

**Lightning kills eight**  
**E.P. Report**  
THARPARKAR: Lightning killed eight people including six family members in different localities of Tharparkar on Monday. According to details, lightning struck a Hindu family working in agricultural fields in Nagarparkar area. As a result, six family members including three children were killed. The deceased included Ramesh, Ranjeet, Bhimbromil, Sagna, Vikram, Tabhor and Aneta.

# President directs rise in number of BISP beneficiaries

**Saqib Mushtaq**

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday underscored the need for enhancing the outreach of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) as well as the number of beneficiaries for the uplift of underprivileged sections of society.

The President expressed these views during a briefing given by the Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Mrs Rubina Khalid, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. He asked the Chairperson of BISP to establish an office at Gwadar so that the deserving people of the area could benefit from the Programme.

Taking note of the 0.45% service charges by the banks from BISP card-holders, the president said that the service charges needed to be waived off, and in this regard, the State Bank of Pakistan should be approached to ask banks for opening accounts for BISP beneficiaries. He said that the new payment system would also protect BISP beneficiaries from exploitation. He also called for engaging donors and the private sector to support BISP in its endeavours to provide scholarships to the maximum number of deserving students.

During the briefing, the President was informed about the core initiatives taken by BISP, including the Benazir Kafalat Program, Benazir Taleemi Wazaif Program, BISP Scholarships for Undergraduates Program and Benazir Nashounuma

Program. Chairperson BISP informed that Rs 598.718 billion had been allocated for BISP during the ongoing fiscal year.

She said that Benazir Kafalat was the flagship program of BISP, providing unconditional cash transfers to eligible women and transgender persons across Pakistan. It was highlighted that Rs 461 billion had been allocated for the Benazir Kafalat Program, during FY 2024-25, for 9.3 million eligible families.

In order to enhance school enrolment and provide education to children from low-income households, she informed that Rs 77.18 billion had been allocated for the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif which would benefit 9.7 million children. It was further highlighted that Rs 1.7 billion had been allocated to provide 10,000 scholarships to students under the BISP Scholarships for Undergraduates Program.

The meeting was told that Special Nutrition Food was also being provided to 2 million pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and their infants to address the issues of malnutrition and stunting. She also informed that during the floods in 2022, BISP disbursed Rs 70 billion to 2.7 million flood-affected families across Pakistan. The President appreciated BISP for providing monetary relief to the deserving and underprivileged strata of society.

**Federal Public Service Commission delegation called on**

**President:** President Asif Ali Zardari called for greater representation of women and minorities in government jobs to enhance their inclusion in the mainstream of society.

The President, talking to a delegation of the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC), led by the senior member Akbar Hussain Durrani, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, said that the Commission should find ways and means to further improve the civil service recruitment process to select the right person for the right job, according to a President House press release.

He said that FPSC had an important responsibility of recruiting civil servants to improve service delivery and promote good governance in the country. He urged the need to make the recruitment process more efficient and transparent by adopting modern technology and new methods, particularly computerized testing, that would help in the selection of qualified and efficient civil servants.

The president said that candidates securing high marks during the written examination should be fairly evaluated. Akbar Hussain Durrani briefed the president about the role and function of the FPSC in recruiting government servants. He also highlighted certain issues being faced by the Commission. President Zardari assured the delegation of his support and guidance in the resolution of problems and improving the recruitment system.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari being briefed about Benazir Income Support Program by Chairperson BISP, Mrs. Rubina Khalid, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## ECP declares 93 MPs as PTI members

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday declared 93 more MPs hailing from Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies as PTI members in light of the Supreme Court verdict on reserved seats.

According to a notification issued by the ECP, 29 MPAs of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) from Punjab Assembly and 58 from KP assembly have been declared as PTI members. Moreover, six MPs from Sindh Assembly have also been declared as PTI members.

Earlier, the ECP had issued a notification recognising 39 MNAs as members of PTI. The Supreme Court had overturned the Peshawar High Court's verdict of depriving the PTI of reserved seats of non-Muslim and women candidates in assemblies. The apex court, in its majority 8-5 decision, announced that the conduct of the Election Commission regarding reserved seats was 'unconstitutional', adding that the PTI would remain intact as a political party even without being assigned an election symbol. The verdict was authored by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah.

## TLP leader, workers booked

**E.P. Report**

LAHORE: Deputy Amir of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), Pir Zaheerul Hasan Shah, and party workers have been booked for issuing death threats to Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice, Qazi Faez Isa. The case was filed at the Qila Gujjar Singh police station.

The charges against TLP deputy Amir include sections of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), inciting religious hatred, causing public disorder, intimidating the judiciary, threatening the judiciary, interfering in official duties, and obstructing legal functions.

According to the FIR, during a protest outside the Press Club, Pir Zaheer Hassan Shah incited hatred against the judiciary and announced a reward of Rs10 million for anyone who brings the head of Justice Faez Isa.

## State Bank cuts policy rate to 19.5%

**E.P. Report**

KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan said on Monday that its Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) had decided to cut the policy rate by 100 basis points to 19.5 percent, effective from July 30, 2024.

According to a SBP statement, the Committee observed that the June 2024 inflation was slightly better than anticipated. The Committee also assessed that the inflationary impact of the FY25 budgetary measures was broadly in line with earlier expectations. The external account has continued to improve, as reflected by the build-up in SBP's FX reserves despite substantial repayments of debt and other obligations. Considering these developments – along with significantly positive real interest rate – the Committee viewed that there was a room to further reduce the policy rate in a calibrated manner to support economic activity, while keeping inflationary pressures in check.

The Committee noted the following key developments since its last meeting. First, the current account deficit narrowed sharply in FY24 and SBP's FX reserves improved significantly from \$4.4 billion at end-June 2023 to above \$9.0 billion. Second, the country reached a staff level agreement with the IMF for a 37-month EFF program of about \$7.0 billion. Third, sentiment surveys conducted in July showed a worsening in inflation expectations and confidence of both consumers and businesses. Fourth, international oil prices have remained volatile in recent weeks, whereas prices of metals and food items have eased. Lastly, with the ease in inflationary pressures and labour market conditions, central banks in advanced economies have also started to cut their policy rates.

Taking stock of these developments, the

Committee assessed that, despite today's decision, the monetary policy stance remains adequately tight to guide inflation towards the medium-term target of 5 – 7 percent. This assessment is also contingent on achieving the targeted fiscal consolidation, timely realization of planned external inflows and addressing underlying weaknesses in the economy through structural reforms.

Latest high-frequency indicators continue to reflect moderate economic activity. Auto and POL (excluding FO) sales and fertilizer offtake increased on m/m basis in June. Large-scale manufacturing also recorded a sharp improvement in May 2024, mainly driven by the apparel sector. The growth in agriculture sector, after showing a strong performance in FY24, is expected to slow down in this fiscal year. Latest satellite images and input conditions for Kharif crops also support this assessment. However, activity in the industry and services sectors is expected to recover, supported by relatively lower interest rates and higher budgeted development spending. Based on this, the MPC assessed FY25 real GDP growth in the range of 2.5 to 3.5 percent as compared to 2.4 percent recorded last year.

After recording surpluses for three consecutive months, the current account posted a deficit in May and June, in line with the MPC's expectation. These deficits were largely due to higher dividend and profit payments and a seasonal increase in imports, which more than offset a significant increase in exports and workers' remittances. Cumulatively, the current account deficit in FY24 narrowed significantly to 0.2 percent of GDP from 1.0 percent in the preceding year.

(Continued on Back Page)

## Fitch upgrades Pakistan rating to CCC+ following IMF deal

ISLAMABAD: Fitch Ratings, the global credit rating agency, on Monday upgraded Pakistan's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating (IDR) from CCC to CCC+.

This upgrade was attributed to the country's recent agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), according to a statement from the agency.

In a statement the agency said, "The upgrade reflects greater certainty over continued availability of external funding, in the context of Pakistan's staff-level agreement (SLA) with the IMF on a new 37-month USD7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF)." It said that strong performance on the previous, more temporary IMF arrangement helped Pakistan narrow fiscal deficits and rebuild foreign exchange (FX) reserves.

"Nevertheless, Pakistan's large funding needs leave it vulnerable if it fails to implement challenging reforms, which could undermine pro-

gramme performance and funding," it warned. Fitch expects IMF Board approval for a \$7 billion, 37-month programme for Pakistan by end-August.

However, before the approval, "the government will have to obtain new funding assurances from bilateral partners, chiefly S Arabia, the UAE and China, totaling about \$4.5 billion throughout the EFF. "We believe this will be achievable, given the strong past record of support and significant policy measures in the recent budget for the fiscal year ending June 2025 (FY25)," it said.

On the previous IMF programme, Fitch said Pakistan successfully completed its nine-month Stand-by Arrangement with the global lender in April. "Over the past year, the government raised taxes, cut spending and raised electricity, gas and petrol prices. The government also all but eliminated the gap between the inter-

bank and parallel market exchange rates through a crackdown on the black market and regulation of exchange houses," it said.

Last year, the Fitch maintained Pakistan's ratings to CCC, saying that the rating reflects "high external funding risks amid high medium-term financing requirements". Fitch also noted that although the country's foreign exchange reserves (FX) have recovered, they still remained low.

It highlighted that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) "is rebuilding FX reserves amid inflows of new funding and limited CADs [Current Account Deficit]". "We estimate official gross reserves, including gold, rose to over \$15 billion at June 2024 (about three months of imports), from nearly \$10 billion at end-June 2023," it said, adding that the agency expected "them to rise to nearly \$22 billion by FY26, close their 2021 peak". — Agencies

## Tarar flays malicious campaign against CJP

**E.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar here on Monday said that the state would respond to the malicious campaign against the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) and no one would be allowed to decree religious notions against anyone.

The minister while condemning the act of threatening and instigating the people against CJP said that the state would shield against spreading hate in the country. It is the responsibility of the state to impose laws in the country, he said adding that belief in the finality of the Prophet (SAAW) remained an essential part of Islam without which no one could claim to be a Muslim.

The minister said this in a press conference after attending a meeting with Ulema, in the Commissioner Office. Attaullah Tarar said that Ulema had laid down many sacrifices in Pakistan. The minister highlighted that the father of the CJP was a close ally of the Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

He went on to say that Qazi Esa (father of CJP) and his father played an important role in affiliating Balochistan province with Pakistan. Therefore, without any research, no space could be given to any unauthentic claims in the society; he said adding that the campaign against the CJP was a political move which would not be allowed.

## PM directs steps to protect lives, properties amidst rains

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the authorities concerned to take all possible measures to protect the lives and properties of the citizens amidst heavy rains in different parts of the country.

The prime minister directed the National Disaster Management Authority to take immediate steps to cope with the emergency and extend support to the provincial governments as well as those of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan. He instructed the Islamabad city administration to facilitate the residents and ensure proper drainage of rainwater.

Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the relevant departments to carry out constant monitoring, take coordinated measures and ensure evacuation of people from low-lying areas and drainage of water. Besides, he said the relevant authorities should ensure the provision of water pumps and other machinery, besides the deployment of medical staff, supply of medicines and vaccines, and timely treatment.

Moreover, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief over the death of Prince Abdullah bin Khalid bin Turki bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia.

The prime minister, in a social media post on X, conveyed his condolences to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King

Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. "My heart goes out to the royal family and the people of Saudi Arabia in this moment of grief. May the departed soul rest in eternal peace," he prayed.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif hailed the upgrading of Pakistan's long-term foreign currency issuer default rating (IDR) from CCC to CCC+ by the Credit Rating Agency Fitch.

Appreciating the efforts of Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and his team, the prime minister said the country and the nation had started receiving the fruits of the government's policy of sacrificing politics for the sake of the state in the shape of improvement in the country's economy.

In a statement, he said upgrading Pakistan's global rating to CCC+ was the international recognition of the government's right economic policies. The prime minister emphasized that the government was working hard on the economic reforms agenda, the fruits of which would surely reach the people soon. The reports of Fitch and other international financial institutions are important for the economic improvement of Pakistan, PM Shehbaz said adding, "we will move forward with more effort and passion on the path of economic improvement of the country".

He hoped that the new International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme would further improve the economic activities in the country. The announcement of another one percent reduction in interest rate by the State Bank of Pakistan was another sign of economic improvement, he added. He said that the recent cut in the interest rate would further reduce inflation and increase business activities.

## Cut in petrol, diesel prices proposed

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: There is a suggestion to slash petroleum products' (POL) prices following a drop in their prices in the international market during the last two weeks. A proposal had been floated to reduce petrol's price by Rs5.50 per liter; that of HSD from Rs11 per liter; kerosene oil by Rs5.84 per liter and one liter of light-speed diesel by Rs5.

If approved, the price of one liter of petrol will come down from Rs275.50 to Rs270.10, while that of HSD from Rs283.63 to Rs272.57. Experts, on the other hand, have said that the strengthening of the Pak Rupee's value has also increased the prospects of a reduction in petroleum products' prices.

## KP CM directs better public service delivery at grass root level

**E.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: As an important development, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has unveiled the agenda of his government regarding Good Governance with the aim to ensure better public service delivery at grass root level in a meeting of civil administration held here on Monday. Besides, Chief Secretary, Inspector General of Police and Administrative Secretaries, the meeting was attended by Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners of the entire province.

The Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners were given detailed briefing about various aspects of the agenda including implementation framework, tasks and timelines etc. It was decided in the meeting to give more financial and Administrative powers to the Deputy

Commissioners with the aim to empower them to implement the provincial government agenda in letter & spirit at grass root. It was further decided in the meeting that Deputy Commissioners would be provided full support by Administrative departments regarding the matters of provincial level, and the administrative departments were directed to take immediate actions on the proposals and reports of deputy commissioner pertaining to their respective departments.

The participants were informed that the agenda was a comprehensive program of good governance which encompasses 11 different thematic areas of public service delivery including general administration, cleanliness and hygiene, public convenience, revenue matters, public good and service delivery, public nuisance & interest, food and price control, quality control etc.

The district administrations were given a number of tasks/activities to be performed within a given timeline which include availability of staff in public offices, regular holding of khuli kachehris, timely disposal of official work, development of sanitation plans at TMA level, special cleanliness drive for urban areas, special cleanliness drives for government buildings/ public place, maintenance and uplifting of all sports grounds, removal of illegal parking stands and illegal speed breakers, fixing of dis-functional of street lights, removal of wall chalking, completion of land record computerization, identification and GIS mapping of government and Auqaf lands, identification and removal of encroachments, maintenance and improvement of revenue records rooms, timely disposal of revenue cases, holding monthly revenue darbars, inspections of patwar khana, shifting of patwar khana within halqa, transfer of rev-

enue officials with two years tenure, administrative inspections of all public service delivery outlets, rationalization of staff in public service delivery centers, action against quakes, unregistered hospitals, laboratories and spurious drugs, identification of encroachments around government installations with removal plan, identification of missing facilities in health and education facilities, tree plantation drives, implementation of minimum wage policy, identification and sealing of illegal crush plants, GIS mapping of brick kilns, enforcement of weight and measure regime, action against illegal housing schemes, illegal mining and illegal cutting of forests, fixation of prices of non-perishable food items, establishment of milk testing labs at tehsil level, converting of brick kiln on zig-zag technology, implementation of the standards of food safety and halal food etc.

It was also decided in the meeting,

that special Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be developed for the deputy commissioners to gauge their performance with the regard to implantation of the agenda. To review progress on the implementation of the agenda, weekly review meetings would be held on the level of deputy commissioners, commissioners and administrative secretaries, and fortnightly meeting would be held at Chief Secretary level whereas monthly review meeting would be held at Chief Minister level.

Speaking on this occasion, the chief minister underlined the need of strict implementation of the agenda and said that it was a public agenda which aimed at improving public service delivery at grass root level by ensuring good governance in all sectors adding that the agenda has been prepared keeping in view the public expectations, requirements and ground realities of the province. He

said that more financial and administrative powers have been devolved to the deputy commissioners to enable them implement the agenda in letter & spirit, and hoped that with more financial and administrative powers, the deputy commissioners would implement the agenda.

He directed the district administrations to go out in the field, meet the public and listen to their problems on regular basis so that public issues of urgent nature could be resolve their and then. The Chief Minister further directed them to strictly monitor developmental schemes in their respective districts, and made it clear that there would be no compromise on the quality of developmental work. He said that the provincial government has zero tolerance policy against all kinds of corrupt practices and warned that any government officials found involved in corrupt practices would be dealt with iron hand.





LAHORE: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Chinese Consul General Zhao Shiren. —APP Photo

## British High Commissioner, Governor discuss bilateral issues

LAHORE (APP): The British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott called on Governor of Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan and discussed ways to strengthening bilateral relations and tackling challenges of climate change during a meeting at the Governor's House here on Monday.

Governor Sardar Saleem Haider said Pakistan attaches great importance to relations with Britain, adding that the British government's cooperation in education, health, social and other sector is commendable.

He said climate change is a global issue, stressing despite having minimum contribution in carbon emissions climate, Pakistan has suffered a lot due to climate change. He said that climate change is also having adverse effect on the agricultural sector of the country.

Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said federal and provincial governments are working on various projects to deal with the issue of climate challenge. He said Pakistan has plenty of renewable energy resources. He said that there is a need to bring people

towards solar energy to deal with the energy crisis.

The Governor informed the British High Commissioner about the efforts to solarize the Governor House Lahore and universities of Punjab.

He hailed the British government for the water management program started in different districts of Punjab.

British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, speaking on the occasion, said the British government will cooperate with Pakistan in all possible ways to solve the issue of climate change and water management.

## BISP distributes over Rs. 24 billions to deserving households

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Director General, Sindh Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Zulfiqar Ali Shaikh, announced today that the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has disbursed Rs. 24,772,482,000 among 23,592,84 deserving beneficiaries in Sindh during the ongoing quarterly tranche of April-June 2024.

Under the Benazir Kafalat initiative, BISP has distributed a quarterly stipend of Rs. 10,500 to each household. There are currently 24,906,29 registered BISP beneficiaries in Sindh, with 131,345 still pending to withdraw their quarterly financial assistance.

DG BISP Sindh, Zulfiqar Ali Shaikh, urged the remaining 131,645 female beneficiaries to collect their

payments from BISP offices or payment centers by July 31, 2024, to avoid return of payments. He also emphasized the importance of recertification surveys for all registered female beneficiaries at BISP's Dynamic Registration Centers in each district and Tehsil offices, accompanied by their children's B-forms and CNICs, to ensure continued payment eligibility.

### Commissioner reviews development schemes

LAHORE (APP): Commissioner Zaid bin Maqsood Monday chaired a meeting of the Divisional Development Working Party (DDWP) at his office to review 19 new development schemes for Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, and Kasur districts.

The committee approved various schemes related to urban development, roads, higher and special education, and local government.

The commissioner also approved the 10 new WASA schemes focused on sewerage, drains and water supply for different towns. Additionally, development scheme for Government College Kuliyat-ul-Banat also received approval.

The commissioner gave conditional approval for road schemes in Kasur and Lahore, requesting more detailed information. He emphasized that the quality of development schemes will be strictly monitored and projects must be completed on time. Director Javed Rasheed Chohan and Assistant Director Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal presented review of the schemes. The meeting was attended by deputy directors and representatives from the relevant departments.

### Minister, WB team discuss green tourism

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora held a significant meeting on Monday with a World Bank team at his camp office.

The meeting was attended by Kiran Fazal Butt, representing the World Bank, along with the team from the Tourism for Economic Growth Project while Secretary of Human Rights Ali Bahadur, deputy secretary minorities, PS Syed Sajjad Imran Haider, and other relevant persons were also present. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the topics of minority religious tourism and green tourism.

## Govt not to offer PTI for talks on various issues: Irfan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) in the Senate, Senator Irfan Siddiqui on Monday said the government would not offer to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for talks on various issues anymore.

Talking to media outside the Parliament House, he said that it was now time for PTI leadership to request the government for

the negotiations to settle down the matters.

Irfan Siddiqui said that earlier, the government's doors were opened for the PTI leaders to initiate dialogue with it, adding that the opposition party had always showed reluctance, non-seriousness and immaturity.

He said the coalition government would complete its five years constitutional tenure as it was effectively working for the

welfare and economic stability of the country.

Commenting on Asad Qaiser's statement about PTI will come into power in December, Irfan Siddiqui said that there was no restriction and curbs on dreaming. After passage of December then 2025 will begin but the PML-N would remain in power as it was inception with heavy mandate of the people, he concluded.

## We have to move forward with latest tech: Siddiqui

KARACHI (APP): The Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, on Monday said we have to move forward by equipping ourselves with modern technology and artificial intelligence.

He said that our all-time tested friend China invested at right time in right place and took it's poor people out of poverty level.

While addressing a

cheque distribution ceremony of Nursing and Arts and Culture Students by Pakistan Education Endowment Fund (PEEF) at National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA), he said that our region was developing in spite of the more population in our neighboring countries.

He said that they did not make the population a liability, but made it their asset and China was the best example of it. The

Education Minister said that the youth of the country were our assets. Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said that NAPA was an institution for the promotion of intellectual freedom and art. He said that the students were important to us.

He further said that most of the countries had high population level, but there was innovation in these countries and those countries needed our manpower. Later, he distributed cheques.

## PHP checks 360,392 vehicles, arrests 126 absconders

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Highway Patrol (PHP) Headquarters has released the performance report for the last week on Monday.

According to the spokesperson for the PHP department here, the Punjab Highway Patrol was active in the province, including Lahore, to enforce laws on the roads and to serve as well as protect citizens.

During the last week, using the e-police post App, PHP checked 712,977 individuals on the roads and during these checks, 126 wanted criminals and court absconders were arrested. He said 360,392 vehicles were

checked, 49 stolen vehicles/motorcycles were recovered. Under the road safety campaign, 51,372 e-challans were issued for traffic violations. As part of Axle Load Management, 9,363 overloaded vehicles were fined and strict legal action was taken against them. A total of 21.5 million rupees were collected in fines as well, he added.

Legal action was also taken against 229 vehicles for illegal use of gas cylinders. To facilitate citizens, 3,562 driving licenses were issued and 17 missing children were reunited with their parents.

He said 51 temporary

and permanent encroachments were removed to improve traffic flow. Assistance and guidance were also provided to 2,070 passengers. He said 1,248 citizens were provided various services at police service centres added 20 cases were registered for illegal weapon possession, and 289-litres alcohol were seized from drug dealers.

IGP Punjab Dr Usman Anwar praised the PHP force for its excellent performance and encouraged them to continue their dedicated efforts with sincerity to ensure smooth traffic flow and effective service and protection for citizens.

### SHC urges public to follow information available on website

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Registrar of High Court of Sindh, Karachi has stated in a clarification note that it has come to the attention of the High Court of Sindh, Karachi that an advertisement bearing No. GAZ/VIA.36(A)(2)/Karachi dated 15-07-2024, regarding vacancies/appointment for Civil Judge & Judicial Magistrates, is being circulated on social media.

The Sindh High Court Karachi hereby clarifies that this advertisement is fake and has not been issued by the Court.

The public is advised to rely solely on information and advertisements available on the official website of the High Court of Sindh, Karachi, for any announcements regarding vacancies or other official matters. The authenticity of any advertisement or information should be verified through the official website to avoid any misinformation or confusion.

For accurate and updated information, please visit the official website: [www.sindhhighcourt.gov.pk](http://www.sindhhighcourt.gov.pk).

We appreciate your attention to this matter and urge everyone to be cautious of such fake advertisements.

### Chinese Consul General meets Karachi Police Chief

KARACHI (APP): A three-member delegation, led by Yang Yundong, the Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Karachi, met with Additional IGP Karachi Javed Akhtar Odho at the Karachi Police Office on Monday.

According to the Karachi Police spokesperson, the meeting with the Karachi Police Chief covered the overall security situation in the city and other related issues. The delegation informed the police chief about the challenges faced by Chinese citizens in Karachi, to which the police chief assured prompt action for their resolution.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Additional IGP Karachi presented honorary shields to the Chinese Consul General and the other members of the delegation.

### Reshuffle of provincial secretaries ordered

KARACHI (APP): Sindh government has ordered transfer and postings of provincial secretaries with immediate effect until further orders. According to notification issued by Sindh Chief Secretary, Suhail Ahmed Qureshi, PSS officer (BS-20) presently posted as Public Health Engineering and Rural Development Dept secretary was transferred and posted as Secretary Services and General Administration & Coordination Dept vice Muhammad Ali Khoso transferred. On transfer from Secretary GA, Muhammad Ali Khoso has been posted as Secretary Works and Services vice Aijaz Ali Shah transferred.

Earlier, the authorities concerned gave a detailed briefing on the supply chain mechanism and food prices in the province.

Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Information & Culture Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari and

## Sindh CM says ever-increasing bills have created unrest among people

KARACHI (PPI) Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said on Monday that the ever-increasing electricity bills had created unrest among the people because of their inability to afford; therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the government to steer the people out of this dilemma.

This he said while presiding over a meeting to firm up proposals for solarisation of the off-grid and on-grid low-income families here at the CM House.

