

**PM to visit Tehran: FO**  
**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will visit Tehran on Tuesday to attend the inauguration ceremony of President-elect of Iran Masoud Pezeshkian. At her weekly news briefing on Thursday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said the visit underscores the commitment by the two countries to strengthen leadership engagement and bilateral relations.

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**Omani delegation arrived**  
**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation, representing the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment Promotion of Oman visited Pakistan. The delegation was headed by Undersecretary of Investment Promotion, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Ibtisam Al Farooji, who was accompanied by members representing various public and private sectors.

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# PM assures relief measures in KP

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Members of the National and Provincial Assemblies from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Thursday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the PM House.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs Eng. Ameer Muqam, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi, and other high-ranking officials. In the meeting, the prime minister assured the lawmakers that the development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly the merged districts, was the top priority of the government.

He said the PMN-N government had always prioritized worked for the development of the merged districts. Assuring the provision of standard health and education facilities in the merged districts, the prime minister said the government would establish Danish Schools in the area to provide international standard quality education to the local students.

The prime minister also emphasized the need to stop electricity theft, promote solar energy, and provide relief to the poor and middle class. He said the government was converting agricultural tubewells to the solar energy across the country that would help in development of the agriculture sector, increase the cultivation land and save billions of dollars in term of imported fuel.

PM Shehbaz Sharif said recently the government had announced big relief for poor and middle income people in electricity bills. On the occasion, he also announced the formation of a committee, chaired by the Deputy PM, to find sustainable solutions to the problems faced by the elected representatives of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said the incumbent government had to take tough decisions to revive the economy and had saved the coun-

try from the default at the cost of their politics. The lawmakers lauded Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for his leadership in improving Pakistan's economy.

**Shehbaz orders strategy for youth to get equitable job access:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif directed the relevant authorities to prepare a comprehensive strategy with respect to provision of employment opportunities to the youth of the country on equal basis.

Calling the youth as the assets of Pakistan, the prime minister said the country's development was linked with their welfare and progress. Chairing a meeting regarding Prime Minister's Youth Programme at the PM House, he said, with their immense talent, the youth could change the fate of the country if they were provided with the required resources.

The prime minister was of the view that provision of employment opportunities to the youth was the government's top priority. He said all the training programmes at National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NVTTC) should be focused on creating job opportunities for the students.

He directed to conduct a detailed survey of job market and then accordingly start the skill training programmes. During the meeting, it was informed that under PM Laptop Scheme, some 600,000 laptops had so far been delivered to the students.

Under this scheme, the government would provide additional 100,000 laptops during current year. The meeting was informed that 64% students who get training under the Youth Skills Development Programme managed to get respectable jobs during previous three years.

It was told that the government funded 100 startups under its PM National Innovation Award who were being placed in designated incubation centers across the country. Similarly, the prime minister was informed that

10 international standard sports academies and a biomechanical laboratory would start functioning this year under PM Youth Sports League.

Likewise, under the Prime Minister Green Youth Program, 268 universities across the country would be targeted for training youth on climate change prevention and eco-innovation. "Preparation of National Youth Employment Policy 2024 is in final stages," the meeting was told. The focus of the policy would be to create decent employment opportunities for the youth and increase the proportion of women in the workforce.

Similarly, it was told that PM Digital Hub was also being prepared which would be a one-window operation dashboard. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, Minister of State for Information Technology & Telecom Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Chairman PM Youth Programme Rana Mashhood, Coordinator to PM Rana Ihsan Afzal and other relevant high officials.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed his commitment that Pakistan would continue to lend its full support to Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in enhancing intra-regional trade among ECO countries as well as on the ECO reforms agenda.

He was talking to Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Amb. Khusrav Noziri who called on him at the PM House. He highlighted the significance of "ECO Vision 2025", signed during the 2017 ECO Summit in Islamabad under then Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, as an important document for the ECO. The outgoing Secretary General apprised the Prime Minister about ECO's initiatives and activities as well as his reform agenda to revitalize ECO during his tenure.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of members of KP Assembly called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## Terrorist killed, arms, ammunition seized in IBO

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces, conducted an Intelligence Based Operation in Hoshab District of Balochistan.

During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and the terrorists. Resultantly, terrorist Ali Jan was sent to hell, while two terrorists got injured.

Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from killed terrorist, who remained actively involved in multiple terrorist activities in the area including kidnapping and target killing of innocent civilians.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area. Security Forces of Pakistan, in step with the Nation, remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace and stability of Balochistan.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif commended the armed forces for their successful operation against terrorists in District Hoshab, Balochistan. The prime minister stated that the soldiers of the Pakistan Army successfully carried out the operation and sent the terrorists to hell, according to a statement issued by Prime Minister's Office.

The prime minister remarked that the officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army were tirelessly working day and night to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from the country. Shehbaz Sharif stated that the entire nation, including himself, takes pride in Pakistan's armed forces and stands firmly with the Pakistan Army in the fight against terrorism to cleanse the country.

## Omar Ayub urges nation to prepare for new elections

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Opposition Leader in National Assembly Omar Ayub says the incumbent government has failed and the nation should prepare for the new elections.

Talking to media on Thursday, the PTI leader emphasised that all CCTV footage from the May 9 incidents and Zaman Park should be disclosed, and deleting such footage constitutes a crime. Ayub said he met Imran Khan in a pleasant atmosphere at Adiala Jail. "The PTI is the biggest political party in the country, and the nation should prepare for new elections for growth and development," he highlighted.

He stated that the only solution to the country's issues is a new election. From the beginning, he claimed that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) misinterpreted the Constitution and called for the resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner and the four provincial commissioners, suggesting Article 6 be imposed on the CEC. Regarding Khawaja Asif, Ayub remarked that a servant like Asif has no status and accused the Shahbaz Sharif government of attempting to create a confrontation between the Army and PTI, a goal he believes will not be achieved. He concluded by stating that the Army grows stronger when it has the support of the people.

## ECP notifies 39 MNAs as PTI members

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) issued a notification recognizing 39 members of the National Assembly (MNAs) as members of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on reserved seats.

The Commission started implementing the decision of the Supreme Court regarding the seats. The ECP also released the notification on the website of these MNAs who submitted the PTI affiliation certificates in the nomination papers.

According to the commission, notification of 39 members of PTI has been issued under the decision of the Supreme Court announced on 12 July. Earlier, in the ECP meeting, it was decided to upload the notification of 39 PTI members on the website. It is to be noted that before the Supreme Court decision, a good number of the PTI members were declared as independents.

Despite the split, the majority of the judges declared the PTI a parliamentary party. The judgement explained that 39 out of the 80, shown by the ECP as PTI candidates, belonged to the PTI. 41 independents would have to file statements before the commission within 15 days, the order declared. In the notification, Shandana Gulzar, Sher Ali Arbab, Asif Khan, Syed Shah Ahad Ali Shah, Shahid Khan, Naseem Ali Shah, Sher Afzal Marwat, Osama Ahmed, Shafqat Abbas, Ali Afzal Sahi, Rai Hyder Ali Khan and Nisar Ahmed were declared PTI candidates.

The Supreme Court gave

## Election Commission of Pakistan seeks Apex court

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: After notifying 39 out of 80 Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf members, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday approached the Supreme Court seeking legal and constitutional guidance on the matter of the remaining PTI lawmakers in the national and provincial assemblies.

The electoral body submitted a plea to the top court's registrar via its secretary Omar Hamid Khan to seek an elaborated version of its July 12 order regarding the PTI-backed independent candidates in which the SC declared the former ruling party eligible for reserved seats. Following the apex court's ruling, PTI lawmakers in the national and provincial assemblies had submitted their affidavits of allegiance to the Imran-founded party to the ECP. However, the ECP raised some queries before the top court despite receiving the relevant party association particulars from the PTI-backed independent legislators. In its civil miscellaneous application related to the SC order, the electoral body stated that the PTI lacked an organisational structure as per the ECP's record, which "is statutory obligation of every enlisted political party to conduct intra-party elections in terms of Section 208 of the Election Act 2017".

Also, Mehboob Shah, Junaid Akbar, Ali Khan Jadoon, Asad Qaiser, Shahram Khan, Mujahid Ali, Anwar Taj, Fazal Mehmood Khan, Arbab Ameer Ayub have been declared as successful candidates of PTI. Moreover, according to the Election Commission notification, Rana Atif, Changaiz Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Ali Sarfaraz, Khurram Shehzad Virk, Latif Khosa, Rai Hassan Nawaz Khan, Aamir Dogar, Zain Qureshi, Rana Muhammad Faraz Noon, Mumtaz Mustafa, Shabbir Ali Qureshi, Anbar Majeed, Awais Haider and Zartaj Gul have also been declared successful candidates of the PTI.

Regarding the independent candidates' issue, the ECP stated in a session last week that 39 candidates of the embattled party had shown their affiliation with the PTI in their nomination papers. However, 41 candidates who had been declared independents hadn't mentioned PTI in their nomination papers neither they disclosed their affiliation with the party nor submitted the ticket of any party, it added.

## UAE troops deployed in Gaza to enhance security

**F.P. Report**

WASHINGTON DC: Yes, the UAE troops were already deployed in Gaza as part of their mission to enhance security and stability in the region. Their arrival marked the beginning of a multifaceted effort aimed at protecting civilians, ensuring the safe delivery of humanitarian aid, and rebuilding critical infrastructure.

The troops had landed amidst a mix of skepticism and cautious optimism from the local population. Initially, the presence of foreign soldiers was met with wariness, but as they began their operations, patrolling streets and securing key areas like schools, hospitals, and marketplaces, perceptions started to shift.

Working closely with local authorities and international organizations, the UAE troops focused on maintaining neutrality while providing much-needed security. Their efforts extended beyond military operations, as they launched initiatives to rebuild essential services and infrastructure. Schools, hospitals, and homes were reconstructed with the help of local partners, ensuring that the projects were sustainable and beneficial to the community.

Educational programs aimed at the youth were a significant part of the UAE's mission. These programs focused on peace-building and conflict resolution, nurturing a generation that could envision a future beyond the perpetual state of conflict. The UAE's commitment to a comprehensive approach, combining security with humanitarian aid and development, aimed to create a lasting impact on Gaza's future.

Despite the numerous challenges, including the complex political landscape and the presence of various militant groups, the UAE troops remained steadfast in their mission. Their presence in Gaza symbolized a broader aspiration for peace and stability in the Middle East, with the hope that their efforts would encourage other nations to contribute to the cause, paving the way for a more stable and prosperous region.

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## Biden meets Netanyahu

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held White House talks on Thursday on an elusive ceasefire to the 9-month-old Gaza war, with Vice President Kamala Harris due to meet the Israeli leader later in the day.

It was the first face-to-face talks for the two men since Biden traveled to Israel days after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, hugged Netanyahu and pledged American support. The visit coincides with a shift in American politics. On Sunday, Biden stepped aside from the US presidential race under pressure from fellow Democrats and endorsed

Harris for the party's 2024 presidential nomination.

"We've got a lot to talk about," Biden said when he welcomed Netanyahu to the Oval Office. "I want to thank you for 50 years of public service and 50 years of support for the state of Israel," Netanyahu told Biden, citing the president's half-century of public service.

In the late afternoon, Harris will meet the Israeli leader in her ceremonial office at the White House. The meeting will be closely watched for signs of how Harris, who was the first top US official to call for a ceasefire, could shift US policy toward Israel if she becomes president. Harris was expected to closely track the administration line in the meeting, a US official said, focusing on the plight of Palestinians while also supporting Israel's right to self-defense.

Biden and Netanyahu later will meet together with the families of American hostages held by Hamas. The two leaders have had strained relations for months over Israel's attacks on Gaza, which have killed more than 39,000 people, according to health officials in the Hamas-run Palestinian enclave, and sparked a humanitarian crisis. The US is a major arms supplier to Israel and has protected the country from critical United Nations votes.

## Firewall trial leads to internet slowdown

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The trial run of a firewall has resulted in the slowing down of social media, officials privy to the development have confirmed, sparking fear about the future of internet-based businesses in Pakistan.

However, they added, internet traffic will return to its normal pace once the trial is over. The government allocated more than Rs30 billion in the development budget for the acquisition and installation of this filtering system.

The allocation was made to the Ministry of Information Technology; however, the execution of this project is being done from another power centre. The MoI's role is not more than a post office in this operation. An official said that work on the firewall has been in progress since January this year which includes the purchase of the system and its installation which has been done and now it is being commissioned.

The commissioning will take some weeks. Asked if the national filter will impact the internet-based businesses, he said this might be considered a subtle threat, however, the businesses are not its target. Another official said that this is aimed at social media influencers which, the government thinks, are involved in spreading fake news. The objective is to reduce their reach by blocking their content or making it less visible.

They are already being taken to task through the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act 2016 as the courts are also being set up to try those held accused under this law. While the firewall is now at the trial stage, an advertisement two weeks ago from the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority suggested as if the paperwork to document this purchase is yet to be started.

An advertisement on July 11 invited tenders for "supply, installation and configuration of Next Generation Firewalls (Ex-Chinese brand - LOT A), Web Application Firewall (WAF) [LOT B] for five years with hardware warranty Next Business Day (NBD) and Support (24/7/365)."



PESHAWAR: KP Chief Minister, Ali Amin Gandapur and other participants of jirga for peace in Bannu. Corps Commander Lt. General Umer Ahmad Bukhari also present.

## KP apex committee vows stern action against terrorists

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur on Thursday chaired the Apex Committee meeting to address the current security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, focusing on recent terrorist incidents and formulating strategies to maintain law and order.

The meeting saw participation from key civil, military, and law enforcement officials, underscoring the need for unified efforts against terrorism. The committee decided uncompromising action against terrorism and sectarianism. The provincial government will take strict action against individuals and groups involved in terrorism and sectarian hatred. The Chief Minister has directed all departments to ensure no leniency is shown.

The law enforcement and intelligence agencies will strengthen coordination to effectively monitor and counter terrorist activities through increased surveillance and intelligence-sharing. Citizens are encouraged to report suspicious activities to law enforcement agencies. The Chief Minister ordered the police to crackdown on armed groups and individuals.

The administration will ensure public safety and protect lives and property of the citizens. The committee also decided to request a judicial inquiry into the Bannu incident,

while the government will conduct its own inquiry to determine individual responsibilities.

The apex committee said that peaceful protest is recognized as a right, but citizens are urged to avoid violence and taking the law into their hands. The committee highlighted the sacrifices of the army, police, and security agencies, stating that undemocratic agendas and unnecessary criticism of government institutions harm the sentiments of the martyrs' families and should be avoided.

The committee was informed that there is no ongoing military operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; police and the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) will handle terrorist elements with enhanced manpower, vehicles, weapons, and other essentials. The police force has been directed to remain on high alert, increase patrolling, and prioritize southern districts.

The CTD will operate in suspected areas, with support from the army and security forces in remote border regions. A committee headed by the Commissioner, including representatives from all stakeholders, will be established to resolve misunderstandings between the public and institutions.

These measures aim to restore peace and stability, ensuring the safety and security of all citizens in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The provincial government, armed forces, and police

remain committed to eliminating terrorism and maintaining law and order.

## Ban on PTI can't be ruled out: Kh Asif

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has left no room for dialogue in politics.

Talking to media outside the Parliament House on Thursday, the senior PML-N leader said that political parties and their workers did not engage in such activities. "There wasn't any discussion in the cabinet regarding the ban on PTI," said the minister. He added that the decision to impose ban on PTI would be made after consulting the coalition partners in the government.

"The ban cannot be ruled out as our consultation process is still going on," said the veteran politician. Khawaja Asif added that protest is the right of every political party but it will not make any difference. Earlier, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar had said that the government decided in principle to ban the PTI. Addressing a press conference earlier this month, Tarar said that the ruling coalition had decided to ban PTI. "The PTI and the country cannot go together", he categorically stated.





ISLAMABAD: Senator Sherry Rehman, Nadeem Afzal Chan, BISP Chairperson Rubina Khalid, Zahir Ali Shah, Ali Muhammad Khan and others is offering feteiha for the departed soul of father of PIO Mobashir Hasan in Islamabad.

### Rs 2m released for employees treatment

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has ordered release of over Rs 2 million funds for medical treatment of ailing police employees and their family members.

Sub-Inspector Mahboob Hussain from Vehari was granted one million rupees for a kidney transplant. Rs 500,000 were provided to the wife of the late ASI Abdul Ghaffar for cancer treatment. Constable Haris Saqib from Rawalpindi received Rs 100,000 for a leg surgery. Head Constable Amir Ali Khan was granted Rs 100,000 for gallbladder surgery. Driver constable Rashid Bashir Abbasi received Rs 100,000 for his wife's treatment. Constable Sajjad Hussain from Lodhran was given Rs 100,000 for leg treatment. ASI Muhammad Tahir Islam and Head Constable Syed Nasir Abbas received 127,000 rupees for treatment of various ailments. The medical grant for these cases was approved by a committee under the chairmanship of Additional IG Welfare & Finance.

### Correction

It is to inform our valued readers that on 25th July an article with the headline 'Happy Birthday Asian Nelson Mandela' was published on Page 2. However the name of the writer was not mentioned on the article. Please note that the writer of the article was Dr Saif ur Rehman Medical doctor, public health expert, and human rights activist.MBBS, MSPH, fellow FETP CDC-NIH.

## Sindh improves agro-economy by introducing climate-resilient crops: CM

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has asked the civil servants to be honest, dedicated and hardworking to solve the public problems as per their capacity wherever they are posted.

He was talking the probationers of the 7th Civil Service Training Program (CSTP) who called on him here at the CM House here Thursday. They have completed pre-service training at the Training, Management & Research wing (TMR). The delegation was led by Secretary TMR Saeed Awan. The meeting was attended by PSCM Agha Wasif, DG TMR Issa Memon, chief instructors Aftab Memon and Asad Abro, Director Nouseen Usman and DD Khalil Shaikh.

The CM told the officers that they had a long career to reach the climax, and it was up to them to shape their career with an impressive track record of service, honesty, and dedication. "I will advise you to make your career impressive and full of service, fraught with public prayers you'll encounter in your [service] career," he said.

Replying to their question, the chief minister said that climate change had changed the dynamics of planning and development in which climate-resilient development, economy and policies were being developed. "We are going to launch a massive stormwater drain system to combat urban flooding in the city," he said and added he has also restored old waterways discharging into the LBOD system.

Syed Murad Ali Shah said that he was working to improve the agro-economy of the province by introducing new climate-resilient crops, developing tourism in PPP mode, and promoting the industrial sector. The CM extended his best wishes to the newly inducted and trained officers.

**Murad calls for shifting of utilities, speeding up work on BRT Redline:** Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, presiding over a meeting to review the progress of the BRT Redline project, has directed all utilities-providing agencies to shift their installations within a month so that the work on the project can be sped up, meanwhile, the traffic police would properly manage the traffic to reduce public inconvenience which has become unbearable.

The meeting was held at the CM House, and was attended by Senior Minister Sharjeel Memon, PSCM Agha Wasif, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, MD SSWMB Intiaz Shah, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, DIG Traffic, MC KMC Afzal Zaidi, KE Representatives Sadia Dada, Haris Siddiqui and project director of the BRT Redline.

Senior Minister Transport Sharjeel Memon briefing the CM said that there were two Lots of civil works of the BRT Redline project. Lot 1 starts from Malir halt and ends at Mosamiat and Lot- 2 from Mosmiyat to Numasih. The physical progress of Lot-1 has been achieved by 9.46 per cent and lot-2 by 15.3 per cent.

Memon told the CM that work on Lot-1 and Lot-2 would be completed by March 2026 and June 2026 respectively. The CM said that in the entire area of the Red Line Corridor, there were serious traffic issues, therefore people in the areas were in distress. "I want you to speed up the work on the project so that public distress can be alleviated," he told the transport dept.

Minister Transport told the CM that work on mixed traffic lanes, delineators, Tipu Sultan Underpass, Hydrant Underpass, Kind Cottage Underpass, King Cottage Station, and Safoora Pile caps were in progress.

The CM said that overall effective coordination from all utility agencies was essential through a dedicated focal person to resolve project issues promptly. He directed the KMC to coordinate with the Transport dept to develop the existing Nullah Crossing along the BRT Red Line.

Shah directed SSWMB to carry out regular cleaning and waste removal from the Right of Way along the corridor placement of waste bins at the jointly identified points.

The CM directed K-Electric to shorten the procurement procedure, currently five to six months. The CM directed KE to shift the utilities for which the PD of the BRT Redline has already paid 80 per cent of the amount. At this, the KE representatives told the CM that they had not been given the right of way for shifting their cables.

The CM directed Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi to give RoW to KE and their cables shifted and submit him report. Murad Shah also directed the water board to work with the transport department so that work on the BRT Red Line and K-IV Augmentation works.

The CM was told that a temporary traffic management plan has been developed. Temporary walkways at the edges were being constructed along with the removal of the median Island and shifting one lane of the main road to the service road. The mixed traffic carriageways were also being developed.

The CM directed DIG Traffic to deploy more traffic police at the traffic diversions to regulate the traffic.

The chief minister said that he would chair another meeting next week to review the progress made on his instruction. "I want the work on BRT Red Line to be completed much before the targeted date," he said.

### LGH doctors team saves life of 5-month-old infant

LAHORE (APP): The doctors at Lahore General Hospital (LGH) demonstrated exceptional professional skills by saving the life of a 5-month-old infant who was in critical condition.

According to the LGH sources on Thursday, the medical team, led by Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Gastroenterology, Dr. Hassan Salman Malik, performed a life-saving Endoscopy procedure to remove a key from the baby's stomach.

The infant, Ayan Khan, was referred from Sargodha after other hospitals declined to take the case due to its complexity.

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Gastroenterology, Dr. Houria Rehman, also played a crucial role in the successful procedure. The parents expressed their deep gratitude to the medical team for saving their child's life and alleviating their trauma.

## Ambassador Hashmi concludes his official visit to Kunming

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Khalil Hashmi visited Kunming, capital city of Yunnan Province in Southwestern China on 22-24 July.

The visit was undertaken at the invitation of the provincial authorities of Yunnan on the occasion of the 8th China-South Asia Expo, in which Pakistan was designated as the theme country of honour.

During his stay in Kunming, Ambassador Hashmi spoke at various important forums including the 5th China-South Asia Cooperation Forum; the 17th China-South Asia Business Forum; and China-South Asia Government, Industry, Academia, and Research Collaboration Event. Besides, he interacted with the political leadership of Yunnan province; held important meetings with academia and enterprises; and engaged with media platforms.

