

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has asked for a response from the Interior Secretary and other relevant parties regarding the removal of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) chief Sahibzada Hamid Raza from the travel ban list. Chief Justice Amir Farooq presided over the hearing, calling Deputy Attorney General Syed Ahsan Raza to the rostrum.



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# Shehbaz demands Israel's accountability for war crimes

## Says lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan the linchpin to achieving the SCO objective

ASTANA (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday took Pakistan's clear and blunt position regarding the situation in Palestine at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit and the SCO Plus Summit, stressing the international community to make Israel accountable and bring it to justice.

The prime minister, vigorously fighting the case of Gaza at the SCO and SCO Plus summits, said that Israel was involved in the genocide of Palestinians.

The International Court of Justice, he said, had also declared Israel's heinous actions as genocide of the Palestinians.

"Israel is wreaking havoc in Gaza and committing war crimes," the prime minister said. The international community should speed up its efforts for an immediate ceasefire and access of humanitarian aid in Gaza.

Pakistan's position was that all long-standing disputes should be resolved according to the United Nations resolutions, he added.

PM Shehbaz deplored that around 37,000 innocent people had been martyred in Palestine – most of whom were women and children, while over two

million Palestinians were displaced by Israel.

"Pakistan is in favour of a two-state solution to the Palestinian issue on the lines of pre-1967 borders with the establishment of a Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital," he added.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to SCO objectives of peace and prosperity, urged the member states to put in their collective efforts against terrorism, poverty alleviation and dispute resolution, particularly the ongoing Israeli barbarism in Palestine.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, calling the lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan the linchpin to achieving the SCO objective, urged the international community to meaningfully engage with the interim Afghan government to help meet their economic needs. Similarly, the interim Afghan government must also take effective measures to prevent the use of its soil for terrorism against any other state, he stressed.

"Recent terror activities have been a matter of great concern for all of us. Terrorism and extremism by individuals, groups or

states must be fought collectively in a comprehensive fashion. Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including state terrorism, must be condemned in clear and unambiguous terms. There can neither be any justification for killing innocent people nor should the bogey of terrorism be used for political point-scoring," he said and emphasised outlawing Islamophobia universally.

"I reaffirm Pakistan's commitment to working together to strengthen SCO as an active and integrated regional forum to achieve the common objective of peace and prosperity in line with the Shanghai spirit," the prime minister said addressing the 24th Summit of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which commenced here in the capital city of Kazakhstan.

Titled "Strengthening Multilateral Dialogue – Striving Towards a Sustainable Peace and Prosperity", the summit is being attended by leaders from Pakistan, China, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, India and others.

The prime minister's address encompassed all

major regional and international issues, including terrorism and extremism, Islamophobia, instability in Afghanistan, poverty, climate change, regional connectivity, and resolution of disputes.

The prime minister said that Astana held significance for Pakistan where the country had formally joined the SCO in 2017 and congratulated Belarus for being the newest member.

He also felicitated Chinese President Xi Jinping on assuming the SCO chairmanship for 2024-25 and expressed confidence that under his visionary leadership, the SCO would continue to grow and prosper.

He told the international gathering that Pakistan aligned itself with socio-economic and security objectives of the SCO as the country's association with the Organization went back centuries.

He said during 23 years, the SCO had established itself as a credible and effective transregional organization. He said contemporary realities of globalization and interdependence necessitated "working together and joining hands for a secure, peaceful and prosperous future for our people".

Continued on Back Page



ASTANA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif delivering a national statement at Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit.

## Seven of a family die as van falls into ditch

HARIPUR (APP): At least seven people of the same family were killed and ten others sustained critical injuries when a van carrying them fell into a deep ravine near Chekhai area of Haripur district in the small hours of Thursday.

According to Rescue 1122, the ill-fated family was traveling from Swabi Meera area to Islamabad airport when it plunged into a gorge while navigating a sharp turn in the vicinity of Sadar police station Haripur. Seven people died instantly and ten others sustained critical injuries.

A total of 17 family members were aboard the vehicle to receive one of their relatives at Islamabad airport. Rescue 1122 said women and children were among those killed and injured in the mishap, adding that the death toll might increase as some of the injured were in critical condition. The rescue workers faced difficulties in the recovery operation due to the depth of the ditch, storm and rainy conditions.

Rescue teams promptly arrived at the scene after being notified and transported the deceased and injured to the hospital. Local sources said the vehicle fell into a ravine due to its high speed on the road having sharp and dangerous turns. They said the vehicle fell into a 200 feet deep ditch.

It merits a mention here that the high rate of fatal traffic accidents in the area is attributed to poor road conditions, poorly maintained vehicles, and reckless driving. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi here Thursday expressed condolences over loss of four lives in a road accident in Haripur district.

The Governor while expressing sympathy with the bereaved families, has prayed for eternal peace of the deceased and early recovery of the injured.

## Tribunals' formation SC suspends LHC decision, ECP notifications

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday suspended Lahore High Court's decision over formation of election tribunals and the election commission's notifications over the matter.

A five-member bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa take up the appeal of the Election Commission of Pakistan to decide controversy over who should appoint tribunals to decide

election disputes.

The ECP in its appeal argued that the establishment of election tribunals, falls under their jurisdiction. Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa remarked that the chief justice and chief election commission could have settle the matter with meaningful consultation. "The election commission should consult immediately after appointment of the new chief justice of the high court".

"The sides are complicating the matter, our effort is to resolve the issue," the top judge further said. During the hearing, PTI's lawyer Niazullah Niazi, raised objection over the composition of bench, against the chief justice. "The court has been scandalized much, now enough is enough. Why not the case of Niazullah Niazi be sent to the bar council for disciplinary action," the chief justice said.

## Murad presents 15-year progress of the Sindh govt



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, under the banner of Vision Sindh, toured the entire province to showcase the development initiatives undertaken by the PPP government over the past 15 years through pictorial and video representations on a big screen at the Auditorium of the provincial assembly to the participants.

The Members of civil society attended the first ever such an elaborated and comprehensive presentation, chambers of trade & commerce, media houses and their associations such as APNS, PBS and CPNE, religious leaders of different faiths, provincial ministers, chief secretary, IG Police and secretaries of various departments.

Thar Coal: Sindh The Chief Minister stated that the total power generation based on Thar coal was 3240 MW. He provided a breakdown, explaining that Thar Coal Block-I, which was installed for \$2 billion, generates 1320 MW. Thar Coal Block-II has generated 660 MW since July 2019. Thar Energy Limited has been generating 330 MW since September 2022. Thal Nova Power Thar Limited has been generating 330 MW since February 2023, and Lucky Electric Power at Port Qasim has been generating 660 MW since March 2022.

Shah mentioned that Thar Block 1 & II

alone would ensure the energy security of the country by generating power from local resources, saving foreign exchange. The CM also mentioned that the ongoing projects, including Coal to Gas fertilizer, Keti Bandar Park of 10,000 MW, and Dhabaji Special Economic Zones, would help ensure the economic security of the country once they are commissioned.

Flood Emergency: Mr. Shah discussed the flood protection (FP) Bund, which stretches from Sehwan to Chhukhi along the boundary of Sindh on the Right Bank of River Indus. This serves as the primary line of defense against hill torrents from the Kirthar Range for the Right Bank of River Indus in Sindh. The Bund was renovated after the 2022 floods, with the top rehabilitated and new stone pitching provided on the waterside for added protection. The CM said that the capacity of the Danister Tail Regulator, taluka Sehwan, was 1,500 cusecs which was enhanced by constructing the new Danister Tail Regulator upto 6,000 cusecs. With the capacity enhancement of the Danister Aral head regulator, the flood discharge capacity of Manchhar to the Indus River has been enhanced from 37,000 cusecs to 83,000 cusecs.

Small Dams: Murad Ali Shah said that his government has constructed 113 Small Recharge and Delay Action Dams and the construction of 18 Small Dams was in progress in Nagarparkar and Kohistan. Bedside this, nine Tarrai were also ongoing in Taluka Chacharo of Tharparkar. He added that these structures would store/retain Rainwater from the hill torrents of Karoonjhar and Kirthar Hills cultivate about 512,360 acres of land and provide water for drinking purposes to people and livestock.

Continued on Back Page

## Gandapur plea against ECP PHC adjourns hearing

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A two-members bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Muhammad Ijaz Khan adjourned hearing on a plea filed by Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur against the Election Commission's notice for alleged election fraud on 8th February, on Thursday.

PHC observed that to hear all parties involved on the next hearing date to decide the matter. The counsel Alam Khan Adeenzai advocate argued that the Election Commission's notice was unlawful and requested the court to quash it.

Election Commission's lawyer Sikandar Bashir Mohmand requested for adjournment of the hearing, which was accepted. It is worthy to mention that Ali Amin Gandapur is accused of rigging in 8th February general elections for forcing voters to cast their votes in his favor, leading the Election Commission to issue a notice to him. The petition challenges the legality of the Election Commission's notice.

## Iraqi armed groups say ready to fight Israel

BAGHDAD (AFP): As war rages in Gaza and threatens to spread to Lebanon, Iraqi militant groups warn they are ready to enter the fray against Israel and the United States.

A field commander of the so-called Islamic Resistance in Iraq said there would be "escalation for escalation" in the event of a full-scale war in Lebanon.

The commander, speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, said the Iran-backed group had already sent "experts and advisers" to Lebanon.

Iraqi political scientist Ali Al-Baidar agreed that a major war between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah, if it happens, "will not be limited to Lebanese territory."

"In Iraq and in the region armed groups will enter into the confrontation," he said, adding that they would want to show "their abilities, but also their loyalty" to their allies.

The bloodiest-ever Gaza war broke out when Palestinian militant group Hamas attacked southern Israel on October 7.

The conflict quickly widened to involve several pro-Iran armed groups in the so-called "Axis of Resistance" expressing solidarity with the Palestinians and demanding an end of the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

The alliance includes Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthis rebels, who have attacked Israel and Israeli-linked shipping, but also armed groups in Syria and Iraq.

In recent weeks, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed responsibility for drone strikes against targets in Israel, labelling many of them "joint operations" with the Houthis.

The Israeli army, without naming an attacker, has confirmed several aerial attacks from the east since April, but has said they were all intercepted before entering its airspace.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has previously shown its willingness to launch attacks.

Last winter, it carried out more than 175 rocket and drone strikes against US troops based in Iraq and Syria as part of an international anti-jihadist coalition.

On Sunday, the so-called Coordination of the Iraqi Resistance issued further threats against Israel and Israel's top ally the United States.

Citing the threat of "total war against Lebanon," it warned that "if the Zionists (Israelis) carry out their threats, the pace and scale of operations targeting them will intensify."

It added that "the interests of the American enemy" in Iraq and around the region would also be "legitimate targets."

The group includes the Hezbollah Brigades, Al-Nujaba and the Sayyed Al-Shuhada Brigades, all of whom are under US sanctions.

Al-Baidar noted the past experience of "operations and attacks against American forces and diplomatic missions" in Iraq. "It is possible these attacks will repeat themselves with greater intensity," he said.

In late January, a drone strike launched by Iraqi armed groups killed three US soldiers in a base just across the border in Jordan and provoked an armed response.

# 5th July-The metaphor of destruction, degradation and decline!

Sharjeel Inam Memon

**JULY 5th is the darkest day in the history of Pakistan. Forty-five years ago, on July 5, 1979, the military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq became an instrument in a global conspiracy against Pakistan, overthrowing the elected democratic government of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He usurped power, imposed martial law, and suspended Pakistan's first consensual constitution. This unconstitutional action by General Zia-ul-Haq brought Pakistan to a state of crisis and destruction from which it has not yet been able to recover.**

Not only that, but the imposition of martial law in Pakistan caused significant damage to non-aligned movements in third world countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, including the Islamic world, as well as to movements for national autonomy and democracy, which remains unresolved to this day. July 5, 1979, is a terrible day in modern history when the dream of building a new world was shattered.

A world in which the poor and underdeveloped countries of the third world could gain freedom from global imperialist oppression and build democratic, prosperous, and just societies with national autonomy. In the context of the conditions that African countries, including Pakistan, are suffering today, there is a greater need than ever to realize the disastrous effects of July 5, 1979.

The judicial assassination of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was part of the global conspiracy on July 5, 1979. He not only rebuilt a defeated and devastated Pakistan but also put it on the path of national autonomy, economic self-reliance, democracy, and development. To achieve this, he strengthened the national autonomy and democracy movements in the third world, making them his power base. He became the focus of the hopes and aspirations of the people in the third world.

This was not accepted by the world's imperialist powers. What Shaheed Bhutto did for Pakistan before July 5, 1979, and the destruction he predicted afterward, is best

described in his own words. Sitting in the death cell of the District Jail in Rawalpindi, he wrote a letter to his daughter, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, on the occasion of her birthday on June 21, 1978. This letter was published in the book titled "My Dearest Daughter." In this letter, Shaheed Bhutto describes how the rulers of Pakistan summoned him from abroad and entrusted him with the responsibility of saving the country.

He writes, "I was in the United Nations at that time and was trying my best to solve an impossible situation. When General Yahya Khan surveyed the devastation and became fully convinced of defeat and the possibility that nothing could be recovered, and that what little was left was in danger, they sent a special plane to bring me back to Pakistan."

Yahya Khan's eyes were red and he was very upset when, on December 20, 1971, at 10:30 in the morning, he told me that he had failed miserably and that I should take charge of a defeated Pakistan because only I had the ability to save the rest of the coun-

try. I took the oath as the President of Pakistan at noon under these adverse circumstances."

Shaheed Bhutto tells his daughter in the same letter, "After assuming this responsibility for a defeated and devastated Pakistan, I made progress on all fronts with great activity." Among the first tasks I focused on was the constitution-making work, ensuring that the constitution could be adopted through democratic consensus, particularly addressing the issue of provincial autonomy. Additionally, I initiated economic reforms and implemented important social and economic measures.

"I solved the problem of Bangladesh by recognizing its independence. I signed the Shimla Agreement with India, which had no secret clauses, and successfully negotiated the return of over 5,000 square miles of territory to Pakistan in Sindh and Punjab. I repatriated 90,000 prisoners of war with honor and without subjecting them to trials. I hosted the Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore, modernized Pakistan's armed forces, and revitalized the nation.

These achievements resonated with the voices of people across Asia, Latin America, and Africa, alongside those of Pakistan. Reflecting on these accomplishments, I felt such a wave of joy and happiness that tears came to my eyes."

Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto writes in the same letter about the motives behind the events of July 5, 1979 in Pakistan and their potentially dangerous effects. He mentions that these events were not about just seizing power, but rather about amending agreements related to nuclear reprocessing plants, protecting foreign interests in mining copper, gold, and other minerals, ensuring Pakistan's continued alignment with "CENTO" and "SEATO," and yielding to territorial claims of powerful nations to safeguard global interests. He critiques this shift towards prioritizing Gross National Product (GNP) over national sovereignty and rights.

Instead of supporting freedom movements, they became preoccupied with inflation rates. He points out the contradictions he witnessed: when such leaders depart from the

political scene, they leave behind increased corruption, bribery, instability, division, weakened economies, chaos, and constitutional vacuums.

Shaheed Bhutto was not only saddened by what happened to him personally but also deeply concerned about the disastrous effects on Pakistan. In the same letter, he states, "While there may be outrage and personal anger over what these barbarians have done to me, I am more saddened by the greater damage they have caused to national interests." Despite the personal bitterness, his sense of impersonal pain outweighs his personal feelings.

From these words of Shaheed Bhutto, it is clear that he believed the main reason for the decline Pakistan has suffered until today is July 5, 1979. He compared the situation to regressing to the era of 1947, emphasizing that nations either prosper or undergo explosive and quiet decline, rather than reversing course entirely.

**The writer is Minister for Information, Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control, Transport, Mass Transit Government of Sindh.**



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According to details, a reckless driven truck



# DG BISP KP directs staff to treat beneficiaries politely



PESHAWAR (APP): Director General, Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) KP, Zohra Aslam visited various centres during her visit to Dera Ismail Khan district where she directed the staff to treat beneficiaries politely and in decent way. She inspected various arrangements about distribution of ongoing installment and expressed satisfaction about its distribution process. The Director General

BISP was accompanied by Deputy Director South Zone Shafiqullah Kundi. Zohra Aslam said that 1, 30,000 beneficiaries are being provided financial assistance under BISP in DI Khan besides education under Wasila Taleem. Besides establishment of Naushnoma centers for food nourishment of poor children, she directed the authorities concerned to open centres for facilitation of more women. The DG BISP also met with Deputy Commissioner DI Khan Mansoor Arshad Khattak and thanked him for better arrangements and cooperation during distribution of ongoing installment of BISP.

## Fixed tax on electricity bills condemned

**F.P. Report**  
PESHAWAR: The Flour Mills Association, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter, strongly condemns the unjust imposition of Fixed Tax in electricity bills affecting flour mill industry sales. In an executive committee meeting chaired by Haji Muhammad Iqbal, it was unanimously decided that if the federal government does not immediately withdraw these taxes, extensive protests will commence not only in the province but nationwide. The emergency meeting of the Pakistan Flour Mills Association, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter, was attended by group leader Muhammad Naeem Butt and all divisional vice-chairmen and senior members of the province. The meeting expressed severe backlash against the introduction of oppressive taxes, including the Fixed Tax (MDI) on electricity bills, which significantly hike costs for flour mills, dealers, and the general public. Under the leadership of Haji Muhammad Iqbal, the executive committee unanimously resolved that if the federal government does not promptly retract these taxes, widespread protests will be launched at the national level alongside the province.

## Muzammil terms federal budget as hybrid budget

**F.P. Report**  
PESHAWAR: The federal government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have presented the budget for 2024-25 as a hybrid budget, said Muzamil Aslam, financial advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Regarding the new electricity tariff rates, Muzamil Aslam criticized them as significantly unfair and eight times higher compared to production costs. He stated, "The federal budget 2024-25 is a hybrid of decisions made by the government and the IMF in terms of tax selection by the IMF and expenditures by the government," in a statement issued from his office. Advisor Muzamil Aslam and inter-provincial relations secretary for KP, while reacting to the federal budget 2024-25, said, "The burden of taxes is a decision of the IMF for the common people and a tax cut for the elite is a government decision, just as taxes on milk and medicines are the IMF's decision while local builders' tax cuts are the government's script." They said that the increase in electricity, gas, and petrol prices is the IMF's decision while the government's decision is to increase government subsidies and salaries. Muzamil Aslam said that cuts in education, health, and agriculture are the IMF's decision, while the government's decision is to allocate Rs 75 billion for developmental expenditures. The budget is only the IMF's and the government is a complete partner." Advisor for Finance Department and Inter-Provincial Relations Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muzamil Aslam while reacting to the new electricity rates said that new rates are unfair and based on injustice. He said that compared to electricity production cost in Pakistan, the production cost is \$0.04/KWH and the selling price is \$0.3/KWH which is eight times higher than production costs. Muzamil Aslam said that from income expenses, Pakistan is the most expensive country to live in and who is responsible for all this and why people of Pakistan are being affected.

## Protest against increase in power bills held

**F.P. Report**  
PESHAWAR: Traders from Peshawar held a peaceful protest against increase in power bills and prolonged load shedding across the city. During the protest, participants held placards and banners with slogans against the government's anti-trader and anti-citizen policies, unjust taxes on electricity and gas bills, unfair load-shedding, and the Cantonment Board's property tax. The protest rally was held at Jinnah Street, Gora Bazaar, Peshawar Cantt, and concluded at Sadr Road Takhto Jamaat. A large number of traders and the general public participated in the rally. Under the leadership of the Markezi Tanzeem E Tajran Peshawar Cantt, headed by President Sharafat Ali Mubarak, to raise their voice against the increase in electricity bills. Important office-bearers of the Traders Association, including Former Minister Malik Mehr Elahi, Abid Ullah Khan, Baba-e-Tajiran Amin Hussain Babar, President of Peshawar Traders Chamber Gulam Bilal Javed, Jahangir Khan, Muhammad Aqeel, Mudasar Ehsan, Mukhtiar Hussain, Haji Shafiq, Ehsan, and others participated in the protest. The speakers at the protest emphasized that the government's increase in electricity and gas bills, unfair load-shedding, and unjust property tax hikes are intolerable for traders and the public. They stated that these policies are ruining the business environment and causing severe difficulties for the people. The participants demanded that the government retract the increase in electricity and gas bills and address the issues of the trader community promptly. The Traders Association announced that if their demands are not met, the scope of the protest would be expanded further.