Shah said: "Since the energy sector falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government, and it can set the tariff, however, as a provincial government, we can assist poor people by offering them solar panels or a minimum of 100 units for free, as per the directive of Chairman PPP Bilawal

Bhutto Zardari.

Minister Energy Nasir Shah briefing the CM on the Benazir Solar Program as saying that the survey of low-income families using 100 units per month comes to 1,976,500, including 1,054,000 of KE, 566,427 HESCO and 356,073 SEPCO.

The CM was told that there were 2.6 million off-grid households in Sindh. At this, the CM said that 500,000 households (off-grid) might be provided Solar Home Systems (SHS) with 100W panels of three LED bulbs, 35W DC fan and six-hour Battery backup and mobile charging ports. To a question, Nasir told the CM that each SMS would cost Rs55,000 if purchased in bulk.

Another proposal Nasir submitted to the CM was

for microgrids. He said six micro-grids, each one of 75kW, might be established at the divisional level to cover a cluster of 100 households. Those grids would provide 100kWH units per month.

The energy minister said that each grid would cost around Rs30 million. The CM directed the minister to get the feasibility study of the grid stations. The CM was told that around 300 acres of land was required for a grid station at Sukkur for grid station, 230 acres in Hyderabad and 270 acres in K-Electric.

The third proposal, the minister presented was the establishment of three solar parks each one with a cumulative capacity of 350 MW. These solar parks could be established in PPP mode also.

## Court adjourns hearing of PA illegal recruitment case

LAHORE (APP): An anti-corruption court on Monday adjourned the hearing of the Punjab Assembly illegal recruitment case until September 4 and gave a final opportunity to former chief minister Punjab Chaudhry Parvez Elahi to appear on the next date of the hearing.

Anti-Corruption Court Judge Saffar Ali Bhatti conducted the proceedings during which accused Muhammad Khan Bhatti was produced after being brought from jail. The other accused who were on bail also appeared and marked their attendance.

A counsel on behalf of Chaudhry Parvez Elahi submitted an exemption application, stating that his client had not recovered from a fracture yet and that doctors had advised him to rest. He pleaded with the court to exempt Parvez Elahi from personal appearance for one day.

However, the court expressed annoyance at the non-appearance of Chaudhry Parvez Elahi and reminded the counsel that it was giving the last opportunity for Parvez Elahi to appear. Subsequently, the court allowed the application and exempted Parvez

Elahi from personal appearance, adjourning the hearing until September 4. The court also summoned all accused for indictment on the next hearing date.

The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) Punjab had registered the case, accusing Parvez Elahi of unlawful appointments and kickbacks. Allegedly, qualified candidates were denied positions while those who had not taken exams were appointed. The ACE claimed that, as the then chief minister Elahi misused his authority by influencing appointments after receiving bribes.

## CM Maryam orders supply chain enhancement to control food prices

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired an emergency meeting on the price and supply chain mechanism, directing authorities to enhance efficiency in the supply chain to control food prices across the province.

The CM said, "We will not allow unnecessary burden of inflation on people. The prices of essential commodities should be within the reach of people. By correcting demand and supply mechanism, it will be possible to control artificial inflation."

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said improving supply system of essential commodities will further reduce costs, adding that supply chain mechanism should be made foolproof to avoid crisis and shortage of goods in the market.

Earlier, the authorities concerned gave a detailed briefing on the supply chain mechanism and food prices in the province.

Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Information & Culture Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari and

Agriculture Minister Ashiq Hussain attended the meeting. Chief Secretary, secretaries concerned and other relevant officers were also present.

**Govt taking measures to combat environmental pollution : CM:** Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that all possible measures are being taken to eliminate environmental pollution in Punjab.

In a meeting with British High Commissioner in Pakistan Jane Marriott to discuss promotion of mutual cooperation in education, health and other sectors, here on Monday, the CM added, "We are providing solar panels to people for economic relief." The solarization project will be started in Punjab from August 14, she mentioned.

The CM said that transparency and merit would be ensured in the bidding of solar panel project, adding that British companies are welcomed to participate in the project. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif briefed British High

Commissioner Jane Marriott that the Punjab government was taking all possible measures for the protection of women and children. She apprised her about the establishment of first Virtual Women Police Station and Virtual Child Safety Center in Punjab.

The British High Commissioner appreciated the implementation of the Sikh Marriage Act in Punjab, and termed the Child Marriage Bill an exemplary initiative of the Punjab government. She said the Punjab government was taking unique and historic steps for the protection of women and children.

The CM commended the welfare services of Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office in Punjab.

Senator Pervaiz Rashid and Senior Provincial Minister Mariyum Aurangzeb attended the meeting. Additional Secretary Sara Hayat, Head of British High Commission Lahore Office Clara Strandhoj and other officers were also present.

## Action plan prepared to eliminate encroachments in Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi chaired a weekly meeting on Monday to review the progress of the improvement of traffic related and other civic issues.

The meeting discussed and planned actions to improve traffic flow, eliminate haphazard parking and illegal parking, restore basement parking in commercial buildings, and remove encroachments from footpaths and roads. Important decisions were made to make these actions effective.

All Deputy Commissioners attended the meeting. Deputy Commissioner South Altar Sario, Deputy Commissioner Central Fawad Ghaffar Soomro, and Deputy Commissioner Kemari Juned Khan briefed the Commissioner on various city improvement measures in their respective districts. Other Deputy Commissioners shared their efforts via video link.

Food department officials also attended the meeting and briefed the

commissioner on the measures to check the quality of milk and other food items and prevent the sale of adulterated or unhealthy food.

The meeting reviewed and decide that Food department officials would check the food quality with the concerned district administration officials. In the meeting, it was decided that Deputy Commissioners will take action to solve the problems of encroachments, parking, billboards, and construction materials with comprehensive planning, in coordination with concerned departments including with Traffic Police, Municipal Institutions, Town Administration, and Sindh Building Control Authority.

It was decided that the Deputy Commissioners will identify ten model roads in their respective districts, conduct a survey of the mentioned problems, and take action to solve them with planning. The meeting also decided that all Deputy Commissioners will inform the Commissioner's office about

the work plan they will make in this regard.

It was also decided in the meeting that a list will be made of commercial buildings where basement parking is being avoided with consultation of SBCA. The Sindh Building Control Authority will be informed about the non-compliance by these buildings, and they will work together to restore basement parking. Further decided in the meeting that roadside hotels, footpaths, service roads, roads, and green belts will be cleared of all kinds of soft encroachments.

A detailed review of the measures to eliminate haphazard parking and illegal parking was taken in the meeting. It was decided that strict action will be taken on all No parking zones in the city. The roads where there is issue of traffic congestion will be declared as no-parking roads. Necessary rules will be required to be followed by the road users and the concerned agency would install mandatory No parking zone traffic sign.





PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur presiding over a meeting of Civil Administrators at Civil Secretariat.

# PHC stops eviction of AP from official’s residence

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) granted stopped eviction of Assistant Professor Dr. Ghuffran Ullah from his official residence at the Pak-Austria Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology, Haripur after denying extension in contract, on Monday.

PHC’s single bench of Justice Muhammad Ijaz Sabi at Abbottabad stopped eviction of Dr. Ghuffran Ullah from his government-allotted residence while ordered Pak-Austria Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology along Higher Education Commission for submission of reply.

The counsel Nauman Mohib Kakakhel advocate presented arguments via video link, stating that the petitioner was denied a contract extension due to false allegations of harassment by a female student. Despite being a PhD holder and Hafiz-e-Quran, Dr. Ghuffran Ullah was terminated, citing poor performance.

The lawyer argued that the university’s actions were motivated by malice and discriminatory, as Dr. Ghuffranullah was eligible for a 4-year contract extension. The university had ordered him to vacate his residence within six days, which the court has now stayed.

PHC sought a response from the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the relevant university, and will hear the case further after receiving their response.

# Online taxi driver looted at gunpoint, deprived from vehicle

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Unknown armed men snatched vehicle from online taxi driver and looted mobile along with cash in the premises of Tehkal police station on 26th July while the robbers escaped from the scene.

According to details, the taxi driver named Arif Ullah of 35 years age was deprived from a silver-colored VXR car bearing number KV-835 Islamabad, mobile phone and a purse containing 2 ATM cards, smart card for the motor car, Rs12 thousand rupees in cash along with other necessary documents by armed robbers.

The incident occurred on July 26, 2024, at 9 pm when the driver, 35-year-old Arifullah, son of Zahoorullah, a resident of Tehkal Bala, was driving home from Warsak Road to Musli Gharhi Road.

The robbers stopped him near the canal and looted him at gunpoint.

An emergency meeting of online taxi drivers held which was attended by Haris Mushataq Safi, Arif Ullah, Mian Ishfaq, Saddam Hussain, Imran Bangash, Mian Sohail, Haroon-ur-Rashid, Talib Jan, Hayat-ur-Rahman, and Amin Dawar along with others.

The meeting argued the Chief Minister, Governor, Inspector General of Police KP, Commissioner Peshawar, and other high officials for provision of security.

The online taxi drivers demanded provision security and other facilities to hundreds of skilled laborers associated with Careem and In-Drive. They also demanded usage of modern scientific methods to investigate and recover the stolen car and bring the culprits to justice.



PESHAWAR: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Babar Saleem Swati presiding over Provincial Assembly Session.

# Sethi House: An architectural marvel turns tourists destination

PESHAWAR (APP): Laiba Farooq, a sixth-grade student passionate about architecture and archaeology, was excited on Monday after visiting the Sethi House, a historic jewel renowned for its awe-inspiring woodwork and exquisite architectural design.

Accompanied by her parents, Laiba Farooq along with her sister Aleena Farooq—a residents of Nowshera were over the moon after exploring the architectural wonder located in Mohalla Sethiyar near Ghanta Ghar, amid overcast skies with chances of rain at Peshawar.

Built in 1886 by Sethi Karim Bakhsh, Sethi house left her in an enormous excitement with its awesome wooden gate, grand courtyard, and captivating water fountain grabbing the visitors attention.

Construction work was started in 1835 during the colonial era and the house was finally completed in nearly 49 years. Standing as testament of amalgamation of Muslim and vernacular Uzbekistani architecture, the house unique features such as basement, central courtyard, and an upper floor has magnified the Sethi family’s flair for awesome architecture design and love for woodwork.

The significance of the house’s architectural jewel was rightly elaborated by the renowned archaeologist Prof Ahmad Hassan Dani who had mentioned houses in the Sethi neighbourhood in his book ‘Peshawar - Historic City of the Frontier’.

Professor Dani wrote that through a galaxy of pre-Islamic, Mughal, Sikh and even British, much of Peshawar’s rich and varied cultural history can be traced. Known for their international trade and innovative architectural contributions, Sethi family had faced economic and financial difficulties in the early 20th century due to the Bolshevik Revolution, which negatively impacted their businesses.

They eventually sold their properties including the Sethi house to revive their fortunes, Bakhtzada Khan, Assistant Director of the Archeology and Museum Department said and noted that the beauty of the meh-rabs (prayer place) adorned with glass shelves that mimic stars and the exquisite ceiling design were the most frequented visit sites.

Tourist Umar Khayam Khan from Nowshera praised the building’s historical significance and its potential for attracting global visitors and was highly impressed by its eye-catching glasswork and floral designs, which were brought from Belgium, adding its charm. He said Sethi house was the identity of Peshawar and urged visitors to ensure that plastic bags and other raw materials should not be thrown away after visiting it.

Shahryar Khan, Chief Architect at the Communication and Works Department, described Sethi House as a model of green architecture of 20th century due to its effective ventilation and durability. Acquired by KP government in 2006 and converted into a museum in 2010, Sethi House now attracts architecture enthusiasts.

Sethi House museum houses a collection of artifacts and antiquities from the region. The collection includes paintings, sculptures, carpets, and textiles, Mughal paintings, Pashto paintings, and a few European paintings. The sculpture collection includes Buddhist sculptures, Gandhara sculptures, and a few Hindu sculptures.

He said the carpet collection includes tribal carpets, Mughal carpets, and a few Persian carpets besides shawls, dresses, and rugs. The museum also has a library and a research centre. The library has a collection of books on the history and culture of the region. The research centre is used by scholars to study the artifacts in the museum.

Its preservation was part of CHTP, which renovated a 500-meter trail from Ghanta Ghar to Gor Gathri, restoring the grandeur of Peshawar’s historic sites. The CHTP has revitalized around 85 heritage buildings, reflecting Peshawar’s rich history from the Mughal, British, and Sikh eras.

# Sher Ali assumes charge as Chairman DDAC Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Sher Ali Afridi has taken charge as the Chairman District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) for Peshawar district. On Monday, he arrived at his office, where he was warmly welcomed by Director General of Capital Metropolitan Waheed Rehman and Assistant Director of Local Government Malik Arshad, who presented him with bouquets.

Speaking at the occasion, Sher Ali Afridi vowed to effectively contribute towards development of Peshawar while utilizing position of DDAC chairman as an opportunity, says a press release issued here.

He further stated that all of Peshawar’s issues would be resolved with the cooperation of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Peshawar will be put on the path of development and prosperity.

In this regard, he said a meeting of officials from all departments will be convened soon to formulate a plan of action to address Peshawar’s issues.

DG Capital Metropolitan Waheed Rehman and Assistant Director of Local Government Malik Arshad assured Sher Ali Afridi of their full cooperation. Sher Ali Afridi has also been appointed as a member of BoDs of PDA, and a notification to this effect has been issued.



PESHAWAR: Labourers unloading plants from delivery van at local nursery in Hayatabad.

# Researchers demystify myth of scorpion’s high price in int’l market

PESHAWAR (APP): Researchers in arachnids while demystifying the myth regarding the high price of scorpions in the international market, have suggested trade in venom extraction on scientific grounds through rearing of scorpions in farms.

“The reports circulating on social media about very high prices of different kinds of scorpions are mere rumors and have no reality on the ground,” claims Professor Hafiz Muhammad Tahir, Chairperson Zoology Department Government College Lahore with PhD research on arachnids.

He said that the base of this myth of scorpion stems from reports about the high price of scorpion venom because of its usefulness in the preparation of medicines for different diseases including cancer, nervous disorders and pain management. The pharmaceutical industries involved in the preparation of cancer treatment are in demand of scorpion venom, Dr. Tahir added.

However, these pharmaceuticals do not purchase scorpions for extraction of venom, he clarified.

Dr. Tahir stressed that the reports about the scorpion trade are just a hearsay and those involved in hunting scorpions should take notice of this reality. He said that those involved in hunting arthropods should concentrate on the scientific extraction of venom through the breeding and rearing of scorpions on farms.

He said that in several countries, scorpion venom labs have been established including Iran, UAE and some African countries. However, he said that in Pakistan, there is no such lab through which scorpion venom can be extracted scientifically and preserved for supply at national and international levels.

“We have experts on scorpions in Pakistan by whom guidance can be obtained by those who wanted to initiate scorpion venom business”, Dr. Tahir suggested.

He also informed that there are around 2400 species of scorpion in the world while in Pakistan around 35 to 40 species are reported till now. There is also a need to hold research on scorpion biodiversity and hotspots of different species at different locations in the country, he added.

“The rumours of the attractive price of scorpion has exerted a lot of pressure on its diversity as a large number of people have become involved in hunting and keeping scorpions with them in the hope of earning huge amounts of money,” opined Sahibzada Muhammad Jawad, a PhD researcher on scorpion from Peshawar.

Talking to APP, Sahibzada Jawad said the population of black scorpions is under stress due to media reports, prompting people to become rich by hunting and selling of scorpions in international markets.

Doing research on ‘Systematics and Biodiversity of Scorpion fauna occurring in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’, Jawad concurred with the suggestion of Dr. Tahir of tapping the potential of scorpion venom trade by establishing proper labs and farms in the country.

He also offered his expertise in launching scorpion breeding and rearing farms for the extraction of venom.

Jawad informed that he recently returned from the USA to conduct research on scorpion morphology and DNA at the American Museum.

If the government establishes a lab, it will help in carrying out research on the rich biodiversity of arthropods in the country besides other benefits we can get from it, Jawad opined.

Even in Afghanistan, he continued, a person has set up a scorpion farm in Lashkargah area and is selling venom in the international market at exorbitant prices in dollars.

The establishment of modern labs and farms can help in the treatment of fatal diseases through scorpion venom besides earning much-needed foreign exchange through international trade, he reiterated.

# Budget of Agriculture University Dera okayed

PESHAWAR (APP): The fourth Senate meeting of the Agricultural University Dera Ismail Khan was held under the chairmanship of Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi and approved the annual budget for the fiscal years 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Provincial Minister for Agriculture Major (R) Sajjad Barakwal, university’s Vice Chancellor Dr. Shakeeb Ullah, Principal Secretary to the Governor Mazhar Irshad, representatives from the Higher Education Department, Finance Department, Higher Education Commission, and other Senate members attended the meeting.

The Senate members raised concerns over the lack of a third-party audit and the absence of the Auditor General’s report. Despite these issues, they approved the revised budget after corrections.

Speaking on this occasion, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi commended the Senate members for their keen interest in addressing budget deficiencies, noting that proper guidance could prevent future issues for the Agricultural University.

The Governor expressed concern over the Veterinary Department of the university not receiving NOC from the Pakistan Veterinary Council, stating that the delay is troubling and could impact the future of students.

The meeting also highlighted that while the Gomal University’s Agricultural Faculty has been upgraded to an Agricultural University, both universities are still running their programs.

The Senate discussed the issue of insufficient funding for the university and the pending NOC for the DVM program. They stressed the need for attention to faculty appointments and balancing administrative and ministerial staff to maintain the university’s operations.

Furthermore, it was decided that both Gomal University and the Agricultural University should undergo a third-party audit within two months.

# PESCO team visits CISNR

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Top Management Delegation from Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) paid a visit to Center for Intelligent Systems and Networks Research (CISNR), University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar.

The delegation was given a brief about the products developed by CISNR for utility and other sectors. CEO PESCO, Engr. Akhtar Hamid was the first one to implement MeroCure-Photobilling project at PESCO, ensuring its success and is now implemented across all DISCOs improving the billing efficiency and reducing overbilling and underbilling anomalies. He appreciated the progress made by CISNR since 2012.

Both the organizations pledged to work together to lower Administrative, Technical and Commercial losses of the Peshawar region and improve the quality of service. Both the organizations signed MOU to work towards the betterment of PESCO and quality energy access to the people of KPK.

Under this MOU CISNR will provide technical support and innovative products for smart grid and cost effective smart metering to reduce losses in PESCO making it a profitable organization.

# PHC seeks reply in provision remand

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) single bench of Justice Shakeel Ahmad ordered respondents for submission of reply in plea against provision of remand to Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) without producing accused in court before 9th August, on Monday.

The petitioner named Muhammad Ayub challenged Session Judge Kohat decision regarding provision of 10 days remand to CTD Kurram on 19th July without producing accused in the court.

The counsel argued that First Information Report registered on 1st July 2024 while the remand was obtained from District Session Judge Kohat on 19th July without production of accused before the Session Judge.

PHC’s single bench of Justice Shakeel Ahmad ordered respondents to submit comments till 9th August and observed that the petitioner may file complaint against District Session Judge Kohat for redressal of grievances.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Human Rights Association chanting slogans during a protest rally.

# KMU holds HoDs meeting

PESHAWAR (APP): A meeting of the Heads of Departments (HoDs) was held on Monday at the committee room of VC Secretariat, chaired by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq.

The meeting was attended by Registrar KMU Inam Ullah Khan Wazir, Controller of Examinations Prof. Dr. Saleem Gandapur, and all KMU institution heads.

The primary agenda was to discuss the directives from the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC) and the Provincial Government.

These directives emphasize the importance of full-fledged planning and efficient execution to maintain high standards of transparency in the conduct of the MDCAT and KMU CAT tests.

The Vice Chancellor briefed HoDs on the necessary arrangements, logistics, and timelines, and solicited their input and suggestions to ensure a successful and fair testing process.

The meeting addressed the solarization of KMU’s main campus and constituent institutions, emphasizing the need to expedite the process to minimize electricity expenses and foster sustainable energy practices.

The Solarization Committee was directed to accelerate progress and project development, while HoDs were urged to offer their valuable expertise and support to ensure a seamless implementation.

Various matters and requirements of different institutes were also discussed, including infrastructure development, faculty recruitment, and student affairs. The importance of regular coordination between HoDs and the HR, DD Procurement, Director Admission, and Finance departments was emphasized to ensure seamless operations and efficient resource allocation.

The meeting aimed to rationalize university processes, enhance inter-departmental collaboration, and address pressing issues. It was declared a central needs committee meeting to underscore its significance in aligning KMU’s efforts towards achieving its strategic goals. Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq, commended participants for their valuable contributions and assured them of necessary logistical support and resources to facilitate their work.

# Newly elected MPA of ANP Muhammad Nisar takes oath

PESHAWAR (APP): Newly elected member of the provincial assembly of the Awami National Party (ANP), Muhammad Nisar took the oath on Monday.

Speaker KP assembly Babar Saleem Swati administered oath to the newly elected MPA who later in his speech thanked the people of his constituency and expressed his gratitude for their support.

He said that an unfortunate incident occurred before the elections, which caused fear and panic in the area.

Muhammad Nisar called for release of Rs 600 billion out of the allocated Rs 1000 billion rupees by now.

Muhammad Nisar urged government members to stand united to resolve national issues.

He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was rich in natural resources and that provinces should have received their rights after the 18th amendment. He also expressed regret that over 60 percent of Bajaur’s youth have to go to work in other cities or abroad.





## In brief

### 3 die in Swabi rains incidents F.P. Report

SWABI: At least three persons died due to rains related incidents and flash floods in Swabi district on Sunday night. According to police, last night heavy torrential rains caused flash floods in different areas of Swabi, claiming lives of three persons. The Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Ameen Gandapur expressed condolence and sympathies with the victims' families. The Chief Minister announced financial assistance for the affected families and assured support.

### Dacoits attack police post

SHIKARPUR (PPI): Armed men attacked a police post near Safdar Laaro near Shikarpur on Monday, injuring a constable and seizing official weapons, local authorities said. According to initial reports, the assailants, equipped with automatic weapons, attacked the Rustam police station picket. Police Constable Abdul Hafeez Domki was injured during the exchange of gunfire. The attackers fled the scene, firing into the air and taking the official weapons. The injured constable was taken to a government hospital for treatment. A large contingent of police and Rangers was deployed in the area following the incident, and an investigation was ongoing. No arrest could be made till filing this report.

### Dacoit killed during encounter

DERA GHAZI KHAN (INP): A dacoit was killed during an exchange of fire with police in premises of Darahma police station. According to police sources, Darahma police arrested an accused Muhammad Kashif in two cases numbers 491/24 and 508/24 registered against him. The accused killed Mushtaq Patafi during a bid of snatching motorcycle and shot him dead for putting resistance a few weeks back. The police was taking him to a place for recovery of weapon when the members of the gang including Riaz alias Ratta and other attacked police party to get their fellow releases from police custody.

### Free medical camp held F.P. Report

KASUR: Pakistan Army organized a free medical camp in Chunian Tehsil of Kasur District. According to a report on Monday, specialist doctors and gynecologists were engaged in the camp. Over fifteen hundred patients, including women and children, were provided with free medical treatment. Doctors and para-medical staff also delivered awareness lectures on prevention and treatment of malaria, dengue, including hygiene. The local people were appreciative of Pakistan Army's public welfare initiative.

### Fire breaks out in FBR office

GUJRANWALA (INP): A massive fire broke out in the regional office of Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) in Gujranwala on Monday morning. The blaze started on the third floor of the FBR regional office building and four vehicles of the fire brigade took part in the operation to douse the fire. According to a Rescue 1122 Rescue spokesman, the fire is huge but it will be brought under control soon. He further said that they have not yet traced the reason for the blaze.

# KP's govt deprives LG councils from funds in budget

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Mayor Mardan Himayatullah Mayar, pointed out that in the previous budget, local governments did not receive any funds from the provincial government for development projects and services under the PFC award. He stressed that no funds have been allocated to local governments by the provincial authorities.

These comments were made by Mayor Mayar during a budget meeting of the City Local Council, chaired by Presiding Officer Babar Khan, and attended by council members, TMA officers, and journalists. He announced that the City Local Government of Mardan will base its current budget on revenue from the PFC award and its own sources, aiming for a surplus budget where income surpasses expenditures.

Mayor detailed that the City Local Government received over 18 million rupees for salaries and 557 million rupees for development projects through the PFC award.

He further noted that Mardan Tehsil's share of the PFC award is approximately 308 million rupees, while the Village and Neighborhood Councils' share is 205 million rupees, totaling 514 million rupees disclosed that the total estimated revenue from various sources is approximately 1.605 billion rupees,

with expected savings of 77.86 million rupees. He outlined that the expected revenue from the provincial government is around 620.659 million rupees, which includes property tax, octroi, development funds, grants for TMA during financial deficits, and allowances for the mayor and councilors.