Inaugurating Pakistan Pavilion at the China-South Asia Expo, the Ambassador highlighted Pakistan's substantial participation in this year's expo with the presence of FPCCI, KCCI, and 180 businessmen. Underlining the significance of utilizing such platforms for strengthening regional connectivity, he briefed the audience on the upward trajectory of Pakistan-China trade and investment relations and the positive impact of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit on further strengthening of the bilateral economic ties. He also toured the Pakistan Pavilion and visited booths of the participating businesses.

During all of his speeches, the Ambassador underscored Pakistan's position on regional connectivity and economic integration; strength of its partnership with China, including under China-Pakistan Economic Cooperation (CPEC); and the need to enhance multi-faceted cooperation despite the challenges posed by the challenging regional and international environment. On the diplomatic front, the envoy underscored the need for peaceful resolution of outstanding disputes, and the importance of regional peace and stability as a necessary precursor of prosperity and developments.

While interacting with various interlocutors in Yunnan province including political leadership, enterprises, academia and media, Ambassador Hashmi focused on further deepening practical cooperation for the mutual benefit of Pakistan and China.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Senator Saleem Mandviwalla and PPP leaders cutting cake to celebrate the birthday of President Asif Ali Zardari at Parliament House.

## Asif Ali Zardari-A political School!

Sharjeel Inam Memon

The 69th birthday of President Asif Ali Zardari of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is being celebrated today. This is the best opportunity to recognize his services for the stability of Pakistan, its democracy, and the well-being of its people, and to pay tribute to his historic achievements.

One of Asif Ali Zardari's great achievements is that, after the martyrdom of Mrs. Benazir Bhutto, he worked tirelessly for the survival and continuity of the Pakistan People's Party in very difficult circumstances. After the judicial killing of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the terrorists' aim in martyring Ms. Benazir Bhutto was to destroy the People's Party. The People's Party transformed the democratic struggle of the people of Pakistan into a powerful political movement in the 1960s and continues to lead this democratic struggle. The People's Party represents not only the unity of the people of Pakistan but also an institution of national unity. Preserving and strengthening it is undoubtedly a historic achievement for democratic and national stability.

Another major achievement of Asif Ali Zardari is the restoration of the 1973 Constitution through the 18th Constitutional Amendment, which ensures the preservation of the Federation of Pakistan. This guarantee is provided by the federal parliamentary democratic system established in the constitution. Asif Ali Zardari transferred his presidential powers to Parliament under the 18th Constitutional Amendment for the sake of the country and democracy. Now, only Parliament has the authority to form, change, and dissolve governments. The 18th Constitutional Amendment has also significantly reduced opportunities for non-political forces to seize democratic power or interfere in the political process. It has granted greater provincial autonomy, ending the sense of deprivation among smaller federal units and strengthening the Federation of Pakistan.

Another significant achievement of President Asif Ali Zardari is that he made crucial political decisions alongside the 18th Constitutional Amendment to address threats to Pakistan's security. He gave an identity to this federal unit by renaming the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This recognition ended the perception that the province and its adjacent tribal areas were merely a 'buffer zone' in the geopolitical game. Asif Ali Zardari also identified these areas as distinct units through the Gilgit-

Baltistan Reforms in 2009, which helped mitigate risks for Pakistan. Additionally, he not only apologized for past violations against the people of Balochistan but also introduced the 'Balochistan Rights Package' to integrate them into the mainstream political framework of Pakistan.

Another great achievement of Asif Ali Zardari is his promotion of the politics of reconciliation in the country. Reconciliation is a fundamental philosophy of the Pakistan People's Party. Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto himself drafted the party's 'fundamental document' at its establishment in 1967, with its first chapter dedicated to reconciliation. From 1970 to 2024, every election manifesto of the People's Party has included a chapter on reconciliation. The philosophy of reconciliation advocates that instead of engaging in conflict, political forces should agree on a political and democratic program and work together to advance democracy and people's rights.

The way Asif Ali Zardari implemented this philosophy of reconciliation is unparalleled in modern history. Through his conciliatory politics, he achieved significant milestones for democracy and people's rights, including the unanimous approval of the 18th Constitutional Amendment. While pursuing reconciliation with political forces, he avoided confrontation with non-political forces or the establishment of Pakistan, and refrained from any kind of adventurous actions. He believed that conflicts and adventurous politics in third-world countries often damage political forces. Political and democratic evolution should not obstruct the necessary adjustments of state institutions.

Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is continuing this tradition of reconciliation politics, opposing the traditional politics of conflict and bitterness. It is important to reference Asif Ali Zardari's historic speech in the National Assembly, where he stated that the era of divisive politics must end, and that we should not pass on a legacy of hate to future generations. Through his conciliatory approach, Asif Ali Zardari introduced prudence, tolerance, and politeness into politics, nurturing great traditions that will serve as a model for genuine political forces.

In the political history of Pakistan, the name of Asif Ali Zardari will remain prominent among those great politicians who endured the hardships of long imprisonment. He was imprisoned for 11 years, facing numerous false political cases and following the legal path to prove his innocence. He frequently appeared in

different courts in a single day. At no stage did his determination or independence waver, nor did he compromise. He respected all state institutions, including the judiciary of Pakistan, and never claimed that, as the leader of a major political party, he was above the law. He never incited his party workers to attack institutions. Like Shaheed Bhutto, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, and thousands of other workers and leaders of the People's Party, he accepted court decisions. He avoided conflict with state institutions and did not drive the country into chaos. Instead, he continued his political journey with great resolve, working for the stability of Pakistan and democracy.

Another significant achievement of his is the immense patience he demonstrated during the worst propaganda and media trial against him in history. He adhered to the belief that the position and status of any political leader are defined by history, not by the opponents' propaganda. Additionally, he advanced the main mission of the People's Party by delivering the fruits of the democratic struggle to the people. He continued the party's program of providing employment, housing, and other basic needs, redirecting financial resources to improve living standards and implementing plans to enhance the quality of life for the people.

What Asif Ali Zardari has done for Pakistan and its people reflects his profound political consciousness. Born into a political family, his father, Hakim Ali Zardari, was a progressive and people-friendly politician. He maintained close relationships with progressive and democratic thinkers in Pakistan and provided financial support to people-oriented and progressive organizations and individuals. Hakim Ali Zardari's views on Pakistan's affairs were clear and impactful.

Asif Ali Zardari inherited this political awareness, which was further refined through his association with the martyr Ms. Benazir Bhutto. His high political consciousness, prudence, integrity, and struggle have earned him the honor of serving as the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for a second term—a distinction no one else has achieved. Under his leadership, the People's Party government was established in Balochistan for the second time. Asif Ali Zardari will be remembered among those leaders whose political traditions will endure and from whom students of politics will continue to seek guidance. He is also a significant figure for political opponents, serving as a school of politics in his own right.

### Mayo Hospital suspends 2 storekeepers

LAHORE (APP): The administration of Mayo Hospital has suspended two storekeepers, Shahzad and Sarfraz, following allegations that they provided expired injections to cancer patients. In a statement issued on Thursday, Hospital Chief Executive Officer Faisal Masood confirmed that an investigation was underway regarding the incident.

He assured the public that there have been no adverse reactions reported from the patients who received the expired injections. All affected patients have been admitted to the respective wards for monitoring and care. An inquiry committee has been established to thoroughly investigate the matter and will submit its findings soon. Based on the committee's recommendations, appropriate legal action will be taken against those found responsible for the incident.

## LESCO detects 508 power pilferers in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 508 connections from where customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts: Lahore, Sheikhpura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara on the 29th day of grand anti-power theft campaign.

A LESCO spokesman told the media on Thursday that the company had also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 159 FIRs had been registered in respective police stations, while 30 accused arrested by the respective police.

On the 29th consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved

in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units. Among the seized connections 14 were commercial, 10 agricultural and 484 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 427,522 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 15,284 million.

During the 299 days of the grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned, the LESCO detected pilferage on 107,404 power connections and 90,744 FIRs have been registered against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations, while 34,526 accused have so far been arrested by the police. The LESCO has so far charged a total of 119,877,869 detection units worth Rs

4,286,195,707 to all the power pilferers.

### Public Notice

We have lost original ownership allotment letter Plot No.C-19 Kohat Development authority Kohat. Owner is Anjum Begum W/o Shahbaz Khan. Anyone find the letter please inform at street No.128 Jinnahabad Abbottabad. From: Shagufta Shahbaz W/o Saeed Khan D/o Shahbaz Khan. Cell No. 0313-5857758.

### Lost & Found

I have lost Original B.Sc Degree Year 1984 under Roll # 1039 If anyone find please return it to Syed Asif Ullah S/o Feroz Shah CNIC # 173018196999 Contact # 0345-9084120.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### Auction of Gold

Finance facilities were extended by Mobilink Bank against the security of deposit and pledge of gold to the customers mentioned below. The customers who have neglected and failed to repay the finance extended to them by Mobilink Bank along with the markup thereon.

Details:			
Branch	Haripur	Branch code	0017
Auction Date	29th July-2024	Time	11:00 AM

Customer Name	CNIC #	Address	Gold Weight (GM)	Detail of Gold Ornaments
Rashid Khan	13302-3805524-3	Barthal, P.O. Sarai Sahla, Haripur	40.3	1 Kanta (with bead and pearl, broken), 1 Pair of Earrings (with beads), 1 Ring
Muhammad Tufail	37103-2089115-7	Tarkhan Mohra, Hassan Abdal, District Haripur	25.3	4 Churiyan

Notice is hereby given to the customers in above mentioned that if payment of entire outstanding amount financed along with markup is not made by them to Mobilink Bank within 1 day of the publication of this notice, Mobilink Bank shall auction the gold ornaments and no further Public Notice shall be issued to call upon the customers to make the payments.

Mobilink Bank



# Chief Secretary chairs meeting to check flood preparedness

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting regarding the flood preparedness of the Irrigation Department was held here Thursday under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Aslam Chaudhary.

The meeting was also attended by Additional Chief Secretary Planning & Development Department, relevant secretaries and officials.

During the meeting, the Irrigation Department presented a comprehensive overview of the flood contingency plan for monsoon season. The briefing mentioned the establishment of a flood emergency cell in

Peshawar and the status of the rehabilitation of gauges, pre-flood inspection of structures, and other necessary flood-related infrastructure.

Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary emphasized the importance of maintaining flood readiness to mitigate the impact of potential floods. He directed all departments to

ensure that all measures are in place and to remain vigilant throughout the monsoon season.

Additionally, the operationalization of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Water Resources Regulatory Authority was discussed, highlighting the need for efficient water resource management in the province.

## Meeting discusses provision of cheap electricity to economic zones

PESHAWAR (APP): A meeting held here at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) with Special Assistant to KP CM on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Abdul Karim Tordher in the chair discussed the construction of 12-kilometer long transmission line to supply the electricity generated by Shishi Power Station to the economic zone of Chitral and another one kilometer transmission line to provide the electricity generated by Pehur Power House to Gadoon Economic Zone, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

Besides, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) KP-EZDMC Javed Iqbal Khattak, CEO KP Transmission Lines and Grid Company, Mohammad Ayub, the representatives of the Small Industries Development Board (SIDB), Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO), Board of Investment & Trade (KP-BoIT), and Swati Corporation, a private sector Electricity Transmission Lines Company also attended the meeting.

The participants of the meeting stressed the need for the establishment of a regulatory authority for the provision of cheap electricity to the economic zones of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and supply

of the electricity of Shishi and Pehur Hydropower Stations to economic zones at Chitral and Gadoon.

The possibilities of the establishment of proposed economic zones in Chakdara and Mansehra also came under discussion during the meeting. In case of the establishment of the proposed Chakdara Economic Zone 1035 megawatt electricity could be provided through the local power houses and another 728 megawatt locally produced electricity to Mansehra Economic Zone.

On this occasion, it was decided to initiate work on the supply of the locally produced electricity to Chitral Economic Zone as a pilot project for provision of cheap electricity to other economic zones of

the province.

The Special Assistant directed the authorities of PEDO, KP-EZDMC and KP Transmission Lines & Grid Company to set together to begin work on the completion of all phases of the project as soon as possible.

Speaking on the occasion, the Special Assistant said that the provision of cheap electricity to industries will help promote industrialization in the province, which will generate employment opportunities for the residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He further said that the initiative will prove a milestone towards the economic development of the province as presently the industries are facing an energy crisis.

## Billion tree plus plantation drive launched in Peshawar division

PESHAWAR (APP): Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mehsood has launched the Billion Tree Plus campaign to combat climate change and mitigate its negative effects.

He inaugurated the drive by planting a sapling during a ceremony at the Commissioner's House in Peshawar.

Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Captain (Retd) Sarmad Saleem, Member

of Provincial Assembly Asif Khan Mehsood, Conservator of Forests Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Hazrat Mir, and District Forest Officer Peshawar were also present at the ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, he said the saplings planted under the Billion Tree Plus campaign will not only enhance the beauty of the area but also contribute to a better environment in the future.

Under the campaign, 750,000 saplings will be planted in all five districts of Peshawar Division including Peshawar, Nowshera, Charsadda, Mohmand Tribal District, and Khyber District during the monsoon season.

Special teams comprising Deputy Commissioners and District Forest Officers have been formed for this purpose to make such efforts fruitful.

Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsood underlined the need for planting more trees to effectively meet the challenge of climate change.

He issued special instructions to all deputy commissioners to ensure the success of the campaign.

He also assured that he would personally oversee the campaign to ensure its successful completion.

## Senior journalist murder case solved in Nowshera

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: The murder case of senior journalist Malik Hassan Zaib, associated with the daily "Aaj" newspaper, has been resolved. The underlying cause was a dispute over a plot of land valued at 3.7 million rupees. The suspects, a father and son, have been arrested, and further investigations are ongoing.

In a crowded press briefing held at the conference room of the new DPO Complex, District Police Officer (DPO) Muhammad Azhar Khan provided an update on the case. He stated that on July 14, 2024, Anwar Zaib, son of Shah Jahan and resident of Akbarpura, reported to the

police that he, along with his brother Hassan Zaib, was traveling from home to their shop in car number 7869/LOR. Upon reaching the main road opposite Dua Hospital in Akbarpura Bazaar, Anwar got out of the car while his brother remained inside.

At that moment, two motorcyclists on a 125cc bike approached and started firing at Hassan Zaib with the intent to kill. Hassan Zaib was shot and died on the spot, while Anwar narrowly escaped unharmed. Anwar stated that they had no known enmity with anyone. A case was registered on the same day under FIR number 308, dated July 14, 2024, for offenses under sections 302 and 34 of the Pakistan Penal Code at the

Akbarpura police station.

Upon receiving notice of the incident, DPO Azhar Khan assigned the investigation to a team led by SP Investigation Alamzeb Khan, including SDPO Pabbi Circle Jawad Khan, SHO Akbarpura Niaz Muhammad, and CFU In-Charge Sajid Khan. The investigative team immediately visited the crime scene, meticulously gathered all evidence, and the technical team began their efforts.

Due to the high-profile nature of the case, which received extensive coverage in print, electronic, and social media, the police were under significant pressure to solve it.

Through relentless efforts and thorough investigation, the primary suspect, Ashfaq, son of Hameed Gul and resident of Khandar Akbarpura, was apprehended. During interrogation, Ashfaq confessed that the dispute with the deceased Hassan Zaib was over a plot of land worth 3.7 million rupees. Ashfaq revealed that Hassan Zaib had repeatedly insulted them and threatened to abduct their women. Ultimately, Ashfaq's son, Zohaib, with the help of another accomplice, murdered Hassan Zaib.

The police have arrested Ashfaq and Zohaib, and further investigations are underway to uncover any additional details and to ensure that all individuals involved are brought to justice.

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PESHAWAR: A female Afghan refugee provides fingerprints for updating her Proof of Registration (POR) card at the PCM center in Chamkani, following the government's extension until June 30, 2025.



PESHAWAR: Chairman of Peshawar Parents Action Committee Irfan Afridi addressing a press conference at Peshawar Press Club on Thursday.

## Pesco issues power shutdown schedule

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) would suspend power supply to certain areas due to maintenance work on Saturday and Sunday.

According to the company's spokesperson, power supply will remain suspended from Jamrud Grid Station on July 27 and 28 from 6:00 AM to 10:00PM, resultantly consumers Hayatabad 3 feeders will face inconvenience.

Power Supply will also remain suspended from Hattar Grid Station on July 28 from 8:00 AM to 2:00AM and as a result consumers of Nova Sypack, Muree Glass, Hattar 2, Shadi, Solve Tech, FDL, Mian Steel, Ali Steel, Al Hadeed, Neelam Steel, National Steel, Rehmat Steel, Capital Steel, Hattar 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, Mujahid Steel, Pak Accumulator, Wah Nobel, SAC, Mustehkam, HEC, Echo Pack, Beffo, Nomi Steel, Hattar Steel, Coronot Foot, Syntronics, Neelum 2, Spin Ghar, Mujahid 2, Minrox, Silver Lake, Fared Steel, Adeel Shahbaz, Gujar Steel, Sharif Gasses, Venus Carpet, Neelum Paper, Syntronics 2, Coca Cola, Pak Accumulators 2, Special Economic Zone 1, 2 feeders will face inconvenience.

## PHC decides 104 appeals of subordinate court's servants

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) decided 104 service appeals of subordinate court employees, which were pending for the last six years.

Senior Puisne Judge Justice Ijaz Anwar heard these service appeals, which were pending since 2018. Out of a total of 108 appeals, the hearing of all has been completed, and only five cases have been adjourned until the arrival of another senior judge.

Justice Ijaz Anwar recused himself from hearing these five cases, stating that he had previously appeared as a lawyer in these cases.

Out of the total 104 appeals, 36 were dismissed, and 46 were disposed of on the grounds that the employees had already approached the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Service Tribunals.

Therefore, these appeals could not be heard further. According to the data, seven appeals were

allowed, nine were reserved for judgment, and four were partially allowed.

According to the Peshawar High Court's data, these appeals were pending for the last six years.

Senior Puisne Judge Justice Ijaz Anwar started regular hearings of these appeals a few days ago and, after a few regular hearings, issued decisions on these appeals to dispose of the employees' appeals.

## UET, NEECA organize event on energy conservation

F.P. Report

Peshawar: The Building Energy Research Center (BERC), University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Peshawar, in collaboration with National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA), organized a roll-out event for the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) 2023 in Islamabad the other day.

ECBC-2023, developed by NEECA. This manual provides a clear explanation of the key sections of the ECBC-2023 and practical guidance on how to implement its provisions. This is an important milestone towards a standardized approach to energy efficiency in the building sector in Pakistan.

Implementing Building Energy Conservation Building Code is important to keep the indoor temperature comfortable without the expense of energy by improving the insulation of walls, windows and roofs. The code also helps reduce the soaring bills of residential sector.

Energy and Climate Change at GIZ, highlighted the importance of the collaboration between GIZ and NEECA. He underscored the challenges posed by soaring energy prices, economic depression, and inflation, alongside the complexities within the energy sector. He thanked NEECA for recognizing the need and providing a revised Energy Conservation Buildings Code as a guideline to digitalize and standardize buildings as well as a chance to reduce energy consumption and energy costs.

The event was organized under the project titled "Transformation of Construction Sector in Pakistan: A Pathway towards Clean, Green, and Sustainable Buildings." The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with GIZ as the supporting partner and NEECA as the lead executing agency.

The event was held to formally roll out the Energy Conservation Buildings Code 2023 and launch the Manual for the Implementation of

Dr. Sardar Mohazzam, Managing Director at NEECA, expressed gratitude to stakeholders for revising the code and emphasized the importance of implementing it to address Pakistan's rising energy costs and climate challenges. He highlighted the need for nationwide outreach and capacity building.

Wolfgang Hesse, Cluster Coordinator

Dr. Zeeshan Ullah, Director Buildings at NEECA, likely delved into specific sections of the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) to highlight the benefits of compliance for building stakeholders. Dr. Naveed, Director Buildings Energy Research Center (BERC) presented research products, online tools, and software developed to support the implementation of ECBC-2023.



## Steps to stop violence against women, transgenders sought

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Legal Aid Committee of Da Hawwa Lur held its second quarterly meeting to address critical gaps in implementation of pro-women and transgender legislation. Shawana Shah, Program Director of Da Hawwa Lur, expressed deep concern about the alarming increase in violence against women, highlighting the organization's unwavering commitment to bridging legislative gaps and enhancing protections for women and transgender individuals. Recent incidents, including honour killings in Swabi district, an acid attack in Peshawar district, and child marriages in Dir district, underscore the urgency of this mission.

The Legal Aid Committee is composed of dedicated members from

academia, media, and law, along with a focal person from the transgender community, specifically tasked with identifying and addressing issues faced by women affected by violence, child marriages, acid attacks, and targeted honour killings. These members are actively and seriously engaged in their work, reflecting the gravity of the situation.

Rakhshanda Naz emphasized the critical need to bolster evidence-based and research-driven policy reforms. Additionally, she highlighted the importance of Da Hawwa Lur's legal officers visiting police stations to collect concrete data on gender-based violence, honor killings, and related issues. These actions aim to enhance the understanding and response to such pressing societal challenges.

Despite the existence of laws designed to protect women and transgender individuals, a lack of implementation has fostered a pervasive culture of impunity. This has resulted in severe and widespread violence throughout the country.

"We express our serious concerns over the recent incidents of violence and unequivocally condemn these heinous acts," said Rizwan Khan, representative from National Commission for Human Rights. Dr. Shakeel, a Professor from University of Peshawar highlighted that, "It is imperative that these atrocities come to an immediate end. We demand that the justice system take serious action against all perpetrators to ensure accountability and protection for all vulnerable groups."





## In brief

### Former minister passes away F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: Raees Ghulam Qadir Khan Malkani, a former provincial minister and seasoned politician, passed away on Wednesday night after a prolonged illness. He was 70 years old. Malkani breathed his last at the National Medical Center in Karachi, where he had been receiving treatment for several days. Chief Minister of Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and other party leaders expressed deep grief over the loss of the stalwart politician, who had been affiliated with the PPP since 2008. Malkani enjoyed a significant reputation as the patriarch of the Jat Tribe across the province. He entered parliamentary politics in 1985 by defeating Shafqat Shah Bukhari and was re-elected in 1990. He served as provincial minister for culture and tourism and was appointed special advisor to the Chief Minister of Sindh, Liaquat Jatoi, in 1997 and by Syed Qaim Ali Shah in 2010. During his long political career, Malkani was affiliated with various parties, including Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz, Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-Azam, and Pakistan Muslim League-Junejo. He contested general elections in 1988 and 2008 but lost. After the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, he joined the PPP but parted ways in 2013, only to rejoin in 2015 and remain a member until his passing.