PESHAWAR: Vendor selling and displaying traditional ice cream locally called kufli to attract the customers at Sadar bazar. — APP photo

## BERC, UET organize awareness session

**F.P. Report**  
PESHAWAR: The Buildings Energy Research Center (BERC), University of Engineering and Technology, Peshawar in collaboration with National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA) organized an awareness session on the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) 2023 at the Capital Development Authority (CDA) office, Islamabad recently. The session was specifically designed for the senior management of the CDA. The ECBC-2023 developed by the NEECA applies to all new buildings and new sections of existing buildings across Pakistan. The session was a part of the project "Transformation of the Construction Sector to Promote Energy Efficiency in Buildings," funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany, and supported by GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) with UET Peshawar's BERC as the Technical Lead for the Project. Dr. Naveed Ahmad, Director BERC said on the occasion that the aim of the session is to enhance the CDA staff's understanding of the buildings' sustainability, building energy codes, the rating system of buildings and its effective implementation and to raise awareness about the global significance of energy efficiency and conservation in buildings.

Director BERC and the Technical Lead for the project gave a presentation on the global trends and targets, policies and tools to reduce the carbon footprint of the buildings in a systematic way and shed light on some important tools devised as Project deliverables so far. Dr. Sardar Mohazzam, the Managing Director NEECA, offered an in-depth overview of the ECBC 2023 code, highlighting its requirements and the benefits of adherence for sustainable development. Understanding and implementing this code has become crucial for building control authorities across the nation, he added. Chairman CDA Mohammad Ali Randhawa appreciated the initiative taken by the NEECA. The other speakers emphasized that CDA By-laws be reviewed and amendments be suggested for making future buildings environmentally sustainable. Ms. Sadia Haider, CDA emphasized the need for Buildings' Energy Audit and the need for prompt action in this regard. Engr. Muhammad Irshad Khan, Head of the project at GIZ, highlighted the initiatives of GIZ introducing the first project in Pakistan aimed at implementing sustainability in buildings sector. He also enlightened the audience with the key objectives of the project and its impact and forecasting.



PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, and SAFRON Engineer Amir Muqam offering condolences on the demise of Senior Leader of Muslim League-N, Haji Shah Ji Gul Afridi, and Senator Haji Taj Muhammad Afridi. The deceased was also the elder brother of former MPA Haji Shafiq Sher Afridi, and the paternal cousin of former MPA Bilawal Afridi, Haji Syed Nowab Afridi, in Jamrud Tehsil, Khyber District.

## No one to be allowed to disturb peace during Muharram: CS



**F.P. Report**  
PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chaudhry Nadeem Aslam along with Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan and Additional Chief Secretary Home Department Abid Majeed visited Kohat district on Thursday regarding maintaining peace and order during the month of Muharram. Secretary Chaudhry Nadeem Aslam chaired a Grand Jirga to review the security measures taken in Kohat division regarding Muharram. Addressing the Grand Jirga of Shia and Sunni Elders in the Commissioner House Kohat, the Chief Secretary said that all arrangements have been completed to maintain the peaceful atmosphere during Muharram. All relevant institutions are playing their due role to maintain religious tolerance and brotherhood and to suppress the elements that spread chaos and hatred in the society. Chief Secretary declared that no one will be allowed to interfere in the peaceful atmosphere and stern legal action will be taken against the troublemakers irrespective of their religion. He said, there should be peace not only in the month of Muharram but the whole year. He added that the consensus formula has been decided by bringing together the scholars of all schools of thoughts on one platform so that peace can be further promoted. On this occasion, Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan thanked the leaders of the Jirga and said in his address that the police always vigilant and fully prepared to face any challenges as a guarantor of peace. He further said that it is good that everyone here speaks of peace and their hearts are full of love for the soil and hoped that the people here will show exemplary solidarity and high character during Muharram. Addressing the Jirga, GOC Nine Division said that promoting inter-religious and inter-faith harmony for the peaceful celebration of Muharram is a common responsibility of all of us. Law enforcement agencies and the people of the province are on the same page and comprehensive security plans have been formed to thwart the nefarious intentions of the anti-state elements spreading chaos. On this occasion beside the members of National and Provincial Assemblies of Kohat Division, Commissioner Kohat Division Abid Khan Wazir, Regional Police Officer Sher Akbar Khan, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, Deputy Commissioner Hangu Haider Hussain, Deputy Commissioner Orakzai Tayyab Abdullah, Deputy Commissioner Kurram Javedullah Mehsud and District Police Officer Kohat Umar Khan, Pakistan Army officers, Police Chiefs and other concerned officers of District Administration Kohat were also present.

## Health Minister inaugurates New Welfare Initiatives at Hayatabad Medical Complex

**F.P. Report**  
PESHAWAR: KP Health Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah, visited Hayatabad Medical Complex today for the inauguration of important public welfare projects. He was welcomed by the President of IDF-HMC, Dr. Nazeef Ullah. On this occasion Health Minister was briefed on the launch of the Free Drugs Bank for underprivileged cardiac patients at Heart Linq, Cardiology Department by the Chairman of Cardiology & President of Teacher Association KGMC Dr. Shah Sawar. This initiative will ensure needy individuals receive lifesaving medicines without a cost burden. Dr. Shah Sawar also briefed the Minister on the newly launched Executive Clinic that utilizes cutting-edge technologies to expand access to specialized cardiac care. Mr. Faisal Khan briefed the Minister on how the new Telemedicine Services leverage technology to provide remote care. Other attendees included Chairman BoG, Medical Director Dr. Shehzad Akbar, Director Admin Dr. Sherzaman and Dr. Muhammad Shah. In his address, the Health Minister commended the vision of establishing these projects aimed at fulfilling the government's goal of equitable healthcare for all. He praised the diligent efforts of Dr. Shah Sawar and the staff in overcoming challenges through innovation.

## KP Govt to utilize receipts from oil, gas on concerned districts

**F.P. Report**  
PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to further improve the production bonus guidelines issued for the better utilization of the receipts in the districts with oil and gas production capacity and to involve the district administrations of the respective districts in the consultation process for the purpose. Work has been started on forming committees for the utilization of using the income from oil and gas reserves discovered in Dera Ismail Khan and North Waziristan in the development process in the respective districts so that the population related to the natural resources of oil and gas could be benefited to maximum extent. In this connection, the Energy and Power Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in light of the instructions of the KP Chief Minister organized a one-day consultative seminar in a local hotel regarding the improvement of the guidelines of production bonus funds in the oil and gas producing districts here on Thursday. The special guest at the seminar was Tashfeen Haider, Special Secretary Energy and Power while Additional Secretary Oil and Gas Akhlaq Ahmed, Deputy Secretaries Asif Ali, Javed Afridi and the representative of companies working for the production of oil and gas, Mari Petroleum, Al Haj Petroleum Companies, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Oil and Gas Company and district administration were also present in the consultation seminar. Speaking on this occasion, Special Secretary Tashfeen Haider said that out of the total national crude oil production 42 percent of the about 30,000 barrels of oil per day, is being produced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that oil and gas are produced at 16 places in the southern districts of the province, Kohat, Karak, Hangu and Lakki Marwat, earning receipts to the tune of billions of rupees for the province in the form of royalties and federal excise duty. Tashfeen further said that KP Energy department is determined to increase the production capacity of oil and gas to usher development and economic stability in the province. On this occasion, the Additional Secretary Akhlaq Ahmed Khan said that after the discovery of oil and gas in Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan and North Waziristan, the provincial government has started work on forming committees under consultation to improve production guidelines bonuses. The development funds will be utilized in a transparent manner through the local representation of these districts. Meanwhile, a group discussion was also organized to include the consultation and suggestions of the seminar participants. At the end of the seminar, Special Secretary Tashfeen Haider said that a dashboard including members of district administration, Energy & Power, Planning and Development and Finance Departments to be made soon.

## PESCO feeder forced to resume supply: Spokesman

**F.P. Report**  
PESHAWAR (APP): Spokesperson of Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) has said that political activist Malik Shohab along with a mob forcibly entered the Rehman Baba Grid Station last night and resumed power supply from Kachori Feeder. The PESCO spokesperson alleged that the protesters manhandled the PESCO staff and forced to restore the power supply from the Kachori Feeder which registers more than 83 percent losses due to electricity theft and non-payment of dues. The spokesperson added that forcibly activating the feeder affected the electricity supply to other feeders, causing inconvenience to the public. PESCO has announced that legal action was being taken against Malik Shohab and other protesters to prevent such incidents in the future. This incident is a recent example of public discontent regarding electricity issues and their resolution in Peshawar. The PESCO spokesperson has appealed to the public to try to resolve issues legally and avoid actions that could cause difficulties for ordinary citizens.





## In brief

### Govt jobs sold in KP: PPP F.P. Report

KARAK: Information Secretary Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Women's Wing Meher Sultana advocate has said that there is a government job market in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa based on scale, the corruption market is hot everywhere in the province, which journalists are threatened for exposing. Free press is being stifled. Many journalists in the merged districts are forced to leave the area due to threats. Ala Ali Amin Gandapur, he added that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is afraid of free press in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Yes, PPP is with journalists against atrocities on journalists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PPP believes in the freedom of the press and will not allow suppression of journalism, institutions and parliament should play a role for the protection and freedom of journalists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, she claimed.

### 2 alleged drug dealers held F.P. Report

SHAHADAKOT: Police arrested two alleged drug dealers and recovered contrabands from their possession on intelligence report, on Thursday. According to details, after arresting the accused drug dealer Dildar Chandio, seized 500 from his possession and registered case at Mirokhan police station. Even in the second operation, SHO Mirokhan police station, based on the secret information from resources, action from Mirokhan police on Sajawal road. Moreover, another drug dealer Farman Chandio and recovering 500 grams of hashish from his possession, case crime no. FIR#59/2024 u/s 9b CNSA of PS Mirokhan. It has been registered while further investigation is being done on the arrested drug dealer suspects.

### Two killed in firing

NANKANA SAHIB (INP): Two people were in firing of armed man after verbal clash over petty issue here on Thursday, police said. According to details, the incident took place in Thatta Khurlan area Syedwala police station jurisdiction where exchange of word hot words took place which purchase of house items from a shop. Firing after verbal clash led to death of two people including Mubbashir and Asif. The bodies were shifted to hospital for postmortem and police after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest culprits.

### Man killed in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD (INP): Unidentified armed bandits shot dead the owner of a general store over resistance in dacoity in the limits of Batala Colony police, here on Thursday. According to the police, the outlaws entered the Husnain General Store near a dispensary in the Batala Colony area and started looting money from the store. In the meantime, the owner Muhammad Hafeez, son of Muhammad Siddique, offered resistance.

### Youth convention organized F.P. Report

HANGU: A youth convention organized in Hangu expressed the commitment to contribute to the country's development. The participants praised the role of Pakistan Army in various fields including education, development and security.

# Civil society hold peace march at Mingora city

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The civil society have launched a peace march against possible military operation and terrorism from Mingora city while lawyers, political and social figures and traders participated and chanted slogans in favor of their demands.

According to details, the protesters blocked all traffic at Mingora's Nishat Chowk and held white flags and banners. City Mayor Shahid Ali Khan addressed the peace marchers and said that the people of Swat have always supported the federal government, but the federal government's decision to launch an operation is unilateral.

Shahid Ali Khan said that there is complete peace in Malakand Division, and no operation is needed. The people of Swat have suffered greatly due to terrorism and military operations, and they will not tolerate any more bloodshed. The march is proof that the people of Swat are not ready for any possible operation.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Forests, Environment, Climate Change, and Wildlife, Fazal Hakem Khan Yusufzai, also addressed the march and said that Swat is famous worldwide for its natural beauty and pleasant weather. He vowed to protect the peace in Swat at all costs. The people of Swat have made immense sacri-

fices for peace and will not let it be sabotaged again. He warned that if Swat's peace is disrupted again, the entire country will be shut down.

The minister announced that protests will also be held in other districts of the Malakand Division, including Buner, Shangla, Lower Dir, Upper Dir, Chitral, Malakand, and Bajaur. Fazal Hakeem Khan Yousafzai said that all members of the national and provincial assemblies from Malakand Division, including Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, are supporting this peace movement and he does not agree with any operation in Malakand Division and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## NAC hold protest against transfer of nursing officer

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Nursing Action Committee (NAC) members in Mardan Medical Complex hospital on Thursday held protest demonstration against the transfer of their nursing officer on political base and declared the transfer act as illegal and immoral. A large number of nursing staff gathered in front of press building with the purpose to hold protest demonstration against the political base transfer of the nursing officer identified as Qaiser Iqbal.

The protesters including both male and female nursing staff were carrying banners and placards inscribed with relevant condemnation and criticizing notes as well as with notes about provision of their due rights.

Talking on the occasion, office-bearers of Nursing Action Committee including chairman Hakeem Khan, vice-chairman Ismail Khan and Nusrat Ali alleged that the PTI parliamentarians MNA Muhammad Atif Khan and MPA Abdus Salam Afridi were behind the act of political-base transfer of nursing officer.

NAC blamed that the PTI provincial assembly member Abdus Salam Khan Afridi had written letter on his own letter-pad to relevant authorities to

transfer the said nursing officer. They also alleged that the PTI MNA Muhammad Atif Khan was backing the MPA in the transfer issue. They claimed that the transfer act was sheer illegal and immoral as the said nursing officer had been performing his duty as the rules and regulations with his full honesty and sincerity.

They deplored that they were protesting the said transfer act for the last ten days but parliamentarians of the ruling PTI party was not taking matter as serious. They threatened that they would hold protest sittings in front of the residences of MNA Muhammad Atif Khan and MPA Abdus Salam Afridi if they did not take back the transfer order of the nursing officer.

When this journalist contacted the MPA Abdus Salam Afridi for his comments in this regard, he rejected the allegations and declared it as totally baseless and incorrect. He said that legally, a government employee could work on one place for period of three years but the said nursing officer posted for eight years on one same place. He said that he legally acted to transfer the nursing officer. MPA blamed that those nursing staff who were protesting against the transfer, they were actually

belonged to mafia network within the nursing community who had taken control of the relevant affairs. He said that they were working for their self-interest instead of national and peoples' interests.

**Admn installs air coolers at juvenile barracks:** Central Jail Mardan administration provided air coolers to prisoners and staff to help them cope with the intense heatwave, on Thursday.

Superintendent Mardan Jail Najam Abbasi said that the initiative is taken for the first time in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and claimed that various officers of the jail personally arranged installation of air coolers in the barracks of juvenile prisoners and other inmates.

The superintendent said that providing facilities to prisoners is the top priority of the jail administration and claimed that opportunities for skill development and education is also provided to inmate, so that they can lead a respectable life after their release.

He appreciated the efforts of the jail's staff, including Deputy Superintendent Rizwan Shah, Shaukat Ali, and Line Officer Sardar Sajid Hussain, and directed them to take measures to provide all kinds of facilities to the prisoners.



QUETTA: Chief Minister of Balochistan, Sarfraz Bugti meeting with Kasi tribe newly elected head Nawab Senator Arabab Omer Farooq.

## Under-construction hockey facility inspected

F.P. Report

BUNER: Adviser to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jahan Bacha paid surprise visit to under-construction hockey ground and sports gymnasium at Swari bazaar, on Thursday. The CM Aide inspected the under-construction work. He also inspected the proposed land site for the district level youth center to be established. On this occasion, Deputy Director Youth Affairs, District Sports Officer, other relevant officers and revenue officials were also present.

The CM Aide has asked to speeded up the work on Sports Gymnasium. He directed and given instruc-

tions that the construction work should be completed according to the required high standard. He asked the responsible officers to complete the ongoing sports projects without interruption and speed up so that the local youth can have opportunities for sports and entertainment as soon as possible.

He confided during visiting the proposed site for setting up the youth center in Buner that the youth center will be established on the land owned by the sports department and proper demarcation of suitable land has also been done. He also issued instructions to the concerned authorities to decide the next steps to start this project soon. While talking to the media, the

Youth and Sports Adviser has said that the purpose of establishing the Jawan Markaz (Youth Center) is to help the youth in KPK districts and including newly merged districts as well.

The advisor argued keeping in mind the challenges and opportunities faced by youth the government is committed to support them. He claimed these youth centers have the necessary infrastructure, educational facilities, entrepreneurship incubation centers, IT labs, collective working space for start-ups, youth assemblies and recreational facilities at one place. He shared these facilities are designed to keep young people moving, learning and connecting with each other, he concluded.



CHITRAL: Deputy Speaker, KP Assembly, Suraya Bibi interacting with patients during her visit to DHQ Hospital, Booni.

## Rescue 1122 prepared for flood disaster

Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: District Emergency Officer (DEO) Rescue 1122 Nowshera Malak Ishfaq Hussain inspected preparation for upcoming monsoon to cope with any emergency situation, on Thursday.

According to details, all Rescue 1122 personnel of Nowshera are ready to deal with possible flooding. District Emergency Officer visited Rescue Station 11 to review the preparedness of drivers and disaster teams.

In light of the directives of Director General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rescue 1122 Dr. Muhammad Ayaz Khan, boats, divers, and other necessary equipment have been provided across the district. DEO has issued a high alert to all Rescue 1122 officers to be prepared 24/7 to deal with any unpleasant situation. In case of any emergency or accident, call the Rescue toll-free number 1122.

## Rescue 1122 official visits Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Regional Director Rescue 1122 North Arshad Iqbal on the instructions of Director General Dr Mohammad Ayaz Khan, paid a surprise visit to the district office and control of Rescue 1122 at Timergara in Lower Dir here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion Arshad Iqbal said that the purpose of the visit was to ensure the provision of rescue services to the public as per international standards. Rescue 1122 district emergency officer Ibrar Ali briefed the official about the services provided by his organisation. The visiting officer was given a warm welcome by the entire staff of Rescue 1122 Lower Dir.

The Regional Director North Arshad Iqbal conducted a detailed inspection of the attendance, discipline, fire vehicles, disaster vehicles, ambulances and emergency equipment and medicines of all the rescue personnel. He said that Rescue 1122 was always ready to provide international style services to protect the life and property of people. He said that people in need could call 1122 free of charge for immediate help in case of emergency. He directed the staff to perform their duties with utmost care and devotion to humanity.

## Flour prices increase

FAISALABAD (INP): The Owners of wheat crushing machines have hiked flour prices, causing significant concern among citizens. Just last week, flour was priced at Rs 90 per kg at mills, but within three days, prices soared by Rs 20 per kg, reaching Rs 110 per kg.

Attributing the price surge to the unavailability of official flour quotas, mill owners explained that they are compelled to purchase wheat from the general market, where escalating prices are pushing up flour costs. They noted a daily increase of Rs 500 per ton in wheat prices, leading to market instability and subsequent hikes in flour rates. Citizens expressed frustration, lamenting the sudden affordability challenge for a staple food item.

## ANP: Govt, Opp failed to redress public issues

Anees Takar

MARDAN: Haji Abdul Aziz Khan, the provincial leader of the Awami National Party (ANP) and former candidate for PK-56, has lambasted both the government and opposition for their failure to address the pressing issues faced by the public. He accused them of playing a "musical chair" game, where they are only concerned with their own interests and power struggles, while the people suffer.

Speaking to media representatives at his office, Khan said that the province, particularly Mardan, has been left in a state of neglect with parliamentarians only focusing on their own offices and commissions. He pointed

out that each member of the assembly has received millions of funds, but the public has seen no benefit from it.

Khan also criticized the recent general elections, calling them a "drama" that was staged to deceive the public. He said that the ANP is a people's movement that will not be limited to elections alone, but will continue to fight for the rights of the people.

He appealed to political opponents to work together to resolve public issues, asking them why they had failed to deliver despite being in power for the third time. He also urged parliamentarians to complete the development projects initiated by the ANP in Mardan, which is the second-largest district in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa. Khan assured party workers that they should not be discouraged, as the ANP believes in public service and will soon launch welfare projects under the auspices of the Bacha Khan Trust in Mardan. He said that the party's struggle is not limited to elections, but is a continuous movement for the rights of the people.

