political figures in talks and had "brought the situation under control".

He added a jirga was also being held to establish peace and security. "The chief minister has instructed that a transparent investigation be conducted into the incident and that exemplary punishment be imposed on those found responsible for unlawful actions and causing instability," he said. The spokesperson said that compensation was also announced for those killed and injured during the violence, adding that further details would be revealed soon. Muhammad Numan, a spokesperson for three government hospitals in Bannu, told media that one person was killed and 27 injured during the violence.

Pakhtoon Yar Khan, the KP minister for public health engineering, who was a speaker at the protest, also confirmed the death to foreign news agency. "During the rally, shots were fired directly at me and the people standing near me. This wasn't just firing in the air — it was intended to kill us," he told foreign news agency. "The shooting was carried out by those who want to destroy our peace. They want to spill the blood of our people, but the com-

munity is no longer willing to tolerate this."

The minister also visited a hospital in Bannu to enquire about the condition of the injured. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department also declared an immediate health emergency in all public sector hospitals in the district in light of the situation. "The entire healthcare staff, including doctors and paramedics, is hereby put on high alert to handle the emergent situation on war footings and mitigate the prospects of loss to human lives," a statement released by the health department said.

The department also ordered health officials to stay in contact with the district administration and rescue teams for better cooperation. Rights organisations Amnesty International and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) condemned the incident but claimed a higher death toll. The HRCP said it was "appalled to learn that at least five protestors have been killed and over 20 injured" from firing during the protest.

"The provincial and federal governments must immediately engage with the protestors and their legitimate concerns, and hold to account those responsible for protestors' deaths and injuries. Moreover, any actions taken to restore law and order in the region must be debated transparently in Parliament and account for the rights of those affected," it demanded. Amnesty said the "death and injury of several protestors, is a violation of their rights to peaceful assembly under international human rights law and Pakistan's own Constitution. The use of lethal force at a peaceful rally advocating for peace is unlawful."

Leaders of Imran Khan's PTI also condemned the incident and called on the KP government to take appropriate action in response to the firing on protesters. "There should be an independent judicial inquiry against this action, and the responsible should be prosecuted," said Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly (NA) Omar Ayub. Former NA speaker Asad Qaiser too echoed the demand, saying the provincial government "should carry out its responsibility and conduct an immediate and transparent investigation into the incident".

"KP government is expected to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the incident," said PTI MNA Ali Muhammad Khan, adding that firing on protesters was condemnable. "Desire for peace is not a crime and peaceful protest is a basic constitutional legal and political right of every citizen," he said. Former KP finance minister Taimur Jhagra said it was "imperative that both sides of government, federal and provincial, show immediate leadership and resolve this."

Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan-Fazl (JUIF) spokesperson Aslam Ghoori also strongly condemned the incident, saying that "firing on people begging for peace is beyond comprehension." He called for a judicial inquiry into the incident. Awami National Party President Aimal Wali Khan termed the incident "shameful".

Afghan TTP, terror groups serious threat to peace: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday strongly urged the Interim Afghan Government to take immediate, robust and effective action against the perpetrators of the 15 July attack at Bannu Cantonment and to prevent such attacks in the future as such attacks undermined bilateral relations and regional stability.

"We conveyed to the Afghan authorities our serious concern on the terrorist attack at Bannu Cantonment on 15 July 2024 and the continued use of Afghan territory by Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to carry out deadly attacks in Pakistan with impunity," Foreign Office spokesperson Muntaz Zehra Baloch said in her weekly press briefing. She said the Bannu Cantonment attack underscored the urgent need for Afghanistan to take concrete and effective action against terrorist sanctuaries within its borders.

"Despite Pakistan's repeated calls for action, the presence of TTP and other terror groups in Afghanistan continues to pose a serious threat to regional peace and security," she said adding "We urge Afghanistan to take effective action against these groups and to ensure that the Afghan territory is not used for terrorism

against Pakistan. Pakistan remains committed to combating terrorism and ensuring the security of its people". Pakistan also strongly condemned the dastardly terror attack of the 9th of Moharram on Imam Bargah Ali bin Abu Talib in Muscat, Oman that resulted in six deaths including four Pakistani nationals.

The attack on peaceful civilians in a mosque during the holy month of Moharram in the peaceful city of Muscat is reprehensible and inhumane. Such acts of terrorism and violence against peaceful civilians cannot be condoned on any grounds whatsoever, the FO spokesperson said. She emphasized that Pakistan condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. This attack demonstrates the persistent threat of terrorism posed by terrorist organizations in the region. It is also a reminder of the importance to work together to fight these terrorist entities and to find common solutions to root out this menace from the region.

"We stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Oman as they contend with this tragedy. Pakistan has offered all possible assistance to Omani authorities in the investigation and in bringing to justice those responsible for this heinous crime in this holy month of Muharram," she added.

Pakistan also condemns in the strongest terms the continued genocidal barrage by Israeli occupation forces on the schools and shelters in Gaza, she said adding that over the last 10 days, they had attacked eight schools in Gaza being used as shelters by the displaced civilians. The atrocious attack on the tents of displaced persons in the Al Mawasi area of Khan Younis in southern Gaza resulted in deaths of at least 90 Palestinians, including women and children taking refuge in the camp. Targeting a camp that Israel itself designated as a "safe zone" is another violation of international humanitarian law.

Pakistan also condemns measures being taken by Israel against the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian State. Israel has no locus standi to decide about the future of the lands belonging to the people of Palestine. She added Pakistan firmly believed that the only just solution to the Palestinian question is the creation of a viable, secure, contiguous and sovereign State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. "We are also concerned about the arrest of participants of a Muharram procession in Srinagar under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for raising pro-Palestine slogans.

Cop martyred in Takhtbhai checkpoint attack

Fazal Haq

MARDAN: One police personnel was martyred and two others sustained critically injuries when a police post located in Takht Bhai ruins near archaeological sites came under terrorist attack in the early hours of Friday. Police officials and locals said.

The preliminary investigations conducted by relevant police officials, revealed that unidentified assailants hurled hand grenade following by indiscriminate fire on the police post in Takht Bhai near the archaeological sites at around 3.00 a.m. on Friday. The perpetrators managed to flee the scene immediately after the incident.

As a result of militant attack, the police constable identified as Umar Nabi died on the spot while the other two police officials named Shabbir and Muhammad Fayyaz were taken to Mardan Medical Complex hospital by personnel of rescue-1122 with serious injuries.

Soon after the terrorist attack, a heavy contingent of police rushed to the spot and cordoned off the area followed by launching a search operation to apprehend the culprits. The Takht Bhai police not only registered FIR in the terrorist incident but also began further investigations so that to ascertain the real perpetrators and arrest them.

Two killed in Waziristan explosion

F.P. Report

WANA: As many as two tribesmen embraced martyrdom while five others were injured in a remote-controlled bomb blast targeted the vehicle of former peace committee leader Ain Ullah near Aman checkpoint on Kari Kot Road. However, Ain Ullah miraculously survived the attack, on Friday.

According to details, two passersby named Zardin and Noor Ullah Khojail Khel, were killed. Five others, including Fazal Rehman, Hamaz ud Din, and Fakhrul Din, were injured and taken to the Headquarters Hospital Wana for treatment.

According to hospital sources, two of the injured are in critical condition and receiving treatment. The attack involved a remote-controlled bomb installed on a motorcycle, which exploded as Ain Ullah's vehicle passed by, causing a loud explosion. Firing was also reported after the blast, causing people at the scene to scramble for safety. The recent series of terrorist incidents has raised significant concerns among the local population.

ECP conforms to SC verdict

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday decided to act upon the Supreme Court decision regarding reserved seats for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidates.

The decision was taken during a meeting held for the second successive day as Thursday's huddle remained inconclusive. Friday's meeting was again presided over by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja and "all aspects" of the Supreme Court verdicts were discussed.

The ECP chief advised its legal team to take into account the imperative to act on the apex court's decision. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday convened a meeting following the Supreme Court decision on reserved seats. The chief election commissioner preside over the meeting. The legal wing of ECP briefed the participants on the decision on reserved seats.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Oman, Fahad Sulaiman Khalaf Al Kharusi called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

KP demands electricity at Rs 15 per unit

Provincial Assembly passes resolution against ban on PTI

Shah Faisal

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Friday passed a resolution, asking the federal government to fix the price of electricity in the province at Rs 15 per unit.

The resolution was moved by Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) Fazal Elahi, stating that that electricity is being sold to the public at Rs 70-80 per unit, despite the fact that it costs only Rs 2 to produce.

The resolution demanded that the federal government provide electricity to the province at a price of Rs 10 to Rs 15 per unit. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly through a resolution also demanded the centre to end electricity load-shedding in the province. Coincidentally, the power supply was suspended in the assembly hall during the debate on the resolution.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly has passed a resolution against the ban on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). In the provincial assembly, Law Minister Aftab Alam presented the resolution, stating that the Supreme Court's decision makes it clear that PTI is the largest political party in the country.

The resolution emphasized that, according to the Supreme Court's decision, PTI should be given reserved seats. Despite this judicial decision, the federal cabinet is promoting the narrative of banning PTI. The resolution asserted that PTI stands with the constitution, and any ban on the party would be a violation of Article 17 of the Constitution.

It is noteworthy that, a few days ago, Federal Minister for Information, Atta Tarar, announced

during a press conference that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and the country cannot coexist. He stated that a ban on PTI is being considered and that a review petition on the decision of reserved seats has been filed.

He claimed that the Supreme Court has given undue relief to PTI. Following Atta Tarar's press conference, PTI responded strongly, and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan also stated that the decision to ban PTI should be immediately reversed. The local government and mines& mineral (amendment) Bills 2024 were also presented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

These bills were presented by Law Minister Aftab Alam and Local Government Minister Arshad Ayub. Speaker KP Assembly Babar Salim allowed the Ministers to present the Bills. The members of opposition in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly staged a walk out after the Speaker Babar Salim did not allow them to speak during passage of resolutions presented by the Law Minister Aftab Ahmad.

The Speaker observed that first the Minister should present resolutions in the assembly and later the opposition members would be allowed to speak on a point of order. Later, the opposition members returned to the house on the request of Provincial Ministers. The Speaker adjourned the assembly session till Monday.

The names of panel of chairmen for ongoing session of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly with speaker Babar Salim Swati in chair were announced. The speaker announced names of panel of chairmen including MPAs Muhammad Idress,

Miansharafat, Hamyun Khan and Aftab Haider. The house also offered fateha for victims of bomb blasts and terrorist attacks and Shaheed Geelman Wazir.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly also discuss the firing incident on the peaceful procession in Bannu and the deteriorating law and order situation in the province. JUI-F MPA Adnan Khan, speaking on a point of order, highlighted that the people of Bannu, who were peacefully demanding peace, were fired upon, resulting in 20 injuries. He urged the government to take action against the perpetrators and ensure the safety of the people.

JUI-F parliamentary leader Lutfur Rehman highlighted security concerns, stressing that the country was facing a critical situation and demanding governmental action against terrorism to protect the citizens. Other members of the provincial assembly also called for steps to restore peace in the province. Provincial minister Dr Amjad Khan reassured the assembly that the government was taking the law and order situation seriously.

He announced that an inquiry into the Bannu firing incident had been ordered and a committee would be formed to investigate the incident and ensure public safety. KP Assembly Speaker Babar Salim Swati emphasised the need for a collaborative approach to address the issue, suggesting the formation of a committee comprising the government, opposition, security officials, and administrative officials to find a solution. The assembly session was adjourned till Monday.

Biden vows to fight on Trump vows to end wars

WASHINGTON (Reuters): President Joe Biden vowed on Friday to continue his campaign for reelection even as seven more fellow Democrats in Congress urged him to end his floundering campaign, fearing that it could cost the party dearly in the Nov. 5 election.

More than one in 10 congressional Democrats have now publicly called on the 81-year-old incumbent -- who is isolating at his Delaware home with a case of COVID -- to drop out following a disastrous June debate against Republican Donald Trump that raised questions about Biden's ability to win or to carry out his duties for another four years. Biden remained defiant, saying he would resume campaigning soon.

"I look forward to getting back on the campaign trail next week to continue exposing the threat of Donald Trump's Project 2025 agenda while making the case for my own record and the vision that I have for America," he said in a statement, referring to a policy plan developed by Trump's conservative allies. The divide among Democrats stood in sharp contrast to the scenes that played out his week at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, where former party rivals united around Trump, who accepted the Republican nomination in a rambling speech that featured his familiar mix of grievance and bombast.

So far, 30 of the 264 Democrats in Congress have openly called for Biden to end his campaign, while other senior Democratic leaders have pushed him behind the scenes to do so, according to sources and media reports. "We must face the reality that widespread public concerns about your age and fitness are jeopardizing what should be a winning campaign," Representatives Jared Huffman, Marc Veasey, Chuy Garcia and Marc Pocan wrote in a letter on Friday.

Three other Democratic lawmakers also separately called on Biden to

MILWAUKEE (AFP): Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump promised to bring an end to raging international crises and restore American prestige on the world stage, saying he could "stop wars with a telephone call." The former president sought to paint a dire picture of the world under his successor Joe Biden, telling the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee that the planet is "teetering on the edge of World War III."

"I will restore peace, stability and harmony all throughout the world," Trump said, without giving any detail on how he might do that. "Under our leadership the United States will be respected again. No nation will question our power, no enemy will doubt our might, our borders will be totally secure." Trump placed the blame for conflicts around the world squarely on Biden -- even those with roots stretching back far before the Democrat took office. "There is an international crisis the likes of which the world has seldom been part of... war is now raging in Europe, in the Middle East, a growing specter of conflict hangs over Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines and all of Asia," he said. He vowed to change all that if he is elected to a second term in the White House. "I will end every single international crisis that the current administration has created, including the horrible war with Russia and Ukraine," Trump said. But "to achieve this future, we must first rescue our nation from failed and even incompetent leadership." He also said he wanted Americans held abroad to be released -- or else. "The entire world, I tell you this: we want our hostages back and they better be back before I assume office or you will be paying a very big price," said Trump -- again failing to give any specifics. He pledged to build a version of Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system for the United States, ignoring the fact that the system is designed for short-range threats and would be ill-suited to defending against intercontinental missiles that are the main danger to the country.

drop out: Senator Martin Heinrich and Representatives Zoe Lofgren and Greg Landsman. Democrats are increasingly worried about a Republican sweep in the Nov. 5 election that could leave Trump and his allies not only in charge of the White House but also with majorities in both chambers of Congress.

Former House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi is among those who have told Biden he cannot win in November, according to a White House source familiar with the matter. After weeks of insisting he will remain in the race, sources say Biden is now taking calls to step aside seriously, and multiple Democratic officials think an exit is a matter of time.

Biden campaign chairwoman Jen O'Malley Dillon acknowledged that

Biden faces a difficult path to reelection but said his support has not fallen significantly in recent weeks. "We have a lot of work to do to make sure that we are reassuring the American people that, yes, he's old, but he can do the job and he can win," she said on MSNBC.

Though a Reuters/Ipsos poll earlier this week found Biden and Trump effectively tied, strategists from both parties say Biden's path to victory is narrowing as he trails in most of the battleground states that will decide the election. Were Biden to step aside as a candidate, Vice President Kamala Harris, 59, could fill the role. Reuters/Ipsos polling shows her as performing marginally better against Trump in a theoretical head-to-head matchup.



CM decides to implement Bilawal's program to provide free electricity

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, presiding over a meeting, has decided to implement the PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto's program to provide free-of-cost electricity to consumers living off-grid and to those using 50 to 100 MW electricity by implementing the solar energy solution.

This decision was taken in a meeting held at the CM House in which different proposals were discussed. Minister P&D and Energy Nasir Shah, CM Advisor for Cooperative Societies Ahsan Mazari, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, Secretary Energy Musadiq Khan, and others

attended the meeting.

On-Grid: Minister Energy Nasir Shah, briefing the CM, said that on his directives, his department has worked out that around 80,000 households were using 50 MW of electricity per month. They include 441,483 in KE jurisdiction, 229,338 in HESCO, and 125,500 in SEPCO.

Similarly, the number of households using 100 MW per month comes to 1.9 million, with 1,054,000 in Karachi (KE), 566,427 in the Hyderabad region (HESCO), and 356,073 in the Sukkur region (SEPCO).

Off-Grid: The CM was told that there were 2.6 million off-grid households of

them 500,000 may be provided Solar Home Systems (SHS) in the first phase. The CM said that a 100-watt SHC was enough for 3 LED bulbs, a 35W DC fan and a 6-hour battery backup with Mobile charging ports. Nasir Shah told the CM that the cost of an SHS comes to around Rs50,000 each and the total cost for 2.6 million SHS would be around 25 billion.

Microgrids: The CM said that six microgrids, each one of 75kW, could be established in all six divisions as a pilot project to cover a 100-household cluster. These grids could provide electricity to households consuming 100 kWh. Minister Energy said

that its feasibility could be prepared if the proposal is approved.

Three Solar Parks: The CM proposed that three Solar Parks, each one of 305 MW may be established to provide electricity to KE, HESCO and SEPCO to provide onward to the on and off-grid household.

The CM directed Minister Energy to prepare proposals for Solar Parks and Solar Home Systems so that one of both proposals could be discussed and approved. Meanwhile, the CM directed the chief secretary to collect data for SHS consumers from the data. "This will help to make decisions."



KARACHI: A view of rainy weather in provincial capital. —INP Photo

Killers of Christian man arrested, says minister

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora said on Friday that a Christian man was killed by his neighbour, with the help of his accomplices, who had been arrested now.

Addressing a press conference, along with DIG Organised Crime Unit (OCU) Imran Kishwar, he said the Racecourse Police Station had registered the case. A team comprising SP Furqan Bilal, DSP Tauqeer Anjum, and Inspector Atif Imran later arrested the accused within a week.

The minister said that on the directions of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, he had visited the home of Christian man and assured the affected family that the accused would be arrested soon. He also conveyed that the CM had assured the family of complete protection.

DIG Imran Kishwar told the media that the anti-kidnapping cell had arrested the main suspects including Sajjad-ul-Hassan alias Malik Shani, Muhammad Azam, Muhammad Sultan, and Muhammad Mubashir.

He said the accused had shot dead Christian man Marshall. Following the incident, the Christian community staged a protest demonstration. The OCU team showed excellent performance by apprehending the suspects and recovering the murder weapon and three pistols from them.

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Muqam reaffirms unwavering support to Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs, Engineer Amir Muqam, on Friday reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering support to Kashmiris on all international platforms.

The minister in his message on 'Kashmir Accession to Pakistan Day' highlighted the significance of the day. He recalled that on July 19, 1947, the brave people of Kashmir passed a resolution in Srinagar for accession to Pakistan.

He emphasized the enduring dedication of

Kashmiris to this cause, noting the immense sacrifices they have made over the past seven decades in their quest for self-determination.

"The commitment of Kashmiris to Pakistan is eternal," said Engineer Muqam. He asserted that no Indian tactics could undermine this profound bond, as evidenced by the continued burial of martyrs in the green crescent flag, symbolizing their unwavering love for Pakistan.

Minister Muqam noted the resilient spirit of Kashmiri youth, who, like

their forefathers, remain determined to achieve self-determination and complete accession to Pakistan.

"Kashmiris hoist the flag of Pakistan on every street and intersection of Occupied Kashmir," he remarked, underscoring the widespread public support for this cause.

"Pakistan will continue to stand by Kashmiris at all forums of the world," he affirmed, emphasizing the nation's commitment to the Kashmiri struggle for freedom and self-determination.

Govt to launch three new routes for People's Bus Service

F.P. Report

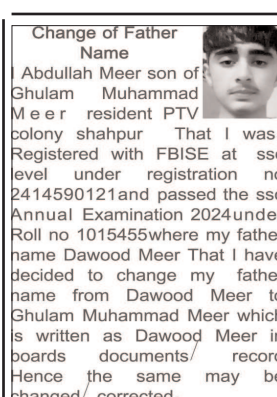
KARACHI: The Sindh Government Transport Department has announced the launch of three new routes for the People's Bus Service and the extension of one route to improve public transport in Karachi. These new routes will be operational from Monday, July 22, 2024.

According to the Department for Transport, on July 22, 2024, the People's Bus Service will commence Route 13, running from Hawke's Bay to the Tower. A new electric bus route, EV4, from Bahria Town to Numaish Chowranghi, will start on July 24, while Route 8,

from Yousuf Goth to the Tower, will begin on July 25, 2024.

The Transport Department has also announced the extension of Route No. 12, Starting from July 23, Route 12 will begin from Memon Goth instead of Khokhrapar to the Tower. Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has stated that the new routes are part of the Sindh government's efforts to enhance public transport in Karachi and provide affordable, convenient, and comfortable travel facilities for citizens.

He mentioned that more buses will be introduced for the convenience of the citizens, and additional new routes will be launched. It is the Sindh government's commitment to serve the people without discrimination.



PESHAWAR HIGH COURT, PESHAWAR TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are invited from registered firms/suppliers for supply of the following Stationary for the use of Peshawar High Court, Peshawar:-

S.No	Name of item	Quantity
1.	White Paper (Legal Size)	4000 Rims
2.	Computer Printer Toner Pro 400 (80-A)	400 Nos
3.	Uni Ball Point	150 Box
4.	Ball Point	300 Box
5.	Black Pencil	200 Box
6.	Short Hand Note Book	300 Nos
7.	Stapler Pin	800 Box
8.	Stamp Pad	100 Nos
9.	Stamp Pad Ink	150 Nos
10.	Sharpener	300 Nos
11.	Single Punch	250 Nos
12.	Eraser	300 Nos
13.	Avery Card (120 Gm)	2000 Nos

- Details/specifications and bidding documents can be obtained from the Office of the Stationary Clerk, Peshawar High Court, Peshawar during office hours.
- Tenders should reach the undersigned on or before 03/08/2024, which will be opened on the same day at 11.00 am in office of undersigned. Tenders received after the due date and time shall not be entertained.
- Tenders can be submitted to the undersigned either personally or through registered post.
- Tender should be accompanied with call deposit as earnest money @ 2% of the total amount, in the name of Registrar Peshawar High Court, Peshawar.
- No tender will be considered without call deposit & after due date and time. Sales Tax Registration Number and Bank Account Number must be indicated in tender.
- The successful bidder will be bound to supply the items within fifteen days after the issue of supply order and will also pay prescribed taxes under the Rules. Failure in supply within the stipulated period or below standard shall entail forfeiture of the earnest money/call deposit.
- This court may reject a bid by assigning a reason prior to the award of the contract.

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SNGPL disconnects 33 illegal connections F.P. Report

LAHORE: In a continued effort to combat gas theft, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has conducted extensive raids across Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad, resulting in the disconnection of 33 illegal gas connections and the imposition of fines totaling Rs 0.3 million.

In Lahore, SNGPL teams disconnected 8 illegal gas connections and filed 3 First Information Reports (FIRs) against offenders. In Multan, 18 illegal connections were cut off. The Faisalabad team disconnected 3 illegal connections and levied fines amounting to Rs 0.057 million for gas theft.

In Sheikhupura, fines totaling Rs 0.157 million were imposed for gas theft. The team in Gujranwala disconnected one illegal connection and imposed fines of Rs 0.17 million. In Bahawalpur, 3 connections using compressors illegally were disconnected.

IGP releases Rs 2.2m for medical treatment

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar has released Rs 2.2 million for medical treatment of employees posted in various districts including Lahore.