He also stated that the revenue from Mardan Tehsil various sources, such as property tax, map fees, and bus stands, amounts to approximately 336.887 million rupees. The total estimated expenditure of the Tehsil Municipal Administration is around 1.572 billion rupees, covering natural disasters, religious and national festivals, sports promotion, and other expenses. Himayat Ullah Mayar highlighted that TMA Mardan spent nearly 990 million rupees on salaries and pensions, while only 50 million rupees are allocated for service delivery.

Development expenses amount to approximately 308.84 million rupees, including a monthly honorarium of 10,000 rupees for council members and a daily allowance of 1,000 rupees per meeting. Additionally, the honorarium for the handicraft center has been increased from 2,500 to 5,000 rupees.

Mayor Mardan expressed strong disapproval of the provincial

government's decision to return land designated for educational institutions in Mardan to the original owners. He emphasized that this assembly rejects the decision and demands its immediate reversal. He also warned that if the decision is not rescinded, we will take decisive action against it.

**Rs170 fixes per liter milk price:** Milk will be sold at the fixed rate of 170 liters; action will be taken against the violators. According to the details, Assistant Commissioner Mardan on the orders of Deputy Commissioner Adil took actions against high selling of milk in Mardan city.

A number of shops selling milk at a higher price than the price list sealed, while Assistant Commissioner Mardan sold milk at 170 rupees a liter under his supervision. On this occasion, Assistant Commissioner said that official rate set by Deputy Commissioner Mardan should only 170 liters of milk, otherwise strict legal action will be taken.

Assistant Commissioner Kamran Khan, while inspecting the filling stations in the city area arrest the managers of various pumps for filling small amounts of petrol. The filling station has been sealed and summoned to the Assistant Commissioner's court for further legal action.

# WPA's Chairperson meets rape victim

## F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Chairperson, Women Protection Authority, Punjab (WPA), Hina Parvaiz Butt visited Hafizabad and meet raped victim woman who was raped during dacoity on Sukheki-Marr Balochan Road, on 24 July 2024 at night when she was on its way alongwith her husband and two year and three-month-old daughter to Chiniot from Village Dinggi Juppa after meeting her relatives.

Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Sundas Irshad, DPO Faisal Gulzar and other offices were also present on this occasion. Hina Parvaiz Butt assured the victim woman to provide financial and legal assistance and she directed the Incharge Darul-Aman Hafizabad to

ensure provision of all kind of facilities to victim women as well as to provide psychological treatment so that she succeeded to come out from trauma. DPO Faisal Gulzar gave briefing to Hina Parvaiz Butt regarding this tragic incident and progress of police for tracing and arrest of accused involved in this case.

Meanwhile, police have issued sketch of raped accused which prepared with help of victim family and police appealed the people to inform the police about wanted accused. The name of informer would be kept secret, police spokesman said.

**Kuli Katcheri held:** In order to provide relief to common people and easy access to offices of different departments, Deputy

Commissioner Hafizabad Sundas Irshad held 'Kuli Katcheri' at district complex, Saturday on the directions of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryum Nawaz Sharif.

ADCG Hammad Ullah, AC Munawar Hussain and other officers attended the open court. DC listened complaints of people patiently and directed the offices concerned to address grievances of people on merit without any delay. DC said that problems of applicants resolved on priority basis in the open court and objective of holding open courts was to listen complaints of people directly and to provide opportunities to common people for approaching offices of different department without any recommendation or reference.

# Milk dealers reject KP Food authority report



## Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: President Milk Association Malakand Division Fazal Muhammad has categorically rejected a report of Halal Food Authority alleging that 97% of milk in the region is substandard, on Monday.

This he rejected while addressing a press conference at Swat Press Club along with General Secretary Habib Ali, Finance Secretary Naveed

Aman, and other officials, maintained that milk sold in Swat and Malakand Division is of high quality, rigorously tested by both the Halal Food Authority and Livestock Department.

Muhammad took issue with the Halal Food Authority's testing methodology, pointing out that it employed a "milkoscan" machine from Germany, typically used for tetrapacked milk, rather than open milk. He questioned

the necessity of external testing when local laboratories are readily available.

The Milk Association president stressed their strong opposition to substandard milk sellers but warned against unfairly targeting legitimate businesses. He demanded the immediate reopening of nine sealed shops and called for inflation-adjusted pricing for milk sellers, warning of strong protests if their demands are not met.

# Man kills wife, four injured in firing

## F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: A man shot dead his wife over domestic disputes while four people were injured in separate firing incidents over old enmities. Two youth were abducted for ransom.

According to details, accused Muhammad Shafique hailing from Siraj Basti area of Samundri shot dead his wife Faiza Bibi after exchange of hot words over domestic disputes

and fled the scene. CPO Kamran Adil taking notice of the incident has sought report from SP Saddar Division.

In separate incidents of firing over enmities in Chak No 471 GB Samundri, Chak 239 GB Satiana and Chak No 215 RB Saddar, four people including Hanif, his daughter Mehwish, taxi driver Shafqat and Allah Dita were critically injured.

The body and injured were shifted to different

hospitals. Culprits riding a car abducted two youth Hamza and Noman and took them to an unknown place.

The accused brutally tortured the abducted youth, made their videos sending them to heirs demanding two million rupees for their release. The police registered separate cases in all incidents at respective police stations and started efforts to arrest the culprits and rescue the abducted youth.



ATTOCK: A large number of people enjoyin at Attock River, Picnic Point.

## Two drowned in Panjkora River while taking bath F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The body of a 30-year old Hassan Zeb, a resident of Peshawar was recovered by the Rescue 1122 divers from the Panjkora River at Shago Kas area in the jurisdiction of Timergara police station here on Monday. The victim had drowned in the river while taking a bath at Saddo here two days ago.

The Lower Dir additional deputy commissioner Bashir Khan and Rescue 1122 district emergency officer Ibrar Ali supervised the rescue operation. The body was shifted to the district headquarters hospital Timergara for formality and then handed over to the heirs.

Meanwhile the Rescue 1122 divers also rescued safely the uncle of Hassan Zeb who jumped into the river on spotting the body. Another youth identified as Haroon s/o Nizamud Din, a resident of Khall Drown in the Panjkora River while taking a bath at Khall. The Rescue 1122 divers along with local volunteers and relatives of the victim started a search operation but to no avail.

Taking notice of the frequent fatal incidents and human losses, the Lower Dir deputy commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan imposed section 144 CrPc on collecting of firewood, timber, stock and unnecessary walk on the bank of the Panjkora and Swat rivers and taking bath in the rivers here on Monday. The order, according to a circular, would remain enforced for the next 30 days while the violators would be dealt with under section 188 CrPc. All the assistant commissioners and additional assistant commissioners have been directed to keep a regular check on violators in their respective areas and take prompt action against them.

A resident of Shago Kas told Dawn on contact that despite the imposition of section 144 CrPc, several youths and teenagers were seen taking bath in the river to beat the scorching heat at different places in the Panjkora river.

**JI women wing:** The Jamaat-i-Islami women wing provincial chief and former MNA on reserved seat Aisha Syed on Monday announced that the party's women workers would also participate in the JI ongoing protest sit-in in Islamabad. Talking to local journalists here she said that inflated power bills and price hike had broken the back of poor masses against which the JI staged a sit-in in Islamabad.

She said the JI women wing was as active and organized as its counterpart. Ms Aisha Syed said that women from parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would also participate in the JI Islamabad protest. She said that women workers under her supervision would soon leave for Islamabad.

**Welfare work:** The Shaheed Waqar Ahmad and Ansar Welfare Foundation on Monday announced to assist orphans and poor children in the Aseelo Rabat village council on its own. The announcement was made during a function held at Tango Baghkor area which was addressed by the Foundation president Rafiullah, head of Madrassa Ibn e Abbas Maulana Jehangir, Shah Zamin Khan and others.

# Youth workers convention held in Kohat

## F.P. Report

KOHAT: A Youth Workers Convention was held in Kohat under the auspices of the Youth Wing of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf which beside the elected members of the national and provincial assemblies of Kohat, largely attended by the party leaders, activists and youth.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Afridi, Senior PTI Leader Shehryar Afridi MNA, Chairman DDAC Kohat Shafi Jan MPA, Daud Afridi MPA, former District Nazim Kohat Nasim Afridi, Chairman Tehsil Gumbat Sajid Iqbal

and PTI leaders Salman Shinwari, Shafqat Hayat, Abidur Rahman and others also addressed the Convention.

The speakers in their addresses said that youth is the great asset of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and it have a high value in the party. The today popularity of PTI is due to the youth, they added. The speakers while addressing the youth, said that you people are the important asset of the party as well as Pakistan and it is you people who have to take the country out of the current quagmire. Until you stand up, this outdated system of the country cannot be changed, they said.

The speakers said that

the party's Quaid Imran Khan is neither a rebel nor a traitor but he is a true patriot and a person who values Pakistan with all his heart and soul. They asserted, the only fault of Imran Khan is that he asks for equal and same law and justice system for the rich and the poor in the country, talks about changing the current outdated system and talks about true freedom for which he is being punished.

They hoped that the movement started by Imran Khan will definitely succeed with the efforts of you people. Imran Khan is the last hope of a prosperous and developed Pakistan, they concluded.

# FIA arrests former district election commissioner

## Allah Dad Chandio

LARKANA: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested former district election commissioner of Qamber Shahdadkot Munwar Ali Solangi in alleged embezzlement of government funds worth Rs2.8 million, few days ago.

FIA Composite Circle produced alleged culprit in the court of 4th additional Session Judge Imtiaz Ali Shahani, where the court has sent the suspect to jail on judicial remand, in this regard,

FIA Circle Larkana officials said that a case was filed against the former

District Election Commissioner on July 15, on which FIA investigated for five days. Today, the accused was presented in the relevant court for remand, where the court handed over the accused to the jail on judicial remand. He has been arrested for misappropriating the government funds released for training, conferences and symposiums.

**Two youth killed in Larkana violent incidents:** Two youth were killed and two others injured in separate incidents of violence in different localities of Larkana, police said on Monday.

According to details, armed men over 'karokari' charges sprayed bullets at three brothers in Nasirabad area. As a result of firing, 24-year-old Siraj was killed on the spot while two others were critically injured.

Unidentified motorcyclists gunned down a youth identified as Hamza in Lashari area and sped the scene. Reasons behind the murder could not be ascertained. The bodies and injured were shifted to different hospitals and police after registering separate cases at respective police stations started efforts to arrest the culprits.

# Development budget of Rs118.2m for Jandola

## F.P. Report

TANK: The Tehsil Council Jandola has approved development budget of Rs118.2 million for Jandola Tehsil. In this regard, a meeting was held in District Council Tank under the chairmanship of Tehsil Chairman Haji Bahadur Khan which was attended by various chairmen of village and neighborhood councils.

The Rs 118.2 million budget was unanimously approved for the development of eight village and neighborhood councils. Out of which, Rs 4,128 would be for non-development and other expenses while Rs One million would be for the salaries of employees.

Speaking on this occasion, Tehsil Chairman Haji Bahadur Khan said that all available resources were being utilized for the devel-

opment of tribal area and welfare of its people. He said that record work was done for the development of Jandola Tehsil and its people. He informed that Rs 210 million have been spent on the education, health and communication sector so far. Despite the limited resources, vigorous steps were being taken for the development and prosperity of the tribal people, he added.

# PPP celebrates Zardari's 69th birthday

## F.P. Report

BUNER: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) workers celebrated 69th birthday of co chairman and President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardar on the directions of former candidate Dr. Saveera Parkash, on Monday.

Dr. Saveera father and the PDF Buner president Dr. Oam Parkash, ex candidate PK 27 Syed Shamsher Bacha, district leaders Bakhti Mohamad, Rehman Zada Jillani, Fazal Akbar,

Haleem ur Rehman Advocate, Bakhti Rawan and large number of workers were present.

PPP workers cut the birth day cake jointly and served to each other with slogans "Aik Zardari Sab Par Bhari". They also raised slogans "Jeyy Shaheed Bhutto Jeyy Sheed Benazir and Jeyy Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. The speakers highlighted the great services the party leaders were rendered even embraced martyrdom.

The speakers added Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the founder of Pakistan People's Party, and the co chairman and President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari were eager to works for public supremacy and workers of Pakistan People's Party are trying to play their role to accomplish the mission. The speakers proudly claimed It is a day of great joy that Asif Ali Zardari is trying to complete the mission of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

# Traffic police establishes license centers

## F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: District Traffic Officer (DTO) Asif Rahim Butt said that license centers have been established across the district like rest of Punjab province for immediate issuance of license.

This he claimed while

talking to The Frontier Post and added that traffic police are performing their duties honestly. Indiscriminate actions are being taken against under-age drivers and drivers of motorcycles and other vehicles without license due to accidents, who are facing legal action with heavy fines.

Citizens are requested not to drive a motorcycle or vehicle without a license. Driving License centres have been set up in every city, visit them today to get your license to reduce traffic accidents significantly. In the End, he said that fines are being imposed on those who do not use helmets.





## US to revamp military forces in Japan

TOKYO: he United States will overhaul its military forces in Japan as the two countries move to deepen defense cooperation, Washington and Tokyo said, in a sweeping step to modernize their alliance in the face of mounting security threats in Asia.

The announcement comes as Japan and the US warily eye a region where China is seen as increasingly aggressive in asserting its disputed territorial claims and North Korea continues its illegal weapons program - while both tighten ties with Russia as it wages war in Ukraine. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and their Japanese counterparts Minoru Kihara and Yoko Kamikawa announced the plan in a joint statement following a meeting in Tokyo, where they also called China's "political, economic, and military coercion" the "greatest strategic challenge" in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

The move is likely to stoke the ire of Beijing, which has watched warily as the US has bolstered ties with regional allies in a part of the world where observers say China seeks to be the dominant power - and where it's accused the US of fostering a Cold War-style bloc mentality. Under the new plan, US forces in Japan would be "reconstituted" as a joint force headquarters reporting to the Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command to "facilitate deeper interoperability and cooperation on joint bilateral operations in peacetime and during contingencies," according to the statement.

In a press conference

following the meeting, Austin hailed the countries' move to "modernize" their alliance command and control as an "historic decision."

"This will be the most significant change to US Forces Japan since its creation, and one of the strongest improvements in our military ties with Japan in 70 years," Austin said. He pointed both to the "upgrade" of US Forces Japan with "expanded missions and operational responsibilities," announced, and Japan's new Joint Operations Command, saying that the countries were reinforcing their "combined ability to deter and respond to coercive behavior in the Indo-Pacific and beyond."

The announcement follows an April summit in Washington between US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, where the two vowed to upgrade their respective command-and-control framework "to strengthen deterrence and promote a free and open Indo-Pacific in the face of pressing regional security challenges."

Details of the implementation would be figured out in working groups led by US Indo-Pacific Command, a senior US defense official said ahead of announcement, adding that there is no intention to integrate Japanese forces into the US commands. US Forces Japan (USFJ), whose headquarters is Yokota Air Base, consists of approximately 54,000 military personnel stationed in Japan under a 1960 mutual cooperation and security treaty.

The expected reconfiguration comes as Japan shifts its defense posture, veering away from the pacifist con-

stitution imposed on it by the United States in the aftermath of World War II, with a plan to boost defense spending to about 2% of its GDP by 2027 and acquire counterstrike capabilities.

These changes have cemented Japan's centrality to Washington's regional security strategy and its push for increasing coordination with allies and partners amid rising regional tensions - and as it increasingly sees security in Europe and Asia as intertwined in the wake of the war in Ukraine. The latest move also comes months ahead of the US presidential election, which American allies around the world have been watching closely, as Republican candidate and former President Donald Trump has repeatedly questioned the cost of US alliances. When asked whether the elections could impact US-Japan relations, Blinken said the long-standing alliance "was stronger than it's even been" and would be "sustained irrespective of the outcome of elections in either of our countries." "The reason for that is because it's manifestly in the interests of our people, the Japanese people, the American people, and people well beyond our countries," he said.

China was repeatedly mentioned with pointed language in the joint statement, with the ministers outlining shared concerns including what they described as Beijing's "intensifying attempts to unilaterally change the status quo" in the East China Sea, its "threatening and provocative activities in the South China Sea," and its "support for Russia's defense industrial base." — CNN

## Libyan officials jailed over deadly floods

TRIPOLI (BBC): Twelve Libyan officials have received sentences ranging between nine and 27 years in prison for their role in catastrophic dam collapses that killed more than 4,000 people last September. Entire neighbourhoods in the city of Derna were swept away, and evacuation efforts were botched. The convicted officials were responsible for managing water resources and maintaining the dams.

They were charged with crimes including negligence, premeditated murder and wasting public money, Reuters reported. Three of the defendants were also ordered to repay money obtained through illicit means, the public prosecutor's office said. Four others put on trial were acquitted. An international report in January said the dams gave way partly due to poor maintenance and governance during more than a decade of conflict in Libya. A week after the disaster hit Derna, furious residents burnt down the mayor's home as they demanded answers. The whole city council was dismissed. In the days after the floods, residents told BBC Arabic that evacuation orders focused on the wrong part of Derna, that no sufficient provision was made for where evacuated people should shelter and that some of the stay-at-home orders and curfews contradicted each other. Locals also told the BBC that some people who were evacuated from the seafloor because of fears of rising sea levels were moved to more dangerous areas that later flooded.

The water was brought by Storm Daniel, resulting in more than 400mm of rain to parts of Libya's north-east coast within a 24-hour period. That is an extraordinary deluge of water for a region which usually sees about 1.5mm throughout the whole of September, as BBC Verify reported at the time. Libya's National Meteorological Centre said the rainfall set a new record. Since the ousting of long-time leader Muammar Gaddafi, Libya has been divided by power struggles and currently has two governments - a UN-recognised one based in Tripoli, and another in the country's east backed by warlord Gen Khalifa Haftar.

## Meloni vows to 'relaunch' ties with China

ROME (BBC): Italy's prime minister Giorgia Meloni has vowed to "relaunch" relations with China as she began her first visit to Beijing since taking office. Ms Meloni met Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the beginning of her five-day trip and signed a three-year plan to strengthen economic cooperation between the two nations.

It comes after Ms Meloni last year removed her country from President Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). At the time, Rome said the massive Chinese investment scheme had failed to bring any benefits to Italy. Ms Meloni described her trip as a "demonstration of the will to begin a new phase, to relaunch our bilateral cooperation". She also said the two countries have signed an agreement that aims to boost cooperation on electric vehicles and renewable energy. In a statement released by his office, Premier Li said the two countries aim to increase "mutually beneficial cooperation between small and medium-sized enterprises in the fields of shipbuilding, aerospace, new energy, artificial intelligence." Italy was the only major Western nation to sign up to the BRI, one of China's most ambitious trade and infrastructure projects. The move was heavily criticised at the time by the US and some other major Western countries. Since coming to office in 2022, Ms Meloni has sought to lead a more pro-Western and pro-Nato foreign policy than her predecessors. Before withdrawing from the BRI, Ms Meloni had described the former government's decision to join it as "a serious mistake". Under her leadership, Italy has moved to block a Chinese state-owned company from taking control of tyre making giant Pirelli.

## Maduro wins third term as Venezuelan president

CARACAS: Incumbent Nicolas Maduro has been declared the winner of presidential election, but the opposition said they were preparing to dispute the results. Elvis Amoroso, president of the CNE electoral authority, said Maduro secured a third six-year term with 51.2 percent of the vote. Opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, who had been leading in opinion polls, got 44.2 percent, he said.

The electoral authority, which is controlled by Maduro loyalists, did not immediately release the tallies from each of the 30,000 polling stations nationwide. Opposition representatives said earlier that tallies they collected from campaign representatives at the centres had shown Gonzalez trouncing Maduro.

In comments shortly after the announcement, Maduro said his reelection was a triumph of peace and stability and reiterated his campaign trail claims that the voting system was transparent. Maduro, 61, first won power in 2013 after his mentor, socialist Hugo Chavez, died from cancer. He has been accused of locking up critics and harassing the opposition and has failed to end a years-long economic crisis that has prompted more than seven million of Venezuela's 30 million citizens to emigrate. The opposition campaigned on a promise to end the economic crisis and exit polls suggested they stood a strong chance of beating Maduro.

Gonzalez replaced popular opposition leader Maria Corina Machado on the ticket after authorities loyal to Maduro excluded her from the race. Machado, who campaigned far and wide for her proxy, had urged voters to keep "vigil" at their polling stations



in the "decisive hours" of counting amid widespread fears of fraud. She said Gonzalez had won 70 percent of the vote. "We want the whole world to know that we won in every sector and every state in the country. We know what happened today. We've been making sure all the information was collected and reported. This shows the results. It is irrefutable," Corina Machado told a rally. Analysts also expressed scepticism at the outcome.

"Everything we have seen so far indicates the results of the government are just produced," Phil Gunson, International Crisis Group's senior analyst for Venezuela, told Al Jazeera. He claimed the tallies announced by the government-controlled electoral authority did not correspond to the votes cast. "The result that the opposition claims is the correct one ... corresponds very closely to what opinion polls have been say-

ing for the last several months," Gunson said. "All the partial results we have seen so far indicate the opposition got something like three-fifths of the vote." election was the product of a deal last year between the government and opposition. The agreement led the United States to temporarily ease sanctions imposed after Maduro's 2018 re-election, which was rejected as a sham by dozens of Western and Latin American countries.

But the sanctions were reinstated after Maduro reneged on agreed conditions. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is currently visiting Japan, said Washington wanted the votes to be counted "fairly and transparently" and expressed concern at the declaration of Maduro's victory. "We have serious concerns that the result announced does not reflect the will or the votes of the Venezuelan people," Blinken said. — Aljazeera

## BD restores mobile internet after 11-day blackout to quell protests

DHAKA: Bangladesh has restored mobile internet, 11 days after a nationwide blackout was imposed to contain deadly protests over quotas in government jobs. The South Asian nation's 4G mobile internet services resumed, hours after Zunaid Ahmed Palak, the state minister for telecommunications and information technology, made the announcement.

"We have decided to restore the 4G network connectivity from 3pm [09:00 GMT] today," the state minister said, following a meeting with internet service providers (ISP) and other stakeholders in the capital Dhaka. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube, however, remain restricted. The broadband internet connectivity was restored, but a vast majority of internet users in Bangladesh rely on mobile devices to connect with the world. On July 17, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government had suspended mobile internet services, deployed the army and imposed a curfew after tens of thousands of students hit the streets,

demanding reforms in the quota system which reserved 30 percent of government jobs for relatives of veterans who fought in the 1971 war of independence against Pakistan. The protests - one of the biggest upheavals of Hasina's 15-year tenure - remained largely peaceful until the demonstrators were attacked by the police and pro-government student groups last week.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said at least 147 people were killed during the violence, in the government's first toll, published a day after the main protester group, Students Against Discrimination, gave its own preliminary count of at least 266 dead. Speaking to reporters in Dhaka, Khan said the deceased included students, police, activists, and people from various professions, adding that further investigation is under way to determine the total toll. Independent estimates put the toll at more than 200. Home Minister Khan told reporters that police operated with restraint and only fired on demonstrators to protect government buildings. He added that

police had only abducted some protesters for their own safety.

"Despite the killing of their fellow officers, they showed extreme levels of patience," he said. "But when they saw that the properties could not be protected, then police were forced to open fire." The students opposed to the quota system have called it discriminatory and began their peaceful protests after a High Court bench in June reinstated the quotas that were abolished in 2018. With around 18 million young Bangladeshis out of work, according to government figures, the move to restore the quotas deeply upset graduates facing an acute employment crisis. Critics say the quota is used to stack public jobs with loyalists to the ruling Awami League party.

Amid the protests, the country's Supreme Court cut the 30 percent quota for veterans' descendants to 5 percent, and the quota for ethnic minorities, transgender people and disabled people was limited to 2 percent. But the top court fell short of the protesters' demands to scrap the quotas entirely. Army

patrols and a nationwide curfew remain in place, more than a week after they were imposed. Schools and other educational institutions remain closed until further notice. In a bid to restore normalcy, the government relaxed the curfew for 11 hours (6am to 5pm) in Dhaka and set new timings for office work from 9 am to 3 pm for the next three days, according to the Home Ministry, the dpa news agency reported. Meanwhile, a police dragnet has scooped up thousands of protesters, including at least half a dozen student leaders.

Members of Students Against Discrimination said they would end their weeklong protest moratorium, but vowed to renew it if their leaders are not freed. The group's chief Nahid Islam and others "should be freed and the cases against them must be withdrawn", group member Abdul Hannan Masud told reporters in an online briefing. "Otherwise, Students Against Discrimination will be forced to launch tough protests" from Monday, Masud said. — Aljazeera

## Boat disaster in Ethiopia kills 12

AMHARA (BBC): Reports from northern Ethiopia say at least 12 people have drowned after their boat sank in the Amhara region. The wooden vessel was taking passengers to a funeral across the Tekeze river, which runs along Ethiopia's border with Eritrea. The boat was hit by a flash flood and capsized.