### Tree plantation drive kicks off F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: In connection with the Billion Plus Tree plantation campaign, siblings were planted to begin the drive in Landi Kotal on Thursday. Assistant Commissioner (AC), Landi Kotal Adnan Mumtaz Khattak, Additional AC, Rameez Ali Shah, District Youth Officer Sajid Afridi, tribal elders, students and social workers planted siblings in Shelman areas. Under the supervision of district administration with assistance from government departments under the banner of billion plus tree plantation drive, departments of local government, police, agriculture, education etc. participated in the campaign. AC, Landi Kotal Adnan Mumtaz Khattak emphasized that all resources will be utilized with support of local tribesmen to ensure the campaign success. He maintained that under the auspices of Billion Plus Tree plantation drive a significant number of siblings will be planted in different localities of the Landi Kotal.

### DC calls on Dir journalists F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Lower Dir journalists' community demanded the district administration to ensure implementation of the official price list and conduct of open kutcheries at tehsil level at least once in a month. They made the demand during a meeting with the newly posted deputy commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan at his office here on Thursday. The member journalists from the Timergara and Chakdara press clubs led by their respective presidents attended the meeting. The meeting was held on the call of deputy commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan. The journalists informed the newly posted deputy commissioner about the incomplete development projects including the Talash bypass road, Timergara beautification, Koto hydro power station and other civic issues faced by local residents.

# 600,000 saplings to be planted in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The additional deputy commissioner Bashir Khan has said that about 600,000 saplings of pines and deodar will be planted during the monsoon plantation drive in different parts of the Lower Dir. He was addressing a function after formally inaugurating the monsoon plantation campaign under the 'Green Growth Strategy- Billion Tree plus plantation drive of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at government high school Mian Banda as chief guest here the other day.

The divisional forest officer Asif Ali Shah, district youth officer Malik Shahzad Tariq, SDFO Younus Khan, chairman Malakand Youth assembly Qazi Hanif and others also spoke on the occasion. The speakers highlighted the importance of forest and asked the civil society and area elders to play their active role in making the region clean and green. Besides government officials, social and political activists, area elders, teachers and students attended the function.

The ADC said the district administration in col-

laboration with the forest and youth affairs' departments had planned to plant about 600,000 saplings of pines and deodar in the months of July, August and September in the district. He said the educational institutions would be provided with those saplings which would be planted by students.

Meanwhile the tehsil municipal administration employees planted saplings at Chakdara, Khall, Munda and Timergara and launched the drive. The district administration has directed all the TMOs to mobilize their workers for fully participating in the drive.

**Irrigation channel:** The executive engineer of the irrigation department in Lower Dir, Shahid Khan, sub divisional officer Tayyib Syed and engineer Nizamul Haq informed local journalists that extension and repair work on the Balambat Irrigation channel has entered into the final stage and soon water would be released in it. Briefing the journalists they said that some vest interested elements spread false and baseless information on social media regarding the irrigation channel.

The officials said that a total of 11000 acres of land was being irrigated through the 76 kilometer long tunnel. They said that repair and extension work on the channel with a cost of 800 million, was in progress at Akhagram, Shalpalum and Sacha Maira sites. They said that work on a 600 feet long site had been completed and the remaining work had entered the final stage. The XEN said the capacity of the channel would be enhanced to provide 130 cusec water instead of 125 cusec when the project is completed. He said the department was well aware of the farmers' grievances but their grievances would be resolved once water was released again in the channel.

**Charge assumed:** The newly posted district accounts' officer Muhammad Mukhtiar Jan assumed the charge of his responsibilities after replacing Sajid Khan here the other day. Mr Sajid had been transferred to the Accountant General office at Peshawar by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government. The Lower Dir government officials of various departments congratulated Mr Mukhtiar on being posted as DAO in the district.

## Three killed in Faisalabad incidents

FAISALABAD (INP): Three people including a teenage girl were killed in separate incidents in different localities of Faisalabad. The police busted a two-member robber gang.

According to details, a man identified as Ali Hassan committed suicide by hanging him over torture and misbehavior of merciless son Junaid Hassan in Mandi Bachiana. Armed robbers gunned down a motorcyclist youth Qasim Shah over resistance near Chak No 79-GB, in jurisdiction of Thekriwala police station Faisalabad and fled away.

At Dera-Jhang road Syedwala area, a 14-year-old girl Fiza Shehzadi died after she mistakenly touched live naked wire while switching on the LCD. The Civil Lines Police busted a two-member robber during a crack-down. The detainees

included Khawar Abbas and Ashiq Ahmed and police recovered five stolen motorcycles, cell phones, Rs3,50,000 cash and arms from possession of the nabbed robbers.

**FIA arrests accused traveling abroad on fake documents:** The Immigration Department of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), foiled an attempt of travel abroad on fake travelling documents and offloaded a passenger at Faisalabad International Airport.

According to details, the accused passenger identified as Qamar Hussain Shah, was traveling on flight 791 GB with a fake work visa for Italy. In preliminary investigations, it was revealed that the accused attempted to travel on passport and resident card of his real brother Nazim Hussain Shah and he had paid Rs600,000 to

travel agent Bilal and his cohort Faisal for acquiring fake documents. The travel agent's cohort Faisal was also detained from parking area. The accused passenger has been handed over to Anti-Human Trafficking Circle Faisalabad for further legal action.

**342 farmers booked over canal water theft:** Sahianwala police have booked 342 farmers over canal water theft on the reports of Irrigation Department teams. According to police sources here on Thursday, the teams detected water theft in different villages in the police limits by installing motors as well as breaking water courses. The teams reported the matter to the police station, upon which separate cases were registered against water thieves. Police are raiding for the arrest of the guilty farmers.

## Monsoon afforestation kicks off in Mardan

F.P. Report

M A R D A N : Commissioner Mardan formally inaugurated Monsoon Afforestation Drive launched by PTC with the collaboration of Local Administration as well as provided 50,000 plants to contribute in government's Green Pakistan Initiative. This effort underscores Public Private Partnership to attain long term environmental goals.

The event was held at Commissioner's Office, and brought together key stakeholders and notable attendees. Commissioner Muhammad Ayaz, Deputy Commissioner Behzad Adil and Junaid Khalid, Assistant Commissioner

Takhtbai/ Focal person for Plantation participated in the event. Ali Abbas Shah, Leaf Sustainability & Engagement Manager, Jamal Toru, Regulatory Affairs Man, Kifayat Ali, Regional Growing Manager Mardan and Fatima Hasan Bajwa, Leaf Sustainability Manager represented PTC.

The PTC team while briefing the commissioner informed that in 2024, PTC aims to distribute 2.4 Million plants under its Flagship Afforestation Programme, which is a cornerstone of PTC's sustainability efforts since 1982.

Till date, PTC has issued over 150 Million saplings under this pro-

gramme. This highlights their contribution in increasing the forest cover and promoting Biodiversity.

Commissioner Mardan while appreciating the effort said that this event would contribute to signify and highlight the importance of Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience adding that PTC would continue to actively support the district administration in fulfilling the broader National Green Agenda. PTC team thanked the Divisional and District Administration for cooperation and pledged to provide more plants for Mardan and Swabi Districts under its afforestation drive.

### Tokens distributed among framers F.P. Report

WANA: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's farmer-friendly and eco-friendly project, in collaboration with the World Bank, has selected agricultural machinery for farmers through a draw under the Rural Investment and Institutional Support Project. Tokens were distributed among farmers for various agricultural tools, including land leveling, soil conservation, beekeeping, water conservation, and environmental technology.

Speaking to the media, Project Consultant Amjad Khan, Assistant Director of Agriculture Salman Khan, Agriculture Manager Habib Ur Rehman, and MPA Lower Waziristan and DDC Chairman's focal person Murad Wazir said that the 8-year project aims to meet all agricultural needs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's merged districts, benefiting local farmers. Amjad Khan emphasized that the project would bring prosperity to the area and create employment opportunities for the unemployed. Local farmers expressed gratitude to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Lower Waziristan Cabinet and MPA Ajab Gul Wazir for this initiative.

### Ombudsman's Advisor inspects Passport Office F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: On the instructions of Federal Ombudsman Ijaz Ahmad Qureshi, Advisor in-charge Federal Ombudsman Secretariat Regional Faisalabad Syed Shahid Hussain Jilani visited Passport Office and inspected the record room as well as pace of work in all sectors.

Advisor in-charge Federal Ombudsman Secretariat Syed Shahid Hussain Jilani inquired from the citizens present about the problems and the attitude of the passport office staff. On this occasion, Assistant Director Sheikh Idrees while giving a briefing said that about 200 citizens come to the passport office on a daily basis.

Completed the process without any delay. He said that I come before the office timing in the morning and stay in the field till four in the evening. Assistant Director Passport Sheikh Idrees added that the doors of my office are open all the time for the cities of Toba Tek Singh. Citizens can come to me to obtain passports and solve the problems they face. Adviser incharge Federal Ombudsman Secretariat praised the performance of Assistant Director Sheikh Idrees after the office visit and said that the purpose of the visit was to solve the problems and problems of the people have to do.

The system of District Passport Office is working in the right direction within the limited resources. It is heartening to see. Shortage of office staff, equipment and encroachment will be brought to the notice of higher authorities by Assistant Director Passport. Adviser incharge Federal Ombudsman Secretariat Regional Faisalabad Syed Shahid Hussain Jilani said that we have also reviewed the facilities provided to the public during the acquisition of passports, which are satisfactory.

# Afghan refugee students obtained school's bags



F.P. Report

BUNER: Pakistan People's Party leader and former candidate provincial assembly Dr. Saveera Parkash along with Assistant Commissioner Mandanr Maryam Bakhtawar hand over school bags to Afghan Refugee's students to promote education and planted a sapling to kicks of monsoon plantation drive.

The school bags were provided by a non-governmental organization Helvetas Pakistan while the ceremony held at the residence of President Afghan Refugee Camp Koga Pirzada Zadrin. Speaking to the media, Assistant Commissioner Mandanr Maryam Bakhtawar and Dr. Saveera Parkash emphasized the importance of

education, saying that without education, development is incomplete. They encouraged parents to send their children to school.

On the occasion, Helvetas Field Officer Muhammad Alam presented shields to Dr. Suwera Parkash and Assistant Commissioner Mandanr Maryam Bakhtawar. Muhammad Alam said that helvetas is working to promote education in six districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the Afghan Refugee Camp Koga in Buner, where school bags were distributed among children. He added that they provide free education, school bags, books, stationery, sports equipment, and food items to these children.

After the ceremony, Dr.

Suwera Parkash visited the Basic Health Unit (BHU) of the Afghan Refugee Camp. President of the Afghan Refugee Camp Pirzada Zdrin thanked all the guests and expressed hope that other organizations would also organize such events to alleviate the problems faced by the refugees.

C&W complete intra-villages road: XEN C&W Division II Buner Engineer Syed Nasir Jahan claimed that long-awaited Krappa Naway Kalay road to be completed in July and added that the completion of road will facilitate passengers from Pir Baba and Daggar to use this road and via Sir Malang enter into Rustam, Mardan, Peshawar and Islamabad easily.

## Supremacy of Constitution vital: Samina

F.P. Report

QUETTA: No one is above the law in a civilized society. All citizens are bound to follow the constitution and the law equally. The observance and respect of the constitution and the law is mandatory for every citizen. The rebellious elements and the people who spread sedition and disorder will be brought into the legal circle and the supremacy of the constitution and the law.

These views were expressed by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri in her reaction regarding press conference of Dr. Mah Rang and regarding Gwadar gathering. She said that there are always conspiracies to destabilize the country, which is well dealt with by the state. She said that Dr. Mahrang's press conference and announcement of Gwadar Jalsa yesterday is only to spread chaos. The problems could have been resolved through talks but they chose protests and sit-ins. She said that it is the right of everyone to raise their voice for their rights, but for this they can sit and talk peacefully. This is proof of the government's good intentions.

Senator further said that under no circumstances will anyone be allowed to spread chaos and chaos under the guise of protests, sit-ins and meetings and take the law into their hands. She said that we saw some fake news and fake videos have also come out about pulling someone's veil and if this happens, it is a reprehensible act. How

many difficulties did the girls of the universities and colleges have to face? Efforts are being made to create a gap between people and institutions through social media, which is very dangerous.

Senator Samina Mumtaz said that you should recognize your real enemies who do not want the country, especially Balochistan, to develop and be stable. Fabrication is anti-nationalism, the aim of which is to spoil the image of Pak forces in the public, which has been rejected by the patriotic people and any such adventure will not be accepted under any circumstances. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zahri said that the way some elements attempts are being made by the government to fuel a fabricated narrative against the state and the army and criminalizing the innocent youth against the state, which is unacceptable. The time has come when we all need to understand what they are all about. There are reasons that whenever Balochistan is on the path of development and stability, such sit-ins and Jalsas are started as part of a well-thought-out plan in which the anti-state narrative is propagated.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zahri said that the prosperity of Pakistan is hidden in the implementation of the constitution and law, while the pride of the nation lies in good morals and civilized practices. The truth of the elements behind the provocative incidents should be brought before everyone and those who take the law into their

hands and spread chaos should be immediately arrested and brought to justice and if they are found guilty, they should be punished in such a way that they become a lesson. She said that Dr. Mahrang should resolve their concerns and demands through negotiations. The federal and provincial governments are ready to negotiate for legitimate demands but will not engage in blackmail in any way or by anyone.

### Two brothers killed in attack on vehicle

DERA MURAD JAMALI (INP): Two brothers were killed while three others including a cop were injured in firing on a vehicle here on Thursday. According to details, unidentified culprits sprayed bullets near Dost Hotel in district Dera Murad Jamali of Balochistan.

As a result of firing, two brothers identified as Muhammad Sabir Bugti and Muhammad Ibrahim Bugti were killed on the spot while three others including a cop were injured. The attackers fled the scene after committing the dual murder. The deceased were brothers of Dr Ishaq Bugti who was murdered few days earlier. The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities. Police said that reasons of the attack could not be ascertained.

## Overpopulation crisis: A call for sustainable solutions

Syeda Serat

**A resident of the Malukabad region in Mingora, Swat, forced out two of his nine children from their home on the night of July 9, 2024, due to overcrowded living conditions and ongoing load shedding. Fortunately, a neighbor took the children in for the night.**

This incident underscores a growing crisis in Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), where overpopulation exacerbates the strain on families, communities, and the nation's infrastructure. As we confront these challenges, it becomes imperative to develop strategies for sustainable population growth to ensure a stable and prosperous future.

Overpopulation significantly burdens KP's and Pakistan's education systems. According to the Population Council, with 32% of children aged 5-16 out of school in KP (22% boys, 44% girls) and one out of three children out of school nationally

(27% boys, 37% girls), the demand for education far exceeds the current capacity. By 2040, KP will need an additional 14,000 primary schools, and Pakistan as a whole will require 85,000 more schools to accommodate the growing number of children. Overcrowded classrooms and inadequate facilities hinder the quality of education, ultimately affecting human capital development in both the province and the country. This educational crisis reflects broader economic challenges.

KP's average annual growth rate from 1998 to 2017 was 2.89%, and that of Pakistan's was 2.4%. The total fertility rate in KP is 4.0, while nationally it is 3.6, which is the highest in South Asia. This rapid population growth necessitates substantial economic resources to provide employment, housing, and healthcare. By 2040, KP will require 14 million jobs, and Pakistan will need 117 million jobs to maintain employment levels—a daunting challenge given

the current economic conditions. High fertility rates also contribute to malnutrition, with 23% of children under five underweight in KP and 40% stunted, 18% wasted, and 29% underweight nationally, further impeding economic productivity. These economic strains are compounded by infrastructural deficiencies.

KP's infrastructure struggles to keep pace with its growing population, mirroring national trends. Housing shortages are acute, with KP needing 2.3 million more houses and Pakistan needing 19 million more houses by 2040 to accommodate the increasing population. Water scarcity is another critical issue; in 1951, Pakistan had 5300 m³ of water per capita, but by 2020, this had plummeted to 800 m³ per capita, placing Pakistan among the top three water-stressed countries globally. The ongoing load shedding experienced in Malukabad is symptomatic of broader infrastructural deficiencies exacerbated by overpopulation. This intercon-

nected web of challenges highlights the urgency for systemic solutions.

The plight of the family in Malukabad mirrors the larger regional and national crisis. Overcrowded living conditions forced a father to make the heart-breaking decision to force out two of his children. Such situations are becoming increasingly common as families grow larger without corresponding increases in housing and resources. The neighbor's act of kindness in taking in the children highlights community solidarity, but it also underscores the urgent need for systemic solutions. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach.

Raising awareness about the impact of population growth on economic and social development is crucial. Public discourse can help shift societal norms and encourage smaller family sizes. KP's current spending of \$1.0 per capita on population services is insufficient. Doubling this expenditure can help eliminate

unmet needs for family planning. Increased investment is essential for providing comprehensive reproductive health services and education. Additionally, all private sector providers and health department outlets must offer family planning services. If contraceptive use rises from the current 28% to 54% in KP, it could save 800 mothers and 16,700 infants annually. Nationally, increasing contraceptive use from 34% to 55% could save 3,800 mothers and 140,000 infants annually.

Ensuring that political leaders remain committed to population management is vital. Increased accountability measures can ensure that family planning services meet the needs of the population. The National Task Force's recommendations, endorsed by the Supreme Court and the Council of Common Interest, must be implemented with urgency. Establishing a balanced population growth narrative that emphasizes the link between family size and resource avail-

ability can foster national consensus. This narrative should promote the idea that sustainable development is achievable through maintaining a balance between population growth and resource capacity.

The incident in Malukabad is a microcosm of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's and Pakistan's broader demographic challenges. Addressing these issues requires urgent and coordinated action across all levels of government and society. By promoting public discourse, increasing investment in population services, improving access to family planning, sustaining political commitment, and developing a national narrative, we can achieve sustainable population growth. This will not only alleviate the current pressures on education, the economy, and infrastructure but also ensure a more prosperous and stable future for all the citizens.

*The writer is M. Phil Scholar of International Relation at Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad.*





# Biden bows out to ‘unite nation’, backs Harris

WASHINGTON: United States President Joe Biden has made his first public address since dropping his re-election bid, saying he pulled out of the race against Republican challenger Donald Trump to unite his party and save the country's democracy. The 81-year-old politician struck a sombre tone as he sat behind the Resolute Desk at the Oval Office of the White House, and announced that it was "time to pass the torch" to younger voices.

The decision, which Biden first announced, followed weeks of pressure from top allies in the Democratic Party after his halting performance against Trump in late June. His withdrawal has upended the already unprecedented race and thrust Vice President Kamala Harris into the spotlight as the Democratic party's heir apparent to take on Trump in November. Biden did not mention Trump during his address, but it was clear that the Democratic incumbent was referring to the former president when he said the future of the country's democracy was at stake in the upcoming election.

"I revere this office, but I love my country more," Biden said in the opening minutes of his speech. "It's been the honour of my life to serve as your president. But in the defence of democracy, which is at stake, I think it is more

important than any title." The US was at an "inflection point", he said, adding that the upcoming months will "determine the fate of our nation and the world". "We have to decide, do we still believe in honesty, decency, respect, freedom, justice and democracy? In this moment, we can see those we disagree with, not as enemies, but as fellow Americans. Can we do that?" he asked. Biden said his "record as president, our leadership in the world, my vision for America's future all merited a second term", but that he was pulling out of the presidential race to unite his party and win the November election.

"Nothing can come in the way of saving our democracy. That includes personal ambition," he said. "The great thing about America is here, kings and dictators do not rule. The people do. History is in your hands. The power is in your hands. The idea of America - lies in your hands." He added that "there is a time and a place for long years of experience in public life" but that "there's also a time and a place for new voices, fresh voices, yes, younger voices. And that time and place is now". "I have decided the best way forward is to pass the torch to a new generation. That is the best way to unite our nation," he said. Biden took a moment to thank Harris, who he has endorsed to be the Democratic presidential

candidate. "I've made my choice," he said of Harris. "She's experienced. She's tough. She's capable. She's been an incredible partner to me and a leader for our country."

He said it would be up to Americans to make the choice come November. In an apparent rebut of Republican calls to resign, Biden said he will spend the rest of his term "focused on doing my job as President". "That means I will continue to lower costs for hard-working families and grow our economy. I will keep defending our personal freedoms and our civil rights - from the right to vote - to the right to choose," he said, outlining some themes that Harris is expected to build her campaign around. He added that he would continue to work for Supreme Court reform and rally support for Ukraine and end Israel's war on Gaza. "I'm going to keep working to end the war in Gaza, bring home all the hostages and bring peace and security to the Middle East and end this war," he said. Biden wrapped up his address by describing his time as president "privilege of my life". "Nowhere on earth could a kid with a stutter from the modest beginnings of Scranton, Pennsylvania, Claymont, Delaware, one day sit behind the resolute desk in the Oval Office as president of the United States," he said. — Aljazeera

## 25 migrants dead in Mauritania shipwreck

NOUAKCHOTT (BBC): Twenty-five migrants have been killed in a shipwreck off the coast of Mauritania, according to the country's news agency, with dozens feared missing. The incident took place near the capital city of Nouakchott. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said that more than 190 people were still missing and that a rescue operation was underway to recover people.

The Mauritan coast-guard rescued 103 migrants and recovered 25 bodies a coastguard commander said. The IOM said around 300 people had boarded a wooden pirogue boat in Gambia, and spent seven days at sea before the boat capsized on 22 July. Fifteen were confirmed dead when the coastguard arrived, while 10 others were admitted to hospital for urgent medical care. Ibba Sarr, a fishmonger at a Nouakchott fish market, told the Reuters news agency that strong winds in the past two days had moved the bodies closer to the shore. Mr Sarr said he saw around 30 bodies being collected from the beach. "Surely other lifeless bodies will be discovered in the next two days." The disaster follows a similar incident on 5 July, when Mauritanian coastguards recovered the bodies of 89 migrants from a capsized boat. The IOM said many migrants were seeking to reach the Canary Islands, located off the coast of Morocco. The route from West Africa to the Spanish territory is one of the world's deadliest. More than 5,000 migrants were killed trying to reach Spain by sea in the first five months of 2024, according to charity Ca-minando Fronteras. 40,000 people arrived in the Canary Islands last year, more than twice as many as in 2022, according to Spanish government data. In April, the EU gave Mauritania 210m (£177m; \$225m) in aid, almost 60m of which is earmarked for the fight against undocumented migration to Europe.