According to the details, Rs 1 million was given to injured constable Javed Iqbal of Faisalabad police for medical expenses. Ghazi Constables Ahmad and Omar Daraz were given Rs. 0.2 million each for medical expenses. Ghazi ASI Arif Hussain and injured constable Haseeb Jamal Awan of Vehari police were given Rs 150,000 each for treatment. Traffic Warden Sahib Ali was given Rs 0.5 million for treatment of his son's brain cancer.

LHC CJ orders transfer of pending cases to expedite justice provision

LAHORE (APP): Lahore High Court Chief Justice Ms Aalia Neelum has taken notice of pending cases in the accountability courts of Lahore and issued orders to transfer those cases to other courts to ensure speedy justice.

According to details, out of 10 accountability courts in Lahore, only three have judges, while remaining seven are without judges. As a result, cases have been pending

in those courts for long.

The chief justice ordered for transfer of 65 pending cases from the non-functional courts to the functional ones. The cases pending in Court No. 2 will be transferred to Court No. 5, those in Court No. 3 will be transferred to Court No. 10, and the cases in Court No. 6 will be transferred to Court No. 9. However, the accountability courts No. 1, 4, 7, and 8 of

Lahore have zero pendency.

The LHC chief justice ordered that cases should not be delayed in any court and vowed to take all necessary steps to ensure expeditious disposal of cases.

The cases have been transferred from the non-functional courts for time being, and would be returned to the original courts once judges were appointed to those courts.

Punjab sets up flood relief camps amid threat of flooding

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister and Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Disaster Management Khawaja Salman Rafique announced on Friday that the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) had established flood relief camps in anticipation of potential flooding.

The announcement was made during his visit to the PDMA Head Office here. He highlighted the risk of flooding due to recent rains in the Koh-e-Sulaiman mountains, which could

lead to rising water levels in rivers and mountain streams. He assured the public that the situation is being closely monitored around the clock in the Epidemic and District Control Rooms, and that prompt measures will be taken to protect lives. He also urged the public to take necessary precautions during the rainy season.

During his visit, he reviewed various schemes aimed at preventing river erosion. He also toured the PDMA control room to assess the rain situation

across the province. DG PDMA, Irfan Ali Kathia, provided a comprehensive briefing on the current weather conditions and the safety measures in place.

The meeting also included a detailed review of the water levels in Punjab's rivers, dams, and barrages, all of which are currently reported to be normal. The situation of rivers in Dera Ghazi Khan was also thoroughly discussed. Member of the Punjab Assembly, Ghulam Abbas Gormanani, also attended the meeting.

268,337 registrations completed in Social Economic Registry

LAHORE (APP): Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb presided over a meeting to review progress of the Punjab Social Economic Registry. The senior minister while addressing the meeting highlighted that five thousand registration centers in the union councils had been established across the province.

Approximately, 268,337 registrations have been completed in the Punjab Social

Economic Registry to date. She also mentioned that training had been imparted to the staff at the division-level.

Marriyum Aurangzeb underscored that citizens by getting registered in the Punjab Social Economic Registry could easily acquire Himmat Card, Kissan Card, Laptop, Scholarship Programme, Livestock Card, Solar Panel Scheme, Tractor Scheme and Ramadan Package. The people could benefit from these packages

as outlined by the chief minister Punjab without any discrimination and disparity.

The senior provincial minister called for an extensive campaign to be launched across all media platforms to impart and inculcate awareness about the Punjab Social Economic Registry.

اطلاع عام

عوام الناس کو مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ پلاٹ نمبر 218 سکٹر 8 کے ڈی اے کو احاطہ رقبہ 6.5 مرلہ واقع فیروز آباد کے ڈی اے کو احاطہ کے مالک نے براہِ احوالہ تمام امور سکٹر محلہ فیروز آباد کو احاطہ کی دقت کے بعد دوبارہ جاری شدہ پلاٹ آف ایڈیشن ٹین کی رو سے ہر ایک کو احاطہ رقبہ پر ان کے حصص سے مزید اور ضرورت پڑنے پر خزانہ کی حیثیت سے خارج ہو چکے ہیں نے مذکورہ پلاٹ کی لیگل میٹری کی درخواست تزاری ہے۔ مذکورہ پلاٹ کا اور رجسٹرڈ الاٹمنٹ آرڈر نہ ہونے پر ذمہ داریٹ الاٹمنٹ آرڈر جاری کرنا بھی مقصود ہے۔ اختیار اور مقررہ امور پر ان کے مزاج سے مندرجہ بالا پلاٹ کی دفتری کاروائیوں کے لئے اپنے حصے کا اختیار نامہ عام معہ اولاد میں انمولہ دلتان محمد اسماعیل سکٹر مسلم آباد جڑوٹ ورد کو احاطہ کوپا ہے جو کہ سب رجسٹرڈ کو احاطہ کے پاس رہتی ہے۔ 289 بمبئی نمبر 04 کی جلد نمبر 291 فروری 27/06/2024 کو درج ہے۔ اگر کسی شخص فرم تک ادارے کو کوئی اعتراض ہو یا مذکورہ پلاٹ کی کتنی ہمیں میں ہو یا کسی کے پاس ڈگری وغیرہ ہو یا کوئی دیگر شخص اپنے آپ کو نہ براہِ احوالہ تمام امور سکٹر محلہ فیروز آباد کو احاطہ کی دقت کے بعد دوبارہ جاری شدہ 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PHC rejects husband bail for allege killing of his wife

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A single bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Fazal Subhan rejected bail plea of alleged killer named Issa Khan, a suspect accused of murdering his wife and attempting to disguise the crime as a suicide, on Friday.

According to prosecution, sufficient evidence available which will implicate the petitioner in the murder of his wife including a statement of the victim's brother, who alleged that Issa Khan had committed the crime.

The complainant lawyer Shehryar Khan Khilji advocate argued that Issa Khan had committed the offense over domestic disputes with his wife.

The defense, on the other hand, claimed that Issa Khan was innocent and had been falsely implicated in the case. The defense argued that the prosecution's evidence was circumstantial and that there was no concrete proof of Issa Khan's involvement in the murder.

PHC's Justice Fazal Subhan rejected the bail plea of alleged murderer Issa Khan after hearing the arguments from both sides.

KP CM takes notice of Bannu situation, sought report: Saif

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Friday took notice of the ongoing situation in Bannu district and sought report of the incident.

He said that Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner Bannu was making negotiations with protestors and situation was under-control after talks with the elders.

The chief minister announced package for deceased and injured of the incident and directed best medical facilities to the injured.

He said that complete investigation of the incident would be made and strict punishment would be awarded to the responsible.

Barrister Saif said that peaceful protest was constitutional and legal right of every citizen, however nobody would be allowed to take law into hands under the guise of protest. He appealed to the people to remain peaceful and avoid taking law into hands.

Syed Qasim Ali Shah meets with MSF officials

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: KP Minister for Health Syed Qasim Ali Shah met with officials from Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) at his office.

The meeting was attended by Director EPI Dr. Arif, Director MCH Dr. Khizr Hayat, DHO Khyber Dr. Zafar Ali Khan, Focal Person Health Department Dr. Mohammad Nabi Jan Afridi, and other relevant officials.

During the meeting, MSF officials briefed the Minister of Health on their ongoing projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the establishment of two clinics for the treatment of leishmaniasis at City Hospital Peshawar and Budh Bher Hospital.

They also informed the minister about their work in Khalifa Gul Nawaz Hospital and Tira Valley, Khyber.

The MSF officials also discussed their plans to establish a leishmaniasis treatment center at the Dargai Hospital in Khyber district.

They informed the minister that a five-year project has been designed, which will be technically and financially supported by MSF. The project will also include the establishment of a pediatric health care center and a blood bank.

The Minister of Health directed the officials to initiate the project as soon as possible and complete the necessary paperwork to ensure the provision of facilities at the hospital.

He also instructed DHO Khyber Dr. Zafar Ali Khan to facilitate MSF in implementing the project and to establish strong links with the Health Department.

The meeting was part of the Minister of Health's efforts to strengthen collaboration with international organizations and improve healthcare facilities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

KP Govt sanctions 25pc, 20pc adhoc relief allowance to employees

PESHAWAR (APP): The provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa sanctioned an Adhoc Relief Allowance 2024 at the rate of 25 percent of the basic pay as on June 30, 2024 to the employees from BS-17 to BS-22 and 20 percent to the employees in BS-03 to BS-16 falling under the civil servants of the provincial government including contingent of paid staff and contract employees employed against civil posts in Basic Pay Scales on standard terms and conditions of contract appointment, said a notification issued by the Finance Department here on Friday.

The Adhoc Relief Allowance with effect from 1.07.2024 will be subject to income and admissible during leave and entire period of LPR except extra-ordinary leave and will not be treated as part of emoluments for the purpose of calculation of pension/gratuity and recovery of House Rent.

Similarly, it will also be not admissible to the employees on their repatriation from posting/deputation abroad at the rate and amount which would have been admissible to them had they not been posted abroad.

The term 'Basic Pay' for the purpose of Adhoc Relief Allowance 2024 will also include the amount of the personal pay granted on account of annual increment (s) beyond the maximum of the existing pay scales.

The Adhoc Relief Allowance-2024 shall be accommodated from within the budgetary allocation for the Year 2024-25 by the respective Departments/organizations and no supplementary grants would be given on this account to all the government employees of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with effect from 1st July, 2024.

Weather Forecast for Saturday Rain and thunderstorms expected in various parts of KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On Saturday, scattered rain and thunderstorms with gusty winds are expected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, central and southern Punjab, Sindh, and northeastern Balochistan.

In northeastern Punjab, Potohar region, Islamabad, Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, there will be isolated incidents of rain and thunderstorms.

Heavy rainfall is also anticipated in some areas of southern Punjab, northeastern Balochistan, and southeastern/upper Sindh.

During the past 24 hours, gusty winds and thunderstorms with rain were observed in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Punjab, and northeastern Balochistan. The rest of the country experienced hot and humid conditions.

Meanwhile highest rainfall recorded (in millimeters) were as follows.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Parachinar 63, Mir Khani 12, Dir 10, Drosh 06, Kalam 02, Balakot 01

Sindh: Tando Jam 34, Hyderabad (Airport 24, City 19), Badin 17, Thatta 15, Tharparkar (Dahli 14, Diplo 12, Chhachro 05, Nagarparkar 02), Mirpurkhas 09, Karachi (University Road 15, Hasan Square 07, Jinnah Terminal, Faisal Base 06, Malir Halt 03, Surjani Town, MOS 02, Ibrahim Hyderi 01)

Punjab: Khanewal 22, Sialkot (Airport 13), Hafizabad 25, Kasur, Multan (Airport) 07, Bhakkar, Dera Ghazi Khan 06, Toba Tek Singh 04

Balochistan: Sibi 28, Barkhan 02

Meanwhile, highest temperatures recorded on Friday were in Dadu, Dalbandin, Jacobabad 44°C; Bahawalpur, Khanpur, and Rahim Yar Khan 43°C.

Bolstering SMEs imperative for youth empowerment

PESHAWAR (APP): With scattered leather and rubber shoes at his shop in bustling Namak Mandi bazaar, Haji Noor-ud-Din along with his laborers, was working against the clock for timely delivery of orders placed for famous Peshawar Chappal.

Amidst power outages coupled with electricity fluctuations, this 60 years old shoemaker could be seen giving final touches to popular shoe liked in KP, Karachi and Gulf countries due to its shiny designs and affordable prices.

"I stepped into cobbler craft in 1976 after death of my father. My teacher Ajmal Din helped me to learn this art. After five years, I opened my own shop at Jahangirpura bazaar near Qissa Khwani and later shifted it to Namak Mandi from where I never looked back," said Haji Noor ud Din.

Commonly known as Chacha Noor-ud-Din, he uses imported leather for shiny finishing and durability of his product. "I import special soft leather and modify traditional designs keeping the sole thicker with foam-coated inner to add variety to my hand-stitched shoes. The single pair passes through six stages of skilled hands to become a finished product."

Chacha Noor ud Din is a glaring example of small and medium enterprises earning his living by selling shoes across the country and abroad. He is one among thousands others associated to small businesses to earn bread and butter for their families.

Once being the backbone of our economy the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and cottage industry witnessed worrisome decline during recent decades with many people associated to traditional pottery business, power looms, handicrafts, clay pottery, weaving and knitting and toy making etc going jobless.

As big chains and commercial entities groomed on faster pace in recent past, the business of small and medium entrepreneur continued shrinking with some out rightly vanishing from the scene.

"With this diminishing tendency many youth do not find suitable businesses that leads to rise in unemployment and poverty," said Fayyaz Khan, a retired school teacher. "Lack of funds and investment, slow growth of SME industries, load shedding and poor infrastructure in KP commonly hamper establishing small businesses."

Statistics show that around 62 million people in Pakistan are below 35 years of age, but unfortunately about half of them do not have jobs. Besides education-industry gap, the lack of technical and vocational expertise, deteriorating education standard and competence of professionals are stated to be main reasons behind lesser job opportunities for educated youth and professionals.

"I entered the gemstone business after many years of unemployment when I was repeatedly rejected by employers due to lack of experience," said a graduate Ihtisham Khan, who is associated to gemstones business in Peshawar for last five years.

"It is not me alone, but many other educated youth who joined gemstones, marble and jewelry business at different markets and business centers of the city," he stated. "If there are no jobs in public and private sectors, the government should facilitate small businesses to employ our youth."

Although, unemployment rate in Pakistan showed a nominal decline in 2023, yet rising population and every year thousands of graduates completing their education would continue adding to unemployment and poverty rate. Promotion of SMEs, in such a scenario can help address these issues.

"We have vast scope for small and medium enterprises," said Professor Dr Muhammad Naeem, former Chairman Economics Department, UoP and mentioned to information technology, automobile, textile fabric, glass, ceramics, bakery and confectionary, meat, fruit, vegetables, fans and solar panels, beauty parlors, shoe making, dry-cleaning, gem and jewelry and number of other businesses where educated and technically qualified youth could get jobs or start their own businesses.

About 90 percent of businesses and over 50pc of global employment come from formal SMEs, he claimed and said, as per world bank report around 600 million jobs will be required to accommodate the expanding global population by 2030 worldwide especially in emerging markets where seven out of 10 jobs are generated by SMEs.

"Therefore, promoting specific mechanism for SME-focused entrepreneurs and small businesses would become imperative to employ our youth."

Underscoring the need for close coordination among State Bank of Pakistan, SMEDA and Provincial SMEs boards, Dr Naeem said it was crucial to enhance managerial capacity of SMEs, provision of free financial facilities and soft loans under Kamyab Jawan Program and Prime Minister's youth business and agriculture to SMEs in KP and erstwhile Fata.

Meanwhile, SMEDA spokesman said that over 225,000 SME facilitations and 3100 trainings to SMEs were imparted besides conducting over 400 plus pre-feasibility studies.

"KP Cloud First Policy has been approved for digital transformation and efficient use of technology and skills enhancement as part of the Chief Minister's digital transformation roadmap 2030," he informed.

Meanwhile, to encourage SMEs, a Rs. 12 billion program has been launched in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 44 MoUs were signed at Dubai Expo 2020. E-Kasib (skill) was launched for an online service in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that helps employers and entrepreneur find the best talent for their projects and contribute to the country's development process.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Libraries and Archives, Meena Khan Afridi in a group photo with Director and other staff during his visit to Directorate of Archives and Libraries.

Kundi assures tribal delegation of addressing public issues

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi met with a delegation of the Wazir tribe representatives from Bannu Domail at the Governor House.

The delegation informed the Governor about the regional situation and the public issues.

The meeting was also attended by the provincial president of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha and the provincial secretary coordination Farzand Ali Wazir.

The situation in Bannu and the southern districts is extremely concerning, said Faisal Karim Kundi.

Due to insecurity, businesses are suffering and investments are not being made, Faisal Karim Kundi stated.

Community elders and youth should play a positive role in maintaining peace by collaborating with security forces and the government, Faisal Karim Kundi emphasized. Peace is a guarantor of the province's development and prosperity, Faisal Karim Kundi highlighted.

The deteriorating law and order situation in the southern districts and throughout the province is alarming, Faisal Karim Kundi noted.

I will play a vital role in fulfilling the promises made to the tribal people following the FATA merger, Faisal Karim Kundi asserted.

The deprivations of the tribal districts' residents must be eliminated, and these areas need to be brought into the mainstream of development, Faisal Karim Kundi affirmed.

During the meeting, the elders of the Wazir tribe presented traditional tribal shawls to Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, PPP leadership Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, and Farzand Wazir.

Ex-Minister calls on KP Governor

Former Provincial Minister, Muzaffar Syed here Friday called on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi here at Governor House.

During the meeting, peoples' problems related to education and health besides other sectors came under discussion. Expressing concerns over the poor status of the education sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Governor said there were no permanent vice chancellors in 26 public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa besides these universities were also suffering from financial problems.

For this purpose, he said that the education task force was being constituted while work on the health task force was underway to address problems of this sector also in KP.

The Governor said the unity of political leadership of KP was key for obtaining provincial rights.

Muzaffar Syed appreciated the efforts of KP Governor for raising the province issues with the concerned authorities at federal level besides uniting the political leadership of the province for provincial rights.

Faiq calls for a 'broad-based' dialogue to end the crisis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chairman, Amun Taraqqi Party Muhammad Faiq Shah stressed the need for holding a greater dialogue to end political and economic turmoil.

While chairing a meeting of the party's central executive council here on Friday, Faiq gave a stern warning about worsening situations, if in case any misadventure in politics.

The meeting was attended by central information secretary Awais Khan, Ishtiaq Elahi, and others.

He asserted consensus is the best path, adding that peace is a prime requirement for progress, as the country couldn't afford uncertainty and instability.

Shah said no courage in politicians holding dialogue and table talk because their personal interests and revenge above all.

The party leader said everyone should jointly work on unified policy in which people, public authority, economic stability and poverty alleviation to be prioritized.

He went on to say that every political party wants power and authority that created confrontation between institutions which gave birth to cruelty and fascism, and its first victim is ordinary citizens.

Faiq condemned the recent resurgence of terrorists' activities in the country.

He prayed for departed souls of martyrs and expressed full sympathy with martyrs' families.

The ATP chief asked to learn the lesson from the bombing in Bannu district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He called for devising a joint security network in all provinces including Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, which should work around the clock.

Shah said ATP has a mega plan for peace and progress, which has been presented before the government and all relevant institutions and urged to implement it with true spirit.

Emergency declared in Bannu district hospitals

PESHAWAR (APP): Director General Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has declared emergency in all hospitals of Bannu district in wake of existing law and order situation.

The decision has been taken following recommendations of Deputy Commissioner Bannu. Doctors and all medical professionals working in hospitals have been directed to remain alert to deal any emergency in an effective way.

Director Medical Teaching Institute Bannu, Medical Superintendent and District Health Officer have also been directed to liaise with district administration and relief workers to work in a coordinated manner for save human lives during emergencies.

Mehsud welfare organization delegation calls on KP Governor

A representative delegation of Mehsud Welfare Association here Friday called on KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at Governor House.

Led by veteran tribal elder Rehmat Shah Mehsud and comprised of its members Roshan Khan Mehsud, Noor Rehman Wazir, Pakistan Peoples' Party Tank Divisional President Fateh Sher Mehsud and district president Sardar Hidayatullah Gandapur and others, the delegation appraised the Governor about performance and objectives of the organization.

It was informed that scholarship was provided to over 200 talented students by the association and briefing on the education city at Waziristan was also given to KP Governor.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi assured support regarding establishment of Danash school at Waziristan. He said that concerns regarding educational facilities in KP especially in merged tribal districts were based on realities.

He said the Prime Minister was giving special attention to vocational education training and we are in close touch with NAVTEC for vocational training programs in line with modern requirements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



In brief

SHO CTD escapes life bid

PISHIN (APP): Station House Officer (SHO) of the Counter terrorism Department escaped a life bid when a remote control bomb went off in Pishin district of Balochistan on Friday. The blast left six persons, including three officials of the CTD injured, police said. They said that unknown men had placed explosives along the roadside that exploded, leaving three CTD men and three passerby injured. The injured were rushed to Civil Hospital Pishin for medical aid. SHO CTD Chaudhry Asghar remained unhurt. Soon after the incident, the local administration reached that site and cordoned off the area. A search operation has been launched for the arrest of the culprits. Further probe is underway.

Young man gunned down

QUETTA (PPI): A young man was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Masood Gali area of Pushtoonabad in the precincts of police station Pushtunabad Quetta on Friday. According to police, unidentified assailants opened fire at a young man in Masood Gali area of Pushtunabad, killing him on the spot. The victim was identified as Syed Wali Nurzai son of Shah Wali Nurzai, a resident of Pushtoonabad. His body was shifted to Sandeman Provincial Hospital Quetta and later handed over to the heirs after fulfilling necessary medico-legal formalities. The incident has created a mourning atmosphere in the victim's home. Further investigation was being conducted by the authorities of Police Station Pushtunabad, Quetta.

Courts sentence drug peddlers

TAXILA (APP): The courts in Taxila sentenced two drug peddlers to imprisonment and imposed fines, including a female offender, on Friday. A police spokesman said that in the first case, a Judge of the special court for the Control of Narcotics Substances (CNS) was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment besides imposing a fine over a lady drugs peddler identified as Saeeda Bibi. Moreover, a special court for the Control of Narcotic Substances (CNS) sentenced to nine years imprisonment besides imposing a fine over a drugs peddler who was arrested by Wah Police with drugs at his den in 2023. The convict Kamran Khan- a native of Nawababad.

Two killed as roof collapses

DASKA (APP): Two persons were killed and three others sustained injuries in a roof collapse incident that occurred near Chongi No.8 area of Daska tehsil, district Sialkot, tv channels quoting the Rescue team reported on Friday. According to details, a few members of a family were residing in a house located in the Chongi No.8 area, when the roof of their house fell on them. As a result, two family members died on the spot while three others were also injured in the same incident. The rescue team rushed to the site and shifted the dead and injured to the Civil Hospital.

Tree plantation drive starts

SUKKUR (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Sukkur, Dr Raja MB Dharejo on Friday started a tree-plantation drive and planted a sapling at Qasim Park. Speaking on the occasion, the DC said that a green environment was imperative for keeping the earth clean and protected against multiple hazards.

Pakistan Accession Day rallies organized in Muzaffarabad

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): Tehreek-e-Shabab-ul-Muslimeen and Pasban-e-Hurriyat organized rallies in Muzaffarabad, today, on the occasion of "Accession to Pakistan Day" in which hundreds of citizens participated.

On 19th July in 1947, genuine representatives of the Kashmiris unanimously passed the resolution of Kashmir's Accession to Pakistan during a meeting of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference at the residence of Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan in Aabi Guzar area of Srinagar. Tehreek-e-Shabab-ul-Muslimeen took out a rally from Upper Adda, Lal Chowk. All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter information Secretary and Vice Chairman of Tehreek-e-Shabab-ul-Muslimin Mushtaq Ahmad Butt and Hurriyat leader Syed Gulshan led the rally.

President Al-Shifa Muhajir Camp Abdul Hameed Lone, President of Muhajir Camp, Zero Point, Chaudhry Shah Wali, Lal Deen Durrani, Muhammad Younis Mir, Dr Younis Mir, Sardar Khurshid Awan, Riaz Ahmed Awan, Naseer Ahmed Mir, Munir Kunshi, Zubair Ahmed, Asif Durrani, Arshad Awan, Falak Khan, Imtiaz Awan,

Shabbir Awan, Aftab Ali, Nazakat Qureshi and others participated, of

On this occasion, the speakers said the story of eternal sacrifices of Kashmiris, which started in 1947, is not only continuing even today, but the brutalities of the one million Indian army have failed to break the determination of the Kashmiris and with the passage of time, there has been an immense increase in the freedom spirit of Kashmiris.

