

More monsoon rains

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) anticipated more rains, wind and thundershower with isolated heavy rains in various regions of Pakistan until August 18th. According to the forecast, more rain was expected in catchment areas of Neelum and Jhelum rivers in Azad Kashmir.



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RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir arriving at a ceremony held in honour of Army veterans. He is accompanied with former Chiefs General (Retd) Ashfaq Pervez Kayani and General (retid) Raheel Sharif.

COAS pays tribute to Army veterans

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir has paid heartfelt tribute to the contributions of the retired personnel, lauding their dedication and instrumental role in shaping the nation's history.

The COAS hosted a graceful reception in honor of Pakistan Army veterans on the occasion of Independence Day. The event brought together a multitude of retired army officers and soldiers, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news

release said.

The COAS paid heartfelt tribute to the contributions of the retired personnel, lauding their dedication and instrumental role in shaping the nation's history.

He emphasized the paramount importance of unity and resilience in the face of challenges, urging veterans to continue playing a vital role in Pakistan's progress and development.

The COAS also cautioned against the insidious threat of fake news and propaganda being perpetrated by inimical elements to weaken the bond between the people of

Pakistan and the Armed Forces.

He reassured that the unwavering support of the nation, including the veterans would foil all such futile efforts.

The veterans expressed faith and confidence in the leadership of the Pakistan Army, pledging their support in combating both internal and external security challenges.

The event served as a testament to the unbreakable bond between the Pakistan Army and its veterans, united in their commitment to the nation's prosperity and security.

3 more retired officers under military custody: ISPR

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: In connection with the Field General Court Martial (FGCM) proceedings of Lt General (R) Faiz Hameed, three retired officers were also in military custody for their actions prejudicial to military discipline.

Further investigations of certain retired officers and their accomplices for fomenting instability at the behest of and in collusion with vested political interests, are continuing, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said on Thursday.

"In connection with the FGCM proceedings of Lt Gen (Retd) Faiz Hameed, three retired officers are also in military custody for their actions prejudicial to military discipline," the military's media affairs wing said.

PM lauds armed forces' over successful Kurram operation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif lauded the armed forces on Thursday for their successful operation in Kurram District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which led to the death of seven Khawarij terrorists besides the arrest of five others.

According to a statement from the Prime Minister's media office, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated that the armed forces of Pakistan had worked tirelessly round the clock to rid the country of the Khawarij terrorist threat.

The prime minister stated that the entire nation, including himself, had paid tribute to the brave officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army, who had carried out their duties selflessly, risking their lives for the integrity of Pakistan.

The prime minister said that the entire nation stood by the Pakistan Army in its determination to rid the country of the menace of terrorism.

The Frontier Post

Seven khwarij killed

RAWALPINDI (INP): The security forces gunned down seven khawarij during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted in Kurram district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Thursday. The military's media wing in a statement said that the killed terrorists were actively involved in numerous attacks against security forces and innocent civilians.

Gaza ceasefire talks get underway in Doha

DOHA/CAIRO, Aug 15 (Reuters) - A new round of Gaza ceasefire talks was underway in the Qatari capital Doha on Thursday afternoon, an official briefed on the meeting told Reuters, with Israel's spy chief joining his U.S. and Egyptian counterparts and Qatar's prime minister for the closed-door meeting.

The talks, an effort to end 10 months of fighting in the Palestinian enclave and bring 115 Israeli and foreign hostages home, were put together as Iran appeared on the point of retaliating against Israel following the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on July 31.

With U.S. warships, submarines and warplanes dispatched to the region to defend Israel and deter potential attackers, Washington is hoping a ceasefire agreement in Gaza can defuse the risk of a full-out wider regional war.

Hamas officials, who have accused Israel of stalling, did not join Thursday's talks. However, mediators planned to consult with Hamas' Doha-based negotiating team after the meeting, the official briefed on the talks told Reuters.

Israel's delegation includes spy chief David Barnea, head of the domestic security service Ronen Bar, and the military's hostages chief Nitzan Alon, defence officials said on Wednesday.

CIA Director Bill Burns and U.S. Middle East envoy Brett McGurk represented Washington at the talks, convened by Qatari

prime minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, with Egypt's intelligence chief Abbas Kamel also in Doha.

Israel and Hamas have each blamed the other for failure to reach a deal but in the run-up to Thursday's meeting, neither side appeared to rule out an agreement.

A source in the Israeli negotiating team said on Wednesday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has allowed significant leeway on a few of the substantial disputes.

Gaps include the presence of Israeli troops in Gaza, the sequencing of a hostage release and restrictions on access to northern Gaza.

In the lead-up to Thursday's talks, Hamas, which rejects any U.S. or Israeli intervention in shaping the "day after" the war in Gaza, told mediators that if Israel made a "serious" proposal that is in line with Hamas' previous proposals the group would continue to engage in negotiations.

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters on Thursday that the group is committed to the negotiation process and urged mediators to secure Israel's commitment to a proposal Hamas agreed to in early July, which he said would end the war and required a full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza.

Even as negotiators arrived in Qatar, fighting continued in Gaza, with Israeli troops hitting targets in the southern cities

of Rafah and Khan Younis.

After months of a war which has laid waste to Gaza, killed more than 40,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials, and driven almost all of its 2.3 million population from their homes, there was a desperate desire for an end to the fighting.

"Enough is enough, we want to get back to our homes in Gaza City, every hour a family is getting killed or a house getting bombed," said Aya, 30, sheltering with her family in Deir Al-Balah in the central part of the Gaza Strip, where hundreds of thousands have sought refuge from the fighting. "We are hopeful this time. Either it's this time or never I am afraid," she told Reuters via a chat app.

In Tel Aviv, families of some of the hostages protested outside the headquarters of Netanyahu's Likud party.

"To the negotiating team - if a deal is not signed today or in the coming days at this summit, do not return to Israel. You have no reason to return to Israel without a deal," said Yotam Cohen, whose brother Nimrod Cohen is a hostage in Gaza.

The hostages were taken in the Hamas raid on southern Israel on Oct 7 in which the militants killed some 1,200 people, triggering the war in the Palestinian enclave.

In a statement Hamas issued late on Wednesday jointly with some smaller factions, it reaffirmed the outstanding demands the

factions wanted a ceasefire agreement to achieve.

The group said negotiations "should examine mechanisms to implement what was agreed upon in the framework deal submitted by mediators that would achieve a comprehensive ceasefire, a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces, breaking the siege, opening crossings and reconstruction of Gaza as well as reaching a serious hostages/prisoners deal."

Iran's threat of a response to the killing of Haniyeh has added extra gravity to the talks. Three senior Iranian officials have said that only a ceasefire deal in Gaza would hold Iran back from direct retaliation against Israel.

But a possible escalation from the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement in southern Lebanon is also weighing on the outlook.

Following a missile strike that killed 12 youngsters in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights on July 27, Israel assassinated Hezbollah's senior military commander Fuad Shukur in Beirut, prompting vows of retaliation from the movement.

Israel and Hezbollah have been exchanging regular fire for months but the exchanges have been kept within tacitly understood red lines that risk being erased if the conflict escalates. Israel has neither confirmed or denied its involvement in Haniyeh's killing. The U.S. Navy has deployed warships and a submarine to the Middle East to bolster Israeli defences.

ECC okays continuation of PM Relief Package

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet here on Thursday approved continuation of the Prime Minister's Relief Package for the fiscal year 2024-25 through Utility Stores Corporation (USC) with revised price and subsidy.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb

chaired the cabinet committee meeting, according to press release issued by the finance ministry.

The proposal to continue the package was presented by the Industries & Production Division, the press release added.

Furthermore, the ECC approved the request of Ministry of Industries & Production to declare Warehousing and Logistic

Sector as an industry, it added

Among others was attended by Minister for Industries & Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain; Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan; Minister for Privatization, Abdul Aleem Khan, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Federal Secretaries, and other senior officials of the relevant ministries.

Terrorists' attack on police post repulsed in DG Khan

DERA GHAZI KHAN (APP): Punjab police successfully repulsed an attack by terrorists at an inter-provincial post in Dera Ghazi Khan, police said on Thursday.

Around 50-60 terrorists attacked Likhani police post at the Punjab-KP boundary in DG Khan from all four directions.

However, police managed to identify their presence by thermal image cameras and attacked the terrorists by machine guns and mortar guns forcing them to retreat.

Regional Police Officer DG Khan Captain (Retired) Sajjad Hassan Khan led the operation. IGP Dr. Usman Anwar said that Elite Force and Quick Reaction Force (QRF) back up teams immediately rushed to the check post while DPO Dera Ghazi Khan Syed Ali, leading elite force teams, reached Triman post from where he supervised the operation against terrorists. SHO PS Vehoa and his team has also reached the police post, IGP said.

US-Russian citizen sentenced to 12 years in jail

YEKATERINBURG, Russia (Reuters): Ksenia Karelina, a Russian-American spa worker, was sentenced to 12 years in prison on Thursday by a Russian court after she was found guilty of treason for donating money to a charity supporting Ukraine.

The Los Angeles resident pleaded guilty at her closed trial in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg, where her case was heard by the same court that convicted Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich of espionage

in July.

The court said investigators found that Karelina had, on February 24, 2022 — the first day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine — "transferred funds in the interests of a Ukrainian organization, which were subsequently used for the purchase of tactical medicine items, equipment, means of defeat and ammunition by the Armed Forces of Ukraine."

Her supporters say she had donated \$51.80 to Razom for Ukraine, a New York-based charity that provides humanitarian aid to children and elderly people in Ukraine. The charity has denied it provides any military support to Kyiv.

Karelina appeared in court on Thursday in a white sweatshirt and blue jeans, sitting calmly in a glass courtroom cage.

The 35-year-old was not included in a major prisoner swap between Russia and the West last week that freed Gershkovich, but her lawyer Mikhail Mushailov has said she hoped to be included in a future exchange.

Sindh cabinet okays 250 acres land for 500 MW solar park

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that significant decisions were made during the Sindh Cabinet meeting, chaired by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah. The cabinet approved the allotment of 250 acres of land for a 500 MW solar park in Manjhand. Additionally, approval was granted to establish a 120 MW solar park on 612 acres of land in Karachi Central District. The establishment of the Sindh Electric Power Regulatory Authority (SEPPRA) was also approved during the meeting.

Addressing a press conference following the Sindh Cabinet meeting, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated that Sindh will play a

crucial role in resolving the current energy crisis. He noted that President Asif Ali Zardari is committed to providing relief to the people under any circumstances. President Zardari also issued a statement yesterday, emphasizing that the current electricity bills are beyond the people's tolerance, and therefore, relief should be provided. He has urged all governments to take action to ease the burden on the public.

He mentioned that economic and energy experts have concluded that Thar coal can play a pivotal role in addressing the energy crisis. Thar coal will be used to generate affordable electricity, which will not only meet Pakistan's energy needs but also enable the country to export electricity.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that a retired general was arrested today, and according to

ISPR, there have been three additional significant arrests, which were welcome. It appears that these arrests may be linked to the tragic events of May 9, where certain individuals went to great lengths to discredit their own institutions. These arrests demonstrate that the net is tightening around those conspiring against Pakistan.

He remarked that conspiracies were orchestrated against Pakistan in the pursuit of power, with everyone driven by their own interests. Some sought positions, while others aimed for different benefits, leading to the May 9 conspiracy. The May 9 tragedy stands as one of the darkest chapters in the country's history, designed to mislead and provoke the people, turning them against their own institutions. The ultimate goal was to pressure these institutions into halting actions against Imran

Khan and clearing the path for his return to power. The PTI founder was the mastermind behind the May 9 tragedy, directly involved in its planning, while others acted as facilitators. It is also believed that the recent arrests may be connected to the May 9 conspiracy.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that there is another facilitator of the PTI founder who has played, and likely continues to play, a significant role in securing relief for PTI from the courts. This facilitator is a notorious figure, and during his tenure in a very important constitutional position, he repeatedly violated the constitution and laws of Pakistan, actions that are well known to the public. This individual used his position to target Imran Khan's opponents through his remarks, imprisoning them and closely monitoring their cases, all

driven by his infamous conduct.

He mentioned that this infamous person was responsible for the arrest of the People's Party leadership. On his orders, our leaders, Ms. Faryal Talpur, Syed Khurshid Shah, and Agha Siraj Durrani, were arrested. He created an atmosphere of fear and made arbitrary decisions, leading to the suffering of many in Pakistan at the hands of former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar.

He stated that there are reports indicating that even today, the former Chief Justice continues to support PTI, with the founder still managing the party's affairs. However, divine justice is at work, and those who have oppressed and misled the people are now being brought under the law.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that those who were burning the ambulances of innocent

people were not acting alone; they had facilitators behind them. These facilitators are gradually being unmasked, and more individuals will be exposed. He emphasized that the message is clear: nothing is greater than Pakistan, and the country's democracy and parliament are paramount. All institutions in the country are valued, and no one should be above the law. Anyone conspiring against the country's institutions, whether it be the former Chief Justice or a former head of an institution, must be brought to justice.

He stated that the leadership of the PPP has faced severe oppression, including hangings, bombings, shootings, and flogging. Shaheed Bibi's government was dissolved twice, and its leaders were imprisoned twelve times without any crime.

Continued on Back Page



Murtaza inaugurates modern Funland at Karachi Zoo

KARACHI (PPI): Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab said on Thursday that a tender would be issued for road construction in all seven districts of Karachi to resolve delays in developmental work.

The Work would be visible on MA Jinnah Road, Hub River Road, Malir, Korangi, Ibrahim Hyderi and other areas, he said while addressing the inauguration ceremony of modern Funland at Karachi Zoo after flag hoisting ceremony with school students at the Mughal Garden.

He said: "The city that

drives Pakistan can run itself as well, and we will demonstrate this. No tax will be applied on electricity bills up to 200 units." Wahab said KMC had received an additional revenue of Rs4 billion, and at the end of this month, they would inform how much revenue has been received and how it will be spent on the development of Karachi.

Wahab said that modern Funland had been inaugurated at the zoo today. This space was previously unused, but now quality recreational facilities had been provided for the citizens. You can see the large

number of people visiting the zoo.

For the lower and middle classes, this is a great recreational spot in Karachi where families can observe various animals and birds and spend pleasant moments. We will continue to improve Karachi Zoo and enhance recreational facilities.

He also mentioned that on Independence Day, a tree plantation campaign has been launched in Karachi to increase greenery and reduce the intensity of the weather.

"Small and large parks, as well as green belts along roads, have also

been made greener through this plantation effort, which includes the establishment of urban forest. Proper arrangements have been made for the protection and watering of the planted trees to ensure that this plantation effort contributes to making the city more beautiful and environmentally friendly in the future."

Wahab added that while the Punjab Chief Minister had announced a tax on garbage collection in the province, any similar initiative in Karachi faced criticism. The mayor also enjoyed a ride on the train installed in Funland.



KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon addressing a press briefing after meeting of Sindh Cabinet.

Bugti says security forces committed to root out terrorism



QUETTA (PPI): Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, on Thursday said that a conspiracy had been hatched to create chaos and anarchy in Balochistan in the garb of protest.

Addressing a press conference at the Chief Minister's Secretariat, he said that the 77th Independence Day across the province was celebrated with great zeal and enthusiasm, adding that the incidents of terrorism were taking place in Balochistan under a pre-planned conspiracy.

He said that security forces were committed to root out terrorism. He said 500 children of labourers were being sent to Islamabad for education.

Bugti said that educational expenditures of the children of Deputy Commissioner, Panjur, Zakir Baloch, who was mercilessly martyred in Mastung, would be shouldered by the government besides providing government job to the widow of Deputy Commissioner, Panjur, Zakir Baloch. He said that the government was working on reforms agenda, adding that issue of the transporters of Chaman had been resolved.

Flag-hoisting held in Pak embassy in Kabul

F.P. Report

KABUL: The Embassy of Pakistan in Kabul proudly hosted a flag-hoisting ceremony on the occasion of Pakistan's 78th Independence Day. Ambassador Ubaid-ur-Rehman Nizamani, Pakistan's Head of Mission, raised the flag. The ceremony was attended by embassy staff and distinguished guests.

The messages of President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Mohammad Shahbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister /

Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar were read on this occasion.

In his remarks, Ambassador Nizamani paid rich tributes to the brave national heroes, particularly the martyrs of the armed forces of Pakistan, who laid down their lives to protect Pakistan's physical and ideological frontiers.

He recalled the vision of Quaid e Azam and other prominent leaders of the freedom movement and emphasized the need for Pakistani citizens to emulate their selfless struggle for Pakistan's future prosperity.

The freedoms we enjoy, and the peace we cherish will be further strengthened by following in the footsteps of the heroes of Pakistan movement.

Ambassador Nizamani felicitated the entire nation on Pakistan's Independence Day and especially congratulated Pakistanis present on the occasion on their participation in the significant event of hoisting of Pakistan's flag in Kabul and urged a renewed commitment to uphold the ideals of our forefathers to keep our flag flying high across the world.

Sindh Education Dept reopens 2889 closed schools: Shah

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Thursday, announced that 2889 closed schools have been reopened across the province under the ongoing educational reform process.

The minister, in a statement issued here, said that as many as 2587 teachers were appointed in the closed schools on recommendations of 'Teachers Placement Committee' amid improved teachers' availability following the merit-based recruitment of over 60,000 teachers in Sindh.

Sardar Shah termed reopening of schools those were closed mainly due to shortage of teachers- as a major development in education reforms in Sindh and vowed that no school will remain closed in the province due to the paucity of teaching staff.

Sindh School Education and Literacy Department had formed a Teachers Placement Committee in order to re-open the viable closed Schools and rationalization of teaching staff in May 2024. On the recommendations of the committee 2587 teachers have been appointed in viable

closed schools and a notification in the regard has also been issued by the department concerned.

The appointments of teachers in the closed schools were made at the Taluka (Tehsil) level to ensure teacher availability, the minister said adding that, however, the case of 169 closed schools in deprived talukas was pending as the matter was under litigation and those schools will be opened according to the court decision.

He said that implementation of the placement plan would continue and new teachers will be

appointed immediately in case of retirement or death of any serving teacher.

"The provincial government has taken remarkable steps under education reforms, and now the community should also play its role," he said and urged every member of society to lodge complaints against absentee teachers.

Sardar Shah also instructed teachers to discontinue their duties with honesty and sense of responsibility and warned of action under efficiency and disciplinary rules against those who fail to do so.

KU, donors discusses expansion in scholarship projects

KARACHI (APP): The University of Karachi and donor organizations discussed different proposals to expand the existing scholarship schemes for KU students.

The representatives of Balochistan Education Endowment Fund, Alkausar, USA, UKAHA Houston, Pakistan Baitulmal, and Ihsan Trust met the KU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi at the KU VC Secretariat on Thursday. The KU Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Professor Dr Shaishta Tabassum, the KU Dean of the Faculty of Science Professor Dr Musarrat Jahan Yousuf, in-charge KU Students Financial Aid Office Professor Dr Ziasma Haneef

Khan, and others were also present on this occasion.