RAFAH: Palestinians inspect the damage after the Israeli army withdrew from Tulkarem in occupied West Bank.

# Lula seeks to bolster support for global alliance against hunger

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP): Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva unveiled a global alliance against hunger and poverty in Rio de Janeiro, an initiative he described as one of Brazil's top priorities for its current presidency of the Group of 20 nations. "Hunger is not something natural. Hunger is something that requires a political decision," Lula said during a ministerial meeting to establish the global alliance.

The leftist leader slammed the perpetuation of hunger across the world despite sufficient production. Lula was seeking to bolster support ahead of the formal establishment of the alliance later this year, when world leaders will gather in Rio de Janeiro for the Nov. 18-19 summit of the leading 20 rich and developing nations.

Presidents of multilateral banks, delegations from abroad, Brazilian ministers as well as members of UN agencies attended the event, held in downtown Rio. The alliance aims to implement a mechanism to mobilize funds and knowledge to support the expansion of policies and programs to combat inequality and poverty, according to a statement from Brazil's G20 press office. It will be managed from a secretariat located at the Food and Agriculture Organization headquarters in Rome and Brasilia until 2030, with half of its costs covered by Brazil, Lula said in his speech. World Bank President Ajay Banga

expressed his support for the initiative during a bilateral conversation with Lula, according to a statement from Brazil's presidency which also emphasized that the initiative is Brazil's main proposal.

A former trade unionist who governed between 2003 and 2010, Lula returned to the presidency for a third, non-consecutive term in 2023 after thwarting the reelection bid of former president Jair Bolsonaro. Lula, who was born to a poor family in Brazil's northeastern Pernambuco state, has long sought to tackle hunger both at home and abroad. Food security issues and poverty are present across Brazil, from the Amazon to large urban centers, which means the country can bring expertise to the global discussion, said Marcelo Cândido da Silva, a history professor at the University of Sao Paulo and vice-coordinator of an international research project against hunger.

Brazil is also one of the world's top exporters of food, sending abroad large quantities of corn, soja, coffee, sugar, beef and chicken. Ending extreme poverty and hunger by 2030 are part of the UN's sustainable development goals, adopted in 2015, but progress has been lagging. Around 733 million people faced hunger in 2023, equivalent to one in eleven people globally and one in five in Africa, according to the annual State of Food Security and

Nutrition in the World report, released in Rio. There was a sharp upturn in people facing moderate or severe food insecurity in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and since then numbers have remained stubbornly high despite progress in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to a statement accompanying the launch of the report.

"A future free from hunger is possible if we can rally the resources and the political will needed to invest in proven long-term solutions," said World Food Programme Executive Director Cindy McCain in the statement. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to hunger and poverty, Brazil's first lady Rosângela da Silva - known as Janja - said during a side event spotlighting the issue at the end of the day. As well as spotlighting hunger and poverty, Brazilian diplomats are using the presidency of the G20 to push for the reform of global governance institutions and advocate for a sustainable energy transition.

Those efforts are part of Lula's bid to pitch his nation - and himself - as leader for the Global South. The alliance against hunger and poverty "allows Brazil to position itself as a leader because it is bringing an issue dear to the world's poorest countries to a forum where they are not represented, the G20," said Eduardo Mello, a professor of international relations at the Getulio Vargas Foundation think tank and university.

# Frantic digging at scene of deadly Ethiopia landslides

GOFA (BBC): At the scene Ethiopia's deadliest landslides men are still digging through mounds of mud with their bare hands, spades and pick axes to find those missing - their efforts punctuated by the wails of women and children mourning the 229 people whose bodies have so far been found.

They are victims of a cruel act of nature, heavy rains caused a landslide in a village perched high on a mountain in the remote Gofa zone. With four homes engulfed by the landslide, nearby villagers and police officers came in large numbers to dig through the mud in the hope of finding the occupants alive, while women and children looked on, praying and consoling each other. The search continued, only for a second landslide to occur, burying hundreds of people - no-one knows exactly how many - under the mud.

When I arrived in Gofa, in the south-west of Ethiopia, between 100 and 200 mostly young men, were still digging as relatives sat nearby, hoping for

the best. The diggers had no earth-moving equipment - nothing has been flown in so far and it is impossible to bring it in as there is no road leading to the village. There is only a narrow and now-muddy footpath along a cliff. It is a dangerous and steep climb up - and the walk down is also dangerous. When a body has been found families have been forced to carry their relative down this footpath for a formal burial. Sombre-looking men have been building tombs over graves, while women and children in these farming communities have not stopped weeping.

Disaster relief officials have been quoted as saying that drones are being used in the search-and-rescue operations. One man I spoke to said he spotted them, but he has not seen any since. For the villagers, there is only one option: to keep digging with spades, pick axes and their bare hands in the hope of finding their loved ones - alive. Fortunately, the weather held up, making it easier. Gofa is part of the state known as Southern

Ethiopia, located around 320km (199 miles) south-west of the capital, Addis Ababa. It is among the areas of the country that have been hit by particularly heavy rain and flooding in recent months. But instances of landslides and floods go back further.

In May 2016, at least 50 people were killed in floods and landslides following heavy rain across the south of the country. The UN's humanitarian office (Ocha) says \$3bn (£2.3bn) is needed for Ethiopia to help those affected by El Niño over the last year - which has brought drought and flooding - as well as conflict, but the drive had been "woefully underfunded". "With the extremes of rain coming we also expect more of these kinds of emergencies to continue," Ocha's Ethiopia head, Paul Handley, told the BBC's Newsday programme. In the area engulfed by the landslides, there were concerns about the stability of the slope and 10,000 people in the area needed to be evacuated "out of harm's way", Mr Handley added.

## Australia finds shipwreck 55 years after deadly disaster

SYDNEY: Fifty-five years after it sank, killing 21 men, Australia has found the shipwreck of the MV Noongah. The 71m (233ft) freighter was carrying steel off the coast of New South Wales when it ran into stormy weather in 1969, sparking one of the biggest maritime searches in Australian history.

Five of the 26 crewmen were plucked from the water in the hours after the vessel sank, but only one body was ever recovered from those lost at sea. The location of the wreck has now been confirmed by Australia's science agency, using high resolution sea-floor mapping and video footage. Only minutes after sending a distress signal on 25 August, the ship had sunk in heavy seas. Royal Australian Navy destroyers, minesweepers, planes, helicopters and a number of other vessels launched a massive search, as rescue crews also combed the shore for any sign of survivors. Over the next 12 hours, they found two men at sea in two separate life rafts, and three more clinging to a plank of wood, according to local media. The fate of the rest of the crew and the ship itself have been a mystery ever since. Locals first spotted a wreck years ago - in deep water off the coast of South West Rocks, about 460km (286 miles) north of Sydney - and reported its coordinates to authorities. There have long been suspicions that it may be the Noongah, but the technology or diving knowledge needed to identify the ship was not available. But last month, a high-tech ship owned by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) was sent to investigate further. They found the wreck, largely intact and sitting upright on the sea floor, 170m below the surface. All its key dimensions matched the Noongah, the CSIRO said. — Aljazeera

# Paramilitary RSF agrees to US-mediated talks on Sudan war

KHARTOUM: The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has said it is ready to participate after the United States invited the warring sides in Sudan to mediated ceasefire talks. RSF leader Mohammed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo said that the paramilitary group will participate. The US invited the RSF and Sudanese army to meet for talks in Switzerland on August 14, as efforts to end the conflict mount.

The US announced that the negotiations will be co-hosted by Saudi Arabia and include the African Union, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and the United Nations as observers. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement: "The talks in Switzerland aim to reach a nationwide cessation of violence, enabling humani-

tarian access to all those in need, and develop a robust monitoring and verification mechanism to ensure implementation of any agreement."

Sudan's army, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, has yet to respond to the invitation. Dagalo said that the invitation to negotiate was "welcome". "We reaffirm our firm stance ... which is the insistence on saving lives, stopping the fighting, and paving the way for a peaceful, negotiated political solution that restores the country to civilian rule and the path of democratic transition," the paramilitary leader said in a post on X.

The brutal war between the RSF and the military government has raged in Sudan since April 2023. Tens of thousands of people have been killed, and

almost 10 million displaced, according to the United Nations, amid reports of numerous war crimes by both sides and a humanitarian crisis. A UN report issued found that nearly 26 million people in Sudan are not getting enough food due to the war. Blinken said that Washington remains "committed to working with partners to end this devastating war". "These talks do not aim to address broader political issues. As the Sudanese people have long demanded, Sudan's governance must return to civilians and civilians must play the leading role in defining a process to address political issues and restore Sudan's democratic transition," he said. However, efforts so far to bring the war to an end have been met with little

success.

Direct talks in Saudi Arabia last year between the RSF and the army produced only agreements for temporary truces - which were quickly violated - and repeatedly failed to end the war. Indirect talks held earlier this month in Geneva by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's personal envoy were called an "encouraging" first step by the UN. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters that the goal of the talks in Switzerland would be to try to resurrect and build on last year's talks in Jeddah. Both the RSF and the army continue to trade accusations of war crimes, including deliberately targeting civilians, indiscriminately shelling residential areas, and blocking humanitarian aid. — Aljazeera

# Kenya's opposition joins crisis-hit government

NAIROBI (BBC): Kenya's President William Ruto has nominated key allies of main opposition leader Raila Odinga to his cabinet, in the latest move to quell growing dissatisfaction with his government. He gave four posts to the opposition - including the powerful finance and energy ministries.

This is the first time the opposition will serve in government since Mr Odinga took up the post of prime minister in then-President Mwai Kibaki's cabinet in 2008. Mr Ruto's decision comes as he faces the biggest crisis of his presidency, with young people taking to the streets to demand his resignation under the hashtag #RutoMustGo. The protests, which started last month over a proposed finance bill containing controversial tax hikes, grew in size until parliament was stormed and a part of it set ablaze. This prompted President Ruto to withdraw the bill, but that has not quelled the anger of protesters, who are also upset by the police's brutal handling of the demonstrations. In an address to the

nation, Mr Ruto said he had consulted extensively on forming a "broad-based" government that would spearhead a "transformational agenda" to make Kenya a "better, more just and prosperous" nation. However, protesters have rejected this, saying it merely perpetuates deal-making among Kenya's political elite. Mr Ruto made 10 appointments in total, bringing his cabinet to 21. About half of them were in his previous cabinet, further raising the ire of protesters who are demanding a complete break with the past. Cabinet appointments in Kenya are subject to parliamentary approval, something that is likely to happen as the two main parties have struck a deal. The ODM was divided over whether to join the government, with some of its members saying it would be a betrayal of Kenyans. Mr Ruto's critics see his latest decision as an attempt to neutralise the ODM. Some analysts believe the formation of the "broad-based" government could unify people against a single target - a tone-deaf political elite that flagrantly

displays opulence. It is unclear why Mr Odinga, 79, did not take up a post, though it may be because he is vying to be the next chairman of the African Union Commission. Mr Ruto became president in 2022 after defeating Mr Odinga in a tightly contested election. He promised young people greater economic opportunities, but he has lost considerable support among them since his ascent to the presidency. The protests began after complaints that Kenyans could not pay more taxes when they were facing a cost-of-living crisis and there was widespread corruption and wastage in government. The demonstrations have since snowballed, though on a smaller scale, into calls for Mr Ruto's resignation, an end to corruption and justice for victims of police brutality. In his speech, Mr Ruto tried to address some of these demands, saying parliament should pass a bill that would deal with conflicts of interest among politicians and officials in order to set a "high bar" on accountability, integrity and anti-corruption measures.

# EU executive criticizes rule of law issues in Hungary, Slovakia, Italy

BRUSSELS (AP): The European Union's executive commission criticized rule of law developments in Hungary, Italy and Slovakia, but welcomed reforms in Poland and Spain in its latest democracy health check across the 27-nation bloc.

Across the board, EU countries had fully or partly addressed about two thirds of recommendations made by the commission in 2023, the EU executive said in its latest annual report on the state of the judiciary, anti-corruption efforts, press freedom and civil society. "Protecting the rule of law is a continuous work," European Commission Vice President Vera Jourova told journalists in Brussels. "We see that further action is still needed, especially where systemic issues and backsliding occur in some countries."

Hungary had made no progress implementing any of the seven reform recommendations set out by the

commission last year. They covered issues such as the prosecution of high-level corruption, the independence of public media and the health of civil society. "Hungary is a real systemic issue for the commission about the rule of law," European Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders said. The conclusion comes at a time of heightened tensions between Brussels and Budapest. Last week, the commission said that top officials will boycott informal meetings hosted by Hungary while the country holds the EU's rotating presidency, after Hungary's pro-Russian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held a series of rogue meetings with foreign leaders about Ukraine that angered his European partners.

The commission has long been engaged in a protracted struggle with Budapest's nationalist government in an effort to force it to comply with EU rule of law standards, with-

holding EU funds and hauling it to the bloc's top courts. Late last year, the commission released 10 billion euros (\$10.9 billion) of frozen funds to Budapest following reforms, infuriating the European Parliament. But another 20 billion or so remains on hold, Reynders noted. There was no immediate response from Hungary. Jourova expressed concern about "the independence and funding of public service media" in Italy. In May, journalists at Italy's state-run broadcaster RAI went on strike to protest budget streamlining and what they saw as an increasingly repressive atmosphere for the media under the government of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. "We have been expressing the need for safeguards for years now but with new incidents reported by stakeholders and budget cuts, this is becoming very urgent," Jourova said. Slovakia, under the government of

populist Prime Minister Robert Fico, also got a poor report card. There was no progress on seven of the recommendations set out in last year's report, and only "some progress" on one. Fico, long a divisive figure in Slovakia and beyond, survived an assassination attempt in May. By contrast, the top EU officials praised progress in Warsaw and Madrid. In May, in the wake of a change of government, the commission ended a six-year dispute with Poland, saying it had initiated the necessary changes to reverse what the bloc called the previous government's backsliding on democratic principles. Spain, meanwhile, had ended a years-long deadlock in renewing its General Council of the Judiciary, which supervises the country's judges, due to disagreement between the government and the opposition. The breakthrough was in line with the urgings of the EU, Jourova noted.



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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

## US policy sabotages its solar ambitions

**R**ESHORING industries that had left the United States while suppressing their Chinese competitors is a key component of the Joe Biden administration's supply chain reshuffling efforts. Such efforts sound perfect politically, because they are expected to serve the dual purposes of adding jobs at home while undermining the United States' leading strategic competitor.

But the recent troubles in the US photovoltaic market may present uneasy evidence to the administration that these are economically unviable endeavors.

On July 17 local time, SunPower, a leading residential solar installer in the US, announced it would suspend multiple core businesses. Renova Energy, partially invested by the company, immediately declared it was temporarily halting all business operations in California and Arizona.

SunPower plans to cut jobs and close its direct sales channel to survive. But analysts see it on the cusp of failing. After conceding looming financial troubles in December, the company fired its CEO in February and COO in May, then saw its auditor resign this month.

If SunPower fails, it will involve at least three other companies in the industry in which it is a partial investor.

But the troubles are far from exclusive to SunPower and its associated companies. SunPower is the third US photovoltaic enterprise to find itself in dire straits within a month. Just days ago, Toledo Solar announced it was suspending all research and development and then business operations. On June 28, the sixth-largest US consumer solar installer, Titan SolarPower, declared its permanent closure. This year has already seen a number of other smaller solar companies go bankrupt.

SunPower's troubles derived ostensibly from suspicion that its management may have fudged numbers to make it more attractive to investors. Behind it, however, multiple factors are responsible. And those factors boil down to one simple truth — the US approach to boosting the domestic photovoltaic industry is failing, not because of Chinese competition, but because of its absence.

Transitioning from traditional fossil energy sources such as coal and petroleum is a global consensus as a means to address some of humanity's biggest challenges, including environmental pollution, resource exhaustion, and climate change. In the 2020 presidential election, Biden campaigned on a pledge to shift the country to clean energy, and he retained that pledge in this year's campaign until he dropped out. His administration has gone a very long way to foster the solar industry at home. For that purpose, despite its fierce attacks on the Chinese government for allegedly breaking market rules, Washington has actually gone farther in doing that.

Since 2012, the US has launched anti-subsidy and antidumping probes against Chinese photovoltaic firms, and continuously raised tariffs. In May, for instance, it raised tariffs on Chinese solar batteries to 50 percent from the previous 25 percent. While limiting Chinese exports, the Biden administration signed the Inflation Reduction Act, vowing to subsidize domestic photovoltaic companies with the \$369 billion earmarked for climate change and energy security.

The astronomical subsidies and lax financial environment at the time did deliver a period of conspicuous growth in the US photovoltaic industry. But rising interest rates, inflation, policy changes and financial irregularities have combined to subvert that untenable model.

The US dream of a prosperous home-grown photovoltaic industry may prove unrealistic in the near term because the approach is against market rules. As many have observed, closing the US solar market to the reasonably priced Chinese products has resulted in significantly higher consumer prices and installation costs in the US. There is no way this could hold for long.

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## The ICJ compelled int'l community to take action against Israel

Abbas-Ali Kadkhodaei

**I**N recent weeks, the Israeli regime has accelerated its attacks on the core institutions and valued representatives of the United Nations in an effort to conceal the truth about its countless international and humanitarian law violations in Gaza and the rest of the illegally occupied Palestinian territories.

In addition to continuing with its longstanding policy of accusing the UN and its agencies of bias and even "complicity in terror" for criticising its illegal occupation and supporting the internationally recognised rights of the long-suffering Palestinian people, the Zionist regime also launched a personal attack against the UN's much respected Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the West Bank and Gaza, Francesca Albanese.

The regime and its supporters baselessly accused Special Rapporteur Albanese of anti-Israel bias, anti-Semitism and financial improprieties merely because she honourably fulfilled her duty, defended a vulnerable population, exposed Zionist atrocities in Gaza, and demanded that those blatantly violating the human rights of the Palestinians are held to account.

Throughout her mandate, which began in May 2022, the special rapporteur tirelessly highlighted the crimes the Israeli regime has long been committing in the territories it illegally occupies, defended the human rights of Palestinians, including their right to self-determination, and supported all her reports and statements with scientific data from the ground and credible legal arguments. She defined Israel as an apartheid state and in a March 2024 report said that Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza amounts to genocide. She also repeatedly emphasised the need for Palestine to be recognised as a sovereign state and Israel to be officially designated as an occupying regime for the human rights violations in Palestine to come to an end.

Her position has always been clear: Palestinians have been living under the Zionist regime's illegal, violent occupation for more than 50 years,

deprived of their freedom of movement and denied access to their most basic rights and natural resources. The international community must take immediate action to end the regime's apartheid practices and ethnic cleansing. It should enforce international norms and urgently act to defend the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

Israel has been pointing to these stances when mounting its accusations of bias against Special Rapporteur Albanese. However, everything she has stated about Palestine is supported by leading international scholars, prominent NGOs, and recently, were explicitly approved by the International Court of Justice – the world's highest judicial body.

Indeed, in its landmark advisory opinion issued on July 19, 2024, on the "legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem", the World Court ruled that Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful and should come to an end "as rapidly as possible". And it further affirmed the rights of Palestinians who have endured decades of systematic human rights violations as a result of this unlawful occupation.

The court not only recognised the Israeli regime's ongoing occupation of Palestine and persecution of a defenceless people as a clear threat to international peace and security but also officially acknowledged the fact that the Zionist regime is committing the crime of racial discrimination and apartheid against Palestinians.

The advisory opinion was also a vindication of the work many other UN officials and special rapporteurs have done on the occupation in the past and a rebuke of the Israeli regime's attacks against them.

Indeed, Special Rapporteur Albanese is hardly the first UN official targeted, maligned and prevented from efficiently fulfilling their mandate by the Israeli regime for the "crime" of exposing Israeli atrocities and standing up for the rights of the

Palestinian people.

The regime, for example, levelled accusations of anti-Israel bias at and persistently denied entry to Albanese's predecessor, Michael Lynk, who was the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory between 2016-2022. Like Albanese, Lynk had equated illegal Israeli settlements to a war crime, accused Israel of apartheid practices against the Palestinians and called on economic sanctions on the Israeli regime. Richard Falk, who held the same role between 2008 and 2014 was also barred from entering the occupied territories for speaking the truth and exposing the regime's unlawful practices.

Makarim Wibisono, another former UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory (2014-2016), meanwhile, was forced to resign from the position before completing his mandate due to Israeli pressure.

The regime's efforts to evade scrutiny and accountability for its widespread human rights violations by targeting UN officials performing their duties was not limited to the targeting of special rapporteurs either. It also routinely denied access to UN fact-finding missions tasked with examining the human rights situation in the occupied territories.

In 2020, the Israeli regime refused to renew the visas of staff members of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and consequently expelled 15 international OHCHR staff members from the occupied territories.

After consequent requests for visas by the office were ignored for two years, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet issued a statement in August 2022 condemning the regime's behaviour. "Israel's treatment of our staff is part of a wider and worrying trend to block human rights access to the occupied Palestinian territory," she said. "This raises the question of what exactly the Israeli authorities are trying to hide."

Looking at the Israeli regime's long history of

preventing the UN's human rights officials from accessing the occupied territories, makes it clear that its ongoing accusations against UN agencies and Special Rapporteur Albanese are merely a continuation of a long term policy of inflicting costs on officials and experts exposing its crimes. The aim of this strategy is to evade punishment for blatant violations of international law and prevent the international community from rising against this criminal regime in support of the Palestinian people.

The ICJ's landmark advisory opinion published on July 19, however, ensured that this strategy can no longer yield the intended results. After the World Court made its position on the issue clear, and declared the Israeli occupation unlawful and the regime's treatment of Palestinians unacceptable, efforts to silence and intimidate UN special rapporteurs can no longer shield Israel's criminal behaviour from international attention and condemnation.

It should be added that the ICJ, in its advisory opinion, has placed the responsibility for ending the Israeli regime's flagrant violations of international law on the United Nations and all its member states. This is a serious wake-up call, especially for governments that have made it their clear and open policy to defend the Zionist regime's ongoing crimes, which the World Court clearly said must be stopped immediately. The countries that have not listened to Special Rapporteur Albanese and her predecessors in the past better start paying attention and act accordingly now that the ICJ has officially reached the same conclusions on Israel's occupation as they did.

Indeed, all states and international organisations have a duty to react and express unequivocal condemnation in the face of a state's blatant breach of international law and attacks on the UN and its representatives, like Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese. The consequence of neglecting this important matter any longer, especially after the ICJ's landmark advisory opinion, will be the further weakening of the credibility of the current supposedly rules-based world order.