They said today the third generation of Kashmiris are as determined as their forefathers to achieve their right to self-determination. Even today occupied Jammu and Kashmir is going through its darkest period and dozens of Kashmiris are being martyred every day and the fascist regime of BJP and RSS is settling thousands of Hindu citizens in the occupied territory.

They deplored under the guise of new domicile laws, Kashmiris are being deprived of their employment and jobs and their land is being illegally occupied. Pasban-e-Hurriyat organized a rally in Muzaffarabad today on the occasion of "Accession to Pakistan Day.

The participants of the rally shouted slogans like "Relationship with Pakistan, La ilaha illa

Allah" and "Jeevay Jeevay Pakistan". On this occasion, hundreds of citizens signed the text of the July 19 resolution and endorsed it. The participants of the rally carried banners with the text of the July 19 resolution and the names of the Kashmiri leaders who passed it.

Addressing the rally, the speakers said today Kashmiris, living on both sides of the Line of Control and around the world, are ratifying the resolution of Accession to Pakistan passed on July 19, 1947. They said the July 19 resolution passed in Srinagar is an important milestone in the freedom movement as the people of Kashmir had decided to join Pakistan even before it came into being. They said the Kashmiris have eternal love for Pakistan, Kashmir and Pakistan are inseparable and both are incomplete without each other.

Speakers said the slogan "Hum Pakistani Hain Pakistan Hamara Hai", created by veteran Hurriyat leader Shaheed Syed Ali Gilani is a reflection of the undying love of Kashmiris for Pakistan. They said Kashmiris are currently fighting the Indian oppression and they are determined to continue their struggle for freedom from Indian occupation and joining Pakistan.

CEO asked to ensure provision of free medicines

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Secretary Health said that provision of better healthcare to people is top priority of the health department under health Punjab vision of the Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and a big contingent of medicines will be reached to DHQ Hospital Hafizabad in view of shortage of medicines so that all patient could get free of cost medicines and other healthcare facilities at local level.

While visiting DHQ Hospital and Trauma Centre Hafizabad, on Thursday, Secretary Health Ali Jan and Deputy Commissioner reviewed availability of treatment facilities at DHQ and Trauma Centre Hafizabad. Secretary took feedback regarding provision of medicines and other treatment facilities as well as attitude of doctors and paramedical staff with patients and their relatives came to inquire after health of patients admitted in the hospital.

Secretary Health

inspected Nursing School, main medical store and different department of the hospital and took feedback about availability of necessary facilities to students in the Nursing School. He warned the CEO Health Dr. Umer Sharif and Medical Superintendent DHQ Hospital Dr. Maqsood Zafar to ensure provision of medicines and treatment facilities to patients under the policy of the Punjab government.

He warned the CEO Health Dr. Umer Sharif Rathore and MS DHQ Hospital Dr. Maqsood Zafar that any negligence and slackness n provision of treatment facilities to patients would not be tolerated.

Rain turns roads, streets into lakes: The Roads and streets have converted into streams after rain on Thursday Morning. According to details, on Saturday, torrential rain started early in the morning and continue till more than one hour. As a result of which, low laying area inundated while roads and streets were converted into

streams and dirty pounds.

The rain water remained stand in the roads and streets till filing of this story. Resultantly, people are facing communication hardships due to failure of Municipal Committee Hafizabad. The people said that due to negligence of MC officers, sewage system in the city has collapsed. They said that the Punjab government had spent million of rupees to improve sewerage system of the city but no improvement was witnessed despite lying new sewerage system in area of bus stand, Gujranwala Road, Mohallah Gharrihi Awan and adjunct areas of Kassoki Road, Alipur Road, Bajli Mohallah, Sher Pura, Sagar Road etc.

The people demanded the Chief Minister of the Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif to take notice of negligence of Municipal Officers and to make appropriate arrangements for improving sewerage system in the city Hafizabad to avoid worst situation in future.

DG visits Rescue personnel in Mardan

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Director General Rescue 1122 Dr. Muhammad Ayaz Khan and Regional Director Operation Imran Khan Yousafzai arrived at the court of rescue personnel. Rescue 1122 squad presented a salute. Syed Shoaib Mansoor District Emergency Officer gave detailed information about the performance of Rescue 1122 Mardan to the Director General.

Director General Rescue 1122 met the rescue personnel. On this occasion, Director General Rescue 1122 Muhammad Ayaz Khan said that Rescue 1122 provides timely services to the people throughout the province during any emergency, day and night, which is being appreciated at all levels, the welfare and best of Rescue 1122 personnel.

Various steps have been taken for the future, in which MoUs have been signed with various hospitals across the province for all Rescue 1122 personnel who will provide treatment on a discounted basis.

Martyrs package for Rescue 1122 personnel and recruitment of one of the family members of the personnel martyred in the line of duty, Director

General Rescue 1122 said that various grades of Rescue 1122 personnel were upgraded while promotions were also given to the personnel posted in various positions. Rescue stations have been established in 34 districts across the province, most of which are permanent rescue stations, in which rooms have also been allocated for the accommodation of officials performing duties in the stations established in distant districts.

Rescue 1122 services with modern equipment. Equipped with and conforming to international standards and proved to be helpful during any emergency, Rescue 1122 is an organized institution, in which there is no compromise on discipline and all matters are decided according to clear rules. Director General Rescue 1122, after listening to the various opinions presented by the rescue personnel in the held court, issued orders to the officers present on the spot for immediate action and the opinion of improving the service in the future. Rescue 1122 appreciates the professional services provided by the personnel during the activities which will directly benefit the public.

AWKUM announces

fall admissions: Admissions for fall semester 2024 have started in Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. Admissions for bachelors, Master, M. Phil and PhD level in more than 39 modern academic and research fields of five faculties of the university have been announced.

In this regard, a high-level meeting was held under the chairmanship of Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Tahir. On this occasion, Director Admission Dr. Majid, Director Academic Prof. Dr. Saeed-ul-Islam, Director Research Dr. Tariq Mehmood, Prof. Dr. Sher Afzal, Principal Women's College Dr. Naseem Rafiq, Dr. Hazeer Rahman and others were present.

BS level admissions in the departments of English, Computer Science, Management Sciences and Psychology for Fall Semester 2024 have also started in Temergarh, Pabbi Campuses and University College for Women of the University. Online system for submission of admission form has been introduced for the convenience of students seeking admissions where students can register themselves and send admissions online.



LARKANA: Fishermen setting net for catching fishes at Rice Canal.

WSSC D I Khan provide efficient services in Muharram

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Water and Sanitation Service Company (WSSC) Dera Ismail Khan provided best services to the mourners during Ashura. On the direction of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of WSSC and Deputy Commissioner DIKhan Mansoor Arshad, the company utilized all resources to provide extraordinary cleanliness arrangements for the citizens of the city during the first ten days of Muharram.

While talking to media, the official of the WSSC said the leaves of all operations team and sanitation staff were suspended during Muharram. He said that around 300 sanitation and water supply staff, including officers, participated in special operations during Muharram.

He added that main procession routes and streets around all Imambargahs of the city were cleaned during cleanliness drive. In addition, the construction material or debris were also removed from the routes of the procession and its adjacent areas.

He said that the operations team inspected the routes of mourning processions before and throughout Muharram ul Haram. The official said that the WSSC has carried out cleanliness of major drains of the city and also done necessary repair work on them. The company senior officials also held meetings with the custodians of different Imambargahs from time to time.

Teenage girl brought back to life through CPR

RAJANPUR (APP): A teenage girl who was retrieved by villagers from a big canal in an almost breathless and unconscious condition was successfully brought back to life by a motorcycle ambulance-riding rescuer through a half-an-hour-long Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) process.

The sixteen-year-old had gone to the bank of the Qadria Canal to wash her hands and feet after performing duty in crop fields when suddenly she slipped and went into the deep waters of the canal. Villagers present nearby jumped into the canal and brought her back in unconscious condition. Rescue 1122 officials said.

The relatives started mourning loudly presuming the girl was dead, however, someone called Rescue 1122 and a rescuer Haroon Rasheed driving a motorcycle ambulance reached there. Upon checking he found the girl breathless with no or weak pulse. He immediately started the CPR procedure and the girl started moving and breathing after an almost half-hour-long struggle.

Haroon said rescuers in Rajanpur were trained to deal with all kinds of emergencies to save lives under the supervision of district emergency officer Dr. Muhammad Aslam.

Cab driver deprived of car at gunpoint in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A cab driver Sadiq, a resident of Kumrat on Friday complained that he was deprived of his car, mobile phone and cash at gunpoint in Ouch here the other day. Talking to local journalists at Chakdara, he said that that a man booked his non-custom paid car bearing temporary No AC 5828 Swat from Timergara to Ouch while some other persons looted him on a link road to Tisso Ouch at gunpoint and also lifted his car worth Rs 2 million.

The cab driver said that he belonged to a poor family and he earned for his family through taxi driving. He demanded the Lower Dir police and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to take notice of the incident and help him recover the lifted car.

Meanwhile the Ouch station house officer Bahram Khan told this reporter on contact that they had been searching for the missing car. The SHO said that all CCTV cameras had been checked and the car had been spotted on the road. He said the police were sure to recover the stolen vehicle soon.

Nurses' protest: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nursing Association has

demanding of the government and inspector general of police to trace and recover a missing male nurse, Inayatullah who was kidnapped six days ago. The demand was made during a protest demonstration held at the DHQ hospital Timergara here the other day which was attended by nurses, paramedics and class Iv employees of the hospital. Speaking on the occasion the nursing association provincial chief Inayatullah, district president Hidayatullah, paramedical association's representative Ibrahim Khan and others said the male nurse, Inayatullah was kidnapped along with his car six days ago when he was going back to home after performing his duties at the DHQ hospital Timergara.

The speakers said the Lower Dir police registered the FIR several days later against unknown accused. They said the hospital staff felt insecurity and the incident had spread panic among the health professionals. They demanded security for the healthcare workers and safe recovery of the kidnapped male nurse.

According to relatives of the male nurse, Mr Inayatullah had been missing along with his car for

the last five days. They told local journalists that no one had so far contacted the family for ransom. The relatives said the family had been searching for the missing male nurse continuously for five days but there had been no clue. They said the victim had no enmity with anyone. The nursing staff threatened to boycott their duties if the missing male nurse was not traced and recovered within a week.

AKF leaders' visit: The central president of the Al-Khidmat Foundation Prof Dr Hafeezur Rehman along with the AKF provincial president Khalid Waqas visited the Al-Khidmat hospital Timergara and checked the ongoing construction work. The visiting leaders also examined various units of the hospital. The hospital director Majidullah briefed them about the facilities provided to patients.

The visiting team expressed satisfaction on the construction work and appreciated the hospital staff for providing free of cost medical care to deserving patients. Speaking on the occasion Mr Hafeezur Rehman said that serving humanity was always respected in society. He asked the AKF volunteers to provide the best services to the ailing people.

YDA demands dues, salaries, filling of vacancies

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Young Doctor Association (YDA) on Friday called on the authorities to release funds for payment of outstanding dues to the teaching faculty of three medical colleges of the province, grant salaries for the last three months to the teaching faculty of medical colleges and forward requisition to Balochistan Public Service Commission for filling the vacant positions in all the medical colleges of Balochistan or else healthcare services in all teaching hospitals affiliated with three medical colleges of the province would be boycotted.

It was stated by spokesman for Young Doctors Association, Dr. Saboor Kakar in a statement. Spokesman for YDA said that Finance Department, Balochistan through a notification stopped the salaries of teaching faculty serving in three medical colleges of the province which was clear cut violation of the verdicts passed by the Supreme Court of Pakistan and Balochistan High Court.

He said that teaching faculty of three medical colleges of Balochistan had been performing their duties for the last three months without salaries, adding that several positions in teaching hospitals of the province had been lying vacant, but provincial health department was not forwarding requisitions to Balochistan Public Service Commission to get the vacant slots filled through BPSC.

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Namibia refuses to extend visa for Ugandan monarch

KAMPALA (BBC): The Namibian government has refused a request to extend the visa for a Ugandan king who has been getting medical treatment in the country since April. King Mutebi II of the Buganda has been receiving treatment for an undisclosed condition. The centre where he has been staying requested his visa extension earlier this month.

But in response, the international relations ministry said Namibian immigration law provided for a maximum stay of only 90 days in a year to foreign citizens. This comes weeks after authorities reportedly expressed displeasure over protests by Ugandan activists at Namibian diplomatic missions. "Having checked the records, I wish to inform you that the request for an extension is declined," the state broadcaster NBC quoted a ministry official as saying.

The Ugandan envoy in South Africa said recently that Namibian authorities were unhappy over the harassment of their diplomatic officials regarding the king's stay. In May there were protests at the

Namibian High Commission in the UK, with Ugandan demonstrators demanding transparency over the king's extended stay.

They wanted Namibia to disclose information about the king's whereabouts to put to rest suspicions that he had been kidnapped. The Namibian government then referred the matter to the Buganda traditional authorities. Two weeks ago, Buganda traditional chiefs travelled to Namibia to seek the truth about the king's health, sparking diplomatic concerns and a rebuke from Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni. "I request all the Ugandans to stop embarrassing Uganda by opportunistically trying to show how much they are for the Kabaka [king]," Mr Museveni said.

The delegation, which was said to have travelled without the knowledge of either the Buganda kingdom or the Ugandan authorities, was briefly detained and questioned by Namibian officials, who reportedly asked if they had authorisation to see the monarch. They had gone

even though the Buganda king had addressed his subjects through a pre-recorded video, where he spoke about his improving health, and expressing hope that he would return soon.

The Namibian newspaper quoted a state official saying that it was "normal practice" for a foreign national who had stayed for 90 days to return to their country. "There is nothing controversial about that," foreign relations officer Erastus Hailwa said. Uganda has said it will respect Namibia's decision.

"Namibia has decided that they are not interested in this kind of bad publicity, and we should respect [their] position," Uganda's Monitor newspaper quoted the country's Foreign Minister Henry Oryem Okello as saying. "We have to respect their rules and ways of life. Since Kabaka went to Namibia, many people have turned the country into... a market where they enter as they wish," he said. Buganda is the largest of Uganda's four ancient kingdoms, none of which have any political power but remain influential.

Rwanda's president smashes his own election record

KAMPALA (BBC): Rwanda's President Paul Kagame has smashed his own record by winning elections with more than 99% of the vote, full provisional results show. The 66-year-old won the 2017 election with 98.63% of the vote, higher than the 93% he got in 2010 and the 95% in 2003. His critics say Mr Kagame's thundering majorities come as no surprise as he rules with an iron hand.

However, his supporters say they point to his huge popularity, with Rwanda having achieved stability and economic growth under his rule. Mr Kagame is a former rebel commander whose forces swept to power in 1994, ending a genocide that claimed the lives of around 800,000 people in 100 days. The electoral commission barred at least three presidential aspirants, including the president's most vocal critics, from contesting. It allowed two candidates - the Democratic Green Party's Frank Habineza and independent Philippe Mpayimana - to run against him. They got 0.53% and 0.32% respectively, worse than in the 2017 election when their combined vote topped the 1% mark.

Voter turnout was remarkably high - 98%, according to the electoral commission. "Kagame's unprecedented score of over 99% in the election should be seen as a reflection of just how limited political space for the opposition is in Rwanda today," Clementine de Montjoye of the campaign group Human Rights Watch (HRW) said, the AFP news agency reports.

The outcome "does not bode well for anyone seeking to engage in legitimate and credible opposition activities", she added. But Mr Kagame's victory was praised by neighbouring Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, who said his reelection was a "testament to the trust and confidence" Rwandans had in his leadership. Despite Rwanda continuing to struggle with high rates of youth unemployment, it is one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa. On the campaign trail, Mr Kagame promised to protect Rwanda from "external aggression" amid tensions with neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi.

Russian court sentences US journalist

MOSCOW: A Russian court has sentenced American journalist Evan Gershkovich to 16 years in prison after convicting him for espionage in a closed-door trial, according to state media. The 32-year-old correspondent for The Wall Street Journal pleaded not guilty and his employer and the United States have denounced the charges as fabricated.

Gershkovich was sentenced to "punishment in the form of imprisonment for a term of 16 years in a strict regime colony," Judge Andrei Mineyev said, announcing the verdict on Friday as the reporter stood in a glass cage. The journalist was arrested on March 29, 2023, while on a reporting trip to the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg. He was accused by prosecutors of gathering secret information about Uralvagonzavod, a plant manufacturing tanks for Russia's war in Ukraine, on the orders of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

"This disgraceful, sham conviction comes after Evan has spent 478 days in prison, wrongfully detained, away from his family and friends, prevented from reporting, all for doing his job as a journalist," Almar Latour, the chief executive of Dow Jones and publisher of The Wall Street Journal, and the newspaper's editor-in-chief Emma Tucker said in a statement. The authorities have provided no public evidence for the allegations against him, with the Kremlin saying only that he was caught "red-handed" spying on a tank factory in the Urals and was working for the CIA. He is the first Western journalist to be arrested on espionage charges in post-Soviet Russia. — Aljazeera



TEL AVIV: People gathered at the scene of a deadly explosion in Israel.

South Africa's calm opening of parliament heralds new era

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): South Africa parliament appears to have entered a new era - one of political maturity. The atmosphere was remarkably different from what what had gone before - no interruptions, no chaos and no scuffles, as President Cyril Ramaphosa laid out plans for the first time since the coalition government took office.

This was a result of the African National Congress (ANC) failing to secure more than 50% of the vote for the first time in the democratic era. Former President Jacob Zuma - who leads the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party but was barred from running as an MP just before May's election - snubbed the invitation to attend sitting. With the parliament now open, the MK - a party founded less than a year ago - was recognised as the official opposition.

Its leader of house, disgraced former Justice John Hlophe, had promised not to engage in petty politics. Also, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) - who have a reputation for disrupting, heckling and brawling in parliament - had promised to change, with party leader Julius Malema saying the EFF would be a constructive opposition. Members of the Democratic Alliance (DA) - formerly South Africa's official opposition but now part of the coalition government - nodded and clapped during an hour-long speech as the ANC's President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the top priorities.

These included rapid, inclusive economic growth, job creation and tackling the high cost of basic goods. Mr Ramaphosa's humbled ANC had streamed into parliament with the least number of members since it came to power 30 years ago. After losing its parliamentary majority, the ANC formed an initially shaky coalition with nine other political parties. Mr Ramaphosa's address followed the coalition government's first cabinet meeting since the vote was held.

That meeting "underscored the

determination of all members of the Government of National Unity to work together to advance the interests of all South Africans", he told parliament. The priorities he has announced fuse mostly ANC policies with some concessions made to accommodate the concerns of the DA, South Africa's second-largest party and the ANC's long-time rival. The pro-free market DA is ideologically at odds with the ANC's social welfare traditions, and seen by many as catering to the interests of the white minority, which it denies.

In his address, Mr Ramaphosa firmly stated economic growth must "support the empowerment of black South Africans and women and those who in the past had been relegated to the fringes of the economy". The government, which is backed by 70% of the MPs, promises to make "massive" investments in infrastructure and turn the whole country "into a construction site". The second area of focus will be to expand the basket of essential food items exempt from the VAT sales tax, in order to address the high cost of living.

This is an initiative that the DA had been lobbying for in an effort to eliminate poverty, TK Poee, a senior researcher at the Wits School of Governance, told the BBC. Another part-concession, the ANC's plan to launch compulsory universal healthcare for all, will now proceed subject to consultation with stakeholders. The DA and private medical insurance groups had threatened legal action, arguing that the scheme violates the right to choose a service provider. "Court will be the last resort," DA leader and Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen told journalists outside parliament. "We are in government now and have a forum in which we can negotiate." He welcomed Mr Ramaphosa's speech.

New sports minister Gayton McKenzie was also pleased, saying the address was Mr Ramaphosa's "best" ever. However, John Trollip

from Action SA, a political party that is not part of the new government, said the president's address was thin on credibility and sounded like lots of previous speeches. The EFF's Mr Malema told national broadcaster SABC that "it's very clear that the president has got no plan to transform South Africa for the better".

But Mr Poee said what the president did not explicitly mention - foreign policy and the ANC's ties to Gaza and Russia - is equally important as the priorities he outlined. "It'll be interesting to see how now the statements about Israel and Russia might become a bit more muted to accommodate the many voices in the room," he said, in reference to the DA's support of Israel. The MK's John Hlophe agreed.

"He didn't address the issue of Palestine because the DA is watching him," he said. Mr Hlophe added that the speech was "appalling" and silent on land reform without compensation - a central MK policy as well as a key issue nationally. White people, who make up just 7% of the population, own the vast majority of farmland that is held by individuals. There has long been a debate about whether the state should redistribute this land without paying its owners for it.

Mr Poee believed the president's speech did not over-promise. "We are not expecting to see radical change and that might be a positive. [The speech said] these are the choke points holding the country back: energy, infrastructure local government and this is what is going to be addressed," he said. "If the grand coalition can stick to those things and then allow private actors to come in on the other matters the better for South Africa." Perhaps deliberately, the opening of parliament coincided with the birthday of the country's first democratically elected President, Nelson Mandela, who at the time symbolised hope and renewal for a nation in crisis. He acknowledged that they would have to work hard to reach this consensus.

‘Ticking time bomb’: Poliovirus found in Gaza sewage

GAZA: Poliovirus has been detected in samples of sewage water in the densely populated Gaza Strip, placing "thousands" of Palestinians at risk of contracting the highly infectious disease that can cause paralysis. Gaza's Ministry of Health said it had detected "component poliovirus type 2" in coordination with UNICEF, the United Nations children's agency.

"Detecting the virus that causes polio in wastewater heralds a real health disaster and exposes thousands of residents to the risk of contracting polio," it said in a statement. The virus could be found in sewage "that collects and flows between the tents of the displaced", said the ministry. Already scarce supplies of drinking water in the densely populated Strip are at risk of being contaminated by the virus.

Authorities in the central Gaza city of Deir el-Balah this week predicted that "roads will be flooded by wastewater" and "diseases will spread" after it turned off sewage water pumping and treatment stations. "We're talking about a very grim medical reality," said Al Jazeera's Tarq Abu Azzoum, reporting from Deir el-Balah, where 700,000 people have arrived in search of safety from fighting and air strikes.

The Israeli military's escalation of attacks on "water wells, sanitation and water waste treatment", and its obstruction of "essential hygiene supplies" into the Strip had created a "suitable environment for the spread of different diseases," he said. Dr Tanya Haj-Hassan, a paediatric intensive care physician, told Al Jazeera the presence of the virus in

sewage was a "ticking time bomb". "Normally if you have a case of polio, you're going to isolate them, you're going to make sure that they use a bathroom that nobody else uses, make sure that they're not in close proximity to other people, [but] that's impossible," she said.

"You have everybody clustering in refugee camps at the moment without vaccines for at least the past nine months, including children who would otherwise have been vaccinated for polio and adults who, in the setting of an outbreak, should receive a booster, including healthcare workers," she added. The spread of the disease among healthcare workers would be "catastrophic", Haj-Hassan said, for a healthcare system already "annihilated by direct targeting, by abductions of healthcare

workers, by [the] killing of healthcare workers".

Earlier, the Israeli Ministry of Health said it had evidence of the "component poliovirus type 2", found in sewage samples taken inside the Gaza Strip. It instructed the Israeli army to vaccinate all troops in the Gaza Strip as well as those who are about to enter, and recommended a booster for those already vaccinated.