The General Manager Ihsan Trust Fayyaz Ur Rehman informed the meeting that over 500 students from different departments of the University of Karachi have received interest-free loans from the trust in the past and now they can provide financial support to more than 500 students in a single year.

He mentioned that evening students can also avail themselves of the Ihsan Trust scheme, and easy loans are available to every needy student at any stage of their education. He said the trust can also provide financial aid for purchasing transport bus (s) for campus students.

Qaim Mehdi representing Alkausar USA shared that

the Pakistani community living in the US is supporting students as they are willing to improve the education sector of Pakistan. He said that the University of Karachi has a large number of students and Alkausar wants to uplift their education standards.

Assistant Director of Pakistan Baitulmal Sadia Ashraf mentioned that Pakistan Baitulmal provides scholarships to bright students of the public sector universities and Pakistan Baitulmal is working to expand the pool of scholarship funds to facilitate more students including youngsters studying in the evening program. Feroze Iqbal representing UKAHA Houston shared that the alumni of the University of Karachi were

helping the students on the individual level but after signing the memorandum of understanding they have increased the funds to help more students through the KU SFAO. He advised students that after completing their studies, they must try to help others according to their capacities.

Earlier, KU VC Dr Khalid Iraqi briefed the visitors about the Student Admission Fund project which is helping the students who could not afford their admission fees, and shared the benefits of scholarships for the merit and need base students. He said that we are encouraging our departments to take their alumni on boards so that our students can have more facilities in the classrooms.

Karachi reports 4th case of Congo virus

KARACHI (INP): Karachi has reported yet another case of Congo virus this year, with a 32-year-old patient being admitted to Jinnah Hospital under critical conditions. The patient, who was brought in on Wednesday, was initially experiencing symptoms, including fever and diarrhoea. Upon examination, the patient's Congo virus test returned positive. Due to the severity of the illness, the patient has been transferred to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the hospital for advanced medical care. Medical professionals have indicated that the Congo virus is highly dangerous, with only a 10% chance of recovery. Congo virus, also known as Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF), is a viral disease transmitted from animals to humans, and it can also spread from person to person. The virus is known for its high mortality rate and poses a significant health risk. An increase in the Congo virus cases has been seen in Karachi, as five cases have been reported in the first two weeks of August only, sources said.

SUIT ADVERTISEMENT

In the Court of Miss Ambareen Navid Judge Banking Court-1 Peshawar Federal Judicial Complex, Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar Case No: 110/1 of 2024 Date of hearing: 08-10-2024 Suit for the Recovery of Rs. 1,617,405/- ZTBL Through Manager Charsadda branch. Vs: Zakir Shah Khan Notice Versus:- Zakir Shah Khan, S/o Zahir Shah Khan, R/o:- Shaheedan Dheri, sar Dheri, Tehsil and Dist: Charsadda. Where as the plaintiff bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs. 1,617,405/- Against you under section 10 (2) of the Financial Institution (Recovery of Finance) Ordinance 2001, you are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/ publication of the notice in the newspaper. Failing which an ex-parte decree shall be passed in favour of the plaintiff Bank with costs. Issued today on 10-08-2024 under my signature and seal of the Court.

Registrar,
Banking Court, 1 Peshawar

گورنمنٹ پولی ٹیکنک انسٹیٹیوٹ کیڈ فنڈ ضلع مہمند

تصحيح

بحوالہ اشتہار شائع شدہ مورخہ 13 اگست 2024 بروز نامہ آج پشاور فریڈیز پوسٹ پشاور اور نئی بات پشاور، افغانستان نمبر 2029/24 INF(P) میں انٹرویو کی تاریخ غلطی سے 5:30 اگست 2024 شائع ہوئی ہے جب کہ صحیح تاریخ 5:30 ستمبر 2024 ہے۔ بقیہ اشتہار من ر ہے گا۔

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PHC seeks govt reply in varsities land case

Seeks response till 12 Sep against curtaining mayors' powers

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court has issued a notice to the provincial government regarding the possible sale of land belonging to various public universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, seeking a response. The case was heard by a two-member bench consisting of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Syed Arshad Ali, on Thursday.

The counsel Daras Khan Afridi advocate informed the court that over 400 kanals of land were acquired for the University of Engineering and Technology Mardan, Agricultural University Mardan Complex, and Bacha Khan Medical College in Mardan between 2009 and 2012. However, media reports suggest that the provincial government is planning to sell the land of these universities and is pressuring the relevant officials to revise the original master plan.

The counsel argued that many universities are currently without vice-chancellors and are being run without them. Additionally, most universities in the province are facing financial issues. On one hand, the provincial

government is planning to sell the land of public universities, and on the other hand, it is taking steps to merge several universities.

He argued that the government does not have the authority to sell university land, and the land in question has buildings constructed on it for the institutions. Thousands of acres of land were acquired for educational institutions and other purposes. Instead of reducing its expenses, the government wants to sell the land of public universities.

The petitioner requested the court to restrain the government from selling university land or merging institutions until a final decision is made on the petition.

He also requested the court to order the provincial government to release funds to public universities facing financial issues. The bench, after hearing initial arguments, issued a notice to the provincial government, seeking a response.

PHC seeks response till 12 Sep against curtaining mayors' powers plea

A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Arshad Ali once again

issued a notice to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government regarding the transfer of financial and administrative powers from mayors and tehsil chairmen to the Secretary of the Local Council Board, seeking a response by September 12, on Thursday 1.

The petition was filed by Haji Zubair Ali, the mayor of Peshawar, and argued by Farooq Afridi Advocate. He informed the court that under Article 32 of the Constitution, local government institutions should be encouraged to enable elected representatives to serve the people at the grassroots level. Similarly, each province should have a local government system with financial and administrative powers.

However, on July 12, 2024, the Secretary Local Government issued a notification transferring financial and administrative powers related to development projects at the local council level to the Secretary Local Council Board.

The petitioner's counsel argued that this move not only undermines the effectiveness of councils but also violates Article 14-A of the Constitution, which guarantees the existence of

local government.

The court was informed that the notification has given all administrative and financial powers to the Secretary Local Council Board, whereas the Local Government Act 2013 and 2019 only allows for the transfer of powers through amendments in the provincial assembly. The counsel argued that the Local Council Board's primary function is to handle matters related to appointments, promotions, transfers, and pensions, but it has now been given financial powers as well, which is illegal and unconstitutional.

Additional Advocate General present in the court requested more time to submit the provincial government's response. The petitioner's counsel requested the court to declare the July 12 notification illegal and restrain its implementation until the court's decision. Justice Arshad Ali remarked that the court will review the government's response once it is received.

PHC divisional bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Syed Arshad Ali issued another notice to the provincial government, seeking a response by 12 September.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur looking at the model design of Solar Scheme.

Ban on kite, pigeon flying in areas near to airport

PESHAWAR (APP): District Administration under section 144 has imposed ban on kite and pigeon flying in areas situated in proximity of airport.

The ban has been imposed in areas including Pishakhara, Gulbarg, Swati Phatak, Landi Akoon Muhammad, Umar Gul Raod, Nawar Kale, Old Bara Road, Customs Chowk, Abdara Road and Pawake Road.

The ban has also been imposed on quad copter flying, use of high beam lasers and shops of pigeon selling. Ban has been posed a part of safety measures essential to ensure safe landing of planes on air fields.

Anyone found guilty of defying ban would be prosecuted under Section 188 of CrPC.

Matric students awarded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Tehsil Council organized Pride of Mandanr Award ceremony as part of the Pakistan Independence Day celebrations to pay tribute to the students obtained highest marks in the premises in matriculation examination.

The special guest of the award show was Assistant Commissioner Mandanr, Maryam Bakhtawar. The ceremony was attended by tehsil Nazim Buner Naseeb Khan, tehsil municipal officer Amin Khan, Additional AC Muhammad Khan, deputy superintendent of police Musharraf Khan, Forest Range Officer Bakhtshad Khan, village nazims, and award winner students.

According to details, shields and cash prizes were awarded to students including Hamid Alam, Jaffar Hussain and Syed Zalan Ali. Similarly, female students Raufa Kashi, Kashmala Hussain and Seemra Shad for their academic achievements in matric examination. Government Primary School head teacher Muhammad Salah, High School Ambela science teacher Umar Rahim and journalist Imran Buner obtained awards for their extraordinary services in the respective fields.

Moreover, the students of 9th class including Amina Ali, Suhana Kausar and Anwar Ullah were also awarded with shields and cash prizes for obtaining highest marks in the tehsil.

Village nazims, DSP Musharraf Khan, SHO Anwar Zeb Khan, and others were also awarded shields for their good performance.

Speaking at the ceremony, chief guest Maryam Bakhtawar said that we have maintained our traditions and awarded Pride of Mandanr awards to those who have made Buner's name shine in various fields, so that they are encouraged and others learn from them.

She said that during the Independence Day celebrations, tree planting was done at various places, awareness walks were held, and plants were distributed among students and the public to highlight the importance of trees.

SACM directs speedy completion of work on District Jail Swabi

PESHAWAR (APP): Special Assistant to KP CM on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Abdul Karim Tordher has directed to complete the construction work on the new under-construction District Jail Swabi as soon as possible.

He issued these directives while presiding over a meeting held here review the pace of construction work on the new District Jail Swabi here at the Civil Secretariat on Thursday.

Besides, Special Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs Department Muhammad Zubair, Inspector General Prisons Usman Mehsud, Chief Planning Officer Industries Department Basit Khalil along with officers of Home and Tribal Affairs Department, Planning and Development and representatives of other concerned departments attended the meeting.

The Special Assistant said that for the provision of required financial resources, the concerned

department should prepare a case and refer to the relevant forum. He said that due to the prolonging of the project, the existing Sub-Jail has less capacity, therefore, he stressed for more concentration on the completion of the construction work, so it could be partially opened within a short period of time.

He also directed for initiating steps to impart technical and professional skills to inmates and in this context the local institutions including industries, Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) and Prisons' Department will improve coordination with each other, so the prisoners could be equipped with standard skills.

In the meeting, the Special Assistant was told that 70% construction work on the new District Jail Swabi has been completed saying that new District Jail is being constructed for 850 prisoners, but it will be having the capacity of higher number

of inmates.

The Special Assistant was told that a revised PC-I of Rs.3288.97 million has been submitted for the project. However, there is an urgent need for Rs.585 million to operationalize the nearly completion parts of the jail.

On this occasion, the Special Assistant directed the officials of the department to fulfill their responsibilities as soon as possible to make it ready for keeping the prisoners. He directed the preparation of the case in a proper manner and then for provision of funds send it to the concerned forum.

He said that work on the project is continued since 2008, which has been delayed due to financial difficulties, but their efforts are to complete it as soon as possible as the Sub Jail Swabi has less for the capacity of local prisoners, saying after the establishment of this new prison there will no need of transferring prisoners to District Jail Mardan,

DHA Peshawar celebrates Independence Day



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: DHA Peshawar celebrated Pakistan's 77th Independence Day on August 14, 2024, with a flag-hoisting ceremony at Pakistan Chowk. Brig Haroon Rahim, Administrator of DHA Peshawar, raised the national flag in the presence of senior officials and DHA Peshawar personnel. Prayers were offered for the nation's security, stability, and prosperity, reaffirming the commitment to Pakistan's progress. The event also featured a celebratory cake-cutting and a glider plane fly-past over Pakistan Chowk.

In collaboration with Shaukat Khanum Memorial Hospital, Al-Huda Trust, and IRNUM Peshawar, DHA Peshawar organized a tree plantation campaign at the Adventure Arena. Children undergoing treatment at the hospital actively participated in the initiative, promoting environmental sustainability.

The celebrations also included a 4x4 car show with activities like tug-of-war and racing, which attracted considerable public interest.

Toyota Khyber Motors showcased its latest range of vehicles, drawing attention from attendees across various backgrounds.

A martial arts demonstration was another highlight of the event, earning widespread appreciation from the audience. Participants were awarded certificates at the conclusion of the activities.

The festivities began on the evening of August 13 with a lively Meena Bazaar, featuring food and corporate stalls, and culminated in a spectacular fireworks display at midnight.

Faiq calls for devising a joint agenda to end crisis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Muhammad Faiq Shah, founder and chairman of the Amun Taraqqi Party called for setting aside political differences and frame a joint agenda to steer the country out of crisis.

Shah noted: "Pakistani politics is stuck in a vicious cycle of vengeance, which is impeding democratic culture."

He asked: "Are we destroying the political landscape?" Talking to various delega-

tions here on Thursday, the party leader said accountability is that which should be carried out 'across the board' and indiscriminate.

He said accountability based on specific purposes/interests and political revenge have multiplied bitterness and hate and also created hurdles in the way of justice.

Eulogizing the sacrifices of Pakistan's armed forces, Shah said an exemplary system of discipline, merit and sacrifices is in our Pakistan Army. The ATP chief asked governments and institutions

to build up a concrete system of external accountability so that the process of self-accountability can be fostered.

We need to learn lesson from 77 years of social, economic and political history. Shah said oppression, consequences of actions, and political and economic conditions were visible before everyone. The party leader said today, Pakistan would have ranked among the developed nations, if attention had paid to education, agriculture and industry.

Day Care Center inaugurated at UET Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Day Care Center at the University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar was inaugurated by the Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Qaiser Ali, here on Thursday.

Addressing the occasion, the Vice Chancellor emphasized the university's commitment to providing

facilities for female faculty members and administrative staff.

Supporting our female employees during their duties is our top priority, he added. The Day Care Center aims to provide supervision and care for the children of working mothers at the university, enabling them to focus on their duties more effectively.

The center's establishment is a significant step towards promoting a supportive work environment for female staff.

The Vice Chancellor appreciated the efforts of Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ashraf, focal person of the center, Engr. Hamna Shakeel, incharge Day Care Center and Director Works, Sardar Muhammad Asghar for their tireless

efforts in setting up the center in a remarkably short period.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Prof. Dr. Hamid Ullah, Chairman, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Prof. Dr. Afzal Khan, Provost, Prof. Dr. Misbah Ullah, Advisor Finance and other senior faculty members and administrative officers.



VC KMU Prof Dr. Zia Ul Haq to be awarded Sitara-e-Imtiaz

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has announced prestigious Sitara-e-Imtiaz for the Vice Chancellor of Khyber Medical University (KMU), Prof Dr. Zia Ul Haq. This distinction recognizes his remarkable contributions in the fields of medical education, research, and public health. This achievement is a significant milestone for KMU Peshawar. Prof Dr. Zia Ul Haq was recommended for this honor by both the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the provincial government, underscoring the national recognition of his impactful work. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government and the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Islamabad supported his nomination for his outstanding leadership in higher medical education, medical research, and public health. Appointed as the youngest Vice Chancellor of KMU at the age of 40, Professor Dr. Zia Ul Haq has been instrumental in transforming the university into a modern, self-reliant hub for high-quality medical education and future technology. Under his visionary leadership, KMU has emerged as a research-driven institution, making significant strides in both education and public health. Prof Dr. Zia Ul Haq also heads the Task Force for Higher Education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and is a member of various provincial and central committees related to medical education and public health. His leadership extends internationally, where he directs several critical research projects.



PESHAWAR: A worker busy in knitting charpoy, a traditional bed, at his workplace in Dabgari bazaar. — INP photo



In brief

Bandits demand Rs2m

KHAIRPUR (PPI): A gang of bandits has demanded Rs20 million ransom for the release of the kidnapped son of Assistant Superintendent of Central Jail Sukkur. According to a PPI report on Thursday, the robbers demanded Rs20 million from the heirs of Jameel Rind, who was kidnapped from Rind Hajana village near Khairpur. The bandits have tied the Jameel with chains and were also torturing him. They also sent such a video to the heirs. In the video, kidnapped Jameel is seen appealing to his father and mother to save his life by paying Rs20 million ransom to the kidnappers as soon as possible. He told them that those people used to chain him day and night and also torture. He further said that if the ransom money was not paid to them, they would kill him. The crime rate is Khairpur district is on the rise as police have failed to control it.

DG plants sapling

FAISALABAD (APP): Director General (DG) Environment Department Punjab Imran Hamid Sheikh on Thursday planted a sapling on Chak No 248-RB, Dalawal under plant for Pakistan campaign. Deputy Director Johar Abbas Randhawa and other officers, brick kiln owners and students took part in the plantation drive. He said that plantation was vital for the protection of the environment. He directed plantations at brick kilns and other available spaces.

SDOs FESCO suspended

FAISALABAD (APP): Four Sub Divisional Officers (SDOs) of Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) were suspended on the charge of negligence, delinquency and misbehaviour with consumers. Spokesman Tahir Sheikh said here on Thursday that Chief Executive Officer (CEO) FESCO Engineer Muhammad Amir received complaints against SDO Nazim Abad Subdivision Shoaibur-Rehman, SDO Dijkot Subdivision Zeeshan Sarwar, SDO City Subdivision Bhakkar Kazim Raza and SDO City Subdivision Darya Khan Ayyaz Khan that they had not only committed negligence in their official duties by also misbehaved the honorable FESCO consumers by abusing their powers. Talking serious notice, FESCO Chief suspended these four SDOs and warned the other FESCO officers and officials to perform their duties honestly and dedicatedly in addition to dealing with the FESCO consumers politely as the FESCO clients are precious asset of the company. FESCO Chief also directed the operation staff in all circles, divisions and subdivisions to attend the phone calls immediately and respond prompt for redress of electricity related complaints. He also directed the FESCO officers to listen to the consumers' complaints in open courts daily from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. so that their electricity related issues could be redressed without any delay. Meanwhile, Director Career Management FESCO Mehmood Ahmad also issued notification for suspension of 4 SDOs, FESCO spokesman added.

Wana students shine in board exams across province

F.P. Report

WANA: The students sponsored by WAWA grab top position from all the educational boards across the province in the recent SSC and Intermediate exam, it include Cadet College Wana, Cadet College Razmak, Cadet College Spinkai, Tameer Watan Public School Abbottabad and Modern Age Hazara.

So far, thousands of orphans and poor children have benefited from Wawa scholarship, wana welfare association a social and welfare organization established in 2005. Due to this welfare organization, thousands of children's have quenched their thirst for knowledge and achieved a high position in the society. Wawa raised the slogan of higher education in the war-torn and military operation-affected Wana at a time when Wana was a victim of terrorism and the people living here were asking for life instead of education.

Wana Welfare

Association has brought a revolution in the field of education, health, forestry, agriculture has no parallel in the region. Last year, Wawa successfully completed the transplanting of more than two lakh wild olives in south Waziristan(Lower), which will prove to be a game changer in the economic development of the region. Wana welfare association also planted huge number of during annual plantation campaign organized in different parts of the areas, which play an important role in controlling the problems faced in the region regarding climate change. Umma Children's Academy and Zindawar Schools System are the significant achievements of WAWA.

In these institutions the poor students of the area are getting free education in the best environment on wawa scholarship, with excellent accommodation and free education to more than thousands of orphan children's of district South

Waziristan. students graduated from Umma Welfare Trust Nowshera on the scholarship of WAWA are working in good positions in and outside the country. A student Qudrat Wadan currently studying in Cadet College Razmak on Wawa's scholarship has secured 1133 marks in the recent matriculation examination from BISE Bannu and secured second position in Cadet College Razmak.