## Israel a barrier to any regional security deal

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

Israel's Knesset last week voted to reject the establishment of a Palestinian state. The Israelis never miss a chance to miss a chance for peace or to enhance their own security. They do not understand that the more they hold on to their rejectionist attitude, the more they compromise their own security.

Following the Gulf War, the Bush administration was ambitious and wanted to bring everyone to the table for a process known as arms control and regional security, or ACRS. However, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir blew it up. And today Benjamin Netanyahu is torpedoing any initiative aimed at achieving a sustainable regional peace.

The Gulf War was a wake-up call to the potential use of weapons of mass destruction. During the war, Israel distributed gas masks. This is why the Americans thought arms control should be a high priority. The Bush administration called for a project that came from the Madrid Conference in 1991. The US promised Arab countries that it would take serious steps toward peace in the region. They were three bilateral tracks: Israel-Lebanon, Israel-Syria and Israel-Palestine.

The Shamir government did not want to participate. The Bush administration pushed Shamir to come to the table. Israel had reservations because it did not want to tackle the issue of refugees. The arms control and regional security scheme was part of a broader multilateral process aimed at streamlining the relationship between the different countries and creating a regional security architecture.

Its prospects faltered in 1995. It failed because the Israelis wanted security but did not want to offer any concessions. They wanted to avert war. They did not want any controls on their own armaments and did not want to tackle the issue of the refugees. Basically, the Israelis wanted to benefit from cooperation with Arab countries but did not want to address their main concern: Palestine. Israel was happy with the operational track to avert any prospect of war but did not want to discuss the fundamental issues that mattered to its Arab interlocutors. Arab states were cynical about the process because they wanted progress on the Palestinian dossier, which Israel was avoiding. In the end, the scheme collapsed. Also, the Egyptians clashed with the Israelis over the nuclear issue.

The same is the case today. There is a threat of weapons of mass destruction. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken last week announced that Iran's nuclear weapon breakout time is now down to one to two weeks.

Nevertheless, Iran today is different from Saddam Hussein's Iraq. In 1991, the only country with nuclear capabilities was Israel. Iraq's Osirak reactor having been destroyed in a 1981 Israeli raid. Today, with the advances of technology, everyone seems to have the capability to inflict harm on the other. Hence,

each country's security is dependent on others' intentions and not their capabilities. As the situation seems more complex, the stakes are higher and the risks are graver. The issue is currently more complicated because technology is more widely available than it was in the 1990s.

Also, today there is the problem of nonstate actors. The Houthis are attacking ships bound for Israel and this week even targeted Tel Aviv. Israel has retaliated and bombed Yemen. There is less room to verify proliferation controls with the existence of nonstate actors and the informal channels that link them to their patrons. This is why a regional order is more important than ever. This is why everyone in the region should feel safe, otherwise no one is safe.

However, Israel has not changed its attitude. It wants to cooperate with Arab countries on security, to develop trade relations and be recognized without making any concessions. Nevertheless, Israel is in a very precarious situation. A regional order is its only guarantee. Even if Iran, by some miracle, is neutralized, another threat will surely emerge from another country. The Israelis have to understand that, as long as they subjugate Palestinians and deny them their freedom, dignity and statehood, they will never be safe.

A solution to the Palestinian issue can also create a face-saving exit for Iran in order for it to relinquish its call to annihilate Israel. A fair deal with the Palestinians, through giving them a state with East Jerusalem as its capital, will deprive the Iranian regime of its belligerent narrative. It would also give the ideological regime a legitimate excuse to make a U-turn.

Saudi Arabia has offered normalization in return for an irreversible path toward a Palestinian state. The Kingdom has also been engaging with Iran to ease regional tensions. The Biden administration has offered Israel a ceasefire plan to end the carnage in Gaza and start a political process. This is a golden opportunity for Israel. It should capitalize on these initiatives to start the process of streamlining its relations with all its neighbors, even Iran. This will be the only way to guarantee its security.

However, Netanyahu is sticking to his maximalist goals. The region is on the brink of explosion. It is at a crossroads. It can either go toward all-out war or toward a comprehensive arrangement. Israel is dragging the region toward war through its rejectionist attitude and by prioritizing war over diplomacy. Just as it refused to address the issue of Palestine in the 1990s, it is refusing again today.

However, what Israel does not understand is that the stakes are higher today than they were back then. Gaza should create a moment of truth, the same way the Gulf War created a moment of truth. Hence, solving the Palestinian issue should be the core issue on which reconciliation talks are conducted and it should be at the heart of any arms control and regional security scheme.

— Arab News

## A tale of two US departures

Faisal J. Abbas

not because his security leagues and from members detail protected him (if anything, one of the officers man with a backback and a

**You may ask why I, the editor of Arab News, bring this up when it's clearly an internal US issue. But as this column has noted before, what happens in America doesn't stay in America and if the US sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold.**

squeezed him so hard there were genuine fears that she might have been the cause of his premature death). Moreover, why was the area not subject to a more careful and thorough security sweep? And why did Secret Service officers ignore warnings, both from col-

long-range sight was acting suspiciously and had climbed on to the roof from where he subsequently opened fire?

You may ask why I, the editor of Arab News, bring this up when it's clearly an internal US issue.

But as this column has

noted before, what happens in America doesn't stay in America and if the US sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold.

Biden's withdrawal as a candidate has reflected positively on the US image abroad by showing statesmanship, and a peaceful and civilized transition of power. But the debacle of the Trump assassination attempt has caused observers worldwide to doubt the competence and abilities of such an important institution as the US Secret Service. There is a huge gap between the image created by Hollywood films — "Olympus Has Fallen" springs to mind, with its Secret Service hero — and the almost comical ineptitude on display in Butler, Pennsylvania, on July 13.

At a time when critics take pleasure in mocking a diminished US global role and doubt American abili-

ties, such incompetence by what is otherwise a highly regarded institution such as the Secret Service will inevitably leave many skeptical — especially against a backdrop of significant successes by traditional US competitors such as China, whether military, commercial, technological or diplomatic. Beijing not only brokered a Saudi-Iranian rapprochement last year, but also has just done the same for the two main Palestinian factions, Hamas and Fatah.

Personally, I think no rational or wise observer should ever bet against America, a powerful country that is also full of great talent, ideas and, most important, resilience. But when such a great nation cannot protect its own former president, and a contender to be the next one too, then it is only fair to say that this is indeed a "colossal failure."



# Netanyahu’s speech to Congress was uninspiring and directionless

ONLY those who still harbor any expectations of Israel’s embattled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were disappointed by his speech to a joint meeting of the US Congress on Wednesday. For the rest of us, it was the same old Netanyahu: all hype and no substance; clichés over content. He was cynical in exploiting the hostages, whether still in captivity or released, parading them along with soldiers and officers who risked their lives in the war. As always, he was economical with the truth, and all for the sake of his own vanity and political survival.

It was argued that this Netanyahu speech, although delivered in Washington, was mainly intended for Israel’s domestic audience. In fact, its messages were chiefly for American consumption, mainly because most Israelis are not falling for his empty rhetoric about “total victory” and his pretense that releasing the hostages is his priority. But the optics of the event were directed at the audience back home, in an attempt to redeem his credibility and reputation as a statesman who can still play on the biggest international stages.

Those present at the Capitol willingly swallowed his rhetoric, but it was worth paying more attention to the relatives of the hostages. Either those in the gallery in Congress who wore T-shirts reading “Seal The Deal NOW” and consequently were removed from the hall and arrested, or those watching in Israeli TV studios who were holding back the tears as they had hoped that Netanyahu, because he had taken the trouble to be away from the country in these tough days, would deliver a message that a deal had actually been reached. Their disappointment was understandably visible.

Instead, it became apparent that Netanyahu’s speech had three aims. First, to receive US support for continuing the war. Second, to maintain the flow of American weapons and ammunition. And, lastly, to attack the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice in order to find a partner to help derail any legal proceedings against Israel and against himself personally.

Netanyahu received repeated rounds of applause from those present at his tedious, nearly

hour-long speech, but about half of the congressional Democrats skipped it, including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and

Yossi Mekelberg

..... fights on the front line of civilization,” that American cities are safer

sions of gratitude to President Joe Biden in Netanyahu’s speech, there was a barely veiled criticism of the former’s hold-

with no evidence to support it.

Particularly appalling is the Israeli government’s lack of any strategic outlook, either for a ceasefire and the release of hostages or for a “day-after,” which can only suggest that this war will continue to claim lives and inflict suffering upon many more people, to the tune of American legislators’ applause.

Netanyahu was careful not to commit to any deal with Hamas, because keeping his coalition intact is more important to him not only than Palestinian lives, but also the lives of the hostages. He was more interested in the heart emoji that his National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir sent him on X after the speech than sending the Israeli negotiation team to Doha, the departure of which has once more been postponed.

It has been revealed that four more hostages have been killed while in captivity, at least one of them by Israeli military fire. At this rate and with no ceasefire deal in the offing, who knows how many of them will return alive and in what condition?

Perhaps naively, it might have been expected of Netanyahu that at long last he would find the courage, while thousands of miles from home, to at least hint at his responsibility for the failures of Oct. 7 and show some remorse, maybe some regrets for all the innocent lives lost. But this is not in his nature and especially not when his wife Sarah and son Yair are watching from the gallery.

The speech at Capitol Hill was a home game, for which only his own supporters showed up, while most of his critics watched it on the screen. Have we learnt anything new from Netanyahu’s speech? Not at all. It was just another illustration of his populist rhetoric, which has appeal in some quarters in Washington. But this will not end the war in Gaza or avert one with Hezbollah and it will not hasten either the return of the hostages or a future of security based on peace with the Palestinians.

Neither will it put Israeli society back on the tracks after Netanyahu derailed it with his assault on the country’s democratic institutions. Without rectifying all of this, a speech is just a speech and time sadly trudges by without favor for the Israeli and the Palestinian people, as well as the rest of the international community.

# Vance may be a real asset to Trump campaign

Maria Maalouf

At the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, last week, J.D. Vance told delegates: “Tonight is a night of hope. A celebration of what America once was and, with God’s grace, what it soon will be again.” He lambasted globalization and pledged to restore the ability of the American economy to create more jobs and be an energy-producing economy.

When choosing Vance, the Republicans’ presidential nominee Donald Trump opted to escalate the stature of a rising star of the right wing of politics in the US and to intensify the appeal of the populist movement. It is Trump who has boosted that conservative-pop-

ulant faction of the party. The establishment wing promotes the traditional Republican Party views of fiscal conservatism and support for a bigger US military. Nevertheless, its foundations have been shaken as it has compromised more on issues of government spending, abortion, taxes and frequent American military interventions abroad.

Trump wants to undermine the set of beliefs espoused by the Republican establishment with the help of the man he hopes will be his future vice president. The essential attitude of the conservative-populist pursuit in American politics, as manifested by both Trump and Vance, is

..... **Trump selected Mike Pence as his running mate eight years ago. But Pence was a former governor of Indiana and part of the Republican establishment. Trump now wants to move further away from the establishment Republicans who were previously the dominant faction of the party. The establishment wing promotes the traditional Republican Party views of fiscal conservatism and support for a bigger US military. Nevertheless, its foundations have been shaken as it has compromised more on issues of government spending, abortion, taxes and frequent American military interventions abroad. Trump wants to undermine the set of beliefs espoused by the Republican establishment with the help of the man he hopes will be his future vice president.**

..... ulist trend in American life since he first ran for president against Hillary Clinton in 2016. But Trump needs a successor, someone who can carry the torch of his Republican campaign in the years to come. He sees in Vance a political figure for whom he can serve as a political uncle as they campaign ahead of the Nov. 5 election against the Democratic successor to President Joe Biden, likely to be Vice President Kamala Harris.

Trump selected Mike Pence as his running mate eight years ago. But Pence was a former governor of Indiana and part of the Republican establishment. Trump now wants to move further away from the establishment Republicans who were previously the dom-

that these policies are depriving the American people of their liberties and freedoms. High taxes mean that people cannot do what they want with their money and America’s wars overseas mean that the US government is more interested in what is happening in other countries than on what is good for America and the American people. Repeatedly, Trump and Vance affirm their desire to “Make America Great Again.” And to follow “America First” policies.

Vance is a disciple of MAGA. There are reports that he is a good friend of Donald Trump Jr., the eldest son of President Trump. According to NBC News, President Trump was leaning toward North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum as his pick for running mate.

That’s when Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump chimed in. “Don Jr. and Eric went crazy: ‘Why would you do something so stupid? He offers us nothing’,” a long-time Republican operative familiar with the discussion told NBC News. “They were basically all like ‘J.D., J.D., J.D.’,” the operative said.

There have also been reports that Vance may approach his old acquaintances in Silicon Valley, California, who are known for their very liberal views and pro-Democratic Party stances. He will seek to neutralize them and convince them that the Trump agenda for the Republican Party and for the whole of the US would also fit with their own interests.

The selection of Vance also reveals that Trump thought about other candidates and later dismissed them. He could not nominate Nikki Haley because she was his rival in the Republican primaries and always campaigned against him. He dismissed other choices like Burgum because he signed a law in his home state that banned almost all abortions. Vance is pro-life too. However, he never had the chance to sign a law determining what the rules on abortion should be.

Vance’s age may also have been a positive factor that appealed to Trump. He will turn 40 in August. This could help Trump reach young voters, who are usually more liberal in their outlook. If Trump can siphon off a segment of them to vote for him, this will make it easier for him to return to the White House.

Vance started out as a critic of Trump. Now, he is his running mate. This could also be a demonstration of the success of Trump. He convinced a former political enemy to support his views. Trump now aims to turn more of his critics into political allies. Since Vance was in the Marines, he will help Trump reach out to military men and women and their families. Trump can even do well with intellectuals thanks to the nomination of Vance, who is the author of a best-selling book titled “Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis.” He wrote it in 2016. It is a personal memoir of what he called “Appalachian values.” It is about growing up poor in Kentucky and what his family faced when living in Ohio, confronting many social and economic problems. While this book appeals to intellectuals, it will also resonate well with the American middle class. This could make Vance a real asset to Trump’s 2024 campaign.

# Why the US is losing the Arab world

Guo Jiulin and Wang Yizhen

AMERICAN scholars Michael R o b b i n s , Amaney A. Jamal and Mark Tessler published a joint article in Foreign Affairs analyzing that October 7, 2023, may become a watershed for the United States. The Gaza war, which tragically claimed the lives of 37,626 Palestinians and left 86,098 others injured, has catalyzed a significant shift in the Arab public’s perception of the United States. The three American scholars believe the United States is losing the Arab world, while China is reaping the benefits.

Their analysis, based on data from the Arab Barometer, underscores this transformative trend. Through surveys conducted across five countries in late 2023 and early 2024, they observed a stark decrease in Arab citizens’ favorable views of the United States, juxtaposed with a warming sentiment towards China. Moreover, a pre- and post-October 7 polls in Tunisia strongly indicates that this shift in sentiment was a direct response to the events unfolding in Gaza.

The scholars emphasize that Arab discontent with the United States appears to be the driving force behind this shift, rather than explicit support for China’s stance on Gaza.

Although the three scholars cite a variety of data to support their views, some of the analysis exhibit a clear Western bias and lack persuasiveness. For example, when asked whether US or Chinese policies are more conducive to security in the Arab world, a significant number of respondents expressed a preference for China’s approach. Despite this, the scholars counter by highlighting that China’s actual presence in the region is minimal, and its engagement is mainly focused on economic deals facilitated by the Belt and Road Initiative.

Obviously, their argument doesn’t hold water. From the ancient Silk Road to the Belt and Road Initiative, China and Arab countries have maintained a symbiotic relationship, striving for mutual benefit and win-win outcome.

The two parties have actively engaged in substantive cooperation across various sectors including economy,

trade, energy, infrastructure construction, agriculture and high technology, yielding fruitful results.

In addition, China has played a pivotal role in fostering historic reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, advocating for Syria’s reinstatement in the Arab League, and supporting Arab countries in strengthening their strategic autonomy.

On the issue of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, China has consistently provided humanitarian aid to the Palestinians and dispatched special envoys to advocate for ceasefire negotiations.

Thus, China’s presence in the Arab world demands recognition and cannot be disregarded.

What is particularly striking is their assertion that the Arab populace’s preference for China is solely result of their discontent with the United States—a viewpoint that is biased and speculative. In fact, their shift in attitudes towards China and the United States stems from the very different approaches of the two countries, with China notably exerting a positive impact.

As a Chinese saying goes, “A just cause

enjoys abundant support while an unjust one finds little support,” it is evident that China’s actions have resonated positively in the region. The three scholars’ attempts to downplay China’s contribution to the region aims to underscore the US influence and sow discord in China’s relations with the Arab world by distorting cause and effect.

They depict China as reaping the spoils of victory without lifting a finger, which not only reveals the United States’ apprehension towards the growing Arab affinity for China, but also underscores its strategic agenda to contain China. This narrative also exposes the West’s ignorance and prejudice towards China.

It is the limitations of the Western perspective that hinder a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced factors driving the Arab world’s evolving sentiments towards the United States. In the article, the scholars attribute the US diminishing standing in the Arab world primarily to its divergent policies concerning Israel and the Gaza conflict, overlooking broader con-

tributing elements.

While acknowledging the significant impact of the US mishandling of the Israeli-Palestinian discord, this perspective merely scratches the surface, warranting a more profound examination across historical timelines and Arab-centric viewpoints.

First and foremost, this is a historic choice for the Arab people. Twenty years ago, the United States pledged to liberate and foster a united, stable and free Iraq, yet Baghdad was eventually turned into a “ghost town” under the American invasion. Nowadays, despite the avowing commitment to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the US continues to arm Israel with offensive weapons and equipment—a disheartening echo of past actions.

For a long time, the United States has tried to exert its influence on the Middle East through military interventions and economic sanctions, but its actions have often triggered regional conflicts and even led to the outbreak of wars, posing a threat to the peace and security of the region.

The recurring hege-

monic conduct of the United States has left the Arab people feeling incensed and disillusioned. After long-term observation and judgment, the Arab people have already seen through the real intention of the United States.

From the perspective of the Arab world, this may be a manifestation of the region’s pursuit of strategic autonomy. After the Cold War, the United States interfered brazenly in Arab nations’ internal affairs to safeguard its own interests, and even advocated for regime change through forceful tactics like armed invasions, and the imposition of a contrived “American-style democracy”.

This is reminiscent of historical instances such as Britain’s imposition of a hierarchical system and the “divide and rule” policy in India to perpetuate its dominion. Undoubtedly, such interventions by the United States and the United Kingdom have caused irreparable harm and losses to the local people.

With the development of globalization and information technology, the Arab world is undergoing unprecedented transformation.

Some Arab countries have begun to seek political pluralism and economic autonomy in an attempt to break away from the control of external forces such as the United States. This change has not only had a profound impact on the relationship between the United States and the Arab world, but on the political landscape of the entire Middle East region as well.

In contrast to the US approach, China has emerged as an active participant in the peace-building endeavors in the Middle East, steadfastly upholding principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

In its cooperation with the Arab world, China prioritizes bolstering the autonomy of the Middle Eastern countries and advocates for self-driven stability, aiming to foster enduring peace and prosperity in the region.

This approach has engendered growing trust and admiration among the Arab people towards China. The recent signing of the Beijing Declaration stands as the best exam-

ple of the trust.

The declaration encapsulates the aspirations of the 14 Palestinian factions for peace and improved livelihoods, underscoring their deep confidence in the Chinese government’s commitment to the well-being of individuals in the Arab world.

Echoing the sentiments of the three American scholars, the current situation represents both danger and opportunity for the United States.

It is imperative for the United States to actively engage in resolving the Gaza conflict, kick-start negotiations for a permanent solution to the Palestinian-Israeli discord, and work with the international community to foster a peaceful and stable future for the Middle East region. Meanwhile, the United States should re-examine its foreign policy and strategies in the Middle East, abandon the mindset of Western hegemony, respect the autonomy of the Arab world, and prioritize cooperation and dialogue with Arab countries in order to realize a mutually beneficial and win-win situation.

— China Daily





**PESHAWAR:** Businessman Forum leader Ilyas Ahmad Bilour addressing members of Pakistan Tea Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at Chamber's House.

## PSX loses 927 points to close at 78,469.33

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Thursday, losing 927.68 points, a negative change of 1.17 percent, closing at 78,469.33 points against 79,397.01 points on the last working day.

A total of 327,279,993 shares were traded during the day as compared to 386,980,823 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 15.283 billion against Rs 14.899 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 445 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 135 of them recorded gains and 263 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 47 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Fauji Fertilizer Bin Qasim with 28,451,875 shares at Rs

42.71 per share, HASCOL Petrol with 17,867,321 shares at Rs 6.45 per share and Dewan Motors with 16,451,307 shares at Rs44.57 per share.

PIA Holding Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 81.21 per share price, closing at Rs 898.00, whereas the runner-up was Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited with a Rs 69.76 rise in its per share price to Rs 7,576.42.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 69.50 per share closing at Rs 18,175.00, followed by Nestle Pakistan Limited with a Rs 63.04 decline to close at Rs 6,956.96.

**Rupee gains 10 paise against dollar**

Pakistani rupee on Thursday appreciated by 10 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.40 against

the previous day's closing of Rs 278.50.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 278.85 and Rs 280.5 respectively.

The price of Euro went up by 46 paise to close at Rs 302.01 against the last day's closing of Rs 301.55, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen gained 02 paise and closed at Rs1.82, whereas an increase of 25 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs359.06 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs358.81.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 03 paise each to close at Rs75.79 and Rs74.21 respectively.

## Nestlé Pakistan reports half year results

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: The Nestlé Pakistan's revenue for the six-month period ended June 30, 2024, rose to PKR 107.7 billion reflecting a growth of 6.2% compared to the same period last year. The results were announced following a Board of Directors' meeting at the Company's Head Office.

This was driven by broad-based growth across our portfolio, complemented by a favorable product mix and demand generating activities. However, headwinds in commodity and energy prices, along with increased investment in our brands, have resulted in a decline in operating profit. The Company maintains a cautious outlook for the rest of the year in view of the taxes announced as part of the Federal budget 2024-25, along with the ongoing external challenges.

## Gold rates decrease by Rs.2,300/tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of per tola of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs2,300 and was sold at Rs250,500 on Thursday against its sale at Rs252,800 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs1,972 to Rs214,763 from Rs216,735 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold down up to Rs196,866 from Rs198,674, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs60 to Rs2,860 whereas that of ten gram silver went down by Rs51.44 to Rs2,451.98.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$43 to \$2,370 from \$2,413, the Association reported.