The ANP leader's remarks came at a time when the public is increasingly disillusioned with the political system and the failure of elected representatives to address their concerns. Khan's statements are seen as a call to action for politicians to put aside their differences and work together for the betterment of the people.

## Govt commits for revolutionizing agriculture

F.P. Report

HAFAZABAD: The government is taking all possible measures to ensure agriculture revolution in the country while the Punjab government is giving Rs. 300 billion subsidies to farmers for increasing per acre agriculture yield and improving socio-economic condition of growers to achieve the target of agriculture revolution and self-reliance in food production.

This was stated by Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Imtiaz Ali Baig while distributing prizes among

position holders of Grow More Wheat Competition. Deputy Director Agriculture Hafizabad Muhammad Yousaf, Agriculture officers Fraz Hussain, Dr. Waqas Ahmad and farmers attended the Prize Distribution Ceremony.

Talib Hussain of village Wadaray grabbed first position to busy 59 mends per acre wheat, Khazar Hayyat of village Ahmad Pur Chathab get second position to grow 55 mends wheat and Falik Sher of village Jalalpur Bhattian occupied third position to grow 54 mends per acre wheat

production in the Grow More Wheat Competition.

ADCR Imtiaz Ali Baig gave away Cheque amounting Rs. 3 lakh, Rs.2 lakh and one lakh or rupees to Talib Hussain, Khazar Hayyat and Falik Sher respectively. He also said that farmers could enhance per acre agriculture production to use standard seeds, fertilizers and latest agriculture technology. ADC further said that farmers got record wheat production to use latest agriculture technology, quality seed, proportional fertilizers and implement on advisory of agriculture experts.

## Immediate ban on deforestation needed

Nusrat Bibi

**EACH green plant, tree etc. has infinite worth in a forest in terms of preserving habitats and food chain for biodiversity, wildlife and ultimately for human beings. Forest continuously renews itself naturally in a cyclic way, new greenery is grown and weaker dead flora is consumed by microorganism internally in their food chain paradigm. Hence any man-made intervention disrupts this natural cycle seriously.**

Since, one year our precious forest is on slaughter unbelievably from the forest department hierarchy, the guards of forest. The masked network of wood mafia has flourished their businesses with bleeding forest under the logo of "fire tree for Scientific Management". Thousand live green trees were cut down throughout KP under this cover and our government still recommends field monitoring of the forest cutting to justify the notorious Scientific Management, despite the authentic sources of information and live videos of green trees cutting and clearing of the forest have been displayed even on social media, which will further delay the process of imposing a total ban on forest cutting, surprisingly is a total national dilemma.

Centuries old trees were cut down within seconds with the fast blades tree killing machines.

Biodiversity and wildlife are the immediate sufferers and communities are crying for losing their livelihood and their survival in intense climate and weather patterns is on stack.

Similarly, our country is on high alert both from drought and flash flooding but the anti-country wood Mafia is busy in "clearing forest mission" in KP and our government is helpless to immediately ban deforestation. What a selfish and greedy attitude of this Mafia! They are national menace and a threat to the stability of our region and must be dealt with heavy penalties.

As Forest works in a cyclic way so there is no need of cutting dead trees and planting new trees as these old trees are consumed internally in a food chain in the forest ecosystem. Similarly, older trees are worthier in terms of biodiversity and habitats preservation, buffer zone provision in watershed and flood mitigation, heritage, in scenic vista for ecotourism and have millions other benefits give to this universe.

In addition to, forest renews itself automatically in very organized way, a new tree is grown naturally before a dead tree is fallen but in KP's deforestation, forest was cleared totally, which has weakened their claim of justifying deforestation in the Scientific Management of forest. Therefore, the Scientific Management logo should be banned immediately

now along with its tree killer machines.

Hence a Forest Protection Act should be passed on national level in which the forest and the forest resources should be safeguarded and all the trees cutting machinery and the wood processing machines should be licensed immediately. A permit system throughout the country should be implemented on the sale, purchase and keeping such machinery. Similarly trees cutting along with guilty persons, machinery and vehicles used in carrying the cut wood should be regulated in the country. Likewise, the export of wood from country should be enforced with heavy penalty and life time imprisonment of the guilty persons.

Similarly, the government should change the market strategy in encouraging wood recycling, sale on old wood products and furniture in the country. Increasing the prices of virgin wood products and decreasing the prices of recycled and old products will fix the demand and supply of wood. Promoting recycled and old wood products can break the wood Mafia chain of businesses while keeping the forest and its resources in balanced form. Another important market strategy can be replacement of wood products with plastic, iron, steel and rubber through which our forests can be saved forever.





# India likely undercounting heat deaths

BENGALURU, India (AP): Months of scorching temperatures sometimes over 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) in parts of India this year - its worst heat wave in over a decade - left hundreds dead or ill. But the official number of deaths listed in government reports barely scratches the surface of the true toll and that's affecting future preparations for similar swelters, according to public health experts.

India now has a bit of respite from the intense heat, and a different set of extreme weather problems as monsoon rain lashes the northeast, but for months the extreme heat took a toll on large swaths of the country, particularly in northern India, where government officials reported at least 110 heat-related deaths. Public health experts say the true number of heat-related deaths is likely in the thousands but because heat is often not listed as a reason on a death certificate many heat deaths don't get counted in official figures. The worry, they say, is that undercounting the deaths means the heat wave problem isn't as prioritized as it should be, and officials are missing out on ways to prepare their residents for the scorching temperatures.

All of India's warmest years on record have been in the last decade. Studies by public health experts found that up to 1,116 people have died every year between 2008 and 2019

due to heat. Difficulties registering heat deaths

As part of his work in public health, Srinath Reddy, the founder of the Public Health Foundation of India, has advised state governments on how to factor in heat when recording deaths. He found that as a result of "incomplete reporting, delayed reporting and misclassification of deaths," heat-related deaths are significantly undercounted around the country. Despite national guidelines for recording deaths, many doctors - especially those in overcrowded public hospitals where resources are already strained - don't follow it, he said.

"Most doctors just record the immediate cause of death and attribution to environmental triggers like heat are not recorded," Reddy said. That's because heat deaths can be classified as exertional or non-exertional: Exertional is when a person dies due to direct exposure to high temperatures and non-exertional is when young children, older people or people with pre-existing health conditions become seriously ill or sometimes die from the heat, even if indoors. "The heatwave is the final straw for the second category of people," said Dileep Mavalankar, former head of the Indian Institute of Public Health in Gandhinagar. "Most people dying during heat waves belong to this category but their deaths are not

recorded as connected to the heat." Mavalankar agreed the official number of heat deaths this year is an undercount. He said there were 40,000 recorded case of heat stroke, but only 110 deaths. "This is just 0.3% of the total number of heatstroke cases recorded, but usually heat deaths should be 20 to 30% of heatstroke cases," he said.

"We need to be counting deaths better," Mavalankar said. "That is the only way we will know how severe the consequences of extreme heat are." Planning for future heat In his former role at the Indian Institute of Public Health in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, Mavalankar was instrumental in developing India's first-ever heat action plan for the city of Ahmedabad in 2013, three years after more than 1,300 people died there during a heat wave.

The heat plan included measures like increasing access to shaded areas for outdoor workers, converting relatively cool public buildings to temporary shelters for people without homes or access to electricity and ensuring hospitals have adequate medical supplies and staff during heat waves. In the years that followed, Mavalankar and his team studied the impact of the heat plan by counting death tolls in subsequent hot summers. Because of a lack of data on heat deaths specifically, the team looked at deaths from all causes, which spikes during heat



waves, and used the number of excess deaths to determine how many deaths were likely caused by heat.

They estimate that the heat action plan had helped reduce the number of fatalities during heat waves by up to 40%.

Having that data, while imperfect, Mavalankar said, allowed the city to adequately prepare itself for extreme heat, and do more of what worked in the future. But he said the lack of data elsewhere makes it difficult to replicate the results in Ahmedabad on a national level. "Not reporting these

deaths, sharing data, is like the Indian Meteorological Department not sharing weather data," he said. "We can easily do this across the country but we've not decided that we should do it." Improving government data The Indian government collects data on heat-related deaths through the health ministry's National Centre for Disease Control which is then shared with the National Disaster Management Agency. The agency then shares the data as a total nationwide figure for the year, but a state by state breakdown is not publicly available.

The National Crime Records Bureau also collects heat-related death data as part of their accounting of deaths due to "forces of nature" and publishes those figures. But there are huge discrepancies. In 2020, the last year with publicly available data on heat deaths from both official sources, the crime records bureau recorded 530 deaths from heatstroke, but the disaster agency reported just four heat-related deaths. The Associated Press contacted India's health ministry spokesperson, the NCDC and the NDMA to comment on the discrepancy but did not receive a response.

Getting better data can answer a whole host of questions about who is most vulnerable and how best to help them, said Bharghav Krishna, a public health expert and a fellow at the Sustainable Futures Collaborative thinktank, "especially with respect to identifying who is dying, where they're dying, what are they doing when they're dying." Krishna thinks that the data currently collected, while inadequate, can at least provide some insight for policymakers and researchers and force at least some action if it's shared with the right people. But Malavankar said the issues of data collection are more systemic, and that needs to be urgently addressed. "We have not done a national census since 2011, not having numbers is our national weakness," he said.

## Pay rise freeze for Kenyan MPs after public anger

NAIROBI (BBC): Proposed pay rises for members of Kenya's cabinet and parliament will not happen after President William Ruto ordered a review of the plans following public outcry. It comes a week after mass protests forced Mr Ruto to drop a controversial finance bill that had included tax hikes.

Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC) Chairperson Lyn Mengich said the commission would "freeze" the salary increases for state officers due to "the current realities of the economy". Initially the SRC had recommended a pay increase of 2% and 5% for all state officials, including judges. People began questioning how the the salaries of politicians, including governors, could be raised when there was a supposed financial crisis.

The U-turn came after discussions with the National Treasury, said Ms Mengich. Last year the SRC issued a notice, proposing that the increases take effect from the beginning of this month. But Public Service Minister Moses Kuria said he would not implement the increases

"as applies" to the cabinet. Mr Ruto abandoned plans to increase taxes after protesters complained they could not afford to pay them as they were already hit by the sharp increase in the cost of living. Many said the government should first reduce spending, which President Ruto has vowed to do. Several lawmakers - including Aaron Cheruiyot, a senator from the ruling coalition - have called for parliament to reject the pay increase.

Adan Keynan, an opposition party MP allied with the government, expressed a similar view, saying the proposed increase was "tone-deaf". And opposition senator Edwin Sifuna said higher salaries could not be justified "when the whole country is saying we need to lessen the taxpayer burden". Samuel Njoroge, clerk of the National Assembly, told the People Daily newspaper that the SRC's recommendation could not be overturned as they affected all state officers. "The changes are normal salary reviews or increments in any organisation," he was quoted as saying. But Mr Ruto has asked the treasury to review the

notice.

"The president has emphasised that this is a time, more than ever before, for the executive and all arms of government to live within their means," a statement by his spokesman said.

Last week's protests, led by young people, were the biggest in Kenya since Mr Ruto took office in 2022.

The demonstrations have since morphed into calls for his resignation and demands that the security forces face justice over the killing of protesters. It is estimated by the state-funded rights commission that 39 people have been killed in the demonstrations over the last two weeks. The protests appeared to degenerate into anarchy as shops and supermarkets were looted. Police have published images of 38 people wanted for "engaging in lawlessness". Some of the young Kenyans linked to organising the protests alleged that hired "goons" had infiltrated the demonstrations. They said they were reassessing their strategy and were even thinking of calling off the protests altogether.s

## World's oldest artwork discovered

JAKARTA (AFP): Scientists have discovered what they believe to be the world's oldest artwork - depicting three people gathered around a large red pig - in a cave on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. Research published indicates the painting was created some 51,200 years ago.

"This is the oldest evidence of storytelling," Maxime Aubert, an archaeologist at Australia's Griffith University and co-author of a new study published in Nature, told the AFP news agency. Aubert was part of the team that identified the previous record holder, a picture of a warty pig thought to be at least 45,500 years old.

The latest discovery, found inside the Leang Karampuang cave in the Maros-Pangkep region of South Sulawesi, is in poor condition. It shows three people around a wild pig, measuring 92cm by 38cm (36 inches by 15 inches), in a single shade of dark red pigment. There are other images of pigs in the cave as well.

"The juxtaposition of the figures - how they are positioned in relation to each other - and the manner in which they are interacting - were clearly deliberate, and it conveys an unmistakable sense of action. There is something happening between these figures. A story is being told. Obviously, we don't know what that story was," said Griffith University archaeologist Adam Brumm, another of the study's authors. Aubert speculated that the paintings were probably made by the first group of humans who moved through Southeast Asia before arriving in Australia about 65,000 years ago. "It's probably just a matter of time before we find samples that are older," Aubert added.

Previously, the first narrative art was thought to have emerged in Europe. The date given for the Indonesian cave art is "quite provocative" because it is so much older than what has been found elsewhere, including in Europe, said Chris Stringer, an anthropologist at London's Natural History Museum. Stringer, who was not involved in the research, said the experienced team's findings looked sound but needed to be confirmed by further dating.

"In my view, this find reinforces the idea that representational art was first produced in Africa, before 50,000 years ago, and the concept spread as our species spread," he told AFP. "If that is true, much new supporting evidence from other areas including Africa has yet to emerge."

## Ukraine calls them meat assaults: Russia's brutal plan to take ground

KYIV (BBC): On the frontlines, Ukrainian soldiers use a graphic term to describe the Russian tactics they face daily. They call them "meat assaults": waves of Russian soldiers coming at their defensive positions, sometimes nearly a dozen times in a day. Lt Col Anton Bayev of the Khartia Brigade of Ukraine's National Guard says wave after wave can arrive in just a few hours at frontlines positions north of Kharkiv.

"The Russians use these units in most cases purely to see where our firing equipment is located, and to constantly exhaust our units," he said. "Our guys stand in positions and fight, and when four or five waves of the enemy come at you in a day, which you have to destroy without end, it is very difficult - not only physically, but also psychologically." This tactic has led to staggering Russian casualties since Moscow launched its latest offensive two months ago. Around 1,200 Russian soldiers were being killed or wounded every day in May and June, the highest rate since the beginning of the war, according to Western officials.

Those attacking are normally quickly spotted by drones above and the Russians leave their dead and wounded on the battlefield, Lt Col Bayev says. "Their main task is simply meat assaults and our total exhaustion." The tactic is a sign that Russia is seeking to make the most of its key advantage - numbers. In Pokrovsk in the Donetsk region, Captain Ivan Sekach from Ukraine's 110th Brigade compares what he sees to a conveyor belt bringing Russians to be killed, although still allowing

them to push forward slowly. Russia benefits from a significantly larger population than Ukraine. Some of those in the assaults are former prisoners, but Russia is also able to recruit through making one-off payments, sometimes thousands of dollars. And there have been complaints from the Russian side about "crippled regiments", in which wounded soldiers are forced back into fighting. One video shows dozens of men, some on crutches, appealing to their commanders because they say they are wounded and require hospital treatment, but instead are being sent back into combat. All of this, Western officials say, means Moscow can keep throwing soldiers, even if poorly trained, straight on to the front lines at the same rate they are being killed or wounded.

Ukraine could not match the Russian tactics even if it had the numbers, partly due to a different attitude towards casualties. A senior general was removed in recent weeks after complaints he was using what are often called Soviet tactics - throwing people at the front lines. "There are a lot of criticisms because we have lost a lot of our guys because of Soviet-type mindset and strategy," says Ivan Stupak, a former Security Service officer. "We are limited with manpower. We have no other options than thinking of our people." In the area around Kharkiv, Russian advances have been stopped. But in the east, Russia's attritional approach is making slow but steady advances. "Unfortunately there are a lot of Russians. And they are trying to conduct this rolling operation centimetre

by centimetre, inch by inch, 100m per day, 200m per day. And unfortunately, it's successful for them," says Stupak. There is frustration in Kyiv about the pace of Western support. One senior official complains they are receiving enough help to ensure they do not lose but not enough to make sure they win.

Western officials acknowledge 2024 has been a tough year for Ukraine, with delays in the arrival of US military aid creating a major strain on defences which has cost territory and lives. "It seems like a so-called incremental approach," Oleksandr Merezhko, chair of Ukraine's parliamentary foreign affairs committee, told the BBC. "We receive little by little, and I get the impression that our Western allies give a little bit of weaponry, and they see what happens next, as if they're afraid of what they refer to as escalation." The lifting of restrictions on using US weapons over the border into Russia has made a difference and helped stall Moscow's assault on Kharkiv. "If we have to fight with our hands tied behind our back, you know we'll be only bleeding to death," says Mr Merezhko. "That's why it's crucially important to be allowed to use long range missiles in the territory of Russia, and we already have results."

But a Ukrainian official said the use of longer range strikes into Russia had only been a palliative and was not fundamentally altering the dynamic of the war. "We are driving towards stalemate," former security service officer Ivan Stupak says, acknowledging that this may lead eventually to the "bitter pill" of some form of negotiation.

## 7 arrested on suspicion of committing war crimes in Syria

COPENHAGEN (AP): At least seven people have been arrested in Germany and Sweden on suspicion of committing crimes against humanity and war crimes in Syria in 2012-2014, authorities in the two countries said.

In a coordinated effort that also involved the European Union judicial cooperation agency Eurojust, the EU police agency Europol, and several other unnamed European countries, four were arrested in Germany and three in Sweden. The German federal prosecutor said that those arrested in Germany were "strongly suspected of killing and attempting to kill civilians." Some of those arrested also were suspected of torture.

The four arrested in Germany are known only as Jihad A., Mahmoud A., Sameer S. and Wael S., and had been affiliated with the Free Palestine Movement, an armed militia in Syria, since early 2011. German prosecutors did not give their last names in line with privacy rules. Sweden did not identify the three it arrested. At the time, the militia exercised control over Damascus' mostly Palestinian district of al-Yarmouk on behalf of the Syrian regime, Germany's federal prosecutor said. Since July 2013, the Syrian regime had cordoned off the area completely, resulting in a shortage of food, water, and medical supplies.

Among other crimes, all suspects allegedly participated in the violent crackdown of a peaceful anti-government protest in al-Yarmouk on July 13, 2012, severely damaged on Union Island, which is part of St Vincent and the Grenadines. Parts of Jamaica earlier experienced disruption to power and electricity supplies, with the Jamaica Public Service Company (JPS) saying it was forced to pause restoration of power lines in some locations for the safety of their workers. In a news briefing, the NHC's director, Dr Michael Brennan, said Jamaica would experience "devastating hurricane force winds". Rainfall in some parts of the country could hit 12in (30cm), potentially leading to flooding and mudslides, the director explained, while life-threatening storm surges as high as 9ft (2.7m) above tide

level are also expected. "Everybody in Jamaica needs to be in their safe place and be prepared to stay there for at least the next 12 hours," Dr Brennan warned. The BBC's Nick Davis said Jamaicans had been rushing to supermarkets earlier in the week to get "as much as they could as quickly as they could". Jamaica's Information Minister Dana Morris Dixon said the island had 900 shelters to house people who needed to leave their homes.

In Venezuela, Hurricane Beryl brought heavy rains which caused a river to overflow in the northern state of Sucre. Three people died and several are still missing.

J. is a Syrian national. The four were arrested in Berlin, in Frankenthal and near Boizenburg, in southwestern and northeast Germany, respectively. The home of another suspect, whose name was not given and who was not arrested, was searched in the western city of Essen.

They are due to be brought before an investigating judge at the Federal Court of Justice, who will read out their arrest warrants and decide on pre-trial detention. The arraignment will take place, the prosecutor's statement said. In Sweden, the Prosecution Authority gave no details regarding those arrested. The prosecution authority said it must be decided before noon Saturday whether they should be detained or released.