He belongs to village Tanai of district South Waziristan. Along with this Wawa scholarship holders Abdul Rehman has secured first position among boys in the entire Abbottabad board by securing 579 marks in 9th annual examination 2024.

Apart from this, the scholarship holders of Wana Welfare Association have achieved a prominent position in other prominent educational institutions of the province, WAWA is moving forward to change the destiny of the nation through the slogan of quality education.

Govt wants solution to people's problems: Aftab

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law Aftab Alam Afridi and former Interior Minister Shehryar Afridi MNA have said that it is the mission of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur to solve the problems of the people at their doorsteps and for this purpose, the Chief Minister has strictly directed the deputy commissioners to hold Open Katcheries in the remote and farflung areas of the province and today's Open Katchery is a part of it.

They said that these courts will not be just sitting and dismissing, but will be purposeful and effective.

They expressed these

views while addressing an Open Katchery held in Dara Adam Khel, Kohat on Thursday.

On this occasion, Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Mutasim Billah Shah, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali, Officers of the District Administration and Line Departments, Elders and Youth of the area were present.

The participants openly presented their problems on this occasion, prominent among it were the exemption of the vehicles of Dara Adam Khel from tunnel tax, lack of staff in the hospitals and educational institutions, gas, electricity, drinking water and irrigation sectors issues.

They maintained that

there will be significant reduction due to these Katcheries in public grievances and most of the common problems of the people will be solved at local level. They assured that the important problems of the area will be taken up with the higher authorities at the relevant forum which will yield positive results. They added that the collective problems of the area will be solved on priority basis.

They clarified that the decisions made in the Open Katchery will be implemented in letter and spirit and action will be taken against those who do not implement within the deadline.

The elders of the area while declaring the event a welcome step, stressed for its continuation in future also.



QUETTA: Traffic police forklifter lifting a vehicle from no-parking area att Zarghoon Road. — INP photo

Bangash obtains SC license

F.P. Report



KOHAT: Another honor of the District Bar Association Kohat, Malik Muhammad Mohtsham Bangash succeeded in obtaining the license of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

According to the details, 40 lawyers participated in the interviews held on August 6, 2024, out of which 23 candidates were successful. Young lawyer Malik Muhammad Mohtsham Bangash from Kohat was also among these 23 lucky lawyers, the chairman of the interview panel.

Justice Supreme Court Yahya Afridi himself, Pakistan Bar Council members Syed Gulb Hasan and Ehsan Boom were also part of the interview panel. While talking to Malik Muhammad Mutashim Bangash, he said that he will continue to work hard in the future and will make every possible effort to ensure the delivery of justice to the people as soon as possible.

Malakand RPO visits martyr' family in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Regional Police Officer Malakand Range Muhammad Ali along with district police officer Saleem Abbas Kulachi on Thursday visited the family of the martyred police head constable Siasat Khan and offered fateha for the departed cop. The head constable embraced martyrdom when militants attacked a police post in the Paloso area of Mayar in the Lower Dir district here the other day. Another police constable, Hazrat Nabi had got injured in the grenade attack.

The RPO expressed his condolences to the heirs of the Shaheed Siasat Khan, and prayed for the elevation of his ranks in Jinnah, of the martyr. He also met with the martyr' children, and said that in this hour of difficulty, his family should not consider themselves alone.

The RPO said the entire police force was standing with the martyr family. The RPO lauded the bravery of the martyr Shitash, who sacrificed his life for the

sake of the country.

The Regional Police Officer issued orders to utilize all available facilities for the welfare and education of the martyr's children.

Later, the Regional Police Officer visited various police pists in the jurisdiction of Mayar police station and encouraged the jawans on duty.

He made a detailed review of the security arrangements at the various check posts.

The RPO directed the police officials to increase patrolling, search and strike operations at check posts more efficient in their jurisdiction.

OPEN KUTCHERI: Following the instructions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, the Lower Dir administration on Thursday arranged an open kutcheri at the district assembly hall with deputy commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan in the chair.

Additional Deputy Commissioner and Planning John Muhammad, Assistant

Commissioner Timergara Dr. Nida Iqbal, Assistant Commissioner Revenue Tariq Khan, Tehsil chairman Mufti Irfan Uddin, heads of all departments, social workers and public participated in the event.

Social workers presented public grievances to the administrative officers. The Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned officials to implement the orders as soon as possible regarding the public complaints. The heads of the concerned departments explained on the spot some complaints.

On this occasion, the DC highlighted the importance of open courts and said the public should raise problems faced by them. The Deputy Commissioner gave detailed answers on the issues related to the district administration. Responding to public issues he said that a report will be sent for fund release regarding the ongoing incomplete projects approved by the provincial government.

The participants were asked to cooperate with Pesco officials in the recovery of electricity bills. He said there would be no power outage for over 12 hours on any feeder. The DC directed the Pesco authorities to fix any fault on any feeder as soon as possible.

"All the indicators of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's public agenda are for the welfare of the people, it will be implemented in any case. All department heads have been assigned various tasks with timelines", the DC informed the gathering.



Moonlight serenity unfolds in Oshu valleys as tourists extend stay in Kalam

SWAT (APP): The enchanting charm of the moonlight, accompanied by the melodious chirping of birds and budding flowers, forced tourists to extend their stay in the serene Oshu valleys of Swat on Thursday.

The picturesque landscapes of Upper Kalam's Oshu valleys and the Mahudhand Lake became a haven of tranquility as moderate to erratic rain showers intermingled with bursts of sunshine, enhancing the natural splendor of the region. The pleasant weather brought an influx of visitors to the area on occasion of Pakistan Day celebrations, who were eager to experience the unique blend of nature, moonlight charm and calm.

The dramatic interplay of clouds and sunlight over the pristine landscapes provided a mesmerizing backdrop for those seeking solace from the hustle and bustle of city life.

Faraz Khan, a tourist from Nowshera, expressed his delight, saying, "The weather in Kalam is amazing. I came from Wapda Town, Nowshera with my family and celebrated 78th Pakistan's Independence Day here in the Mahudhand and Oshu Valleys. We have had a wonderful time amidst this beautiful setting, filled with fun and excitement."

The ongoing allure of Kalam's natural beauty, enhanced by the day's pleasant weather, continues to draw visitors seeking

both adventure and relaxation in this idyllic corner of Pakistan.

Nestled amidst towering deodar trees and abundance of trout fish, Mahodand lake with two kilometers length and 9,400feet height of sea level emerges as a jewel of nature, its bluish-white waters swelling with the monsoon rains.

Visitors flock here eager to immerse themselves in the lake's tranquil beauty and partake in leisurely boating adventures.

The lake's surroundings burst into a riot of colours, with vibrant seasonal flowers and roses sprawling across the landscape, creating a feast for the eyes and soul. The monsoon season is cherished as an unparalleled opportunity to visit one of the country's most beautiful tourist destinations. The atmosphere here is imbued with a palpable sense of ecstacy, courtesy of the frequent moderate to erratic rains that grace the region.

"I came to Kalam Valley with my family after five years to enjoy its mesmerizing natural beauty and cold weather on the weekend," said Waheed Khan, a resident of Peshawar while talking to APP.

"Every raindrop adds to the moonson magic, enhancing the lush greenery and the lake's emerald allure," he said, adding Mahodand lake is renowned not just for its stunning vistas but also for its freezing waters and abundant trout fish besides exploring it

through boating of Rs 200 trip," said Waheed while enjoying trout fish as his children playing football around him amid great fun and laughter at Mahundhand with cold breeze and waterfall emanating from snow-clad Osho.

Adventure enthusiasts and nature lovers from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are particularly drawn to this beautiful destination known for its breathtaking natural beauty, taking advantage of the open access road and improved transportation facilities.

The enhanced infrastructure and Swat motorway have made it easier for tourists to indulge in various adventure sports in Upper Swat, further elevating the lake's appeal.

"In this season of monsoon, Mahodand lake stands as a testament to nature's splendor. It invites all to experience its ethereal beauty, to breathe in the fresh, rain-kissed air, and to create unforgettable memories in one of Pakistan's most enchanting locales," he said. Saad Khan, the spokesman of Tourism and Culture Authority told APP that elaborate arrangements were made for accommodation and facilitation of tourists and adventure sports lovers during monsoon season in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Under Development of Ecotourism Project (ETP), he said that camping pods with facilities of two to four

beds alongwith wash wash-rooms and kitchen were established at various scenic places including Malakand and Hazara divisions.

Besides establishment of camping pod at Gabeen Jabba near Mahudhand lake and Sharan near Saiful Malook lake, he said 10 more camping pods were installed at different tourism places to provide affordable accommodations to tourists' families.

These camping pods were established at Sharan Kaghan, Mansehra, Mahaband Buner-Swabi, Allai Batagram, Bamburait Chitral, Tandyani Abbottabad, Bisigram Swat, Yakhtangi Shangla, Saheed e Sir and Malka Swat and Sheikh Badin in DI Khan. Bishigram, Shran, Yakhtangi, Shaheed e Sir and Malk camping pods have already been opened for tourists.

Each pod has two to four beds for families, a wash room and a small kitchen with foolproof security arrangements by tourism police, he said, adding Rs3500 to Rs5000 per day/night stay was being charged against Rs12,000 to Rs15,000 per room by a private hotels at Khagan, Naran and Galiyat valleys.

As many as 10 more camping pods at Jargo and Sulatan in Swat, Lashkargha Broghal Valley and Surlaspur Shandor valley Upper Chitral, Kumrat valley in Dir, Laram Top and Shahi Bin Shahi in Lower Dir, Lilowani Alpuri

in Shangla Samanah Top in Orakzai/Hangu and Kalam Swat. One of the key initiatives that have been undertaken is to increase the presence of security personnel in tourist spots. This has made tourists feel safer and more secure, resulting in an increase in the number of tourists visiting northern KP.

Tourism police force comprises well-trained officers equipped to handle any situation that may arise while tourists are visiting the northern KP to beat sizzling heat in plain districts of Pakistan. These officers are fluent in several languages, including English, to make communication with foreign tourists easier.

A mobile application called the "Tourist Safety App," has been launched enabling tourists to quickly and easily contact the tourist police in case of an emergency. Furthermore, the government has invested heavily in improving the infrastructure, including the road network, transportation, and accommodation facilities.

The construction of new hotels, resorts, and rest houses has made it easier for tourists to find suitable accommodations while enhanced road networks had reduced load on the established tourism stations.

Muhammad Ali Syed, General Manager, Tourism and Culture Authority said that waterfalls of Lamchar, Sajkot, Noori, Chajjian Haripur, Jarogo Swat, Lanchar Dir and Umbrella

Abbottabad were being developed to promote ecotourism.

Tourism spots, jeep tracks and roads to link waterfalls of Abbottabad, Haripure and Mansehra were being developed.

To reduce tourists' load at Galiyat, Kaghan, Naran, Kalam, Malam Jabba and Dir, jeepable tracks was being constructed in 15 areas with an estimated cost of Rs500 million, adding camping pods were also established near it while local communities were encouraged to reserved at least one rooms for tourists to bolster income of rural population.

Similarly, over 19 PTDC hotels/motels including at Gharan Chesma, Pir Maflash, Boni, Kalash in Chitral, Oshu Kalam, Mankiyal, Saidu Sharif, Miamund in Swat, Balakot Mansehra, Ayubia Abbottabad opened for tourists.

Omair Khattak, GM Investment, KP Tourism Authority said Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZs) at Ghanool Mansehra, Mankiyal Swat, Madaklasht Chitral and Thandiyani Abbottabad would be constructed with assistance of the World Bank.

Ghanool Mansehra would be established on 59.6 acres, Mankiyal Swat on 29.5 acres, Madaklasht on 540 Kanal and Thandiyani on 640 Kanal of land respectively.

As a pilot project, ITZ Ghanool with a proposed cost of Rs5.5 billion and

Mankiyal with an estimated cost of Rs2.9 billion to be developed first to promote sustainable tourism. Rules and regulations for Mankiyal and Ghanool ITZs were prepared that would be completed on the patterns of ITZs of Malaysia and Indonesia. These ITZs are expected to create 200,000 direct and indirect job opportunities and USD 2.8 billion investment. Feasibility of the Cable Car project from Dir Upper to Madaklasht Chitral has been completed and it would be financially supported by the World Bank through Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated tourism project (KITTE).

Four colonial era tracks' development including Thandiyani-Nathiagali having 8, 200 feet height, 40km length and 1500 old trees belt, Thandiyani-Biringali track, Dagri Bangla-Meera Jani-Nathiagali track and Kaghan- Mahnoor track starting from Shinkiyari to Kund Bangla and onward to Shaheed Pani-Nadi Bangla to Musa Ka Musallah were in pipeline.

These positive measures of the government would help increase tourism revenue besides promoting the soft image of Pakistan being a tourism loving country.

The experts underlined the need for showcasing these treasures through short videos and pictures through social media to attract foreign tourists imperative for bolstering rural economy.



Pakistan Independence Day celebrated in Munich



F.P. Report

MUNICH: On August 14th, the West Park in Munich, Germany, was abuzz with excitement as overseas Pakistanis gathered to celebrate Pakistan's Independence Day. The event was a vibrant

display of Pakistani culture, with various stalls showcasing traditional clothing and cuisine from all four provinces of Pakistan. The festivities kicked off with a flag-hoisting ceremony, followed by a special dua for the unity and prosperity of Pakistan.

Kids and adults alike enjoyed a range of activities, including quiz, games, face painting, and a Photo Booth. The air was filled with the sweet sounds of Pakistani music, with live performances by the kids attendees. As the day drew to a close, the community

came together for a special prayer, seeking blessings for Pakistan's progress and prosperity. The celebration was a testament to the strong bond between the Pakistani diaspora and their homeland, and a showcase of the rich cultural heritage of Pakistan.

Pakistan Independence Day celebration held in Ottawa

F.P. Report

TORONTO: A dignified flag hoisting ceremony to celebrate Pakistan's 77th Independence Day anniversary was held at the Pakistan High Commission, Ottawa. All three Consulates in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal also organized the flag hoisting ceremonies. Acting High Commissioner Mr. Faisal Kakar unfurled the national flag with the national anthem in the backdrop. The festive event was attended by a large number of Pakistani diaspora and Canadian nationals of Pakistan origin. Special messages from the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan were read out. On this occasion, Mr. Kakar highlighted the historical significance of the day, acknowledged the contributions being made by the Pakistani Canadian community and apprised them of the recent measures being taken by the Government of Pakistan to facilitate overseas Pakistanis. He emphasized on the need for unity and harmo-



ny among the Pakistani diaspora and urged them to redouble their efforts for the socio-economic development of their motherland. He stated that, despite various challenges and odds, Pakistan has

achieved remarkable progress in the past years. He underscored that this auspicious day symbolizes the spirit and resilience of the Pakistani nation, reminding us of the sacrifices made by our forefa-

thers in their struggle for freedom. It highlights our responsibility to uphold the ideals of independence and signifies our collective journey towards progress, prosperity, and national unity. He drew attention of the international community on the plight of oppressed people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), while reaffirming Pakistan's support to their legitimate struggle for the right to self-determination. "Canada and Pakistan are long-standing partners with deep ties between our people. Today, Canada is home to over half a million Canadians of Pakistani origin who are deeply woven together and make Canada a more prosperous, diverse, and inclusive place, he added. The ceremony concluded on a joyous note, with a cake-cutting ceremony, symbolizing unity and progress. Besides this event, the Pakistani diaspora organised a series of events marking the 78th Independence Day of the nation.

Judge tells Google to brace for shakeup

SAN FRANCISCO (AP): A federal judge on Wednesday indicated he will order major changes in Google's Android app store to punish the company for engineering a system that a jury declared an illegal monopoly that has hurt millions of consumers and app developers. Over the course of a three-hour hearing in San Francisco, U.S. District Judge James Donato made it clear that the forthcoming shake-up he is contemplating will probably include a mandate requiring Google's Play Store for Android phones offer consumers a choice to download alternative app stores. Donato has been weighing how to punish the Google since last December when a jury declared the Play Store a monopoly following a four-week trial. The verdict centered on Google's nearly exclusive control over distribution of apps designed for Android phones and the billing systems for the digital commerce occurring within them — a system that generates billions of dollars in annual revenue for the company.

In protesting the judge's potential requirements, Google has raised the specter of consumers' devices being infected by malicious software downloaded from third-party app stores, triggering "security chaos." But Donato repeatedly hammered on the need for a major overhaul of the Play Store, even if it causes Google headaches and huge bills that the company has estimated could run as high as \$600 million, depending on what the judge orders. "We are going to tear the barriers down, that is going to happen," Donato told Google attorney Glenn Pomerantz. "When you have a mountain built out of bad conduct, you are going to have to move that mountain." Donato said he is hoping to issue an order outlining the framework for the changes to the Play Store within the next few weeks, possibly before the Labor Day weekend.

Google's tactics in the penalty phase of the Play Store case may foreshadow its strategy in a similar round of so-called "remedy hearings" that will be held in an even bigger antitrust case that resulted in a judge branding the dominant search engine as an illegal monopoly, too. Those hearings focused on the crown jewel of Google's empire are scheduled to start Sept. 6 in Washington, D.C. In the Play Store case, Donato still appears to be grappling with how much time he should give Google to make the changes to its Android operating system and Play Store, and also for how long the restraints he imposes should remain in effect.

Google wants 12 to 16 months to make the adjustments to ensure a smooth transition and avoid glitches that could affect the performance of Android smartphones. Epic Games, the video game maker that filed the antitrust lawsuit that resulted in the Play Store being declared a monopoly, contends Google could do everything in about three months at a cost of about \$1 million.

Without revealing a timeline he has in mind, Donato indicated he isn't going to give Google as much time as it wants to make the required changes. "Google is telling me it will take eons for all of this to happen, but I am skeptical about it," the judge said. "I am dubious that all that brainpower can't solve these problems in less than 16 months."

Epic Games wants whatever Donato orders to remain in effect for six years, but the judge said Wednesday that he thinks that proposal is too lengthy. He wondered aloud if a five-year term for his order might be more appropriate. Google wants the order to expire after one or two years.

Donato assured Google that he isn't going to attempt to micromanage its business, even as he braced the company for a significant shake-up. "The whole point is to grow a garden of competitive app stores," the judge said.

Thai alliance rallies behind daughter of tycoon Thaksin for next PM



BANGKOK (Reuters): Thailand's ruling alliance on Thursday backed the daughter of divisive tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra to become the next prime minister, a surprise move that could prolong a power struggle and reignite political turmoil.