The discovery of poliovirus came after a European activist group released a report saying the Gaza Strip is "drowning" in hundreds of thousands of tonnes of human waste and rubble from the war. UN health agencies started a global campaign in 1980 to eradicate polio, most often spread through sewage and contaminated water, but there has been a resurgence in recent years in Afghanistan and Pakistan. — Aljazeera

‘Swiss and Swedes keep a fragile peace’

PANMUNJOM: With a collection of Swiss army knives, a chopping block surrounded by firewood and a cowbell hanging outside the front door, Major General Ivo Burgener's home would not feel out of place in the Swiss Alps. But despite the peaceful atmosphere, this is no ordinary house.

As a delegate to the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC), Burgener lives in one of the most heavily militarised regions of the world, just metres from the North Korean border. Established at the end of the Korean War in 1953, the NNSC was tasked with monitoring adherence to the armistice agreement signed by China, North Korea and the United States to bring a halt to the fighting until a permanent peace treaty could be signed.

But that treaty never came. To this day, South and North Korea remain technically at war. And living deep inside the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that splits the Korean Peninsula, NNSC delegates continue to monitor the uneasy truce that has lasted to this day. More than 70 years on, they find themselves facing a new set of challenges. With evolving technology and modern weapons posing new threats, and relations across the increasingly militarised border at a low, delegates describe their work as more vital than ever. "The more armistice violations there are, the more important it is to have a neutral and independent institution,"

Burgener told Al Jazeera. "It demonstrates that the NNSC is all the more important." Just outside the DMZ, NNSC Secretary Major Luca Meli, also a Swissman, removes his beret as he enters a hut in Camp Greaves. Formerly a US military base, the complex now hosts an exhibition outlining the commission's history.

The NNSC was originally composed of delegates from four nations. Switzerland and Sweden were selected to monitor armistice adherence by the United Nations Command, a multi-state military organisation formed to support South Korea during the war. North Korea and the Chinese People's Volunteers, who had supported Pyongyang, chose Poland and Czechoslovakia.

But following the breakup of Czechoslovakia and with Poland shifting closer to the West, things changed. By 1995, neither Polish, Czech nor Slovakian delegates were welcome in North Korea. "The north doesn't recognise the NNSC any more," Meli told Al Jazeera. Although Poland sends a delegation to South Korea twice a year, only Switzerland and Sweden have maintained a constant presence in the DMZ.

Thanks to this presence, the NNSC's access in the South has grown in recent years, Burgener said. From guard posts to live fire military exercises, "there's nothing we can't observe", he said. But with the commission frozen out by

Pyongyang, monitoring North Korea's armistice adherence is more difficult. This is especially worrying when tensions across the peninsula are high.

In recent weeks, North Korea has sent more than 2,000 balloons filled with dirt and rubbish towards their southern neighbour. And with both sides moving away from the 2018 Comprehensive Military Agreement (CMA), aimed at making the DMZ safer, delegates report increasing militarisation on both sides of the border. Back at the Swiss camp, with a view of North Korea visible through the window, the sound of an explosion interrupts Al Jazeera's interview with Burgener. With North Korean soldiers actively laying minefields and engaging in construction work, delegates now report hearing detonations like this coming from the northern side on an almost daily basis.

Just last month, Seoul also reported that North Korean troops had accidentally strayed across the de facto border on three occasions, prompting warning shots from South Korea. While NNSC delegates maintain that the situation on the border is relatively stable, with increasing soldiers, construction activities and weapons on both sides of the demarcation line, the risk of an accidental escalation has increased, Burgener said. "The biggest risk is that a misunderstanding, an unwanted shot, a warning shot that accidentally injures someone, could lead to an escalation," he said. — Aljazeera

Spain heats up under 1st heatwave of year

BARCELONA (AP): Spain sweated under its first official heatwave of the year with temperatures expected to reach 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in a large swathe of the country, while Italy, Greece and other areas of southern Europe also struggled to stay cool. After a relatively bearable spring compared to record heat in 2023 and 2022, millions of Spaniards will be sweltering at least through Saturday before feeling any relief. The nation's weather authority said the only areas to be spared will be the north-west and northern Atlantic coasts.

Weather forecasters said a large mass of hot air travelling across the Mediterranean from northern Africa will settle over central and southern Spain. That, combined with the typical harsh summer sun, will make cities like the beautiful medieval cites of Sevilla, Toledo, and Granada bake. The hottest area will be the southern Guadalquivir River basin

where thermometers could reach 44C (111F). Six regions are under alerts for high temperatures.

2022 was the hottest year for Spain since it started keeping records in 1961. 2023 came in as the second hottest year. The first heatwave for last year arrived in June. Authorities and experts agree that climate change is behind the rise in temperatures that is also feeding prolonged droughts and wildfires in the Mediterranean and other parts of the world. In Spain, a heat wave is a minimum of three consecutive days during which at least 10% of weather stations register highs above the 95% percentile of average maximum temperatures for July and August.

Hot, dry winds scorched Greece, where a prolonged heatwave was at its peak. Temperatures touched 43C (109F) in several parts of the country, while nighttime temperatures in parts of Athens remained above 30C (86F) for the past 10 days. Firefighters were

fighting two large blazes, one near a village on the outskirts of the northern city of Thessaloniki, and a brush fire on the island of Kea, near Athens. Emergency services ordered the evacuation of two areas on Kea, while local media said the fire near Thessaloniki had damaged several homes.

"We appeal to the public to be particularly careful as over the next few days there is a very high risk of the outbreak of serious wildfires," government spokesman Pavlos Marinakis said. "Even one spark can cause a major catastrophe." Italy put 14 cities put under the highest level of alert and temperatures are expected to climb above 40C, especially in the central and southern regions. The health ministry said it will further extend the red alert to 17 Italian cities on Friday, as the intense heat was forecast to continue until Sunday. Serbia's state power company reported record consumption due to the use of air conditioning.

The Frontier Post

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Allies dodging US' tech war draft

THE Joe Biden administration is mulling harsh restrictive measures on Tokyo Electron, ASML and other chipmaking and chip equipment manufacturing companies of US allies if they continue to trade with China. In trying to coerce them to be a collective pressure point on China, the Joe Biden administration is creating a self-made dilemma for the United States.

On the one hand, most US semiconductor companies are opposed to the Biden administration's de facto chip embargo against their largest chip market, believing that the policy is counterproductive and undermines the interests of US business. On the other hand, with Biden facing tremendous difficulties in his bid for reelection as US president in November, more and more US allies feel they needn't serve in the ranks for the Biden administration's "chip war" against China anymore.

Even if Biden tries to resort to extreme pressure to reinforce his anti-China Maginot Line, in which he took great pride as he said during the NATO Summit in Washington last week, that fortification is becoming increasingly shaky and porous. The ASML's sales revenue from China accounted for about half of its global total in the first half of this year. And for three quarters in a row, as of the second quarter of this year, at least 50 percent of the chip manufacturing equipment made in Japan has been exported to China.

Most of those conscripted by his administration know that Biden's "chip war" against China, which violates market law and leaves no party unscathed, was nothing but a personal vanity project from day one. The tumbling share prices of relevant Japanese and Dutch companies on Wednesday following the Biden administration's latest threats — Tokyo Electron's share price dropped by 8.3 percent at one point — means that even before the US' restrictive measures against them materialize, they have started paying for being dragged into the US' tech offensive against China.

The Biden administration's "chip war" is not sustainable. It is like trying to hold back the tide. The latest forecast by the Semiconductor Industry Association of the United States predicts that global chip manufacturing equipment sales will grow by 3.4 percent this year to \$109 billion. Among them, equipment shipments to the Chinese mainland market are expected to exceed \$35 billion, accounting for more than 30 percent of the total, making it the largest market driving demand growth.

All signs indicate that, as the halo of its "value diplomacy" is fading as a result of its "of value only to the US" trade strategies, the Biden administration is increasingly treating the high-tech companies of the US' allies the same way it deals with their Chinese counterparts. Its efforts to unite its allies to form a united front in a "chip war" against China are therefore doomed to failure. Reportedly, a group of heavyweight US executives led by US-China Business Council President Craig Allen and CEO and board chair of FedEx Corporation Raj Subramaniam will head to Beijing soon, hoping to meet with Chinese officials to obtain first-hand insights following the conclusion of the four-day meeting of China's leading decision-makers on Thursday. With no more than four months to go before the election, entrepreneurs in the US and its allies have already started voting with their feet.

Orban's peace efforts

HUNGARIAN Prime Minister Viktor Orban went on a shuttle diplomacy, visiting Kyiv, Moscow, Beijing and Washington after his country assumed the six-month rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union on July 1. But his bid to bring an end to the nearly two-and-a-half-year-old Russia-Ukraine conflict by persuading the two sides to agree to a cease-fire, and hold talks to resolve their differences has evoked a hysterical response from the leaders of the European Union and its member states.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on July 5 that "appeasement will not stop Putin" in response to Orban's visit to Moscow. And while Euronews ran an article on Tuesday suggesting that Orban, as leader of EU member state Hungary, should face the consequences for his shuttle diplomacy while Politico.eu ran an article on the same day titled "Viktor Orban goes rogue". Attacks against Orban's government are nothing new, but the furious response of the EU leaders against Orban's shuttle diplomacy is shocking. Sadly, far more EU leaders lashed out at Orban over the past weeks than condemned Israel's relentless attacks on the Gaza Strip in the last nine months.

The fact that Orban is one of the few EU leaders who can reach out to all sides makes him an ideal candidate for trying to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict. His efforts should be welcome, especially because the United States and NATO have been prolonging the conflict, which could result in more deaths and destruction and risks spreading the war in other regions. When I asked European Commission spokesman Eric Mamer on Tuesday why the EU is averse to Orban trying to mediate peace between Moscow and Kyiv, he recycled the same answer which the EU has been giving for the past two years: "there is a very simple way to end the conflict ... and it is for Russia to stop the war".

Perhaps that's why Orban bluntly told German newspaper Bild and TV news channel Welt that "China has a peace plan. America has a war policy. Europe is just copying the American position instead of having its own strategic approach". Due to its dependence on the US for security, the EU is no longer talking about strategic autonomy, which French President Emmanuel Macron and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell often stressed a few years ago. With Ursula von der Leyen likely assuming her second term and Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, a Russia hawk, expected to replace Borrell, there is little hope of the EU pursuing diplomacy to help end the conflict. Which is tragic, because Europe has been and will continue to bear the brunt of the escalating hostilities while the US military industrial complex reaps the profits of the conflict, a fact acknowledged by senior US officials. A survey released by New York-based Institute for Global Affairs in June showed that 94 percent of the people in the US and 88 percent in Western Europe want NATO member states to pursue a negotiated settlement to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict, with many people from the US and Western Europe citing the huge loss of lives as the primary reason for seeking a negotiated end to the conflict. This shows how disconnected US, NATO and EU leaders are from their people and why Orban should be encouraged to continue his peace efforts.

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Putin has realised just how vulnerable he is

Hamish De Bretton-Gordon

AS Europe awakens to the stark realisation that an isolationist White House under Donald Trump is no longer an implausible nightmare, but the most likely reality come November, the narrative that Russia now has the upper hand in its vicious war — one that was, lest we forget, only intended to last three days — has become increasingly common.

Look at the "stalemate" on the battlefield, the failure of the Ukrainian counter-offensive last year, waning Western support, and Moscow successfully tilting its economy on to a war footing, and it is easy to believe that Russia holds all the cards. But this is not so, as a story reported by The Telegraph this week helped to illustrate.

President Vladimir Putin has been forced to beef up defences around his palace north of Moscow to defend against deep Ukrainian drone strikes. Satellite images reveal at least seven medium-range air defence systems have been stationed close to the perimeter of the sprawling forest estate on the shores of Lake Valdai.

Does this sound like a country about to score a decisive victory? Ever since Kyiv's drones and missiles have been able to hit targets deep into Russian territory, it has been destroying air bases, oil depots, command nodes, and — most visibly striking — the Black Sea fleet. All this has forced Moscow's military command, to quote the Institute for the Study of War think tank in Washington, "to prioritise limited air defence assets to cover what it deems high-value targets".

It tells you a lot about modern Russia that luxury villas hundreds of miles from the battlefield are considered "high value", both in terms of what the Kremlin wants to protect and where Kyiv can now target effectively. Ukraine's security sources said way back in January that they had flown a drone right over Putin's palace en route to attack an oil terminal near St Petersburg, so we know it can be done.

A key element of Ukraine's success with drones has been Western

powers loosening the handcuffs in terms of support and permissions. We have been assisting with drone development and recently

specific targets inside Russia. While in the West we become increasingly pessimistic, Moscow clearly thinks that Kyiv remains

Ukraine's security sources said way back in January that they had flown a drone right over Putin's palace en route to attack an oil terminal near St Petersburg, so we know it can be done. A key element of Ukraine's success with drones has been Western powers loosening the handcuffs in terms of support and permissions. We have been assisting with drone development and recently signalled to Kyiv that we are willing to allow it to use our technology to strike specific targets inside Russia. While in the West we become increasingly pessimistic, Moscow clearly thinks that Kyiv remains a threat, forcing it to stretch its defences far from the frontline.

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a threat, forcing it to stretch its defences far from the frontline.

It was for the same reason that the Kremlin's recent offensive on Ukraine's second city of Kharkiv failed: Putin's army was forced to stop due to devastating drone and missile strikes. Imagine, therefore, if we in the West were to be bolder, loosening the straps entirely and allowing Kyiv to use our long-range missiles — not just drones — to hit weapons depots and critical targets far deeper into Russian territory. Perhaps it would have the added benefit of waking up Russian citizens to the reality of what it means to be fighting a war that has cost their country more than 350,000 casualties.

The MoD stated last Friday that Russian forces had lost 70,000 men in the past two months alone, at a rate of more than 1,000 per day. This is likely to only increase throughout this summer, especially if Putin is using his army's air defence assets to protect his own property.

I don't care what people say about the supposed "resilience" of the Russian army — those levels of casualties are not sustainable indefinitely. Moscow is only willing to take such a pounding because Putin thinks he only needs to survive until November and then Trump will give him what he wants: at least 18 per cent of Ukrainian territory. But if we in Europe can continue to support Kyiv regardless of the US stance — a big ask, which would require a far more proactive approach — then by early next year Moscow would have to start considering something that it has done everything to avoid: enlisting the men of Moscow and St Petersburg, who Putin has tried to shield from the war so as to not sow unrest at home.

Fundamentally, Russia is far more vulnerable than it first appears. Kyiv has adapted its strategy successfully given its limited resources. What we do in the next four months could shape the security of Europe for generations, and the Western leaders who met in the UK yesterday should unshackle Ukraine in order that it can gain a decisive advantage. For this war is not over.

The Telegraph

Welcome to 2024's saddest race

Marina Hyde

BORIS Johnson's supporters will always tell you he is hugely popular in the US, so the spectacle of the former British prime minister addressing a ballroomful of empty chairs at the Republican national convention in Milwaukee is hideously poignant. Politically speaking, it is obviously even worse than when Cheryl got binned off the US X Factor. The idea of one or other of The Anecdotes falling with no one to hear it ... well, Johnson was not so much casting his pearls before swine as spaffing them all over an empty pigsty.

But the erstwhile PM was not alone. I mean, he was virtually alone in the ballroom — but he had a peer group out there in Milwaukee. Liz Truss, Nigel Farage, Russell Brand — it's almost as if the US election will be fought more edifyingly than the contest to be the most desperate Brit at the RNC. Nothing says "our empire ended several decades ago" like the scramble to get in on the end of theirs.

The prize on offer, I read, is the chance to fill the role of "Trump whisperer", a sort of unofficial backchannel position that I assume is officially located in the presidential backchannel. From those prototypical premises, the Trump whisperer is meant to persuade the notional once-and-future president that things he doesn't give a shit about are actually quite important, if not to him, then definitely to little ol' Britain. Anyway: let's see how they all got on.

Johnson turning into a pumpkin while still in the ballroom was clearly a lowlight, though he did manage to post a picture of him and Trump doing a thumbs-up in a hotel suite, albeit with a sad kitchenette visible in the background. The grinning Johnson looks like someone who has just managed to persuade a man with a famous complex about his hand size to pose with their respective digits front and centre. Still, one of these men could soon be operating the levers of power with those hands. And the other ... couldn't.

Also trying to break Milwaukee was Liz Truss, who addressed another deeply unattended event at which she compared Keir Starmer with Joe Biden — but added that unlike Joe Biden, Starmer "can actually utter a coherent sentence". High praise indeed from her. "I've learned how powerful the unelected bureaucracy is," Truss said. "You have to win in November ... you have to dismantle the leftist state ... they are devious, they are ruthless and they are out to get you."

Other than that intriguing account of her implosion, all Liz could muster was a handshake photo with JD Vance. I love this type of picture, which fails to clear even the "can I just grab you?" desperation of a selfie. Consider the mechanics. In order to get the snap, one of Liz Truss's aides has had to wait and — on pain of a bollocking later — capture the fleeting moment the

vice-presidential pick shakes her hand in a line-up. Which is presumably why not simply Vance, but also Truss, are out of focus. Give the aide a break! They only had half a second or something, and from this momentarily blurred encounter the impression of some kind of bilateral must be spun. Truss's lips are smilingly pursed, which is better than them releasing sounds along the lines of "You may remember me from the best 49 days of 2022? Would you like me to show you how to crash the markets and get your entire legislative programme forcibly removed from your hands in about two weeks? OK, got it. Great to connect!"

Best fancied in the whisperer stakes is, of course, Nigel Farage, who tore himself away from the grievances of his recently acquired Clacton constituents to support his close, close friend Donald Trump. A picture of them together has confusingly yet to appear, thought it only took a few questions into an Emily Maitlis interview before Nigel was insisting hotly: "I have friends. I don't know whether you do or not. Maybe you don't. But I have friends." Yeah no, definitely.

Russell Brand did manage to get a photo with a third-tier Trump (Eric), and appeared to be basking in the glow of his recent baptism by Bear Grylls, even if he is still facing numerous suggestions of sexual impropriety. Then again this is the RNC so — who isn't? Facing allegations of sexual impropriety, I mean — not basking in the recent glow of baptism by the chief scout.

All in all, Anglo-American relations seem torn between realpolitik and unrealpolitik. The newly installed foreign secretary, David Lammy, once blasted Theresa May for "selling out the UK" for allowing Trump a state visit, but now says "we will work with whomever the United States choose to put in the White House and become their next president". Mm-hm. By Lammy's own standards — and who else's to judge him on? — some sort of selling-out does seem to have occurred. Either that, or life is more complicated than his tirelessly crafted social media persona would have had us believe.

If that is something Lammy has discovered since taking office, perhaps he must enlighten the rest of Westminster. Because this side of the pond's amusing-spectacle-of-the-week was surely UK politicians wetting their pants over a JD Vance joke about the UK being the first Islamist country with the bomb. The comment was clearly not to the collective taste, but, guys — our foreign secretary once called Donald Trump "a woman-hating, neo-Nazi-sympathising sociopath". If you are going to dish it out, it's probably better if you learn to take it. Sorry if that's confusing, but no doubt it'll get much less so as the next few years unfold.

The Guardian

Biden house of cards is collapsing

Jake Wallis Simons

WHEN Ernest Hemingway wrote that bankruptcy happens in two ways — "gradually then suddenly" — he can hardly have foreseen that 98 years later, his words would neatly describe the decline of the Democratic leadership of America.

Joe Biden has Covid. This latest indignity comes after a woeful period that started with the toe-curling presidential debate, progressed through the "vice president Trump" and "President Putin" gaffes, and ended with the attempted assassination of his rival, which may have succeeded only in killing Biden's campaign. On top of all this, even more influential democrats — including Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer, Adam Schiff, a close ally of Nancy Pelosi, and Hakeem Jeffries, the

party's top representative in the House — have lined up to pressure him to step down. Is Biden's precarious pyramid of power on the verge of collapse? It is starting to look inevitable. If his evident mental and physical decline turns out to be the "suddenly", the erratic policy platforms over which he has presided have been making themselves felt "gradually" for years.

Take, for example, Iran. Biden's strategy towards one of the world's most dangerous regimes has been teeth-grindingly incompetent. Even before he was elected in 2020 — when his advanced age was not yet such a convincing excuse — he made the inexplicable move of telegraphing to the Iranians his desperation to re-enter Obama's JCPOA deal in an article on the CNN website.

"The good news is there remains a better

way," he wrote. "A Biden administration will make it a priority to set Iran policy right." After years of labouring under Donald Trump's painful "maximum pressure" policy, the Ayatollah must have thought his prayers had been answered. Frankly, he wasn't wrong. There followed years of what can only be described as appeasement of Chamberlainian proportions. The Iranians strung out fruitless negotiations while pushing ahead with their development of a bomb. Biden's response? To launch a shadowy programme of turning a blind eye to his own sanctions regime, in the hope that this would make the enemy love him. By last year, the Iranians were exporting over a million barrels of oil daily, a historic high, and had \$16 billion of unfrozen funds

in their coffers. But they still didn't seem to love Biden.

Then there was his policy towards Israel, which has been characterised by public displays of confusion and frustration, serving no purpose other than emboldening the enemy. After an admirable start, sending two aircraft carrier strike groups to the eastern Mediterranean, Biden veered between pledging "ironclad" support for the Jewish state and parroting Hamas propaganda about civilian death tolls.

The debacle of the arms supplies — in which his administration threatened to withhold weapons, then did so, then U-turned on the move, then got dragged into a public spat with Benjamin Netanyahu — seemed designed to send a message of incompetence around the world. If there is an opposite of

deterrence, this was it. The underlying tendency has been the same. Weakness. Biden has been pulled hither and thither by the radical wing of his party, Arab American votes in the swing state of Michigan, Gaza protests on campus and the Iranian regime, as the juggernaut of the Trump campaign bears down upon him.

This week, he has been planning wholesale reform of the Supreme Court, involving term limits, an enforceable code of ethics and restrictions on legal immunity for presidents. This is all very well, but it would be a dramatic volte face; Biden, a former chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, rejected these ideas when they were pushed by the liberal wing of his party during the 2020 presidential race. Moreover, this belated attempt to woo the Left would almost certainly

fall flat in reality, as it would require congressional approval.

But this confusion is eclipsed by his bizarre proposal to introduce price controls on rent. During a speech at the Nato summit in Washington, he outlined plans to cap rental increases at five per cent annually, which would — quite obviously — warp the market and create economic chaos, as has been the case whenever price controls have been introduced anywhere in the world throughout history. As the President languishes with Covid, he may have time for reflection. The collapse now seems a certainty. It is only a matter of time. And with the threat of Trump in the ascendance, it looks equally certain that — gradually or suddenly — Biden will take the Democratic party down with him.

Why we can't give up on capitalism

Bethany Cianciolo

CAPITALISM has long been heralded by many economists as the best economic system around, rewarding — and therefore encouraging — competition and innovation, creating wealth, stimulating growth and allowing new ideas to thrive.

But if the free-market system is really the best model for any economy to expand, where a country's citizens have the freedom to produce and choose their own path to success, why do so many Americans feel so glum about the US economy right now?

Indeed, earlier this year, a CNN poll found that 42% of Americans said their financial situation is worse than it was last year, while the Conference Board's latest consumer confidence index found that consumers are feeling increasingly nervous about what could be ahead.