## Hurricane Beryl batters south coast of Jamaica

JAMAICA (BBC): A powerful hurricane has hit Jamaica with heavy winds and rain, damaging buildings and felling trees on the Caribbean island. Beryl - a category four storm with winds of up to 130mph (215km/h) - struck the island's southern coast. Photos on social media show flooded streets and roofs being blown off.

At least seven people have been killed so far as the storm sweeps through the Caribbean. "It's terrible. Everything's gone. I'm in my house and scared," Amoy Wellington, resident of a rural farming community in the southern St Elizabeth parish, was quoted as saying by Reuters news agency. "It's a disaster."

A hurricane warning is in effect in Jamaica, where the authorities have imposed a curfew from 06:00 to 18:00 local time (11:00-23:00 GMT). Prime Minister Andrew Holness earlier urged people to "take this hurricane seriously". "If you live in a low-lying area, an area historically prone to flooding and landslide, or if you live on the banks of a river or a gully, I implore you to evacuate to a shelter or to safer ground," he said. Three people died in Grenada, where it first made landfall, one in St Vincent and the Grenadines, and another three in northern Venezuela, which was hit by strong winds and flooding. About 90% of homes were destroyed or

severely damaged on Union Island, which is part of St Vincent and the Grenadines. Parts of Jamaica earlier experienced disruption to power and electricity supplies, with the Jamaica Public Service Company (JPS) saying it was forced to pause restoration of power lines in some locations for the safety of their workers. In a news briefing, the NHC's director, Dr Michael Brennan, said Jamaica would experience "devastating hurricane force winds". Rainfall in some parts of the country could hit 12in (30cm), potentially leading to flooding and mudslides, the director explained, while life-threatening storm surges as high as 9ft (2.7m) above tide

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In Venezuela, Hurricane Beryl brought heavy rains which caused a river to overflow in the northern state of Sucre. Three people died and several are still missing.

## Indonesia dismisses chief election commissioner

JAKARTA (AP): Indonesia's electoral commission fired its chairman after finding him guilty of sexual assault following a complaint by an employee. The General Election Commission's ethics council said its chairman, Hasyim Asyari, committed the assault in October and it had

accepted the accuser's complaint "entirely."

The woman, identified only by her initials, worked at the commission's office in The Hague, Netherlands, where she said Asyari during his visit asked her to come to his hotel room. The commission said in the ruling that Asyari "was proven to have

used his power and misuse of state facilities to fulfill his personal desires." In April, another woman filed a complaint of sexual harassment against Asyari, and the ethics council sanctioned him with a "stern warning." The latest accuser attended the hearing at the commission in the capital, Jakarta. It

was unclear whether the woman plans to file a case with the police.

"From the beginning until now I have experienced a lot of ups and downs," she told reporters after the ruling. "I want to inspire all victims in similar cases to be brave, especially women, to challenge or fight for justice."



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## Palestinian space being squeezed

WITH Israel's war in Gaza creating an ever-worsening humanitarian disaster and drawing ire and opposition from the world, the Jewish state's latest land appropriation in the occupied West Bank will only stoke Palestinian animosity and trigger condemnation worldwide.

Peace Now, an Israel-based settlement watchdog, reportedly said on Wednesday that the Israeli authorities have approved the appropriation of 12.7 square kilometers of land in the occupied West Bank, marking the largest single appropriation in about three decades. Israeli settlements in the West Bank have for years been a major obstacle for resolving the decades-long Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Palestinians view the settlements as preventing any possibility of a cohesive state and most members of the international community consider the settlements the main barrier to any lasting peace agreement.

Late last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the fighting against Hamas was "very close" to an end. But tension on the Israel-Lebanon border has subsequently flared higher, marking a dramatic turn in Israel's strategy and drawing growing worries that the conflict will spread beyond Gaza.

With the Israel-Hamas war drawing near to its 10th month, the Israeli authorities may feel compelled to adjust their strategy amid the mounting pressure from home and abroad. To date, the war has deprived the lives of more than 37,800 Palestinians in the Gaza strip, according to Hamas sources. Though being reluctant to scale down the military offensive in Gaza, Netanyahu may have already set his eyes on the post-Gaza conflict era, and the latest land theft in West Bank could be part of Israel's attempts to squeeze the space for the Palestinians. But such an approach will only result in a strong backlash.

Over 2 million people are living in what amounts to an open-air prison, without adequate access to water, electricity, food, medication, and fuel. This man-made humanitarian disaster and serious breach of international law must end, and Israel must heed the international community's call to ensure the rapid and safe entry of humanitarian supplies into Gaza. With the war in Gaza showing multiple signs of spilling over and involving more players in the region, Tel Aviv should exercise more restraint and stop making any irresponsible moves that may exacerbate confrontation and enmity with the Palestinian side. It should fulfill its obligations under international humanitarian law and fully implement United Nations Security Council resolutions on expanding humanitarian access and implementing an immediate cease-fire in Gaza. Influential players in the region, the United States in particular, should also use their arts of persuasion to convince Tel Aviv to implement the relevant UNSC resolutions so that a cease-fire can be realized.

## AI must be harnessed

THE four-day 2024 World Artificial Intelligence Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance opened in Shanghai on Thursday. The conference co-hosted by nine government ministries and agencies in collaboration with the Shanghai municipal government, stands as a premier platform for deliberating on the latest breakthroughs, hurdles, and prospects in the realm of artificial intelligence.

Reflecting the dual intentions of the event — to establish an open, inclusive, and equitable international platform for exchange and cooperation, and to facilitate comprehensive discussions on AI development, security, and governance issues across various sectors and stakeholders — the theme of the conference is "Governing AI for Good and for All".

This was stressed in his opening speech by Premier Li Qiang, who urged countries to adopt "more open mindsets" and promote international cooperation on AI, saying that "each country has its own advantages in its AI technology, data and market, so we should engage in mutual cooperation and join forces".

As the dedicated high-level meeting shows, being among the forerunners in global AI development, China is shouldering the responsibility of playing a leadership role in garnering broad participation for discussions aimed at reaching a consensus on AI governance through negotiation. As part of these efforts, it proposed a resolution on AI that was adopted at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Monday.

As Li said in his speech, AI is "common wealth" that can benefit all on the proviso that it is "safe, reliable and controllable" and the intelligence gap is bridged so that no country is left behind. At the same time, he warned that AI represents a "common challenge" that calls for countries to conduct in-depth discussions to build consensus on an international governance mechanism. A fragmented approach toward AI, and digital technology in general, "is not going to benefit anybody", he cautioned.

Calls for strengthened global AI governance have been rising since Shanghai hosted the first WAIC in 2018, as the rapid development of AI and its growing ubiquity in daily life have heightened concerns about the challenges and inherent risks associated with the technology, which, while having great capacity to serve the greater good, has the potential to cause great harm. Not to mention that the widening gap in AI technology between the developed countries and developing ones is aggravating the existing divide between the haves and have-nots.

With all this in mind, the WAIC and high-level meeting are public goods that China is providing with the aim of addressing the potential risks associated with AI, exploring its opportunities, and driving AI to empower global economic and social development for the benefit of all humanity.

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## US struggling to calm Israeli-Hezbollah tensions

Maria Maalouf

THIS week's exchange of rocket fire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, coupled with escalating clashes that have included the assassination of a prominent Hezbollah leader and the targeting of military and civilian targets in northern Israel, has caused American officials to worry that this escalation could push the war-torn region into a broader conflict.

Since Oct. 7, the Biden administration has been working diligently behind the scenes to reduce the chances of a war between Hezbollah and Israel, which could escalate into a regional war involving the US or expose American troops in Syria, Iraq and Jordan to greater risks.

The most notable US efforts to calm the ongoing tensions between Israel and Hezbollah included the visit of envoy Amos Hochstein to the region on June 18. In Israel, he met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. In Beirut, he met with Lebanese parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, acting Prime Minister Najib Mikati, the Lebanese army commander and other officials. He clarified that the US does not want an escalation and called for an end to the ongoing Israeli aggression on Lebanon, as well as the restoration of calm and stability at the latter's southern border. He pointed out that continuous Israeli threats to Lebanon would not prevent the US from seeking calm, which is a priority for it and all friends of Lebanon.

During his visit, Hochstein emphasized to both parties that the Biden administration wants to avoid further escalation into a larger war, pointing to the urgent need to restore security at the Lebanese-Israeli border and for residents to return to their homes. He added that the conflict along the border has lasted long enough and ending this conflict now would be in everyone's interest. He said this would be achievable through a diplomatic path if both parties agreed.

Simultaneously, the US

affirmed its provision of security support to Israel, which could serve as a deterrent to Hezbollah. American officials, including National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and White House Middle East Coordinator Brett McGurk, reassured a delegation of senior Israeli officials who visited Washington recently that, if a full-scale war broke out between Israel and Hezbollah, the Biden administration was fully prepared to support its ally, although it would not deploy American troops on the ground in such a scenario. These personal assurances came as cross-border attacks between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah increased, raising fears of another full-blown conflict in the Middle East.

Since the outbreak of the Israeli war on Gaza on Oct. 7, Hezbollah's provocations against Israel have continued, escalating in recent weeks. The Biden administration has repeatedly stated that it does not want another war on Israel's northern front and has urged de-escalation.

On June 24, the US administration presented a proposal that included a diplomatic solution to reduce tensions between Hezbollah and Israel, establishing a buffer zone on the border. The US is striving to reach an agreement between the two sides that includes Hezbollah's withdrawal from the border area and repositioning north of the Litani River, about 30 km away from the border with Israel. Hezbollah has rejected this option, insisting that its fight against Israel will continue until a ceasefire is implemented in Gaza. Israeli and American officials are trying to find an alternative that does not amount to a ceasefire in Gaza, which does not seem imminent.

American officials have expressed concern about several scenarios, believing that Israel's recent strikes inside Lebanese territory might be paving the way for a major offensive by the Israeli army and that Hezbollah might respond with larger rocket attacks on

Israel. These officials are increasingly worried that Israel could initiate a war against Hezbollah in Lebanon — a war Israel cannot end without American support.

Some officials are also concerned about the scale of Hezbollah's attacks, which could lead to unintended consequences, forcing Israel to respond and potentially triggering all-out war. An American official mentioned that Israeli forces in the northern command are training in brigade-sized units but are not yet in a position to start an offensive.

If a full-scale war breaks out between Israel and Hezbollah, the latter, as an Iran-backed armed group, could potentially overwhelm Israel's air defenses in the north, including the Iron Dome missile defense system. This would make full US support for Israel even more crucial. Furthermore, American officials are worried that, without a ceasefire in Gaza, the likelihood of war between Israel and Hezbollah will increase, significantly worsening the regional crisis and drawing the US deeper into the conflict.

The threat posed by Hezbollah to Israel, which is the most important US ally in the region, has become a significant political issue, with many Israelis who were evacuated from their homes in the north still displaced. The increasing cross-border attacks between Israel and Hezbollah make it difficult for the US to ease tensions in the region, especially if the Biden administration's efforts to mediate a hostage deal and a ceasefire in Gaza continue to falter. The White House sees the ceasefire talks and the tensions between Israel and Hezbollah as highly complex, given that both sides have miscalculated with their escalation of rhetoric and the intensity of their attacks, while believing they can still avoid a full-scale war.

Assessing the chances of success for the aforementioned American efforts involves considering several factors, including disagree-

ments between the American and Israeli sides on some issues. American officials have revealed that the disagreement between Netanyahu and President Joe Biden's administration over withholding weapons from Israel will hinder US-Israeli diplomatic efforts to calm tensions at the Lebanese border and avoid war with Hezbollah.

There is no doubt that Netanyahu's actions could create a crisis between the allies, leading to a further erosion of Israel's deterrent power in the region, especially in the eyes of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. In an address to the Knesset, Netanyahu promised to bring back all the hostages and emphasized that the war would not end until this goal was achieved, along with the elimination of Hamas and the safe return of southern and northern residents to their homes.

Some observers believe that any agreement with Hezbollah will be temporary and Hezbollah and Iran's long-term strategy will remain unchanged. Therefore, the success of any diplomatic path, even temporarily, requires offering incentives to Hezbollah, such as agreeing on a defined border line. Both the US and Israel face a significant challenge, given that Hezbollah's primary goal, since its inception, has been the removal of Israel. Recent developments suggest that American diplomatic efforts might encounter significant obstacles as long as the military operations and assassinations continue.

In conclusion, the situation seems to be heading toward a full-scale armed conflict if a settlement is not reached between the parties involved, particularly with Hezbollah linking its offensive operations against northern Israel to events in Gaza. This means that escalating the conflict into a full-scale war would undermine US mediation efforts, potentially diminishing Washington's influence, as has happened in recent weeks when Netanyahu insisted on continuing with Israel's military operations in Gaza.

## Despite global threats, the domestic front is most worrying for US

Khaled Abou Zahr

THE Barack Obama years gave us the so-called pivot to Asia away from the Middle East. Now we are seeing a newer version, which is a debate on the pivot to Asia away from Europe. In a defining moment in US history, there are questions on the capacity of the country to face simultaneous challenges in Europe as well as Asia. The war in Ukraine has forced the US to question what might happen if a second front were to open in Asia. Would the US be able to continue supporting both, or would it have to make a choice?

As we see a fractured domestic front and a weakened fiscal position, with levels of debt reaching worrying levels, the challenges to the near-80-year-old Pax Americana are piling up like never before. There is no doubt that the war in Ukraine is the most visible issue, but challenges are also rising in the Indo-Pacific. The reality is that, coupled with these challenges, the US domestic scene is also pushing allies to balance their position. It is probably there that the biggest risk lies for the US' global standing and posture.

It is hard to believe that, in the 21st century, with all the lessons of history, there is an open military front in Europe. And unlike what are known as the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s, total victory does not seem like an option for the US and specifically NATO. There is no doubt that there is now no other choice than to face the music. Yet, we need to understand that military-industrial capacity and troop numbers are the main elements of any war. Today, Russia is at an advantage. This also puts forward the need for Europe to step up to the challenge and build up its military-industrial capacity.

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ilities, among other points. It is hence all the more worthy to note that this deficit is happening when, on the Asian front, tensions between China and the US and its allies are becoming more worrying. This is why, as the NATO Summit takes place next week, celebrating the 75th anniversary of the alliance, analysts in Washington are presenting or demanding new, clear strategies for the Indo-Pacific. Yet, the underlying question with all these initiatives seems to be: can the US face two fronts? Judging by the calendar of events at the White House the week Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un were meeting, one wonders if these challenges are even being taken seriously.

Nevertheless, NATO's collaboration with Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand has pushed forward since the early 2000s. At that time, the main focus was counterterrorism in Afghanistan and anti-piracy efforts in the Indian Ocean. This transitioned to partnerships in the early 2010s, with a first official meeting in 2016 addressing North Korea's military threats. This partnership was elevated with the participation of the leaders of

Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand at the NATO summits in 2022 and 2023. The third meeting that confirms the growing focus on this region is scheduled for NATO's 75th anniversary next week.

There is no doubt that there are many interests shared between NATO and these Asia-Pacific nations, including the rules-based international order and global security issues like cyber defense, terrorism, climate change and maritime security. Their leaders admit that there are worldwide ramifications to security crises in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific areas, especially if the rapprochement and industrial production links between China and Russia continue to strengthen.

NATO has no plans to expand eastward or establish a presence in the Indo-Pacific. The likes of Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand cannot join NATO due to the North Atlantic Treaty's geographic restrictions. Yet, there are now clear calls to create an Indo-Pacific military alliance similar to NATO. This will probably take time and, until then, collaboration between NATO and the region will continue.

The upcoming NATO Summit aims to enhance cooperation, addressing topics such as China-Russia relations, nuclear dynamics, information manipulation, regional deterrence, the war in Ukraine, challenges posed by China and hybrid threats. Yet, how much support can the US really deliver to the Asia-Pacific while it is engaged in Europe? There is no doubt that, up to this point, the US and NATO have given their unwavering support to Ukraine and Europe. Yet, it is clear that it cannot be overstretched on multiple military fronts. And before that happens,

it needs to react decisively to any geopolitical "balloon test." Unfortunately, its failure is an invitation to more bold moves. I, for one, would never bet against the US but I will admit that, with the current administration, I have trouble recognizing America for what it usually stands for. It is looking more and more like Europe. So, I would say that if the US can remain as the US, it will be able to face not two but three fronts and rally its friends and allies. However, if the US gives up on its values, then it will spell doom for the entire current world order. And we need to understand that this change will not come through peace. It will mean chaos and global instability for years to come.

No one wants to see a war, especially not a global one, but unfortunately today two things could precipitate it. The first is what we are seeing in conflict points across the globe, which is like a runaway train; and the second is bringing a true challenge to the key US-established strategic order. And the current domestic political turmoil, with its projection of weakness, is encouraging this to happen. Hence, the most worrying front is not Europe or Asia, but the domestic one.



# New advantages, new challenges

**DATA from the State Administration of Foreign Exchange show that China's outbound direct investment amounted to \$185.3 billion in 2023, and the importance of ODI is expected to grow in the coming years.**

China's ODI started to be on track for steady growth in 2003 and peaked in 2016 at \$196.1 billion. The typical feature of this round of ODI growth compared to previous ones is that more Chinese companies with great competitiveness are investing abroad, a feature that is particularly evident in China's investments in developed economies.

Developed economies are an important investment destination for Chinese firms, but that investment is never easy — Chinese companies face different difficulties at different stages.

In the early days, Chinese enterprises' outbound investment was in sync with the enhancement of their competitiveness. Investment in developed economies helped strengthen the competitiveness of Chinese enterprises.

However, China's investments in developed economies dropped in the years from 2020 to 2022 after some developed economies prevented and restricted Chinese investments on grounds of "noneconomic motives".

As China's outbound investment entered a more mature stage, Chinese enterprises with comparative advantages started to scale up their overseas investment. Their investment behavior is similar to that of enterprises in developed countries, and the pattern of China's outbound investment is closer to that predicted by traditional investment theories.

At the same time, the possibility of host countries enhancing investment barriers is also increasing. Taking Chinese companies' investments in Europe as an example, the following aspects illustrate the transformation of Chinese companies' advantages and the potential challenges they face.

First, the share of private enterprises has risen.

Chinese State-owned enterprises were the forerunners in the early days of China's outward investment. In recent years, however, there has been a rapid rise in the importance of private enterprises, whether in terms of the

investment value, the share or typical cases. According to the Rhodium Group, investments by Chinese private companies in Europe totaled \$7.69 billion in 2022, accounting for 92.4 percent of China's total investment in Europe, a significant increase from \$398 million, or 14.3 percent of the total, in 2010.

There have also been some big investments by Chinese private enterprises

with great competitiveness have also been given "special attention".

Second, the importance of greenfield investments has risen.

Traditionally, mergers and acquisitions are the main means of Chinese investment in Europe.

According to the Rhodium Group, from 2010 to 2019, the total M&A value accounted for about 95 percent of the

extended from M&A to green-field investment.

At the same time, M&A of advanced technology companies in developed countries by Chinese companies remains under close scrutiny and has a low rate of being approved.

Third, the outbound investment value by industries where China has comparative advantages, such as the auto industry, has increased. Earlier, China's investment in Europe's economies of scale in the domestic market both in terms of space and time.

From the perspective of time, it has taken Chinese automakers a long time to build up advantages. Starting with the introduction of foreign capital to establish joint venture auto companies, China's auto industry has gone through decades of development.

Chinese automakers and other industries with comparative advantages will likely encounter more barriers and face fiercer competition when investing in developed economies in the years to come.

In the face of such a situation, first, Chinese enterprises should fully anticipate the challenges arising from overseas operations, understand the concerns of the host country, comply with the regulatory requirements of the host country, better localize their operations, and create true value for the host country.

Second, China can consider improving the mechanisms designed for protecting Chinese companies' overseas rights and interests.

The country should safeguard the rights and interests of Chinese enterprises through law, diplomacy, public opinion, politics and other means. It should help them grow amid overseas competition to increase Chinese people's wealth and back-feed and support the domestic economy.

Finally, China should advocate a more open and inclusive global investment environment, oppose investment protectionism, and urge host countries to provide a favorable institutional environment for Chinese enterprises, so as to inject momentum into international investment and sustained economic growth.