Political newcomer Paetongtarn Shinawatra, 37, will be nominated at a special vote of parliament on Friday and if successful, would become Thailand's second female premier and the third Shinawatra to hold the top post. The announcement followed a flurry of backroom talks in the 24 hours since a court dismissed Srettha Thavisin as premier, in what was the latest blow for Pheu Thai, the populist juggernaut of the billionaire Shinawatra family that has locked horns for two decades with Thailand's influential establishment and royalist military. "The country has to move ahead, Pheu Thai is the main party in forming a government and will push the country forward," Paetongtarn told a joint press conference, flanked by leaders of the party's 10 coalition partners. "We are determined, together, and will push the country forward." Srettha was the movement's fourth premier to be removed by a court ruling

and his downfall suggests a breakdown in an uneasy detente between Thaksin and his enemies in the conservative elite and military old guard, which had enabled the tycoon's return from self-exile in 2023 and ally Srettha to become premier the same day.

SURPRISE GAMBLE Pheu Thai's decision will come as a surprise to some political analysts, who had expected heavy-weight Thaksin, 75, Pheu Thai's founder and figurehead, would delay his political dynasty and shield his youngest daughter from Thailand's cut-throat politics for a little longer.

Pheu Thai and its predecessors have borne the brunt of the tumult, with two Shinawatra governments ousted in coups in a long-running grudge match that began when former telecoms magnate Thaksin tried to upend established patronage networks, angering elites with far-reaching connections.

Uncertainty about political upheaval could add more strain to an underperforming economy that Srettha had hoped to revive with a raft of stimulus measures, some that could now be in question, including his vaunted plan to give 10,000 baht (\$285) handouts to 50 million people. Providing the 11-party alliance stays intact,

Paetongtarn should have no difficulty in winning the vote in parliament, where the coalition holds 314 seats, or nearly two thirds of the current 493 lawmakers. The approval of more than half of the house is required to become prime minister.

If elected, Paetongtarn has multiple challenges to overcome, including assumptions that she will be a puppet of Thaksin, whose claims to have retired from politics since his return after 15 years abroad have fallen on deaf ears.

As an indicator of his immense clout, discussions late on Wednesday between the coalition partners took place at Thaksin's residence, with media showing live images of the leaders arriving.

The gamble on neophyte Paetongtarn comes at a sensitive time in Thai politics, when a Shinawatra dynasty risks the kind of backlash that drove her father and aunt Yingluck Shinawatra into self-imposed exile.

"She would be open to attack," said Titipol Phakdeewanich, a political scientist at Ubon Ratchathani University. "The risk for Paetongtarn is higher. If Pheu Thai can't deliver anything then it could be the end of the Shinawatra family in politics."

Hijab law violation

Iran police shot a woman while trying to seize her car

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP): On a darkened road beside the Caspian Sea, Iranian police officers opened fire last month on a 31-year-old woman who had tried to speed away likely knowing they wanted to seize her vehicle.

Police had been ordered to impound her car, activists say, because of an earlier violation of Iran's headscarf law for showing her hair in public while driving.

Now unable to walk and confined to a bed at a police hospital, Arezou Badri — a mother of two — is the latest casualty of Iran's renewed crackdown over headscarves, or hijabs. Her shooting occurred nearly two years after 22-year-old Mahsa Amini died while in police custody over an alleged headscarf violation, sparking nationwide protests over women's rights and against the country's theocracy.

As the Sept. 16 anniversary of Amini's death approaches, Iran's new reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian has promised to ease enforcement of the headscarf law. But the murky details of Badri's shooting and a recent video of a girl being manhandled in the streets of Tehran show the dangers still lurking for those willing to disobey it.

"They have elevated it to the most serious crime, where the police is allowed basically to shoot to kill," said Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran. "That's really a war on women."

Badri's shooting occurred around 11 p.m. on July 22 along a coastal road in Iran's northern Mazandaran province as she drove home from a friend's house with her sister, activists say. A brief account published by Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted police Col. Ahmad Amini as saying

patrol officers had ordered a vehicle with tinted windows to stop, but that it didn't. It made no mention of the hijab violation or impound notice.

Officers appear to have first fired at Badri's car's tires, according to the group Human Rights Activists in Iran, which spoke to people with knowledge of the shooting. As Badri continued driving, officers fired into the vehicle, the group said; the gunfire pierced her lung and damaged her spine.

Under Iranian law, police must fire a warning shot, then aim to wound below the waist before taking a potentially fatal shot at a suspect's head or chest. If the suspect is driving, officers typically aim first for the tires.

Why police initially stopped Badri's car remains unclear, though activists blame it on the impound alert over the hijab violation. It's also unknown whether any police vehicle at the scene had a camera that recorded the shooting or if any officer there wore a body camera.

There are no public statistics of fatal police shootings in Iran. Police firearms training and tactics vary widely, as some officers face more paramilitary duties in areas like Iran's restive Sistan and Baluchestan provinces.

Iran's Interior Ministry, which oversees the country's police, did not respond to questions about the shooting from The Associated Press.

Authorities are holding Badri at a police hospital in Tehran under tight security, restricting her family's visits and stopping them from taking photographs of her, activists say. Despite that, an image of Badri was published by the BBC this week, highlighting her case.

"She has no sensation from the waist down and doctors have said that it will be clear in the coming months whether she is com-

pletely paralyzed," said one activist in Iran, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisal.

The hijab became a focal point of demonstrations after the death of Amini in 2022. She died after being arrested for not wearing her headscarf to the liking of police. A United Nations panel has found that Amini died as a result of "physical violence" used against her by the state.

Amini's death sparked months of protests and a security crackdown that killed more than 500 people and led to the detention of more than 22,000. After the mass demonstrations, police dialed down enforcement of hijab laws, but it ramped up again in April under what authorities called the Noor — or "Light" — Plan.

The hijab crackdown remains widely discussed in Iran, even as police and state media rarely report on it. Many women continue to wear their hijabs loosely or leave them draped around their shoulders while walking in Tehran. Women driving without wearing hijabs are believed to have been tracked via surveillance camera technology provided by Chinese firms, matching their faces against a government-maintained photo database, Ghaemi said.

If they are stopped, that can lead to physical altercations between women and the police.

Surveillance footage published last week by the Iranian reformist news website Ensa'f showed a 14-year-old girl manhandled by the morality police in Tehran.

Her mother described her daughter's head as being rammed into an electrical box, a female officer pulling her hair and another putting their foot on her neck. Police described the officers' behavior as unprofessional, but also accused the girl of using bad language.

Kolkata doctor case: Protests escalate in India over gruesome rape of doctor

KOLKATA, India, Aug 15 (Reuters) - Holding candles, hundreds of thousands of women marched through the night in cities across India, to protest the brutal rape and murder of a young female doctor in a hospital that has fueled anger over a lack of safety for women despite tough new laws.

A 31-year old trainee doctor was raped and murdered inside the medical college in Kolkata where she worked on Friday, triggering nationwide protests among doctors and drawing parallels to the notorious gang rape and murder of a 23-year-old student on a moving bus in New Delhi in 2012.

"We have come here to demand justice because

even I have a daughter. I am scared to send her anywhere...I am scared to send my daughter to study," said Rinky Ghosh, who took part in a protest in Kolkata. "So I am here today because something ... must be done, this injustice must stop."

The doctor had retired to sleep on a piece of carpet in a seminar room in the R G Kar Medical College after a marathon 36-hour shift, given the lack of any dorms or resting rooms for doctors in the premises, her colleagues told Reuters.

She was found dead on Friday. Police said she had been raped and murdered and a police volunteer was subsequently arrested in connection with the crime.

Many government hospitals in cities across India suspended all services except emergency departments earlier this week, as junior doctors sat outside in protest, demanding justice. The victim was found bleeding from her eyes and mouth, with injuries to her legs, stomach, ankles, her right hand and finger, a doctor's inquest report Aug. 9 and accessed by Reuters said.

In protests called "Reclaim the Night", women marched across several Indian cities from midnight on Wednesday, on the eve of the country's 78th Independence Day, to protest against the lack of safety for women in India, especially at night.

"As a society, we have to think about the atrocities being committed against our mothers, daughters and sisters. There is outrage against this in the country. I can feel this outrage," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in an Independence Day address to the nation on Thursday. The 2012 Delhi rape case was seen as a turning point in attitudes towards women's safety in Indian society. It triggered huge protests and was the catalyst for rapid change in laws tackling crimes against women.

These included fast-track courts for swifter convictions in such cases, but protesters say a decade on, the situation for women has not improved.

"This horrific incident has once again reminded us that women disproportionately bear the weight of ensuring their own safety," Bollywood actor Alia Bhatt said in a post on her Instagram page, which has more than 85 million followers.

Doctors in India's crowded and often squalid government hospitals have long complained of being overworked and underpaid, and say not enough is done to curb violence levelled at them by people angered over the medical care on offer.

Crimes against women in India rose 4% in 2022 from the previous year, data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), released late last year, showed.



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Hopes of water on Mars revived after ocean found

SCIENTISTS have always suspected that there could be water on Mars based on traces of rivers that had dried up billions of years ago on the Martian surface, and by the presence ice-caps in the polar regions of the planet. But now comes the tantalising evidence that there is water beneath the surface that could be the size of an ocean spread across the planet.

The inference was based on the seismic data from the American Insight rover collected between 2018 and 2022. It was found that the seismic waves were faster which is due to the subterranean water. Led by Vashan Wright at the University of California's San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the group of American geophysicists have proclaimed that there is an ocean of water in the mid-crust of the crevices of Mars.

The research paper appears in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Michael Manga of the University of California Berkeley and member of the Vashan Wright team is careful enough to draw a cautious line around the discovery of the Martian ocean. He said, "Establishing that there is a big reservoir of liquid water provides some window into what the climate was like or could be like. And water is necessary for life as we know it. I don't see why [the underground reservoir] is not a habitable environment. It's certainly true on Earth — deep, deep mines host life, the bottom of the ocean hosts life. We haven't found any evidence for life on Mars, but at least we have identified a place that should, in principle, be able to sustain life."

There is the very practical problem that the water is lying seven to 12 kilometres beneath the Martian surface, and there is no technological possibility as of now of tapping something so deep. So, all that the scientists can hope to study is the climate and geological history of Mars.

It is now confirmed that the surface water sources like rivers and lakes on Mars evaporated into space three billion years ago when the Martian atmosphere disappeared. But among all the planets in the solar system, Mars is, apart from Earth, the nearest in promise of water and life. There is as yet no evidence that Mars supported life even all those billions of years ago.

Strangely enough, maverick entrepreneurs like Elon Musk look to Mars as amenable to human colonisation if Earth becomes too hot a place for humans to survive. It is a wild proposition because Mars is an example of what a planet would become if it is denuded of its protective layer — the atmosphere. Planetary scientists believe that Mars would serve as a good base for further space travel and exploration.

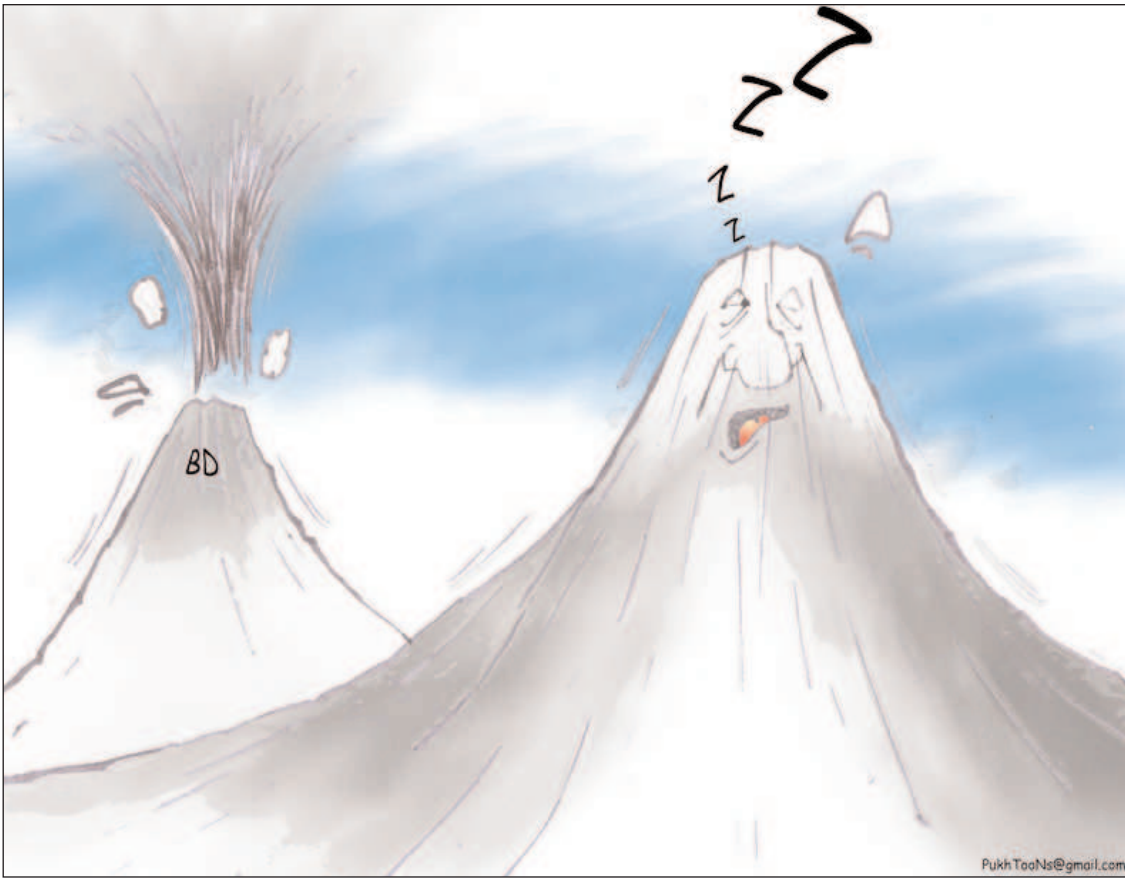
Mars is also the nearest to Earth for travel compared to other uninhabitable places like Jupiter, Venus and Saturn. Even Jupiter's moons are not too friendly in terms of habitation for earthlings. So a devastated Mars seem to be the only possible way-station for human beings, offering them a base camp as it were for space travel into the vast and nearly infinite universe.

There is the dilemma whether human beings are alone in the universe, and whether there is life in other parts. This issue remains in the realm of speculation. While some argue that there could be civilisations in other galaxies which are far superior to that of the human beings on earth, there are others who point to the fact if there are other intelligent beings then we would have come across them, or they would have come across us.

As there has been no signal of life from anywhere else in the universe, it would seem that human beings are the only living, intelligent beings in the universe. And Mars could provide a stepping stone for humans to get out further into the universe.

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Gaza's other death toll

Ghada Ageel

Almost 10 months since the start of the Israeli genocide in Gaza, the official death toll has now exceeded 40,000. While this number is shocking enough, it does not take into account the various forms of death Palestinians face that are not directly caused by an Israeli bullet or bomb.

In the Gaza ghetto where Palestinians live, which even United States President Joe Biden described as "sheer hell", Palestinians die from heat, thirst, hunger and diseases caused by the debilitating siege on the strip.

Among these uncounted dead is Inshirah, a grand Badrasawi woman and a member of my extended family. She was married to my father's cousin, Abdelfattah, and was an integral part of the community of refugees from Beit Daras (Badrasawi means coming from Beit Daras) — a Palestinian village located 32km northeast of Gaza, which Zionist militias destroyed in 1948.

Inshirah was not just any woman; she was a pillar of strength, courage and kindness in Khan Younis refugee camp and al-Qarara neighbourhood. After Abdelfattah passed away from a heart attack at a young age, she single-handedly raised six orphans: five boys and one girl. Known for her great social skills and sense of humour, Inshirah was the smiling face of the camp.

During the first Intifada, she risked her life on several occasions to rescue children from the Israeli army, often getting beaten for her bravery. One time, when my 11-year-old brother Anwar was arrested on his way back home from school, Inshirah courageously stormed the group of soldiers who were hitting him with their batons. She hugged him tightly, shielding him from the painful blows, and cried out with her loudest voice, "He is my son, he is my son!" Her screams alerted the women of the camp, who quickly came to help. Though my brother was saved, Inshirah was left with a broken arm and many bruises from the beating.

Once her children grew up and secured jobs, Inshirah moved from the refugee camp to a piece of land in al-Qarara, east of Khan Younis, where she built a home.

Anwar continued visiting her regularly after she moved. With her sharp wit, she would often remind him of the time she saved his life, saying, "This visit is part of the debt you owe me for saving your life." Her teasing always made everyone laugh.

This was one of the many stories she shared when we last visited her in July 2023. Despite the severe kidney disease she was suffering from and the toll her biweekly dialysis treatments took on her, she remained humorous and generous of spirit, sharing memories and cracking jokes at the dinner table. Her laughter, as always, filled the room with warmth.

In Arabic, the word "inshirah" means joy and our Inshirah very much lived up to her name.

Al-Qarara was one of the first places invaded and destroyed by the Israeli army. Her home suffered substantial damage from

the bombings, but she and the families of her four adult children who lived with her managed to escape in time. They sought refuge in Khan Younis camp near Nasser Hospital, the largest medical complex in Gaza, after al-Shifa.

When the Israeli army laid siege to the hospital compound in February, she was forced to flee again, this time close to Khan Younis's al-Amal Hospital, which the Israelis had raided and ransacked earlier. Her children always wanted to be as close as possible to any health facility.

At that point, we lost contact with Inshirah and her children. I was overwhelmed with fear and anxiety, imagining her being ill amid genocide and the dire lack of resources. The memories of losing my parents due to the Israeli blockade of Gaza prevented

resorted to private transport: cars, donkey carts and even a wheelchair running through the torn-up streets.

Tears streamed down her son Iyad's face as he recounted to my brothers how he once had to surrender the rented donkey cart that was transporting his mother to carry the bodies of a family killed by the IOF. It was an impossible choice between preserving life and respecting the martyrs.

Inshirah continued her arduous journey in a wheelchair over rough and destroyed roads, which took a toll on her already fragile health.

The May invasion of Rafah sent Inshirah's family on the move again. They fled to al-Mawasi in Khan Younis, a former recreation area turned into a zone of horror and despair. Inshirah's suffering intensi-

children spoke in detail of the unbearable conditions their mum had faced in the tents — extreme heat, lack of food and clean water, no nutritional supplements and a complete absence of required hygiene, oxygen and electricity. They remained by her side, offering care and prayers, but the systemic destruction of Gaza's healthcare system left them powerless to offer much more.

Inshirah is just one victim among countless others amid Israel's deliberate targeting of Gaza's medical sector. The Israeli army has repeatedly raided and destroyed hospitals and clinics. Israeli soldiers have filmed themselves delightfully destroying medical equipment and supplies.

According to the Gaza Government Media Office, 34 of 36 hospitals have been put out of service by Israeli attacks. In total, 161 medical facilities have been targeted. More than 500 medical workers have been killed, including highly specialised doctors. The organisation, Physicians for Human Rights, has documented more than 1,000 Israeli attacks on doctors, patients, clinics and health infrastructure, which in their words, "have fuelled a public health catastrophe".

The destruction of Gaza's medical infrastructure and the killing of medical personnel is another deadly driver of the Israeli genocide. It has resulted in unspeakable horror and suffering for patients and their families and led to many preventable deaths.