Ruchir Sharma, chairman of Rockefeller International and founder and CIO of Breakout Capital, has a pretty good hunch about what's behind the angst. In his new book, "What Went Wrong With Capitalism," he argues that the system the US has now can no longer be considered capitalism, thanks to an ever-expanding government and its new culture of bailouts and regulation, not to mention the enormous concentration of wealth and power among a handful of big businesses.

CNN Opinion's Bethany Cianciolo spoke with him about what truly is the best economic system, the lessons we can learn from history and why, after growing up in socialist India, he still has hope that America will get it right.

CNN: Your new book, "What Went Wrong With Capitalism," is a really fascinating look at how capitalism has become increasingly distorted over the past 100 years or so, especially in the United States. But before we look at the current issues, I'd love to talk about the good times. So is there a period that you can point to when capitalism was in its heyday, or really working for the average worker, small business owner — when it was really doing what it was meant to do?

Sharma: It has broadly worked for America for much of its economic history. But it's in the last couple of decades, in particular, that capitalism seems to have not been working for the average worker. So I'd flip the question around and say that for most of America's history, capitalism in its various forms worked. And it is really in the last couple of decades when I think that the deterioration has been quite marked.

I don't think there's been a perfect period because there were very different forms of capitalism. There was the laissez-faire capitalism of the late 19th century and the early 20th century, but that was too ruthless with no welfare state, and very sharp swings in the economic cycle with the government playing absolutely no role to ease them.

And then after that, the government started to play a role. And what I've shown in the book is that the role of the government has increased over time, but it's really the last couple of decades where the average voter is telling us that capitalism has stopped working for him or her.

Capitalism across the western world, not just America, I think has reached a point where it's safe to ask the question: Is this capitalism anymore? Or is this a very different economic system and we need to label it as such?

CNN: And you also note in the book that pro-business is not necessarily the same as pro-capitalism, right?

Sharma: It's actually a very important distinction. Yeah.

CNN: Can you explain that?

Sharma: I think it happens even with the Trump administration, that you think that because they're speaking in favor of business and they're sort of being friendly to big business, we think of that as pro-capitalism. And my point is no, that in fact pro-capitalism means that you're looking to be pro-competition, and big business is often anti-competition. Big business is often in favor of regulations because they can help lobby and write the regulations to keep out a lot of the small and new entrants. Big businesses benefit a lot from regulation because the costs of compliance are huge.

So governments around the world, and including in the United States, often enforce policies that are beneficial to big business. Pro-capitalism means that you've got to constantly be thinking about what will lead to greater competition, what will lead to greater churn. Capitalism is about creative destruction, as the old line goes. So what is it that will lead to the existing businesses being cannibalized or even being destroyed, which sets the field for new businesses to come?

CNN: How does that concentration of power amongst a few big companies hurt everyday Americans?

Sharma: If you look at what's happening in America today, there are so many towns that are dominated by one big business, which is an economic term called monopolies. Now, when that happens, the people working in that town feel quite oppressed because they don't have much bargaining power — there's just one company providing most of the jobs in that

town. Something similar is happening across the economy: As big businesses come to dominate, Americans enjoy less opportunity and mobility, whether it is in moving from one job to another or one town to another.

CNN: You also note in the book that government spending as a share of the economy has been rising over the past century, and that since the '80s, the US has almost become a bailout nation, if you will. And now the government is introducing thousands of regulations a year.

Sharma: On the bailout, until really the 1980s, America did not believe in the culture of bailing out companies because it was thought that, okay, it's a private sector company. If it's going to go bust, that's just the way capitalism is supposed to function.

After that, you had the bailout of Continental Illinois, the first big financial bailout in the early '80s. That was followed by the sweeping bailout of the savings and loans industry in the late 1980s, and from there bailouts just kept getting bigger, and broader. Now, the excuse

In America's first 200 odd years of economic history, right up until the 1970s, America ran a significant budget deficit only in major wars or depressions. Since then it has run a significant deficit every year but four, and now we are running the highest budget deficit by far for an economy that's not in an outright recession or depression. We are running a budget deficit of 6%, 7% of GDP, even though we technically have full employment.

for big bailouts is that the government is doing it because they want to save jobs and prevent the crisis from spreading.

But the downside is that the average person feels that if these rich fat cats are getting bailed out, then why is more not being done for me? I think there was a feeling even in 2008 when they could argue that each of these bailouts made sense to prevent something worse from happening.

And on regulation, more of it means that the cost of doing business, and the cost for any new business to be set up, goes up significantly because of the regulatory burden.

America has been implementing 3,000 new regulations a year for the last three decades, and the total number of regulations withdrawn over that period is 20. So as regulations multiply, so do the costs. If I want to set up an investment fund, the cost of doing so today is 10 times larger than what it used to be 20 years ago.

And at a daily level, I quote some research in the book saying that white-collar employees now spend up to 16% of their time at work on legal compliance, which is a huge burden on the economy. It's unproductive.

CNN: You've also said that risk has become socialized. Can you explain what you mean by that?

Sharma: Capitalism without bankruptcy is like Christianity without hell. If you do not allow anything to fail and you think everything is either too big or even too small to fail, then you've taken risk out of the system. An essential part of capitalism is for people to take risk and know that there are adverse consequences of taking such risk. But if the people in power or people who have the money are taking risks and knowing that the government is there to backstop them, I think that totally changes the way investors make decisions. People do stupid things. And that's one big reason why, as far the stock market is concerned, when the market goes up, no one's really saying much, but when the market goes down, you instantly have policymakers, the Fed, all starting to run to its rescue.

The first time that something like this happened was in the famous October 1987 crash, when Alan Greenspan became the first Fed chairman to explicitly cut interest rates to rescue the stock market. And after that, this notion arose that on the downside, the central bank is there to protect you against losses. And nobody is there to cap your gains when the market is booming. Policymakers say: We don't know if markets are in a bubble or not in a bubble, so we've just got to ignore this.

CNN: And what do you think drove that shift? Is it just the fear of what could happen if governments don't come to the rescue?

Sharma: Exactly. I think that one constant fear among policymakers is a repeat of the Great Depression, which began with a stock market crash in 1929. Now every time there is any trouble in the financial market, the Great Depression gets invoked. Back then, the government did not intervene and the market crashed, and then the market kept on crashing and took the economy down with it eventually. That's the scenario that still grips the imagination of policymakers.

So now, every time there's even a flutter in the markets, there is the feeling that the contagion could be so large that we have to rescue it. And this becomes a vicious loop

because when the government is providing that backstop, then people speculate more, the markets get even bigger, and then once they get bigger, the price of them falling also gets bigger. So then the governments and the Fed feel even more inclined to take action or take preventive action because the beast has become so big. As I document in the book, the size of financial markets now is four times larger than the size of the underlying economy.

CNN: You also note in the book that support for a larger state is higher now than it has been in at least 50 years, and that this support is not just among Democrats, but among Republicans as well. Do you have any thoughts on what our current model of capitalism means for the upcoming presidential election?

Sharma: I think it's unfortunate that this expansion of the state has been a bipartisan project — it's not mattered whether the Republicans or Democrats are in office. The federal debt has increased under every president because no one has looked to cut spending.

despite this increased spending and increased deficit, the faith or the trust in the American government today is at an all-time low. So I think that somewhere deep down, people realize, is the government going to be able to fulfill its obligations if it keeps on running these kind of deficits? So far so good, but I think that somewhere deep down there is this uneasiness about it.

CNN: So where do we go from here? Is there a country that you can think of that has the right form of capitalism that could almost serve as a model for the United States?

Sharma: America still has lots of good things going for it. It is still the country that I want live in. It's still the country that most people want to come to because it's such a reservoir of talent and there's so much that this country has to offer. But as an immigrant who has benefited so much from the American system, and so proud of what America had to offer to the world as a model, I don't want to overlook all the strengths of America.

That said, Switzerland seems to be the trifecta, where government spending as a share of GDP is not that high compared to the US or European countries. They give their people lots of economic freedom. They generate great wealth, with relatively low inequality, and excellent health and welfare outcomes. Switzerland regularly ranks among the top nations for social indicators, including happiness. So Switzerland is one of the richest, the happiest, and the most fair and competitive capitalist countries in the world.

Now, as far as America is concerned, we still have a very high per capita income, but our scores for happiness, and for economic freedom are slipping — from fourth in the world two decades ago to 25th today. Trust in the US government is near all-time lows, in Pew Polls that go back to the 1960s; the more government promises to protect everyone from economic pain all the time, it seems, the less Americans trust it to deliver. Most don't believe they will get their Social Security benefits, or that they will ever be better off than their parents were.

So I think that my idea of this book is to still have faith in America, but to show that the first step to a cure is to diagnose what the problem is. The standard narrative — that American capitalism failed as government shrank starting with Ronald — simply doesn't square with the facts. Big billionaires and monopolies have risen with an ever-expanding government, squashing the competition and creative destruction that would in the past have competed the giants away. So have faith in the founding American model: Limited government and greater economic freedoms will generate better results.

Switzerland is not the only country betting the balance right — between smart state support and regulation, with ample room for freedom and competition. Taiwan is another very interesting model — it's a very tech-savvy economy. Its government spending as a share of the GDP is just about 20% — half that of America. And yet its state was lauded for its deft response to the pandemic — which combined high-tech tracking of cases and rapid vaccine rollouts, but stopped short of state-mandated lockdowns. It also went into the pandemic with relatively light deficits and little public debt, so Taiwan was in a good position to spend what was needed. It shows that there is a role for the state, but not for "checkism" — the now widespread belief that the answer to every crisis is a bigger government check.

CNN: As you note, so many young people today are saying that they prefer socialism over capitalism. So what would you say to a young person who essentially says that they've given up on capitalism completely?

Sharma: What we have now is not capitalism, in which growth is driven by free competition, and the proceeds are delivered at least relatively fairly because the little guy has a chance. What we have now has been lampooned by progressives as "socialism for the very rich," which is part right. What we really have is "socialized risk" for everyone: a government increasingly intent on preventing any economic pain, for the poor, the middle class, the rich and the very rich. In a system like that, the very rich do come out best off.

The book starts with my own youth in India, where I saw our national devotion to socialism create an economy that was both stagnant and deeply frustrating to millions, because it felt so unfree, so clogged with inefficient bureaucrats. I lost my grandfather to an incompetent public hospital, which botched the emergency installation of a pacemaker. As a youth, I saw capitalism as the answer to the problems of socialism. So this book is largely addressed to the young people who today see socialism and bigger government as the answer to the problems of capitalism. Beware what you wish for: The distortions you hate most — the billionaires and monopolies — are creations of big government. And an even bigger government is only going to make those distortions worse.

CNN: Why does this matter for voters?

Sharma: Well, I think it matters because there's a deep sense somewhere that if you do not balance your books, that there will be a day of reckoning eventually. And what's very interesting here is that

Tough on elites, tough on causes of elites

Andy Beckett

and populists alternate in office. Meanwhile the climate crisis, the housing crisis and other huge problems that require consistency from successive governments worsen further. Why is this destructive electoral zigzag happening — and what could Starmer's government do to help stop it?

One explanation is that the nonstop drama of populist governments has changed expectations about governments in general. Whether it's Johnson's Brexit brinkmanship or Donald Trump's tantrums in the White House, populists provide easy stories for reporters and can be compelling for those voters usually bored by politics. Even on the night of the UK general election, as Labour was making its biggest breakthrough in decades, much of the initial coverage focused on Reform's far smaller gains. For some journalists with middle-class backgrounds and liberal politics, populism's rebel airs, hard-right ideas and working-class credentials — genuine or not — give it the allure of forbidden fruit. Centrist can seem bland in comparison.

In these impatient times, the incremental reforms that centrist governments favour can also feel too slow. The Starmer administration is trying to avoid this problem by quickly launching a mass of reviews and proposed legislation to "take the brakes off Britain", and by having new ministers busily criss-crossing the country. The energy and focus have been refreshing after the laziness and drift of Johnson and Sunak's tenures. But many of the government's initiatives will still take years to bring results, if they ever do, and during this waiting period Labour will be vulnerable to claims from Nigel Farage and others — probably including a new, more populist Tory leader — that they can provide miracle cures for Britain that will work much faster.

Another allure of populism is that it identifies people for disoriented voters to blame. Starmer's current strategy of pinning everything wrong with the country on the Tories is good politics — you could see it as centrist with a touch of populist aggression — and in many ways justified. Yet, like Labour's

promise to "govern for everybody", this approach avoids — uncomfortable truths: that a large minority of Britons benefited from Tory rule, and they will probably have to lose some of their privileges — for example, low taxes on the rich by international standards — if the public services used by the majority are to be properly funded. If Starmer doesn't become tougher on elites and tougher on the causes of elites, then populists will continue to blame shortages of public resources on immigrants, other vulnerable minorities and the government itself.

In government, there is a danger that he will continue to follow the populists ever rightwards on crime and immigration, an electoral strategy that has already failed for centrist governments across Europe. In Britain, the temptation for centrist premiers to be influenced by populists may be even stronger, because populist ideas pervade so much of our media. While both the Tory and non-Tory wings of the movement sometimes suffer setbacks at general elections, in the wider culture it is never really out of power.

There remains a chance that Starmer could deal with the populist threat differently. His premiership is still forming and so are his political methods, after less than a decade in parliament. As his biographer, Tom Baldwin, writes, when Starmer is faced with a new situation, "He exhausts conventional options before, if necessary, becoming progressively more radical."

In the 1930s, the last time the far right was so powerful in western democracies, one of the few centre-left governments that survived was in the US, led by Franklin D Roosevelt. Its expansive New Deal policies, distant antecedents of the boldest Labour legislation announced in the king's speech this week, were crucial to Roosevelt's success, but so was his rhetoric. In a celebrated 1936 presidential election speech, he said that the forces of "organised money" and the "organised mob" were "unanimous in their hate for me - and I welcome their hatred". He was re-elected. Starmer may need to be much fiercer towards the populists if he is to manage the same.

Fish don't buy umbrellas to survive in Sea

UMBRELLAS are Hassan Bin Youssef Yassin of even less use

U to fish, seeing as the fish are already dying due to our human excess and irresponsibility. For the best part of 50 years, we humans have been well-aware of the damage we are inflicting on our environment and its likely consequences on our planet and the survivability of future generations. While we have been attending one conference after another, the degradation of our environment has only accelerated, global temperatures have risen even further. Although 194 countries signed the supposedly groundbreaking Paris Agreement of 2015, we have still not seen any changes in our behavior indicating any hope that we are slowing the effects of climate change.

I remember a movie called "Mississippi Burning," where the FBI is called in to investigate the disappearance of three civil rights workers — two whites and one black man — in a Mississippi town run by the Ku Klux Klan. The imagery of fire and hatred is one that unfortunately marks our present day in my mind, with devastating conflicts raging, uninhhibited hatred and racism, far-right election gains across the West, and a US election year that was a farce before it even began, now descending into a media feeding frenzy where the losers, as always, are ordinary citizens. It is not just Mississippi that is burning today; we stare on indifferently as the world is burning.

Shame on us for allowing ourselves to be diverted by all this as we blindly

do absolutely nothing about the greatest existential challenge humanity has ever faced, namely climate change. In a recent issue of Financial Times, Martin Wolf published an article entitled "Market forces are not enough to halt climate change," in which he illustrates how all our good intentions and supposed efforts are making no difference to the devastating climate change already underway, to the "folly of running irreversible long-term experiments on the only habitable planet we have."

The bottom line is that we are simply not prepared to pay the price of decarbonizing the economy or of halting growth in order to halt ever-growing demand for electricity. Although electricity generation from non-fossil fuel sources has risen 44 percent over the last eight years, that from fossil fuel sources also rose 12 percent, meaning carbon emissions are still significantly on the rise, ultimately fueling ever more rapid and irreversible climate change. "Alas, the atmosphere responds to emissions, not good intentions: we have been running forward, but going backwards," Wolf says.

Wolf cited a recent study from researchers at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact, who assert that "the costs of mitigating (climate change) by limiting the temperature increase to 2C, are just a sixth of the costs of the likely climate change."

Wolf adds that although "even a free-market fanatic cannot deny that environmental externalities are

a form of market failure ... the market will not fix this global market failure," a "tragic failure" if there ever was one. Our global economy is simply not made to deal with such tremendous negative externalities, such long-term damage, and such a huge amount of waste being built into our economic reality. Indeed, "among the most important problems in this area is the failure of capital markets to price the failure appropriately," as Lord Nicholas Stern and Joseph Stiglitz argue in "Climate Change and Growth." Shame on us for watching our planet and the future of humanity decline so rapidly in front of our eyes. Mother Nature will adapt; we, seemingly, will not.

We should be educating everyone from kindergartners to retirees on the realities and the limits of our planet in its collision course with our rapacious economic system. We must open new avenues of dialogue and encourage our best minds to find new paths for a solution to this existential threat.

Our empty conferences, our meaningless signatures, our false bravado are all worthless. We must stop rewriting the stories of old and find new ways to bring about the meaningful participation of every human being on the planet, rather than rely on governments and businesses, whose interests lie elsewhere. Most of all, we must learn to value and respect what God and Nature have given us in birth, ensuring that in death we bequeath something better, not worse, to future generations.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association, called on the Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research.

Mahana Bachat and Takaful Flexi Plan Pak-Qatar Family Takaful launches Shariah-compliant plan

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pak-Qatar Family Takaful Limited (PQFTL) has launched a one-of-a-kind Shariah-compliant investment plan by the name of Mahana Bachat & Takaful Flexi Plan (MBTP).

MBTP offers members 100% Shariah-compliant returns with a minimum contribution amount of PKR 50,000.

Participants can further increase their returns through regular top-up contributions as low as PKR 1,000 per month. The plan allows for easy online withdrawals, both partial and permanent.

Participants may also withdraw profit in the

form of an additional steady monthly income. The benefit that stands out among all other benefits is that it includes complimentary Takaful coverage of up to PKR 30 million or 6-multiple of the last 3 months' average cash value, whichever is lower.

Beyond these key benefits, MBTP offers discounts on other Takaful covers, including a discounted rate of 1.35% on motor, 25% discount on travel, 20% on home, 50% on individual health, and 50% on additional life Takaful. This unique value proposition sets MBTP apart from similar plans in the country.

"We are pleased to offer this unique plan

which is a Shariah-compliant investment-linked Takaful plan that caters to the growing demand for financial security and flexibility. It offers unmatched value with its combination of competitive returns, easy onboarding and withdrawals, with complimentary Takaful coverage," said Mr. Waqas Ahmad, CEO of Pak-Qatar Family Takaful Limited. "We have also introduced an easy-to-use mobile app for the servicing of the plan.

This is a reflection of our commitment to developing innovative Shariah-compliant solutions that empower our members to achieve their financial

goals."

Pak-Qatar Family Takaful is part of Pak-Qatar Group, Pakistan's premier and pioneer Islamic financial services group. It provides comprehensive Takaful coverage that adheres to the principles of cooperation and mutual support, offering innovative and Shariah-compliant savings & protection solutions to individuals, families, and businesses. The company is rated "A++" (having a Stable Outlook) by VIS Credit Rating Co. Limited and Pakistan Credit Rating Agency (PACRA). The Company's paid-up capital is in excess of Pak-Rs. 1.3 Billion.

SBP releases its third quarterly review of Payment Systems

F.P. Report

KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has released its Quarterly Payment Systems Report for the third quarter (Jan-Mar) of the fiscal year 2023-24. The report presents a quarterly review of payment landscape of the country.

As per the report, digital transactions were 83% of total retail payments for the quarter, processed by Banks and Electronic Money Institutions (EMIs) whereas 17% of transactions were conducted Over-the-Counter (OTC) at bank branches.

Collectively, Banks and EMIs processed 844 million retail payments

amounting to PKR 128,470 billion during the quarter.

This included 47% funds transfer transactions, 33% cash withdrawals, 11% POS and e-commerce purchases, 6% bill payments and mobile top-ups, and the remaining transactions comprised deposits, tax payments, invoice-based payments, and donations. The report also mentioned that Pakistan's payment system has been witnessing continuous and significant progress in the adoption of digital payment channels.

During the quarter, the digital user base in Pakistan showed remarkable average growth of 8%, reaching to 59 million BB mobile app users, 17 mil-

lion mobile banking app users, 11 million internet banking users, and 3 million EMIs' e-wallet users at the close of the quarter.

Mobile phone and internet banking services continued to be the preferred channels of customers, with mobile phone banking transactions increasing by 8% to 301 million and internet banking transactions growing by 3% to 59 million.

The amount processed through these channels reached PKR 12,955 billion for mobile phone banking and PKR 6,467 billion for internet. The delivery of payment services across Pakistan is facilitated by an extensive network, including 18,049

bank branches, 18,655 ATMs, 120,641 POS terminals, and 648,333 BB agents.

Raast, Pakistan's instant payment system, processed 140 million transactions totaling PKR 3,437 billion in Q3 of FY24, marking a 31% increase in volume and a 48% increase in value from the previous quarter. This significant growth underscores Raast's crucial role in the nation's payment landscape.

Furthermore, a total of 1.5 million transactions amounting to PKR 315,596 billion were settled through PRISM (RTGS) which included settlement of government securities, funds transfers and ancillary clearing transactions.

SCCI EC demands cancellation of IPPs contract

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The executive committee of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry termed Independent Powers Producers agreements as anti-Pakistan and detrimental for the national economy and to terminate all contracts with IPPs and procure electricity from cheaper sources to alleviate economic strain.

The demand was made through a unanimous resolution that was presented during the special one-point agenda executive meeting chaired by SCCI president Fuad Ishaq held here at chamber house on Friday.

The chamber senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, Businessman Forum Leader former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, former FPCCI president Ghazanfar Bilour, former presidents Riaz Arshad, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Hasnain Khurshid, Sherrbaz Bilour, with members of the executive committee Affaf Ali Khan, Naeem Qasmi, Hamza Ibrahim Butt, Monawar Khurshid, Haji Ghulam Hussain, Imran Khan Mohmand, Fahad Amin and Anjumana e Tajran Peshawar president Shaukat Ali Khan, trader leader Inayat Khan, Tajir Insaf President Shahid Khan, traders leader Haji Naseer, former senior vice president Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, former vice presidents Javed Akhtar, Shuja



Muhammad, Faiz Rasool, former president Industrialists Association Peshawar Malik Imran Ishaq, Sohail Javed, Mujeeb Rehman, Aftab Iqbal, Ihsanullah, Saddam Gul, Ishtiaq Muhammad, Rashid Iqbal Siddique, Shams ur Rehman, Zahoor Khan, Peshawar bazar and markets unions and association office bearers and representatives were present during the meeting.

In the meeting, the participants tied black-ribbon on arms and held black flags in protest against the IPPs agreements. The SCCI chief presented a resolution which was unanimously endorsed by the house.

During the meeting, banners were carried by participants with various slogans, demanding cancellation of IPP agreements, making Pakistan's future safe, ending hour-

long loadshedding, and elimination of illegal and unjust taxes.

Fuad Ishaq while talking to media representatives after chairing a meeting of the executive committee called IPPs agreements as cancer for the country and national economy.

He demanded an audit of IPPs and canceled them immediately.

The SCCI chief asked to carry out a comprehensive investigation into IPPs, over invoicing and misdeclaration of capacity. He went on to say that Pakistan has been defrauded and to make accountable all concerned and recover the overpayments.

Fuad Ishaq said people have become major victims of the IPPs and the industry has brought on verge of complete collapse.

He added abolishment

of IPPs agreements for bringing economic stability, industrial and business growth has become inevitable.

Replying to various queries from reporters, the chamber president said that SCCI advocates for the adoption of a 'take and pay' model, where payments are made only for the electricity that is actually supplied and consumed.