— China Daily

# Israel's Sde Teiman is so similar to Guantanamo for a reason

Mansoor Adayfi

**IN May, a shocking CNN report based on whistleblower testimony placed Israel's Sde Teiman military base in the Negev desert under the global spotlight and led to it being compared to the notorious US naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba where I was imprisoned for more than a decade.**

Three Israelis who worked at the desert camp doubling as a detention centre since the beginning of the Gaza war told CNN that they witnessed systemic physical and psychological abuse of Palestinian detainees at the facility.

They said the Palestinians imprisoned there, who are held without charge or legal repre-

The US government established Guantanamo Bay after 9/11 to detain and interrogate men suspected to have had a hand in those attacks, or other terror connections, without being restrained by international humanitarian law and other treaties that ban the mistreatment of war captives. The US government classified all prisoners in Guantanamo Bay as "illegal enemy combatants," enabling itself to hold us without charge, with limited legal representation, and in blatant violation of international law for years. In the years after 9/11, the US "disappeared" countless innocent Muslim men and boys in this way. I was one of the 779 men

Gaza managed to garner global attention only due to the bravery of Israeli whistleblowers who took it upon themselves to expose the abuses under way there.

After the publication of the damning CNN report, Israel vowed to shut down Sde Teiman. Israel's Supreme Court also sought answers about the condition of prisoners held there in response to a petition filed on May 23 by several Israeli human rights organisations. The petition called for the closure of the facility due to inhumane conditions and severe mistreatment that violated both Israeli and international law.

While these are promising developments, we must remain vigilant in

**The report, collaborated by independent reporting from other outlets, as well as testimonies of the released Palestinian prisoners, made my heart sink. It immediately transported me back to that dark day in February 2002, when I was first sent blindfolded and shackled to Guantanamo, where I would spend more than 14 years in arbitrary imprisonment, without knowing when or if I would be released, or even why I was being held. In Guantanamo, my experience as a prisoner was indeed very similar to the one described by the Israeli whistleblowers in the CNN report – an experience defined by a sense of perpetual uncertainty and fear. Just as it appears to be the case with Sde Taiman, psychological abuse was rampant in Guantanamo. We were routinely put in isolation, exposed to extreme temperatures and threatened with physical abuse. Humiliation through forced nudity and sexual assaults were also common. Sensory overload and deprivation, through extended exposure to bright lights and loud noises, or being forced to sit in solitary in complete darkness for hours, further chipped away our sense of reality. The similarities between Guantanamo and Sde Teiman are not limited to the treatment of prisoners either. The two facilities also justify their existence, and provide legal cover for their excesses, using similar arguments and narratives.**

sentation, are blindfolded, forced into stress positions, beaten, insulted, and prevented from speaking for extended periods. Prisoners at Sde Teiman, the whistleblowers claimed, routinely have their limbs amputated due to injuries sustained from constant handcuffing.

CNN also published two photographs from the facility, showing rows of men in grey tracksuits sitting blindfolded in an outdoor area ring-fenced by barbed wire and lit by floodlights.

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and boys sent to Guantanamo. But thousands of others are believed to have been imprisoned and eventually disappeared in similar black sites and military detention centres around the world.

Israel has been justifying the arbitrary imprisonment of Palestinians it perceives to be a threat on similar national security grounds for many years. Many Palestinians who are imprisoned in Israel were arrested under a quasi-judicial process known as "administrative detention". Under this process, Palestinians are initially jailed for six months, but their detentions can then be repeatedly extended for an indefinite period without charge or trial.

Since October 7, just like US did in the aftermath of 9/11, Israel has also been relying on its Unlawful Combatants Law to indefinitely detain Palestinians without legal scrutiny and a chance of putting forward a defence. The law allows Israel to detain individuals in facilities like Sde Teiman without an arrest warrant for up to 45 days. This period often extends indefinitely, as detainees are moved to Israel's formal prison system without due process.

Another similarity between Guantanamo Bay and Sde Teiman is the lack of transparency. At Guantanamo, the US military has consistently, and somewhat successfully, rebuffed attempts by journalists to gain access to the camps, imposing stringent restrictions and censorship under the guise of national security concerns.

This lack of transparency has only intensified in recent years, with journalists encountering even greater barriers in their efforts to shed light on the realities of life inside Guantanamo. Israel, too, is working hard to keep the media, and independent legal professionals, out of its prisons and military detention facilities like Sde Teiman. The plight of Palestinian prisoners in

demanding further coverage and true accountability to ensure the prisoners and practices at Sde Teiman are not simply transferred to another, more secret facility. After all, the abuses and illegality under way at Guantanamo Bay have been exposed many times over in the past two decades, but the infamous facility in Cuba is still functioning, and no one has faced accountability for breaking international law there.

I speak about the parallels between Guantanamo and Sde Teiman to draw attention to the universal nature of suffering caused by detention practices steeped in secrecy, illegality and dehumanising cruelty.

In those Palestinian men imprisoned by the Israeli military in Sde Teiman, I saw myself and hundreds of other men and boys imprisoned by the US in Guantanamo. Our ordeals are so similar, because both Israel and the US believe they can function outside the limitations of international law and do whatever they please to human beings they perceive as a threat in the name of "national security".

That the same abuses in Guantanamo have been duplicated in Sde Teiman underlines the urgent need for accountability and reform. It is crucial for the international community to recognise and address human rights violations in detention facilities – whether they are committed in a military camp in the Negev Desert or a US Naval Base on a Caribbean island.

There should be independent investigations and accountability for perpetrators. Policies should be implemented to prevent such abuses from being repeated in the future. If we fail to take action and seek accountability for the blatant abuses of human rights law in Israeli detention centres, we will soon come face to face with another heart-breaking report about an inhumane prison camp in another corner of the world sometime soon.

— Aljazeera

# Maximizing RCEP's potential

**THE full implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement by all 15 signatory parties in 2023 marked a key milestone for the establishment of the largest free trade agreement in the world, with a combined GDP of \$29 trillion and 2.3 billion people. In order to maximize the benefits of the RCEP, robust public-private partnerships are essential. Additionally, the role of media and think tanks is also indispensable, as they can promote greater awareness and understanding of businesses of the RCEP.**

The RCEP is a new generation of ASEAN-led FTA that is comprehensive in scope, deep in commitment, and more adaptive to emerging opportunities and challenges. It enables the region to achieve transformative progress toward a new level of economic integration, builds the foundation for digital and sustainable future, and enlarges economic boundaries for traders and businesses in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other RCEP countries, including China.

Since the entry into force of the agreement in 2022, ASEAN's trade and investment relations with RCEP countries have flourished even further. In 2023, the total trade of ASEAN with other RCEP Parties amounted to \$1.2 trillion, contributing 35 percent to total ASEAN trade. In particular, China remained ASEAN's largest partner, with trade amounting to \$702 billion, thus contributing 20 percent to total ASEAN trade. The inflow of foreign direct investments from RCEP partners to ASEAN in 2022 increased by 718.1 percent from Australia, 28.9 percent from Japan, 90.0 percent from New Zealand, and 23.9 percent from Korea, respectively.

Meanwhile, China's trade figures with the other 14 RCEP members also saw robust growth, amounting to approximately \$1.8 trillion in 2023, which represents 30 percent of China's total merchandise trade. According to

KAO KIM HOURN

faced by the private sector to the policymakers.

First, a robust public-private partnership is key to unlocking the immense potential of the RCEP.Trade facilitative measures, such

business networks throughout the region. It is also necessary to leverage on various mechanisms under the RCEP, such as the exchange of information, advocacy programs, dialogues, and active engagements, to effectively identify

for economic and technical cooperation, under which the Parties shall develop tangible projects to enhance the capacity of relevant stakeholders, including MSMEs.

ASEAN has launched the ASEAN Tariff Finder, an online tool open for use by all businesses operating in ASEAN, designed to help traders maximize the benefits from ASEAN+1 FTAs, the RCEP, and other bilateral FTAs of ASEAN Member States. Feedback from RCEP users, especially MSMEs, is crucial for identifying pain points or bottlenecks that could inform further improvements in the implementation of the RCEP.

Third, the RCEP must remain open, inclusive, and responsive to ever-changing business needs by keeping trade rules up-to-date and fit for purpose. Emerging as one of the most remarkable FTAs in the world today, the RCEP demonstrates the unwavering commitment of its Parties to upholding a rules-based and open trading system. This system is the fundamental foundation for stable, predictable global trade governance and our ability to withstand disruptions of supply chains. Inputs and views from the media and think tanks are invaluable as it will provide the policymakers with basis to improve the agreement.

The collective efforts of all RCEP Parties, including ASEAN and China, as well as the media and think tanks will enable constructive dialogues to support the commitment of the RCEP Parties to build a partnership for growth. This will also contribute to a better understanding and greater utilization of the RCEP, benefiting all countries participating in the RCEP. With the collective efforts and the active support of our partners in the media and think tanks, the RCEP will continue to fuel our region's growth and prosperity.

**The trade and investment figures clearly demonstrate the potential of the RCEP. It is important for all stakeholders to strengthen their collaboration to ensure that the benefits promised by the RCEP can be delivered. While governments and policymakers intensify their efforts to promote the RCEP, media and think tanks play a critical role in amplifying the messages to the private sector, and conversely, to raise challenges faced by the private sector to the policymakers. First, a robust public-private partnership is key to unlocking the immense potential of the RCEP.Trade facilitative measures, such as self-certification and advanced rulings, are being implemented by the RCEP Parties to facilitate trade processes in the region. The robust and advanced provisions of the RCEP offer significant opportunities for businesses to adopt a new strategy in favor of nimble and resilient growth by diversifying trade and investment sources and recalibrating supply chains to withstand future economic disruptions.**

China's Customs statistics, ASEAN also remained China's largest trading partner in 2023, contributing around 15 percent to China's total trade.

The trade and investment figures clearly demonstrate the potential of the RCEP. It is important for all stakeholders to strengthen their collaboration to ensure that the benefits promised by the RCEP can be delivered. While governments and policymakers intensify their efforts to promote the RCEP, media and think tanks play a critical role in amplifying the messages to the private sector, and conversely, to raise challenges

as self-certification and advanced rulings, are being implemented by the RCEP Parties to facilitate trade processes in the region. The robust and advanced provisions of the RCEP offer significant opportunities for businesses to adopt a new strategy in favor of nimble and resilient growth by diversifying trade and investment sources and recalibrating supply chains to withstand future economic disruptions.

This would require a robust public-private partnership, enhanced awareness among business communities regarding relevant RCEP provisions, and the establishment of intensive

fy and address challenges faced by businesses on the ground. The role of media and think tanks on this matter is paramount.

Second, the RCEP must work for all businesses, particularly micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which account for over 95 percent of registered businesses and provide between 30 percent and 85 percent of total employment in RCEP economies. MSMEs must be equipped with the necessary know-how to take advantage of the RCEP and other FTAs, ensuring inclusive growth and leaving no one behind. The RCEP includes specific provisions





## NPM Committee reveals significant inflation decline

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Price Monitoring (NPM) Committee meeting on Thursday revealed significant inflation decline from 18.5% to 12.2% over the Past Year. In the NPM meeting a significant reduction in inflation over the past year was reported.

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal chaired a meeting of the National Price Monitoring Committee held today in Islamabad, said a press release issued here on.

The meeting witnessed the attendance of Member-Support Services, Joint Chief Economist, AC Islamabad, senior officials from the Line Ministries and Planning Ministry, representatives from Provincial Governments, and the Senior General Manager of Utility Stores.

The inflation rate decreased from 18.5% in June 2023 to 12.2% in the current year, marking a

notable downward trend, despite global inflationary pressures, Pakistan has managed to reduce its inflation rate, although the prices of imported items have seen an increase.

In his opening remarks, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal directed that the National Price Monitoring Committee be convened monthly to establish a rigorous monitoring mechanism aimed at controlling market prices. The Minister emphasized the importance of maintaining vigilant oversight to stabilize the prices of essential commodities across the country.

The meeting highlighted the substantial price difference between various edible items available at Utility Stores and those in the open market, attributed to government subsidies intended to facilitate the public at large.

The Minister instructed that price behavior in regional countries be closely monitored. He highlighted the

necessity of being aware of demand and supply dynamics during special occasions such as Eids and Ramadan to ensure price stability. He called for the establishment of robust mechanisms for price stabilization and storage of products, noting the recurring nature of price acceleration behaviors.

To minimize price variance during the upcoming Ramadan, the Minister directed effective stock management. He also instructed Deputy Commissioners to scrutinize discrepancies between wholesale and retail prices and to intensify price enforcement activities to regulate market prices.

Minister Iqbal emphasized the need for anticipatory governance to minimize market shocks rather than merely reacting to them. He also stressed the importance of combating hoarding, which significantly disrupts the price mechanism and contributes to inflation.

Furthermore, the Pakistan

Bureau of Statistics has developed a Decision Support System following the successful completion of the 7th Digital Census.

This system releases weekly indicators of price changes, known as the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), based on prices of essential goods and commodities collected nationwide.

The SPI includes 51 essential items collected from 50 markets in 17 cities, providing a comprehensive overview of the country's price situation.

The Minister directed that the price behavior of each district be monitored using this system in markets across the country. All Deputy Commissioners were instructed to utilise the Decision Support System and ensure market prices align with the stipulated rates. The Deputy Commissioners would be held accountable for any negligence resulting in price fluctuations, cautioned the Minister.



**KARACHI:** Governor SBP Jameel Ahmed cutting a ribbon to inaugurate Soneri Bank's 500th branch. Senior management of Soneri Bank including Chairman Amin A. Feerasta, President & CEO Muhtashim Ahmad Ashai and Deputy CEO Ahsan Mushahid Siddiqui also present on occasion.

## SNGPL: 36 connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 36 connections; Rs 1.4 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the team disconnected 10 connections on illegal use of gas while another 1 on use of the compressor. The team lodged 1 FIR against gas pilfer.

In Multan, the team disconnected 8 connections on illegal use of gas while another 2 on use of compressor.

The regional team of Faisalabad disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas and also booked an amount of Rs 0.04 million against gas theft cases.

In Sahiwal, the team disconnected 1 connection on illegal use of gas.

The regional team of Gujranwala disconnected 2 connections on the illegal use of gas and another 01 on the use of the compressor and also imposed a fine of Rs 1.0 million against gas theft cases.

In Mardan, the team disconnected 3 connections on illegal use of gas and also imposed a fine of Rs 0.36 million against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Bahawalpur disconnected 4 connections on the illegal use of gas and another 2 on the use of the compressor.

## Pak's liquid foreign reserves position

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The total liquid foreign reserves held by the country stood at US\$ 14,573.0 million as of 28-June-2024. The break-up of the foreign reserves position is as under:

Foreign reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan is US\$ 9,389.5 million.

Net foreign reserves held by commercial banks is US\$ 5,183.5 million.

Liquid foreign reserves is US\$ 14,573.0 million.

During the week ended on 28-June-2024, SBP reserves increased by US\$ 494 million to US\$ 9,389.5 million due to official inflows from multilateral agencies.

## Soneri Bank inaugurates 500th Branch in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Soneri Bank is proud to announce the grand opening of its 500th branch, located in Karachi, Khayaban-e-Shamsheer. This milestone event underscores Soneri Bank's commitment to bringing banking services closer to our customers' doorsteps and supporting SBP's objective of bringing the unbanked sector into the banking fold.

The grand opening ceremony was a significant event, graced by Mr. Jameel Ahmed, Governor State Bank of Pakistan, as Chief Guest, and attended by distinguished members of Soneri Bank's leadership. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was led by Mr. Jameel Ahmed, Governor of SBP, and Mr. Amin Feerasta, Chairman of Soneri Bank, alongside several high-ranking digni-

ties from the Soneri Management Team.

Jameel Ahmed praised Soneri Bank's expansion efforts stating, "Soneri Bank's journey to this milestone is commendable. Their dedication to enhancing banking services aligns with our vision of a robust and inclusive financial sector."

Amin A. Feerasta, Chairman, Soneri Bank, expressed his enthusiasm for the new branch and its offerings saying, "Today, as we celebrate the opening of our 500th branch, we reinforce our dedication to innovation, growth, and excellence in customer service."

Muhtashim Ahmad Ashai, President & CEO of Soneri Bank, stated, "The opening of our 500th branch is a testament to our collective commitment to delivering the best banking experience to our

customers." and Mr. Ahsan Mushahid, Deputy CEO, Soneri Bank, shared his appreciation for the team's efforts stating, "We are immensely proud of our team for their dedication and hard work in reaching this remarkable milestone."

Soneri Bank's journey to 500 branches has been marked by strategic growth and a deep commitment to customer satisfaction. As Soneri Bank continues to expand, it remains dedicated to its core values of Customer Centricity, Ownership, High Moral Standards, being Proactive and Collaborating.

Looking ahead, Soneri Bank plans to continue its strategic expansion with further investments in technology and customer service initiatives. The bank's commitment to efficient customer service will drive its future growth.

## FFC partners with Agrilift to scale Agtech



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Fauji Fertilizer Company (FFC) "Partner in Prosperity," has entered into a strategic partnership with Agrilift to scale their agricultural practices in Pakistan through the introduction of latest Agtech.

This collaboration aims to modernize farming practices, thus enhancing national food security and sustainability in the agricultural sector.

Through this alliance, FFC and Agrilift will introduce an innovative "Agtech" based Agri Services model, starting with 18,000 acres across

Pakistan.

Key components of this initiative include deployment of modern technology, comprehensive advisory services from soil assessment to fertilization, and farmer capacity building through various training programs.

Jahangir Piracha, MD & CEO of FFC, emphasized the significance of this partnership, highlighting FFC's dedication to supporting farmers and enhancing crop yields amid economic challenges.

He stated, "By leveraging Agrilift's innovative solutions and sustainable practices, FFC aims to

empower farmers, ensuring food security and stability for future generations."

Speaking at the occasion, Jawwad Hasan, CEO and Co-Founder of Agrilift, emphasized that the implementation of advanced technologies will contribute to increased farmer incomes, and the promotion of sustainable growth nationwide.

He said, "Our top priority is to uplift farmers by enhancing crop yields, a crucial step in mitigating the food insecurity crisis that has impacted 14% of the population in Pakistan, up from 2% in 2019."

## U Bank and Yousuf Dewan Companies sign MoU



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: U Microfinance Bank (U Bank) and Yousuf Dewan Companies have entered into a strategic collaboration to leverage their combined strengths for the provision of innovative financing options for customers, making the ownership of electronic vehicles more accessible and affordable.

Under this partnership, Yusuf Dewan Companies' customers will be able to benefit from exclusive loan offerings, as well as bun-

dled services, for the ownership of Honri and KIA electronic vehicles, including insurance coverage and registration facilities.

The MoU was signed recently at a ceremony in Islamabad, by Mohamed Essa Al Taheri, President & CEO - U Bank, and Dewan Mohammad Yousuf Farooqui, Chairman - Dewan Group, in the presence of senior management members of both organizations.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mohamed Essa Al Taheri, President & CEO - U Bank commented, "We are thrilled to partner with Yousuf Dewan Companies to facilitate innovative financing solutions for customers interested in EVs. This collaboration is a significant step towards enhanced accessibility to cost-effective means of mobility and will also ulti-

mately contribute to a greener future. By combining our financial expertise with Yousuf Dewan Companies' strong market presence, we are confident in driving technological and financial innovations further that are beneficial to all stakeholders."

Speaking at the event, Dewan Mohammad Yousuf Farooqui, Chairman of Dewan Group, said, "This partnership with U Microfinance Bank marks a significant milestone for us in our mission to provide easy financing solutions. By making it more accessible for people to own EVs and commercial vehicles, we are not only enhancing individual mobility but also contributing to the broader goal of a more sustainable future. Our collaboration with U Bank is a testament to our commitment to driv-

ing innovation and making impactful strides in the automotive industry in Pakistan."

U Bank is a wholly-owned subsidiary of PTCL - e& Group (formerly known as Etisalat Company). The bank has a network of more than 375+ branches, across 210 cities and rural areas in Pakistan and offers a wide range of microfinance loans, deposit products, and branchless banking solutions. U Bank's branchless banking offers services under the banner of UPaisa in collaboration with Ufone (Pak Telecom Mobile Limited).