At the beginning of Israel's genocidal war, Gaza had some 350,000 residents with chronic diseases like Inshirah. How many have survived 10 months of "sheer hell" is unknown, but one estimate by doctors who visited Gaza puts the true death toll at 92,000; another by scientists puts it at 186,000.

Israel's devastation of the medical sector, along with the destruction of sanitation infrastructure and the imposition of starvation, are producing thousands more chronically ill Palestinians, as people contract debilitating diseases. It is believed that some 100,000 people have already been infected with hepatitis A and most do not have access to treatment.

There are also more than 90,000 injured by Israeli attacks, 10,000 of whom urgently need to travel outside Gaza for medical care. They cannot leave because after Israel seized control of the Rafah crossing into Egypt, it has been blocking most medical evacuations.

Despite the desperate cries of civilians and the condemnation of Israel's actions by United Nations agencies, the World Health Organization and medical organisations like Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the US and its allies have continued to supply Israel with weapons and turn a blind eye to its genocide and destruction of Gaza's medical facilities.

It is grotesque to see President Biden claim to want to end the war and then do absolutely nothing to that effect. As he nears the end of his presidency, he looks set to leave behind a genocidal legacy, having been the principal sponsor and enabler of Israel's wholesale destruction of Gaza and the extermination of its people.

Iran's nuclear ambitions raise the specter of a regional arms race

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

The longstanding rivalry between Iran and Israel has reached a critical point, with tensions escalating to unprecedented levels. This growing tensions and hostility seems to be driving Iran to hasten its nuclear program, raising concerns among the international community. The fear is that the conflict might lead to a rapid escalation in nuclear capabilities, further destabilizing an already volatile region.

Given the current state of affairs, any hopes of reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, commonly known as the nuclear deal, seem increasingly remote. The prospect of reengaging in this agreement has dwindled, primarily due to a lack of motivation within Iran to curb its nuclear ambitions. The Iranian government appears to have little reason to return to the negotiating table. The internal political dynamics within the US also play a

true, would dramatically alter the strategic calculus in the region.

Over the past year, the intensifying conflict between Iran and Israel has coincided with significant advancements in Iran's nuclear capabilities. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has issued a dire warning, stating that Iran is on the brink of producing the material necessary for a nuclear weapon, possibly within "one or two weeks." This rapid progress highlights the accelerated pace of Iran's nuclear program, which some attribute to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA under the Trump administration. The current administration views this withdrawal as a key factor in the alarming developments within Iran's nuclear activities, underscoring the complexity of the situation.

In addition, Iran's current uranium enrichment levels have reportedly reached 84 percent, dangerously close to the 90

The Iranian government has consistently asserted that its nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes. However, recent statements from Iranian officials suggest a possible change in policy. Kamal Kharrazi, a senior foreign policy adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, recently indicated that Iran might revise its nuclear strategy if Israel were to launch an attack on its nuclear facilities. This shift in tone is significant, as it reflects a more aggressive stance that could lead to heightened tensions. Furthermore, Iranian MP Ahmad Bakshayesh Ardestani has publicly suggested that Iran might already possess a nuclear weapon — a claim that, if true, would dramatically alter the strategic calculus in the region.

crucial role, as the deal's revival faces strong opposition, making its renewal improbable. There is a significant pressure from the US Republican party to maintain a hard-line stance against Iran by refusing to lift sanctions.

From the perspectives of some politicians in the US, the reimplementing of the nuclear deal, coupled with the easing of sanctions, could provide the Iranian government with the financial resources it needs to bolster its military. Such a development would not only increase Iran's military might but also enhance its standing on the global stage, potentially leading to its reintegration into the international financial system. As a result, the potential influx of revenue could significantly shift the balance of power in the region, further complicating the geopolitical landscape.

Nevertheless, it is essential to highlight a recent shift in the US evaluation of Iran's nuclear activities. A report from the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence has raised alarms, accusing Iran of becoming increasingly vocal and confident in its discussions about nuclear weapons. The report underscores a worrying trend: "There has been a notable increase this year in Iranian public statements about nuclear weapons, suggesting the topic is becoming less taboo," as noted by the intelligence assessment. This shift in rhetoric signals a concerning normalization of nuclear discourse within Iran, which could have far-reaching implications for regional and global security.

It is worth noting that, for years, the Iranian government has consistently asserted that its nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes. However, recent statements from Iranian officials suggest a possible change in policy. Kamal Kharrazi, a senior foreign policy adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, recently indicated that Iran might revise its nuclear strategy if Israel were to launch an attack on its nuclear facilities. This shift in tone is significant, as it reflects a more aggressive stance that could lead to heightened tensions. Furthermore, Iranian MP Ahmad Bakshayesh Ardestani has publicly suggested that Iran might already possess a nuclear weapon — a claim that, if

percent threshold required for weapons-grade material. This proximity to achieving weapons-grade uranium could suggest that Iran could soon possess the essential components needed to assemble nuclear bombs. Such a development would represent a significant escalation of the nuclear threat posed by Iran, with potentially catastrophic consequences for regional and global security.

The Iranian government should carefully consider the repercussions of acquiring nuclear weapons, as the costs far outweigh the benefits.

First of all, the pursuit of nuclear arms would likely lead to severe international isolation. Countries around the world, particularly those in the West, would impose even stricter sanctions, crippling Iran's already struggling economy. The potential loss of diplomatic and economic ties could be devastating, leaving Iran vulnerable on multiple fronts.

Second, the acquisition of nuclear weapons would almost certainly trigger a regional arms race. Other nations in the Middle East, feeling threatened by Iran's nuclear capabilities, would likely seek to develop their own nuclear arsenals. This would lead to increased instability and the risk of a nuclear confrontation, which could have catastrophic consequences for the entire region.

Third, Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons could undermine its long-term security. While nuclear arms might offer a short-term deterrent, they would also make Iran a primary target for preemptive strikes by its adversaries. The risk of a devastating military conflict would increase, putting Iran's security and sovereignty in jeopardy.

In conclusion, in the face of escalating tensions between Iran and Israel, and the diminishing prospects of reviving the nuclear deal, Iran's rapid advancement in its nuclear program poses significant risks. For the sake of regional stability and to prevent a nuclear arms race, it is imperative that Iran refrains from further pursuing its nuclear ambitions. A commitment to non-proliferation would not only alleviate international concerns but also contribute to promoting security and peace in the region.

‘Less flexible?’ Just say it NYT, Israel is sabotaging a ceasefire deal

Once in a while, The New York Times has to tell inconvenient truths regarding Israel, the preferred partner in crime of the United States and the recipient of billions upon billions of dollars in American aid and weaponry.

However, just because the US newspaper of record has to tell the truth doesn't mean it has to do so in a straightforward way.

There was that time in 2014, for example, that The Times reported on the Israeli missile strike that killed four young boys playing football on the beach in the Gaza Strip. While the text of the article did unflinchingly convey the fact that Israel had slaughtered four children, the headline was rendered preposterously vague: "Boys Drawn to Gaza Beach, and Into Center of Mideast Strife".

Now that the Gaza Strip has become not only the "centre of Mideast Strife" but the site of a straight-up genocide, The Times has once again found itself creatively diluting the news, as in Tuesday's headline: "Israel Was Less Flexible in Recent Gaza Cease-Fire Talks, Documents Show".

Translation: Israel is sabotaging ceasefire efforts in a war that way back in January had already killed one percent of the population of Gaza.

Officially, some 40,000 Palestinians have been killed since October 7, although according to a Lancet study the true death toll could exceed 186,000. For its part, the Joe Biden administration has just approved \$20bn in additional arms transfers to Israel even as the US claims to be working towards a ceasefire.

The New York Times confirms in its roundabout way that, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu has relentlessly denied trying to block a deal in Gaza and instead blamed Hamas for the deadlock, unpublished documents seen by the newspaper "make clear that the behind-the-scenes maneuvering by the Netanyahu government has been extensive – and suggest that agreement may be elusive

Israel has also revived its insistence on erecting checkpoints where Israeli soldiers will conduct weapons screenings on displaced Palestinians returning to their homes in northern Gaza – a stipulation that is pretty soundly grotesque coming from the party that is currently perpetrating genocide with all manner of weaponry. In short, it's a simple strategy of moving the goalposts. Whenever it seems that a ceasefire deal might be dangerously within reach, all Netanyahu has to do is throw in a bunch more demands that even members of his own security establishment deem over the top. In addition to pandering to an Israeli far right for whom the prospect of any pause in mass killing is anathema, Netanyahu has other reasons for wanting to derail negotiations. If the war stops, he'll have to deal with corruption charges and domestic opposition – not to mention that annoying institution known as the International Criminal Court, where the chief prosecutor has applied for an arrest warrant for Netanyahu for alleged war crimes in the Gaza Strip.

at a new round of negotiations set to begin on Thursday".

In July, Israel "relayed a list of new stipulations" to US, Egyptian, and Qatari ceasefire mediators that "added less flexible conditions" to the "set of principles" it had previously provided.

Among these new stipulations is that, rather than withdraw its military forces from the Gaza Strip in the

Belén Fernández

event of a ceasefire, Israel would instead remain in control of Gaza's southern border with Egypt. But what could the Palestinians possibly find objectionable in the casual maintenance of a brutal military occupation?

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The biggest lie we tell people

Among the first lessons in pleasantries that we all learn as children is to answer the question, "How are you?", which we are taught to respond in all politeness with "I am fine, thank you." Perhaps, in the days of yore when courtesies were being coined, and when people were kinder and more humane towards each other than in this robotic age, the purpose of the question was to show genuine interest in the other person's well-being and express support if things were going south.

But of late, the question, "How are you?", has begun to sound more customary that is responded in a standard manner – either "I am good" or "all well". And then the conversation swiftly pivots to the business on hand. Most people move on as soon as the initial pleasantries are exchanged, with a few people daring to express a wee more – "could be better" or some even responding with a wry "surviving". And there is an answer that has always kept me guessing – "I am OK."

What does "OK" in reality mean? Good? Not good? Or is it an ambiguous reply that one can interpret any which way, based on the context and the questioner's disposition? Posed with a question on our well-being, seldom do we give an honest reply. How many times have we heard someone say, "Life sucks", "Going through hell" or "not good"? At worst, people say, "going on". But then why do we shy away from telling people the truth of our lives, if not at length at least the fact that not all is well? Why do we hasten to

make people believe the lie of being well, alive and kicking? Because we all have been given to believe that whiners are not winners. We have all been conditioned to pretend to be at our best even when we are suffering because the world and people around us don't

The reason for our practised lie of telling people we are fine might also stem from the fact that we don't want people close to us or those who genuinely care about us to get worked up in our thoughts. We conceal many unsavoury truths not with a wily intention, but because we are convinced that making family and friends privy to our troubles might cause them pain. Yet again, we don't want to cause undue stress and distress with our sob stories; we want people to be happy with us so that they may love us. Hence we lie over and over again – "I am good." "I am fine." But of late, I have strived to be a little more honest than I have been before. The idea of being judged as wimpy or sullen for telling the truth doesn't haunt me because it is what it is. By no stretch of imagination do I expect anyone to resolve my personal woes, but I am increasingly becoming aware of the adverse effects of feigning to be fine. I have divorced the notion that we must fake it till we make it.

like sad stories.

In a world that doesn't think twice before inflicting harm on others but would like to stay out of harm's way, the natural inclination is to court happiness, which in itself is a paradox. If we don't dispense happiness, how is it fair or possible to defy the law of the Universe to remain unscathed by our devious acts? What goes around comes around.

The rise and success of social media itself hinges on this need to seem happy

Asha Iyer Kumar

to the world even when one's life is at stake. Our external demeanour is governed by how we will be perceived by others, and for this, we never tell the truth. We never reveal the reality behind the mask of 'I am

OK', carefully sugar-coating our travails with fake smiles and laughter. Our excessive need to be liked; to be appreciated; to make others happy often robs us of our freedom to cry or even sigh loudly. "Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone." And we fear being alone like we fear death.

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adverse effects of feigning to be fine. I have divorced the notion that we must fake it till we make it.

I am becoming increasingly aware of the fact that pain and suffering is endemic to human existence and there is no reason why we must either glorify it or negate it. There is a simmer in every heart and an uneasy tremor in every body. The acceptance of reality is the first step towards alleviating the bitterness and pain that come along with material life and tenuous relationships. If I am unwell, I might as well spell it out so the other person may know. Not in the expectation that compassion will flow instantly, but it keeps me from turning my life into a travesty.

Saying it aloud will elicit varied responses. From story topping to offering left-handed solutions, people will be very forthcoming in their views. They may be affected by my plight or be ridiculously impervious to my pain. They may probe further out of genuine concern or with the intention of feeding their gossipy nature. What they do with my answer is their look out. They can stew new stories or leave it by the wayside. They can offer me a shoulder or share in my happiness.

No matter what they choose to do, in my own defence I have only this much to say: Ask me "How are you?" and be prepared to hear it like it is. Of being ill, well or neither. The third option because sometimes it is hard to decipher how I am. Life is often a grey, obscure haze.

— *Khaleej Times*

At the end of the day, though, Israel has never been in the business of peace; rather, the entire Israeli enterprise is predicated on the perpetuation of war and killing. One need look no further than Israel's extensive history of sabotaging not only ceasefire deals but the so-called "peace process" in general – all the while naturally blaming the Palestinians for any and all failures to reach a solution.

The year prior to the official Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, which supposedly ended Israel's occupation of the territory, then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's senior adviser Dov Weisglass gave the Haaretz newspaper the run-down on the deal. "The significance of the disengagement plan" from Gaza, Weisglass told Haaretz, was nothing less than "the freezing of the peace process".

He continued: "And when you freeze that process, you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state, and you prevent a discussion on the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem". And voila: "Effectively, this whole package called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed indefinitely from our agenda... All with a [US] presidential blessing and the ratification of both houses of Congress."

Of course, you can also remove the whole Palestinian state package from the agenda by just killing everyone. And as genocide proceeds apace with the next round of ceasefire negotiations set to kick off on Thursday, The New York Times's suggestion that an "agreement may be elusive" is an understatement, indeed.

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I was there to see Shafik's promise to encourage vigorous debate fall flat

Yasmeen Altaji

Columbia University President Nemat "Minouche" Shafik has resigned months after protests about Israel's war on Gaza gripped the New York institution. For many, regardless of where they stood on the conflict or how they viewed the campus demonstrations, her resignation came far too late.

In an announcement on Wednesday night, Ms Shafik claimed progress had been made in "a number of important areas" on campus, but also acknowledged a "period of turmoil". I was a master's student at the Columbia Journalism School during the time she describes and witnessed mounting calls for her resignation that started almost immediately after October 7.

An Egyptian-British economist, Ms Shafik joined Columbia in July last year as the Ivy League school's first Arab, Muslim and female president. It was a proud moment for the community, for representation and diversity, and was a turning point in Columbia's history of white, male presidents. The inauguration festivities were lavish and our Upper West Side campus was lit up by a dance party and laser light show.

Ms Shafik's inaugural address contained many references to the importance of dialogue and discourse in a diverse community. In it, she included this quote from the 1967 Kalven Report – a University of Chicago investigation into how colleges should approach "political and social action" on campus.

"A good university, like Socrates, will be upsetting..." it read. "The university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic... a university must sustain an extraordinary environment of freedom of inquiry and maintain an independence from political fashions, passions and pressures."

In her own words, Ms Shafik added that the purpose of the university is, in part, to "encourage vigorous debate" among eager students who come "from different backgrounds and have different ways of looking at the world".

"At a time of great divisions, the experience of reading and debating texts together creates the foundation for informed and enlightened citizens and leaders," she added.

Reading that address now, it's difficult not to compare it with her administration's response to student protests at Columbia that peaked with the forcible removal of the Gaza solidarity encampment that sprang up on campus.

It's known that Ms Shafik faced mounting pressure from donors and some student groups as anti-war protests broke out on campus shortly after the start of Israel's military operation in Gaza. Israeli students and their allies claimed there was a rise in campus antisemitism, while Palestinian students and those involved in solidarity protests faced doxxing threats and career blacklisting.

Reports of the administration quelling student speech emerged almost as soon as the war began, though, and like many of my graduate colleagues at the journalism school and undergraduate peers on campus papers and radio, I had covered the protests throughout the school year.

In November, just over a week after the announce-

ment of a new task force to combat antisemitism on campus, the university suspended the Columbia chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace following a walkout that attracted hundreds of students. The administration said it was an "unauthorised event".

In December, Ms Shafik attended the Cop28 conference in Dubai, dodging a Congressional hearing on campus antisemitism that ended with the eventual resignations of her MIT and Harvard counterparts.

In January, there were allegations that protesting Columbia students had been sprayed with a hazardous chemical called "skunk", a weapon that the Columbia Daily Spectator – a student newspaper – said had been developed in Israel and used for crowd control in the West Bank. Administrators' initial response included a criticism of student organisers for holding an unauthorised

In the early hours of April 18, a small group of students erected tents on one of the campus's main lawns. By evening, Ms Shafik had called New York police officers to the campus for the first time in more than 50 years, a move that resulted in the arrests of more than 100 students. Officers later said the protesters had been peaceful and did not resist arrest. The encampment then moved to the adjacent lawn — and garnered a much larger crowd of supporters — where it stayed for about two weeks. Students slept through cold, rainy nights, receiving donations of hot meals, blankets and sanitary products. Figures including Palestinian photojournalist Motaz Azaiza, US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, independent presidential candidate Cornel West, and activist Mohammed El-Kurd, made appearances and guest speeches throughout the encampment's lifespan. But after a series of failed negotiations between demonstrators and the administration, Columbia's students embarked on a university protest tradition. Just after midnight on April 30, the anniversary of one of the most famed anti-Vietnam war student protests in the US, pro-Palestinian protesters occupied Hamilton Hall.

rally. Ms Shafik appeared in front of members of the US Congress for her own hearing in April, an appearance that led to her being accused by campaigners for academic freedom of throwing professors and students "under the bus".

Columbia's Gaza solidarity encampment at Columbia sprang up soon after this.

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After a first round of arrests, the administration sent the student community

an email saying that "to bring back the NYPD at this time would be counter-productive". The Hamilton Hall action lasted about 24 hours before Ms Shafik authorised another raid. That night, heavily militarised units of the NYPD – frequently deployed to protests – entered our campus. They had only just arrived at Hamilton when they began moving the media away; I was one of a small group of student journalists ushered backwards into a dormitory and barricaded inside while the police arrested our peers.

We were kept away from any line of sight to Hamilton Hall while officers reportedly brutalised students during arrests. One fired a gun inside Hamilton Hall. By then, seemingly fruitless calls for Ms Shafik's resignation had become all too familiar.

For many students on campus, it seems Ms Shafik's legacy is not the one of diversity, respect, education and dialogue that she promised in autumn last year. She will be replaced, but the shadow of her handling of this historic protest movement will remain.

Time to launch a board tech committee?

Dr M Muneeb & Ralph

When cyber attacks disrupted such reputed enterprises as Equifax, Marriott, Best Buy, and Yum! (KFC/Taco Bell parent), and the like, we had proposed constituting a dedicated board cyber security committee. While this was a useful governance approach, the many facets of technology overall have become so crucial to business today that a comprehensive technology committee may be a wiser approach.