Fuad Ishaq demanded of the government to utilize the abundant hydel energy resources of the country in order to produce cheap and green energy to all consumers.

He said the chamber supports investment in renewable energy sources and improvements in the national grid to reduce reliance on IPPs and enhance the overall efficiency and sustainability of the power sector.

Wall Street extends rout, CrowdStrike slumps on global tech outage

NEW YORK (Reuters): Wall Street's main indexes fell on Friday, deepening a sell-off driven by tech stocks and mixed earnings, while investors assessed the impact of a global cyber outage that knocked down CrowdStrike's shares to an over two-month low.

Cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike slumped 11.2% after an update to one of its products appeared to trigger an outage that affected customers using Microsoft's Windows Operating System, disrupting businesses across sectors.

Major U.S. airlines ordered ground stops citing communication issues, with the Euronext exchange and London Stock Exchange Group's Workspace news and data platform also facing issues. LSEG later said its data and services were back online.

Microsoft slipped 0.7% to an over one-month low, on track for a four-day decline, driven by a rout in

tech stocks.

"Any hint of bad news, because they (tech stocks) are so priced to perfection is going to hurt these stocks, both (CrowdStrike and Microsoft) are excellent companies and are worthwhile long-term holds," said Phil Blencowe, CEO of Ladenburg Asset Management.

The disruption comes after two grueling sessions for Wall Street, as investors assessed second-quarter earnings and a move away from megacaps that have primarily driven the equity rally in 2024.

Megacaps were largely mixed, with Nvidia and Amazon.com losing 1% and 0.5%, while Apple and Alphabet gained 1% each.

Chip stocks also struggled for direction. U.S.-listed shares of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing were down nearly 1.5%, while Arm Holdings jumped 3%.

Over the past two sessions, the Nasdaq has

dropped 3.5% and the S&P 500 has fallen 2.1%, keeping the indexes on track for weekly losses.

Signaling investor unease, the VIX - Wall Street's "fear gauge" - was trading at its highest since early May.

Investors will also await comments from Federal Reserve officials John Williams and Raphael Bostic for hints on the policy path later in the day.

Markets have priced in a 25-basis-point interest-rate cut by September and expect two cuts by year-end according to LSEG data. At 9:48 a.m. ET, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 179.14 points, or 0.44%, at 40,485.88, the S&P 500 was down 2.69 points, or 0.05%, at 5,541.90, and the Nasdaq Composite was down 18.08 points, or 0.10%, at 17,853.15.

Meanwhile, other cybersecurity shares rose, with Palo Alto Networks rising 1.5% and SentinelOne up 6.4%.

Eli Lilly jumped 2.6% after China approved its weight-loss drug tirzepatide, while Intuitive Surgical rose 8% after a second-quarter results beat.

That helped the S&P 500 healthcare index lead sectoral gainers.

Netflix fell 1% in choppy trading after the streaming giant cautioned third-quarter subscriber additions would be lower than a year earlier.

Oilfield services provider SLB rose 1.3% after strong second-quarter profits.

S&P 500 companies that have reported second-quarter earnings to date recorded an 85% beat rate, with the growth rate standing at 11.1%.

Declining issues outnumbered advancers for a 1.40-to-1 ratio on the NYSE and for a 1.19-to-1 ratio on the Nasdaq.

The S&P index recorded 27 new 52-week highs and three new lows, while the Nasdaq recorded 16 new highs and 33 new lows.

CDNS set target of Rs 170 billion for Islamic Finance in FY 2024-25

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (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 National Savings had issued the Islamic bonds for the promotion of the Islamic finance system, which will help the development of the Islamic economy in the country," the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Friday.

Replying to a question, he said the CDNS had achieved the target of Rs

75 billion during the last fiscal year (2023-24) from the Islamic bonds, and that was why it aimed to introduce new dimensions in the Islamic finance sector.

"Islamic finance now has a significant role in the global financial sector. A large part of the economy of many major countries currently includes Islamic finance," he added.

The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in the CDNS.

Given the current market trend in the country, an ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further, he added.

Replying to another question, he said that the 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.

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.

Sialkot Chamber delegation explores opportunities

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 10-member delegation from the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) has been visiting Tokyo, Japan, from July 17 to 22, aiming to strengthen trade ties and foster mutual

cooperation between Pakistan and Japan.

The Embassy of Pakistan, in collaboration with the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, SMRJ, and JETRO, organized a networking event.

Ambassador Raza Bashir

Tarar welcomed the participants and encouraged them to explore Sialkot and Pakistan as potential trade partners.

The Vice President of SCCI also addressed the attendees, highlighting Sialkot as the industrial hub of Pakistan.



LAHORE: Focused on quality: Laborers sort and pack high-quality onions to deliver in market at the provincial capital's vegetable market. — APP photo

Court notice

In the court of Sayeda Tahreema sbahat Senior civil Judge/Judge family court Charsadda Case No 58/FC next date 22/7/2024 Case title - Sana vs Ismail Notice to:Ismail s/o Umar Gul R/o shah lateef toun Karachi (Defendant) ...

In the case titled above, the above defendant is hereby informed by notice that on 22/7/2024, you must appear before the court as a lawyer or attorney and follow the case, otherwise unilateral action will be taken against you.



In brief

Murphy fights back to reach final

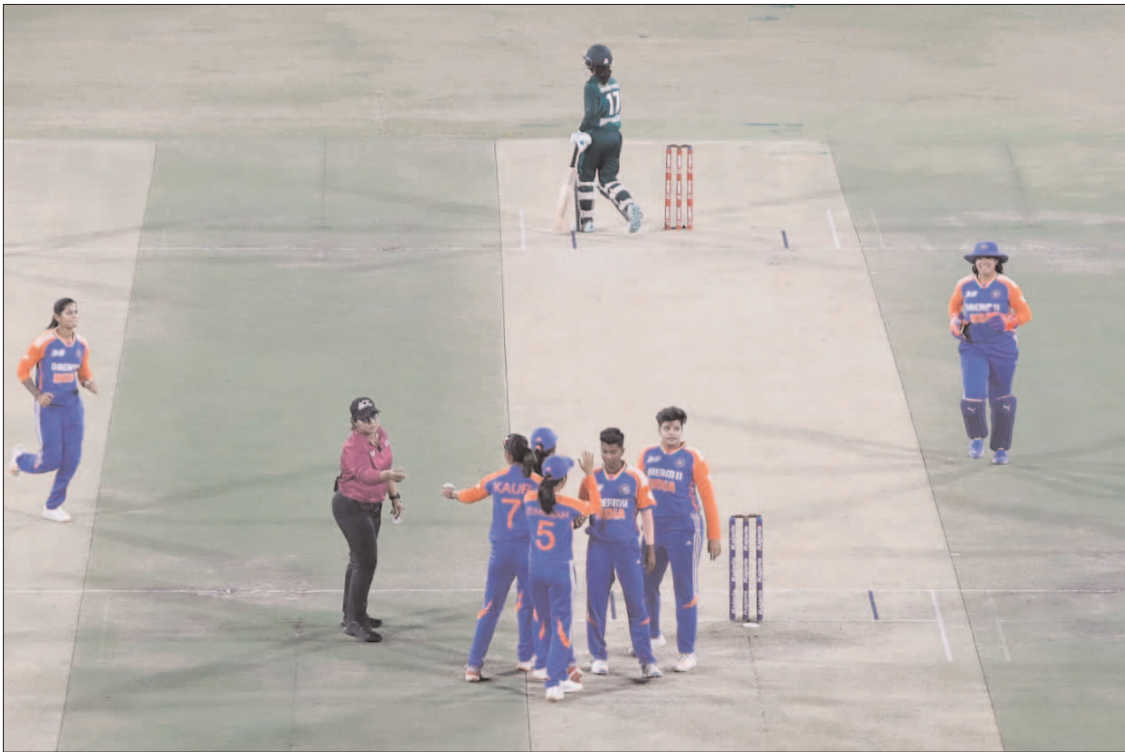
SHANGHAI (Agencies): Shaun Murphy produced a stirring fightback to win five consecutive frames and progress to the Shanghai Masters final with a 10-8 victory over Mark Selby. Selby led 8-5 as he looked on course to reach a third final but his fellow Englishman recovered impressively. Earlier, Murphy had pulled back to 6-5, having trailed 6-2 towards the end of the morning session. The match had been tied at 2-2 before Selby - the 2011 Shanghai Masters winner and 2016 runner-up - took four frames in a row, including breaks of 53, 72 and 53, to move clear. Murphy will face either Ronnie O'Sullivan or Judd Trump, who meet in the other semi-final on Saturday. The final is on Sunday, with the winner pocketing £210,000 in prize money.

Child Football training camp from July 21

ISLAMABAD (APP): The final training camp of Pakistan Street Child Football team in preparations for the Norway Cup 2024 would be held here at the Pakistan Sports Complex from July 21. The training camp will continue from July 21 to 25 here in which the selection of the squad for Norway Cup 2024 will be finalized. The national team will fly to Norway on July 25 to participate in the event, said a press release. Earlier thousands of youngsters participated trials organized by the administration of Pakistan Street Child Football Team last month. Pakistan Street Child Team will be participating in the mega event for the fifth time in the Norway Cup to be held from July 27 to August 3 in Oslo. The national team finished second in Norway Cup 2015, third in 2016 and second in 2023. It may be mentioned that Pakistan Street Child Football team was the undefeated team of the event in Norway Cup last year. In the Street Child Football World Cup held in Doha (Qatar) in 2022, the national team was undefeated in the group matches, but the Pakistan team had to face a 4-3 defeat against Egypt in the decisive match. Pakistan team was also the runner-up in the Street Child Football World Cup 2018 in Russia, while was ranked third in 2014 in Brazil.

Cameron 2.0 'on a mission' to reclaim world titles

LONDON (Agencies): Former world champion Chantelle Cameron is "on a mission" to reclaim her undisputed light-welterweight crown but does not think rival Katie Taylor will accept a trilogy bout. Briton Cameron, 33, was out-pointed by Taylor in Dublin in November, having beaten the Irishwoman on points in their first meeting in May 2023. The Northampton fighter returns to the ring against Elhem Mekhaled in Birmingham's Resort World Arena on Saturday. "I'm on a mission for my belts and I want to get them as soon as I can," Cameron told BBC Sport. Cameron unified the division against Jessica McCaskill in 2022, becoming the first English boxer to hold all four recognised world titles. Her breakthrough into boxing's mainstream, however, came through two high-quality contests with Irish superstar Taylor. Having inflicted a first career defeat on Taylor, Cameron too lost for the first time in the rematch, before negotiations for a third bout stalled.



DAMBULLA: Pooja Vastrakar sent back Pakistan's openers inside the powerplay.

Nadal reaches Bastad semi-finals after four-hour marathon

BASTAD (AFP): Rafael Nadal fought into the semi-finals of the Bastad Open on Friday as he defeated Argentina's Mariano Navone 6-7 (2/7), 7-5, 7-5 in three hours and 59 minutes. The 22-time Grand Slam champion is through to the last four of a tournament for the first time since Wimbledon two years ago. "It was very close, long and tiring," said Nadal, whose near four-hour victory was the second longest three-set match of his career -- after the 2009 Madrid semi-final against Novak Djokovic, which lasted 4hr 3min. "For moments he was in control. For moments I was in control. At the end, no one was in control. That's the truth," added Nadal. "I was able to hold physically till the end. Let's see how I am tomorrow. Today I'm alive and I'm in the semi-finals. So that's super important." Nadal had to overcome a poor start against the fast-rising Navone, now ranked 36th in the world after beginning the year outside the top 100. He dropped serve three times in a row against an opponent who became the first man in the Open era to be seeded in his maiden

Grand Slam appearance at this year's French Open. The Spaniard trailed 4-1 and was down a double break but battled his way back into the set, saving two set points in the 10th game before eventually moving 6-5 ahead. Nadal himself had two set points as Navone served to stay in it, the fourth seed showing his mettle to force a tie-break in which he won the first five points to take charge. Back and forth Navone secured the first set when Nadal sprayed a forehand wide, but the Spaniard quickly regrouped and raced into a 3-0 lead in set two. His advantage was swiftly erased though by Navone who pocketed four games on the spin before Nadal stopped the rot. Navone held to put the pressure back on Nadal, the 2005 Bastad champion, but the 38-year-old didn't flinch, winning his service game and then breaking for a 6-5 edge. He sent the contest to a decider after sealing the set with an emphatic smash and celebrating with an animated fist pump. Navone nudged 2-0 ahead in the third set before Nadal hit back with authority, sweeping five succes-

sive games before a late stumble allowed his rival to haul himself level at 5-all. But Nadal broke again and finally crawled over the finish line when Navone dumped a forehand return into the net. Nadal will next face Croatian qualifier Duje Ajdukovic, the world number 130 who had won just two tour-level matches in his career prior to this week. The 23-year-old Thiago Monteiro in three sets in the quarter-finals. Nadal won the last of his 92 singles titles at the 2022 French Open, as he claimed a record-extending 14th Roland Garros crown. He is using the event in Bastad as a tune-up for the Paris Olympics, where the tennis will be played at Roland Garros. Nadal returned to action this week for first time since losing in the first round of the French Open in late May. Nadal is also still involved in the doubles in Sweden, where he is teaming up with Casper Ruud. They are due to play in the semi-finals on Saturday, after Nadal plays his singles match. "It's time to work on the recovery. Let's see how I am tomorrow," he said.

Suryakumar named as India's new T20 captain

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Suryakumar Yadav has been named India's T20 captain, the country's cricket board announced Thursday, after Rohit Sharma quit the shortest format following last month's World Cup triumph. The 33-year-old Suryakumar will lead a 15-member T20 squad to tour Sri Lanka for three internationals starting on July 27 in Pallekele. Shubman Gill recently led a second-string Indian side to a 4-1 T20 series victory in Zimbabwe and has been named vice-captain in T20 and ODI matches. Rohit will continue to lead the ODI team, which will follow the T20 side by taking on Sri Lanka in three matches on August 2, 4 and 7 at Colombo's R. Premadasa Stadium. Virat Kohli will also return for the 50-over matches, while pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah remains absent from the tour after a gruelling season. Rohit and Kohli had decided to take a break but returned for the ODI matches as India begin preparations for next year's

Champions Trophy to be hosted by Pakistan. All-rounder Hardik Pandya, who was Rohit's deputy in the T20 World Cup, had started as a front-runner for the job but lost out due to his frequent injury breakdowns. Pandya, 30, suffered an ankle injury during the ODI World Cup at home last year and was out of action until the start of this season's Indian Premier League where he returned to captain Mumbai Indians. Pandya remains part of the T20 squad but is out of the ODI series, which will see the return of Shreyas Iyer, who earlier lost out on his contract with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). Suryakumar, an attacking middle-order batsman who has been India's go-to player in the T20 format, remained new coach Gautam Gambhir's top choice, according to media reports. Rohit, Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja announced their retirements from the T20 format after India's thrilling win over South Africa in the final last

month in Barbados. The match was also Rahul Dravid's last as head coach and Gambhir was handed the job last week to build on the team's World Cup win. Suryakumar, who previously captained Mumbai in domestic cricket, last year led India to a 4-1 T20 series win over Australia and followed it up with a 1-1 result in South Africa. **T20I squad:** Suryakumar Yadav (capt), Shubman 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. **ODI squad:** Rohit Sharma (capt), Shubman 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.



SHANGHAI: Shaun Murphy of England plays a shot in the Semifinal match against Mark Selby of England on day 5 of World Snooker Shanghai Masters.

Usman clinches gold at World Strength Lifting C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Muhammad Usman has emerged victorious in the 11th World Strength Lifting and Incline Bench Press Championship held in Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan. Usman, the captain of Pakistan's Strength Lifting Team, secured a gold medal in the 85kg Senior Class, showcasing his exceptional strength and dedication, said a press release. He further impressed by clinching a silver medal in the Incline Bench Press category, edging out his Indian opponent. The competition saw participation from ten countries, including India, China, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Magnolia, Sri Lanka, and Uzbekistan. Usman's remarkable feat was made even more special by his gesture of solidarity as he dedicated his medals to the people of Palestine, raising their flag alongside Pakistan's in a powerful display of support.

The Pakistan Strength Lifting Federation, led by Chairman Manzoor Shaheen, International Strength Lifter and President Aqeel Javed Butt, International Strength Lifter, and Vice President Waqas Zafar (all International Strength Lifters themselves), are preparing a grand welcome for the returning team upon their arrival at Lahore on July 23. Huraira's unbeaten century puts Shaheens ahead on day one

Huraira's unbeaten century puts Shaheens ahead on day one

DARWIN (APP): Mohammad Huraira struck an unbeaten century as Pakistan Shaheens finished with 375-2 off 79 overs on day one of the first four-day match against Bangladesh A at the DXC Arena in Darwin on Friday. Huraira starred with an unbeaten 161 off 203 balls hitting 18 fours and one six while Kamran Ghulam (74 not out, 114b, 11x4s), Sahibzada Farhan (66, 83b, 10x4s) and Umar Amin (54, 77b, 8x4s) struck valuable half-centuries. Earlier in the day, Bangladesh A won the toss and opted to bowl first. Sahibzada and Huraira put on a 134-run opening stand to push the Bangladesh A bowling attack on the back foot. Ripon Mondol drew first blood for Bangladesh A when he bowled Pakistan Shaheens' skipper in the 27th over. Umar Amin, who walked into bat at three, put on a 118-run second-wicket partnership with Huraira to further strengthen Shaheens' position on day one. Huraira brought up his ninth first-class century off 129 balls in the 44th over. Umar's stay on the crease was cut short, soon after he reached his half-century, by Mondol who struck in 52nd over to give Bangladesh A their second scalp of the day. Huraira was then joined by Kamran Ghulam as the duo stitched an unbeaten 123-run partnership to add to Bangladesh A's woes. Kamran struck 11 boundaries in his unbeaten 74. For Bangladesh A, only Mondol managed to strike twice while all other bowlers toiled without managing a scalp.

India crush Pakistan in Women's Asia Cup 2024

DAMBULLA (Agencies): A combined bowling effort, followed by a dominant opening partnership powered India to a thumping seven-wicket victory over arch-rivals Pakistan in the blockbuster ACC Women's Asia Cup 2024 clash here on Friday. Chasing 109, India comfortably amassed the total for the loss of just three wickets and 35 balls to spare. Indian openers Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma banked on the momentum and dominated Pakistan bowlers from the word go. The duo added a blistering 85 runs for the first wicket until Syed Aroob Shah dismissed Mandhana in the 10th over. Mandhana fell agonizing short of her well-deserved half-century, scoring 45 off 31 deliveries with the help of nine fours. Shah struck again in the next over to get rid of another set batter Verma, who made 29-ball 40 which featured six fours and a six. India lost another wicket in the next over when Dayalan Hemalatha (14) was removed by Nashra Sandhu. Pakistan captain Nida Dar's decision to bat first after winning the coin toss did not prove beneficial for her side as they were bundled out on 108 in the final over. The Green Shirts had a shaky start to their innings as they lost opener Gull Feroza (5) in the second over with just nine runs on the board. Coming out to bat at No.3, Sidra Amin took the reigns of Pakistan's batting expedition with her gutsy knock. Sidra put together brief partnerships with Muneeba Ali (11), Aliya Riaz (6) and skipper Nida Dar (8) before finally perishing in the 13th over. She remained the top-scorer for Pakistan with a 35-ball 25 which featured three boundaries. Her dismissal was followed by Iram Javed bagging a golden duck, bringing Pakistan further down to 61/6 in 13 overs. Later, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (5*) and Jemimah Rodrigues (3*) eased India to a massive victory and made sure there were no more hiccups in the modest pursuit. Aroob bagged two wickets for Pakistan while Sandhu could pick up one. Later, Tuba Hassan and Fatima Sana scored valuable runs for the team with a fighting seventh-wicket partnership. The duo added 31 runs to the total until Deepti Sharma got rid of Tuba in the 18th over. She scored 22 off 19 deliveries, hitting three boundaries. Pakistan then lost two more wickets in the same over as Nashra Sandhu bagged a golden duck after Syeda Aroob Shah (2) got run out. Shreyanka Patil cleaned up Sadia Iqbal on the second delivery of the final over to wrap up India's dominant performance with the ball against arch-rivals Pakistan. Fatima Sana remained unbeaten with 16-ball 22 which featured one four and two sixes. Deepti Sharma led India's bowling charge with three wickets, followed by Renuka Singh, Pooja Vastrakar and Shreyanka Patil picked up two each.

Pakistan's Malika-e-Noor retires from int'l football

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan women's football team's seasoned striker Malika-e-Noor announced her shock retirement from the sport with immediate effect. Noor, who rose to the limelight with his 89th-minute winner for Pakistan against Maldives in the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship in 2010 shared that she has formally retired from international football but will continue to play domestic tournaments. "Probably the hardest decision that I have made in my life! I wasn't mentally ready—I thought I would give some more years to the team—but the scenarios have changed, and this feels like a must-do," Noor posted on Instagram. Malika-e-Noor, who played 25 international football matches for Pakistan, termed it as the biggest honour of her life. "Representing my country on the world stage has been one of the greatest honors of my life, and I am incredibly grateful for every opportunity I've had to wear the national team jersey," said Noor. Noor expressed her satisfaction over playing with "the best teammates" and



"exceptional coaches" before going on to thank her friends and family for their unwavering support throughout her professional career. "From my debut to my final match, the journey has been filled with unforgettable moments, hard-fought victories, and invaluable lessons. I have been privileged to play alongside some of the best teammates and under the guidance of exceptional coaches. Each match and every training session has shaped me not only as a player but also as a person," said Noor. "Thank you to my family and friends for your unwavering support and sacrifices, allowing me to pursue my dreams. To my teammates, thank you for your fellowship and for pushing me to be the best version of myself. And to the fans, your passion and encouragement have been the driving force behind every performance. "Though I am stepping away from international play, I look forward to continuing my career at the club level and contributing to the game in new ways. I will forever cherish the memories made and the relationships built through this incredible journey. "My thoughts and best wishes remain with the youth. I hope they find themselves in an environment where they are safe, heard, and treated with equality. Young girls are driving change within the system, and I trust that stakeholders and authorities will recognize this and support the youth in achieving their dreams."

Norris on top after beating Verstappen in

BUDAPEST (AFP): McLaren's Lando Norris outpaced world champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull to top the times in Friday's second free practice session, run in hot conditions, ahead of this weekend's Hungarian Grand Prix. The 24-year-old Briton, who trails the three-time champion by 84 points in the drivers' title race, clocked a best time of one minute and 17.788 seconds to beat his friend and rival by 0.243 seconds in a tightly-contested session. Carlos Sainz was third for Ferrari, one-tenth down, ahead of an improving Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull, George Russell of Mercedes and Haas's Kevin Magnussen, who is set to leave the team at the end of the year. Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton, hoping to claim a record-increasing ninth Hungarian victory, was seventh ahead of RB's Daniel Ricciardo, Alex Albon of Williams and two-time champion Fernando Alonso of Aston Martin. Eight different teams were represented in the top ten, signalling how close the field has become — only Red Bull and Mercedes providing both drivers — and how a tight race is in prospect for Sunday. The session began with Nico Hulkenberg leading the way in searing heat



amid temperatures of 32 celsius (air) and 60 (track), setting the first lap time on mediums before being usurped by Perez in 1:18.568, the Mexican at last finding some pace. On his first run, Verstappen complained that his brakes were "not working, they're not biting". He was fifth and then went second behind his Red Bull team-mate. After a promising first session, Ferrari's fortunes dipped when the luckless Leclerc lost control and ran wide at Turn Four, ran over the kerbs and hit the barriers. "I touched the wall," he reported, having damaged his car and the advertising hoardings. The session was red-flagged for 14 minutes before resuming. For Mercedes, it was also a troubled day following technology problems arising from partner CrowdStrike's global IT glitch which had resulted in them working with blank

screens on the pit-wall during opening practice. Russell and Hamilton were first out on the re-start with the leading contenders all taking softs for some qualifying simulation runs. Russell clocked 1:18.294 to go top ahead of Hamilton by 0.069 seconds before Norris took over in 1:17.788, four-tenths clear of Sainz who had set the pace for Ferrari in the opening session until Verstappen slotted into second. After this flurry of action, most returned to mediums for race preparation while Piastri returned to McLaren for repairs to the floor of his car, his second lengthy absence of the day. In this period, Perez showed he was back on form in race trim, making it important for him to recover some pure pace in qualifying on Saturday. "I think this was Sergio's best Friday performance since China," said Red Bull team chief Christian Horner.