Yousuf Dewan Companies is a diversified conglomerate with a strong presence in various industries, including automotive, cement, sugar, textile, and trading. Under the automotive sector, Dewan Motors represents BMW, providing premium vehicles and services. Dewan Farooque Motors Limited focuses on Kia Commercial vehicles, delivering robust and reliable transportation solutions. Eco-Green Motors Limited is dedicated to Honri electric vehicles, promoting sustainable and eco-friendly mobility. The group's commitment to excellence and innovation extends across its wide range of businesses, contributing significantly to Pakistan's economic growth and industrial development.

## Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Seven ships, Maersk Cape Town, MSC FIE-X, W-Kyrenia, Mulberry Express, Marangas Asclepius, Hafnia Turquoise and CMB Jordaens carrying Container, Palm oil, LNG, Mogas and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Elengy Terminal, Oil Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile four more ships, MSC Positano, Atlantic Spirit, FSM and Achilleas-S carrying Container, Palm Kernal, LPG and Coal also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on during last 24 hours.

A total of ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Maersk Cape Town and Alora left the port on today morning while two more ships, MSC FIE-X and Hafnia Turquoise

are expected to sail on Thursday.

Cargo volume of 197,275 tonnes, comprising 162,610 tonnes imports cargo and 34,665 tonnes export cargo carried in 5,686 Containers (3,964 TEUs Imports and 1,722 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Seven ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, Bitumen Kosei, FSM, Achilleas-S, Nave Andromeda and MSC Positano & two more ships, San Francisco Bridge and Xpress Altair scheduled to load/offload Bitumen, LPG, Coal, Mogas and Container are expected to take berths at respectively MW-1, EVTL, PIBT, FOTCO and QICT on Thursday, while two more container ships, MSC United and Teno are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Friday.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Miss Dua Mehreen, Civil Judge-VI/Kohat. Suit No. 7/1. Date of hearing 06-07-2024. Titled "Mohib Khan Vs. Gulraiz Afzal Khan etc." Notice against (1) Gulraiz Afzal Khan CEO M/S Secure Logistics Group Limited Office Service Road East Sector, 1-10/3, Islamabad, Central Region, House No. 14E/11, Gulberg-III, Lahore, Cell No. 042-35774237-38 (Defendant). Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendant in which date of hearing 06-07-2024 is fixed for your appearance. Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Defendant is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 06-07-2024 otherwise Court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 21-06-2024 (Court of C.J-VI/Kohat).

## IBA and partners team up to elevate deserving students

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi, organized an orientation ceremony for Talent Hunt Program students - Batch 2024 at the Main Campus to welcome more than 300 enrolled students from diverse regions including Baluchistan, KP & FATA, Gilgit-Baltistan, Punjab, and Sindh.

IBA Karachi, in collaboration with Ihsan Trust and Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), remains dedicated to fostering educational opportunities for talented students across Pakistan. Each year, the Institute hosts an intensive orientation program, equipping deserving candidates from underserved communities with the necessary skills to pursue admission at not only IBA, but also other esteemed educational institutions all over Pakistan.

This year the students started their training under the Talent Hunt Programs: IBA-IHSAN TRUST National Talent Hunt Program and IBA-OGDCL Talent Hunt Program. After training and

entrance exam, selected students receive scholarship up to 100% for a four-year undergraduate program, including accommodation, meals, and other essential educational costs.

Director, Talent Hunt Program (THP), Dr. Junaid Alam Khan delivered the welcome note, stating that "IBA stands as one of the few distinct institutions in the country that not only sets the best standards for quality education, but also strives to make it accessible and affordable for deserving students." He also thanked THP's esteemed partners and donors including Ihsan Trust and OGDCL. He further expressed the program's mission to reach new heights through several partnerships with organizations and individuals with shared values and dedication.

Assistant Manager, THP, Syed Rizwan Ali Bukhari, gave a presentation showcasing the impact and success of the Talent Hunt Program. He stated that over 300 students from 67 districts across Pakistan are part of the program with 65.23% males and 34.76% females.

Acting Executive Director and Dean SMCS, Dr. Shakeel Khoja presented an inspiring welcome note, narrating the success story of Nadeem, a student from the first batch of Talent Hunt Program, who after graduating from IBA worked in several prominent positions, authored many books, and is now pursuing a PhD from Boston University. He stated further that "IBA is known for producing street-smart graduates, meaning that our graduates will come up with a solution to every problem."

The event featured numerous program participants who shared their experiences within the program, along with stories of their background and journey. They represented areas including Hunza, Gilgit & Baltistan, Lasbela-Baluchistan, Layyah, Lakki Marwat, Tando Allahyar and underprivileged areas of Karachi. The students expressed their ambition not only to succeed personally through the program but also to return to their communities and uplift them.

Head of Education, Agha Khan Education Service,



Pakistan, Aien Shah expressed heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the event, emphasizing, "We have witnessed how IBA has changed lives and contributed to the upliftment of talent in the most inaccessible areas."

General Manager, Ihsan Trust, Mr. Fayyaz Ur Rehman delivered a heartfelt message emphasizing the value of education and community support. He stated, "Today, I encourage all of you to remember your roots and cherish the support of your parents. Let your journey here be a stepping-stone towards greater achievements, both for yourself and for our country." He highlighted the importance of honesty and dedication in personal and professional life, urging everyone to strive

for excellence while staying grounded in their principles.

General Manager, OGDCL, Mr. Abdur Raziq Khattak commended IBA for their effort and for providing students with state-of-the-art facilities. He said, "This program is not just about financial support, it's about empowering the youth to lead with integrity and compassion, transforming communities from within." He opined that he believes in nurturing leaders who are not detached from their roots and embrace their responsibilities with humility.

Guest speakers from organizations including PAF Masroor Base, Dil Anna College, Kiran Foundation, and TCF also addressed the audience.





## In brief

## Pakistan outplay India

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan downed India in the quarterfinals of ACBS Asian 15Red Team Men's Snooker Championship 2024 at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. According to details, Pakistan team of Asjad Iqbal and Asjad Munair beat India by 3-0 (63-35, 75-22, 70-06). Pakistan team will play the semifinals against Hong Kong.

## Raya makes Arsenal move

LONDON (BBC): Arsenal have activated the £27m option to permanently buy Brentford goalkeeper David Raya after his successful loan spell last season. Raya, 28, kept 16 Premier League clean sheets for the Gunners to win the Golden Glove, conceding just 16 league goals in the campaign. Arsenal already had a settled keeper in Aaron Ramsdale, who had played all 38 of their matches the previous season, keeping 14 clean sheets, but boss Mikel Arteta opted for a new option. In August, the Spaniard signed a new two-year contract with the Bees before joining the Gunners on a season-long loan. "After a year on loan as a Gunner, I can finally say that I'm an Arsenal player for the coming years," said Raya. "I'm excited to see what the future holds but always living in and enjoying the present." Arteta added: "He is a big presence in our dressing room and we are pleased to keep working with him. "We know he will take the strong foundations he put in place last season and build on them in the years to come, and that he will enjoy more success with us." Raya had an underwhelming start to the season, with his lowest point coming after making two errors in Arsenal's last-gasp 4-3 win over Luton in December. But he ended up missing only two league matches, when he was ineligible to face his parent club Brentford. Raya, who was praised by Arteta for his passing out from the back, ended any doubt about his position in March when he saved two penalties as Arsenal beat Porto in a shootout to reach the quarter-finals of the Champions League. This made him the first goalkeeper to make at least two saves in a Champions League shootout since Petr Cech for Chelsea in the 2012 final. Raya was named in Spain's Euro 2024 squad, however he remains behind first-choice goalkeeper Unai Simon. Raya kept a clean sheet in his only Euro 2024 appearance against Albania, with Spain rotating for their final group-stage victory after already qualifying for the knockouts.

## British teenager joins Haas

LONDON (BBC): Oliver Bearman will become the fourth British driver on the Formula 1 grid next season after signing to race for the US-based Haas team. The 19-year-old, who impressed in finishing seventh on his F1 debut for Ferrari at this year's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, has signed what Haas calls a "multi-year contract". "It's hard to put into words just how much this means to me," said Bearman, who took his first Formula 2 victory of 2024 in Austria last weekend, after winning four races in 2023. "To say out loud that I will be an F1 driver for Haas makes me so immensely proud. "To be one of the very few people who get to do the thing that they dreamed of as a child is something truly incredible."

25th National Baseball championship  
HEC, Army, WAPDA reach semis

RAWALPINDI (PPI) The 25th Men's National Baseball Championship, organized by the Pakistan Federation Baseball, has reached its final four stage. On the fourth day of the competition, HEC and Islamabad won their matches and advanced to the semifinals, joining Army and WAPDA.

The day's matches were played at GHQ Baseball Ground in Rawalpindi, where HEC defeated Police 11-0. Muhammad Shah, Madasar, Junaid scored 2 runs each, while Raees, Irfan, Saeed, Akram and Rizwan scored one run each for HEC.

On this occasion, the ceremony was graced by the honorable guest, Minister of Education Punjab, Rana Sekandar Hayat. Pakistan Federation Baseball

Secretary-General, Syed Fakhar Ali Shah, warmly welcomed him and presented him with a bouquet. The teams were introduced to him, and he also interacted with the players, speaking with them on this occasion.

In the match played afterwards, Islamabad defeated Punjab by 12-0. Wahid, Fazal Rabbi and Muhammad Khan scored 2 runs each for the winning team, while Jabran, Razaq, Fayyaz, Rehan, and Abdul Malik scored 1 run each. Major Ali Tahir, Tahir Mahmood, Amir Imdad Bhatti, Amjad Nawaz Khan, Hamza Ashraf, and others were present on the occasion. The matches are being supervised by Zafar Hussain Waraich, Zubair Watto, Tariq Pasha, Sajid Muhammad, and Zubair

Malik under the Chairman Umpiring Muhammad Jamil Kamran, while Muhammad Mubraiz Hussain is the scorer.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Federation Baseball Secretary-General Syed Fakhar Ali Shah announced that the championship has been postponed for two days due to rain predictions. The semifinals, featuring WAPDA vs HEC and Army vs Islamabad, will now take place on July 6, and the final match will be held on July 7. This announcement was made during a conversation with the PFB media manager Perwaiz Ahmed Shaikh at the GHQ Ground in Rawalpindi, where the 25th Men's National Baseball Championship is being held.

## Man Utd trigger one-year extension to Ten Hag deal

MANCHESTER (BBC): Manchester United have triggered a one-year extension in Erik ten Hag's contract to keep him at the club until 2026.

The Dutchman's previous deal, which he signed when he was appointed in 2022, was due to expire in 2025.

Ten Hag, who joined United from Ajax, has won two trophies in two years at Old Trafford.

"I am very pleased to have reached agreement with the club to continue working together," said the 54-year-old.

"Looking back at the past two years, we can reflect with pride on two

trophies and many examples of progression from where we were when I joined."

Ten Hag stressed "we must also be clear that there is still lots of hard work ahead".

United finished third in the Premier League during Ten Hag's first season at the club as the Dutchman ended the club's six-year wait for silverware with victory against Newcastle in the Carabao Cup final.

But the Dutchman's second season was far more difficult as United finished eighth in the Premier League and were knocked out of the

Champions League group stages.

A 2-1 victory against Manchester City in May's FA Cup final proved vital to Ten Hag keeping his job.

The club, led by co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe following his investment last December, conducted a review of the team's performance across the season following the victory at Wembley.

The review saw United speak to potential replacements for Ten Hag but it was eventually decided that the Dutchman deserved to keep his job in order to work under a new, improved structure.

## Naqvi says no decision on Babar's captaincy yet

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi opened up on the future of Babar Azam as captain of Pakistan cricket team.

Talking to media, Mohsin Naqvi said he was in contact with former cricketers and they will decide the future of Babar Azam's captaincy.

"No decision taken so far related to Babar Azam," said PCB chief, adding that he is seeking

advice from former cricketers on how to improve cricket in Pakistan.

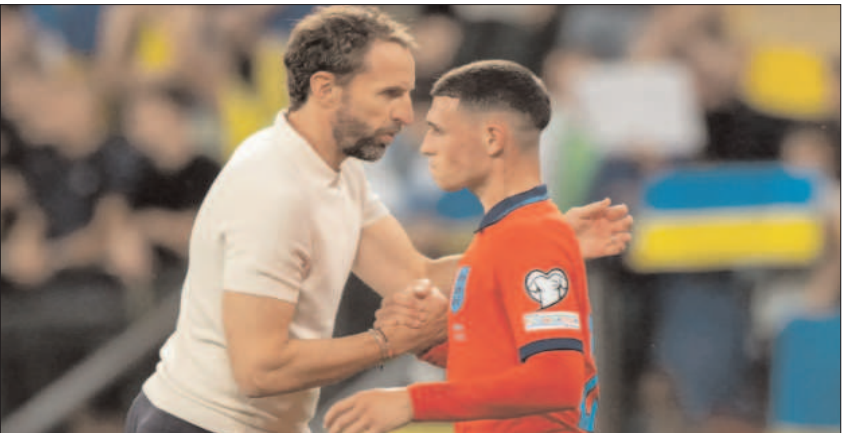
"I'm only speaking to those former cricketers who are interested in the betterment of Pakistan cricket," Naqvi added. Pakistan whit-ball captain Babar Azam received severe backlash following Pakistan's exit from the T20 World Cup 2024 in the group stage.

The Men in Green suffered a shocking defeat at

the hands of the United States of America (USA) in their opening game followed by another heart-breaking defeat to India. While Babar Azam's men won their fixtures against Ireland and Canada, they failed to advance to the Super 8 stage of the tournament.

Naqvi told reporters that Gary Kirsten's report has been received and nation will see the change in the Pakistan cricket.

## Foden 'feels sorry' for under-pressure Southgate



MUNICH (BBC): England forward Phil Foden has said the players "need to take some of the blame" for the team's performances at Euro 2024 and that he "feels sorry" for under-pressure manager Gareth Southgate.

Southgate's side reached the knockout stages of the tournament by finishing top of their group before beating Slovakia after extra time in the last 16.

However, the manner of their play has been criticised with questions asked about team selection and tactics.

"The players have got to take some of the blame," said Foden.

"There has to be some leaders to get together and find out a solution to why it is not working."

"There is only so much the manager can do. He sets you up in a system and tells you how to press. If it is not going like that, you have to [work it out]."

When asked about the pressure on Southgate during the tournament and going into Saturday's quarter-final against Switzerland (17:00 BST), the Manchester City player

added: "I feel sorry for Gareth."

"In training, he has been telling us to press and be high up on the pitch and I feel like sometimes, it has to come from the players."

"We have to be leaders. In games we could have got together a little bit more and worked out a solution."

"So yes, we have spoken about it more. If it happens again in a game, we can get together and find a solution, see where it is going wrong and adapt our press."

Foden was the Premier League's Player of the Season and was voted the Football Writers' Association Footballer of the Year for the 2023-24 campaign as he helped City win the top-flight title.

However, he has yet to score at Euro 2024 and has struggled to replicate his Premier League form in Germany.

"I've not been the best player in the Premier League to come here and not show it," the 24-year-old said.

"[But] every game I'm moving little steps forward and, hopefully, I can put in

good performances for England. That's always been my aim to show it for the national team."

"The first game was very quiet, in terms of how the game went I didn't have much going forward for myself."

"The next games after that I grew. I came close a few times and I was offside [when seeming to score] in the last game [against Slovakia]. Against Denmark I hit the post."

"My performances have improved a lot and if [the efforts] go in no-one's saying anything."

Foden also rejected the view that when he drifts inside from the left he occupies too similar a position to midfielder Jude Bellingham.

"I don't agree with that, I feel we do work good together," he said.

"It's just the way the games have gone sometimes and the way football works, [but] I feel like in the last game we did build on it really well, in terms of keeping the ball."

"We piled pressure on at the end and it can hopefully click together."



LONDON: Harri Heliovaara celebrates his win with Henry Patten in doubles as we take a look back at highlights, outtakes, and moments you might have missed from Day 3 at Wimbledon.

Wimbledon Tennis Tournament  
Coco Gauff and Alcaraz advance, Naomi Osaka loses

LONDON (AP): Coco Gauff likes No. 1 Court at Wimbledon. It's where she beat Venus Williams back in 2019 when Gauff made her Wimbledon debut at age 15. On Wednesday, Gauff beat qualifier Anca Todoni 6-2, 6-1 to advance to the third round at the All England Club.

"This is the court where I first started here at Wimbledon. Court 1 is always a special place for me to play on," the 20-year-old Gauff said in her on-court interview. The victory also allows Gauff, the No. 2 seed, to move another step away from last year's first-round exit.

"Overall, I just learned about life a lot," the U.S. Open champion said when asked about putting that three-set loss to Sofia Kenin behind her. "I just realized that, yes, what I do I'm very passionate about, but it's not ever that serious and sometimes the world can make you feel like there's so much pressure, there's so much expectation," she said. "At the end of the (day), it's a game. It's sport." The 19-year-old Todoni is from Romania and was making her Grand Slam debut.

"I do think I could have played cleaner at some moments," Gauff said. Five years ago, Gauff beat Williams — a five-time Wimbledon champion — 6-4, 6-4 in the first round and eventually reached the last 16, all in her Grand Slam debut.

Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz trailed 6-5 in the first set Wednesday before coming back to beat Aleksander Vukic 7-6 (5), 6-2, 6-2, setting up a third-round meeting with No. 29 Frances Tiafoe after the American eliminated Borna Coric 7-6 (5), 6-1, 6-3. When told by the on-court interviewer that Tiafoe said he's "coming after you," the 21-year-old Spaniard replied with a smile: "I'm going for him." "We played a really good match in the U.S. Open," the No. 3 seed said of their 2022 semifinal that Alcaraz won at Flushing Meadows.

In other results, four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka was eliminated in the second round by No. 19 Emma Navarro by a score of 6-4, 6-1, while No. 1 Jannik Sinner got past 2021 runner-up Matteo Berrettini 7-6 (3), 7-6 (4), 2-6, 7-6 (4) at Centre Court in an all-Italian contest. "I knew that I had to raise my level today," Sinner said. "He is a grass-court specialist. ... I'm very happy how I handled the situation." No. 11 Danielle Collins completed her first-round match — a 6-3, 7-6 (4) win over Clara Tauson. It had been suspended Tuesday night at 4-4 in the second set. No. 20 Beatriz Haddad Maia advanced to the third round by beating Magdalena Frech 7-5, 6-3.

## Briton Miyazaki beaten by Kasatkina in 50 minutes

BBC adds: Briton Lily Miyazaki lost in the second round of Wimbledon as she failed to win a game against Daria Kasatkina.

The Russian 14th seed - who won the Eastbourne title on Saturday - came through 6-0 6-0 in 50 minutes.

World number 148 Miyazaki produced the biggest win of her career when she beat Tamara Korpatsch in the first round, but could not replicate her performance. Miyazaki, 28, struggled to keep the ball in play, with 31 unforced errors among the 53 points won by Kasatkina. Kasatkina, 27, will play Spaniard Paula Badosa in the third round.

## Murray and Raducanu to team up for mixed doubles

Andy Murray will play with Emma Raducanu in a superstar mixed doubles partnership as part of his Wimbledon farewell. Murray, 37, is playing at the Championships for the final time before retiring later this year.

The two-time men's singles champion decided on Tuesday he was not fit enough to play in the singles after a recent back operation. Murray will play in the men's doubles alongside older brother Jamie and has now also opted to join forces with fellow Briton Raducanu in an eye-catching pairing.

Asked after practice on Wednesday how it came about, Murray said: "I was chatting to my team and discussing mixed, so I messaged her coach and asked if he thought it might be something she'd be up for doing. He said it was worth asking, so I did." Despite Murray's worries he had messaged Raducanu too late in the day, he said: "Thankfully, I got a quick reply. "She said, 'Yeah, let's do it.' That was it."

Murray played with American great Serena Williams in the 2019 mixed doubles at Wimbledon, describing it as a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity. Playing alongside 2021 US Open champion Raducanu is set to be another special occasion in the final weeks of his illustrious career. "I chatted a bit with my team about [mixed doubles] and they said 'what exactly are you trying to get out of it?'" Murray said.