A designated, permanent tech committee is not the norm yet, though global numbers are on the rise. At the global S&P 500 level, technology committees have edged ahead of risk committees in popularity –

at 12 per cent. However, there are a few caveats – the committee is often blended with other duties such as strategy, innovation or risk. Also, tech committee use is quite sector specific – Healthcare sector enterprises used maximum (21 per cent) and utility companies the least (11 per cent).

Board talent needed for a tech committee is still a work in progress. The open-ended definitions of "technology," mean that a director who attends a weekend business school session on AI can claim to be an expert, but aim to do better. A study of 40,000 US directors defined "digital savvy" as "understanding, developed through experience and education,

of the impact that emerging technologies will have on business. Companies with three or more such "savvy" directors showed 17 per cent higher profit margins, and a 34 per cent higher market cap.

Here are some first-hand tips for board technology committees:

The tech committee must watch for what is coming to the market, and make that a regular part of board conversation. This is a crucial role of the committee – it assures a regular touch point on these issues and contributes to the board's understanding with planned conversations on technology trends, opportunities and risks. The committee can have 3-4 members, meet quarterly, and its

charter can spell out a broad range of issues, including cyber risk, digital issues, AI and the internet of things. Start as a work in progress, and you can continually update the charter. Chair duties can involve working closely with management to review materials that come to the committee, and then assure a full readout of minutes to the full board.

The tech committee of an electronics tools company brings a strong bench of tech talent, making committee members industry-savvy, and do deep dives on coming trends. But even less technology-focused companies should include at least one or two members

who bring a breadth of experience in a number of related domains such as risk. How is tech impacting their own businesses, and what insights can they share with the board would be their mandate.

We believe that procedures and paperwork drive board behaviour, and that begins with solid charters for committees. Laying out a well-discussed, regularly reviewed statement of duties, powers, areas of focus (and just as importantly, areas reserved for other committees) is fundamental to the heavy lifting demanded of today's working board committees.

When you are planning a charter, first, note that the

titles and ambit of these committees are quite diverse for just being "technology." Traditional board committees, such as Audit, have a well-established mandate and role, and also largely uniform functions. The audit committee of a finance firm, a health care company, or a retail chain will all pretty well handle the same tasks. But the technology used, compliance demands, and strategic issues facing each sector will give their tech committees widely varying concerns and skill needs.

Procter & Gamble's Innovation and Technology Committee is suited to a large consumer products company, and goes beyond just tech oversight to include innovation needs

for new products, markets, acquisitions, and company structure.

The technology committee of Canadian Solar helps the company stay on the cutting edge of energy technology. Their charter also includes a good eight-point listing of its duties and responsibilities.

At Hong Leong Bank in Malaysia, the information and technology committee boasts a very detailed charter of the committee's tech oversight portfolio, especially on cyber resilience.

Australian transport firm SGFleet constituted a board innovation & technology committee with a compact charter that targets the logistics and tech needs of its specific sector.

Tech committees should budget for outside advisors. Given the complexity and the lightning rate of change, the committee can't hope to know everything from within its membership, or even management. Assure resources to tap outside consulting on technology, and also its legal, compliance, privacy and ethical issues.

Given the speed of change in how technology effects business, be sure your committee charter spells out a specific mandate to act as the external eyes and ears of the board on issues like AI, cyber risk and data regulation. More than any other committee, tech committee must watch for what's coming tomorrow.



SCCI rejects imposition of fixed tax on traders

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq rejected imposition of fixed tax on traders and asked the government to immediately take back its decision.

Otherwise, he said SCCI along with traders' community will force on protest against unjust taxes.

Fuad Ishaq was speaking during a protest camp of Peshawar saddar traders against fixed tax imposed by the Federal Board of Revenue here on Thursday.

Accompanied by SCCI senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice presi-

dent Ejaz Khan Afridi, former vice president Javed Akthar, Tajir Itehad President Mujeebur Rehman, Faiz Rasool, Saddar Gul, Fazl e Wahid, the chamber's president Fuad Ishaq visited the traders protest camp.

The traders hoisted banners with noted voices 'Unacceptable unjust taxes', 'Unacceptable Tajir Dost Scheme' and 'Give peace and get taxes'.

The protesting traders also hoisted black flags in camp and raised slogans in favour of their demands.

Fuad Ishaq said that today, traders are on protest owing to wrong policies of the government, adding

that SCCI had presented budget proposals, which were yet not being implemented, which is highly regrettable.

The SCCI chief called Pakistan's tax system as outdated, asking for enforcement of the tax system on the pattern of the UAE by altering the prevailing Australian Tax system.

Traders are the backbone of country's economy, and they want to give taxes but imposition of unjust taxes is unacceptable, which should be withdrawn immediately, Fuad said.

He continued to say that the business community is in great trouble owing to

wrong policies.

The SCCI chief emphasized taking pragmatic steps to put affairs in the right direction.

Otherwise, he clarified that protest/strike of the traders will damage the economy.

Fuad Ishaq said SCCI was proactively taking up traders' issues with relevant authorities at provincial and central level.

He said the chamber had already rejected additional taxation measures through budget 2024-25.

He made it clear that SCCI is supporting traders' protest/strike against unjust taxes and will stand with them.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fuad Ishaq speaking during a protest camp of Peshawar Saddar traders against fixed tax imposed by FBR.

44 illegal gas connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: As part of its ongoing crackdown on gas theft, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has conducted a series of successful raids across Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad, resulting in the disconnection of 44 illegal gas connections and the imposition of fines totaling Rs 0.87 million.

In Lahore, the SNGPL team disconnected 17 illegal connections and levied fines amounting to Rs 0.55 million. The Bahawalpur team targeted the use of compressors, disconnecting 04 connections. In Mardan, 05 illegal connections were severed, with fines totaling Rs 0.16 million. The Faisalabad team disconnected 02 connections and imposed fines of Rs 0.04 million. Meanwhile, in Multan, 14 illegal connections were disconnected, and in Sheikhupura, 02 connections were severed, with a fine of Rs 0.12 million imposed.

SBP to support banking sector

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In line with the government's efforts to give impetus to the SME sector, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has recently conveyed its strong resolve to support the banking sector by issuing a risk coverage scheme, which will help the banking sector to double its SME exposure to Rs. 1.1 trillion during the next five years.

These strategic measures being implemented with the support of Pakistan Banks' Association (PBA) dedicated taskforces, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, are expected to provide significant support to driving robust economic recovery and sustainable development in the country.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely Semer, MSC Positano and APL Southampton scheduled to load/offload Furnace oil and Containers, berthed at Oil Terminal and Container Terminal respectively on Wednesday. Meanwhile five more ships MSC Brasilia, Navig8 Gallantry, Saga, Al-Jabriya and Wisteria carrying Containers, Palm oil, Palm Kernel and Mogas also arrived at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim during the same day.

A total of seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, APL Southampton, MSC Positano, Kashi and LT Beryl are expected to sail on Thursday afternoon. Cargo throughput during last 24 hours stood at 144,394 comprising 98,624 tonnes imports cargo and 45,770 tonnes export cargo including containerized cargo carried in 6,147 Containers (4,624 TEUs imports and 1,523TEUs export) was handled at the Port.

There are 06ships at outer anchorage of the port, out of them three ships, MAC Brasilia VII, Silver Orla and Al-Jabriya & another ship Tucapel carrying Containers, Palm oil, Palm Kernel are expected to take berths at QICT, LCT and MW-1 on Thursday.

Canola, sunflower to be cultivated

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has set a target to cultivate canola over 0.85 million hectares and sunflower over 0.77 million hectares during the current year in order to fulfil the local requirements of edible oil and reduce the reliance on imported oil.

During the period under review, the cultivation targets for rapeseed and mustard were fixed over 5.42 million hectares to produce 6.80 million metric tons of edible oil, said an official in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research.

Meanwhile, the seed cotton to be cultivated over 3.118 million hectares as production targets of the mentioned commodity was

fixed at 4.015 million metric tons, he added.

He said that the government was providing different incentives to encourage the farmers to cultivate oil seeds to enhance the local output of edible oil to save foreign exchange, which was being spent on the import of oil including soyabean and palm into the country.

He said that under the PSDP 2024-25, the government has allocated Rs1,000 million for the promotion of olive cultivation on a commercial scale in the Pakistan phase-II project to enhance the output of edible in the country, adding that Rs1,600 million for the national program for

enhancing command areas in barani areas.

In its annual development agenda, the government has earmarked Rs800 million for the national oil seed development program, whereas an amount of Rs700 million would be spent on professional capacity building in the agriculture national reforms, he added.

The government has also allocated Rs 600 million for water conservation in barani areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, besides allocating an amount of Rs199.865 million on the mainstreaming of mountain agriculture research centres for the promotion of high-value agriculture in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves increased

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The total liquid foreign reserves held by the central bank increased by \$ 119 million to \$ 9,272.6 million during the week ended on August 9, 2024.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were recorded as \$ 5,372.6 million during the week under review, it

added. Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on August 02, 2024, were \$ 14,471.9 million.

Among them foreign reserves held by the central bank were recorded as \$ 9,153.3 million while \$ 5,318.6 million were held by commercial banks.

Walmart lifts outlook after revenues rise

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): The US retail giant Walmart reported a rise in revenues on Thursday on increased e-commerce and advertising sales, and raised its outlook for the year.

Given its vast size and presence across the United States, Walmart's earnings are closely scrutinized for signs of the broader health of US consumers.

Walmart's revenues rose 4.8 percent to \$169.3 billion in the second quarter from the same period a year earlier, it announced in a statement, while profits fell

43 percent.

The firm's results beat analyst estimates, causing it to raise its outlook for the year. Shares surged around seven percent in premarket trading.

"Our team delivered another strong quarter," Walmart chief executive Doug McMillon said in a statement. "Each part of our business is growing -- store and club sales are up, eCommerce is compounding as we layer on pickup and even faster growth in delivery as our speed improves."

"Our newer businesses like marketplace, advertising, and membership, are also contributing, diversifying our profits and reinforcing the resilience of our business model," he added.

Walmart said its global e-commerce sales grew 21 percent in the second quarter, "led by store fulfilled pickup & delivery and marketplace."

Meanwhile, its global advertising business grew 30 percent, fueled by a 30 percent rise in its Walmart Connect business in the United States.

Cambodia collects 43.6 million USD in tax

PHNOM PENH (APP): Cambodia's General Department of Taxation earned e-commerce value-added tax income of 43.6 million US dollars in the first seven months of 2024, the department said on Thursday.

In July alone, the GDT made 6 million dollars in tax revenue from this sector. The kingdom has begun to collect a VAT of 10 percent on e-commerce trans-

actions from overseas-resident companies such as Google, Meta, Amazon, Alibaba, Microsoft, YouTube, TikTok, Mastercard, and Netflix, among others since April 2022.

GDT Director General Kong Vibol has said that VAT on e-commerce transactions was one of potential sources of revenue for the Southeast Asian country. "We see that this has the

potential to further increase national budget revenue in the long run," he said.

GDT is a government agency responsible for collecting taxes such as income tax, salary tax, VAT, and property tax, among others. GDT made a total of 1.91 billion dollars in tax revenue during the January-July period this year, achieving 46 percent of target for 2024.

Stock Exchange witnesses bullish trend, gains 228 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 228.56 points, a positive change of 0.29 percent, closing at 78,105.98 points against 77,877.42 points on the last working day.

A total of 591,065,051 shares were traded during the day as compared to 604,144,238 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs20.102 billion against Rs19.981 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 442 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 227 of them recorded gains and 162 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 53 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Kohinoor Spinning with 91,017,452

shares at Rs9.32 per share, Yousef Weaving with 65,313,406 shares at Rs6.49 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 60,620,909 shares at Rs1.23 per share.

Hallmark Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs48.97 per share price, closing at Rs538.65, whereas the runner-up was Pakistan Engineering Company Limited with a Rs33.87 rise in its per share price to Rs699.11.

PIA Holding Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs84.87 per share closing at Rs883.73 followed by Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs47.50 decline to close at Rs6,800.00.

Rupee remains unchanged against dollar Pakistani Rupee on Thursday remained unchanged against the US

Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.70.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs279.30 and Rs280.40 respectively.

The price of Euro increased by Rs2.35 to close at Rs306.87 against the last day's closing of Rs304.52, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen came up by 01 paisa and closed at Rs1.89, whereas an increase of Rs1.25 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs358.08 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs356.83.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham remained unchanged to close at Rs75.87 and the Saudi Riyal increased by 04 paisa

and stood at Rs74.27.

Gold rates dip by Rs300 to Rs257,400 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed a decrease of Rs300 on Thursday and was traded at Rs257,400 against its sale at 257,700 on the last trading day in the local market.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs256 to Rs220,680 from Rs220,936, whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat decreased to Rs202,290 from Rs202,525, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs2,850 and Rs2,443.41 respectively.

Prices of gold in the international market decreased by \$4 to \$2,454 as compared to the previous day rates of \$2,458, the Association reported.

Launching ceremony of International Innovation Park held

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In continuation with the Prime Minister of Pakistan's visit to China and signing of MoUs with leading Chinese manufacturers to set up their production units in Pakistan, International Innovation Park Private limited is being established as Pakistan's first, smart and largest privately established Export Processing Zone near Karachi. Pakistan and China Forge New Economic Horizons with Launch of Pioneering Export Processing Zone.

The export processing zone in partnership with Terminus Group of China will host manufacturers primarily in Chemicals, Renewable Energy, Automobiles, Robotics & IoT Industries.

This groundbreaking development is set to redefine the economic landscape of the region, fostering a new era of trade, investment, and industrial progress between Pakistan and China.

The launch was held at a grand ceremony in Karachi-Movenpick Hotel, graced by esteemed dignitaries, including His Excellency Khalil Hashmi, Ambassador of Pakistan to China; Mr. Rana Shahzad, Counsel General of Pakistan to China; Zubair Tufail, Chairman of International Innovation Park Ltd and former President of FPCCI;



and Jai Kumar, Chairman of the Pakistan Chemical Manufacturers Association, among other distinguished guests from various sectors.

Zubair Tufail opened the proceedings with an inspiring welcome note, emphasizing the transformative potential of the new export processing zone. His address highlighted the zone's role as a catalyst for economic dynamism, positioning Pakistan as a hub for innovation and industrial excellence. Tufail's vision underscores the strategic importance of this development in enhancing trade efficiency and expanding Pakistan's global economic footprint.

Jai Kumar then took the stage to delve into the intri-

cate details of the project. His comprehensive overview underscored the immense significance of the export processing zone in accelerating industrial growth, particularly within the chemical manufacturing sector. Kumar's insights painted a vivid picture of the zone's role in nurturing technological advancements, fostering sustainable practices, and driving job creation.

The highlight of the ceremony was His Excellency Khalil Hashmi's keynote address, which eloquently captured the essence of this historic initiative. Ambassador Hashmi spoke passionately about the profound impact of the export processing zone on

strengthening bilateral relations between Pakistan and China. His remarks reflected a shared vision of economic prosperity, driven by collaborative efforts and mutual investment in the future.

The inauguration of the Private Sector Export Processing Zone represents a monumental step in Pakistan's economic strategy, signifying a robust commitment to industrial advancement and trade diversification. The zone is poised to attract significant foreign investment, particularly from leading Chinese manufacturers, and is expected to play a pivotal role in reshaping the economic landscape of Pakistan.

Stocks climb as retail sales data dispels US growth worries

LONDON (AFP/APP): Stock markets mostly rose Thursday, with strong retail sales data dispelling worries about the strength of the US economy.

Retail sales in the United States soared past analyst expectations in July, climbing by 1.0 percent, data showed.

A weaker than expected labour market report recently sparked market turmoil as it raised fears that the world's biggest economy was in worse health than anticipated.

"Today's news has been like turning on the light in a dark bedroom to discover that there are no scary mon-

sters under the bed after all," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

Wall Street's main stock indices opened sharply higher and the dollar rose more than one percent against the yen after the retail sales data was released.

Concerns that the US Federal Reserve had waited too long to begin cutting interest rates have seen speculation rise that it could cut even deeper than a quarter point reduction at its next meeting in September.

But economist Michael Pearce of Oxford Economics said the retail

sales data "signal continued resilience" and would keep the Federal Reserve on a path of gradual rate cuts "because fears about the health of the economy that could justify a larger cut appear unfounded."

Wednesday's consumer price index data -- the smallest 12-month increase since March 2021 at 2.9 percent -- solidified expectations that the Fed would cut in September.

Shares in retail giant Walmart rose 7.2 percent after it reported a rise in revenues and raised its outlook for the year.

Given its vast size and presence across the United

States, Walmart's earnings are closely scrutinized for signs of the broader health of US consumers.

London's FTSE 100 stocks index rose 1.0 percent amid rising expectations that the Bank of England will cut interest rates further after the nation's economic output slowed slightly in the second quarter.

Britain's economy grew 0.6 percent in the April-June period, down from 0.7 percent in the first three months of the year, official data showed on Thursday. Paris and Frankfurt stocks were also solidly higher in afternoon trading.



Inter Academies Games in full swing



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The ongoing Merged Districts Inter Academies Games in Peshawar organized by the Directorate of Sports for the merged districts continue to see exciting competitions in various sports. At the Tehmas Khan Football Stadium Sub-Division Tank defeated District Mohmand 2-0, while Sub-Division Peshawar triumphed over Orakzai District with a score of 3-0. Meanwhile in the cricket event held at Islamia College Peshawar Ground

District Kurram secured an 8-wicket victory over Tank. Over 400 athletes from the tribal districts are participating in three different sports at various venues across Peshawar. In the cricket match Sub-Division Tank after winning the toss elected to bat first and scored 120 runs in the allotted overs District Kurram successfully chased the target with a loss of only two wickets Haseeb stood out with 45 runs and Jawad contributed 35 runs. At the Tehmas Khan Football

Stadium three matches were played In addition to Tank's victory over Mohmand Sub-Division Peshawar outplayed Orakzai District winning 3-0. In the ongoing badminton competitions at Hayatabad Sports Complex Bajaur defeated Kurram 3-0, Khyber District overcame Orakzai 2-1, Bannu beat Kohat 3-0, and Mohmand triumphed over North Waziristan 3-0 to qualify for the semi-final. Inter-Academies Games will continue until August 18.

Reus, 35, aiming for MLS title with LA Galaxy

WASHINGTON (BBC): Former Borussia Dortmund forward Marco Reus has signed for Major League Soccer's LA Galaxy and says he wants to "bring the championship back" to the club. The 35-year-old spent 12 years at Dortmund before leaving at the end of last season. He is following in some illustrious footsteps given David Beckham, Steven Gerrard and Zlatan Ibrahimovic are three of Galaxy's most famous ex-players. Although LA Galaxy are the most successful team in MLS history, they have not won the title since a side including Robbie Keane did it in 2014.

Since then a new local rival has emerged in LAFC, who won the trophy in 2022, and now have French World Cup winners Hugo Lloris and Olivier Giroud in their squad.