In brief

IRSA releases 323,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 323,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 299,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1518.70 feet and was 120.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 157,500 cusecs and 190,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1196.45 feet, which was 148.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 24,100 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 227,600, 202,100, 140,000 and 74,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 54,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 37,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

'Zero tolerance' on dengue spread, says Add'l DC

RAWALPINDI (APP): Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters, Zunira Aftab said that recent rains have increased the chances of dengue, to which all departments should focus on dengue to prevent dengue. She said that the Punjab government was following zero tolerance policy in the fight against dengue. According to the details, the additional commissioner received a briefing on anti dengue measures being taken by the district health department. She said out of a total of 29 patients reported with dengue fever in Rawalpindi so far this year, 28 patients have recovered and discharged from hospitals while one patient was under treatment in the hospital. In a briefing by the Health Department, it was apprised that 838 teams were working in the city, of which 635 teams were engaged in indoor and 230 were deployed for outdoor surveillance work. It was further informed that 19,62,000 houses were checked for dengue larvae out of which 8949 houses were detected as having dengue larva. While 370 FIRs were registered against violating the dengue SOPs during outdoor surveillance, 644 spots were challaned while a fine of Rs.8,83,000.0 was imposed.

BISP beneficiaries to get skill training

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid Friday emphasized equipping the beneficiaries with latest vocational and technical skills to make them self sufficient. She was speaking during a meeting between President and CEO of Bank Alfalah, Atif Bajwa and Group Head of Digital Banking, Yahya Khan, held here. The meeting focused on enhancing transparency in payment disbursement and promoting dignity for women beneficiaries. During the discussions, Senator Rubina Khalid urged the bank representatives to treat BISP beneficiaries as valued clients and to implement measures to eliminate deductions from stipend amounts. The discussion also covered technical and skill training for BISP beneficiaries. Atif Bajwa agreed to initiate pilot skill training projects for BISP beneficiaries. These joint projects will be developed and executed in close consultation with technical teams from both BISP and Bank Alfalah to ensure effective implementation and positive outcomes.

Gilani for exploring new avenues of cooperation between Pakistan-Algeria

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani Friday underscored the need to further diversify Pakistan-Algeria relations and explore new avenues of cooperation to further add impetus to bilateral relations.

"Pakistan enjoys excellent relations with Algeria which are rooted in history, religion and similarity of views on various regional and international issues" he expressed these views during a meeting with Algerian Ambassador Brahim Romani.

He also acknowledged and appreciated Algeria's support to Pakistan in the United Nations and at other international fora, in particular, the support for Pakistan's various candidatures.

He called for broadening the political and economic ties. "There is a great need for closer trade and economic relations as the current level of trade is far below its true potential", the chairman stated. He highlighted the significance of frequent exchange of business delegations to boost trade and explore opportunities for joint ventures and investment. He said that Pakistan has one of the best quality rice in the world and Algeria may consider importing rice from Pakistan.

He underlined that there is huge potential for mutual collaboration in IT, pharmaceutical and other sectors. Collaboration between Pakistan and Algeria in the IT sector particularly freelancing can be beneficial for both countries as there are thousands of companies in Pakistan providing freelancing services, he maintained.

He highlighted the need for parliamentary linkages and institutional cooperation to learn from each other's experiences. He said that par-

liamentary diplomacy is one such tool which can help bring people of the two sides closer and promote strong people-to-people contacts. Acknowledging the diplomatic relations, the Senate Chairman observed that Pakistan had issued diplomatic passports to the Algerian leadership to facilitate their travel in 1958.

On the Kashmir issue, the chairman said that the unresolved Kashmir dispute remains on the agenda of the UN Security Council (UNSC) since 1948 and continues to threaten regional peace. He said that the durable peace in South Asia remains contingent upon the peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and as per the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Similarly, he said that Pakistan is also deeply concerned about the immense loss of human lives in the current escalation between Palestinians and Israel.

He said that Pakistan consistently, unequivocally and unreservedly supports the Palestinian cause. He said that Pakistan supports resolving the Palestinian dispute in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council and OIC Resolutions.

Regarding Afghanistan, the chairman said that Afghanistan is a brotherly country and a stable sovereign and independent in the best interest of Pakistan. The Senate Chairman also expressed his well wishes for the political and parliamentary leadership of Algeria. He extended invitation to his Algerian counterpart to visit Pakistan at a convenient time.

He said that people-to-people contacts carry huge importance in promot-

ing bilateral and multilateral cooperation. He said that the Senate of Pakistan is in the process of creating a friendship group for Algeria in the Senate to further diversify the relationship between the two sides and augment multi-sectoral cooperation.

He also invited the Ambassador to visit Multan and explore opportunities for developing linkages with local trade organizations as Multan is the hub for mango production, ceramics and many other important locally manufactured goods. The Ambassador thanked the chairman senate for his warm sentiments. He also called for further expanding mutual ties and said that Pakistan is an important country for Algeria. "Pakistan is the first nuclear country of the Muslim World and Algeria takes pride in that", the Ambassador said while highlighting the importance of bilateral relations between the two countries.

He informed that Algeria has been blessed with natural resources, particularly oil and gas reserves. The Ukraine war and evolving regional scenario have attracted many companies towards Algeria making it a new emerging market of oil, gas and LNG, he noted. He informed that Algeria has supported Pakistan at the UNSC level and Pakistan will reciprocate the same. Both countries can play an active role at the UNSC level to support each other on different issues, he added. He said the Algerian business and trade delegation would visit Pakistan soon to explore new investment opportunities. The current level of trade and economic relations, the Ambassador said, needs to be expanded more keeping in view the decades-long diplomatic and political relationship, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani in a meeting with Algerian ambassador to Pakistan, Mr. Brahim Romani at Parliament House.

Sanaullah announces humanitarian aid for Palestine

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs, Rana Sanaullah on Friday announced that over 1,000 tons of food and relief supplies will be sent to Palestine before July 31.

Addressing a press conference along with Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar and Tehreek-e-Labbaik (TLP) leaders, Sanaullah expressed solidarity with the Muslim community in Palestine.

Sanaullah also commended TLP for their sup-

port and spirit of solidarity with Palestinian Muslims, acknowledging TLP leader Hafiz Saad Rizvi demands for aid and condemnation of Israel's actions.

He reiterated the government's commitment for helping Palestinians, with TLP's support. The Prime Minister has already condemned Israel's actions at the Shanghai conference, and the government will continue to raise its voice for Palestine on each and every platform, he said.

Sanaullah also condemned Israel's attacks and war crimes on Palestine, terming it a terrorist coun-

try and called for United Nations' action against Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. He said that there was a need for global and Muslim unity to stop atrocities in Palestine.

Rana Sanaullah announced plans to send medical aid, doctors and educational support to Palestine, as well as facilitating the treatment of injured Palestinians in Pakistani hospitals.

The government will also boycott products from Israeli companies and those supporting them, with a committee formed to oversee this effort, he said.

Govt taking measures to privatize Discos: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Power Sardar Awaish Khan Leghari Friday said that present government was taking concrete measures to privatization of profit-making power distribution companies (Discos) which would reduce circular debt and reduce recurring losses to national exchequer.

Talking to a private news channel, he explained that the power sector in Pakistan is facing numerous challenges due to poor policies of past governments, adding, the power tariff for all consumers will go down after January. The Federal Minister further explained that the Management of Power Distribution Companies (Discos) will uphold the utmost diligence in keeping all financial records up-to-date and to meticulously compile detailed information pertaining to the company's assets.

Responding to a query, he said Pakistan cannot afford a loss of 500 to 600 billion rupees in the power sector and we have to improve the performance of power distribution companies to control losses. The government is also committed for a zero-tolerance policy against electricity theft thus underscores its unwavering dedication to ensuring a fair and transparent power distribution system, he added.

Replying to another question, he said that it is responsibility of all of us, irrespective of political affiliation to play our due role to control the power theft, adding, provincial governments are also extending all their cooperation in this respect. The minister said lower-middle class has been facing problems due to power theft and we had to rectify existing shortcomings in the power system by bringing long-term reforms.

Ayaz urges youth to play their role in nation-building

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Friday urged youth to play their role in nation-building rather than indulging in propaganda and political polarization.

"Acquainting Youth with parliamentary procedures and norms is pivotal for the growth of democracy in Pakistan", he expressed these views during his keynote address to the orientation session of the Young Citizen Internship Program 2024.

He also said that youth need to be acquainted with the committee system of Parliament as the standing committee plays an effective role in legislation.

The speaker also informed the participants,

"Pakistan Parliament is the first regional Parliament which transformed itself into the first-ever Green Parliament of the World through solarization"

Member National Assembly (MNA) Dr. Nikhat Shakeel Khan, one of the pioneers of the Youth Internship Program initiated by the National Assembly graced the orientation session with her virtual presence and highlighted the importance of connecting the youth with the Parliament, imparting basic principles of democracy to youth, equipping youth with parliamentary etiquettes, processes and most importantly, directing the youth towards nation-building.

Director Advocacy, C a m p a i g n ,

Communications and Media - Save the Children, Raza Hussain Qazi warmly greeted the Young Citizens present in the Speaker's Lounge and apprised them of the goals and objectives of Save the Children Organization along with the synopsis of what is about to follow in the coming four weeks of the Young Citizen Internship Program 2024.

Special Secretary (Special Initiatives), Syed Shamoon Hashmi delivered the opening remarks and conducted an orientation session to acquaint the Youth with the syllabus, hands-on activities, and workshops of the Program aimed at imparting knowledge related to democratic norms, principles, and processes.

NHA set up 24-hours rain emergency cell

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Member Engineering the National Highway Authority Naseem Khattak Friday said that National Highway Authority (NHA) has set up 24-hours emergency cell for monsoon rains and actively working with local administrations and rescue teams to clear roads obstructed by rain.

Talking to PTV news channel, he said tourists were specifically advised to refrain from traveling to such areas. He recalled NHA's crucial role in dealing with heavy monsoon rains in the past that reduced problems of people in low lying areas of the country.

He said the authority will take immediate practical steps for smooth flow of traffic on its 14000 network to the convenience of the

motorists.

He said the authority is closely monitoring the monsoon weather condition and will provide updates as the clearance operation will progress to relevant departments, adding, NHA already issued monsoon advisory and coordinating with all district administrations on daily basis.

Replying a query, he said we are ensuring safety measures ahead of the predicted monsoon rainfalls so that any untoward situation could be dealt with in time, adding, Karakoram Highway and other damaged bridges were also being repaired on priority basis.

He further stated that the relevant staff of the NHAs is on high alert during the monsoon rains to keep the national highways opera-

tional at all times, adding that NHA is fully committed to providing all possible cooperation to the federal and provincial governments during these rains.

To another question, he said public was urged to travel cautiously and avoid non-essential trips, especially in mountainous regions prone to landslides.

NHA is collecting data of damaged roads on daily basis, he said, adding, we are in contact with the coordinated efforts of relevant officials in districts and are also distributing awareness posters and brochures amongst the people on the roads containing information about dos and don'ts during floods, landslides and other monsoon or heavy rain-related incidents.

PTA calls for timely reporting of unlawful content

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) stressed that timely reporting of unlawful content directly to social media platforms is crucial for its prompt removal.

The PTA highlighted that social media platforms encourage users to lodge complaints directly, ensuring a faster and more efficient process to address and eliminate inappropriate content.

PTA Director Muhammad Farooq in his article "The Need to be Responsible Online User" said it is essential for the public to familiarize themselves with these guidelines, as they provide a framework of rules for uploading and sharing content.

Social Media companies strive to ensure a safe platform for users through self-regulation, which involves establish-

ing community guidelines and standards.

He further said that effective results cannot be achieved without active public participation. To facilitate the instant reporting of unlawful content to the PTA, a state-of-the-art and user-friendly Complaint Management System (CMS) has been developed. It is accessible online at <https://complaint.pta.gov.pk/RegisterComplaint.aspx>, with a mobile app available for download on both the Playstore and Appstore.

Users, he said, can lodge complaints by selecting relevant categories, such as Against the Glory of Islam, Hate Speech, Anti-State, Child Abuse or Indecent/Immoral content.

The PTA team thoroughly analyzes each complaint and takes up the matter with the concerned social media platform for its

prompt removal. For public guidance on lodging accurate complaints, a video titled "How to Report Unlawful Online Content" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZggEw2eSGdw>) has been uploaded on PTA's official YouTube channel (@ptaofficialpk).

The PTA has provided a list of URLs (https://www.pta.gov.pk/assets/media/smf_platforms_09032020.pdf) for major social media platforms where complaints can be lodged directly to the platforms.

Additionally, WhatsApp, known for its end-to-end encryption, encourages users to report unlawful content within the app by long-pressing the message and selecting the 'report' option.

In a culturally rich and

diverse nation like Pakistan, where individuals embrace various religious beliefs and sects, it is paramount to avoid uploading or sharing content that offends the sentiments of others. Knowledge of local laws is crucial to avoid legal consequences for uploading unlawful content, he said in the article.

The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) Section 37 deals with the removal of unlawful online content related to the glory of Islam, particularly in cases of blasphemy, and Section 11 addresses hate speech and criminalizes any online content that promotes or is likely to promote interfaith, sectarian, or racial hatred.

PTA encourages online users to use digital space responsibly and to report any unlawful content directly to the relevant

social media company or PTA for timely removal. This collective effort will help minimize the negative impact of such content on society at large.

With the advent of the internet, spreading an agenda, whether positive or negative, has become incredibly easy. Content uploaded or shared online can reach millions of users worldwide within minutes. This rapid dissemination poses significant challenges, particularly in controlling highly sensitive content such as blasphemy, violence, and harmful, and indecent material that can significantly impact society.

As an Islamic country, Pakistan is particularly affected by such unlawful content, facing unique challenges due to the spread of blasphemy and indecent material online.

To mitigate the uploading and sharing of unlawful content, every citizen needs to be informed about local laws and the reporting mechanisms available with Social Media companies and regulators.

In the online world, timely identification and removal of unlawful content is crucial in minimizing its impact.

Although social media companies use Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms for this purpose, these systems are still evolving and require time to become fully effective.

As a result, companies currently depend on a complaint-based mechanism, where the public reports unlawful content, and content moderators review the reported content to determine whether it should be removed or geofencing.

Traffic accident kills six

HERAT (Amu TV): A traffic accident on Thursday night in western Afghanistan claimed the lives of six people, according to local sources. The incident occurred on a key highway connecting Herat City with the border town of Islam Qala. The collision took place in the Raj area when a Corolla vehicle collided with a truck. Most of the victims were passengers in the Corolla, the sources said. Traffic accidents in Afghanistan have recently resulted in numerous fatalities.

Eight people injured

SAR-E-PUL (Amu TV): Eight people were injured on Friday afternoon when an individual attacked a Muharram mourning ceremony in the northern province of Sar-e-Pul, local sources reported. The attack occurred around 12:30 p.m. local time in the "Chobfroshan Alley" on the outskirts of Sar-e-Pul City. According to witnesses, a person on a motorcycle threw a hand grenade at the mourners. The mourners had gathered in a tent.

Amnesty int’l urges Germany to protect at-risk Afghan

KABUL (TOLONews): The German branch of Amnesty International (Amnesty Deutschland) has called on the country's government not to abandon at-risk Afghans in limbo. The organization added that 3,700 Afghans are waiting to be transferred to Germany in Islamabad, and another 15,000 are in contact with the German government in Afghanistan. The German branch of Amnesty International said: "Today, the federal government is negotiating the 2025 budget, which could potentially see cuts to the country's resettlement program, affecting Afghan citizens. 3,700 people are waiting in Islamabad, and another 15,000 are in contact with the federal govern-

ment in Afghanistan. They should not be put at risk." "The recent armed attacks by a number of migrants in Germany, which resulted in the death of a young German police officer, have compelled Germany to review and separate cases to identify which migrants are involved in such acts," a migrant rights activist told TOLONews. Earlier, the German government announced that it would deport some Afghan residents in the country. The issue of deporting Afghan migrants from Germany arose after an Afghan, during a demonstration organized by an anti-Islamic movement, injured several people, including a police officer who later died from severe injuries.

At the same time, some refugees residing in Germany have said that after the attack by Afghan migrants on German citizens, politicians in the country are demanding the deportation of these refugees from Germany. "Criminal incidents involving Afghans can lead to stricter measures regarding the acceptance of Afghan migrants and increase public and political concerns," Alireza Karimi, an Afghan refugee in Germany, told TOLONews. Meanwhile, following the highlighted issue of deporting Afghan refugees from Germany, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate asked Germany not to deport Afghan migrants.

US University Study

66% of Afghan Men support women's rights

KABUL (TOLONews): Findings from a study in the United States show that 66% of men in Afghanistan support the provision of women's rights in the country. According to the University of Massachusetts Amherst survey, 66% of men strongly agree that women's access to human rights, particularly the right to education, political participation, and other rights, is one of the main priorities for the future of the country, and 45% of these individuals support the "Taliban" government. Charli Carpenter, professor of political science and director of the Human Security Lab at UMass Amherst of the United States, said in the study: "Just caring about women's rights is the first step; but men must also act on the behalf of women and girls to truly bring about change. The question of men's support for women's human rights is not just a question for Afghanistan, but for all countries." Abdullah, a resident of Kabul and father of four children, said he has many aspirations for Sediqa, his only daughter, but her inability to continue her education beyond the sixth grade saddens him. Abdullah told TOLONews: "Unfortunately, I don't know what will become of their future now. There is no bright future ahead for them. I hope it changes." Sediqa, who has been deprived of continuing her education, wipes her tears with the edge of her hands and speaks of her unfulfilled dreams: "I wanted to become a teacher and serve the children of this land, but now that the Taliban have come, I have no dreams."

Meanwhile, some residents of the capital also emphasized the need to provide citizens' rights without any discrimination. "Providing equal rights means that the rights of girls and boys should be ensured without difference. I request the Islamic Emirate considers the rights of girls," said Qand Agha, a resident of Kabul. "We ask the Islamic Emirate to pay special attention to the education of our children and the children of this country. There should be no difference between boys and girls as there isn't in Islam," said Waheed Mohammad, a resident of Kabul. Earlier, the interim government has always stated that the rights of women and girls in the country are ensured based on Islamic Sharia.

MOU for solar power generation projects signed

KABUL (TOLONews): Three memoranda of understanding for three solar power generation projects worth \$25 million was signed on Thursday, July 18, with a private company in Kabul. The acting Minister of Energy and Water, Abdul Latif Mansour, said that since the Islamic Emirate took power in the country, this ministry has signed contracts for the production of 400 megawatts of electricity from domestic sources with local investors. This MOUs includes three projects with a production capacity of 8 megawatts of solar power, which are set to be implemented in the provinces of Uruzgan, Paktika, and Farah. It is said that with the completion of these three projects, more than 5,000 families will benefit from electricity. At the contract signing event, Abdul Latif Mansour said: "We have 300 megawatts of electricity produced from the existing networks that are active in Afghanistan.



However, since the arrival of the Islamic Emirate, we are ready for contracts close to 400 megawatts of electricity. Today, an agreement for three projects worth \$25 million is being signed." Meanwhile, the deputy of the contracting company for these three projects has committed to implementing the signed projects on time and has called on domestic and foreign investors to make efforts in electricity production in Afghanistan.

The deputy of the contracting company, Noorullah, said: "If there is electricity, people can access any kind of technology, and we started the work with the cooperation of elders, and we will complete it in a good manner, as the elders have trusted us." In this program, Abdul Latif Mansour also announced the start of a project to produce 100 megawatts of solar power aimed at reducing power outages in Kabul in the near future.



'Intellectual warfare' ongoing in Afghanistan: Khairkhwa

KABUL (TOLONews): Lutfullah Khairkhwa, deputy minister of Higher Education, said that intellectual warfare is still ongoing in the country and is present in society in various areas. Khairkhwa emphasized the need to establish Islamic cultural and media centers to promote Islamic culture in society. Lutfullah Khairkhwa: "Regardless of the various activities that exist, whether scientific, political Islamic, cultural, or Jahadi, they cannot be as effective as invitation and guidance." Meanwhile, the Deputy Minister of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Information and Culture said that the gap between universities and religious schools in the country must be eliminated, and the education and upbringing of youth in society should be based on Islamic values. Mohammad Younus Rashid, the deputy minister of youth of the Ministry of Information and Culture said: "Why does this thought and view exist in our society that a doctor should wear a suit or shave his beard?" Some religious scholars and university professors say that the youth are still victims of intellectual warfare in the country and they call on the Islamic Emirate to pay attention to their economic situation and create job opportunities for them. Matuallah Amin, a university professor, said: "One issue that is always discussed is poverty. The impoverishment of the younger generation provides a suitable ground for the enemy to prey on the young generation." Abdulhadi Mujahid, a religious scholar, says: "In every village, there is a circle. This circle must be monitored or a curriculum created for it, and concepts must flow into it so that over time, religious knowledge and the recognition of the enemy among people in mosques and villages increase." According to officials, the scientific and media organization "Kalimat" was established by some youth, religious scholars, and university professors in the country to strengthen Islamic culture and combat anti-Islamic values.

Former President Trump: China takes control of Bagram air base in Afghanistan



KABUL (Khaama Press): Donald Trump stated in his speech on the final day of the National Republican Convention that China had taken control of Bagram Air Base. Trump criticized Joe Biden for abandoning Bagram Air Base and leaving behind military equipment worth \$85 billion in Afghanistan. He stated that the importance of Bagram is not because of Afghanistan itself but because of its strategic location near China's border within an hour. The former US President said that under President Joe Biden's administration, America left behind \$85 billion worth of military equipment in Afghanistan, which the Taliban are now "selling."