"Firstly, we want to be competitive in the matches - and playing with another Brit was going to be something that would be nice." He added Raducanu is "obviously one of the top British players" and was "top of the list" as a doubles partner. Speaking after she won in the singles on Wednesday, Raducanu said teaming up with Murray will fulfil a childhood dream.

"My doubles record isn't exactly the longest or the most vast but I couldn't say no," the 2021 US Open champion said. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It's been a dream of mine since I was a young girl. "Andy's a hero to us all. It's a real gift and a real honour that he asked me." The mixed doubles is set to start on Friday, with first-round matches also being played on Saturday. The British pair have been drawn against China's Zhang Shuai and El Salvador's Marcelo Arevalo.



RAWALPINDI: A sculpture of cricketer installed at Shamsabad along Murree Road in connection with preparation of upcoming Asia Cup.





## In brief

### NH&MP holds lecture

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NH&MP) organized a lecture titled "Conflict Management and Handling Aggression/Female Driver" here on Thursday. According to Motorway Police North Zone spokesperson, Muhammad Saqib, the aim of providing training to Motorway Police officials was to resolve conflicts with road violators during duty in a better way. During the training, through various videos and exercises, officers were made aware of the various situations that arise and how to deal with them in the best professional manner. He added that the officials were also informed about the legal aspects during the training.

### 320,500 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 320,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 499,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1491.96 feet and was 93.96 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 278,000 cusecs and 130,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1187.35 feet, which was 139.35 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 50,700 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 190,200, 168,000, 105,300 and 32,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 90,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 48,100 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Power shutdown

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday issued a power suspension programme for Friday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 07:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Rawalpindi City Circle, Range Road, T&T, 6th Road, PTCL Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Car Chowk Feeder and surrounding areas.

### CDA seals 60 buildings

ISLAMABAD (APP): CDA has sealed 60 buildings in the federal capital during a crackdown against the violations of the bylaws of the authority. During the crackdown against unauthorized constructions, the Building Control Wing, alongside the Enforcement Directorate, sealed 38 buildings in G-9/4 due to non-conforming use, said a press release. In Gulberg Residencia, 22 under-construction buildings were sealed for proceeding without the necessary permissions. The authority has issued notices to the owners of the sealed properties. Prior to this action, the owners were directed to obtain the required permissions from the CDA before beginning construction. The buildings were sealed because the owners failed to comply with these instructions. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa reiterated the authority's commitment to enforcing building bylaws throughout Islamabad, stating that the crackdown on violations will continue consistently.

# DC, DIG pay visit to Muharram processions routes

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon accompanied by the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) have visited the Muharram ul Haram processions routes and inspected the security measures in place.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Islamabad, along with the Deputy Inspector General (DIG), visited various procession routes to ensure everything was in order, said the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration.

All the Additional Deputy Commissioner and the Assistant Commissioner of the city were also present on the occasion.

After inspecting the routes, the DC expressed satisfaction in the security

arrangements.

He stated that tight security would be in place throughout the mourning processions in the Federal Capital. Special security forces would be deployed to maintain order and safety, DC added.

On the occasion, DC said that security on Muharram was the topmost priority of the district government and no one would be allowed to create law and order situation in the city.

**DC chairs meeting**  
Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon has chaired a meeting and reviewed the arrangements for the ongoing anti-polio drive in the Federal Capital.

The city's polio campaign has entered its fourth day with health workers

tirelessly working to ensure every child receives anti-polio drops, said the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory Administration.

The meeting was attended by the all Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates to assess the campaign's progress.

They informed that the teams were visiting door to door to administer polio drops, ensuring no child was missed.

Polio vaccination camps have also been set up at public places and bus stands for easy access, they informed.

DC Islamabad urged the citizens to ensure their children receive the polio drops. If the teams miss any child, parents were encouraged to inform the district administration immediately.

## Body for ensuring resource mobilization for farmers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly Standing Committee on Food Security and Research on Thursday emphasized the need to ensure farmers support with resources mobilization such as high-quality seeds, fertilizers and access to credit for sustainable agriculture development in the country.

Chaired by Syed Husain Tariq as its Chairman, the Committee also stressed the need to focus on expanding research initiatives to develop climate-resilient crop varieties to maintain national food safety and security, said a press release.

The Committee underscored the importance of investing in agricultural research and development (R&D). They proposed increasing funding for agricultural universities and research institutions to develop new farming tech-

niques and seed varieties. Collaborations with international agricultural research organizations were also discussed.

The Committee stressed the need for training programs to educate farmers on modern agricultural practices. Extension services and farmer field schools were suggested as effective means to disseminate knowledge and improve farmers' skills.

Recognizing the pivotal role of farmers in agriculture, the Committee underscored the importance of farmer-friendly policies. It also recommended to provide adequate support mechanisms, including access to affordable, high-quality seeds and knowledge-sharing initiatives.

To uphold seed quality standards, the Committee has proposed strengthened measures for seed certification and quality control.

Collaborative efforts with regulatory bodies and certification agencies will ensure compliance with established benchmarks and safeguard farmers from substandard seeds.

In line with efforts to empower farmers, the Committee has advocated for provisions that enhance access to certified seeds, agricultural training, and extension services. These initiatives are designed to bolster agricultural productivity and improve farmers' livelihoods.

The Committee also stressed the need of enhancing infrastructure, such as irrigation systems and storage facilities, to support the efficient distribution and preservation of agricultural produce. By improving these logistical elements, the sector can reduce post-harvest losses and ensure a steady supply of food products, it said.

## HEC, UNHCR discuss collaborative initiatives

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) called on Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr Mukhtar Ahmed and discussed issues pertaining to Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Director General HEC Scholarship, Ms. Aayesha Ikram and Project Director Allama Iqbal Scholarships for Afghan Students, Mr Jehanzeb Khan also attended the meeting.

Chairman HEC Dr Mukhtar Ahmed welcomed the UNHCR delegation comprising Ms Philippa Candler, Country Representative, UNHCR

Pakistan, Ms Oksana Panasenko, Senior Programme Officer, and Ms Shahida Sultan, Associate Education Officer.

He shed light on the HEC's role in the promotion of higher education in Pakistan. He informed the delegates about the HEC's Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarships Programme for Afghan Students under which a large number of Afghan students are acquiring higher education in top Pakistani universities.

He said the students graduating from Pakistan go back and play their role in the development of their country.

He said the Afghan stu-

dents studying under HEC scholarships are provided equal facilities that are available to Pakistani students.

He added that the HEC also provides training to Afghan Government officials for their capacity building.

Ms. Philippa Candler appreciated HEC for extending scholarship opportunities to Afghan students as it will play a significant role in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan.

She showed interest in collaborative initiatives between HEC and UNHCR for the Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

## Mushahid Hussain praises IPRI's dedication

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Chairman Senate Defence Committee, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed on Thursday said the country's state system working in unison can achieve any daunting task convincingly while upholding loyalty, patriotism, meritocracy and nation's first motto paramount in every endeavour.

He was addressing the silver jubilee celebration of Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), Pakistan's premier think tank ranked 74th in the global index, celebrated here at its 25th anniversary.

Mushahid was the pioneer and founder of IPRI and chief guest on the occasion who had conceived the idea of IPRI as a think tank in 1999, when he was Minister for Information.

Since its inception, IPRI has evolved on a very fast pace extending significant contribution towards international relations, lawfare, governance and public policy while also rendering services towards strategic studies and economic security.

The celebration was attended by IPRI Veterans,

notables of the city, ambassadors, retired service personnel, academicians and media persons.

Mushahid emphasized on the urgent need to develop a rapid response think tank on strategic communication to craft media narratives for Pakistan.

He observed that challenges exist, but these can be easily resolved collectively as think tanks need to provide clarity and an image of diversity on the global stage. He reiterated Pakistan's image as a peace-loving state, wherein its people are a victim of terrorism, and at the same time have contributed immensely to the global community.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, praised IPRI's dedication, leading to its position as one of the major pillars among think tanks of the Global South, but more significantly, in the world.

He was of the view that intellectualism in today's world is all about "battle of ideas," and remarked that the dynamics of power politics are shifting and it is high time Pakistan choreographed its vision for a better and progressive tomorrow.

row.

Senator Mushahid underscored Pakistan's history and the challenges when it became the first Muslim nuclear power in the world, and narrated the trial and tribulations that went at that moment. He was of the view that Pakistan made a strategic choice by going nuclear, and rightly called the Indian bluff by elevating itself as a détente power.

Senator Mushahid noted that the way forward is to be on the same page as a nation-state and eulogise the tangles in a forward-looking manner.

The seasoned parliamentarian said that Pakistan's foreign relations should be evenly poised, and it is high time it becomes part and parcel of the evolving multilateralism, especially BRICS, wherein China and developing states are leading from the front.

Earlier, President IPRI Ambassador Dr. Raza Muhammad emphasized the significance of think tanks in Pakistan's history and synthesizing efforts of all institutes for the betterment of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Country Director of ADB Yong Ye meeting with Chairperson BISP Senator Rubina Khalid at BISP Headquarters.

## Country Director ADB meets Rubina

ISLAMABAD (APP): Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have joined hands to strengthen technical collaboration for empowering BISP beneficiaries and lifting them out of poverty through innovative skill development and global job market integration.

This was shared during a meeting between Chairperson BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid and Country Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Yong Ye.

Speaking on the occasion, Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized the need for ADB's assistance in developing skill enhancement initiatives and connecting beneficiaries to international job markets.

"ADB's support in designing these programs will be instrumental in breaking the cycle of poverty," she stated. Yong Ye reaffirmed ADB's commitment, praising BISP's exemplary National Socio-Economic Registry and its role in emergency response.

He noted that BISP's digital infrastructure has been crucial in reaching affected populations during emergencies, positioning it as a pioneer in Pakistan's digital landscape.

Senator Khalid acknowledged the ongoing collaboration with ADB and stressed the importance of continuous brainstorming for future initiatives.

Mr. Yong Ye highlighted BISP's leadership role in shaping Pakistan's social protection policies, given its extensive experience and innovative approaches.

The meeting concluded positively, with both parties committed to furthering their collaboration to achieve shared goals of social and economic development for BISP beneficiaries.

## PARC established two labs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Agriculture Research Council in collaboration with Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) has established bee hive products laboratory and green house for fruit plants germplasm handling to promote the output of honey and fruit plants in the country.

Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan Professor Dr Mehmet Paçacı, Vice President of TIKA Dr Umit Naci YORULMA, Country head TIKA Pakistan Muhsin BALCI Inaugurated the laboratories. This facility will help ensure these products meet the international standards, paving way for increased exports and economic growth.

Meanwhile, green house is equipped with controlled temperature and humidity system. These conditions will improve the survival rate of both exotic and local fruit germplasm, expediting the selection process for developing new and promising varieties.

Addressing the ceremony Ambassador of Türkiye Dr Mehmet Paçacı said that these labs will serve as a center for training and capacity building, equipping beekeepers, researchers and students with the knowledge and skills they need to excel.

These state-of-the-art laboratories mark a significant milestone in country's ongoing efforts to advance Honeybee research and development in Pakistan.

## IESCO to replace all meters with AMI by 2030: Dr. Amjad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under digitization and upgradation programme, Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has planned to replace all existing old meters with state of the art advance metering infrastructure (AMI) meters till 2030 across its all six circles aimed at ensuring accurate meter reading, billing, controlling power theft and reducing load-shedding.

Briefing the media persons here Thursday, the IESCO Chief Executive Officer Dr. Muhammad Amjad said currently the company has around 3.8 million consumers in six circles including Rawalpindi City, Rawalpindi Cantonment Circle and Taxila (Division), he said.

The task would be completed by June 2026 for which initially two contractors have been hired to install around 2000 AMI daily in the said circles, he said.

Dr Amjad said the Asian Development Bank has provided \$ 109 million financial assistance to complete the project under second power distribution enhancement investment programme.

The contract for the project was signed on September, 3, 2022 while its effectiveness date was January 2023, he added.

He said that main data and back data centres which were part of the project had already been set up at the IESCO's head office and Gujjar Khan respectively.

The CEO said AMI system would bring about a permanent elimination of power pilferage with systematic control of transmission through round-the-

clock monitoring of the electricity meters. This technology would help reduce power sector losses, enhance the quality of billing and recoveries, control power load-shedding and also address the consumers' complaints of wrong or over-billing, he said.

He said the AMI system would also end human interventions in meter reading, enhance customer support, better measurements, more accurate billing, a degree of control of consumption and help improve IESCO's ability to reduce non-technical losses.

He said automated 100 per cent accurate and timely meter readings would reduce costs incurred on meters readings significantly. In case of any power theft, tripping, power failure, or defective meters, automated intimation would be received in the data centre with instructions to the concerned SDO for rectification in a short time.

The consumers will also be able to control their electricity bills by monitoring their electricity consumption daily through a mobile application, he remarked.

To a question, the CEO said that the system has capacity of 5 million connections and currently IESCO has around 3.8 million consumers and we have still 1 million consumer space in the system.

## Rainfall, flood risk across multiple regions in country

ISLAMABAD (APP): The NDMA's National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) anticipated a significant rainfall across various regions of the country until July 9th.

The affected areas include northeastern parts of Punjab, particularly the eastern rivers' catchment areas, Potohar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), southern Sindh, Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), a news release said.

The anticipated moderate to heavy rainfall may cause urban flooding and was likely to induce rapid rises in water levels in nullahs, triggering flash flooding across the northern regions of Punjab (Sialkot), KPK, and AJK.

Additionally, this precipitation was expected to result in high discharge levels within the eastern rivers. Sulej River Expected to experience a low flood stage with

approximately 50,000 cusecs of water while Kabul River Predicted to reach a medium flood level with approximately 95,000 cusecs.

"These conditions are expected between until July 9th. Extreme rainfall may also lead to additional releases from Indian reservoirs, including Salal, Bhakra, and Pong Dam, which could directly impact the Chenab and Sutlej rivers. Moreover, NEOC has predicted moderate to heavy rainfall in Gilgit-Baltistan until July 8 th, which may trigger flash flooding in local nullahs. Areas such as Chigar and Khaplu are at risk of flash flooding during heavy rains," it said.

Slightly heavy rainfall was expected in Gilgit-Baltistan, KPK, northern parts of Balochistan, and AJK until July 8th. The persistent heavy to moderate rains may cause localized landslides at Karakoram

Highway along Hunza and some of areas of District Nagar, Gilgit, Diamir, Kohistan, Battagram, Mansehra, and Abbottabad, potentially disrupting traffic flows and cutting off far-flung areas from main roads.

The NDMA urged all relevant authorities and the public to take necessary precautions to mitigate the potential impacts of flooding and landslides. Emergency response teams have been alerted, and resources are being mobilized to ensure a swift response to any arising situations.

"Tourists are advised to avoid traveling to these areas during the forecasted period. The public is advised to remain vigilant and follow instructions from local authorities. NDMA advises the public to stay informed and download 'Pak NDMA Disaster Alert' mobile app for timely alerts and closely monitor weather reports," it said.

## Construction work to be completed: CDA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Thursday said that the construction work on the Islamabad Expressway, signal-free project would be completed and inaugurated by August 14 next month.

Following the directives of Federal Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Naqvi, Chairman CDA has been assigned to personally oversee the development projects in the federal capital.

Chairman CDA conducted a comprehensive visit to

the Islamabad Expressway while reviewing the ongoing construction at key locations including Sawan bridge, Japan underpass, Railway bridge and Bhinder bridge.

Muhammad Ali said that under the directives of the Minister for Interior, the construction work on the long-stalled project has advanced at an unprecedented speed by the authority.

The concerned officials informed the CDA chief that, for the first time, construction work is being conducted around the clock to

meet the deadline.

They said that significant progress has been made on the complex and challenging bridges and structures of the project over the past two months.

Muhammad Ali appreciated the efforts of the CDA, contractors and consultants for their dedication in accelerating the project towards completion.

"Maintaining such a rapid pace of work on the project, despite the constant 24-hour traffic on the Islamabad Expressway is commendable," he said.



### Japan to provide \$10m

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Japanese government is providing USD 10 million in partnership with UNODC to ensure alternative livelihoods for former poppy farmers in Afghanistan, the country's embassy in Kabul said. On X, the embassy said the amount was also aimed at providing drug use prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration services for the most vulnerable communities in Badakhshan, Helmand and Kandahar.

## The Frontier Post

# AFGHANISTAN

Zil-Hajj 27 1445 — Thursday, July 04, 2024

### MoRR signs agreements

KABUL (Pajhwok): MoRR has signed two cooperation agreements worth more than \$2.7 million with Wadan Afghanistan. Two agreements were signed by deputy minister Abdul Rahman Rashid with Wadan's representative. The ministry said the Wadan would use the money to distribute cash aid, create jobs for the blind, psychotherapy, surveys and monitor passengers returning via Torkham in Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman, Nuristan, Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan, Zabul and Nimroz.

## Ministry plans construction of 4 new terminals in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): Officials from the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing told TOLONews that the ministry has submitted the plan to construct four terminals in four zones of Kabul to the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation to facilitate the transportation process.

Mohammad Kamal Afghan, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, stated that the ministry has so far allocated approximately 1,670 acres of land for the construction of two transport terminals in two zones of Kabul to the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation.

According to Afghan, this plan aims to reduce

congestion in the city. The ministry has handed over lands in the Khaki Jabar and Chahar Asyab areas of Kabul to the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, and work is ongoing to identify land in the other two zones as well.

Mohammad Kamal Afghan said, "Based on an agreement, the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing has handed over the responsibility to the honorable Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation and tasked them with preparing a design plan according to their needs and specifications on how they want to build the terminals there."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Transport and Civil

Aviation said that the design work for these two terminals will commence this solar year.

Imamuddin Ahmadi, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, told TOLONews, "We plan to build terminals for freight vehicles in the Sang-e-Nawishta and Khaki Jabar areas this year in the eastern and south-eastern routes."

Some residents of the capital consider the construction of these transport terminals important for reducing traffic congestion.

Sharifullah, a resident of Kabul, told TOLONews, "Large vehicles arrive at uncertain times and pass through the city in an unorganized manner, causing

chaos. If this happens, it is the best action."

Shamsuddin, another resident of Kabul, said, "Creating terminals in the four zones of Kabul will bring comfort and improvement for the citizens by reducing congestion. Everything will be unloaded at its designated place, and it is good if it comes from all four sides of Kabul."

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, so far, 1,000 jeribs of government land in the Khaki Jabar area and 669 jeribs of land in Chahar Asyab of Kabul have been handed over to the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation.

## Five schools to get new buildings

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): The construction work of five school buildings at the cost of 53 million afis in southern Ghazni province has started, an official said on Thursday.

Education director Maulvi Naseer Ahmad Hussaini told Pajhwok Afghan News that the buildings will be built in Andar and Giroo districts of the province.

Among the schools that will get new buildings include the schools of Khall, Shaheed Aminullah, Zigai, Nazar Walo and Mullah Mushk Alam schools.

According to Hussaini's information the construction of these school's buildings costs 53.5 million Afis which paid by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Each of the school building would be built on around 2.5 or 4 acres of land and would get 12 classrooms, an administration office, surrounding wall, toilets, clean water spot and solar power equipment, Hussaini explained.

However the provincial director of YAAR construction company Sher Afzal Afzali said that the company had planned to build ten school buildings in Ghazni with the financial assistance of the UNICEF in different parts of the province during the current year.

Haji Barat, a resident of Khall area in Giroo district told Pajhwok that their school had no building and the students experienced various problems in this regard.

Barat confirmed that the construction works of their school building started and it would address most of the students regarding the building.

There are the total of 771 schools in Ghazni of which 250 of them still lack buildings and their students study under open sky.

## Merchants protest increase in export tariffs



KABUL (TOLONews): A number of merchants have protested neighbor country's increase in export tariffs on fresh fruits and vegetables.

They state that the neighbor country occasionally creates challenges for trade between the two countries during Afghanistan's export season.

Merchant Ashraf said, "In the three or four months when it is the season for their orange, tomatoes, and vegetables, there is no issue. However, when our season starts in Saur, Jawza, Saratan, and Asad, the season for grapes and tomatoes, right now a bag of tomatoes costs 40 Afghanis."