When MLS resumes its season later this month, LA Galaxy will be looking to hold on to top spot in the Western Conference. LAFC are their nearest challengers, two points behind with two games in hand.

"I will be ready for a duel with Giroud," joked Reus.

"I just wanted to play football and have fun with a new experience at a new club. LA Galaxy have not won the title for 10 years. This year I think they, or we, have a good chance to bring the championship back. That is why I am here."

Reus spent three years playing with England's Jude Bellingham at Dortmund and said the Real Madrid star will manage the demands of the upcoming season.

Bellingham scored 23 goals in his debut season for Madrid, including 17 in his first 20 games. He also claimed 13 assists, and is third favourite, behind Real team-mate Vinicius Jr and Manchester City midfielder Rodri, for the Ballon D'Or. Bellingham was man of the match in Real's Super Cup victory against Atalanta on Wednesday and Reus is confident the 21-year-old will continue to impress.

"The way he plays, he invests everything in every game, 100%. He is very physical and he never stops. You saw it in the Euros. He was exhausted at the end of the games. But he will manage it because he has had a lot of experience now."

Rooney gets first win

LONDON (BBC): Wayne Rooney got his first win as Plymouth Argyle head coach as his side beat Cheltenham Town 3-0 in the Carabao Cup first round at Home Park.

Argyle had the better share of the first-half chances as Ryan Hardie and Freddie Issaka went close, while Ethon Archer hit the Plymouth post with a low drive five minutes from the break.

Ben Waine finally broke the deadlock after an hour, tapping in from a yard after Adam Randall's free-kick had been parried onto the crossbar.

Having gone ahead Argyle dominated as substitutes Mustapha Bundu and Morgan Whittaker missed excellent chances before Hardie doubled the lead with a great close-range finish from Ibrahim Cissoko's cross from the left.

Bundu completed the win with an excellent controlled finish into the bottom corner from the edge of the box.

Having been thrashed 4-0 at Sheffield Wednesday in his first game in charge on Sunday, Rooney rang the changes as just young midfielder Darko Gyabi and goalkeeper Conor Hazard remained, with Michael Cooper set to join Sheffield United as their new stopper.

Argyle could have been ahead inside the first 10 minutes as Issaka went close, before Hardie had a fierce shot beaten away by Joe Day following a long ball from Hungarian debutant Kornel Skucs.

Shayan Afridi wins Independence Day Tennis C'ship

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Shayan Afridi has won the Ijaz Ahmed Khan Independence Day Junior Tennis Championship in the U-14 category. In the final he delivered a one sided performance defeating Junaid 6-1, 6-1. The championship featured three categories U-10, U-14, and U-18 competitions.

On this occasion Malik Inamullah and Irfanullah distributed prizes among the players. They were accompanied by senior vice president of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Association Omar

Ayaz along with Haji Khan Syed, Arshad Hussain, Shahid Ali Khan, Israr Gul, Janan, Shahid Afridi, Zakir, Shehryar, Nouman, Roman and other notable personalities.

In the first Under-14 semi-final, Shayan Afridi defeated Zahir Roman 6-1, 6-1, while in the second semi-final Junaid Khan overcame Zohaib Amjad 6-1, 6-2.

In the Under-10 competition Faizan won against Riyam Omar after an exciting match with scores of 6-3, 6-4. Earlier in the first Under-10 semi-final, M. Faizan defeated Salar Khan 6-2, 6-1 to reach the

final, while in the second semi-final, Riyam Omar beat Azaan Shakeel 6-2, 6-3.

Under-18 competition Shahsawar Khan defeated Shayan Afridi 6-1, 6-2 to claim victory. In the first Under-18 semi-final Shayan Afridi defeated Zulha Khan 4-2, 6-2, while in the second semi-final, Shahsawar Khan overcame Arsalan Khan 6-1, 6-2.S

Shayan Afridi was awarded the title of the best player of the championship. He displayed outstanding performance throughout the tournament and was rightfully deserving of this honor.

A trophy, a goal and ‘no limit’ - Mbappe era begins

MADRID (BBC): Kylian Mbappe said there is "no limit" to what he and Real Madrid can achieve together after he scored on his debut against Atalanta to help the club win a record sixth Uefa Super Cup. The France captain completed a long-awaited move years in the making when he joined Real this summer after a trophy-laden spell at Paris St-Germain.

And despite having resumed training just over a week ago, it took PSG's record goalscorer just under 70 minutes to lay down his first marker of intent for the new season, with a clinical finish to ensure a triumphant start and more silverware for his new employers.

"It was a great night - I've been waiting for this moment for a long time," Mbappe told Movistar, in fluent Spanish.

"To play with this shirt, with this badge, for these fans, it's a gift for me."

With Vinicius Jr, Jude Bellingham, Rodrygo and Endrick also at manager Carlo Ancelotti's disposal, the addition of Mbappe - arguably the best attacking player in the world - has only strengthened the current European and Spanish champions.

And as they head into the new campaign, Mbappe stressed they are capable of great things.

"We are at Real Madrid, we have no limit. If I can score 50, then 50, but the most important thing is winning and improving as a team, because we will win as a team," Mbappe added.

England midfielder Bellingham, who played a starring role in Real's victory over the Serie A side and laid on a goal for his new team-mate, added: "He's just one of those players, he's brilliant."

"So sharp. So much technical quality. A great team-mate as well. He works for the team, like the rest of the lads. Credit to him, and he deserves it tonight." Speaking to TNT Sports, Ancelotti added: "Mbappe did really well. He adapted well to the team. He combined well with Vinicius Jr and with Bellingham."

"Of course, we have a lot of quality, but we have to play together and we did that tonight."

The TNT pundits watching Mbappe make his Real bow were equally effusive in their praise of the 25-year-old, who received an ovation when he was withdrawn late in the game.

"Mbappe getting his goal is what all Real Madrid fans wanted," said former England and Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand.

"They have added arguably the best player in

the world to this team. Because they have so much youth, there is a hunger. They are adding players with hunger. Mbappe has to prove himself now - no matter how good he has been he hasn't done it here. There is so much to prove for a lot of these players."

With Mbappe switching to the left after the break and Vinicius Jr roaming more centrally, it also allowed Bellingham to surge forward effectively and take control of the game for Real against a tiring Atalanta.

"Bellingham was absolutely phenomenal in the number eight position. His influence was magnificent," added Ferdinand.

"They look like a team of mates, and that doesn't bode well for everyone else. Teams will have to double up on Mbappe and Vinicius Jr, which gives Bellingham more space. He looked like the big kid in the playground today."

Former England and Bayern Munich midfielder Owen Hargreaves added: "With Jude and Vinicius Jr, Real Madrid had too much depth in the second half."

"Ancelotti is the perfect manager, a players' manager, adding Mbappe to that mix to go with Endrick, who will be an amazing young player. This group of players is absolutely exceptional."

De Ligt says partnership with Mazraoui will pay off at Man United

MANCHESTER, England (Reuters): Manchester United's newly acquired centre-back Matthijs de Ligt said his long playing partnership with Noussair Mazraoui will be a big boost to United's back line, an area that was decimated last season by injuries.

The defenders signed contracts on Tuesday from Bayern Munich making United their third team together, and they could both feature in the squad's season opener on Friday against Fulham at Old Trafford.

"What can I tell you about Nous? He is an amazing guy, an amazing

player," De Ligt said in an interview with the team's in-house media.

"I've known him already for a long time, I think around 10 years now. There's a reason we always come together, like before in Ajax, then at Bayern Munich, now at Manchester United," the 25-year-old Dutch defender added.

"I think it is a special relationship and I'm really happy and glad that he's also going to be here, and I think we can help each other a lot."

De Ligt, who signed a deal until 2029, and Mazraoui, whose contract runs until 2028, have

played more than 100 games together at Bayern and Ajax.

They also know Erik ten Hag well, having both played for the United boss when he was Ajax manager.

"He has played a big part (in my development), to be fair. He was the first trainer who made me captain, I was 18 years old and he just gave me so much confidence," De Ligt said of Ten Hag, who made him the youngest captain in Ajax's history.

"He told me right from the start: 'You are an example for the team, and I want you to be captain.' Just the confidence he

gave me at that time, at that age, was really special."

United have largely rebuilt their back line from last season, which is part of what drew De Ligt to the team, he said.

"I actually really like the project," he said. "It's always nice to go somewhere and to feel that you're part of a new project, to feel that you're part of something new."

"Hopefully myself, and the other players that are coming this summer, can give a great piece to the next history of Manchester United and to get the club back to where it belongs: on top."

Yankees' Aaron Judge becomes fastest to 300 homers

CHICAGO (AP): Aaron Judge noticed his teammates dancing in the bullpen as he rounded first. He got quite the reception when he crossed the plate, too.

Not only did he hit his 300th homer, the New York Yankees' slugger reached that milestone faster than any other player when he connected against the Chicago White Sox during a 10-2 victory on Wednesday night.

"It's a great achievement," he said. "Like I said a couple days ago, I was hoping it would come in a win. It came in a big win for us. We were down for a little bit, couldn't get much going, so I was just excited it was there in a big moment."

Judge hit the mark in his 955th game and 3,431st at-bat with a three-run drive in the eighth inning. The six-time All-Star and 2022 American League MVP drove a 3-0 up-and-in-sinker from Chad Kuhl into the White Sox bullpen in left for his major league-leading

43rd homer.

The Yankees let loose as the ball cleared the wall, jumping up and raising their arms and banging the dugout railing. After the game, DJ LeMahieu and Austin Wells doused Judge with a tub of water.

"That means a lot," Judge said. "These guys grind with me every single day. I know the hard work they put in. They see what I do. That was pretty special."

Ralph Kiner reached 300 homers in his 1,087th game, and Babe Ruth did in his 3,831st at-bat.

"Those are some guys that have done a lot of great things in this game," Judge said. "You throw around a lot of those names to people who don't know baseball and they know who they are. It's a special group to be in."

Judge continues to amaze his teammates. Juan Soto thinks Judge has a chance to surpass Barry Bonds' 762 homers.

"Why not?" Soto said. "I think he's the guy who

can literally break the record. ... I hope he got the health to do it and I'm going to enjoy it as much as I can, too."

Chicago was trailing 6-2 when interim manager Grady Sizemore intentionally walked Soto to bring up Judge, who had not homered on a 3-0 pitch since 2021.

"You guys all say how he's swinging the bat this week," Judge said. "It makes sense. The guy had three homers yesterday, a homer to start the game today. Why wouldn't you?"

Judge leads the major leagues with 14 intentional walks. Soto was intentionally walked for the first time this season after hitting three homers Tuesday and another in the first inning Wednesday.

Judge wouldn't say if he thought the White Sox made the right call. But either way, he made them pay.

"If they're going to do that, you've got to come up and drive those runs in," he said. "I was lucky I was able to do that there."

Sizemore made the decision in his fifth game after replacing Pedro Grifol as manager. He said the four homers by Soto caused him to make the decision.

"It's pick your poison. I'm not trying to get to Judge. I got a base open," Sizemore said. "There's no solution or an easy way out of that jam, but Soto's definitely been the hotter of those two bats, even though Judge has been hot, too."

Judge, who hit an American League-record 62 homers in his MVP season, is batting .333 and leads the major leagues with 110 RBIs. No. 300 came eight years and one day after he homered in his first big league at-bat.

"Definitely caught us off guard," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said of the intentional walk, "but Aaron was ready to throw up a great at-bat."

"I thought he expanded the zone a little bit too much there on 3-0," the manager added playfully.





In brief

Naqvi pays tribute to police

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi Thursday paid tribute to the police for foiling a terrorist attack on a police checkpoint in Taunsa. The minister, in a news statement said that the brave officers stationed at the checkpoint thwarted the nefarious designs of the khwarij with bravery. The interior minister commended the brave personnel of Punjab Police who foiled the terrorist attack. He said the police responded promptly and courageously to the cowardly attack by the khwarij. He praised the courageous young personnel of Punjab Police who foiled the attack, saying that we were proud of the brave officials of Punjab Police.

LB polls to help resolve problem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advisor to Prime Minister Rana Sanaullah on Thursday said that local bodies elections would help resolve people's problems at their doorsteps. "There is a consensus regarding conducting local bodies elections so that the issues of the masses could be addressed in a proper manner," he said. We have held a meeting to reduce inflation besides discussion about organizing the local bodies elections, he said. Regarding financial assistance to the representatives of LB, he said elected representatives of the LB must have financial assistance. The measures have also been taken to provide maximum relief to people, he added. Commenting on dubious role of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI), he said PTI had been involved in attacking on national institutions and everyone had seen the footage of May 9. During trial, he said everything would be cleared.

Load-shedding notified

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday issued power suspension programme for Friday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesperson, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period in Islamabad Circle, from 06:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Rawalpindi City Circle, P&T Wini, Jhang, EME Complex, Commercial Centre, Chakra, Shukrial Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Dr. Town, Qureshiabad, Garja-I, Ranyal, Shahpur, Dhok Noor, Jhelum Circle, Islampura, Kangar, Qazia feeders and surrounding areas.

408,900 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 408,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 450,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1548.00 feet and was 150.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 284,200 cusecs and 254,900 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1211.25 feet, which was 163.25 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 22,300 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 296,400, 339,400, 357,400 and 346,600 cusecs respectively.

Sub-committee constituted to revive PSM

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly Standing Committee on Industries and Production on Thursday constituted a sub-committee to address the financial and administrative challenges faced by Pakistan Steel Mill (PSM), prioritizing the concerns of its employees.

The committee was met under the chairmanship of Member National Assembly (MNA) Syed Hafeez ud Din, said a news release.

The Terms of Reference (ToRs) and composition of the Sub-Committee are as follows:

"To address the financial and administrative issues, particularly those related to employees and the operations of Pakistan Steel Mills."

The sub-committee's membership includes Convener Ms. Naz Baloch, along with Abdul Hakeem Baloch, Muhammad Arshad Sahi, and Dr.

Mahesh Kumar Malani as its members.

Earlier, the Minister for Industries and Production provided an extensive briefing on the status of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM).

He said that PSM has a total landholding of 19,000 acres, of which 4,008 acres remain unutilized, while 305 acres have unfortunately been illegally encroached.

Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of PSM also informed the committee that over the years, the federal government invested a substantial Rs. 170 billion into PSM to keep it operational.

The committee, after reviewing the detailed briefing from both the Ministry and PSM representatives, expressed its determination to ensure that PSM continues to function and contributes to the national economy.

Meanwhile, the Mana-

ging Director of Utility Stores Corporation briefed the committee that USC remains committed providing the public with quality commodities purchased exclusively from reputable, branded companies.

These items are then offered to the public at subsidized rates, ensuring affordability for all citizens.

The MD highlighted that these branded companies are contractually obligated not to sell the same items at a price lower than that printed on the packaging anywhere else in the country. Utility Stores Corporation has also received approximately Rs 1 billion as rebate during last one year.

The MD also raised a significant concern regarding taxation policies.

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) currently imposes taxes based on the buying price of commodi-

ties, but the MD USC argued that taxation should instead be based on the subsidized price at which these goods are sold to the public, he added.

The committee acknowledged this issue and decided to call the Chairman, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to its next meeting in order to resolve the taxation matter and support USC's mission to provide essential goods at lower prices.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Industries and Production, MNAs Sajid Mehdi, Ms. Kiran Imran Dar, Syed Murtaza Mahmud, Dr. Mahesh Kumar Malani, Abdul Hakeem Baloch, Ms. Naz Baloch, Muhammad Mubeen Arif, Muhammad Saad Ullah, Rana Atif, Muhammad Ali Sarfraz, Muhammad Arshad/Sahi, Muhammad Iqbal Khan and the officials of the Ministry and PSM.

FGEHA updates Senate body on progress in F-12 and G-12 sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Director General of the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) Thursday provided a progress update on Sectors F-12 and G-12 to the Senate Standing Committee on Housing and Works.

The meeting of the Committee was presided over by Senator Nasir Mehmood. The Director General informed the Committee that an award of Rs. 7.23 million per kanal for these sectors was announced on April 23, 2023.

He also highlighted complications with the landowners of Sectors F-14 and F-15, noting that weekly hearings are being held and Sector F-12 will be launched as soon as the Supreme Court issues its final judgment. The progress and complications in the development of Sectors G-13 and G-14 were also discussed in detail.

The Committee members further reviewed the details of the auction of commercial plots held on

August 7, 2024.

It was reported that during its 31st meeting on January 31, 2024, the Executive Board of the FGEHA approved a proposal to divide a plot from the Federal Government Employees Housing Foundation (EHFPRO) project.

Following the Executive Board's decision on January 11, 2024, the FGEHA divided this 13-kanal project into three plots to maximize revenue potential while considering current market dynamics.

The Director General pointed out that the slow progress of the project has led to a lack of investor interest, despite efforts such as below-the-line advertising.

He mentioned that heavy taxation might have contributed to the auction's failure, citing the tax increase from 43% to 63% after July 8 as a possible factor that deterred potential investors.

The officials briefed the committee on the project's advertising efforts, noting

that the first advertisement was released on July 5, 2024, followed by several others.

The Chairman of the Committee expressed concern over the significant financial losses incurred without achieving tangible results. Senator Khalida Ateeb also highlighted the lack of outcomes despite extensive advertising efforts.

Chairman Senator Nasir Mehmood urged the formulation of a pragmatic strategy to overcome this stagnation. The Committee also received an update on the Pak PWD land illegally occupied by the TMA Murree (Punjab Government).

Officials briefed the committee on multiple cases in civil courts regarding the possession of Constantia Lodge in Murree. Of the 36-kanal project, 6.8 kanals are under the control of the Ministry, 18 kanals are occupied by TMA Murree, and 12 kanals are held by Faujdar Khan (Chowkidar) and his children. Legal pro-

ceedings have been initiated to address the matter, and the issue has been brought to the Prime Minister's attention, who has directed that the litigation be resolved expeditiously.

Senator Saifullah Abro inquired about the list of officers on deputation and whether any action had been taken against the miscreants.

The Minister of Housing and Works responded that action is being taken, and the list will be shared with the Committee. The members also discussed a question raised by Senator Raja Nasir regarding the laws and rules for the separate allocation of Imam Bargahs in the sectors developed by FGEHA. Officials assured that religious sanctity is maintained during the allocation process.

The Chairman of the Committee directed that laws and rules be formulated to allocate separate religious places to ensure the sanctity of all religious communities is respected.

PMDC to issue digital license certificates

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC) Prof. Dr. Rizwan Taj has directed the council's IT team to develop and implement e-certificates for license renewals and Good Standing Certificates.

In a statement, he said that the council is committed to provide a more efficient and user-friendly experience for medical and dental practitioners.

He said that this innovative move will modernize the PM&DC's registration processes by introducing a fully digital system for the issuance of these essential documents.

He said that by transitioning to e-certification, the PM&DC aims to drastically reduce processing times, making it quicker and more convenient for practitioners to obtain their renewal licenses and Good Standing Certificates.

These certificates previ-

ously took days to process can now be issued much faster, ensuring that doctors experience minimal disruption. Under the new system, the issuance time for license renewals is expected to be reduced to 6-7 days, while Good Standing Certificates will be processed within just 1-2 days, he said.