## PTA KP renews pledge to support businessman forum in SCCI elections

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Expressing confidence over leadership of the businessman forum, the Pakistan Tea Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (PTA-KP) joined the businessman forum and pledged to fully support the forum in the upcoming election of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The announcement made by PTA KP Chairman Ashfaq Ahmad along with office bearers and members in presence of businessman forum leader former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, SCCI president Fuad Ishaq, senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, Anjumana e Tajran KP president Shaikat Ali Khan, former president FPCCI Ghazanfar Bilour, and here during visit at the chamber house.

Members of the SCCI executive committee Imran Khan Mohmand, Javed Akhtar, Naqem Qasmi, Hamza Ibrahim Butt, Muhammad Ismail Safi,

and Nadeem Rauf, Aftab Iqbal, Faiz Rasool, Sohail Javed, Fazl e Wahid, former vice president Shuja Muhammad, secretary Muqtasid Ahsan, secretary Sohail Anjum, PTA office bearers and members were present a large number on the occasion.

Fuad Ishaq while speaking on the occasion welcomed the joining of PTA KP into the businessman forum and stated that it is a renewed pledge and manifestation of selfless services of the forum for the traders' community.

The SCCI chief said the businessman forum had successfully served the traders community for the last 24 years, which is exemplary and unmatched.

Fuad Ishaq said when he along with other members of the team took charge of office and swore that they will serve the business community indiscriminately and selflessly.

By the virtue of Allah Almighty, the team has fully come up with expectations of the community and

played an important role in resolution of traders' longstanding and genuine issues.

The SCCI chief said one thing came into their knowledge that matters of SCCI visa section are incorrect and we had unearthed a mega corruption scam after a probe and exposed three member gang and recovered hefty Rs5million, which had deposited in ABL account and case has been filed in Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) for further interrogation.

As compared to the previous financial year, the SCCI income has increased by 42 percent at the end of fiscal year on June 30, 2024.

He said if the recovery amount of corruption would be included so that the chamber income had to be surged up 270 percent.

During the meeting, copies of ABL receipts also distributed among participants about Rs5million recovery from an employee.

Former senator Ilyas Bilour said the pledge that had been renewed today by PTA is a staunch evidence and testimony that the Businessman Forum is the only platform which is fully capable to resolve the issues of the traders' community.

Shaikat Khan in his marathon speech welcomed joining of the PTA into BF and stated that doors of SCCI had always remained open for traders' community because it is the only forum which believes in selfless services to the community and played a proactive role in the resolution of the issues.

The traders' leader said BF is going to contest the election on its performance and God willing, the success will be the forum in the elections.

Ashfaq Ahmad and Aftab Iqbal also spoke on the occasion and announced complete support to BF in the upcoming election of SCCI 2024-26 and claimed the BF will clean sweep the polls.

## Mobilink Bank upgrades treasury operations with AutoSoft Dynamics

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading digital microfinance bank, Mobilink Bank, has brought on board AutoSoft Dynamics, a renowned global provider of core banking and financial application solutions, as a strategic partner to automate their treasury operations. Under this partnership, AutoSoft will facilitate Mobilink Bank's seamless integration with the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) PRISM solution through its Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system. This integration ensures secure and instantaneous fund transfers, aligning with the Bank's commitment to providing premium financial services.

Mobilink Bank is part of the VEON group, a global digital operator that provides converged connectivity and digital services to nearly 160 million customers in six dynamic markets that are home to 7% of the world's population. Adil Ali Abbasi, Chief Financial Officer Mobilink Bank and Bilal Mahmood, M.D. Contour Software & CEO AutoSoft Dynamics formalized the partnership in Islamabad. The signing ceremony was attended by representatives from both organizations.

Sharing his thoughts at the signing ceremony, Faisal Mahmood, Chief Information Officer, Mobilink Bank, said, "We at Mobilink Bank are continuously working on improving our customer's experience. Partnering with industry leaders like AutoSoft Dynamics allows us to utilize cutting-edge technology and create a more agile and efficient banking system. This partnership will enable us to streamline internal processes, strengthen our operational security, and ultimately, deliver premium services to our valued customers. By prioritizing innovation, we ensure Mobilink Bank remains at the forefront of the financial landscape, consistently exceeding expectations and



providing tailored financial solutions."

Bilal Mahmood, M.D. Contour Software & CEO AutoSoft Dynamics commented on the occasion, stating, "We are delighted to welcome Mobilink Bank as our new client. With the support of our experienced team, top-tier solutions, and the best practices of our parent company Constellation Software Inc., we look forward to delivering a robust implementation for the Bank to meet both their current and future needs."

Shahzad Rafique, COO of AutoSoft, stated, "This is the 18th strategic partnership for our Treasury Automation System (ADAMS) in Pakistan, with 20% of the country's Money Market transactions being processed by our

ADAMS Treasury System. We look forward to helping Mobilink Bank deliver its goals!"

Through this partnership, Mobilink Bank will streamline its financial operations and alleviate the burden of manual tasks, minimizing human error. The enhanced visibility and meticulous tracking will allow the bank to manage its investments effectively. The comprehensive MIS reporting will equip management with insightful data for informed decision-making. RTGS management will ensure seamless and efficient funds transfer. By spearheading this integration into its core banking system, Mobilink Bank cements its role as an industry leader, paving a path toward unparalleled digital and financial services.

## Pakistan's regional exports increase 20%

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's exports to the seven regional countries witnessed an increase of 20 per cent during the fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

"The country's exports to the regional countries including Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and the Maldives account for a small amount of \$4334.467 million, which is 13.94 per cent of Pakistan's overall exports of \$31,090.229 million during July-June (2023-24)," SBP reported.

China tops the list of countries in terms of Pakistan's exports to its neighbouring, leaving behind other countries such as Bangladesh

and Afghanistan.

Pakistan carried out its border trade with the farther neighbour Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and Maldives.

Pakistan's exports to China witnessed an increase of 33.64 per cent to \$2,707.225 million during fiscal year under review from \$2,025.741 million last year while exports to Afghanistan also witnessed an increase of 6.07 percent from \$522.271 million to \$554.008 million.

The country's exports to Bangladesh decreased by 13.27 percent to \$666.516 million from \$768.548 whereas exports to Sri Lanka rose by 37.81 percent to \$391.226 million from \$283.882.

The exports to India increased to \$3.569 million

from \$0.329 million in the previous year. Exports to Nepal decreased by 4.67 per cent to \$2.711 million from 2.844 million while to Maldives increased by 7.86 cent to \$9.212 million from 8.540 million, it added.

On the other hand, the imports from seven regional countries were recorded at \$13,900.781 million during the period under review as compared to \$9,994.166 million during last year, showing an increase of 39.08 per cent. The imports from China during July-June 2023-24 were recorded at \$13,566.437 million against the \$9,662.911 million during July-June 2022-23, showing an increase of 40.39 per cent during the period.

## Pakistan Customs holds three-day workshop



### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Customs after completing business process mapping in June, 2024, has held a three-day workshop in Islamabad moderated by international experts from Maersk and KGH. This workshop was attended by senior management of customs including Members, Director-Generals and other senior officers to decide the design of future customs strategy document.

Being one of the first public sector organizations of Pakistan that embraced automation and digitization of its processes, Customs is poised to adopt the latest technological tools available to enhance efficacy, transparency and accountability in the department. Building upon the previous

experience of a digitized Customs Clearance System (WeBOC), Pakistan Customs intends to implement the most modern digital solutions to enhance revenue, border compliance and facilitate trade.

Pakistan Customs has remained cognizant of the challenges posed by growing globalization of cross-border trade and transit supply chains, geographic dispersion of manufacturing and adoption of disruptive technologies. The traditional role of Customs from physical border checks is changing to a multi-functional and whole-of-government strategic player in border controls, trade facilitation, regional connectivity and economic growth.

To align its vision and mission with its enhanced

role in regulating international trade, Pakistan Customs with support from World Bank has embarked on an ambitious transformation of its core business processes to minimize human discretion and utilize modern technology for uniformity in its operations in line with the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Upon completion, the Customs Transformation Project is expected to realign the legal framework, organizational structure and operational model of Pakistan Customs with the international best practices as outlined in the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the WTO. Upgradation of risk management, post-clearance audit capabilities, use of technology and elimination of redundant processes would enable

Customs to re-direct its resources towards more critical functions without incurring new costs.

Customs Transformation Project involves deployment of latest technologies for providing digital solutions to achieve the aims of transparency, good governance and trade facilitation. Once completely rolled-out, the Customs Transformation Project will replace the aging WeBOC system with a risk management based and AI enabled system for efficient handling of cargo and minimizing risks of smuggling, under-invoicing and misdeclarations.

The Prime Minister has constituted a 'Steering Committee' headed by Finance Minister to ensure close oversight, removal of difficulties and timely completion of the Project.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships, EF Amma, Ceylon Breeze, Xin Hai Tong and Bateleur scheduled load/offload Container, Cement, Coal and LPG, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose-2 & 4 Terminals and Sui Southern Gas Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Gulf Diamond and Epic Sunter scheduled to load/offload Rice and LPG are also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on today early morning.

A total of seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, EF Emma, Hafnia Seine and Al-Thakira left the port on today morning while another ship 'Fisher' is expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 53,395 tonnes, comprising 42,570 tonnes imports cargo and 10,825 tonnes export cargo carried in 315 Containers (315 TEUs Imports) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Five ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two ships, Gulf Diamond and Bolan & four more ships, MSC Positano, Maersk Cairo, Seapan Ganges and ONE Modern scheduled load/offload Rice, Mogas and Container are expected to take berths at FAP, FOTCO and QICT respectively on Thursday.

## Stock markets slump after WS's tech plunge

LONDON (AFP/APP): Heavy selloffs in tech stocks hammered equity markets Thursday, tracking a plunge on Wall Street as disappointing earnings caused traders to panic that a long-running rally in the sector may have been overdone.

Paris tumbled more than two percent nearing the half-way stage after Tokyo closed down 3.3 percent, as a stronger yen added to the downward pressure on Japanese exporters.

"Earnings season jitters have really taken hold," noted Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

"The risk-off sentiment permeating through financial markets has done little to help traditional havens such as the dollar and gold, with both losing ground alongside equities."

Oil prices slid nearly two percent Thursday. Shares in French-Italian chip maker STMicroelectronics plunged 14 percent and Infineon Technologies shed more than six percent.

Nearly all sectors suffered, however, with Renault crashing over nine percent and Gucci owner Kering down seven percent. Among the rare risers was consumer goods giant Unilever, which jumped nearly six percent on well-received earnings.

Global stocks had pushed ever higher this year -- with New York's

three main indexes hitting multiple records.

Tech titans such as Google parent Alphabet and chipmakers Nvidia and TSMC have been boosted by an explosion of interest in all things linked to artificial intelligence.

The rallies have been helped by blockbuster profits and upbeat outlooks, causing investors to pile in with cash owing to a fear of missing out.

However, with valuations pushing to dizzying heights, analysts have been warning about retreat, and Tuesday's earnings from Tesla and Alphabet provided a selling opportunity.

Tesla said profits fell 45 percent in the second quarter owing to price cuts and aggressive AI investment.

Seoul's SK Hynix dived nearly nine percent Thursday despite strong earnings, while Samsung

lost two percent.

Tokyo-listed Sony was off more than five percent and Japanese investment giant SoftBank, which has pivoted into AI technologies, gave up 9.4 percent.

Hong Kong and Shanghai fell despite a surprise cut in a key rate by the Chinese central bank.

The earnings shock comes as major economies struggle to mount growth recoveries even as central banks start to cut interest rates in the face of cooler inflation.

Business confidence in Europe's biggest economy Germany unexpectedly weakened in July, a closely-watched survey showed Thursday.

The Ifo institute's confidence barometer, based on a survey of around 9,000 companies, declined to 87 points from 88.6 points in June.

## No more tears

As you leave for greener pastures,  
Tears flown down the cheeks at your departure.

The migrating bird flutters its wings,  
Over for it, is the season to sing.

The Bentley turns round the corner  
Disappears from sight, now and forever.

I shall miss your nudge and touch,  
For our friendship others could vouch.

But since the 'Sea of Gold' is at a distance,  
Leave for it right now, this instance.

— Zeenat Iqbal Hussain





In brief

Waseem bags 2nd position

ISLAMABAD (APP): Joshua Castellano of USA clinched the title of the North American Scrabble Championship by defeating Waseem Khatri of Pakistan in the best of five final in South Bend, USA. Waseem, who was also a finalist here in 2022 had to be contended with the runner-up trophy for the second time while Alec Sjöholm of USA finished 3rd. Waseem will stay in the USA to participate in another tournament The Word Cup that will be played in Albuquerque, New Mexico from July 27 to 31.

Dahani ruled out of Shaheens' tour

DARWIN (PPI): Fast bowler Shah Nawaz Dahani has been ruled out of the Pakistan Shaheens' Darwin tour after picking up a back injury. Dahani will miss the second four-day match against Bangladesh A starting from Friday and the white-ball leg of the Darwin tour, which involves two one-day matches and the Top End T20 Series. The 25-year-old fast bowler, who picked up four wickets against Bangladesh A in first four-day match, will return to Pakistan immediately and will be assessed by the medical panel before starting the rehabilitation process. Spin-bowling all-rounder Mubasir Khan has been added to the white ball squad as cover for Dahani. Khurram Shahzad, who was set to return after the completion of two four-day match series against Bangladesh A, will now be available for selection in the two one-day matches against Northern Territory Strike and Bangladesh A on 4 and 6 August, respectively.

Malik lost 'interest' in playing for Pakistan

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Veteran all-rounder Shoaib Malik on Thursday shared that he has lost interest in playing international cricket for Pakistan again. Malik, who is already retired from two formats, during an interview with a local sports outlet, hinted that his days in international cricket are over. "No, I am happy and satisfied after playing for so many years. I have no interest in playing for Pakistan again," Malik stated. "I have already announced retirement from two formats. I have been playing league cricket, and enjoying my time, wherever I get an opportunity to play. I try to avail it." Upon being asked about his retirement from T20 international cricket, the former captain stated that he would hang his boots from all forms of cricket altogether. "I have no interest but as I said in my previous interviews I will announce my retirement from all forms of cricket once and for all," he said. He also suggested that Pakistan's white-ball captain, Babar Azam, should step down from captaincy and focus solely on his batting. Shoaib Malik believes that the star batter can perform better without the burden of captaincy on his shoulders. "As for his captaincy, my firm stance is that he [Babar Azam] should play only as a player. That's my opinion. When he plays as a player, he can do wonders for the team. He should stay away from leadership," he added. Shoaib Malik has represented Pakistan in 35 Tests, 287 ODIs and 124 T20Is since making his international debut back in 1999. He has scored over 11000 runs across three formats and has taken a total of 218 wickets.

Djokovic, Nadal set for Olympics second-round showdown

PARIS (AFP/APP): Grand Slam record-breakers Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal were placed on an Olympics second-round collision course in the draw for the Paris Games on Thursday.

Nadal, a singles gold medallist at the 2008 Olympics, is playing in his final Games having also won doubles gold in Rio in 2016, while Djokovic was a bronze medallist in singles in 2008. Serbia's Djokovic, a 24-time Grand Slam champion and top seed in Paris following the withdrawal of world number one Jannik Sinner, begins his campaign against Australia's Matthew Ebden.

"I am excited for this duel in the second round, and I will give it my all," said Djokovic, who has faced Nadal 59 times over the past 18 years.

"I am aware of the importance of the Olympic Games. I represent my country, which is more responsibility and even more pressure."

Spain's Nadal, who has won 14 of his 22 Grand Slams on the clay of Roland Garros, faces Hungary's Marton Fucsovics in his opener.

French Open and Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz, the second seed, tackles 275th-ranked Hady Habib of Lebanon in opening round of the tournament, which starts on Saturday. "Roland Garros is the most special place in the world of tennis for me," said 38-year-old Nadal,

who was defeated in the first round of the French Open by Alexander Zverev last month during an injury-hit season.

"This year I was not able to spend a lot of time at Roland Garros so I am excited to be back here. It's another opportunity and a chance to enjoy every single moment." Defending Olympic champion Zverev, seeded third, takes on Jaume Munar of Spain.

Russian fourth seed Daniil Medvedev, playing in Paris as a neutral following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, will meet Rinky Hijikata of Australia. Two-time singles gold medallist Andy Murray, who will end his career at the Olympics after almost two decades on tour, will only play doubles. The 37-year-old former world number one underwent surgery to remove a cyst on his back before Wimbledon, which also sidelined him from singles at the All England Club. - "Toughest decision" - At the Olympics he will play doubles with Dan Evans. "The Olympics are incredibly special for me and I am happy to do it one more time to compete for my country," Murray said at Thursday's draw.

"I trained the last few weeks to get myself ready to play singles and doubles but I am getting older and it's harder to recover from all the injuries. I just ran out of time." Murray and

Evans start their doubles bid against Japan's Kei Nishikori and Taro Daniel. Nadal and Alcaraz, who will team up for the first time, face Argentina's Andres Molteni and Maximo Gonzalez. Nadal, Djokovic and Nishikori are playing at the Olympics for the fifth time in their careers.

Also making a final appearance will be Germany's Angelique Kerber, who announced Thursday she will retire once the Games end. The 36-year-old, who won three Grand Slam titles, was a silver medallist in singles at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

In a first-round clash of mothers, Kerber faces four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka of Japan. "I took the toughest decision of my life today," said 36-year-old Kerber.

"It is not easy to make such a big decision and if I could, I would play forever." Women's world number one Iga Swiatek, returning to the scene of her fourth French Open title last month, begins against Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu. Second-ranked US Open champion Coco Gauff, who missed the Tokyo Olympics three years ago with Covid, takes on Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic. Gauff will join basketball great LeBron James as a flag-bearer for the US team in Friday's opening ceremony on the Seine in the heart of the French capital.

Pakistan to face Sri Lanka in ACC Women's Asia Cup semi

ISLAMABAD (APP): The stage is set for a thrilling encounter as Pakistan Women and Sri Lanka Women face off in the second semifinal of the ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup 2024 on Friday (July 26).

Pakistan, after a loss to India, bounced back strongly with convincing victories over Nepal and the United Arab Emirates earning their spot in the final four.

The opening pair of Gull Feroza and Muneeba Ali has formed a formidable partnership, while the bowling attack, spearheaded by Sadia Iqbal, Nashra

Sundhu, Tuba Hassan, and Syeda Aroob Shah, has been effective.

Pakistan captain Nida Dar expressed confidence in her team's ability to perform well in the semi-final. "After the initial setback, we gained the right track and are showing signs of improvement," she said. "We will be entering the match fully determined to do our best."

Sri Lanka, as the hosts, enjoyed a dominant group stage, remaining undefeated. Their batting, led by Chamari Athapaththu, has been particularly impres-

sive. Spinner Kavisha Dilhari has been a force to reckon with, claiming crucial wickets in recent matches.

Pakistan will look to adopt an aggressive approach to overcome the hosts and secure a place in the final.

**Pakistan squad:** Nida Dar (captain), Aliya Riaz, Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Gull Feroza, Iram Javed, Muneeba Ali, Najiha Alvi, Nashra Sundhu, Omaira Sohail, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Syeda Aroob Shah, Tasmia Rubab and Tuba Hassan.

Pak team to feature in Asian U-18 Volleyball C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan team will depart on Friday for the 15th Asian U-18 Volleyball Championship, scheduled to take place in Bahrain from July 28 to August 4.

According to a spokesman of Pakistan Volleyball Federation, the team, comprising talented young players, will compete against top teams from across Asia, showcasing their skills and determination on the international stage.

The players selected for the team include Talal Ahmed, Abu Bakar, M. Asan, Muhammad Hassan, Jabran Ajmal,

Junaid Muhtad, Ali Shah, Muhammad Junaid, Muhammad Irfan, Muhammad Yahya, Muhammad Nasir and Khizar Hayat.

The team will be led by Head of Delegation Muhammad Kamran, Team Manager Muhammad Buksh Javed, Head Coach Saeed Ahmad Khan Sadi, Assistant Coach Muhammad Suleman, Physio Muhammad Salman, and Referee Muhammad Sabtain.

"We are confident that our team will make Pakistan proud in this prestigious championship," said Muhammad

Kamran, Head of Delegation. "We have a talented group of players who have been training hard, and we are excited to see them in action."

The 15th Asian U-18 Volleyball Championship will feature teams from across Asia, competing for the top honors in the region. Pakistan's participation in this championship is a testament to the country's growing volleyball talent and its commitment to developing young athletes.

We wish the Pakistan U18 Volleyball Team the best of luck in the championship!

Butt blames authorities over Paris Olympics absence

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan weightlifter Nooh Dastgir Butt lamented the lack of support from the sports institutions of the country for his absence from the Paris Olympics, scheduled to run from July 26 to August 11.

Butt appeared at ARY News' show Sports Room and expressed his disappointment over not being able to represent Pakistan in the biggest sporting event.

"The athlete from New Zealand, whom I beat in the Commonwealth Games, is participating in the Olympics but I am not. All because of the [authorities], neither I participated in any qualifying event nor was sent for international training," said Butt.

"They should have sent me for international training right after the Commonwealth Games and also for qualifying events so that I would participate in the Olympics and win a medal for Pakistan," he added.

When probed about the difficulties in his professional career, Butt termed the sports institutions as the biggest hurdle before going on to appeal to the government for an ample platform.

"The biggest difficulty for me currently is the sports institutions of Pakistan, who did not send me for Olympics qualifiers. But now, all I can do is appeal to the government to provide me an international platform so that I can prepare for upcoming events like Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and Olympics," Butt said.

In May this year, weightlifter Nooh Dastgir Butt shared that he has been sidelined from this year's Asian Games and Paris Olympics 2024 for allegedly being part of a parallel weightlifting interim committee.

However, the Commonwealth Games gold medalist has refuted the accusations made

against him and categorically denied his affiliation with any interim weightlifting committee.

Taking to his Instagram account, Nooh Dastgir Butt shared an official letter, that he received from the Pakistan Weightlifting Federation (PWF), which expressed reservations over his inclusion in the weightlifting event of the ongoing National Games.

"I, unfortunately, won't be able to participate in future weightlifting competitions — be it National Games (2023) or international competitions like Asian Games (2023) or Olympic Games (2024) — as I have been alleged to be a member of a parallel weightlifting interim committee by the Pakistan Weightlifting Federation (PWF). As a result, I won't be given an opportunity or platform to participate in future competitions," Butt wrote on his official Instagram account.