Twenty-six people were thought to have been on board when the accident happened. The survivors were taken to hospital for treatment, reports the Amhara Media Corporation (AMC), including a "severely wounded" child. It was not yet clear if all the bodies of those who died had been recovered from the water. Work on an out-of-use bridge which spans the Tekeze river was due to be finished last month, but had been delayed, a local official told AMC. Media access to northern Ethiopia is heavily restricted by the authorities. The region has seen recent clashes between the military and an ethnic Amhara militia known as the Fano.

Meanwhile, for days, retired teacher Meaza Tadelu has been holding on to hope that his missing wife may still be alive. Barefoot and distraught, the frail 66-year-old looked on as younger volunteers dug through mud and earth in search of survivors in his village in Ethiopia's Gofa Zone. "She left home in search of household goods

in the nearby market and I suspect she was trapped by the mudslide," Tadelu, a local from the village of Daly, told Al Jazeera, his clothes and bony hands stained with mud. The first disaster struck , after days of torrential rains in the mountainous southern region triggered a deadly landslide that swept away houses and people. Soon after, locals and police officers arrived to help. But another landslide on Monday swept even more people, including rescuers, away. Tadelu's brother was among the volunteers who went to help. "When my own brother went out to search for [my wife] at the landslide scene, he, too, died," he told Al Jazeera, looking devastated. Like most of the villagers, Tadelu has had barely any sleep all week. The ordeal has left him shaken and worried, bursting into tears whenever he speaks of the tragedy. Ethiopian authorities say at least 257 people perished in the disaster, a death toll the United Nations' humanitarian agency, OCHA, expects to be more or less double to 500. According to OCHA, more landslides are feared, and some 15,500 people in the area are at risk of being affected, including at least 1,320 children under the age of five and 5,293 pregnant and lactating women.

A week after the tragedy, the wails of mourning women and crying children

continued as mostly local men frantically excavated, searching for of hundreds of loved ones who were swept away and buried beneath mud. Authorities said search operations were continuing through the weekend. The mountainous region has made it nearly impossible for heavy machinery to reach the area. So dozens of people have been digging away throughout the day since Monday, excavating by hand, searching for the missing with the help of spades and pickaxes. Almaz Tadesae, a distraught mother in her 30s, sat in the embrace of her consoling sisters. Tadesae lost her seven children in what felt like seconds, she said. From her mud house in the hilly village of Daly, she witnessed her family engulfed by a tsunami of mud early on Monday morning.

They were returning home from a church service when the disaster ripped through the village. She had remained home that day, but now wishes she had not. "I would be better dead than alive given the magnitude of grief that I am grappling with now," Almaz wept as she told Al Jazeera. On a field perched atop a hill, which is typically used to host religious and national celebrations, people gathered to attend a mass funeral for the dead.

The ceremony was quickly organised by the local government and

attended by hundreds of villagers, including those who had brought dead bodies on donkeys and carts to see them buried. At the makeshift mourning ground, many people held photos of their missing family members, while donations were dropped off to help those affected by the landslides. On one side of the field, the dead were buried in unmarked graves. There, 54-year-old Tamene Ayele was also mourning. Ayele lost his family of four - including his youngest son who had rushed to the scene to find his siblings after the first wave of mudslides. The 17-year-old was busy digging with his bare hands to help locate his family when the second landslide buried him alive. Days on, with no trace of his son, bereaved Ayele is now convinced he, too, is dead.

"My son was a farmer like me, but had aspirations to go to college," Ayele said in between sobs. "He worked and studied hard and was supposed to be the first [in the family] to go to college, but now he is gone," he added tearfully. Ethiopia, Africa's second-most populous country, has one of the world's highest economic growth rates, and is one of the region's fastest growing economies. Yet, the remote village of Daly and its grief-struck population are glaring evidence of the poverty that remains widespread.

## California wildfire tears through 5,000 acres

CALIFORNIA (BBC): An enormous wildfire has grown by 8 sq miles an hour (20 sq km) as it spreads across parts of northern California. The Park fire, which started in a suspected arson attack, has burned more than 350,000 acres of land north-east of Chico, and was only 10% contained, the state's fire agency Cal Fire said.

About 3,700 firefighters are battling the blaze, which has been fuelled by steep terrain and wind gusts. A 42-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of starting the fire by rolling a burning car into a gully near Alligator Hole in Butte County. It is now the largest fire in the state this year, and the seventh largest ever recorded in California. It has consumed an area more than 1.5 times the size of New York City's five boroughs. Fire captain Robert Foxworthy said steep terrain and very few roads have made it a challenge to battle the blaze. He said the sheer scale of the fire was made worse by embers being flung out a "great distance" ahead of the main fire, sparking a large number of spot fires. Cal Fire incident commander Billy See said the fire had spread at a rate of 5,000 acres an hour. Speaking at an operational briefing, Mr See said there were almost three times the personnel fighting the fire and "we still don't

have enough". Scott Weese, a fire behaviourist with Cal Fire, said that there was a high fuel load in the area with an abundance of grass. "The heat signature is huge," he told the operational briefing, adding that the fire burned through 150,000 acres yesterday. Authorities were hopeful they could use easing of conditions to contain some of the blaze. Wind speeds decreased and temperatures dropped by about 3-4C, but still hover in some areas in the low 30s (90F). Cal Fire said lower temperatures and higher humidity have reduced the spread of the blaze but it is still growing in some areas.

Officials said the chance of fire whirls had decreased after a rare "firenado" - a swirling vortex of flames and ash formed in intense heat and high winds - was filmed twisting through bushland the day before. California Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency in Butte and Tehama counties because of the Park fire. The governor announced new federal assistance for Tehama County. Federal assistance for Butte County was announced earlier in the week. "This is already one of the biggest fires in California history, and we're continuing to see dangerous conditions - our firefighters and emergency responders are working day

and night to protect our communities. Californians must heed warning from local authorities and take steps to stay safe." At least 16 helicopters are fighting the blaze, as well as multiple air tankers dumping water from the sky when conditions allow. The wildfire has forced mandatory evacuations in Butte, where California's deadliest blaze, the Camp Fire, killed more than 80 people in 2018. The 400-strong population of Cohasset has already been moved as the fire burns out of control. Cal Fire said that 134 structures had been destroyed, while 4,200 were under threat. Officials arrested Ronnie Dean Stout, 42, and accused him of "calmly leaving the area by blending in with the other citizens who were in the area and fleeing the rapidly evolving fire" that he had set. He is being held in jail without bail as authorities determine what charges he will face. A woman who answered the door of the mobile home listed as his home address in Chico told the San Francisco Chronicle that prosecutors "are trying to make him the scapegoat". "They're saying he did it intentionally, but he didn't. The car caught on fire," the unidentified woman said, before refusing to answer further questions. The Park fire is one of many currently burning across the US and Canada.

## Rebel coalition in Mali claims to have killed dozens of soldiers

BAMAKO, Mali (AP): A coalition of armed groups in Mali's predominantly Tuareg north claimed that it killed dozens of government soldiers and Russian mercenaries from the Wagner group in a battle near the border with Algeria. On social media, amateur videos showed the lifeless bodies of several white men and Malian soldiers scattered on the ground alongside destroyed vehicles.

The rebel claim came after the Malian army issued a statement saying two soldiers had been killed and 10 wounded in a rebel attack that also disabled two armored vehicles and two

pickup trucks. The army claimed its troops killed approximately 20 rebels and destroyed several vehicles. Neither side's account could be independently confirmed. Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadan, spokesman for the pro-independence CSP-DPA coalition, said in a statement that a two-day battle raged on the outskirts of Tinzawaten village and the rebels "routed the entire column of Malian army and Russian mercenaries." Ramadan said that "the enemy suffered huge losses in terms of lives and equipment, including dozens of dead and wounded." He also said some "Malian soldiers

and mercenaries from Wagner groups surrendered to the Tuareg fighters." If true, it would be the biggest blow inflicted on Wagner mercenaries by Tuareg rebels in Mali. Rida Lyammouri, a senior fellow at the Policy Center for the New South, a think tank in Morocco, said the battle was a message to the government that "things are not going to be as easy and as simple when it comes to recapturing and controlling northern regions." "Simultaneously, this setback might lead unfortunately to further atrocities against civilians" by the government and Wagner, Lyammouri said.



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# US Navy should bolt missiles onto everything that floats

THE US Navy's new frigate is years late – and some lawmakers are worried. To prevent a near-term collapse in naval firepower, 25 US senators led by Senator Jack Reed – a Rhode Island Democrat and chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee – are demanding the Navy come up with a plan to add ships or missiles or both, and fast. "The committee does not believe the Department of the Navy is adequately emphasizing near- and medium-term capacity requirements," the committee wrote in a new draft of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2025. The committee's concern is understandable. Back in March, a shipyard survey ordered by Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro found serious labor problems in almost all major warship programs. An effort to build potentially dozens of missile-armed frigates is especially troubled, according to the study.

Delivery of the first Constellation-class frigate – under construction by Fincantieri in Wisconsin – has slipped from 2026 to 2029. The Navy had hoped to ramp up to building four of the \$1-billion vessels, each armed with 48 missiles, in order to address a coming slump in overall fleet firepower. But every year of delay in the frigate program prolongs the slump. The firepower problem has been a long time in the making. The Navy built a lot of ships very quickly in the 1980s and early '90s, including 27 Ticonderoga-class cruisers. Each cruiser packed up to 130 missiles, substantially contributing to the roughly 10,000 missiles the whole US fleet deploys with. By comparison, the Chinese fleet deploys with around 5,000 missiles.

But the Ticos are old. Just a dozen are left – and the last is scheduled to decommission in 2027. Their inactivation comes at the same time the fleet plans to decommission four aging cruise-missile submarines, each armed with 154 missiles.

The delivery of new destroyers adds missile capacity, but not fast enough to make up for all the capacity the Navy is losing. The fleet is on track to cut 500 deployed missiles over the next three years. At the same time, the Chinese fleet is on track to add 1,000 deployed missiles. A big class of new frigates, built at a rate of up to four a year, would go a long way toward restoring the lost missile capacity and prolonging the US Navy's firepower advantage over the Chinese navy. But only if the frigates are available soon – and deliver at a steady rate.

In the wake of Del Toro's shipyard study, the senators aren't optimistic. "The committee believes the US Navy needs to focus more on supplementary options for increasing ship numbers and missile-launching capacity in the nearer term," they wrote. To reassure the senators, and to give policymakers options for acquiring more ships and missiles – and quickly – the committee directed the Navy to consider several expedients, and report back in a year.

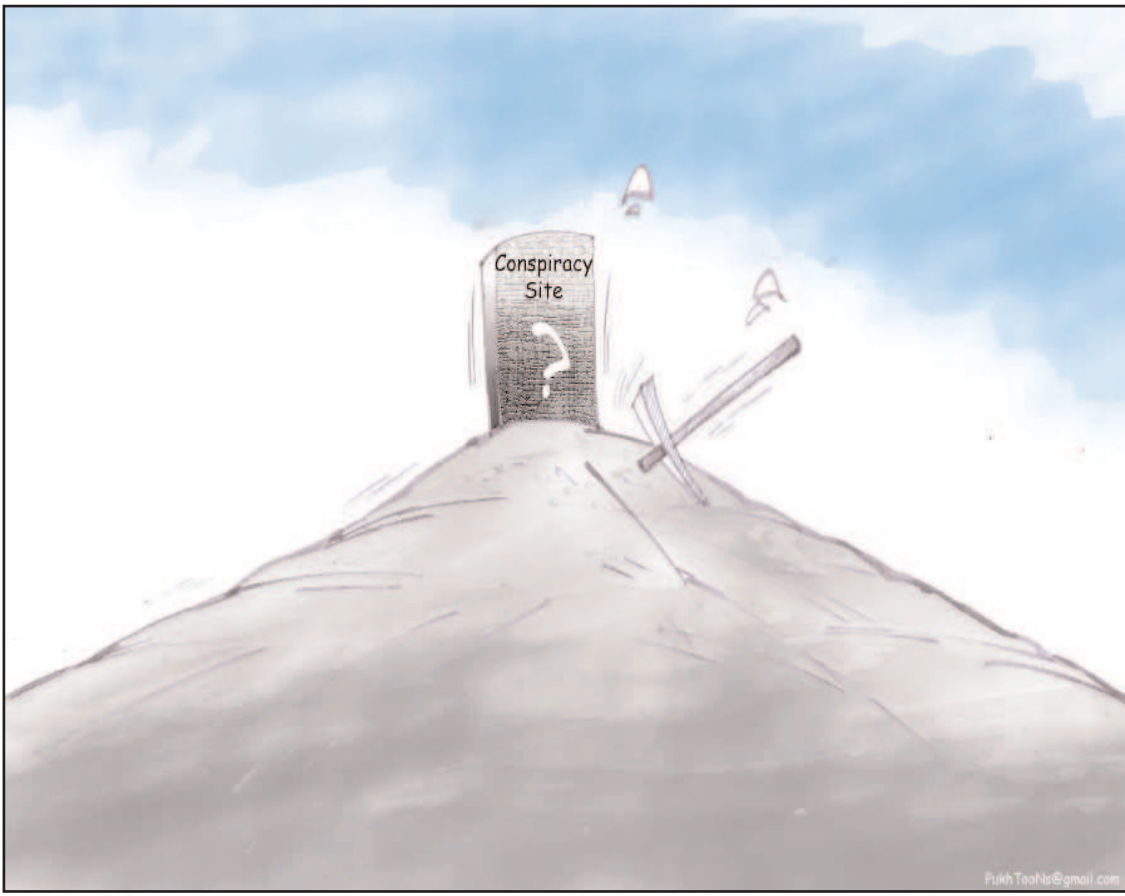
The options could include a rapid acquisition of a new class of small warship – perhaps a manned version of an unmanned missile vessel the Navy is planning to start buying in 2027. The fleet could also add missile-launchers to existing ships – including ships that, at present, are mostly or totally unarmed. The last option would be the quickest and cheapest, as it wouldn't require new hulls. Between them, the Navy and Military Sealift Command already operate more than 200 amphibious, support and transport vessels that are, at best, lightly armed with short-range self-defense weapons. The Navy could bolt simple containerized launchers for long-range missiles onto any of these ships. The newly up-armed vessels wouldn't have the sensors and sophisticated fire-controls they'd need to detect and track targets, but they could fire their missiles at targets that other warships detect and track on their behalf. The problem, of course, is that most of these ships are usually busy performing the tasks for which they were designed and built: hauling cargo, fuel and supplies and performing myriad mundane but essential tasks that keep the fleet's best warships combat-ready.

If there's an exception, it might be the Navy's roughly 20 amphibious landing docks. While primarily designed to land US Marines and their vehicles on defended beaches, these LSDs and LPDs, to use the naval terms, almost always sail alongside destroyers and cruisers in close proximity to enemy shores. They're meant to be in the thick of the fighting. Up-arming these vessels might make sense. Indeed, the Marine Corps has already endorsed the idea. In 2019, Major General Tracy King, then the director of expeditionary warfare, proposed arming landing docks with canister-launched Naval Strike Missiles, which can target ships at sea or targets on land from as far away as 100 miles.

"Do we need something like a Naval Strike Missile so the composite warfare commander ... can use that magazine?" King asked. "Absolutely. And we're going to try to do that, but it is a budgetary fight." Finding money for add-on missiles might not have been a priority five years ago, when Congress assumed the Navy's new frigates would commission on time. Now that the frigates are late and the fleet's missile capacity is set to shrink, it might make sense for lawmakers to shift a billion dollars or two to an emergency effort to up-arm ships that are currently lightly-armed.

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# China is exporting its AI surveillance state

Martin Beraja

FORMER US President George H.W. Bush once remarked that, "No nation on Earth has discovered a way to import the world's goods and services while stopping foreign ideas at the border." In an age when democracies dominated the technological frontier, the ideas Bush had in mind were those associated with America's own model of political economy.

But now that China has become a leading innovator in artificial intelligence, might the same economic integration move countries in the opposite direction? This question is particularly relevant to developing countries, since many are not only institutionally fragile, but also increasingly connected to China via trade, foreign aid, loans and investments.

While AI has been hailed as the basis for a "fourth industrial revolution," it is also bringing many new challenges to the fore. AI technologies have the potential to drive economic growth in the coming years, but also to undermine democracies, aid autocrats' pursuit of social control and empower "surveillance capitalists" who manipulate our behavior and profit from the data trails we leave online.

Since China has aggressively deployed AI-powered facial recognition to support its own surveillance state, we recently set out to explore the patterns and political consequences of trade in these technologies. After constructing a database for global trade in facial-recognition AI from 2008 to 2021, we found 1,636 deals from 36 exporting countries to 136 importing countries. From this dataset, we document three developments. First, China has a comparative advantage in facial-recognition AI. It exports to roughly twice as many countries as the United States does (83 versus 57 links), and it has about 10% more trade deals (238 versus 211). Moreover, its comparative advantage in facial-recognition AI is larger than in

other frontier-technology exports, such as radioactive materials, steam turbines and laser and other beam processes.

While different factors may have contributed to China's comparative advantage, we know that the Chinese government has made global dominance in AI an explicit developmental and strategic goal, and that the facial-recognition AI industry has bene-

China displays an autocratic bias. Equally notable, we found no such bias when investigating the US

One potential explanation for this difference is that autocracies and weak democracies might be turning specifically to China for surveillance technologies. That brings us to our third finding: autocracies and weak democracies are more likely to import facial-recognition AI from China

mated.

At the same time, we do not find any association between surveillance AI imports and institutional quality among mature democracies. So, rather than interpreting our findings as the causal impact of AI on institutions, we view imports of surveillance AI and the erosion of domestic institutions in autocracies and weak democracies as the joint outcome of a regime's pursuit of greater political control.

Interestingly, we also find suggestive evidence that autocracies and weak democracies importing large amounts of Chinese surveillance AI during unrest are less likely to develop into mature democracies than peer countries with low imports of surveillance AI. This suggests that the tactics employed by autocracies during times of unrest – importing surveillance AI, eroding electoral institutions and importing military technology – may be effective in entrenching nondemocratic regimes.

Our research adds to the evidence that trade does not always foster democracy or liberalize regimes. Instead, China's greater integration with the developing world may do precisely the opposite.

This suggests a need for tighter AI trade regulation, which could be modeled on the regulation of other goods that produce negative externalities. Insofar as autocratically biased AI is trained on data collected for the purpose of political repression, it is similar to goods produced from unethically sourced inputs, such as child labor. And since surveillance AI may have negative downstream externalities, such as lost civil liberties and political rights, it is not unlike pollution.

Like all dual-use technologies, facial-recognition AI has the potential to benefit consumers and firms. But regulations must be carefully designed to ensure that this frontier technology is diffused around the world without facilitating autocratization.

The Japan Times

*And a similar pattern appears to hold with imports of US surveillance AI, though this finding is less precisely estimated. At the same time, we do not find any association between surveillance AI imports and institutional quality among mature democracies. So, rather than interpreting our findings as the causal impact of AI on institutions, we view imports of surveillance AI and the erosion of domestic institutions in autocracies and weak democracies as the joint outcome of a regime's pursuit of greater political control.*

fitted from its demand for surveillance technology, often receiving access to large government datasets.

Second, we find that autocracies and weak democracies are more likely to import facial-recognition AI from China. While the US predominantly exports the technology to mature democracies (these account for roughly two-thirds of its links or three-quarters of its deals), China exports roughly equal amounts to mature democracies and autocracies or weak democracies.

Does China have an autocratic bias or is it simply exporting more to autocracies and weak democracies across all products? When we compared China's exports of facial-recognition AI to its exports of other frontier technologies, we found that facial-recognition AI is the only technology for which

in years when they experience domestic unrest.

The data make clear that weak democracies and autocracies tend to import surveillance AI from China – but not from the US – during years of unrest, rather than pre-emptively or after the fact. Imports of military technology follow a similar pattern. By contrast, we do not find that mature democracies import more facial-recognition AI in response to unrest.

A final question concerns broader institutional changes in these countries. Our analysis shows that imports of Chinese surveillance AI during episodes of domestic unrest are indeed associated with a country's elections becoming less fair, less peaceful and less credible overall. And a similar pattern appears to hold with imports of US surveillance AI, though this finding is less precisely esti-

Keri-Lynn Wilson

# When Putin invaded my country, I couldn't take up arms

WHAT is the role of the arts in times of suffering? If we know that a symphony can't halt a slaughter, and that life-and-death decisions in war are made on battlefields and in government offices not in concert halls, why do artists continue to respond to the most tumultuous of events around them, and why do we all yearn to experience what they see and say and sing?

On the day Vladimir Putin launched his attempted full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, we knew this was an assault not just on a nation but on its culture. So my husband – Peter Gelb of the Metropolitan Opera in New York – and I worked with the Polish National Opera in Warsaw to bring together Ukrainian musicians still at home and refugees abroad for a new kind of orchestra, one that would fight for the country's cause all over the world. While I could not take up arms, I could take

up my baton as my weapon instead.

I am of Ukrainian-Canadian heritage with close cousins in the country, one of whom is a lieutenant colonel, who has been fighting in Donetsk since 2014. All of the orchestra, and many members of our audiences, have similar stories to tell.

That first summer, the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra played in London, Amsterdam, New York, Washington DC and more, to make a statement of cultural resistance to barbarity. We had hoped that our first tour would also be our last, and the war would be over. But here we are, two years later. The war goes on and continues to exact its devastating toll. In the wider world, the assurances made in 2022 that a staunchly united west would support Ukraine, come what may, appear less certain. On the ground, this month's atrocity of Putin bombing a children's cancer hospital in Kyiv devastated us all.

In the face of these vast geopolitical movements, and accompanying humanitarian catastrophe, you can't help but consider the purpose and the impact of cultural interventions such as ours. But everywhere we visit provides some different form of inspiration. I write these words from Gdansk in Poland, having just conducted Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, with Schiller's great cry of freedom, the Ode to Joy, sung in Ukrainian. Our venue was the vast hall of a working shipyard, in the presence of the former Polish president Lech Walesa. The resonances with the Polish people's struggle against Soviet oppression were poignantly apparent and he spoke movingly about his ambitions to integrate Ukraine into the EU and Nato, and his regret that failure to do so has partly led to what we see today.

In Paris, the Choir of the French Army sang Schiller's exhilarating words in Ukrainian, having been taught them by a Ukrainian refugee chorus master. This came just days after France had narrowly avoided electing a Putin-apologist party to lead its parliament. When President Macron refused to rule out sending troops to Ukraine, he caused a diplomatic stir, but here were Nato boots on the cultural ground.

At St Paul's Cathedral in London today, we will be joined by the Royal Opera House's Songs for Ukraine chorus, which is made up of Ukrainian refugees and members of London's Ukrainian diaspora affected by the war.

The fight for democracy is fought not only in the trenches, but through the revolutionary music created in response to political oppression.

That is as true of Beethoven's Ninth – this year celebrating its 200th anniversary – as it is of the opening work of our programme on tour by the acclaimed contemporary Ukrainian composer Victoria Vita Poleva. Her

# Not even France can escape West's cultural decay

Tim Stanley

AT the Olympics they often sing Imagine, containing the line, "Imagine there's no countries?..." Well, if there were no countries, there'd be no Olympics, which would be marvellous. Who wants to watch two weeks of muscular women throwing sticks and balls at each other? The only entertaining bit is the opening ceremony. Britain did a good 'un back in 2012; so good that it entered folklore, along with the 1966 World Cup and Dunkirk. When our grandkids ask, "What did you do in the clash of civilisations?" we shall reply: "We pushed Elizabeth II out of a helicopter."

Paris, by contrast, offered us drag queens doing a parody of the Last Supper – insulting Christians, mocking God. When I described the scene to a priest, he replied: "That explains the torrential rain, then."

It was blasphemous, sure, but it was also tacky; the crime aesthetic as well as religious. You have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to sell your country to tourists, and what did France go with? A dozen men – one with a beard – twerking to Freed from Desire. Actual culture necessitates discipline and taste. In the 21st century, people just "party", cos it requires zero effort and any idiot can do it.

Kicking Christians is very easy because we have no power and, when we're angry, we don't fly planes into things. And yet some people cannot leave us alone. They feel a need to ridicule our beliefs and subvert our images, to drag Christ down to the gutter – as if crucifying him once wasn't enough.

It's probably because faith is beautiful. People don't know how to react to it. When you've been raised in ugliness, to be confronted with the profound, transcendent beauty of the Last Supper can inspire awe, yes, but also fear. Think of those apes going bananas at the mysterious monolith in 2001: A Space Odyssey. Beauty pierces the illusion of a comfortably banal existence.

Imagine if instead of the drag queen parody, the ceremony had paused to display the real painting by Leonardo da Vinci. No music. No fireworks. Just Jesus&Co. Millions would've switched off the telly – because they'd find it boring, no doubt, but also strange, unnerving, possibly offensive. There would've been thousands of complaints. We have engineered an entire existence around pleasure and distraction. Stop the disco for one minute and people might fill the silence with thought, even prayer?... or they might riot.