Trump mentioned that America not only left behind these weapons but also abandoned Bagram Air Base, which he now claims China is using. Donald Trump described the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan during Joe Biden's presidency as "shameful" and stated that these forces were not withdrawn according to his plan. Mr. Trump said that according to his plan, America would not leave Afghanistan until the Taliban fulfilled their promises. Donald Trump said on

the fourth day of the National Republican Convention: "I spoke to the leader of the Taliban, and he addressed me as 'Sir.'" Mr. Trump added: "I warned the Taliban leader that if you kill an American, we will hit you harder than any group has ever been hit in history." Mr. Trump said: "This group did not have the guts to attack our soldiers for 18 months." He also recalled that during the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan on August 30, 2021, 13 American soldiers were killed, and 45 others were injured. Donald Trump added that his plan was for US forces to gradually and conditionally withdraw from Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's Central Bank cracks down on unlicensed currency exchangers

KABUL (TOLONews): Noor Ahmad Agha, acting head of the Central Bank, in a meeting with representatives of the Money Exchange Union, said that the Central Bank strives to further mechanize this sector to improve the activities of money exchanges and financial service providers. This meeting follows the ban on activities of unlicensed money exchangers and street vendors in the currency markets. According to the bank's spokesperson, the union representatives affirmed during the meeting that they would continue their operations based on the central bank's regulations. Hasiullah Noori, the spokesman of the Central



Bank of Afghanistan, said: "In this meeting, the acting governor of the Central Bank reiterated the bank's commitment to creating a reliable and secure environment in the financial and money exchange sector and will continue its efforts in this regard." The Union of Money Exchangers of Sarai Shahzada said that most unlicensed exchangers and street vendors who were active in the currency markets are now in

limbo and the central bank should address this issue. "Every licensed exchanger should guarantee three street vendors and provide them with a card to operate, or they should get a license from the central bank to register them," said Abdul Rahman Zirak, a spokesman for the union. Abdulbasir Turki, an economic affairs expert, said: "Street exchangers do not pose a serious threat to Afghanistan's financial stability and system, and on the other hand, the level of poverty is high and job opportunities are very limited." Previously, the central bank issued a decree banning the activities of unlicensed street exchangers.

IOM: Over half a million leave Afghanistan in three months

KABUL (Khaama Press): The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has reported a significant movement of people in and out of Afghanistan during the second quarter of this year. According to the IOM, over 532,000 individuals departed Afghanistan between April and June, while more than 858,000

entered the country during the same period. The reasons for leaving Afghanistan vary, with Afghan nationals often seeking economic opportunities, international protection, safety abroad, and visiting family or engaging in short-term travel for health reasons, as per the IOM. Meanwhile, in response to the crisis, the US State

Department has emphasized expediting the processing of Afghan applicants eligible for relocation to the United States. State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel highlighted efforts to accelerate the processing of Afghan allies and partners eligible for relocation, including those under Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs).

Patel expressed gratitude for the cooperation of host countries like Pakistan in facilitating these efforts and ensuring efficient processing. The IOM's report also noted that recent policies and statements from Iranian and Pakistani officials have influenced movements to and from Afghanistan. These developments underscore the complex geopolitical dynamics affecting migration flows in the region.

Taliban bans yellow Taxi, prohibits private vehicles as cabs

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Taliban Traffic Department has announced that taxi vehicles still bearing yellow colors without transitioning to turquoise and white are not permitted to operate. The department issued a warning on Thursday, July 18th, stating that even privately-owned vehicles conducting passenger transport will face "legal consequences." Taliban authorities, in the month of May 2023, declared their intention to change the city taxi colors from yellow to turquoise. The Taliban Traffic Department stated at the time that the color change would cost each taxi owner approximately 9,110 Afghani.



Some taxi drivers protested after the Taliban decided to change the vehicle colors. These drivers cited financial constraints as reasons for their objection, arguing that they cannot afford the cost of color change. They claimed that the Taliban's decision to change taxi colors was aimed at extracting money from drivers. Taliban officials, however, claim that they have decided to change taxi

colors to improve security, reduce crimes, and beautify the city. During the previous government in Afghanistan, city taxis operated with yellow and white colors, and some vehicles with private plates were engaged in passenger transport within cities. The Taliban's move to change taxi colors reflects their efforts to assert control over urban aesthetics and security measures, despite facing resistance from financially constrained taxi drivers. The Taliban Public Traffic Department has warned that if personal vehicles or taxis with yellow color are seen in public transportation from now on, their drivers will face legal action.

Afghanistan-Turkey trade relations see growth

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce said that the value of Afghanistan's exports to Turkey in the past six months has reached \$13 million. Almond, carpets, raisins, cotton, and talc are the main export items to Turkey. According to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the total value of trade between Kabul and Ankara in the first six months of 2024 is \$52 million. Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, told TOLONews: "Most of the

export items are almonds, cow hides, carpets, raisins, cumin, medicinal plants, cotton, and talc, and the main import items are medicinal drugs, shampoo, carpets, car batteries, plastic foam, chocolate, gold, and rugs." Meanwhile, Nooruddin Azizi, the acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, in a meeting with members of the Turkish Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics Association discussed increasing trade and economic relations and attracting investment from that country to Afghanistan. Hüseyin Akça, the pres-

ident of the Turkish Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics Association, said: "We have a historical friendship with Afghanistan. When I looked at the trade statistics between the two countries, the statistics are very low. Our association has come here to raise the trade level between the two countries to see business opportunities and meet with official and unofficial authorities and the mining community to elevate this level from the current situation to a desirable one." The Chamber of Industries and Mines said

that since the return of the Islamic Emirate in the country, attention has been given to expanding trade relations with regional and global countries, but more economic and transit corridors need to be created so that goods can be exported to Europe via Turkey. Sherbaz Kaminzada, the head of the Chamber of Industries and Mines, said: "Deliver our message to their government to at least reduce these taxes on us because we also use Turkish products so that our balance level decreases." Mohammad Younus Momand, first deputy of the ACCI, said:

"Afghanistan needs to have good and friendly economic relations with all countries of the world. While preserving Afghanistan's national economic interests, it is necessary to have direct connections with Turkey so that we can attract regional countries to the opportunities in Afghanistan." Statistics from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce also show that in the first three months of the current solar year, Afghanistan conducted nearly \$2.683 billion in trade with other countries, of which about \$428 million was exports.



Abu Dhabi Ports Pakistan to invest \$250m: PM told

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer of Abu Dhabi Ports Pakistan Khurram Aziz Khan on Friday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and informed that the company would invest \$250 million in Karachi Port during the next 10 years.

The company CEO, who was accompanied by a delegation, also told that a fully equipped multipurpose terminal, being constructed through a \$130 million investment, would be completed within two years. The delegation members briefed the prime minister about the company's investment in the improvement of the container terminal facility at Karachi Port featuring X control, automated gates, 200-meter expansion in berth, crane rail track and development of infrastructure.

It was told that after the development of new infrastructure, cargo ships of up to 120,000 tons capacity would be able to anchor at the port to boost economic activity. Prime Minister Shehbaz called for using modern technology and machinery to improve cargo and container handling at the port besides reducing the clearance time to a minimum.

He said that the objective of the agreement with Abu Dhabi Ports was to ensure transparency, enhance capacity and improve port operations. He also assured that the government would extend maximum support in executing the agreement to achieve maximum benefits. The prime minister directed the railway authorities to provide freight bogies and other necessary rolling stock to operationalise the project, and improve the transportation of cargo from the terminal.

PM offers Pakistan's support to Oman in dealing with terrorism: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the dastardly terrorist attack on Imam Bargah Ali bin Abu Talib in Wadi Kabir district of Muscat that took place on July 16 and offered Pakistan's support to Oman in elimination of terrorism in all of its forms. The prime minister, talking to Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman Fahad Sulaiman Khalaf Al Kharusi, who paid a courtesy call on him, appreciated Oman's swift response and cooperation with the Pakistan mission in the repatriation of the dead bodies and treatment of the injured. The attack on Imam Bargah had resulted in the death of six people, including four Pakistani nationals, and over thirty injured, nearly all of whom were Pakistanis.

The prime minister said Pakistan had itself been the victim of terrorism for the past several decades. During the meeting, Prime Minister Shehbaz conveyed his good wishes for Sultan Haitham bin Tariq while fondly recalling his telephone conversations with the Sultan on Eid ul Adha as well as Eid ul Fitr earlier in the year.

The prime minister reiterated his invitation to the Sultan of Oman to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at his earliest convenience. On the bilateral front, the prime minister stressed that Pakistan and Oman

enjoyed close, brotherly ties with a shared history, faith, and culture. He expressed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two countries, particularly in trade, investment, energy, and defense.

In this regard, Prime Minister Shehbaz thanked the ambassador for encouraging a trade and investment delegation to undertake a visit to Pakistan next week, while assuring him that the relevant Pakistani authorities would extend full cooperation to the delegation while seeking mutually beneficial outcomes. The ambassador thanked the prime minister for receiving him and conveyed the greetings of the Sultan of Oman. He reaffirmed his country's desire to further enhance its trade and investment relations with Pakistan.

Huawei's Training Program set to elevate Pakistan's IT exports: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that Pakistan's Information Technology exports will rise with Huawei's annual professional training to 300,000 Pakistani students.

Talking to a four-member delegation led by Ethan Sun, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Huawei Pakistan, the prime minister stressed that collaboration with Huawei was essential for providing advanced IT training in various fields, especially for young people. The prime minister emphasized that the government values its sustainable partnership with Huawei in Pakistan's digital economy. The government will prioritize including both women and the youth of Balochistan in this training program.

The prime minister stated that promoting the digital economy requires building a strong foundation of talented professionals within the country. The prime minister stated that the recent visit to Huawei's headquarters in China was highly beneficial. The prime minister emphasized that digitizing government institutions was crucial for implementing a modern, automated, and efficient governance system. The delegation briefed the prime minister regarding the progress of ongoing projects under the cooperation agreement between Pakistan and Huawei for the Digital Pakistan Program.

The prime minister was informed that a new Massive Open Online Courses system for IT training has been developed and will be launched with the support of provincial governments. The delegation suggested backing the development of a national data center in line with Pakistan's national cloud strategy. This initiative will improve cloud services and lead to considerable cost reductions. Huawei was interested in collaborating with the Pakistani government to transform Islamabad into a smart city. As part of the Islamabad Smart City project, various services such as traffic management, health care, education, and parking will be accessible through a digital platform. Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ihsaan Afzal, and other senior officials were also present in the meeting.

Global IT outage hits Microsoft users: PTA

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) said on Friday that the faulty update from a cybersecurity provider that caused a significant global IT outage today also impacted Microsoft consumers in Pakistan.

The software update by global cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike wreaked havoc on computer systems worldwide, grounding flights, forcing some broadcasters off air and hitting services from banking to healthcare throughout the globe. "This outage also affected consumers of Microsoft in Pakistan. The fault forced affected PCs and servers into a recovery boot loop, preventing proper startup. Some internet services are also affected because of this," read a statement released by the PTA.

The telecom authority said that the fault was identified, isolated and fixed as per CrowdStrike's website. It suggested the Microsoft clients to update the software from their support portal to restore services. The cyber outage was caused by an update to a product offered by CrowdStrike, which apparently triggered the issue, affecting customers using Microsoft's Windows Operating System.

Microsoft later said that the issue had been fixed. Banks and financial services companies from Australia to India and Germany warned customers of disruptions and traders across markets spoke of problems with executing transaction.

Imran, wife's acquittal challenged

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The acquittal of the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the Iddat case has been challenged in the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

Khawar Farid Maneka, the ex-husband of Bushra Bibi filed an appeal against the acquittal in the IHC on Friday. In his appeal, Khawar Farid Maneka has requested the court annul the acquittal decision, asserting that it cannot be upheld. Khawar Farid Maneka named the federal government, the founder of PTI Imran Khan, and Bushra Bibi as respondents in his appeal.

On July 13, the District and Sessions Court in Islamabad overturned the conviction of PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the Iddat case. Pronouncing his reserved decision, Additional Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka acquitted the former prime minister and the former first lady in the Iddat case, setting aside their seven-year each sentences.

The court, in its verdict, remarked that Imran Khan and his wife should be immediately released if they are not wanted in any other case. "Both petitions seeking the formation of a medical board and consultations with religious scholars are hereby rejected," the verdict stated.

According to the 28-page written verdict, Khawar Maneka, as his lawyer said, was deprived of his right to conciliation, but during cross-examination, Maneka himself admitted that he received the Nikah news the very next day but did not think of filing a complaint six years ago. The judge declared that Khawar Maneka had failed to prove his allegation that Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi solemnised their Nikah during the Iddat period.

CTD arrests key figure

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Counter Terrorism Department on Friday arrested a key figure of proscribed terrorist outfit Al-Qaeda, Dr Aminul Haq Muhammad, one of the closest aides of late Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden.

According to the Security Council website, Amin ul Haq Muhammad, hailing from Afghanistan was the security coordinator for Al-Qaeda leader Usama bin Laden.



BANNU: A large numbers of people holding white flags during Aman March.

Bangladesh in communications blackout as protests turn deadly

DHAKA (AFP): Bangladesh went into a nationwide communications blackout on Friday following clashes between police and students that have killed dozens of people in the past few days.

The government announced on Thursday night it was shutting down mobile internet for security reasons as student protestors demanding the removal of government employment quotas were on the streets after authorities sealed their campuses and dorms and suspended all educational institutions.

On Friday morning, television news channels were off air, and most online news websites could not be opened. Morning headlines and top stories in local dailies estimated that between 24 and 37 people had been killed and hundreds of others injured since the clashes broke out on Sunday between the students, government supporters and security forces.

The actual death toll is feared to be higher, as already on Thursday, students reported 39 deaths. But on Friday, neither student representatives nor local hospital authorities could be reached for comment due to the blackout. Riot police and at least 2,400 troops from the paramilitary Border Guard Bangladesh were deployed in the capital, where Dhaka Metropolitan Police banned all gatherings. The forces on the ground were assisted by monitoring helicopters of the Rapid Action Battalion — a counterterrorism unit of the Bangladesh Police.

University students have been demonstrating on campuses since the beginning of July against a rule that reserves a bulk of government jobs for the descendants of those who fought in the country's 1971 liberation war. The quota system was abolished by the government after student protests in 2018, but the High Court reinstated it in June, triggering protests.

Under the quota system, 56 percent of public service jobs are reserved for specific groups, including women, marginalized communities and children and grandchildren of

freedom fighters — for whom the government earmarks 30 percent of the posts. More than a fourth of Bangladesh's 170 million population were people aged between 15 and 29. The unemployment rate is the highest in this group, contributing 83 percent of the total unemployed people in the country.

The quotas for well-paid government jobs hit them directly. Dr. Rasheda Rawnak Khan, associate professor at Dhaka University, said the issue could have been solved long before the outbreak of the ongoing protests. "It should have been solved in a prompt manner as the matter is related to the youths," she told Arab News.

"Probably the state here failed to read the pulses of the youth," Bangladesh woke Friday to survey destruction left by the deadliest day of ongoing student protests so far, which saw government buildings torched by demonstrators and a nationwide internet blackout put into effect. This week's unrest has killed at least 39 people including 32 on Thursday, with the toll expected to rise further after reports of clashes in nearly half of the country's 64 districts.

A police statement issued after a near-total shutdown of the nation's internet said protesters had torched, vandalised and carried out "destructive activities" on numerous police and government offices. Among them was the Dhaka headquarters of state broadcaster Bangladesh Television, which remains offline after hundreds of incensed students stormed the premises and set fire to a building.

"About 100 policemen were injured in the clashes yesterday," Faruk Hossain, a spokesman for the capital's police force, told AFP. "Around 50 police booths were burnt". The police statement said that if the destruction continued, they would "be forced to make maximum use of law".

Police fire was the cause of at least two-thirds of deaths reported so far, based on descriptions given to AFP by hospital staff. At least 26 districts

around the country reported clashes on Thursday, broadcaster Independent Television reported. The network said more than 700 had been wounded through the day including 104 police officers and 30 journalists.

Near-daily marches this month have called for 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 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, 76, who has ruled the country since 2009 and won her fourth consecutive election in January after a vote without genuine opposition.

Hasina's government is accused by rights groups of misusing state institutions to entrench its hold on power and stamp out dissent, including by the extrajudicial killing of opposition activists. Her administration this week ordered schools and universities to close indefinitely as police step up efforts to bring the deteriorating law and order situation under control.

Mubashar Hasan, a Bangladesh expert at the University of Oslo in Norway, told AFP Thursday that 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. "The students are in fact calling her a dictator." Students have vowed to continue their campaign despite Hasina giving a national address on the now-offline state broadcaster seeking to calm the situation.

"Our first demand is that the prime minister must apologise to us," protester Bidisha Rimjhim, 18, told AFP on Thursday. "Secondly, justice must be ensured for our killed brothers," she added. London-based watchdog Netblocks said Friday that a "nation-scale" internet shutdown remained in effect. "The disruption prevents families from contacting each other and stifles efforts to document human rights violations," it wrote in a social media post on X.

Pak Navy ship Yarmook deployed on security petrol

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy has deployed its warship PNS YARMOOK with embarked helicopter in the Indian Ocean for safety and security of merchant ships bound to and from Pakistani Ports. During the deployment, PN Ship will undertake independent operations as well as combined operations along with other friendly and partner nations to achieve common objectives of safe and secure maritime commons. The ship will also call on regional ports for Naval Diplomatic tasks in line with Pakistan's foreign policy objectives.

Pakistan Navy is committed to ensure freedom of



navigation on high seas and safety of international sea lanes of communication besides safeguarding national maritime interests and trade through sea. Pakistan Navy, cognizant of its national obligations to maintain rule based order at sea regularly deploys its warships on Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP) and also contributes to collaborative maritime security efforts. RMSPs are conducted as PN initiative to contribute towards maritime security and to support international efforts against menace of maritime terrorism, piracy and narco-arms smuggling.

Israel's settlement policy illegal, rules top UN court

THE HAGUE (AP): The top United Nations court said Israel's settlement policy in the West Bank and east Jerusalem violates international law, as it delivered a non-binding advisory opinion on the legality of Israel's 57-year occupation of lands sought for a Palestinian state, a ruling that could have more effect on international opinion than it will on Israeli policies.

International Court of Justice President Nawaf Salam was expected to take about an hour to read out the full opinion of the panel, which is made up of 15 judges from around the world. In part of the opinion, he said the panel had found that "the transfer by Israel of settlers to the West Bank and Jerusalem as well

as Israel's maintenance of their presence, is contrary to article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention." The court also noted with "grave concern" that Israel's settlement policy has been expanding.

The court also found that Israel's use of natural resources was "inconsistent" with its obligations under international law as an occupying power. Friday's hearing comes against the backdrop of Israel's devastating 10-month military assault on Gaza, which was triggered by the Hamas-led attacks in southern Israel. In a separate case, the International Court of Justice is considering a South African claim that Israel's campaign in Gaza amounts to genocide, a

claim that Israel vehemently denies.

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek all three areas for an independent state. Israel considers the West Bank to be disputed territory, whose future should be decided in negotiations, while it has moved population there in settlements to solidify its hold. It has annexed east Jerusalem in a move that is not internationally recognized, while it withdrew from Gaza in 2005 but maintained a blockade of the territory after Hamas took power in 2007. The international community generally considers all three areas to be occupied territory.

Pak's current account deficit falls to 13-year low

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan's current account posted a deficit of \$681 million in FY2023-2024, a significant decrease of 79 percent from the \$3.275 billion deficit in the same period of the previous fiscal year, according to a report released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Friday.

The current account deficit (CAD) amounts to 0.2 percent of GDP, the lowest in the last 13 years, said the SBP report. "This significant decline was driven by a 6% reduction in the trade deficit and an 11% increase in remittances," it added.

In FY24, the country's total export of goods and services amounted to \$38.9 billion, while imports totaled \$63.3 billion during the period, according to SBP data. Worker remittances clocked in at \$30.25 billion, an increase of 11% compared to the same period last year.

On monthly basis, Pakistan's current account posted a provisional deficit of \$329 million in June 2024 compared to a revised deficit of \$248 million in May 2024, the SBP data revealed. Low economic growth along with high inflation have helped curtail Pakistan's current account deficit, with an increase in exports also contributing.

During June 2024, Pakistan's exports of goods and services stood at \$3.07 billion, while imports totaled \$5.69 billion. Meanwhile, remittances in June were \$3.16 billion. The current account is a key figure for cash-strapped Pakistan, which relies heavily on imports to run its economy.

Maryam urges SC judges to 'let Pakistan progress'

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Friday urged the Supreme Court (SC) judges to let Pakistan progress following the apex court's verdict on Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) appeals, declaring Imran Khan-founded PTI eligible for seats reserved for women and minorities.

"The one who is being brought back is the nation's criminal," the Punjab chief minister said while apparently referring to PTI founder Imran Khan — who is currently incarcerated in May 9 riots cases. Maryam Nawaz alleged that when the country starts to stabilize, some individuals become uncomfortable and make decisions that hinder progress.

She questioned the Supreme Court's judgement, asking if it was not a cause of instability, then what was? She also criticised the PTI-led government, saying that despite being in power for four years, they had caused unprecedented destruction.

The Punjab CM further said that former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had said 'good bye' to International Monetary Fund (IMF), but the person who is serving a sentence in Adiala Jail brought back the global lend.

Maryam also accused the SC judges of rewriting the constitution to bring one person back to the mainstream politics. "The Constitution clearly states that floor crossing is not allowed, but the Supreme Court's decision says otherwise," she added. "It was said that verdicts were announced according to their conscience," she noted, adding that decisions should be as per the constitution, not according to a person's conscience. She claimed that the top court gave the PTI relief that the party did not even seek.

"The incumbent government will complete its five years' tenure. If anyone tries to create political instability, they will be dealt with iron hands," Maryam Nawaz warned. A 13-member bench of the top court, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, ruled that the PTI is eligible for the allocation of reserved seats, dealing a major setback to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's ruling coalition.

JCP okays Tariq's appointment as ad hoc Apex court judge

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) on Friday approved the appointment of retired Justice Tariq Masood Khosa as an ad hoc judge for one year in the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa presided over the meeting which reviewed the pros and cons of appointing ad hoc judges to the Supreme Court. Sources said all members of the commission, except Justice Muneeb Akhtar, agreed on the name of retired Justice Tariq Masood.

Earlier, retired justices Tariq Masood, Mazhar Alam Miankhel, Maqbool Baqir, and Mushir Alam were named for appointment in the apex court as ad hoc judges. However, retired Justices Mushir Alam, Maqbool Baqir, and Mazhar Alam Miankhel declined the offer.

On the other hand, Tariq Masood agreed to be part of the Supreme Court as an ad hoc judge. According to sources, the appointment of an ad hoc judge aims to

reduce the burden of pending cases in the apex court. A retired judge can be appointed as an ad hoc judge for three years.

Meanwhile, Justice (retired) Mazhar Alam Miankhel on Friday declined an offer to become an ad hoc judge of the Supreme Court, sources told Geo News, becoming the third judge to turn down the proposal.

His refusal comes after Mushir Alam and Maqbool Baqir declined to be appointed for three years as ad hoc judges, which the Supreme Court said were needed to clear a backlog of cases. Despite his refusal, the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) huddle led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa approved Miankhel and Justice (ret) Sardar Tariq Masood appointments to the top court for a period of one year.

"Justice (ret) Miankhel has decided not to accept the offer due to personal reasons," the sources familiar with the matter informed Geo News ahead of the JCP meet-

ing. It is also pertinent to mention that the former ruling party — PTI — had hours earlier asked the JCP to turn down a proposal to hire ad hoc judges as it may create concerns about the judiciary's independence.

The PTI has been raising concerns over the appointment of ad hoc judges, claiming that the move is aimed at targeting the party, while the government has supported the decision, saying it falls under the ambit of law. While Alam noted that he was busy with philanthropic work post-retirement, Baqir opted out due to "personal reasons" and said that the criticism of the appointment of ad hoc judges was baseless.

In his letter to the JCP members, PTI's Omar Ayub said that he has "great concern" at the recent proposal to appoint ad hoc judges. Ayub noted that he was writing the letter as the matter of the appointment was not being presented before the parliament's committee, therefore, PTI lawmakers did not have a platform to voice their concerns.