West Indies' Sinclair out of third Test

BIRMINGHAM (AFP): West Indies all-rounder Kevin Sinclair has been ruled out of the series finale against England at Edgbaston after having his forearm fractured by fast bowler Mark Wood in the second Test.

Sinclair, only called up on the morning of the game at Trent Bridge after fellow spinner Gudakesh Motie took ill, suffered the painful blow on the fourth evening when a rapid delivery from Wood also flicked the wrist band of his glove before looping to the slip cordon.

His exit for one was part of a West Indies collapse that saw the tourists slump from 61 without loss to 143 all out as England won by 241 runs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in a three-match series. West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite told a pre-match press conference at Edgbaston on Thursday that Motie would now come back into the side but that the 11 had still to be confirmed as fast bowler Shamar Joseph is suffering from flu.

The uncapped Akeem Jordan, who has been playing locally for Birmingham League side West Bromwich Dartmouth, was called up into the squad on Wednesday after fellow quick Jeremiah Louis -- who did not feature in the first two Tests -- was ruled out with injury.

Now the 29-year-old Jordan, who has taken 67 wickets in first-class matches at 24.10, could make his Test debut at Edgbaston. "Sinclair is out with a fracture," said Brathwaite. "He got a blow from Mark Wood, 'So, Motie's back in. And we have called up Akeem Jordan, so we have have a 12."

"We've named a 12 because Shamar Joseph just has a bit of flu. So, we're waiting on tomorrow (Friday) morning to make the decision on the 11."

Although the West Indies have lost the series, Brathwaite said they would still have plenty of motivation at Edgbaston.

"We have five Tests remaining for the year and, you know, World Test Championship points are still at stake. "We have a lot to play for and that's my thing to the boys. "You know, we are still in the running for the Test Championship and obviously we're looking for points as well."

'Got to be on it' Unlike their innings and 114-run defeat in the series opener at Lord's, the West Indies were competitive for large parts of the match at Trent Bridge and even gained a first-innings lead.

They were well-placed in their second innings before a flurry of wickets cost them dear, Shoaib Bashir doing the bulk of the damage as the 20-year-old off-spinner took 5-41.

"We had a fifty opening stand and then, from there, we lost 10 wickets quite quickly," said Brathwaite. The 31-year-old opener, out for 48 and 47 at Trent Bridge, added: "It shows that you've got to be on it always, not just for the first three days.

S4D Table Tennis Camp begins at Peshawar



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sports for Development (S4D) table tennis camp began at Peshawar in which top eight players of U-15 and U-18 categories being trained in connection with preparation for the forthcoming national junior table tennis championship to be held in last week of August.

The camp being conducted under the supervision of International Table

Tennis Federation qualified coach Mian Absar Ali. Directorate General Sports Chief Coach and Administrator Syed Jafar Shah formally inaugurated the camp and assured all kinds of support to the organizers.

Syed Jafar Shah said that all facilities were available to players in Peshawar Sports Complex. Mian Absar Ali said that they had organized the camp as self help

support, no one was there for supports.

He said that hundreds of balls and other equipment had been bought.

"The camp will motivate the players and improve their skills, which will lead to good performance in the national championship" he said and hoped that CM's Advisor for Sports Syed Fakhar Jahan will help the players in every way by encouraging these efforts.

Spain win women's Olympic football opener



PARIS (AFP): Reigning Ballon d'Or Aitana Bonmati scored one goal and helped create another as World Cup holders Spain came from behind to beat Japan 2-1 in their first game of the women's Olympic football tournament on Thursday.

Spain are making their Olympic women's football debut at the Paris Games but are leading contenders to win the gold medal after their World Cup triumph in Australia and New Zealand last year. They fell behind against Japan in the western French city of Nantes to Aoba Fujino's early free-kick, but Bonmati soon equalised before Mariona Caldentey netted the winner in the 74th minute.

It is the perfect start for Spain in Group C, in which rivals Nigeria and Brazil meet later. With 12 teams split into three groups of four, there is margin for error as the two best placed teams will advance to the quarter-finals.

That will provide some comfort for Japan, who won the silver medal at London 2012. Spain's starting XI featured seven players who were in the line-up for last year's World Cup final win over England in Sydney, plus Alexia Putellas, the two-time for-

mer Ballon d'Or winner.

Japan's side included Hinata Miyazawa, the top scorer at the World Cup, but it was Fujino who opened the scoring in the 13th minute with a fine strike from a dead ball which proved too powerful for goalkeeper Cata Coll.

However, Spain bossed possession and drew level midway through the first half when Bonmati was played in by Athena del Castillo and rounded the goalkeeper to score. They then grabbed what proved to be the winner when Caldentey came in from the left and played a quick exchange of passes with Bonmati before firing in.

Canada shrug off spying scandal

Meanwhile, reigning Olympic champions Canada shrugged off a spying scandal to come from behind and start their campaign with a 2-1 win over New Zealand in Saint-Etienne. Mackenzie Barry gave New Zealand the lead before an embarrassingly sparse crowd at the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard, the same venue where the men's game between Argentina and Morocco was affected by crowd trouble on Wednesday.

However, Arsenal's Cloe

Lacasse levelled in first-half stoppage time for Canada, who beat Sweden on penalties in the final in Tokyo three years ago.

Evelyn Viens then latched onto a long ball forward to fire in the winner 11 minutes from the end. Canada's build-up had been overshadowed after an assistant coach and an analyst were sent home from the Olympics on the eve of their opening game.

The analyst, 43-year-old Joey Lombardi, was also given a suspended eight-month prison sentence for flying a drone over a New Zealand training session this week in Saint-Etienne.

Lombardi pleaded guilty when he appeared in court in Saint-Etienne on Wednesday. The assistant coach was Jasmine Mander, to whom Lombardi reported.

Head coach Bev Priestman apologised and decided to take no part in the game against New Zealand as a result because she felt it would not be appropriate.

Canada and New Zealand are in Group A along with hosts France and Colombia, who meet later in Lyon. Record four-time gold medallists the United States meet Zambia later in Group B, which also sees Germany take on Australia.





## In brief

### CDA resumes services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Thursday resumed death and birth registration services suspended by National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) due to outstanding dues. CDA chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa timely intervention into the matter led to restoration of vital services in the capital. Randhawa, upon receiving notice of the suspension of services contacted Chairman NADRA to resolve the issue. Following his instructions, the Municipal Corporation Islamabad (MCI) immediately settled all outstanding payments to NADRA, leading to the restoration of services. To prevent future disruptions, Chief Commissioner Randhawa directed authorities to take permanent measures to ensure timely payment of NADRA's dues. He emphasized that no shortcomings would be tolerated in facilities provided to Islamabad's citizens.

### 314,500 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 314,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 337,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1516.36 feet and was 118.36 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 202,000 cusecs and 190,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1198.45 feet, which was 150.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 22,600 cusecs and 12,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kala-bagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 199,900, 198,800, 138,500 and 77,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 51,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 33,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### PTA, NADRA ink MoU

ISLAMABAD (APP): To streamline the identity verification process for telecom service providers, the PTA and NADRA Technologies Limited (NTL) signed an agreement on Thursday. This collaboration is yet another step towards 'ease of doing business' in Pakistan, especially for prospective telecom service providers. The signing ceremony was attended by the Chairman PTA Major General (R) Hafeez Ur Rehman and Chairman NADRA Lieutenant General Muhammad Munir Afsar. Member Finance PTA Muhammad Naveed and Member Compliance & Enforcement PTA Dr. Khawar Siddique Khokhar along with senior officials from both PTA and NADRA were also present on the occasion, said a news release.

### USF completes 130 projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): Since its inception in 2006, the Universal Service Fund (USF) has completed 130 projects, while 31 projects are currently in progress and are expected to be completed within one and a half years. An official of the Ministry of IT and Telecom said that 1.5% of the revenue from all service providers goes into the USF, which uses these funds to provide services in underserved and unserved areas, ensuring the availability of data and voice services.

# Body for resolving degree attestation issue by HEC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chairperson Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training Senator Bushra Anjum Butt on Thursday committed to addressing the widespread challenges of attestation and equivalency faced by students across all regions, including students involved in the pending cases.

Chairing the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training, she expressed her dedication to youth empowerment through education.

She emphasized the need to collectively resolve these issues without dwelling on past grievances, stressing that politics should not be played at the stake of the future of the nation's youth.

Senator Butt acknowledged the concerns of the HEC's chairman and expressed readiness to collaborate towards resolution.

Consequently, the committee decided to convene a detailed session at HEC to outline the way forward on attestation matters. They also resolved to handle each case individually for fair treatment, and proposed a checklist on the HEC website outlining mandatory attestation and equivalency document requirements from universities.

Butt reiterated that a rigorous monitoring will have to be taken place in order to prevent issuance of fraudulent degrees, along the process, safeguarding the nation's integrity. Additionally, universities facing issues were invited to an upcoming meeting to discuss their challenges.

The committee members unanimously prioritized student welfare, emphasizing swift resolution of students cases.

Addressing concerns about fraudulent degrees and attestation, Senator Butt highlighted the HEC's responsibility to identify and mark universities issuing fake degrees, advocating for clear public messaging and awareness campaigns.

She stressed accountability for failing to identify and penalize such universities, proposing measures to support affected students.

The committee decided that universities found issuing fraudulent degrees would face bans, and students would undergo testing for future admissions, with universities required to compensate affected students financially.

The committee urged HEC to take decisive actions against fraudulent universities and encouraged genuine universities to collaborate closely.

Similarly, discussions also covered New Port Institute of Communication and Economics Karachi, South Asia University Lahore, and Preston Institute of Management

Science and Technology Karachi, Lahore, and their affiliated campuses. Details were provided regarding pending court cases and an ICA against WP filed by students of unlawful NICE Karachi campuses seeking degree recognition.

The HEC briefed on an initiative of constituting a committee to deliberate and propose a plan of action to address challenges faced by students and administrative issues in educational institutions. The chairman committee also requested for an in camera meeting to unveil the fraudulence of these universities by providing evidences on the same.

Additionally, the committee ratified Ms. Butt's membership at Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design Lahore and welcomed Senator Kazim Ali Shah and Gurdeep Singh as members of the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education.

Earlier, the committee unanimously passed the "WAPDA University Islamabad Bill, 2024" proposed by Senators Fawzia Arshad, Rana Mahmood-ul-Hassan, and Umer Farooq, endorsed by both the ministry and committee members.

The committee meeting was attended by Senators Syed Masroor Ahsan, Falaz Naz, and Fawzia Arshad, Chairman HEC, alongside senior officials from related departments.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting Pullain chairing Committee meeting at Parliament's House.

## Minister directs to open centers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday directed the fertilizer companies to establish model centers in every district to facilitate farmers and ensure the availability of fertilizers at fair prices.

This decision was made during a meeting of the Fertilizer Review Committee chaired by the minister, which aimed to review the availability and prices of fertilizers in the country.

In this regards, he said the farmers would be able to buy fertilizer at the original price at the centers and this initiative would end the manipulation of agencies and dealers.

He said Fuji Fertilizer Company established a few model centers last week, whereas the minister directives Engro Fertilizer Company to share proposals for establishment of model centers on a priority basis.

"The government is committed to protecting farmers from exploitation by middlemen and agencies," Rana Tanveer said.

He instructed the provinces to take strict action on hoarding and price manipulation. The committee expressed satisfaction over the availability of fertilizer stock. The committee also sought suggestions from all the stakeholders for Rabi season planning.

## Authorities directed to resolve issues

RAWALPINDI (APP): Director General (DG) Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Kinza Murtaza has directed the authorities concerned to make efforts to resolve traffic issues and remove encroachments.

Chairing a meeting of the Comprehensive Traffic and Transportation Plan Committee, the DG instructed the officers to review traffic and transportation issues of Rawalpindi city.

The DG instructed Chief Officer Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi (MCR), Rafaqat Gondal, and Director Land RDA, Malik Ghaznafar Ali Awan to collaborate and work hard to resolve traffic problems and remove encroachments from commercial areas of Rawalpindi particularly from Murree Road.

She directed Chief Engineer RDA, Muhammad Anwar Baran, and Chief Planner RDA, Jamshaid Aftab to identify locations for parking areas in the city. Additionally, she also ordered a study on integrated bus operations, and a comprehensive examination of the root causes of traffic congestion besides identifying potential sites for parking plazas, evaluating existing public transport routes and integrating different modes of transport.

She also sought suggestions for pedestrian and cyclist safety routes within the context of Non-Motorized Transport to reduce air and noise pollution, contributing to clean air and a quiet environment.

The spokesman informed that the meeting was attended by Additional Director General, RDA, Awaiz Manzoor Tarar, Chief Engineer RDA, Chief Planner RDA, Chief Traffic Officer, Director Land RDA, Director Master Planning CDA, CEO Chaklala Cantonment Board Rawalpindi, Manager Metro Bus Authority, Chief Officer MCR, Deputy Director Planning, Deputy Director IT, and other officers.

# 178th meeting of IBCC concluded

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 179th meeting of the Inter Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) was successfully concluded here the other day with key decisions aimed at transforming Pakistan's examination and assessment systems. Organized by the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Peshawar on Thursday, the meeting was hosted by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Boards Committee of Chairmen.

The meeting was chaired by Syed Junaid Ikhlaiq, Chairman of the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) and Senior Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, which gathered representatives from examination boards nationwide.

The primary focus of the meeting was on modernizing and standardizing examination systems to enhance the quality of education and ensure fair assessment practices across Pakistan. Historically, the education system in Pakistan has faced challenges such as disparities in quality, regional imbalances, and inconsistent standards across educational boards.

The current assessment systems have been criticized for emphasizing rote learning over critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Recognizing these issues, the Forum endorsed the proposal to formulate the National Assessment Framework. This framework marks a significant step in the country's educational progress, demonstrating a collective commitment to improving education quality and providing equal learning opportunities for all students.

The National Assessment Framework will serve as a comprehensive guide for implementing a robust student assessment system that meets international standards while respecting Pakistan's unique cultural and academic contexts. In 2022, the Forum unanimously decided to adopt a new grading system to replace raw marks, aiming to reduce intense competition among students for the highest marks. Although its implementation was delayed due to pending approvals from provincial BISE authorities, recent discussions have prioritized its execution for the annual examinations of 2025.

Annually, the IBCC organizes a summer camp for top achievers from all BISEs. This year, the Chairman of BISE Benazir Abad has been appointed as the focal person to organize the summer camp on behalf of the Sindh Boards Committee of Chairmen. The event will be held in the scenic valleys of Kaghan and Naran, with

support from KPBBCC. Also, the Federal Education Ministry officially announced the National Curriculum of Pakistan for 2023. The provincial curriculum authorities have endorsed this curriculum, which aims to standardize education, ensure consistent learning outcomes, and improve education quality nationwide. This initiative is expected to bridge educational disparities between urban and rural areas, promote national cohesion, and provide students with a modernized curriculum aligned with international standards.

The Forum also commended the Sindh Government's decision to conduct SSC/HSSC examinations in March/April, aligning with other provincial boards' schedules. This uniform academic calendar will protect students from harsh weather conditions during exams and synchronize board results with university admissions.

Syed Junaid Ikhlaiq expressed his appreciation for the collaborative efforts of all participants, emphasizing the importance of these reforms in shaping the future of education in Pakistan. Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah, Executive Director IBCC, highlighted the goal of creating a fair, transparent, and efficient examination system that accurately reflects students' capabilities.

# Cooperation in IT Telecom sector to be enhanced

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Thursday agreed to enhance ties in information technology and telecom communication sector.

Shah said Saudi Arabia was an attractive market for Pakistani tech companies, urging Saudi Arabia to facilitate Pakistani IT firms registered with Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), in getting visa and travelling to that country.

Shah Fatima said Pakistan intended to boost its relations with Saudi Arabia in the field of IT and Telecommunication.

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# Police bust criminal gang

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have busted a street criminal gang by arresting three of active members of Zahid gang allegedly involved in street and other crimes and recovered cash Rs 68,000, three stolen motorcycles, weapons and other items from their possession.

According to a police spokesman, Pirwadhai police held three street criminals namely Zahid, Akbar and Zubair and recovered Rs 68,000, three stolen motorcycles, weapons and other items.

A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Rawal said that police are making efforts to net other members of the gang.

Meanwhile, Rawalpindi

district police in an action against suspected drug peddlers conducted raids in different areas and arrested 16 accused including three women besides recovering 20 kg charras, one kg heroin, 120 grams Ice and other items from their possession.

A police spokesperson said that Taxila police held an accused namely Ayub and recovered 1012 grams heroin and 120 grams Ice.

R.A.Bazar police rounded up Naila Bibi with 2200 grams charras, Nasreen with 2100 grams charras and third accused namely Shazia for having 800 grams charras.

Three other accused namely Zeeshan, Naveed and Qadeer were sent behind the bars for possessing 4400 grams charras.

Murree police netted

Muhammad Abbas for having 1550 grams charras, Toseef with 1250 grams charras and Afaq for possessing 1620 grams charras. Toseef was arrested for having two pistols 30 bore and a rifle.

Similarly, Pagwari, Kahuta, New Town, Rawat, Cantt police arrested Sohail, Jahanzaib, Amjad, Hazar Khan, Ghulam Shabbir, and Ajmal were rounded up on recovery of total 6340 grams charras.

Separate cases have been registered against all the accused while further investigations are underway.

City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Australia to Pakistan Neil Hawkins meeting with Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan.

# PMD forecast hot weather with chances of isolated rain

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast mainly hot and very humid weather for most parts of the country during the next 24 hours.

However, rain-wind-storm/thundershower is expected at isolated places in Kashmir, northeastern Punjab, Pothohar Region and upper Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Isolated rain-wind-storm/thundershower is also likely in southern Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, northeast Balochistan and central/ south Punjab during evening/night.

In Islamabad, mainly hot and humid weather with rain-wind-storm/thundershower is expected in Islamabad and surroundings during morning/ night hours.

In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, rain-wind/ thundershower is expected at isolated places in Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Buner, Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, Malakand, Bajaur, Khyber, Kurram, Kohat, Karak

Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and Waziristan.

In Punjab, mainly hot and very humid weather is expected in most parts of the province. However, rain-wind-storm/thundershower is likely at isolated places in Murree, Galliyat, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Sialkot, Narowal, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Lahore, Kasur and Okara. While, rain-wind/thundershower is also expected at isolated places in Sheikhupura, Sahiwal, Sargodha, Khushab, Faisalabad, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Noorpur Thal, Mianwali, Bhakkar, Layyah, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bahawalnagar during evening/night.

In Balochistan, mainly hot and very humid weather is expected in most districts of the province.

However, rain-wind/thundershower is likely at isolated places in Zhob, Musa Khel, Barkhan, Kohlu, Loralai, Sibbi, Khuzdar and surroundings.

In Sindh, mainly hot and very humid weather is

expected in most districts of province. However, partly cloudy weather with isolated light rain/ drizzle is likely in coastal areas.

On the northern side, partly cloudy weather with isolated rain-wind/ thundershower is expected in Kashmir.

While, dry/partly cloudy weather is expected in Gilgit-Baltistan.

During tge last 24 hours, hot and humid weather prevailed over most parts of the country.

However, rain-wind and thundershower occurred at isolated places in northeastern Balochistan, Northeast Punjab, upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, lower Sindh and Kashmir.

The rainfall recorded was Balochistan: Sibbi 47mm, Punjab: Sahiwal 17, Murree, Kasur 03, Kashmir: Rawalakot 06, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Pattan 03mm.

The maximum temperatures recorded were in Dalbandin 47C, Nokkundi 46 Bhakkar and Jacobabad 44C.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain presided over a meeting of Sugar Advisory Board.



3 killed in Parwan collision

CHARIKAR (Pajhwok): At least three people, including two women, were killed and as many others wounded in a traffic accident in central Parwan province on Thursday, police said. The accident took place when a Sarcha-type vehicle collided with another car in Dand Patan area of Siagurad district this morning, the police headquarters said in a statement. It three people, including two women, lost their lives and three others women were injured in the collision.

Commission issued cards

KABUL (BNA): The Liaison Commission for Contact with Afghan Personalities has issued safety cards to a former ambassador and several military personnel from the previous administration, marking a significant step in promoting national reconciliation and reintegration. According to a statement from the ARG, the commission distributed safety cards to a former ambassador and several military personnel who recently returned from the United States.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

# Haqqani delivers speech to security forces

## — warns public about carrying unlicensed and illegal weapons



KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Minister of Interior Affairs, Sirajuddin Haqqani made it clear on Thursday that it is illegal to carry unlicensed weapons in the country. Addressing an ‘appreciation ceremony’ for security forces, Haqqani said this applies to both individuals and companies. He said individuals and companies need permits to have weapons. He also spoke about security across the country and said sincerity, good

mony among themselves,” said Haqqani. According to him, all factors that cause instability of society must be prevented in the Sharia system. “Without responsible persons, no one has the right to carry weapons without a permit, apart from the Emirate’s organizations; if it is security companies, businessmen, the private sector, or any person who wants to carry weapons they must obtain permits,” Haqqani added. He also warned that any responsible person who undermines the security of the people will be investigated by the authorities. Regarding the structure of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, he said that there are approximately 230,000 policemen and efforts are being made by the ministry to “professionalize” them. Haqqani also said that another major factor in

Ensuring security is good coordination between the ministries of interior, defense and the General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI), which he said “has won the trust of the people and the world.” The GDI head, Abdulhaq Wasiq, said at the same event that the three entities have joint and separate responsibilities in terms of preventing crime, ensuring national security and other tasks. He also said these three bodies also work with other ministries when needed. Wasiq said GDI performs its duties in accordance with the law and that all laws have been approved according to Islamic Sharia and Hanafi jurisprudence. He said the laws have been approved by scholars and experts of the relevant department, and ratified by the supreme leader of the Islamic

Emirate. “Unlike the structure and strategy of the past intelligence organizations, the intelligence officers of the Islamic Emirate are bound by Islamic Sharia and the law. When they commit a violation, they are investigated. Alhamdulillah, intelligence (GDI) is now a reformed and law-abiding organization,” said Wasiq. He also said “negative propaganda” is occasionally detected by some circles that attempt to present a false image of the directorate. “This propaganda is a one-sided lie, the facts are clear to the people of Afghanistan and all the countries of the world, and these biased circles are known by all the countries of the region and the world who want peace and prosperity in the world,” he added. According to him, Afghanistan is now on the list of safe countries in the world, terrorist groups have been suppressed, and have been forced to flee Afghanistan. He said: “They are now outside the borders of Afghanistan.” “Our security performance has proven to the world that the Islamic Emirate has the capacity to provide Afghanistan’s security and can fulfill its obligations in this regard.” Wasiq did however call on the international community to make sure they had the facts and not believe false information. “The media reports about the presence of various [terrorist] groups in Afghanistan are not true, but all these reports are political and are aimed at misleading the public.” Wasiq also rejected repeated claims by international organizations and countries that some militant

## Pharmaceutical sector: Beradar calls for investment



KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Beradar has called the production and smuggling of low-quality drugs illegal and against Islamic values and asked businessmen to invest in the health sector. Addressing a gathering marking the inauguration of a pharmaceutical company Life Pearl he said: “The smuggling and import of low-quality drugs was an illegal and bad act and we hope that with the inauguration of this factory public access to quality drug would improve, we ask the owners of pharmaceutical factories to produce quality medicines.” He hoped that businessmen would invest in medical sector to improve drugs production and make Afghanistan self-sufficient in the production of drugs. Acting Health Minister Noor Jalal Jalali said currently quality medicines are produced in the country and there was need for investment in this sector. He said: “The Islamic Emirate is trying to make Afghanistan self-sufficient in all sectors and we should not wait for foreign help,

## 200 schools require reconstruction

FARYAB (TOLOnews): More than 200 schools in Faryab, damaged by past wars and recent natural disasters, need reconstruction. Residents of Faryab say that the destruction of these schools has made the educational process difficult for students. Currently, students are studying in open spaces and rented houses. They are calling on the Islamic Emirate and aid organizations to provide not only basic reconstruction but also desks, chairs, and safe drinking water. Najibullah, a religious scholar, said: “Children are continuing their education in mosque corners, rooms, and under trees because there are no buildings. We urgently need the schools to be repaired.” Abdul Jamil, a resident of Faryab, said: “The war destroyed the schools, and our children are studying in some rented buildings, which is very difficult.” Khudai Berdi, another resident of Faryab, said: “They are destroyed, dilapidated, with no desks or chairs. The children of the nation are studying on bare ground with no proper place or drinking water. The children are in a lot of trouble.” Mohammad Tahir Jawad, the Director of Education for Faryab, has called on the central government, aid organizations, traders, and philanthropists to assist in the reconstruction of these schools. The Director of Education for Faryab added: “Our 200 schools in Faryab have been damaged by past wars and natural disasters and need repairs. One example is the central high school of Dawlatabad district where we are currently located.”