Either way, you've got a revolution on your hands, and the powers that be can't have that. Organisers have apologised for any offence caused, but wise-guys insist the whole thing was a very French joke the world didn't get. But how French was the ceremony in total?

Celine Dion is Canadian. Lady Gaga is from the United States. "This is France!" tweeted Emmanuel Macron – in English, something one could never imagine De Gaulle or Mitterrand doing. In fact this version of France looks suspiciously American, and drag is another import. Men have been dressing up as women for a laugh for centuries, and long may it continue. But the art form's current vibe was promoted by Ru Paul – obviously influenced by Voguing – and the notion that drag queens are apostles for progress is 100 per cent "made in the USA".

I'm old enough to remember when a drag act meant a bloke, often married, dressed as Barbara Cartland telling filthy jokes about foreigners in the Dog and Duck. The Yanks have mainstreamed this subculture, transforming it into a mass consumer product, which was another reason to yawn rather than boo at the drag disciples. This stuff ceased being brave or transgressive 20 years ago. Like the rainbow flag (designed by an American) or Pride (begun in America), it is banal because it is ubiquitous.

So, Brits shouldn't gloat over the tawdry French games. If we held them today, we'd make identical mistakes. Our ceremony would also be a celebration of diversity – every Western nation has become diverse to the point of looking exactly the same – for diversity is something one promotes when you've lost confidence in your historical identity. When you've decided everything you did pre-1960 was racist, and you've stopped writing great novels, composing symphonies or painting beyond primary school standard.

The West is culturally dying. It only looks alive because we're dancing among the relics of what we used to do well – and are so embarrassed by these past accomplishments that we feel moved to ridicule their ideals. The Paris ceremony, of course, featured a headless Marie Antoinette. Let's laugh at a victim of an earlier experiment in egalitarianism. It's interesting how gender always haunts debates about civilisation. In 1790, Edmund Burke – a philosopher writing before Marie's execution – predicted that the lack of chivalry shown towards the queen would eventually spell disaster for all women and all France. In a world without etiquette or distinction, he said, "a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal, and an animal not of the highest order". Abusing monarchs, like burning books, erodes dignity and encourages murder.

France's decline is nothing special. In some regards it is ahead of us; in others, behind. The depressing point is that it is familiar. These Olympics have been marred by racial tension, incompetence, poor taste, unreliable railways, filthy river water and terrible weather. France's fate is worse than death: she has become Great Britain.

The Telegraph

Bucha Lacrimosa was written in memory of the innocent victims massacred at the hands of Russian invaders in the Ukrainian town of Bucha in 2022, after she had travelled through the town while making her escape from the country.

Conductors have also taken a stand. In the 1930s, Toscanini's heroic anti-fascism saw him refuse to perform in Germany, while continuing to speak up for a more noble vision of culture by conducting the great German repertoire in neighbouring nations. Daniel Barenboim's East-West Divan Orchestra attempted to bring together young Israeli and Palestinian musicians. Leonard Bernstein was vociferous on a number of causes, notably civil rights. The Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra follows his example set on Christmas Day 1989, just weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when he conducted Beethoven's Ninth in the city and made one important change to the text. He altered Schiller's opening

word Freude (Joy) to Freiheit (Freedom). In our version, we have changed Freude to Slava, from the phrase that has become familiar around the world as the rallying call of Ukrainian resistance in the face of ruthless Russian aggression, Slava Ukraini (Glory to Ukraine).

When the war ends there will be a rebuilding: of physical infrastructure and military capacity to ward off future threat; but also a need for the less tangible rebuilding of health and education and robust institutions, businesses and public administration. A vibrant and confident culture will be vital to this national renewal. As President Zelenskyy recently said: "In times of war – even more so than in times of peace – we must all remember the significance of culture. And people of culture matter. Everyone who speaks out for Ukraine, who voices what's on their hearts, who revives what could have been forgotten, gives people strength."

The Guardian



# No president is above the law

**THIS nation was founded on a simple yet profound principle: No one is above the law. Not the president of the United States. Not a justice on the Supreme Court of the United States. No one. But the Supreme Court’s 6-3 decision on July 1 to grant presidents broad immunity from prosecution for crimes they commit in office means there are virtually no limits on what a president can do. The only limits will be those that are self-imposed by the person occupying the Oval Office. If a future president incites a violent mob to storm the Capitol and stop the peaceful transfer of power — like we saw on Jan. 6, 2021 — there may be no legal consequences. And that’s only the beginning.**

On top of dangerous and extreme decisions that overturn settled legal precedents — including *Roe v. Wade* — the court is mired in a crisis of ethics. Scandals involving several justices have caused the public to question the court’s fairness and independence, which are essential to faithfully carrying out its mission of equal justice under the law. For example, undisclosed gifts to justices in cases before the court, as well as conflicts of interest connected with Jan. 6 insurrectionists, raise legitimate questions about the court’s impartiality. I served as a US senator for 36 years, including as chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee. I have overseen more Supreme Court nomina-

tions as senator, vice president and president than anyone living today. I have great respect for our institutions and the separation of powers.

What is happening now is not normal, and it undermines the pub-

Joe Biden

***I served as a US senator for 36 years, including as chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee. I have overseen more Supreme Court nominations as senator, vice president and president than anyone living today. I have great respect for our institutions and the separation of powers. What is happening now is not normal, and it undermines the public’s confidence in the court’s decisions, including those impacting personal freedoms. We now stand in a breach. That’s why — in the face of increasing threats to America’s democratic institutions — I am calling for three bold reforms to restore trust and accountability to the court and our democracy.***

lic’s confidence in the court’s decisions, including those impacting personal freedoms. We now stand in a breach. That’s why — in the face of increasing threats to America’s democratic institutions — I am calling for three bold reforms to restore trust and accountability to the court and our democracy.

First, I am calling for a constitutional amendment called the No

One Is Above the Law Amendment. It would make clear that there is no immunity for crimes a former president committed while in office. I share our Founders’ belief that the presi-

changes with some regularity. That would make timing for court nominations more predictable and less arbitrary. It would reduce the chance that any single presidency radically alters the makeup of the court for generations to come. I support a system in which the president would appoint a justice every two years to spend 18 years in active service on the Supreme Court.

Third, I’m calling for a binding code of conduct for the Supreme Court. This is common sense. The court’s current voluntary ethics code is weak and self-enforced. Justices should be required to disclose gifts, refrain from public political activity and recuse themselves from cases in which they or their spouses have financial or other conflicts of interest. Every other federal judge is bound by an enforceable code of conduct, and there is no reason for the Supreme Court to be exempt. All three of these reforms are supported by a majority of Americans — as well as conservative and liberal constitutional scholars. And I want to thank the bipartisan Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court of the United States for its insightful analysis, which informed some of these proposals.

We can and must prevent the abuse of presidential power. We can and must restore the public’s faith in the Supreme Court. We can and must strengthen the guardrails of democracy. In America, no one is above the law. In America, the people rule.

The Washington Post

# How does Russia treat its modernizers? By locking them up

Andrei Soldatov & Irina Borogan

**ALEXEI Soldatov, a Russian internet pioneer and a founder of the first internet provider in the country, has been sentenced by a court to two years in a labor colony on charges of “abuse of power.” Soldatov, 72, had been detained by a court in Moscow. He is terminally ill.**

Very few in Russia believe in the government charges against a man widely known as a Father of the Russian Internet — and who is less well known as the father of Andrei Soldatov, one of the authors of this article. Soldatov was accused of abuse of power when managing a pool of IP addresses for an organization at which he had no power. This legal absurdity was enough to see him imprisoned even though the court knew of Soldatov’s illness, which meant the court had no legal right to pass a custodial sentence. His family believes that the decision is essentially a death sentence.

Soldatov, a trained nuclear physicist, made his career in the Kurchatov Institute of Atomic Energy, a leading Soviet nuclear research facility during the Cold War. In addition to research on atomic weapons, scientists at the Kurchatov were involved in many crucial defense projects, ranging from Soviet nuclear submarines to laser weapons. As a result, the institute held an exalted status in the Soviet Union.

Because of that, the institute enjoyed a degree of freedom unthinkable for other Soviet research centers. Among other things, it meant the institute had a phone line capable of making international calls. Soldatov, who was known at the Kurchatov Institute

for using computers more than anyone else to do his work, dreamed of building a network at the institute. He formed a team of programmers around him. In 1990 they began to think about how they could connect the institute with other research centers in the country. They needed a name for this network, so ran a random word-selection program in English. The program came up with Relcom.

In August of that year, the Relcom network became a reality, connecting the Kurchatov Institute in Moscow to the Institute of Informatics and Automation in Leningrad, 460 miles away. Further connections were established with research centers in Dubna, Serpukhov, and Novosibirsk. The network used ordinary telephone lines with extremely narrow bandwidth, meaning it was only capable of exchanging simple e-mails. But the Relcom team dreamed of connecting with the world.

On Aug. 28, 1990, the very first Soviet connection to the global internet was made when Kurchatov programmers exchanged emails with a university in Helsinki thanks to Relcom. Having connected the isolated country to the rest of the world, Relcom expanded rapidly. Many began using the company’s name as a shorthand term for the internet or email.

It was a very anti-Soviet idea — to connect people instantly both within the country and the world. The Soviet Union was a country where hierarchy was everything, and where any act required obligatory pre-authorization.

The first political test for

Relcom came when the KGB organized a putsch in August 1991. The KGB blocked and banned traditional media, but did not pay attention to the nascent internet. Soldatov was in Vladikavkaz, far from Moscow. But when he called his people at the Kurchatov Computation Center, he insisted on one thing and one thing only: that they keep the line open.

Relcom remained operational, disseminating news about resistance in Moscow and other cities to Europe and the US It was hugely effective because the network was completely horizontal. On the first day of the coup someone in the Relcom team came up with an idea called “Regime N1”: to ask all subscribers of Relcom to look out the window and send back exactly what they saw — just the facts, no emotions. Soon Relcom received a kaleidoscopic picture of what was happening throughout the country, disseminating the eyewitness reports from subscribers along with news reports. It became clear that the tanks and troops were present only in two cities — Moscow and Leningrad — and that the coup would not succeed.

In the 1990s the new Russian internet blossomed, and Soldatov’s Relcom became just one of many middle-sized internet service providers. Even so, he remained widely respected, in the country and abroad, for his expertise in internet governance. He also helped to establish the organizations that provided the technical backbone of the Russian Internet ever since — including the distribution of domain names and IP addresses.

# I’ve been branded mad, bad and dangerous by my own party – so I will not lead it

Suella Braverman

**POLITICS is bruising and thankless. But the honour of being sent to the green benches by thousands of your fellow citizens is a gift unique to democracies, of which there are fewer around the world. Whilst our democracy is in rude health, the battering that we Conservatives received is painful. Hundreds of excellent Conservative MPs lost their seats. I think often about friends who find themselves abruptly unemployed.**

There has been much discussion about how we suffered the worst ever result in history. But still no consensus. The disaster was down to our failure to keep promises. We did not cut immigration despite saying we would; we raised taxes to a 70-year high whilst pledging the opposite and we over-reacted to Covid which disabled our public services. We failed to tackle the long tail of Blairism contained in the Human Rights Act, Equality Act and European Convention on Human Rights, despite complaining about them. And it was on our watch that transgender ideology and critical race theory seeped into our institutions, notwithstanding our rhetoric.

It’s not comfortable accepting these truths. I’ve tried to set them out and been vilified by some colleagues. But it is what it is. Anyone who leads our party needs to accept them or else prepare for a decade in the wilderness. On the night of the general election, I did the one thing I thought any of us could do on that dreadful evening when we lost half our vote and two thirds of our MPs:

I said sorry. I meant it then and I mean it now: I accept my share of the blame, and I appreciate that we got things monumentally wrong. The result was not some freak, “loveless landslide” for Labour. It was predicted, preventable, deserved and, as yet, unaddressed.

It’s why the other inconvenient truth we must confront is the existential threat posed by Reform. Nigel Farage destroyed us. We have no hope of recovery until we win back the trust of the four million. Branding them as racists and comparing their events to Nuremberg rallies did not work during the campaign and it won’t work now.

People talk about in-fighting. What they mean is those of us who saw this threat years ago and warned about it. But they are wrong. The reality is that we were a united party under Rishi Sunak. We MPs united to install him as PM with a coronation. Rishi never lost a vote because of Tory rebellion (save for Infected Blood). Precisely everything on Rishi’s agenda was noddod through: smoking bans, pedicabs, tax rises, Windsor framework and even the misguided early general election.

In fact, if only our Rwanda rebellion had succeeded, we would have got flights off. But not enough colleagues joined us, instead putting “unity” above a fatally flawed law that failed to stop the boats – as we predicted. Compare that to the paralysis that crippled Theresa May’s government. Now that was division. One

moral of this story is that so many colleagues were lost at the altar of unity. Not because of occasional comment from backbenchers.

So where to next? Although I’m grateful to the 10 MPs who wanted to nominate me for the leadership, getting onto the ballot is not enough. There is, for good or for ill, no point in someone like me running to lead the Tory Party when most of the MPs disagree with my diagnosis and prescription. The traumatised party does not want to hear these things said out loud. Instead, platitudes about “unity” are fashionable. That’s all fine but it’s not honest. When I said multiculturalism wasn’t working, I meant it. When, two years ago, I argued that we needed to leave the ECHR to stop the boats (as opposed to the cryptic talk about “readiness” or “reform”. Reader, beware of those reinventing themselves as ECHR-sceptics), it’s because it was true. When I’ve said the police needed to be tougher on pro-Palestinian thugs, that was the right thing to do. Now we are in a crisis and that’s why I’m being honest again about our problems. So we can fix them and go on to win.

I can only apologise to the people who backed me to stand. To the thousands of party members and the many disenchanted ex-Conservative voters who have written to me, I’m sorry. I cannot run because I cannot say what people want to hear. I do not complain about this – it’s democracy in action and worked for Keir

Starmer. I’ve been branded mad, bad and dangerous enough to see that the Tory Party does not want to hear the truths I’ve set out.

I wish all the candidates the best. The survival of our party depends on the outcome of this contest. And it is not just about unity. Pretending that we are united on the surface when we are unrec-onciled on policy won’t work. We must provide a bold, authentic and compelling vision of hope to the law-abiding, common sense, aspirational patriots. We are at our best when we offer them a full-throated defence of our country, meritocracy and fairness. When we don’t allow our people to be worn down by smears of racism simply for waving our flag or wanting less migration. When we fight for their freedom to spend their hard-earned money before the government sucks it up. Where we stand for the strength and sovereignty of the family unit, and its corollary, home ownership, as the bedrock of society. Where we eschew the luxury beliefs brigade and instead work for the well-being of the most deprived towns and communities. When we fight for our national sovereignty, culture and identity as if our civilisation depends on it. And when we restore pride in our nation so that those brave souls who keep us safe at home and abroad are not demonised or prosecuted for every judgment made in the heat of conflict. Whoever takes charge will, I know, have the best intentions and I will support them from the backbenches for a Conservative revival, a privilege for which I am deeply grateful.

The Moscow Times

# Americans don’t have enough in bank to weather unrelenting disasters

Daniel Kaniewski

**NATURAL disasters can have devastating financial consequences for individuals and households, yet few are fully protected. With a record number of recent disasters, including severe storms, flooding and wildfires, and an active hurricane season forecast that has already seen Beryl hit Texas, it’s a bad time to be disaster-poor.**

Individuals and their communities should act now to build their financial resilience. Some, though, believe the federal government will make them whole when disaster strikes. As the former Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) official responsible for helping Americans prepare for disasters, I can tell you this is simply not the case.

All too often, I would arrive in a community following a disaster to find survivors desperate for help. FEMA can provide assistance to support emergency needs, yet I also knew that the long-term needs of people hit hard by disaster would not be met with FEMA aid alone. The survivor’s journey begins with immediate actions such as evacuating out of harm’s way and meeting basic needs such as food and shelter. These all cost money — money that the survivor may not have available. In fact, 37% of Americans say they do not have the cash to cover a \$400 emergency expense.

Later, as a survivor seeks to rebuild and recover, they often find that the costs of replacing their possessions and homes are beyond their means. FEMA provides modest, needs-based aid aimed at immediate relief and essential repairs. The assistance is capped, but in reality most disaster survivors only qualify for a fraction of the \$42,500 maximum for housing assistance and \$42,500 maximum for other needs assistance. FEMA’s aid is not intended to cover full recovery costs.

Many Americans lack the financial preparedness skills and tools necessary to bounce back from disasters. This is for a variety of reasons, many of which can be addressed prior to a disaster. Some think disasters won’t strike where they live (disasters can happen anywhere). Others believe that FEMA assistance will satisfy all their needs (it won’t). Some simply do not have the financial resources to sustain a cash reserve (but with proper planning, many can make progress in this area).

Insurance is one way to protect against the financial impacts of disasters. Yet, two-thirds of Americans do not have adequate property insurance coverage. One in 13 have no insurance at all. Even those who have insurance often don’t know what their policy covers. Renters are particularly at risk: only 37% have renters insurance. This means that for many renters, their possessions are not covered if there is a disaster or any other kind of loss.

Not only do many Americans lack sufficient homeowners and renters’ coverage, but they also lack certain types of disaster-specific insurance. While standard homeowners insurance policies cover damage from fire, wind and hail, losses from other types of disasters, such as flooding and earthquakes, are usually not covered. Even though floods have impacted 99% of US counties over the past 28 years, only 4% of homeowners have flood insurance. The financial difference between a survivor with flood insurance and without is stark.

Consider Hurricane Harvey in 2017. For those without flood insurance, FEMA provided \$4,400 on average. The average payment to those who had flood insurance was \$118,000. While homeowners with a federally backed mortgage living in a flood zone are required to have flood insurance, all homeowners and renters should consider it. At FEMA, we often repeated the maxim “where it rains, it can flood,” because 40% of flood claims are outside designated flood zones.

The cost of insurance has increased for various reasons, from disasters to inflation to issues unique to each state. While not all these factors can be controlled by a policyholder (or insurer, for that matter) because insurance is priced

based on risk, one way to address these costs is to reduce risks. Risk-reduction measures such as upgraded roofs and windows not only help a home weather a disaster but can yield real benefits for homeowners through lower premiums and higher resale values. Homes in Alabama that were strengthened to a hurricane-resistant standard, for example, have 16% to 40% lower property insurance premiums and sell for 6% to 7% more than their neighbors’ homes.

Communities and their residents also benefit from these investments. According to a recent study

Money spent now on hazard mitigation measures, such as retrofitting a home in a seismically active area or elevating a home in a flood zone, can safeguard your family, reduce financial losses and even reduce your insurance premiums. Many are relatively easy and affordable, such as removing brush around your home to reduce the risk of wildfires. States are increasingly offering grants and other financial incentives to help homeowners defray the costs of home-hardening measures. For example, the Strengthen Alabama Homes Program provides up to \$10,000 to replace your roof to withstand hurricane-force

***No state is immune from disaster, so all states should consider such programs to encourage lower-cost preparedness. Check with your local emergency management agency for any incentive programs that may be available to you. Reduce your risks. Money spent now on hazard mitigation measures, such as retrofitting a home in a seismically active area or elevating a home in a flood zone, can safeguard your family, reduce financial losses and even reduce your insurance premiums.***

by the US Chamber of Commerce and Allstate, every \$1 invested in resilience saves communities \$13. This is because resilience measures reduce physical damage, cleanup costs and economic impacts. With fewer impacts, not only will home repair bills be reduced but more-resilient businesses mean fewer residents will lose their jobs, and the entire community will bounce back faster after a disaster. Individuals and communities both have roles to play in building financial resilience to disasters. Those who are financially prepared will recover more quickly and more fully.

The first step of preparedness is assessing one’s insurance as a financial shock absorber for disasters. Those with property insurance were 82% less likely to have high financial burdens in the near- and long-term following a hurricane, according to a recent study. Reviewing and updating insurance policies to ensure adequate protection against disasters is essential. At a minimum, homeowners and renters must ensure their policies cover potential risks specific to their regions, such as floods, earthquakes or hurricanes. In addition, individuals should consider life, disability and health insurance to protect against personal and financial losses. Insurance literacy programs can also help you understand your policies and make informed decisions.

Everyone should prioritize building an emergency savings fund by saving a bit each month. Financial experts advise saving three to six months’ worth of living expenses. This fund should be readily available in a checking or savings account, with a few hundred dollars in cash on hand for immediate needs. This should only be used for true emergencies. Consider setting up automated savings plans to consistently contribute a portion of your income into a dedicated savings account without requiring constant decision-making.

Stock up on supplies when they are more readily available (and ideally on sale). This should include food, water and other survival essentials, but also consider items such as generators, which could enable you to shelter in place (and reduce the costs of staying elsewhere) after a disaster. Florida and Virginia have disaster preparedness sales tax holidays, during which essential supplies can be purchased without paying sales tax. No state is immune from disaster, so all states should consider such programs to encourage lower-cost preparedness. Check with your local emergency management agency for any incentive programs that may be available to you.

Reduce your risks.

CNN





## PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 798 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 798.23 points, a positive change of 1.02 percent, closing at 78,827.74 points against 78,029.51 points on the last working day.

A total of 371,087,020 shares were traded during the day as compared to 278,327,575 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 19.156 billion against Rs 11.621 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 437 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 252 of them recorded gains and 129 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 56 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Waves Home Applications with

27,932,495 shares at Rs 9.82 per share, Ali-Shaheer Corporation with 15,548,238 shares at Rs 7.03 per share and Dewan Motors with 14,274,013 shares at Rs 43.86 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 139.96 per share price, closing at Rs 18,289.96, whereas the runner-up was Sazgar Engineering Works Limited with a Rs 104.33 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,147.61.

Rafhan Maize Products Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 86.43 per share closing at Rs 7,512.56, followed by PIA Holding Company Limited with a Rs 40.96 decline to close at Rs 911.25.

**Rupee sheds 17 paise against dollar**  
Pakistan rupee on Monday depreciated by 17

paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.50 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.33.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 278.40 and Rs 280.05 respectively.

The price of Euro came down by 13 paise to close at Rs 301.92 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.05, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen gained 01 paise and closed at Rs1.81, whereas a decrease of Rs1.25 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs356.95 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs358.20.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 05

paise and 04 paise to close at Rs75.82 and Rs74.23 respectively.

**Gold rates up by Rs200 per tola to Rs252,700**

The price of per tola of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.200 and was sold at Rs. 252,700 on Monday against its sale at Rs. 252,500 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 172 to Rs. 216,650 from Rs. 216,478 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold up to Rs. 198,595 from Rs.198,438, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs.2,860 and Rs.2,451.98 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$4 to \$2,390 from \$2,386, the Association reported.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb in a meeting with Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan.

### SB's interest rate cut termed as insufficient

KARACHI (PPI): Mohammad Kamran Arbi, President of the Site Association of Industry Karachi, on Monday described the recent reduction in interest rates as insufficient.

In a statement issued, he urged the State Bank of Pakistan to implement a further cut so as to bring the rate to a single digit to help reduce production costs. According to Arbi, high interest rates place a significant burden on industries, making it difficult for them to compete in global markets under these conditions.

Arbi emphasized that a single-digit policy rate was proposed in the budget proposals by SITE Association of Industry to address the heavy strain on purchasing power due to rising production costs. He said that currently, 80% of borrowing is by the government, while 20% to 22% is by the private sector. A 2% reduction in the policy rate could potentially create fiscal space of approximately 650 billion, thereby providing additional fiscal space for the government.

He said: "The global business environment is evolving, with the ease creating space for lower interest rates and thereby increasing economic activity. Pakistan should consider adopting a similar approach."

He also expressed disappointment over the modest rate reduction in the recent monetary policy review.

He has requested the central bank to address the high production costs and encourage industrial growth by lowering interest rates further.

He believes that reducing the burden of costly loans will positively impact the economy and significantly enhance the country's export performance.

### RCCI hails interest rate cut

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has welcomed the reduction in interest rate by the State Bank of Pakistan.

In a statement issued here today, the Acting President of RCCI Muhammad Hamza Sarosh has lauded State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) for its decision to reduce the interest rate from 20.5% to 19.5%.

He said that the reduction in interest rates will increase business activities. However, he noted that interest rates were still high as compared to the neighboring countries in the region, and underlined the need to further reduction in it.

Hamza further said that the decline in the interest rate was a positive indicator for the national economy.

Market analyst David Morrison at Trade Nation said that traders are more worried about demand rather than supply.

Oil prices were steady despite rising tensions in the Middle East as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed a "severe response" to the rocket fire in the annexed Golan Heights that killed 12 children.

Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare said it was not clear whether the US Treasury market was hit by geopolitical

concerns or the prospect to a September rate cut. "It just might be a little bit of both, but in any case, lower Treasury yields are providing some runway for a continuation of Friday's rebound move," he said.

Wall Street stocks rebounded on Friday on data showing a moderation in US inflation, firming expectations the Federal Reserve will start cutting interest rates in September.