Merchant Abdul Saboor said, "When our season comes, neighbor country raises its tariffs. Yesterday, I sold tomatoes for 130 Afghanis, but this morning I sold them for 80 Afghanis. This is a significant economic loss for the people."

Merchant Khalid Sharifi said, "When Kabul's season starts and we export to neighbor country, they find various excuses such as transport and customs issues."

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock insists that a strategy must be created so that merchants from both countries can conduct business based on it.

First Deputy of the Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock, Mirwais Haji Zada, said, "This is neighbor country's permanent policy. I have always said, and I say it again, that they make agreements at sunrise but break them by sunset."

Merchant Akhtar Mohammad Ahmadi said, "Compared to previous years, they have increased it fourfold. For example, if last year grapes were 19,000, they have increased to 77,000, and pomegranates have gone from 25,000 to 108,000 Afghanis per ton."

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Commerce states that neighbor country's sudden decision to increase export tariffs on Afghanistan's fruits and vegetables will negatively impact trade between Kabul and neighbor country.

Naqibullah Safi, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, said, "Such sudden tariff increases and imposition of taxes negatively affect bilateral relations between the two countries, not positively."

Every year, neighbor country imposes restrictions during Afghanistan's fresh fruit and vegetable season, which leads to reduced trade and creates challenges between the two countries.

According to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, in the first five months of this year, exports to neighbor country amounted to \$294 million, a 32% decrease compared to the first five months of last year.

## Kankor examination process kicks off in Nangarhar



JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Nearly 9,500 contenders have appeared for the Kankor examination in the university of eastern Nangarhar province, an official said on Thursday.

The examination started early morning on Thursday which was continued for three hours. Besides 12th class graduates some students from 14th classes also participated.

Mawlavi Moalem Ahmad Haqqani, the administrative head of National Examination Authority, said full preparation were made for the successful and transparent conduct of Kankor examination.

Some people whose age was 51, 55 and 60 also participated in examination.

Nangarhar Education University Head Mufti Habib Hazrat Haqqani said in the past few years most problems faced by school students had been addressed, the education system had been improved and hoped that contenders would be able to pass the test and get enrolled in the faculties of their choice.

Nangarhar University students also termed the Kankor examination process as positive and asked officials to pay greater attention to transparency and order in three days.

Sabirullah, one of the Kankor participants, asked officials to ensure fairness and transparency in the outcome of Kankor process.

## IEA team in China to attend Trans-Himalaya Forum



KABUL (Pajhwok): An Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) delegation, led by Minister of Economy Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, has arrived in the Xizang city of China to attend the 4th Trans-Himalaya Forum for International Cooperation.

The forum is scheduled to commence today (Thursday) in the presence of high-ranking Chinese officials and representa-

tives from various countries and organisations, the Afghan Embassy in Beijing wrote on its X handle.

It said the IEA delegation included Environment Protection Authority head Hafiz Aziz Rahman and two representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

IEA Ambassador to China Bilal Karimi is also taking part in the forum, which was initiated in 2018

to deepen practical cooperation among regional countries on diverse subjects, including geographical connectivity, environmental protection, ecological preservation, and enhancing cultural linkages.

The last in-person meeting of the forum was held in 2019.

The theme of this year's forum is "Ecological Civilization and Environmental Protection."

## Paghman township declared state property

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has declared the Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan township in the Paghman district of Kabul a state property.

The Special Court for trying land-grab cases has determined the land for the township, spread over an area of 278 acres, is owned by the state, the MoJ wrote on its X handle.

It said the Land Grab Prevention Commission (LGPC) had submitted the township case to the Special Court after inspecting the site.

The ministry added the group had confirmed the township as a state property after a comprehensive investigation.

The commission has proven the ownership documents for the township are "fake."

The process of taking back government lands was proceeding rapidly across the country, the ministry explained.

LGPC is responsible for reclaiming state lands from usurpers.

Earlier, MoJ had reclaimed nearly 600 acres of state land from grabbers in Pagrami district.

The ministry said one million acres of state land had been wrested back from usurpers, including powerful individuals, across the country.

## Construction of two new standard schools begins in Faryab

FARYAB (TOLONews): Following a TOLONews report on the lack of standard buildings for 155 schools in Faryab, the Directorate of Education, in collaboration with an aid organization, has recently initiated the construction of two schools in this province. These two schools will cost over 27 million Afghanis and will be built to high standards.

Mohammad Tahir Jawad, the head of Faryab's Directorate of Education, stated that they aim for balanced development in the province's education sector and strive to address the challenges of inadequate standard buildings, professional teachers, and other obstacles faced by students.

Regarding this, the head of Faryab's Directorate of Education said, "The two schools we have laid the foundation for are in Dawlat Abad district and Maimana city, both with a budget of approximately 27 million Afghanis. One school we inaugurated has a budget of about 14.2 million Afghanis, and a total of 1,141 students will benefit from these three schools."

The residents of Faryab welcome the commencement of construction of these two schools but also demand the appointment of professional teachers, provision of safe drinking



water, and more facilities for these schools.

They said that due to the lack of standard buildings, students of these two schools have been studying under the shade of trees, in mosques, and private guest houses.

Sayed Nasiruddin, a resident of Faryab, said, "Previously, students were studying in rented houses and under tents. We are now pleased that the Directorate of Education has laid the foundation for

the school."

Additionally, the construction of a primary school in Qaramqul district of Faryab, costing over 14 million Afghanis, has been completed and handed over for use. The students of this school were also previously studying in open spaces.

Mohammad Rafi, a teacher, said, "As you know, our students were studying in rented houses or under the shade of trees. Now, this school has been built, providing us with

great convenience. It is a suitable environment for students to study in."

Abdul Basir, another teacher, said, "We are happy now that our school has been built. It is a standard and good school. Previously, we were teaching in a rented house."

According to the Directorate of Education of Faryab, there are currently 498 schools in the province, with approximately 305,000 students engaged in education.

## IAE's officials meet with journalists



JALALABAD (Ariana News): A joint meeting was held between journalists and local officials of Nangarhar province of Afghanistan in order to address problems faced by the media outlets in the

province.

In this meeting, a number of journalists said that they want the financial problems of the media to be addressed and officials must let them have access to information on time.

"These kinds of meetings are necessary so that journalists can share their problems with the authorities and that the journalists should be able to fulfill their responsibility towards the government," said a journalist.

Meanwhile, the deputy governor of Nangarhar, the head of information and culture and the spokespersons of various departments emphasized in the meeting that they are ready to fully cooperate with journalists.

"We share your problems with the relevant departments. We cooperate with you as much as we can," said Sayed Ahmad Banuri, the deputy governor of Nangarhar.

## Australia names new special envoy for Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): The Australian government has appointed Amanda McGregor as its new special envoy to Afghanistan, replacing Glenn Miles.

"Based in Qatar, Ms McGregor will work with like-minded countries to call out the Taliban on its abuse of human rights and support the people of Afghanistan," Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong said.

"Our diplomats are the driver of Australia's engagement with the world. They build influence and prosecute Australia's national interests abroad," she added.

Before working for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, McGregor was a senior adviser to the Canadian embassy and Prime Minister's Cabinet. She also spent five years at the Department of Defence.

Most recently, McGregor was deputy head of mission at the Australian Embassy in Lebanon.

## UN to implement projects in Herat

KABUL (BNA): In a promising development for Herat, the United Nations has announced its readiness to implement several development projects in the region. This initiative aims to boost local infrastructure, improve living standards, and foster sustainable growth.

In a meeting with Herat Governor, Mawlana Noor Ahmad Islam Razi, the UNOPS Earthquake Response Project Manager provided a brief overview of their projects in Herat. They expressed readiness to begin the restoration of health centers, residential



homes, irrigation canals, and water supply networks damaged by last year's earthquake in Herat.

Governor Islam Razi welcomed the continued cooperation of UNOPS with the

people of Herat, praised the previous activities of the organization in the province, and assured full cooperation from the local administration with the United Nations office.



# KP CM reviews security plan for Muharram

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high level meeting to review the arrangements for the holy month of Muharram-ul-Haram was held here on Thursday with the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair.

The meeting took a detailed review of the security plan and other arrangements in order to maintain law and order during the month of Muharram. Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Additional Chief Secretary Home Muhammad Abid Majeed, Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur, administrative secretaries of concerned departments and other relevant high ups attended the meeting. Divisional commissioners, Regional Police Officers, Deputy Commissioners and District Police Officers also attended the meeting via video link.

While briefing the participants on the security plan and other arrangements for the month of Muharram, it was informed that Muharram processions and gatherings would be carried out in 14 districts of the province out of which, eight districts have been reported as the most sensitive and other six as sensitive in terms of law and order and security arrangements, adding that about 40 thousand security personnel would be deployed during the month of Muharram, whereas special contingents of FC and Pak Army would also be deployed for the security of Muharram processions and gatherings.

sions and gatherings.

An integrated strategy in consultation with the all the stakeholders has been devised to effectively monitor the processions and gatherings. "A central control room comprising representatives from all relevant departments and law enforcing agencies is also being set up at the Home department for the purpose" the authorities told and added that special arrangements have been made for the security of sensitive districts and spots across the province. Processions and public gatherings would be monitored directly through CCTV cameras whereas display of arms, pillion riding and hateful wall chalking have also been banned.

The participants were further informed that special initiatives have been proposed to constantly monitor social media pages in order to control spreading of hateful contents and negative propaganda during the month of Muharram. Similarly, mobile phones services in the sensitive districts would be suspended.

Apart from this, staff of health and rescue departments would be assigned with special duties with the purpose to effectively deal with any untoward situation during the month of Muharram.

Addressing the participants, the Chief Minister said that maintaining law and order during the holy month of Muharram is the top most priority of the government, and that's why, he directed that special attention must be given to the sensitive districts across the province so as to

avoid any kind of unrest and untoward situation in the province. He has directed the concerned quarters to release the financial resources required for the security purpose on the first priority.

Moreover, he directed that religious leaders of different sects and elected public representatives should be approached as an effort to promote religious harmony and tolerance during Muharram. Similarly, keeping in view the intense heat wave in the province, the Chief Minister directed to install tents at suitable places in the routes of processions, further directing them to take the PESCO and TESCO authorities on board in order to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity to the routes and places of processions and public gatherings (Majalis).

The Chief Minister further directed them to have an effective mechanism of coordination amongst all the relevant departments and agencies at provincial, decisional and district levels, adding that the proposed security plan should be implemented in its letter and spirit.

"Maintaining law and order during the month of Muharram should be the top most priority of all the stakeholders", he said and added that all relevant authorities, departments and agencies would have to fulfill their respective responsibilities well in time for this purpose. Ali Amin Khan Gandapur also appealed to religious leaders as well as general public to play their proactive role in maintaining law and order and promoting sectarian harmony during the month of Muharram.



BEIRUT: Smoke billows after a hit from a rocket fired from southern Lebanon over the Upper Galilee region in northern Israel on Thursday. — AFP

## Advance tax discord

# PPDA announces to shut down petrol pumps today

ISLAMABAD (INP): Following the collapse of negotiations between the government and the petroleum dealers over the issue of advance tax, the association has announced to shut down all fuel stations on Friday.

Chairman Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) Abdul Sami Khan said: "We met with government officials in Islamabad, but the talks produced no results, hence, we will go on strike as announced earlier."

Demanding withdrawal of the advance income tax imposed in the budget 2024-25, the petroleum dealers said the tax would ruin the petrol pump business.

They said they were already running the business with a low profit margin, amid high inflation. Khan said they would be forced to shut their business because of the unfair tax, as there was "no way in the world to run fuel stations in loss with double taxation".

Voicing concerns about

the budget's 0.5% advance tax on turnover, the PPDA pointed out that every transaction for the cost of commodities sold is already taxed at the time of purchase and is recorded in the books of account of oil marketing businesses and dealers.

Therefore, the PPDA requested, the clause should be removed from the finance bill as soon as possible.

Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, the PPDA chairman said he had told the Ministry of

Finance that they should not be dealt like other sectors. He also warned of severe consequences, if their businesses came to an end. Expressing reservations over oil smuggling in the country, Khan said they contacted all the relevant departments over smuggling of oil from Iran, but none listened to them. He said they wanted the government to sign an agreement with Iran and impose tax on its oil as it was the government's responsibility to check the smuggling.

## Senate polls in KP PHC adjourns hearing till SC verdict on reserved seats

### Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice SM Attique and Justice Muhammad Ijaz Khan adjourned the hearing of a petition seeking holding of Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa till Supreme Court of Pakistan verdict on reserved seats, on Thursday.

The counsel Ali Zaman advocate argued that the Election Commission has unlawfully delayed the Senate elections in the province, despite the fact that elections have been held in the rest of the country. The delay is a violation of the constitution and the electoral laws, and that the province has been deprived of its representation in the Senate, he added.

Election Commission's lawyer Mohsin Kamran advocate argued that the delay is due to a case pending in the Supreme Court regarding reserved seats. PHC observed that the case will be

heard once the Supreme Court decides on the issue of reserved seats.

The petitioner's lawyer argued that the Senate elections are essential for the representation of the province in the upper house and that the delay is causing irreparable harm to the province.

The Election Commission's lawyer argued that the commission is bound by the Supreme Court's decision on reserved seats and cannot proceed with the Senate elections until the issue is resolved. PHC adjourned the hearing until the Supreme Court's decision on the reserved seats case.

### PHC orders AG for response on imposition Excise duty on tobacco

Meanwhile, Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered Advocate General for submission of comment in a plea challenging imposition of Rs50 per kilogram Excise Duty on raw tobacco by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government during 2024-25 budget, on Thursday.

The counsel Ishiaq Ahmad Senior advocate

argued that that the imposition of excise duty is illegal and violates federal laws, as the federal government already imposes Rs390 per kilogram excise duty on tobacco. He added that the provincial government's duty is a violation of the Federal Excise Act 2024 and will lead to the collapse of the industry in the province.

The lawyer stated that the industry is already struggling due to the existing federal excise duty, and the additional provincial duty will make it difficult for them to operate.

The counsel requested the court to declare the duty null and void, arguing that it is a double taxation, which is not allowed under the law. They also argued that the provincial government's duty will lead to the collapse of tobacco industry.

PHC's divisional bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Syed Arshad Ali directed Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to submit a response to the petition and adjourned the hearing.

## Murad presents 15-year progress

### Continued from Front Page

Improvement of Roads: During his presentation, Mr. Shah showcased the damage to various newly constructed roads caused by the 2022 floods. Some of these affected roads are the 6.45 km stretch from Pithoro to Girhorer Shareef, the road from Tharparkar, Netaveri to Dohharo, and the road from Jhudo to Ahmed Jatt.

He stated that numerous damaged schools have been reconstructed or rehabilitated after the 2022 floods and he displayed their photographs. Some of the rehabilitated schools include Khaliq Colony Larkana, Boys Primary School Ali Murad Chandio in Tando Moahmmad Khan, Boys School in Kallar Machhi, Sehwan, and many others.

Housing initiative: Murad Ali Shah discussed the construction of houses for those affected by the floods, mentioning that out of the rural population of 23 million, the focus is on reconstructing houses for 14 million individuals. He revealed that the number of project beneficiaries, at 15 million, exceeds the population of 154 countries worldwide.

The CM provided an update on the housing project, stating that validation of 2 million houses has been completed, 805,000 bank accounts have been opened, funds have been provided to 555,000 affected people, 373,000 houses have reached the post-plinth level, and 150,000 houses have been fully constructed. Shah disclosed that Rs112 billion has been secured for the construction of 2.1 million houses, with an assurance of Rs548 billion. Addressing the impact of the largest housing initiative in the world, the CM noted that it has bolstered women's empowerment, generated over one million jobs, and facilitated financial inclusion through 2 million bank accounts.

During the presentation, two documentaries were screened - one featuring Noor Khatoun from Thatta district, showcasing the process from receiving the first instalment to the completion of a resilient house, and another highlighting the transparent Management Information System (MIS) process, including tracking of each beneficiary in real-time. Health: The Chief Minister said that the biggest achievement of his government's partnership with Child Life Foundation was that today every child in Sindh is within 30 minutes of world-class emergency care - 24/7 - free of charge.

## Response sought on plea challenging Nawaz's victory

LAHORE (INP): Lahore High Court's (LHC) election tribunal has sought response on a plea challenging Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) President Mian Nawaz Sharif's victory in the general election.

LHC's election tribunal Judge Anwaar Hussain heard the petition of Yasmin Rashid challenging Nawaz Sharif's victory in the NA-130 constituency in the general election. The election tribunal inquired about the notice issuance on this petition, petitioner's

counsel replied, no notice was issued. Consequently, the election tribunal has adjourned the case hearing until September seeking arguments on the petition challenging Nawaz Sharif's victory in NA-130 in the general elections.

It is pertinent to note that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Dr. Yasmin Rashid has challenged the victory of her political opponent, PML-N President Mian Nawaz Sharif in National Assembly constituency NA-130. The petitioned

filed by Dr. Yasmin Rashid contended that Mian Nawaz Sharif clinched the success in Lahore constituency NA-130 in the general elections through rigging.

The petition implied that PML-N candidate lost the election in the NA-130 constituency as per Form-45 but he was made winner in the said constituency through forged Form-47. It was requested in the petition to the election tribunal to declare Nawaz Sharif's victory in NA-130 null and void.

## Israel sends delegation to negotiate hostage release

CAIRO/GAZA/JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told U.S. President Joe Biden on Thursday he has decided to send a delegation to resume stalled negotiations on a hostage release deal with Hamas, Netanyahu's office said in a statement.

In a phone call between the two leaders, Netanyahu repeated his position that Israel would only end its nearly nine-month war in Gaza when all its objectives had been achieved, the statement said.

Israel's Channel 12 said the head of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency would lead the Israeli delegation for the talks, though this was not immediately confirmed. Netanyahu is scheduled later on Thursday to

have consultations with his negotiating team, and then discuss the hostage release talks with his security cabinet.

It was not clear where the Israeli delegation would go to resume the talks. Prior efforts to end the Gaza conflict were mediated by Egypt and Qatar, with talks held in both locations.

Israel received Hamas' response on Wednesday to a proposal made public at the end of May by Biden that would include the release of about 120 hostages held in Gaza and a ceasefire in the Palestinian enclave.

A Palestinian official close to the mediation effort told Reuters that Hamas, the militant group that controls Gaza, has shown flexibility over some clauses that would allow a framework agree-

ment to be reached should Israel approve.

Two Hamas officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Hamas has said any deal must end the war and bring a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Israel maintains it will accept only temporary pauses in the fighting until Hamas is eradicated.

The plan entails the gradual release of Israeli hostages still being held in Gaza and the pullback of Israeli forces over the first two phases, and the freeing of Palestinian prisoners.

The third phase involves the reconstruction of the war-shattered territory and return of the remains of deceased hostages.

In Gaza, Palestinians reacted cautiously ahead of Israel's response.

## Zardari to visit Lahore on Tuesday

LAHORE (INP): President Asif Ali Zardari will reach Lahore on July 9 (Tuesday) owing to his multiple engagements in Punjab's capital. President Asif Zardari will attend a seminar organized in connection with the anniversary of Professor Waris Mir. According to sources, the president will also meet members of Pakistan People's Party's (PPP) parliamentary party in Punjab Assembly. President Zardari will also meet the party leaders of Pakistan People's Party Punjab and Lahore. Asif Zardari will also review the reorganization of the People's Party in Punjab, the sources added. President Zardari will also meet Punjab Governor Sardar Salim Haider Khan.

## Amir Mughal arrested

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Islamabad chapter president Amir Mughal has been arrested ahead of the party's power show in the federal capital. As per details, Amir Mughal's counsel Asim Baig took to X (formerly Twitter), saying that the PTI leader was arrested outside the DC office Islamabad. Earlier, the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) granted bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Amir Masood Mughal, who was arrested and booked under terrorism charges in Karachi Company police station. It is pertinent to mention here that the Islamabad district administration granted permission to PTI to hold a power show at Tarnol Chowk Islamabad on July 6.



LONDON: Britain's opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer and his wife Victoria Starmer walk outside a polling station during the general election in London, Britain, on Thursday.