# Sanctions affect Afghanistan’s global relations, says Hanafi

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Administrative Deputy of the Prime Minister’s Office, in a meeting with the head of UNAMA, called for the transfer of Afghanistan’s seat at the UN to the interim government, the lifting of sanctions, and the removal of Islamic Emirate officials’ names from the blacklist. In a statement from the Arg, Abdul Salam Hanafi was quoted as saying that imposing restrictions on Afghanistan’s relations with other countries has a negative impact. The statement said: “We believe that these restrictions are not only unhelpful but also negatively impact Afghanistan’s relations with other countries. Therefore, it is necessary to address the problems and challenges with joint efforts



and flexibility.” Abdul Salam Hanafi, in his meeting with Roza Otunbayeva, expressed gratitude for the United Nations’ assistance to the people of Afghanistan and UNAMA’s efforts to improve Afghanistan’s relations with other countries. The statement added: “The leadership of the IEA is striving with all its might for economic growth, creating job opportunities for young people, and implementing development projects in various regions. We request the United Nations and other aid agencies to cooperate in the fields of health, education, agriculture, and other sectors.” Arg also quoted Roza Otunbayeva, the head of UNAMA, as saying that the United Nations wants to continue its assistance to

# Herat exports recycled fibers to Germany for first time

HERAT (TOLOnew): Recycled fibers from plastic waste produced in the industrial park of Herat have been exported to Germany for the first time. It is planned that 750 tons of these fibers will be exported to Germany over several months. These fibers produced in the Herat industrial park are exported to Germany after quality assessment and testing. Abdulrahman Mutmain, a production factory official, said: “For the first time, we have contracted to export approximately 750 tons of fibers from the Mumtaz

Jahan company in the Herat industrial park to Germany. The products we produce are from plastic beverage and mineral water bottles. The value of each 25-ton shipment is up to twenty-one thousand dollars.” Previously, polyester fibers from this factory have also been exported to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The Herat Chamber of Mines and Industries says that due to the improvement in the quality of the industrial park’s products, the export of domestic products to various countries has increased. Hamidullah Khadem, head of the Herat Chamber of Industries and Mines, said: “Today we are witnessing the export of a shipment of fibers abroad. This shipment is a trial to ensure it meets the foreign market’s preference, and in the future, exports will be carried out on a larger scale.” Polyester fibers are obtained from plastic waste; after being collected from cities, the waste is brought to the factory for fiber production. Abdul Rahim Mohammedi, an employee of a pro-

# Citizens’ security ensured: IEA officials



KABUL (TOLOnews): Some officials of the Islamic Emirate, on the final day of the National Labor Conference, reiterated that Afghanistan’s territory will not be used against any country. The acting Ministers of Defense and Interior said on the second day of the conference that while Afghanistan has limited resources, it enjoys good security, and opposition groups in the country have been eliminated. The Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, Abdul Salam Hanafi, said: “After the

security of every citizen of the country at any cost, defend it, and protect its dignity. We safeguard their property, children, and honor.” Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani, acting Minister of Interior, mentioned that they have destroyed ISIS in Afghanistan and have ensured the country’s security with limited resources. The acting Minister of Interior further said: “The only concern was that Afghanistan posed a threat and a problem; but today, this concern and threat no longer exist. Any number of malicious and corrupt individuals have been eliminated.” The acting Minister of Foreign Affairs criticized neighboring countries and the world on Tuesday, the first day of the National Labor Conference, stating that they always emphasize the Islamic Emirate’s fight against terrorism and narcotics but have not cooperated with the Islamic Emirate in these areas.

# Top Kankor students praised by National Examination Authority

KABUL (TOLOnews): The top ten students who scored the highest marks in the Kankor exam were praised by the National Examination Authority. Abdul Baqi Haqqani, the head of the National Examination Authority, emphasized the need for standardization of higher education in the country and said that the education and higher education sectors are facing serious challenges. Haqqani added that Western countries are trying to influence the young by offering scholarships. The head of the National Examination Authority said: “The devastation and misery of the past 45 years were created by cadres trained by foreigners against Afghanistan and Islam.” Meanwhile, Sebaqatullah Wasel, financial and administrative deputy of the Ministry of Education, emphasized the standardization of exams and added that the Islamic Emirate is committed to the expansion and improvement of modern



sciences in the country. Wasel said: “Sheikh Sahib also emphasized that in addition to religious sciences, modern sciences are also necessary.” Saifuddin Tayeb, deputy of the Administrative Office, said: “Students who enter the educational and academic field should not waste their time and should make the most of the talents that Allah Almighty has given them.” Some religious scholars and other officials also mentioned that the gap between universities and religious schools should be eliminated, emphasizing the importance of learning and improving modern and religious sciences in the country. Abdul Rahman Mosleh, a religious scholar, said, “You can benefit from both the divine and current systems. This is the grace and blessing of Almighty Allah, who has granted you knowledge and progress; never forget it.” In this program, the National Examination Authority praised the top ten Kankor 1403 students who achieved high scores.



# Rs1.6b dues of media industry paid in transparent manner

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, Culture and National Heritage Attaullah Tarar informed the Information Standing Committee of the National Assembly on Thursday about clearance of Rs 1.6 billion in dues to the media industry by the government in a transparent manner, which would eventually help them to pay every media worker salary in time.

The minister disclosed the details about the dues' clearance in the committee meeting which was presided over by Pullain Baloch and briefed about the functioning of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and its attached departments. Pointing out a halt in advertisements to certain media channels on favoritism basis in the past, Attaullah Tarar confirmed seamless distribution of the ads to the channels on merit and in accordance with the criteria.

He said there were presence of the dummy newspapers which were being printed only for the sake of ads, describing the practice a major challenge for the ministry that has been taking concrete measure to address the issue. The minister said there was a proposal in the budget 2024-25 to impose a 10 percent tax on newspaper industry, but the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting opposed the idea that could deal a big blow to the industry which ran through the imported paper.

He, during the meeting vowed, more incentives for the newspaper industry. The body was informed that the Information Ministry had been discharging its duties under the Rules of Business 1973 efficiently and its attached departments performance was satisfactory.

The minister said that the restructuring of PTV was being done through various administrative measures. Besides, editorial policy had been reviewed to ensure coverage of all the political parties. He informed that the PTV's income had increased substantially after the launch of the PTV Sports channel. Recalling the past glory of the PTV, he said in the past, its teleplays were watched all over the world, and its past dramas were still popular today.

Tarar acknowledged that currently there was a need to improve the

drama section in the PTV. The minister said that the PTV Entertainment would be brought under public-private partnership in the near future as part of the initiatives to reform and improve the PTV. He told the panel that the revenue of PTV Sports had doubled but there was a need for improvement in entertainment programs and news sections of the PTV.

The minister said a Center for Digital Communication would be established at Pak-China Friendship Centre soon to promote the country's image and government's initiatives. Attaullah Tarar said he was grateful to Secretary Information Shahera Shahid, who had played a great role in reforming the ministry.

He informed the panel that officers of the Ministry of Information were also posted in Pakistani embassies abroad. The body was informed that the External Publicity Wing not only dealt with foreign publications but it was also playing its role for promotion of the soft image of Pakistan abroad. The members of the committee sought a detailed report on the performance of the officers of the Ministry of Information posted abroad.

In response to a question, the Federal Information Minister said that amendments were being proposed in the Newspapers Employees (Conditions of Service) Act, 1973 to bring electronic media workers under the ambit of Wage Board award. He added that the privatization of Shalimar Recording Company was being seriously considered as the company was continuously incurring losses.

As regards the Center for Digital Communication, the body was informed about the importance of presenting the government's policies and initiatives effectively. Information Secretary Shaheera Shahid underlined the importance of such a platform to curb fake news against the national security and sovereignty.

The committee was further informed that Pakistan Television (PTV), Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) and Shalimar Recording and Broadcasting Company (SRBC) have appointed Ministry officers as heads under temporary arrangements. Executive Director General and Principal Information Officer (PIO) Mubasher

Hasan briefed the standing committee on the working of the Press Information Department.

Mubasher Hassan said that the PID was striving to provide citizens with authentic information through print, electronic and digital media. He informed that 858 employees of the Press Information Department were working across the country with a large number of them deputed in its headquarters in Islamabad.

Mubasher Hassan said recruitment in the PID was done after a transparent test. He said the PID officers were appointed as Public Relations Officers who disseminated responsible information to the public and shared their sentiments to the government. "We convey the trends to the government which are based on facts," Mubasher Hassan said to the query of Waqas Akram Sheikh, MNA.

The Pulse Analysis Unit prepared reports in this regard, he added. The PIO maintained that the Prime Minister paid serious attention to the public sentiments, and opinion shared in the media, especially newspapers. Mubasher Hassan said the PID has been conducting advertising campaigns for the government's communication and development activities and no political angle was involved in this, rather it was purely based on public interest.

In the last five years, the government of Pakistan had released public notices and advertisements worth Rs 10 billion. He said he would present the details of the expenses of the PID of the last three months in the next meeting. Advertising campaigns were monitored through a software to ensure transparency, he added.

The Standing Committee sought a detailed briefing on the performance of PTV so that proposals and suggestions could be discussed to make the national TV financially self-reliant. The committee also decided to hold a special briefing on the advertisement policy of the government to ascertain criteria for public sector advertisement in electronic and print media. The Standing Committee offered Fateha for the soul of the father of PIO Mubasher Hasan who passed away last week. The chairman of the Standing Committee and its members expressed their heartfelt condolences with the PIO.



ISLAMABAD: A view of heavy containers placed on a green belt alongside a road near red zone due to Jamaat-e-Islami Dharna at D-Chowk.

## Raoof's remand extended

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Raoof Hasan's remand was extended by three days on Thursday. Meanwhile, the court granted post-arrest bail to two women from the PTI media cell. Hassan was produced before the Islamabad District and Sessions Court today, following the completion of his two-day physical remand. The FIA requested further physical remand for Hasan and other suspects involved in the case. Hasan, along with 11 other suspects, is facing charges under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA). He was arrested by Islamabad Police on July 22 during a raid on the PTI secretariat. Subsequently, on July 23, the District and Sessions Court granted a two-day physical remand to the FIA.

During today's hearing, the FIA argued for an extension of the remand, stating that they are still investigating social media accounts and Gmail logins related to the case. The FIA claimed that individuals involved in the case were operating WhatsApp groups with members from abroad, and that fake accounts were found on the suspects' mobile phones. They alleged that Hasan, who heads the PTI media wing, was directing the campaign against the judiciary and administration.

The FIA prosecutor stated that under the PECA, they can request a 30-day remand in such cases.

Separately, the District and Sessions Court granted post-arrest bail to two women from the PTI media cell, identified as Farhat and Iqra, who were also facing charges under the PECA. During the hearing, the FIA prosecutor argued that these women were employed by the media cell and that evidence supporting the charges against them exists. He claimed that they were hired for a specific purpose. The court, however, granted bail to the two women on a surety bond of Rs. 50,000 each.

## PTI's Neeli Parri arrested

**E.P. Report**

LAHORE: Police in Lahore on Thursday arrested PTI activist Aneela Riaz Jutt alias Neeli Parri for beating up stage artiste Tahir Anjum in front of the Punjab Assembly Wednesday for making videos against the former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan.

Earlier, in the FIR, the police had registered on the complaint of the artiste, Neeli Parri and some men accompanying her tore his clothes besides hurling life threats at him when he went past the hunger strike camp set up by the PTI leaders and workers. The PTI activist reportedly dragged Anjum out of the car and then punched and kicked him. The people, who were present nearby, rescued the actor.

Talking to media, Anjum said he did not do anything illegal. "Neither I made any video. I was going along with my family when I was waylaid by the PTI workers and Parri subjected me to torture." Anjum's eyes were filled with tears when he was talking to the channel.

## Israeli forces advance in Gaza, tanks in Rafah

### Israeli military says bodies of 4 captives retrieved from Gaza

TEL AVIV: The Israeli military has announced that it recovered the bodies of five captives during an operation in Khan Younis in southern Gaza. The army said on Thursday that the bodies of kindergarten teacher Maya Goren as well as soldiers Tomer Ahimas, Kiril Brodski, Ravid Aryeh Katz and Oren Goldin – the latter two reservists – had been returned to Israel.

Goren, 56, was killed in the kibbutz of Nir Oz, one of the communities targeted in the Hamas-led attack in southern Israel on October 7, according to Israeli Army Radio. The others were killed in combat on October 7, the army said. Katz was a member of the Nir Oz kibbutz security team. The five bodies were retrieved on Wednesday from the area of Khan Younis, where Israeli forces launched new raids this week. The Gaza Government Media Office said at least 129 Palestinians were killed and hundreds wounded in the previous 48 hours in Khan Younis after Israel launched its latest attack and ordered residents to evacuate. About 150,000 people were forced to flee. — Aljazeera

tants.

In a speech to the US Congress, Netanyahu said his government was actively involved in seeking the release of remaining hostages and was confident they would succeed. Hamas described the comments by Netanyahu as "pure lies" accusing him of thwarting efforts to end the war. Netanyahu's comments also disappointed many displaced Palestinians who had hoped for a clearer signal of an imminent end to the fighting, which has laid the overcrowded enclave to waste and created a humanitarian crisis.

"It was depressing, he didn't even mention ceasefire at all, not even once," said Tamer Al-Burai, a resident of Gaza City, now displaced in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. "People awaited some surprise, a ceasefire announcement by Netanyahu as a gift to (US President Joe

Biden, but they slept with much disappointment, as Netanyahu said he was determined to pursue war," Burai said via a chat app.

Deir Al-Balah, where tanks haven't yet invaded, is currently overcrowded with hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, displaced from other areas of the enclave, home to 2.3 million people. "Netanyahu spoke in a play, he spoke to clowns," said Burai.

Diplomatic efforts by Arab mediators, backed by the United States, to conclude a ceasefire deal, seemed to be on hold, as Israel was expected to send a delegation for more talks next week. In northern Gaza, an Israeli air strike on a house in the Sheikh Radwan suburb killed four people, medics said, while seven Palestinians arrived at a hospital in central Gaza who had been detained by Israeli forces and released in an area close to the border.

## Iran condemns US for welcoming Israeli PM

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran on Thursday denounced the US government and Congress for welcoming the Israeli prime minister amid the deadly war in Gaza that is raging into its 10th month.

"Palestinian children are slaughtered every day by the Tel Aviv butcher, and in the face of all these crimes, the American government and Congress are welcoming this executioner with applause," said Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani in a post on X. "The criminal prime minister of a fake regime is embraced by his supporters after nine months

of genocide and infanticide," he added, referring to Netanyahu, who addressed the US congress on Wednesday.

The remarks came after Netanyahu called for an alliance against what he described as an Iranian "axis of terror," claiming Tehran is behind almost all sectarian killing in the Middle East. "America and Israel today can forge a security alliance in the Middle East to counter the growing Iranian threat," he told US lawmakers.

The months-long Gaza war was triggered when Palestinian militant group Hamas launched a surprise

attack on Israel on October 7, resulting in the deaths of 1,197 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures. Out of 251 people taken hostage that day, 111 are still being held inside the Gaza Strip, including 39 who the military says are dead. More than 39,100 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's military campaign in the Gaza Strip since the war began, according to the health ministry of Hamas-run Gaza. Iran had hailed the October 7 attack but said it was not involved in it.

## NK hackers stealing military secrets, say US and allies

LONDON (Reuters): North Korean hackers have conducted a global cyber espionage campaign to try to steal classified military secrets to support Pyongyang's banned nuclear weapons programme, the United States, Britain and South Korea said in a joint advisory on Thursday.

The hackers, dubbed Anadriel or APT45 by US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the US National Security Agency (NSA) and cyber agencies, Britain's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), and South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS). "The global cyber espionage operation that we have exposed today shows the lengths that DPRK state-sponsored actors are willing to go to pursue their military and nuclear programmes," said Paul Chichester at the NCSC, a part of Britain's GCHQ spy agency.

The FBI also issued an arrest warrant for one of the alleged North Korean hackers, and offered a reward of up to \$10 million for information that would lead to his arrest. He was charged with hacking and money laundering, according to a poster uploaded to the FBI's Most Wanted website on

the advisory said.

It was co-authored by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the US National Security Agency (NSA) and cyber agencies, Britain's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), and South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS). "The global cyber espionage operation that we have exposed today shows the lengths that DPRK state-sponsored actors are willing to go to pursue their military and nuclear programmes," said Paul Chichester at the NCSC, a part of Britain's GCHQ spy agency.

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## LHC declares Imran's remand verdict 'null, void'

**E.P. Report**

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday declared a verdict, allowing the physical remand of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan in May 9 cases, "null and void". A two-member bench comprising Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh and Justice Anwar-ul-Haq Pannu reserved the verdict on the petitions challenging the former prime minister's physical remand. The high court also declared the notification of the PTI founder's appearance via the video link null and void.

During the hearing on Thursday, Justice Saleem said that the suspect cannot be forced to undergo photogrammetry test. Meanwhile, Pannu questioned the prosecutor when did he get the idea that we should move towards the modern devices now. Prosecutor General Punjab Farhad Ali Shah told the

court that the facility to conduct the photogrammetry test is inside the jail and it would be an injustice to not give prosecution a "full chance".

"At the end, the prosecution is blamed that it failed," Shah added. The prosecutor told the court the investigation would be impossible without the recovery of mobile phone through which the tweets were posted and WhatsApp messages were sent. At this, the Justice Pannu asked how will the mobile be recovered when the suspect is in jail.

The PTI founder filed petitions against the anti-terrorism court's (ATC) verdict, saying that it did not assess the records properly when granting police Khan's physical remand. An ATC in Lahore last week had approved a 10-day physical remand of the PTI founder in 12 cases related to the May 9 riots. He was remanded in five

cases of Sarwar Road police station, three cases of Gulberg police station and one case each of Race Course, Shadman, Mughalpura and Model Town police stations.

In another development on Thursday, PTI founder Khan moved the Punjab's top court to avert his potential detention by the military in connection with the May 9 cases. However, Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh discarded his plea, upholding the objection raised by the Registrar's office.

The registrar of the court objected that the power of attorney submitted to the LHC was not signed. Khan pleaded with the LHC to direct authorities to keep him under the jurisdiction of "civilian courts". The PTI founder, in his petition filed by his counsel Aziz Karamat, nominated the federal government and the inspectors general of police of all provinces as respondents.

## National Accountability Amendment Ordinance 2024 challenged in IHC

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Amendment Ordinance 2024 has come under legal scrutiny, with a petition challenging its validity filed in the Islamabad High Court.

Citizen Malik Najjullah, represented by lawyer Azhar Siddique, has challenged the ordinance, naming the Secretary of the Cabinet, the President, the Chairman of the Senate, and the Speaker of the National Assembly as respondents.

The petition argues that the ordinance unlawfully extends the remand period

from 14 to 40 days and reduces the punishment for filing malicious cases from five years to two years.

Najjullah contends that these changes infringe on basic human rights and undermine democratic principles. He asserts that the ordinance, which was issued without parliamentary approval, imposes the opinion of a single individual on the entire nation. He also criticized the ordinance for failing to address the issue of officers making false cases, arguing that a two-year penalty is insufficient.

The petitioner highlighted that the Chief Justice of Pakistan had previously

questioned the democratic legitimacy of such ordinances and noted that they should not bypass parliamentary scrutiny. Najjullah has requested the court to declare the National Accountability Ordinance 2024 unconstitutional and void, and to invalidate any measures taken under it as politically motivated. This legal challenge follows the issuance of two ordinances on May 27, approved by Acting President and Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani.

## Former PML-N leader criticises govt's bid to ban 'popular' PTI

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Muhammad Zubair has spoken against government's move to ban Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), saying that it is the most popular political party.

"No political party including PTI should be banned," Zubair told

media, stressing to remove the "restrictions" for the country's development as they had hindered progress. His remarks came after Information Minister Attaullah Tarar doubled down on the government's decision to ban the PTI, saying the government had made up its mind to go ahead with its "principled" decision.

"[We] have consulted with the Pakistan Peoples

Party with regards to the PTI ban and are currently in talks with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan [...] people are strongly supporting [the idea of banning PTI]", Tarar said.

The former Sindh governor said that about 70% of Pakistanis say that the party should not be banned. "The parties want to ban the majority party," he said.