## BF leader raises question over PTI stance on IPPs contracts

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Leader of Businessman Forum and ANP parliamentary leader former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour reacted to PTI stance on IPPs agreements, stating that people had high expectations during four year regime of Imran Khan that it will take practical steps for change in IPPs contracts or correct/revoke them in the country and people greater interest.

He, however, said it is

unfortunate that the PTI-led government during four years did nothing for people and the country.

In a statement here on Monday, Ilyas Bilour who was remained active and regular member of Senate of Pakistan from 1994 to 2018 said that PTI senators had brought IPPs contracts issue in knowledge of the party founder Imran Khan but he didn't pay heed to it because he has kept supreme the party and own interest over the country

and people interests and not taken any steps for betterment for the country.

The BF leader said the PTI had given the name IPPs as rampant corruption of elites.

Why did the PTI not revisit the IPPs contracts during its four year tenure?

Today, he said the PTI is raising voice against the IPPs contracts and made a demand for cancellation of the IPPs contracts immediately and calling it economic destruction of the country.

## KCCI wants substantial cut in interest rate

KARACHI (PPI): Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) President Iftikhar Ahmed Sheikh, while commenting on State Bank's decision to reduce the interest rate by 1 percent to 19.5 percent on Monday, stated that KCCI was expecting substantial reduction in interest rate but, unfortunately, it has been reduced by 1 percent only which was not enough and it should have been reduced by 300 to 500 basis points.

"With a reduction of 100 basis points, the key policy rate now stands at 19.5 percent which was still too high, hence, it must be reduced more aggressively to quickly go down to single digit at somewhere around 7 to 8 percent at par with many other countries in the region and around the world", he added in a statement issued here on Monday.

He said that the business community wanted to see interest rate down to single digit which would definitely encourage borrowings and promote

expansion due to reduced cost of doing business, proving favourable for the economy.

"It is encouraging to see that the State Bank of Pakistan has continued to ease monetary policy stance as this was the second consecutive cut which brought the interest rate down from 22 percent to 20.5 percent and now 19.5 percent. This, to some extent, would stimulate economic growth and ease financial burden on businesses and consumers," he added.

He stated that that it was a well-known fact that tight monetary policy stance by SBP that led to unprecedentedly expensive borrowing caused too much loss to the economy, particularly the cost of doing business, which has grossly suppressed the manufacturing sector, hence, relief in the form of substantial cut has become inevitable.

"We appreciate second consecutive reduction in interest rate and hope that the trend continues with

SBP reducing policy rate by at least 300 to 500 basis points in its next review", he added.

Although the inflation has drastically come down but in Pakistan's case, it was not because of SBP's tight monetary policy stance but due to administrative measures taken by the government along with improved agricultural production, he opined while referring to excellent agricultural production.

### Arabi becomes PCJCCI body chairman

LAHORE (APP): Renowned industrialist Imtiaz Mehmood Arabi has been appointed as the Chairman of the Standing Committee for Gilgit-Baltistan of the Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI).

PCJCCI General Secretary Salahuddin Hanif issued an official notification here Monday.

Aamir Ali, the Goodwill Ambassador for CPEC, congratulated him, stating that Mehmood Arabi is a wise industrialist who will prove to be very beneficial for the community. It is worth mentioning that Imtiaz Mehmood Arabi is the CEO of Dukes & Dukes.

### COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Ms Dua Mehreen Civil Judge VI Kohat, Suit no.181/I Date of hearing, 14-09-2024, Titled:- Muhammad Tahir(etc) Vs Arshad Ali Khan (etc) Notice against:- Lrs Defendant no.9.(1)Mst. Munsifa Bibi widow (2)Ayaz Afridi (3)Arslan Afridi (4)Burhan Afridi Sons (5)Mst Neelam Bibi (6)Mst. Hira Bibi Daughters of Imtiyaz Ali (Late) R/o Babri Banda District Kohat and Defendant no. 3-4 Presently R/o (now in Abroad) Defendants(Lrs) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendants/Lrs in which date of hearing 14-09-2024 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Defendants/Lrs is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 14-09-2024 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on.25-07-2024 (Court of C.J VI Kohat)

## Balochistan's trade connection to CARs pivotal in Pak-Indonesia trade

ISLAMABAD (APP): Charge d'Affaires of the embassy of the Republic of Indonesia to Pakistan, Rahmat Hindiarta Kusumahas has said that Balochistan's trade connection with the Central Asian states (CARs) will prove to be important in the mutual trade between Indonesia and Pakistan.

Similarly, due to its location, Balochistan is important in the economy and trade of Pakistan, he said in press release issued here on Monday.

Charge d'Affaires of the embassy of the Republic of Indonesia to Pakistan, Rahmat Hindiarta Kusumahas said this while visited Federation Pakistan Chamber

of Commerce and industry (FPCCI) Balochistan Office along with his economic team.

Meanwhile on the occasion Charge d'Affaires of the embassy of the Republic of Indonesia and his team were received by Senior Vice Chairman of FPCCI, Haji Jamaluddin and President Zhob Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the industrialists and business leaders of Balochistan.

The envoy said that due to its location, Balochistan is close to the Central Asian states on the one hand, and on the other hand, it is also connected with the Middle East, which is very important in its future trade.

He said that this province of Pakistan can play an important role in the geo economy of Pakistan by using its geostrategic position.

Rahmat Hindiarta Kusumahas said that Indonesia wants to expand its economic and trade relations with Pakistan in the future and in this regard the Indonesian Embassy is ready to provide all kinds of facilities to the business communities in Pakistan.

He said that talks are ongoing to promote the new economic sector of the future trade of Pakistan and Indonesia.

The envoy said that the role of the private sector is very important in the trade of both the countries and

efforts are being made on two sides.

He said that he will maintain contact with all the chambers of commerce and the business community of Balochistan and in this regard will increase the links between the business communities of both the countries.

He said that he will also visit the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry and hold an important business meeting there. While visiting the Quetta dry fruit market on this occasion, he said that the trade between Pakistan and Indonesia in this sector can increase further. He said that he will make all efforts to promote bilateral trade in this sector.

## Askari Bank Limited & Fauji Fertilizer Company sign MoU

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Askari Bank Limited (AKBL) and Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited (FFC), have entered into a strategic partnership to enhance agricultural financing in Pakistan. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony took place at FFC Head Office.

Through this collaboration, AKBL and FFC aim to provide easier access to credit and tailored financial solutions for farmers, promoting the adoption of modern agricultural practices.

This collaboration showcases AKBL's effort towards fostering sustainable growth in the agricultural sector by facilitating



enhanced financial inclusion and productivity. In the same vein, this initiative underscores FFC's commitment to supporting agricultural development and improving farmer liv-

elihoods across the country. Members of senior management of both organizations expressed their strong commitment for this collaboration highlighting its potential to drive transfor-

mative change in farming communities across Pakistan. They also reaffirmed their dedication to fostering a conducive environment for agricultural innovation and growth.

## Pakistan fifth among countries affected with hepatitis: President

FAISALABAD (APP): Pakistan is fifth among countries most affected with hepatitis B&C after China, India, Indonesia and Nigeria with a total number of 12.6 million patients suffering from this deadly disease, said Dr Khurram Tariq, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

In a statement on Monday, he said that the prevalence of hepatitis in Pakistan is around 8.64% while it is a whopping high up to 17.77% in Faisalabad alone. However, the ratio of this silent killing disease is much higher in aged per-

sons, he added.

He stressed the need for an organized, collaborative and continuous effort to contain this disease in this industrial, commercial and business hub of Pakistan. He said that most of the public sector hospitals have special facilities for the treatment of hepatitis in addition to a dedicated Liver Centre in the Allied Hospital-II (DHQ Hospital) Faisalabad.

However, he lamented that there was no facility for liver transplant in Faisalabad as a kidney and liver transplant institute is available only in Lahore.

He said that the Punjab government has established 36 hepatitis filter clinics in different districts and these clinics must be made more proactive to identify patients suffering from this disease.

He urged the health authorities and civil society to create much-needed awareness among the patients to mitigate the sufferings of the people as well as the government who has to spend billions of rupees on the treatment of identified patients.

Meanwhile, Senior Vice President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad and Vice President

Hajji Muhammad Aslam Bhali have disclosed that quacks are the main cause of spreading hepatitis as they use a single syringe for scores of patients.

"Similarly, invasive surgery and unqualified street dentists are also contributing their role in enhancing the ratio of Hepatitis patients in Faisalabad", they said and urged the government to hit hard these elements as it was adding unbearable financial burden on the national exchequer in addition to increasing monetary burden on the infested families.

## Stocks mostly rise as focus turns to interest rates

LODNON (AFP/APP): Major stock markets mostly advanced Monday as investors looked ahead to key interest-rate decisions this week in the United States and elsewhere.

Leading Asian indices largely gained, Europe was mixed and Wall Street's top stock indices rose following last week's volatility caused by mixed earnings and big selling of technology stocks.

"This week is a crucial one for the markets, with significant data releases, central bank meetings, and major company earnings reports set to impact indices, metals, and currencies," said market analyst Fawad Razaqzada at City Index and FOREX.com.

The US Federal Reserve, Bank of England and Japan's central bank are due this week to update on their

monetary policies, with US jobs data and more results from multinationals also set to come out.

"While no change is expected at the Federal Reserve meeting this week, the odds are now strongly in favour of a cut in September," noted Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor.

Razaqzada said "the Fed adopting a more dovish tone is what we

expect to witness", adding that in addition to the 0.25-percentage-point cut in September the market has priced in nearly two more quarter-point rate cuts.

On Thursday, a day after the Fed's latest decision, the Bank of England may cut borrowing costs for the first time since the Covid pandemic after a sizeable fall to British inflation this year, analysts said.

They added that the decision is on a knife-edge, similar to what is expected over the Bank of Japan's decision.

Expectations for a rise, either this week or at the BoJ's next meeting, along with bets on a Fed cut, have helped push the yen higher against the dollar after it hit a four-decade low near at the start of July.

Moody's Analytics believes the leave rates on hold

despite a pickup in Japanese inflation.

Oil prices were steady despite rising tensions in the Middle East as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed a "severe response" to the rocket fire in the annexed Golan Heights that killed 12 children.

Market analyst David Morrison at Trade Nation said that traders are more worried about demand rather than supply.

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In brief

Lihao wins his second gold

CHATEAUROUX (Agencies): China's Sheng Lihao claimed his second gold of the Paris Olympics on Monday by winning the men's 10-metre air rifle event, while South Korea's Ban Hyo-jin won the women's gold. The 19-year-old Chinese won with an Olympic record aggregate of 252.2 to finish ahead of Sweden's Victor Lindgren, who scored 251.4 to take the silver medal. Miran Maricic won the bronze for Croatia. Sheng was part of the Chinese duo who won the mixed team gold on Saturday. In the women's section on Monday, Ban's late wobble allowed China's Huang Yuting to draw level at 251.8, forcing a shoot-off between the teenagers. Ban fired 10.4 to clinch the gold ahead of Huang, who shot 10.3. The silver was Huang's second medal of the Games having combined with Sheng to win the mixed team gold on Saturday. Switzerland's Audrey Gogniat took bronze.

Arsenal sign Italy defender Calafiori

LONDON (AFP): Arsenal have signed Italy defender Riccardo Calafiori from Bologna on what the Premier League club said on Monday was a "long-term contract". No fee was disclosed, but British media reports said Calafiori, 22, had arrived at the Emirates Stadium on a five-year deal worth £42 million (\$54 million) after representing Italy at Euro 2024. "We welcome Riccardo and his family to Arsenal," said Gunners manager Mikel Arteta. "He is a great signing and gives us huge strength to reinforce our defence. "Riccardo is a big personality and character, with specific skills which will make us stronger as we push to win major trophies. "He has already shown great development in recent seasons with his performances for both Bologna and Italy, with his progression and development in the past year being really impressive. "We're looking forward to working with Riccardo, integrating him into the squad and supporting him in the years to come." Calafiori becomes Arsenal's second major signing of the summer transfer window after David Raya's loan move from London rivals Brentford was made permanent. The Gunners will be looking to go one better in the 2024/25 season after finishing runners-up to Premier League champions Manchester City by just two points last term.

NZ to play China in Olympic quarters

PARIS (AFP): Defending champions New Zealand set up a quarter-final against China at the Olympic sevens at the Stade de France on Monday. The Kiwi women, fellow favourites Australia, France and the US had all already qualified for the knock-out stages after winning the two opening pool matches on Sunday. Another sell-out crowd of 69,000 packed into France's national stadium to watch New Zealand, gold medalists at the Covid-delayed Tokyo Games in 2021, run out 38-7 winners over Fiji. Tries from Jorja Miller, Stacey Waaka and Jazmin Felix-Hotham, all converted by Risi Pouri-Lane, saw them build a 21-0 lead at half-time in scorching weather. Waaka got her second, while Manaia Nuku and Michaela Blyde also scored tries in the second period. Fiji grabbing a consolation through Adi Vani Buleki. The result meant that Tokyo bronze medalists Fiji, who suffered a surprise 40-12 defeat by China on Monday, missed out on the quarter-finals.

## Djokovic beats Nadal to keep Olympic dream going



PARIS (Agencies): Novak Djokovic outclassed his long-time rival Rafael Nadal to win their Olympic second-round match and continue his bid to land an elusive gold medal.

Serbia's Djokovic, 37, looked on a different level to Nadal for most of a one-sided contest which he won 6-1 6-4 on the Roland Garros clay. Djokovic led 4-0 in the second set to quell the partisan support for the Spaniard, before 38-year-old Nadal fought back to wipe out the double break. But Djokovic, like we have seen him do so many times, stepped on the gas again to break for 5-4 and serve out victory.

"I'm very relieved," said Djokovic. "Everything was going my way, I was

6-1, 4-0 up but I played a sloppy service game and gave him chances." Nadal, known as the King of Clay, has won 14 French Open titles at the Olympic venue but the aura he carries there was not enough to trouble a man of Djokovic's quality.

The pair, who have won 46 Grand Slam singles titles between them, shared an embrace at the net before Djokovic sportingly clapped Nadal off the court. It was the 60th meeting of their enduring rivalry - no two men have ever played each other more.

After first meeting in 2006, Djokovic now leads 31-29 in their head to head. "I never thought back in 2006 that we'd still be playing each other almost 20 years later," Djokovic

said. Djokovic steps up in latest chapter of enduring rivalry

Djokovic has won everything there is to win in men's singles tennis - including 24 Grand Slam titles across the four majors and every ATP Masters event. But the Olympic title is the one which he still has not won - and the one he really craves.

The top seed produced arguably his highest level of the season to make the fast start which rocked 2008 gold medallist Nadal. Nadal, who had a thigh injury heavily strapped again, was a shadow of the player who has won 22 majors and could not cope with Djokovic's quality until the late resistance.

Nadal will return to Roland Garros - where he has a metallic statue paying tribute to his achievements - on Tuesday when he plays for Spain in the men's doubles alongside reigning French Open and Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz. What happens after that remains to be seen.

Nadal has barely played over the past two seasons because of injuries and hinted last year he could retire at the end of the 2024 season.

Although the former world number one has since said he wants to keep playing as long as his body lets him, this could have been the final time he played singles on Court Philippe Chatrier. Whatever happens, there is a strong possibility Djokovic and Nadal will not renew their rivalry ever again on a competitive court.

## India confirmed as Men's Asia Cup 2025 host

NEW DELHI (Agencies): India will host the Men's Asia Cup 2025, scheduled to be played in T20 format while Bangladesh will host the event in ODI format in 2027.

Both editions of the Men's Asia Cup will feature a total of six teams Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and a sixth team which will be finalized after the completion of the qualifying event.

The development was confirmed when the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) issued the Invitation for Expressions of Interest (IEOI) for the sponsorship rights document on Saturday. The letter extends an invitation to interested parties to submit an IEOI for ACC Sponsorship Rights between 2024 and 2027.

The document further highlighted that all information is provisional and subject to change at the ACC's sole discretion without responsibility, including timetables, dates, formats, and locations. Notably, the official schedule of the ACC Men's Asia Cup 2025 has not been finalized yet while it is expected that the six-team tournament will be played in September next year after the monsoon season ends in the country.

Remember, Pakistan were given the hosting rights of the previous edition of the continental event. However, it was played in a hybrid model with Sri Lanka emerging as the co-host after the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) refused to send Team India to Pakistan.

As a result, Pakistan could host just four matches while the rest of the nine matches including the final were played in Sri Lanka. The tournament, which was coined as an ideal opportunity for the top Asian sides to prepare for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 was won by India.

## Pakistan U17 footballers continue winning streak in Norway Cup 2024

OSLO (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan street football team, playing under the name of Muslim Hands FC, continued winning U17 matches in the Norway Cup 2024 as they defeated Vardeneset BK 5-0 in their second match of the tournament.

An impressive performance by the Pakistani players saw them dominating the opponent with an all-round display.

A brace from Mohammad Kashif and one goal each by Mohammad Khan, Mohammad Adeel and Shahid Anjum helped the Pakistan team cruise to a comfortable victory.

With two wins in two matches, a strong start from Pakistan has set the tone for their upcoming matches as after finishing as the runner-ups in the last edition, they are eager to lift the title this time.

In their first match of the tournament, Pakistan defeated Astor Fotballklubb 6-1 as a brace from Abdul Ghani and one goal each by Mohammad Essa, Mohammad Junaid, Owais Ahmed and Mohammad Khan propelled them to vic-



tory. Pakistan will now face Oystese IL Oystese/Norheimsund in their last group match on Tuesday.

It is worth mentioning that in Norway Cup 2023, Pakistan lost the final on penalties 10-9 against Sola FK. They were undefeated throughout the tournament and defeated all the teams they faced by big margins.

Pakistan scored a total of 28 goals in Norway Cup 2023 and conceded only three and proved that they are capable of not just winning the matches, but winning them with a high score line.

It must be noted here that the Pakistan team finished runners-up in the Street Child World Cup in

Doha, Qatar in 2022. They remained unbeaten throughout the tournament but lost the final against Egypt on penalties (4-3).

They were also the runners-up in the previous edition in Russia (2018), meanwhile, in Brazil (2014) they finished third.

Pakistan's squad for Norway Cup 2024

Goalkeepers: Aryan, Adeel Ali Khan.

Defenders: Asad Nasir, Ubaidullah, Mohammad Adeel, Hamza Gul.

M i d f i e l d e r s : Mohammad Junaid, Mohammad Khan, Daniyal, Owais, Mohammad Osama

Forwards: Mohammad Kashif, Isa Khan, Shahid Anjum, Abdul Ghani.

## French climber summits Pakistan's K2 in record time

PARIS (AFP) : French climber Benjamin Vedrines summited Pakistan's K2 in record time on Sunday, his team told AFP, reaching the top of the world's second-highest mountain in just under 11 hours.

The 32-year-old specialist in high-speed ascents — made without the aid of oxygen — left K2 base camp just after midnight on Saturday and reached the summit 10 hours, 59 minutes and 59 seconds later. Vedrines attempted the summit in 2022 but was forced to turn back after suffering from hypoxia, a lack of oxygen in the blood caused by thin air at high altitudes.



"I took my revenge on this mountain," Vedrines said in a voice message shared with AFP. "But above all I wanted to reconcile with it by doing things with maturity." "It was very symbolic for me because I was returning in my footsteps to where I experienced those

very unique moments," he said. "I really enjoyed seeing the same sections again, but with lucidity this time."

Standing at 8,611 meters (28,251 feet) on the Pakistan-China border, K2 is 238 meters shorter than Everest but is considered more technically challenging — earning it the nickname "Savage Mountain."

Vedrines is considered one of France's pre-eminent climbers and set a speed record climbing Pakistan's Broad Peak in 2022 before descending by paraglider. He reached the top of the 8,051-meter mountain — a short distance from K2 — in seven hours and 28 minutes.

## Shaheens fall short in thrilling contest as BD level series

DARWIN (APP): Pakistan Shaheens fell five runs short of the 296-run target as the second four-day match against Bangladesh 'A' finished in a thrilling manner on Monday at the DXC Arena in Darwin.

The pendulum kept swinging all day as Bangladesh 'A' bowlers took the required six wickets, striking at regular intervals, while Shaheens' batters dug deep, eventually falling five runs short. The fourth day's play saw 56.2 overs bowled while Shaheens scored 154 runs. Bangladesh 'A' skipper Mahmudul Hasan Joy led the team from front with a match-winning five-wicket haul with his figures reading 5-21 in 13 overs.

At the beginning of the day, Shaheens required 160 runs to win with Haseebullah and Tayyab Tahir on the crease.

Haseebullah (51, 120b, 7x4s) departed after adding seven runs to his overnight total of 44. At this point, Tayyab (43, 97b, 3x4s) and Omair Bin Yousuf (45, 103b, 4x4s) joined forces to stitch a dogged 65-run sixth-wicket partnership off 21 overs before the former succumbed to Mahmudul in 66th over.

Omair's resistance too came to an end some 57 balls later when he was caught by Mollah off Mahmudul with Mohammad Ali on the other end and Shaheens requiring 65 runs to win. Khurram Shahzad and Ali produced a

spirited eight-wicket stand of 57 runs which came off 93 balls, keeping Bangladesh 'A' at bay.

Mahmudul cleaned up Ali, who had scored 21 off 63 balls hitting four fours, with Shaheens still eight runs away from win. Seven balls later Khurram's 57-ball rear-guard, yielding 28 valuable runs with the help of three fours and one six, was ended by Mahmudul.

Faisal Akram faced seven balls for his solitary run before he was bowled by Hasan Murad to give Bangladesh 'A' series-leveling victory. Mahmudul was aided by Rejaur Rehman Raja and Hasan Murad who returned figures of 3-85 and 2-62 respectively.

## 10-day long Women Camps in District Charsadda concluded

PESHAWAR (APP): The 10-days long Women training and coaching camps in different age groups from 8-years to 18-year-of-age in six games concluded here at Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex on Monday.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Charsadda Shahbaz Khattak, Additional Assistant Commissioner Muhammad Waqas, Regional Sports Officer Peshawar Region Kashif Farhan, Ex-DSO Tahseen Ullah, Caretaker Irshad Khan, Women Coordinator Nousheen Khan, President Peshawar Press Club Arshad Aziz Malik, former President PPC M. Riaz, President Charsadda Press Club Sabaz Ali Khan, President Mohammadzai Union of Journalist Faiz Muhammad, District Sports Officer Charsadda Miss Mishal Malik, players and large number of spectators were also present during the colourful closing ceremony.

The ceremony was started with the recitation from the Holy Quran by volleyball player Habiba Khan, followed by the national anthem. The kids of Peace and ICMS School

and Colleges presented the national song "Tu bi Pakistan Ha Ma bi Pakistan Hon and Dil Dil Pakistan, Jan Jan Pakistan.

Speaking on this occasion, ADC Shahbaz Khattak lauded the idea of holding different games camps wherein female players from 8-years to 18-year-old actively participated. He said such a camp is very vital for the players at the grassroots level.

He said training and coaching at grassroots coaches should look to create a fun, safe learning environment for young people to learn and prosper within a sporting environment. Children participating in different games including hockey, badminton, rugby, volleyball, cricket and table tennis at grassroots will have different motivations – but what is important is that they enjoy playing healthy sports activities.

ADC Shahbaz Khan said that holding such camps in six different Games means a lot of talented players would be identified through that way, challenging stereotypes about gender and leadership and offering diverse

perspectives, insight and advice to their athletes.

One hundred percent of male athletes have had a male Coaching role model during their athletic careers, to their benefit; young women likewise need and deserve more same sex role models in training and coach, he said.

He said, despite the growing popularity of women games globally, many barriers still hinder female participation at the grassroots level. Cultural norms, lack of access to training facilities, and a dearth of female coaches and role models in the sport contribute to women's underrepresentation.

Promoting female participation at the grassroots is not just about playing a game; it's about fostering a more inclusive, healthy, and equitable society. As we champion these efforts, we pave the way for future generations of women to thrive in sports and life, ADC Waqas said. It is time to change the game and ensure that women and girls have equal opportunities to play, lead, and inspire, he added.

## Daley wins superb fifth Olympic medal with Williams

PARIS (Agencies): Tom Daley won his fifth Olympic medal with a superb silver alongside Noah Williams in the men's synchronised 10m platform in Paris.

Daley, 30, effectively retired from the sport after winning gold in the event in Tokyo, but he and Williams, 24, looked calm as he returned to the biggest stage.

The pair applied pressure to China's Lian Junjie and Yang Hao - who were ultimately in a class of their own for gold after three world titles in a row - and were comfortable silver medallists after six fine dives.

Daley did not compete for two years but was persuaded to come out of retirement when his son Robbie, now aged six, said he wanted to see his 'Papa' dive at an Olympics.

Daley's husband Dustin Lance Black, Robbie, their youngest son Phoenix and countless more friends and family were in the Paris Aquatics Centre to give the British pair loud support.

"It's just so special,"



Daley said.

"Doing it in front of my son who asked me to come back is so special. I now have one of every colour, I've completed the set."

His two sons were wearing t-shirts that read 'That's my Papa' and the first flicker of emotion from Daley came as he blew a kiss to his family from the medal podium. For Williams, whose first experience of diving was watching on TV as a 14-year-old Daley

competed at his first Olympics in 2008, this was a first Olympic medal.

"Tom dove amazingly," said Williams, who will also compete in the individual competition in the second week of the Games.

"The fact he dove like that, and China were really good as well, helped me to elevate how I normally dive to what I did today."

Team GB now have five medals in Paris - three silvers and two bronzes.

## Gillespie rates Shaheens' performance in red-ball series

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's newly-appointed Test coach Jason Gillespie shared his insights on Pakistan Shaheens' performance in the two-match red ball series against Bangladesh 'A' in Northern Territory, Darwin.

The two-match red-ball series between Shaheens and Bangladesh 'A' culminated here on Monday, with the latter securing a narrow four-run victory on the final day of the second four-day match.

Earlier, Pakistan Shaheens registered an emphatic victory in the first four-day fixture to kick off a triumphant start to the tour. In a video released by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Pakistan's Test coach Jason Gillespie shared it was a mixed bag for the side as they won and lost one match each but emphasized the experience Shaheens' players gathered amid the tour.

"It has been a wonderful experience for all the Shaheens players. We certainly learned a lot. It was a great opportunity for me to get to know the guys, see how they approach training, preparation, teamwork, and their work on the field. It's been a real learning curve for me. I think the players have certainly benefited from this opportunity," he said.

"That's what the Shaheens is about—getting out there in foreign conditions against different opposition and being able to test their skills in this environment," he added.

Jason Gillespie then went on to highlight the flaws in Pakistan Shaheens' batting and bowling which resulted in them losing the second fixture. "While there are plenty of lessons to learn from this game, our top

seven batters did not quite deliver as expected. In both innings, four of our top seven got starts, but none managed to go on and achieve a really big score," Gillespie said.

"Similarly, our partnerships were middling, with several in the forties and fifties, but we lacked those substantial partnerships that put the opposition under real pressure and drive the game forward. These are key areas for our batters to focus on, encouraging them to stay busy and shift the pressure back onto the opposition.

"We didn't execute our plans as effectively as we could have in this game.

Despite these challenges, it was a great experience getting to know the players and staff, who are a fantastic group of people."

Following the two-match red-ball series against Bangladesh 'A', Pakistan Shaheens will now feature in a tri-series with the Northern Territory side and Bangladesh in Darwin. They will also participate in the nine-team Top End T20 Series.

Remember, Pakistan's red-ball head coach Jason Gillespie's stint with Pakistan Shaheens was until the red-ball series against Bangladesh 'A'.

## “I never think about captaincy,” says Shaheen Afridi

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan ace pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi on Monday asserted that he never thinks about captaincy and also representing the country is his prime focus. Afridi, who has been in hot water after reports emerged of his alleged argument with batting coach Mohammad Yousuf amid the national team's tour to Ireland and England ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, stated his upbringing is not such that he would bring negativity into the team.

"All team members are my friends. I was raised well and I always fight for my country," said Shaheen. "I never think about captaincy. My prime focus is to represent my country and would never bring negativity into the team," he added. Soon after the reports of his alleged misconduct with Yousuf emerged, it was reported in the local media that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) would take disciplinary action against Shaheen Afridi and thus, he will not be considered for the upcoming home Test series against Bangladesh.

When asked to share his two cents on the reports, Shaheen stated that he is unaware of such rumours. "I don't know if I'm being dropped from the Test series [against Bangladesh]. My role is to play cricket and I would do that with dignity," he added. Remember, reports of an alleged dispute between Pakistan captain Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Shah Afridi also emerged following the national men's team's poor run at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 344,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 344,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 403,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1519.31 feet and was 121.31 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 238,700 cusecs and 200,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1200.20 feet, which was 152.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 32,200 cusecs and 12,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 220,300, 196,600, 144,000 and 74,400 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 51,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 53,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### 4 sons arrested for mistreating parents

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a heart-wrenching incident, City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani has taken strong action after elderly parents were allegedly abused and thrown out of their home by their sons. According to the police spokesman, the elderly woman complained to the Civil Lines Police Station that her four sons Atif, Kashif, Saqib, and Ali had mistreated her and her husband, and forcibly removed them from their home. Responding quickly to the complaint, SP Pothohar ordered the immediate arrest of the sons. The police detained the accused by using all means and further investigation was underway. CPO Hamdani praised the police for their prompt action and condemned the abuse, describing the mistreatment of parents as "unimaginable and intolerable."

### Five drug dealers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a significant crackdown on drug trafficking, police have arrested five individuals and seized more than 3 kg drugs. According to police spokesman, Wah Cantt police held Abdul Khaliq and recovered 120 gram ice from his possession. Similarly, Taxila police nabbed Danish and recovered 1.6 kg drugs from his custody. While, Naseerabad police recovered 700 gram of charas from Imran. Gujjar Khan police recovered 550 gram of charas from Numan. Following operation, Ratta Amaral police apprehended Amir and recovered 530 gram of charas from him. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani emphasized that all legal steps will be taken to ensure the accused are punished. He also vowed that the crackdown on drug dealers will be continued, aiming to protect the youth from drug abuse and ensure strict action against those involved in drug trafficking.

### Rescue teams open Lawrence College Road

RAWALPINDI (APP): After timely operation to remove rocks, the Lawrence College Road in Murree is now open for traffic. The road was closed due to land-sliding which caused a blockade of traffic.

# Senate Committee on Human Rights discusses meets

ISLAMABAD (APP): Meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights, chaired by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri, was held at the Parliament Lodges and attended by Senator Mohammad Humayun Mohmand, Senator Poonjo Bheel, Senator Dr. Zarqa Suharwardy Taimur, Senator Syed Ali Zafar, Senator Jam Saifullah Khan, the Federal Minister for Law, Justice, and Human Rights, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, the Secretary of the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR), and senior officials from the affiliated Ministry.

The committee members engaged in a comprehensive briefing on the main functions, workings, and institutions of human rights. It was informed that there are seven human rights institutions, namely the National Commission for Human Rights, the National Commission on the Status of Women, the National

Child, the Zainab Alert Response and Recovery Agency, the Child Protection Institute, Islamabad, the Council on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Senior Citizens Council, with the latter four based in Islamabad.

Additionally, the meeting included a briefing on social welfare centers and development projects planned for the year 2024-25. The committee members inquired about the legal process for women in jail. The Federal Minister for Human Rights, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, explained that the National Commission has a mandate different from legal aid, which is not their responsibility. Legal aid is available for deserving candidates who apply for it. A district committee, headed by a designated official, ensures prisoners are kept in a reasonable environment as per jail mandates and forwards their reports to the government.

While briefing on major

achievements, Senator Tarar informed the members about the launch of the AWAZ app for reporting human rights violations on Android. This app is linked to the Prime Minister's office and is available for 18 hours a day, making it convenient for citizens. MoHR officials also reported on the monitoring of human rights violation cases, the National Action Plan for Human Rights, and the awareness activities, training sessions, and workshops conducted by MoHR. Additionally, Senator Tarar provided details on the Diyat, Arsh, and Damam Fund, which is operational. It was also informed that an amount of Rs. 31,293,842 has been granted by the Federal Administrative Committee for the provision of financial assistance to release 20 convicts who were languishing in jails due to the non-payment of Diyat, Arsh, and Damam amounts.

In addition, the Secretary of the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) provided further information

on the Human Rights Relief and Revolving Fund and the development of the ICT Integrated Social Welfare System (ISWS). This system aims to provide coordinated inter-agency support to Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), Senior Citizens, Transgender Persons, and Victims of Gender-Based Violence. He also mentioned the issuance of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) certificates, noting that 19,000 certificates have been issued to PWDs, and efforts are underway to digitize the entire system. Currently, data for 7,000 PWDs has already been digitized in the ISWS.

The achievements of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC), and the Child Protection Institute (CPI) were also highlighted, along with the launch of the ZARRA Alert app on Google and iOS on

November 20, 2023, featuring the Zainab Alert. The chairperson of the committee emphasized the need to raise awareness about the ZARRA Alert and Awaz app, adding that the majority of people are not aware of these facilities.

Regarding the issues of pending legislation, Senator Tarar highlighted the Pakistan Code app, which is functional and authentic for public use. The chairperson of the committee, while stressing the importance of addressing neglected and pending cases, recommended that the ministry official tackle judicial issues. She emphasized that although there is a mechanism in place, the prosecution is not doing its job, and efforts are being wasted. She lamented that our courts have been focusing increasingly on political cases rather than on legislation related to human rights and public welfare. With millions of cases pending in the High Court and Supreme Court, it is crucial to

expedite these matters, as delayed justice is denied justice.

Therefore, a comprehensive reform of the judiciary is needed. Senator Tarar, acknowledging the recommendations, added that major revamping and capacity building are needed, stating that poor performance constitutes misconduct.

In conclusion, Chairperson Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri urged the ministry to promptly implement the recommendations of the Cabinet Committee on Enactment of Special Laws for the Provision of Speedy Justice, stressing that many pending human rights cases are being neglected. She also suggested the swift implementation of the Action Plan on Human Rights. Additionally, she recommended creating a nationwide awareness campaign on laws related to human rights, especially concerning issues like domestic violence, child abuse, and rape cases, which have become a plight for the entire nation.

## Mohsin Naqvi directs Chairman CDA to ensure swift water drainage

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has contacted Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa and directed him to ensure swift drainage of water after torrential rain in Islamabad.

The Interior Minister while directing the mobilization of field teams for the drainage of water said that the relevant officers and staff must remain in

the field.

He said that all possible resources should be utilized to deal with the situation caused by the heavy rain adding that additional staff and machinery should be mobilized to monitor the drains, highways, and waterways.

The Interior Minister also directed to ensure speedy drainage of water from the underpasses and other places. He further

said that the traffic police should perform their duties in an active manner to maintain the flow of traffic.

He added that no effort should be spared to resolve the issues being faced by citizens during the rain. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa apprised the Interior Minister regarding the steps taken for the drainage of water.

## Commissioner reviews arrangements to cope with flooding

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Amir Khattak here on Monday reviewed all the arrangements finalized by Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi and administration to cope with flooding.

Chairing a meeting held at Commissioner Office, the Commissioner said that rain emergency was declared in Rawalpindi. All concerned institutions were on high alert, he added. The Commissioner said that all the Deputy Commissioners along with the officers concerned were present in the field. Immediate arrange-

ments should be made for drainage of stagnant rain water, he added.

Nullah Lai should be specially monitored and all the preparations should be completed immediately, Aamir Khattak said. Managing Director (MD), WASA briefed the Commissioner about arrangements finalized for Monsoon. WASA teams are engaged to drain out stagnant rain water particularly from low-lying areas with the help of heavy machinery, he informed. Water level in Nullah Lai at Kattarian was at 5 feet while at Gawwalmandi, it was recorded at 4 feet.

He further said that all the

officers were directed to remain alert during rain and all the arrangements were finalized timely to deal with any emergency. Under the supervision of Director Sewerage, drainage operations were being done across the city, he informed.

Meanwhile, WASA spokesman informed that a total of 54 mm rainfall was recorded on Monday at Saidpur Village, 49 mm at Golra, 35 mm at Bokra, 32 mm at PMD, 66 mm at Shamsabad and 53 mm at Katcheri while 12.5 feet water level was recorded at Kattarian and 10.5 feet at Gawwalmandi.

## ICT admin cracks down on dengue violators

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a determined effort to combat the spread of dengue, the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has intensified operations, resulting in the arrest of four individuals and the closure of three businesses for violations of standard operating procedures (SOPs) set by the government.

According to the spokesman of ICT administration, the authority has ramped up their anti-dengue campaign, with significant actions taken in Sector F-7. The Assistant Commissioner (AC) City led an operation that result-

ed in the arrest of four individuals. These arrests were made due to continuous violations of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) designed to curb the spread of dengue.

Three business outlets were also shut down for failing to implement the required anti-dengue measures. These closures are part of a broader effort to ensure compliance with health regulations aimed at preventing the breeding of dengue-carrying mosquitoes.

On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon emphasized the need for

city-wide efforts to stop the growth of dengue larvae.

He called for unbiased and comprehensive inspections to be carried out across all sectors of the city. Memon also stressed the importance of keeping citizens informed about ongoing operations and health measures.

The crackdown highlights the city's commitment to enforcing health guidelines and protecting public health. The district administration plan to continue their stringent inspections and enforcement actions until dengue risks are significantly reduced.

## 'Azadi floats' to travel through Punjab main cities

RAWALPINDI (APP): 'Azadi floats' depicting cultural and ideological representation of Pakistan will be traveling through various main cities of Punjab on the occasion of forthcoming independence day.

The floats will pay tributes to national heroes along with displaying cultural music and folk dances. According to the details, a meeting of the Board of Management of the Punjab Arts Council PAC was held with Shazia Rizwan, MPA in the chair.

During the meeting it was apprised that the floats would ensure the representation of all four provinces, and statues of the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the great thinker of the nation, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, and the Mother of the

Nation Fatima Jinnah would be parts of the floats.

Executive Director Ghulam Saghir Shahid while briefing the meeting informed that PAC was preparing two floats for the first time in connection with the Independence Day celebrations, one float would travel from Rawalpindi to Lahore via GT Road, while the other float would entertain the citizens from Dera Ghazi Khan to Multan. He further informed that the Azadi floats would pay tribute to the heroes of the Pakistan Movement and would also feature music and folk dances.

Shazia Rizwan mentioned that Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz has issued special instructions for the preparation of the Independence Day floats.

She stressed for the preparation of state of the art work on the said floats.

The meeting was attended by PAC management and notable poets including Ali Asghar Samar, Naseem Sehara, Dr. Farhat Abbas, Arif Baloch, Saleem Shahzad, Anjum Salimi, Akbar Niazi, Ittifaq Butt, Ziauddin Mari, and Irfan Jameel.

The participants informed the chair about the literary organizations of Rawalpindi-Islamabad and their services. At the conclusion of the meeting, a painting exhibition was inaugurated by the MPA. The exhibition was organized in collaboration with the Punjab Arts Council and Rawalpindi Women University. The young artists were awarded with certificates of appreciation.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri, Chairperson Senate Functional Committee on Human Rights presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament Lodges. —APP Photo

## PTA carries crackdown on illegal issuance of SIMs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Offices Lahore, Faisalabad and Peshawar have conducted a series of raids against franchisees cellular companies, located in Rawalpindi, Sargodha, KotMomin, Kohat and Hangu.

The franchisees were reportedly involved in the illegal issuance of SIMs, often associated with criminal activities such as fraud, identity theft, and other illicit operations.

During the raids, the FIA seized 4 laptops, 1 PC, 12 BVS devices, active SIMs, mobile phones, hard disks, original CNICs with photocopies and soft copies of Afghan passports and POR cards. Fifteen persons working for the franchisees were arrested on the spot and FIRs have been registered by the agency, said a news release.

FIA is further investigating the cases. PTA had filed complaints with FIA earlier based on information regarding the illegal issuance of SIMs by the sales channel.

## HEC, PBC collaborate to uplift legal education

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) through its Directorate of Legal Education (DLE) and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Monday to streamline efforts to uplift the standard and quality of legal education in the country.

The signing ceremony was attended by the Federal Minister for Law & Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar and Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed.

Members of PBC including Syed Amjad Shah, Hassan Raza Pasha, Haroon Rashid, Director (DLE) Barrister Usama Malik and Director (Admn./Litigation) HEC Tariq Iqbal were also present at the occasion.

The MoU was signed by Prof. Dr. Anwar Gilani, Consultant (Quality Assurance) HEC and Barrister Usama Malik. It aims to enhance collaboration to revamp the syllabus and quality of LLB graduates in Pakistan along with promoting training of Law faculty members in the country.

Under the MoU, both HEC and PBC have undertaken to strictly implement the quality assurance criteria in legal education institutions. Speaking on the occasion, the Law Minister appreciated the signing of the MoU and said that this will significantly contribute towards improving the quality of legal education in the country.

## ANF seizes 74 kg drugs in 11 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover 74 kg drugs and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He informed that 3 kg ice was recovered from a Jeddah-bound passenger at Islamabad Airport.

24 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested near Iqbal Shaheed Toll Plaza Attock. In third operation, 12 kg hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up near Jannat Gul Town,

Karachi.

9.6 kg hashish was recovered from a drug smuggler arrested in Khanewal. 6 kg opium and 2 kg hashish were recovered from the possession of a woman netted at M-1, Islamabad.

4.8 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted on River Road Karachi and an accused was arrested during the operation.

4.8 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects arrested near Sangjani Toll Plaza, Islamabad. 2.4 kg hashish and 450

grams ice were recovered near Link Road, Karachi and 3 kg ice was recovered from an accused rounded up near Pushtakhara Chowk, Peshawar.

In 10th operation, 2 kg hashish was recovered from the accused near Ayub National Park Rawalpindi and in 11th operation, 800 grams ice was recovered near University Road Peshawar.

Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

## NHMP launches Radio FM 95 in 3 major cities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of National Highway and Motorway Police (NHMP) Salman Chaudhry on Monday announced launch of Radio FM 95 transmission in three major cities including Nowshera,

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sargodha Punjab and Jamshoro for Sindh.

According to him, the initiative was a significant milestone in promoting road safety education among commuters on national highways. He said since its inception, Radio FM 95 has been broadcasting informative and engaging content, including road safety tips, traffic updates, and awareness campaigns, reaching

a vast audience across the regions. The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with commuters appreciating the valuable information and entertainment provided by the radio station, he added.

The IG NHMP said that the success of Radio FM 95 could be attributed to its innovative approach to promoting road safety which included Interactive talk shows and interviews with road safety experts, public awareness campaigns on critical road safety issues, real-time traffic updates and alerts and engaging entertainment programs to keep commuters informed and entertained during their journeys.

He said the NHMP's commitment to road safety education has been further strengthened through Radio FM 95, which has become an essential tool in reducing accidents and saving lives on national highways.

The IG Salman Chaudhry emphasized the importance of road safety education in maintaining safe motorways and highways. The FM 95 radio service provides crucial updates on weather, traffic, alternative routes, traffic rules, and accident prevention. Initially launched in Islamabad in 2015, the broadcast received positive feedback, with listeners requesting its extension to other cities.

## More Monsoon Rains-wind, thundershowers till 3rd August

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Monday issued an advisory highlighting that monsoon currents from Bay of Bengal are likely to penetrate central and southern parts of the country from July 27th and likely to remain till August 3rd whereas under its influence heavy to hefty rainfall is expected in upper catchment areas of western and eastern rivers of country from July 28th to August 4th.

"Flash flooding is expected in Northeastern parts of Punjab including Deg, Basemter and Bein nullahs of River Ravi, Aik & Palku areas in catchment of Chenab as well as Neelum Valley, Muzafarabad, Rawalkot, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber of AJ&K while Mardan, Swat, Dir, Kohistan, Shangla and Malakand of Upper KP province," the NDMA

said. Low to Medium level flow is expected in rivers Jhelum Upstream of Mangla, Kabul, and its tributaries, Chenab at Marala, Khanki, and Qadirabad\*. Low to medium-level flows are expected in the River Indus at Tarbela and hill torrents of DG Khan division, and increased flows are expected in the Nullahs of Zhob.

Urban flooding is expected in Northern & Northeastern parts of Punjab i.e Lahore, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Narowal, Gujranwala, Sargodha, Gujrat, Rawalpindi/Islamabad, and surrounding areas while southern parts of Sindh including Hyderabad, Jamshoro, Sanghar, S. Benazirabad, and Karachi\* also face urban flooding during forecasted period.

NDMA has issued instructions to all relevant departments to take neces-

sary precautions to mitigate the possible effects of flooding and extreme weather.

Flash floods can strike suddenly, catching people off guard. Population at risk is advised to avoid flood waters and find a safe location away from flood-prone areas. Even a mere six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet, and just one foot of moving water can sweep away a vehicle. Bridges can be hazardous during floods. Avoid crossing them if water is flowing rapidly. Avoid staying in weak structures. In case of intense rain, seek shelter in safe places such as schools, government buildings, or any concrete buildings.

NDMA has launched the Pak NDMA Disaster Alert application, available on Google Play Store and iOS App Store, to provide timely alerts, advisories, and guidelines to the public.



7 members of one family die

HERAT (Ariana News): Kandahar officials on Monday have confirmed that seven people in one family died in a tragic accident on Sunday on Herat-Kandahar highway. The accident happened in Adraskan district of Herat when a small sedan and a lorry collided head on. Women and children were among the victims. Head of Herat Emergency Hospital said that two children, three women and two men were killed. They were all members of the same family.

Railway works discussed

KABUL (BNA): Sheikh Noor Ahmad Islam Jar, Governor of Herat, met with Azad Atamuradov, Head of the Turkmenistan Railway Department, to discuss the construction of the Herat-Torghundi railway. The meeting focused on enhancing trade relations, constructing the Herat-Torghundi railway and developing the Torghundi port railway station. Governor assured the administration's cooperation in expediting the various phases of the Herat-Torghundi railway project.

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

Ministry seeks to register historical sites

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Information and Culture announced its efforts to register the country's historical sites on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List. Khabib Ghufuran, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Information and Culture, said that some of the country's historical monuments are already registered with UNESCO, such as the city of Zuhak, the city of Gholghola, the Minaret of Jam in Ghor, and the Kakrak Valley. The spokesperson for the Ministry of Information and Culture said: "So far, the Ministry of Information and Culture, through its efforts, has managed to register 9 historical sites with UNESCO, including the City of Zuhak, the City of Gholghola, the Minaret of Jam in Ghor, and the Kakrak Valley." According to Ghofran, the ministry is also currently working to register Babur's Garden on UNESCO's cultural heritage list. The spokesperson for the Ministry of Information and Culture stated: "Ministry of Information and Culture, in cooperation with UNESCO,

Taliban expel fighter after girl's tragic death

BAMYAN (Khaama Press): Local sources have reported that the Taliban expelled a fighter who forcibly placed a young Bamyan girl onto a military vehicle and referred him to the military prosecutor. After being released from Taliban detention, the girl tragically committed suicide. The Taliban delayed her burial for several days, raising additional concerns. Reports indicate that the Taliban have yet to detain the soldier involved. Speculation suggests that the expulsion may be an attempt to suppress potential protests. The case has been forwarded to the military prosecutor, but specific details regarding charges or legal proceedings are currently unavailable. The exact charges against the Taliban fighter are unknown, and the circumstances of the incident are still under investigation. The incident began when the Taliban fighter forcibly placed the girl onto his military vehicle while she was traveling from the Punjab market to her home. Following this, the group's intelligence agents detained the girl's father and brother. The family was transported to the Bamyan provincial capital, where the girl was interrogated for at least three days. The reasons for the Taliban fighter's actions and the subsequent arrest of the girl's family are unclear, as is whether formal charges were filed against the family in Bamyan. Reports revealed that the 19-year-old girl experienced severe mental distress after her detention and interrogation, worsened by the closure of her sewing workshop. Her sewing workshop in the Punjab market was shut down by the Taliban's Department of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice following her detention. Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, they have banned education for girls beyond the sixth grade, leading to immense pressure on women and girls and resulting in widespread violations of women's rights. The tragic case of the Bamyan girl underscores critical issues regarding the treatment of women and girls under Taliban rule. The delay in burying her body and the lack of clarity about the charges against the fighter highlights broader concerns about human rights abuses and the suppression of women's rights in Afghanistan.

Haqqani and Zhao discuss regional stability, security

KABUL (Ariana News): Sirajuddin Haqqani, acting minister of interior, this week met with China's envoy to Afghanistan Zhao Xing for discussions on regional stability and security and technical cooperation between the two countries. The ministry's press office said in a statement that Haqqani and Zhao also discussed technical cooperation between the two countries. Zhao meanwhile confirmed that commercial and economic relations between the two countries over the past few weeks has expanded. China has had close relations with the Islamic Emirate in the past three



years and has increased its investment in Afghanistan in various fields, especially in the mining sector. This meeting comes in the wake of Sunday's meeting between a Chinese businessman and the deputy minister of industry and commerce. The visiting businessman was keen to invest \$40 million into establishing a solar power plant in Afghanistan.

Polio program in Afghanistan: Health Minister meets with WHO official



KABUL (Ariana News): The Minister of Public Health of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Mawlawi Noor Jalal Jalali, convened a meeting Monday with senior officials from the World Health Organization's (WHO) polio program to discuss efforts to eradicate the disease in the country. According to WHO, Afghanistan continues to be affected by ongoing endemic wild poliovirus transmission. So far this year nine cases have been reported – compared to six cases last year. On Monday, Dr. Hamid Jafari, the head of WHO's polio eradication program for the Eastern Mediter-

anean region, attended the meeting. The parties deliberated on Afghanistan's polio eradication initiatives, and on the full operationalization of the polio laboratory, and the challenges confronting the polio program. Jalali meanwhile requested funding and capacity enhancement for the remaining equipment required for the polio laboratory, underscoring the need to have it fully operational. WHO officials assured Jalali that the remaining equipment for the polio laboratory would be delivered soon. Currently, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the only two countries in the world that still record polio cases every year.

Afghan girls' struggle for education depicted in art

KABUL (TOLOnews): Several girls in the capital who have been deprived of education and are now engaged in learning painting once again urged the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools for girls above the sixth grade. They said education is one of their fundamental rights and they asked the interim government to support women in various fields. Sharifa, one of these girls, says that she turned to the art of painting a year ago, but learning this art is not everything for her. This girl, who was in the ninth grade when she was forced to leave school, is waiting for the doors of schools to open for girls. Sharifa told TOLOnews: "I have been painting for a

year. Our problems are economic. We ask the government to open schools so that girls can study properly." Like Sharifa, other girls are also busy learning to paint. They say that to escape psychological pressure, they have turned to learning various arts and face many challenges. Agha Bano, another student, said: "I have been painting for a year. I didn't want to sit idle at home. My request to the government is to let us study and progress." Some women's rights activists said the role of women and girls in the country is important and they urged the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools for girls above the sixth

grade. Tafsir Siyahposh, a women's rights activist, said: "We Afghan women have always had three demands: freedom in accordance with Islam, reopening the doors of schools and universities, and reconsidering the restrictions imposed so that we, as the daughters of this land, can play our role in society." On September 17, 2022, the Ministry of Higher Education issued a directive that all secondary and high schools for girls above the sixth grade would remain closed until further notice. Now more than a thousand days have passed since the closure of schools in the country, and there is still no news of their reopening.

China and Afghanistan reject deployment of anti-drone systems

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Chinese Embassy in Kabul told Khaama Press that China rejects any installation of anti-drone systems at Bagram Airport. Meanwhile, Afghanistan's Defense Minister stated on X that the letter regarding the installation is false and has been dismissed. Earlier, a letter circulated in the media from the Ministry of Defense in Kabul claimed that Taliban officials had negotiated with the Chinese government to obtain these systems and had secured China's agreement. China strongly rejected such negotiation and called it fake news. Abdul Kabir, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Taliban government, has stated that due to a lack of necessary equipment, they are unable to prevent drone flights over Afghanistan.

Speaking in Panjshir, he described drone flights as "bullying" and lamented that their limited resources prevent them from countering such aerial intrusions effectively. Earlier this year, Fasiuddin Fetrat, Chief of Staff for the Taliban government, revealed that the US still controls Afghan airspace and notes that American drones frequently patrol Afghan skies, indicating that the airspace remains under American occupation. Fetrat also mentioned that these drones might enter Afghan airspace from neighboring countries. The Taliban's inability to monitor or control drone activities highlights ongoing challenges in Afghan airspace defense. Despite their efforts, the presence of American drones and the lack of advanced equip-

ment continue to hinder their capabilities to assert control and address aerial surveillance effectively. If the report is accurate about the negotiation between Chinese and Taliban officials, the installation could include radar and rockets designed to detect and intercept US drones and any other foreign unmanned aerial vehicles over Afghanistan. The confirmation and implementation of this report would indicate that China is moving beyond its previous economic focus to engage in military and security objectives in Afghanistan. Last week, Mullah Abdul Kabir, the Deputy Prime Minister in Kabul, explicitly referred to China and Russia as strategic allies of the Taliban regime, a departure from previous statements.

If China indeed takes such action and restricts US control of Afghan airspace, it would give real meaning to this strategic alliance. According to Afghan experts, if this happens, Afghanistan may once again become a battleground for competing regional and global powers, particularly as the conflict in Ukraine shapes new rivalries between Western and Eastern nations. The potential deployment of Chinese anti-drone systems in Afghanistan marks a significant shift in geopolitical dynamics. If realized, this move would not only redefine China's role in Afghanistan security but also potentially exacerbate the regional power struggle, impacting international relations and security in the broader context of ongoing global conflicts.

Shia scholars thank IE Forces for security during Muharram

KABUL (TOLOnews): Some Shia scholars and leaders expressed their gratitude to Islamic Emirate forces for ensuring security during days of Muharram. At an event, they mentioned that the security forces, in coordination with local forces, have properly fulfilled their responsibilities and have ensured that the past two years' Muharram days in the capital have been incident-free. Sayed Hussain Aleemi, the head of the Secretariat of the Shia Scholars Council of Afghanistan, said: "We thank all the security forces; they have properly fulfilled their responsibility to ensure the security of Imam Hussain's mourners."



"Our Sunni brothers celebrate Ashura alongside their Shiite brothers, and the Islamic Emirate should ensure the personal and economic security of these people with all its might and power," said Shahidi, a member of the High Commission of Afghan Shiites. Meanwhile, the Kabul security command said some groups tried to create a rift between the people and the government but were unsuccessful.

Mohammad Shaker Saad, the deputy of Kabul security command, said: "They tried hard, but our vigilant forces did not give them a chance, and wherever the enemy existed, they were discovered."

Officials of the Kabul security command also added that during the days of Muharram they arrested several individuals who intended to attack the mourners, and prevented their attacks.

Women entrepreneurs concerned over lack of access to markets



KABUL (TOLOnews): Several women entrepreneurs express concern about the lack of markets available for their products and the shortage of raw materials in the capital. They said that the absence of a market has become a serious challenge for them. They are calling for support from the Islamic Emirate and aid organizations for their products. Entrepreneur Freshta Hashemi said: "There are many challenges facing women. Firstly, they lack raw materials and do not get connected to supporters. Those who do receive very little budget, and they cannot even pay the rent for the place where they operate."

cannot even pay for transportation. For now, we have managed to provide the environment for women to be with us, and now we need help to collaborate with us." Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economy said it supports women entrepreneurs within the framework of Islamic values. Abdul Latif Nazari, the Deputy Minister of Economy, told TOLOnews: "Women are currently active in the private sector, companies, and NGOs. According to the country's laws, they play a role in economic growth and development."

The Chamber of Commerce and Investment, emphasizing support for women entrepreneurs in the country, said their role in the country's economic growth is beneficial. "There is a need to create opportunities for the growth of businesswomen, especially those who produce carpets in the provinces," said Khan Jan Alokozay, a member of the ACCI's board of directors. This comes after the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs had previously announced the issuance of work permits for more than thirty thousand women last year.

Olia, another female entrepreneur, said: "We are given opportunities to participate in exhibitions, but the issue is that we have economic problems; we

Kazakhstan to export wheat to Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): Securing regional trade agreements has been a top priority for Central Asian countries over the past few years – a move that will benefit the region, including Afghanistan. In line with approach, Kazakhstan will reportedly export wheat to Afghanistan and Pakistan through the Beineu grain terminal in the near future. Kazakh media reported the plan involves constructing additional storage

facilities in border areas and establishing logistics routes through Turkmenistan. The Beineu terminal, which covers 26 hectares, is located in the Mangistau region and has direct access to the Kazakh-Turkmen border. Last week, delegations from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, along with Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister Serik Zhumangarin visited the terminal.

Chinese firm to construct three Dams in Kunar

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Water and Energy of Afghanistan has announced that a Chinese company is ready to invest in large-scale hydroelectric dams (Shal, Sagi, and Sartaq) in Kunar province. The Ministry released a statement about the meeting between Abdul Latif Mansoor, the acting Minister of Water and Energy, and representatives of a Chinese company in Kabul. The statement quotes the Chinese company officials expressing their interest in investing in these projects. They have indicated their eagerness to sign a cooperation agreement with the Ministry as soon as possible and to start the work in practice. The acting Minister of Water and Energy welcomed the Chinese investment in this sector, emphasizing that "the capacity to generate electricity from the Kunar River is sufficient. If all these dams are constructed in the future, Afghanistan could even export electricity to neighboring countries." Details about the Chinese company and the construction costs of the dams have not yet been provided.

Afghans in Iran report increasing harassment

KABUL (TOLOnews): Some Afghan migrants in Iran have complained about the inappropriate behavior of the police in this country. They say that Afghan migrants have been harassed by Iranian citizens for some time now. Recently, videos have been circulating among social media users, showing inappropriate treatment of Afghan migrants, along with anti-Afghan migrant slogans in this country. Omid Hassan, an Afghan migrant, told TOLOnews: "Iranians beat Afghans and unfortunately, so far seven Afghans, including a woman, have died; I don't know if they were killed in the breadline." Ali Mohammad, another Afghan migrant in Iran, said: "Afghans are not treated well here. In places like Qiyam and subway queues, Afghans are harassed." These migrants urged the Islamic Emirate and migrant support institutions to take immediate action to end their tense situation in Iran. Akbar Soltani, a migrant, said: "There is no distinction between people, all of them dislike Afghan

migrants, and when arrested by the police, they beat them extensively." At the same time, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations reported the return of 128,000 individuals from Iran to the country in the past month. Abdul Mutalib Haqqani, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, said: "In the past month, around 1,800,000 Afghan migrants have returned from Iran, with about 52,000 returning forcibly and the rest voluntarily." Recently, Khalil Rahman Haqqani, the acting minister of Refugees and Repatriation, in a meeting with Ararat Jamal, the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Afghanistan, requested attention to the problems of Afghan migrants. According to a newsletter from this ministry, Jamal also emphasized in the meeting the need for coordination among host countries to solve the challenges faced by migrants. Previously, the Human Rights Assembly had requested the UNHCR to send a delegation to Iran to address the problems of Afghan migrants.



# Israel insists on harsh response to Hezbollah

BEIRUT (Reuters): Political and diplomatic communications have intensified between Lebanon and other nations to mitigate the serious escalation between Hezbollah and Israel. The communications aim to prevent Lebanon from entering into an open conflict, particularly in light of Israel's decision to strike Hezbollah in response to what it deemed "Hezbollah's responsibility for the shelling of Majdal Shams." Hezbollah has denied responsibility for the attack on Majdal Shams that killed 12 teenagers and children on Saturday.

A Lebanese government source said that "international communications" had so far succeeded in containing an all-out war. Israeli army spokesperson Avichay Adraee stated: "Our response to Hezbollah will be clear and strong." A Lebanese security source confirmed that Hezbollah evacuated several key points in the south and Bekaa since Sunday, near the Lebanese-Syrian border and the vicinity of Sayyida Zainab in Syria, "in anticipation of an Israeli strike."

Lebanon witnessed a state of anticipation and caution on Monday, especially in the southern regions, the Bekaa, and Beirut. Movement remained relatively cautious on roads connecting the regions. The announcement that some airlines were suspending their flights to Lebanon further increased caution.

Foreign ministries, instead of embassies, warned their citizens to leave Lebanon immediately or "prepare for long periods of shelter." Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati received a call from British Foreign Secretary David Lammy, who renewed "the call on all parties to exercise restraint to prevent escalation." Lammy stressed the need to "resolve disputes peacefully and through the implementation of relevant international resolutions."

Reuters reported that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called Israeli President Isaac Herzog and emphasized "the importance of preventing the escalation of conflict after the missile attack in the Golan Heights." According to Reuters, Blinken and Herzog discussed "a diplomatic solution that allows residents on both

sides of the Israeli-Lebanese border to return to their homes."

Reuters quoted an Israeli official as saying: "We want to harm Hezbollah, but we are not seeking a full-scale regional war." The hostile operations between Hezbollah and the Israeli army did not stop on Monday.

An Israeli raid in the morning targeted two locations. The first raid targeted a car near Shaqra, and when a motorcycle arrived at the scene, it was targeted by a second raid. This resulted in the death of two people and the injury of three others, including a child.

Hezbollah mourned its two killed members, Abbas Salami, aged 34, from the town of Kharbat Salem, residing in the town of Shaqra, and Abbas Hijazi, aged 29, from the town of Majdal Salem. Israeli airstrikes hit Houla, with Israeli artillery bombardment the outskirts of Aitaroun. Residential areas to the south of Mays Al-Jabal were also hit by artillery and phosphorous shells, resulting in fires.

The outskirts of Markaba, Rab El-Thalathine, and Kafr Hamam were also attacked. The Israeli army conducted a sweeping operation toward Kafr Kila from its outposts in the settlement of Metula using automatic weapons. Hezbollah continued attacking Israeli positions. The Al-Manar channel — affiliated with Hezbollah — reported that "large fires broke out in the forests surrounding the settlement of Kiryat Shmona after missiles fell in the area."

Hezbollah said it targeted the Al-Baghdadi site with dozens of Katyusha rockets. It also targeted the Israeli soldiers' position at the Al-Raheh site with guided missiles. Israeli media reported the fall of several rockets at the Hagoma junction in Upper Galilee. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant reiterated the Israeli threat that Hezbollah "will pay a heavy price, and we will let actions speak, not words."

On Monday afternoon, Middle East Airlines' aircraft landed on the runways of Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut after their flights were suspended on Sunday night. The

airline attributed the irregularity in its flight schedules to "insurance risks." The airport witnessed a rush of passengers arriving in Lebanon, mostly Lebanese expatriates, while others were departing.

Hala, an employee at the reception area at the airport, told Arab News: "When we ask arriving passengers if they are afraid to come to Lebanon, they laugh and continue to walk." The US Embassy in Lebanon, in a video clip by Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Rena Bitter, advised American citizens to "develop a crisis plan of action and leave before the crisis begins." Bitter stressed: "Washington is laser-focused on Lebanon. The US Department of State has no higher priority than the safety and security of US citizens overseas."

She reminded US citizens of key points on crisis preparedness so they could receive direct alerts from the embassy. She said: "Regularly scheduled commercial transportation is always the best option, while local communications and transportation infrastructure are intact and operating normally. "Please ensure your US passports are valid for at least six months. Should commercial airlines not be available, people should be prepared to shelter in a place for long periods."

The Italian foreign minister also urged Italian nationals to leave Lebanon, while the German government spokesperson advised German citizens to "urgently leave Lebanon." The Luftansa Group, which also includes Swiss International Air Line and Eurowings, said in a statement that it would "suspend flights to Beirut until Aug. 5 due to the current situation in the Middle East, and as a precautionary measure." Air France and Transavia suspended their flights to Beirut until Wednesday.

Saudi Arabia urged its citizens to "adhere to the decision of not traveling to Lebanon." Royal Jordanian Airlines suspended its flights to Beirut. Turkish Airlines canceled two flights to Beirut. Turkish low-cost carrier SunExpress, Turkish Airlines' AJET, Greece's Aegean Airlines and Ethiopian Airlines also canceled flights.



RAWALPINDI: JI sit-in continue against inflated electricity bills in Liaquat Bagh.

## Govt to deal hate-mongers with an iron fist: Asif

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Monday warned that attempts of bloodletting were being made on the pretext of religion. He was speaking at a press conference alongside Federal Minister for Development Ahsan Iqbal.

Referring to the ongoing campaign against Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa, the defence minister said that few misguided people were targeting the CJP for a recent SC verdict which, he said, had nothing to do with the CJP. He cautioned that the state would swing into action if the campaign against the CJP continued unabated.

In a thinly-veiled reference to a religiopolitical party, he said few elements were misusing the religion for their petty political gains, stressing that true face of Islam should be shown to the public instead of threatening or killing people in the name of religion. "The state will not accept any turmoil on the basis of religion and will take action according to the law and constitution," he warned.

Sharing his viewpoint at the presser, Minister Ahsan Iqbal recalled that a political party was created to foment chaos in 2018. Iqbal recounted decrees by religious scholars in which they said that terrorism, sectarianism and suicide killing had no link with Islam.

He called for unity among people instead of resorting to violence, hence ridiculing the nation in front of the world. "We are being compelled to take action. We can't keep our eyes closed anymore. May 9 culprits have still not been taken to task. The constitution must be respected, not denigrated," he concluded.

## Naval Chief meets Romania mily leadership

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf paid an official visit to Romania. During the visit, Naval Chief held combined meeting with Chief of Defence Staff General Gheorghita Vlad and Chief of Romanian Navy Vice Admiral Mihai Panait onboard Romanian Navy Frigate Regina Maria. Issues related to regional maritime security, professional matters of mutual interest and bilateral military collaboration were discussed in the meeting. The dignitaries, while acknowledging the significance of strong bilateral military collaboration, agreed on further enhancing mutual interactions in diversified military domains.

During his visit to National Defence University of Romania, the Admiral also delivered a lecture on 'Collaborative Maritime Security' in which he stressed upon the need for Collaborative Maritime Security efforts. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf underscored that Pakistan firmly believes that dialogue and negotiations are the most effective means of resolving maritime disputes. He highlighted that no single state has the capacity to create and sustain an environment with effective Maritime Security.

# SC's ad hoc judges take oath

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Justice (Retd) Sardar Tariq Masood and Justice (Retd) Mazhar Alam Miankhel, were sworn in as ad-hoc judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday.

The ceremony was held at the Supreme Court where Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa administered the oath. Other judges including Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan, law officers, lawyers, and court staff attended the ceremony. Chief Justice Isa administered the oath of office to

both ad-hoc judges. Justice (Retd) Sardar Tariq Masood and Justice (Retd) Mazhar Alam Miankhel were appointed for a period of one year.

The Ministry of Law and Justice had issued a notification for the appointment of two ad-hoc judges to the Supreme Court on July 27th. President Asif Ali Zardari had approved the appointments on July 26th. Earlier, on July 20th, the Supreme Judicial Council had approved the appointment of Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and Justice Mazhar Alam Khan Miankhel as ad-hoc judges.

The Chief Justice had proposed four retired judges for the ad-hoc positions: Justice (Retd) Mushir Alam, Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqir, Justice (Retd) Mazhar Alam Miankhel, and Justice (Retd) Tariq Masood. However, Justice (Retd) Mushir Alam and Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqir declined the offer. Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqir cited personal commitments, while Justice (Retd) Mishir Alam withdrew his candidacy due to the ongoing social media campaign against ad-hoc judges.

# Sepoy martyred, 16 FC men injured in Gwadar

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: A violent mob in garb of so called Baloch Raji Muchi assaulted Security Forces' personnel employed for security duties in Gwadar district. Resultantly, Sepoy Shabbir Baloch (Age: 30 years; resident of: District Sibi), embraced shahadat.

In addition, the unprovoked assaults by the violent protesters have resulted in injuries to sixteen soldiers including an officer. While on the other hand, fake and malicious propaganda is being spread on social media using doctored pictures and videos by the propagandists to gain sympathy and support for the unlawful violent march.

Security forces have displayed extreme restraint to avoid unwarranted civilian casualties despite provocations. The violent actions of the mob are unacceptable and those responsible will be brought to justice. All citizens are urged not to fall prey to the propaganda, remain calm and peaceful, and to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in maintaining public safety and order. Security Forces of Pakistan, in step with the Nation, remain determined

to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace and stability of Balochistan.

**Security forces kill five terrorists in three KP IBOs:** Five terrorists were killed in three intelligence-based operations (IBOs) of security forces conducted in different areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Monday. According to the military's media wing, the security forces during the IBOs also destroyed the terrorists' hideouts. It further stated that weapons and ammunition were also recovered from possession of the killed terrorists.

The ISPR said that a killed terrorist Sifatullah was involved in the suicide attack in Daraban on 12 December 2023 and other criminal activities. Another terrorist was gunned down in the IBO conducted in North Waziristan. "Pakistan forces are determined to eradicate the scourge of terrorism from the country. Pakistan Army is fighting against terrorism alongside law enforcement agencies," the ISPR added.

Earlier on July 16, the ISPR reported that Pakistan security forces killed 10 terrorists who attacked Bannu Cantonment in

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ISPR. According to military's media wing, the attackers attempted to infiltrate the Bannu cantt but were repelled, leading them to detonate an explosive-laden vehicle against the perimeter wall.

## Army rescues six more foreign climbers from K2

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Army has rescued six more foreign mountaineers after they got sick while attempting to summit the towering K2 mountain, lies in Karakorum Range.

K2, the world's second-highest peak which stands at 8,611 meters, lies in Pakistan's Gilgit Baltistan region. It is nicknamed "the savage mountain" by high-altitude climbers who often encounter great difficulty in summiting it. The Pakistani Army carried out three heli sorties to rescue American, Chilean, Macedonian and Nepali climbers, who were present in the K2 base camp.

## Remand of PTI founder, wife okayed

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: In Toshakhana reference recently filed by National Accountability Bureau (NAB), an accountability court on Monday approved a 10-day physical remand of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi.

After expiry of the previous seven-day remand of the couple, the anti-corruption body's team had presented them before the court. A 14-day remand of the couple was sought by the anti-graft watch, but the court turned down the request and approved physical remand till August 08. Earlier, former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi were sent on seven day physical remand in NAB Toshakhana reference.

On July 13, Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi were arrested in a fresh National Accountability Bureau (NAB) reference related to Toshakhana, hours after their acquittal in the Iddat case. The NAB team headed by Deputy Director Mohsin Haroon arrested Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi from the Adiala Jail, the sources privy to the development added.

## Elahi again skips indictment

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Former Punjab chief minister and PTI leader Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi could not be indicted in illegal appointments case being heard by an anti-corruption court in Lahore on Monday as the former CM did not appear in court.

The court was due to charge-sheet Pervaiz Elahi, Muhammad Khan Bhatti and others in the case today but the PTI leader skipped the hearing on medical grounds. Pervaiz Elahi's lawyers filed an application in the court seeking exemption from appearance. They also submitted a medical certificate in the court. According to the medical report, the doctors have advised Pervaiz Elahi to refrain from long travel as his ribs fracture is yet to heal fully.

Moreover, the former chief minister is also suffering from infection in the fracture. The presiding judge expressed displeasure over Pervaiz Elahi's absence.

# NA, KP: PTI finalises names for reserved seats

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Monday finalized names for the reserved seats in the National and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly.

As per details, the list for the reserved seats has been submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan after the approval of KP CM Ali Amin Gandapur. For the KP Assembly, the list includes names of Mishal Yousafzai, Fauzia Bibi, Ayesha Naseem, Uzma Riaz, Sajida Hanif, Gul Nasreen Ali, Fareeda Qureshi, Farzana Javed, Shakeela Rabbani, Faiza Mumshir, Humeira Nawaz, Saima Khalid, Khushboo, Farzana Safeer, Harna

Ibrahim, Naseem Naz, Asmat Ara Kakakhel, Mehrab, Nayab Khushal, and Chand Bibi, Naureen Arif, Razia Nosheen Abbasi, Zahida Javed and Alia Nawab.

For the National Assembly, the list includes Maliha Ali, Samira Shams, Nadia Ambreen, Momina Basit, Naina Arshad, Saba Bibi, Sajida Zulfiqar, and Naila Marwat. For the minority seats in the National Assembly, the list includes the names of Lal Chand, Rajesh Kumar, Waqas Khokhar, Huqooq Rafiq, and Chaudhry Amir.

For the minority seats in the KP Assembly, the names include Wazirzada, Irfan Joseph, Rajesh Kumar, Ravi Kumar, and Peter Neroz. A 13-member

bench of the top court, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, ruled that the PTI is eligible for the allocation of reserved seats, dealing a major setback to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's ruling coalition.

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah announced the 8-5 majority verdict, setting aside the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) order wherein it had upheld the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision denying the reserved seats to the SIC. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, Justice Jamal Mandokhail, Justice Naem Afghan, Justice Yahya Afridi, and Justice Ameenuddin Khan opposed the majority decision.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf called on Romania's Chief of Defence Staff General Gheorghita Vlad during his official visit to Romania.

# Weapon license issuance in KP faces delays

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: The issuance of weapon licenses in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has come to a standstill, causing frustration among citizens across the province. Hundreds of applications submitted in each district remain unprocessed, leading applicants to make repeated trips to government offices only to be directed towards an online application system that has proven to be cumbersome.

Files pending at the offices of the Deputy Commissioners show no signs of progress, as there appears to be a lack of interest in resolving the backlog. Citizens have expressed concerns that the new online application process is overly complicated, causing greater difficulties than the previous

system. They report that the updated system not only poses more challenges but also incurs higher costs.

Residents argue that the previous method for obtaining licenses was somewhat efficient but has now become more complicated with the introduction of the new system. They claim that instead of simplifying processes for the public, the government is entangling them in further bureaucracy.

For over a year, the online weapon license system implemented by the Home Department has been ineffective. Similarly, the e-Domicile system has also failed to deliver the promised efficiency. Continuous experiments by the Home Department have exacerbated the problems within the weapon license system.

Citizens have appealed to Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur to reinstate the old method of issuing weapon licenses and abolish the current online mobile application system to ensure a smoother and more accessible process.

An official of grade 18 from the Home Department has acknowledged the issues and assured that efforts are underway to expedite the weapon license and e-Domicile systems. Under the leadership of the current Additional Chief Secretary Home, Abid Majeed, the department is committed to resolving all public concerns. The public eagerly awaits these improvements, hoping for a swift resolution to the ongoing delays and inefficiencies in the weapon licensing process.