Additionally, the enhanced digital infrastructure will allow the PM&DC to efficiently handle up to 300-400 applications per day, further increasing operational efficiency.

President PM&DC said that the current manual processing of license renewals and Good Standing Certificates is time-consuming and resource-intensive.

With advancements in digital technology, there will be an opportunity to streamline these processes by manually processing and mailing hard copies, to online application submis-

sion, electronic certificate generation, and direct electronic delivery to the applicant or the relevant authority with enhanced security features.

He added that the decision has also been made to cut printing and mailing costs, which will help reduce paper usage. It will provide a more convenient, transparent, and user-friendly application process and more enhanced digital security measures to prevent fraud or forgery.

Since the inception of the updated portal in June 2024, a total 17524 renewal cases have been received from which 16692 cases have been completed and issued.

Over the past two months, nearly 5,063 doctors and dentists have applied for Good Standing Certificates, with 4,891 cases successfully issued.

Medical professionals often require a Good Standing Certificate to

practice abroad, apply for jobs, or pursue further education in other countries.

He said as soon as the e-certification system is executed, the expected issuance time for license renewals will be reduced to 6-7 days, and Good Standing Certificates will be processed within just 1-2 days.

This new system will also significantly increase efficiency, enabling the PMDC to handle at least 300-400 applications daily. A considerable reduction from the previous timeframe.

Furthermore, he stated that directions have been given to the IT staff to start preparing for the implementation of e-certification on a war footing.

This preparation phase includes developing the necessary technological infrastructure, training staff, and ensuring that all processes are aligned with the new system.

and Balochistan (Zhob, Nasirabad, Sibbi & Kalat Divisions).

During the same period, widespread thunderstorm rain of Moderate to Heavy Intensity with Isolated Very Heavy Falls may occur over Islamabad, Punjab (Rawalpindi & Gujranwala Divisions) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including upper catchments of rivers Indus, Kabul & Jhelum besides, scattered to widespread thunderstorm rain of Moderate Intensity with isolated Heavy to Very Heavy Falls over Punjab (Sargodha, Lahore and D.G.Khan Divisions) including upper catchments of rivers Chenab, Ravi and Sutlej.

For the next 24 hours, FFD, Lahore has predicted scattered thunderstorm rain of Moderate Intensity with isolated Heavy Falls over Punjab (Faisalabad, Sahiwal, Multan & Bahawalpur Divisions), Sindh



ISLAMABAD: Vehicles and bikers make their way through heavy rain at Zero Point in Federal Capital.

ANF seizes 71 kg drugs in operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): An Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations managed to recover 71 kg drugs and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He informed that 235 grams ice was recovered from a parcel sent to New Zealand from a courier office in Lahore.

30 kg hashish, 12 kg opium and two 30 bore pistols with 4 magazines and 200 rounds were recovered near Chungi no 26 Islamabad while two accused were arrested during the operation.

24 kg hashish and 500 grams ice were recovered from a vehicle intercepted in Pishin and an accused was arrested.

3.3 kg hashish was recovered from a motorcyclist on MM Road Mianwali.

In two operations near M-1 Islamabad, 800 grams hashish, 250 grams heroin and 100 grams ice were recovered from the possession of two suspects.

Investigations have been started by registering cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act against the arrested accused.

Monsoon spell predicted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Meteorologist of the flood forecasting division Lahore Shahid Abbas on Thursday predicted monsoon spell which will bring widespread showers to the Northern areas, including Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

This rainfall spell will not only provide relief from the heat but also help to replenish water sources, mitigate the risk of wildfires, and support agricultural activities in the region, talking to PTV news channel he said.

Shahid Abbas expressed confidence in the preparations made to handle the anticipated monsoon spells, stating that a wise strategy had been adopted and optimal arrangements put in place to deal with the situation.

Additionally, he said that areas vulnerable to flooding and other extreme weather events were also being identified, enabling authorities to take proactive measures to mitigate potential risks and ensure public safety.

Replying a query, Chief Meteorologist Shahid Abbas provided an update on the water levels at Tarbela Dam, revealing that it was currently 98% full.

He reassured the public that despite the high water levels there were no flood warnings in effect for any rivers or areas during the current monsoon spell, indicating that the situation was under control and being closely monitored by the authorities.

To another query, he said the upcoming monsoon spell would bring a significant end to the suffocating heat and hotness that has gripped the region, providing a much-needed respite to the public.

He assured that the spell would not only reduce the temperatures but also alleviate the oppressive weather conditions, making the environment more pleasant and comfortable for everyone.

The above-average rainfall is anticipated to have a positive impact on the environment, agriculture, and water resources, making it a promising development for the country, he added.

CEO visits SDO offices

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer of IESCO, Muhammad Naem Jan, made an unannounced visit to various SDO offices in the Islamabad Circle where open kacharies were being held.

During these visits, the IESCO Chief met with customers attending the forums, inquired about their electricity-related issues, and issued instructions to the relevant officers for their immediate resolution, said a press release.

On this occasion, IESCO Chief, Muhammad Naem Jan, stated that IESCO is committed to addressing customer complaints as quickly as possible. Customers appreciated the initiative of holding daily open kacharies in all SDO offices from 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM, as per the instructions of the Government of Pakistan and the Ministry of Energy (Power Division).

He noted that these forums have enabled the

quick resolution of their billing issues, power outages, installation of new transformers/meters, replacement of old and faulty transformers/meters, non-receipt of electricity bills, and other electricity-related complaints.

Naem Jan praised the field officers for ensuring the resolution of customer complaints and emphasized the importance of maintaining friendly and professional relations with customers.

According to the details, since the start of the open kacharies from July 15, 2024, a total of 10,481 complaints of various kinds have been registered in 126 SDO offices, out of which 10,449 complaints have been promptly resolved, and necessary instructions have been issued for the resolution of the remaining complaints.

Customers are encouraged to participate in these open forums to ensure timely resolution of their electricity-related issues.

Body to probe abduction case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police on Thursday made notable progress in a troubling case involving abduction and sexual assault. The incident was first reported when a woman was found on Wednesday, abandoned with her hands and feet bound within the Aabpara police station limits.

According to a police spokesperson, the woman who initially identified herself as Farwa and asserted that she was a Belgian citizen who had arrived in Pakistan in January 2024, has now been confirmed as Farwa Kayani, Daughter of Sultan Farid Kayani age 44 years a resident of Rawalpindi. Despite her claims of foreign nationality, the Belgian Embassy has denied any record of her entry into the country.

This discrepancy has raised significant doubts about her alleged foreign identity.

The investigation into her case is being spearheaded by a special committee led by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Arsalan

Shahzaib. The committee is delving into the motives behind Farwa Kayani's claim of foreign nationality and the nature of the allegations she made. Farwa Kayani, whose age was earlier said to be 28 years old, has been receiving medical treatment at Polyclinic Hospital after being discovered in a state of distress on Street No. 33, G6/1, Saddar Road.

According to the police spokesperson, there is currently no evidence supporting her claim of being a foreigner, and her statements have been marked by several inconsistencies. Concerns have also been raised about her mental state, particularly since she is fluent in Urdu and Punjabi, which contradicts her claim of being a foreign tourist.

The Islamabad Capital Police have urged the public to avoid speculation and refrain from sharing unverified information on social media. They assure that the senior command of the Islamabad Police is fully committed to uncovering the truth behind this complex and troubling case.

Body discusses internet issue

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunications Thursday discussed the issue of recent internet disruptions across the country causing real-time hindrances for individuals running e-commerce businesses. Senator Palwasha Muhammad Zai Khan chaired the meeting.

Secretary for the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications, Aisha Humera Chaudhry, explained that there is no issue with broadband connections; however, mobile operators using mobile data are facing disruptions.

The PTA is assessing the issue, and the ministry will be in a better position to provide an overview once the assessment is completed in two weeks. The committee addressed the complaint of MNA Ali Jaan Mazari regarding poor internet service in Kashmir.

He said that internet services have been crawling for the last four months, and

despite several requests, no action has been taken so far. PTA officials highlighted that there are around 156 sites of three major service providers in the area and that internet services are mostly down due to unannounced load shedding.

However, the PTA is assessing the issue and will submit its report in the next 15 days. The committee also directed the PTA to submit its quarterly survey report at the next meeting.

Shaza Fatima Khawaja, State Minister for IT, while informing the committee said that the proposal was moved forward by the Establishment Division and that the ministry will brief the committee on the matter in the upcoming week.

The committee deliberated on the Bill titled "The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023." Senator Dr. Afnan Ullah Khan, the bill's mover, said that the primary purpose of the bill is to protect the data of citizens because, as of now, there is no law in place for this purpose.

Construction works started

LOGAR (BNA): Work has commenced on the construction of five health centers across four districts of Logar, with a budget exceeding 30 million AFN. Hafiz Saeed Rahman Qadri, Director of Public Health in Logar, told Bakhtar News Agency that these health centers are being established with financial support from UNFPA and are expected to be completed within three months. The districts benefiting from these projects include Baraki Barak, Azra, Kharwar and Charkh.

Women need urgent support

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations has reported that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains dire, largely out of the media spotlight. The organization stated that the Taliban's restrictions have made Afghan women and girls increasingly vulnerable and in need of more support. The UN's Asia-Pacific division called for global attention to Afghan girls in a social media post on Thursday, August 15th.

Impact assessed of int'l aid on Afghan economy

KABUL (TOLONews): Humanitarian aid from the United Nations and donor countries to Afghanistan over the past three years has been one of the key economic issues for the country.

Despite steps taken by the Islamic Emirate's authorities in the areas of security, reconstruction, and the implementation of certain projects, particularly in establishing economic relations with neighboring countries, the region, and the world, words like poverty, unemployment, and migration continue to dominate the headlines.

Hamidullah, a resident of Kabul, said: "No one asks how we are doing, what problems we have. We have not received any aid."

However, in the latest instance, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in

its 64th quarterly report stated that the United States has allocated \$20.7 billion for Afghanistan since August 2021, including \$2.9 billion for humanitarian and development aid, \$3.7 billion for transferring Afghan assets to a trust fund, and over \$14 billion for Afghan refugees.

But the Ministry of Economy of the Islamic Emirate has called Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)'s report an exaggeration, saying that this amount of money has not been made available to the citizens of the country.

Additionally, the United Nations has announced that despite billions of dollars flowing into Afghanistan, the country is still facing widespread poverty.

Roza Otunbayeva, head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), said on June

22, 2023: "More than seven billion dollars have been provided by international donors for humanitarian assistance and more than four billion to support basic human needs to the Afghan people since the Taliban takeover."

Given these reports, analysts consider the effectiveness of humanitarian aid efforts from the UN, the European Union, the US, and other donor countries and organizations.

Shabbir Bashiri, an economic expert, said: "Humanitarian aid over the past three years, as its name suggests, has been humanitarian, and some of this aid has reached those in need."

Officials in the Islamic Emirate do not consider the humanitarian aid from international organizations and donor countries sufficient to reduce poverty in Afghanistan, and emphasized efforts to shift this aid

towards entrepreneurial sectors.

Abdul Latif Nazari, the Deputy Minister of Economy, said, "Over the past three years, international community aid and relief organizations have been effective, but insufficient, and the reason is that most of this aid has been humanitarian. We are striving to turn this aid into developmental assistance."

At the same time, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has announced that half of Afghanistan's population lives in poverty, and one in four Afghans is uncertain about where their next meal will come from.

According to OCHA statistics, around 23.7 million people in Afghanistan will need humanitarian aid this year, making it the third-highest number of people in need worldwide.

UK to donate £40 million to WFP Afghanistan

KABUL (BNA): The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Afghanistan has announced a £40 million donation from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). This contribution, equivalent to over \$50 million USD, will allow WFP to provide direct emergency food assistance to 1.2 million people in Afghanistan.

In addition to emergency food aid, WFP plans to offer malnutrition prevention services to approximately 150,000 children and 140,000 pregnant and nursing women. The program will also identify and engage up to 77,000 individuals suffering from food insecurity to participate in community-based public works projects aimed at improving resilience to climate impacts and enhancing productivity.

UK Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, Andrew Mitchell, emphasized that this aid will deliver critical food and nutrition support to over one million people. He also highlighted the UK's investment in programs that build resilience in affected communities, helping them better prepare for and respond to climate change impacts.

With this latest funding, WFP will procure a total of 9,000 metric tons of essential food items, including fortified wheat flour, enriched vegetable oil, split peas, and iodized salt, for distribution through emergency and resilience programs. Additionally, 1,900 metric tons of specialized food products will be purchased to prevent malnutrition. WFP will also distribute \$29 million in cash to enable families to purchase food from local markets.

Gordon Craig, WFP's Country Director for Afghanistan, expressed gratitude for the UK's support, which enables WFP to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations while continuing to build a more resilient and food-secure future for remote communities.

WFP's resilience program in Afghanistan aims to mitigate the impacts of climate-related shocks such as droughts and floods that contribute to widespread hunger. Through initiatives like the FFA, participants work on six-month community projects, such as irrigation canals and retaining walls, which benefit entire villages. This support also allows WFP to assist smallholder farmers by distributing climate-smart seeds, providing equipment for solar-powered food processing, and supporting beekeeping.

In 2023, WFP assisted 18.6 million people in Afghanistan through its various programs, including 9.4 million women and girls. The organization distributed 600,000 metric tons of food and provided \$190 million in cash assistance to help families meet their nutritional needs.

Fire at Customs incurs huge financial losses



HERAT (Ariana News): A fire that swept through a Herat Customs facility incurred financial losses of millions of dollars for traders, who also battled for hours to extinguish the blaze.

Herat Customs officials said the fire started at about midday in the clearing area but quickly spread.

As trucks and goods went up in flames, customs officials appealed to the public to help douse the flames alongside the fire department.

Firefighters took five hours to bring the blaze

under control.

Ismatullah Yaser, the deputy head of Herat Customs, said: "Unfortunately, a fire broke out at noon on Wednesday ... the cause has not yet been determined."

Najibullah, a trader, said: "Our goods were worth about \$200,000 that caught fire. 'There is a possibility that all our property will be burned.'"

Zalmi Bahadri, another affected businessman, said: "The fire has been controlled and all our craftsmen who had facilities,

including myself, who had a few tanks, are currently engaged in firefighting."

Officials at Herat Customs say that it is not yet clear how much was lost but said financial losses were huge. They also said the cause of the fire had not yet been determined.

Traders however spoke out and criticized the customs department for not having sufficient facilities for them while waiting for customs clearance and for not having mechanisms in place to prevent a fire of this nature.

Nearly 30 regional, international meetings held on Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): Nearly 30 meetings have been held over the past year by regional and international countries regarding the situation in Afghanistan.

In these meetings, Afghanistan's political, security, and human rights situation were discussed. One of these meetings was the third Doha meeting, hosted by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

A meeting titled "Afghanistan Regional Cooperation Initiative" was held on the 9th of Dalwa 1402 (January 29, 2024), at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul, with the participation of representatives and ambassadors from more than ten countries.

Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, described the meeting as focused on examining ways of regional cooperation based on mutual regional interests and respecting governance methods.

He stated during the meeting, "The security, stability, and development of Afghanistan benefit the region, and there should be no cooperation in regional insecurity."

The second and third Doha meetings were among the most important regional meetings about Afghanistan, held in the Qatari capital with representatives from various countries. The second Doha meeting on Afghanistan took place on February 18-19, 2024, with representatives from over thirty countries and international organizations.

Key issues discussed at the second Doha meeting included consultations on Afghanistan, increasing international engagement in a coherent and structured manner, appointing a UN special representative for

Afghanistan, identifying fundamental features for constructive and principled engagement, and global concerns about the policies of the Islamic Emirate.

However, no representative from the Islamic Emirate was present at this meeting.

The UN Secretary-General said at the end of the second Doha meeting, "In fact, I received a letter with a set of conditions to be present in this meeting that were not acceptable. These conditions first of all denied us to talk to other representative of the Afghan society and demanded a treatment that would to a large extent be similar to recognition."

However, unlike the second Doha meeting, the third Doha meeting was held with the participation of an Islamic Emirate representative after extensive consultations. The third Doha meeting was led by the UN Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Zabiullah Mujahid led the Islamic Emirate delegation.

Zabiullah Mujahid said that the international community pledged to make efforts to provide alternative crops for opium, and humanitarian assistance.

Mujahid said, "All countries, including the United States, have pledged to assist Afghanistan and not support any military side."

Russia also held two meetings on Afghanistan. One of these meetings took place in Kazan with the participation of the Islamic Emirate delegation, and the other was held in Moscow with the presence of political opponents of the Islamic Emirate.

The fifth Moscow Format meeting on Afghanistan was held on September 28, 2023, in Kazan, Russia, with representa-

tives from over ten countries, including the Islamic Emirate delegation. This meeting discussed Afghanistan's current situation, intra-Afghan talks, the reconstruction of Afghanistan after years of war, and ensuring the security of regional countries.

Moreover, a meeting titled "Afghanistan Between the Past and the Future" was hosted by the Russian Justice Party on November 23, 2023, in Moscow, with the participation of Islamic Emirate opponents and representatives of some countries. Participants in this meeting discussed the formation of an inclusive government, the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, the United Nations' approach to Afghanistan, and other issues.

The Afghanistan Future Thought Forum meeting on the August 19, 2023, "Afghanistan in the past and future" was held on October 27, 2023, the 11th Herat Security Dialogue on November 27, 2023, the Vienna meeting on December 5, 2023, and the Oslo meeting on May 16, 2024, were held by opponents of the Islamic Emirate; these meetings were considered fruitless by the Islamic Emirate.

The United Nations, the UN Security Council, and the UN Human Rights Council have held more than thirteen meetings regarding Afghanistan. Most of these meetings, alongside constructive engagement with the Islamic Emirate, discussed human rights, especially the rights of women and girls, the formation of an inclusive government, and the non-use of Afghan territory against other countries.

The UN Security Council meetings included discussions on extending

UNAMA's mandate in Afghanistan, the independent review by the UN's special coordinator for Afghanistan, the UN Security Council meeting hosted by Switzerland on Afghanistan, the UN Security Council meeting on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, the UN Security Council's consultation on a draft resolution for an independent UN assessment of Afghanistan's situation, the UN Security Council meeting on how to increase global common approaches more coherently and structurally, the UN Security Council meeting on the appointment of a special representative of the United Nations for Afghanistan, UNAMA's mandate extension consultation, Roza Otunbayeva's quarterly report at the UN Security Council, the UN's meeting on the situation of Afghan women during "Women, Peace, and Security" week, the UN meeting hosted by the delegations of Canada, Qatar, and the UK to assess the situation in Afghanistan, and the UN Human Rights Council meeting on Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the commemoration of August 14th, marking the third anniversary of the victory of the Mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate over the American occupiers and their allies, was celebrated in the capital and across the provinces in a secure and peaceful atmosphere.

According to BNA, special gatherings held in various provinces were attended by governors, district chiefs, officials from civilian and military institutions, local administration leaders, scholars, tribal elders, influential figures, security forces, and the public.

In December 2023 that consular services at the Afghan embassy in New Delhi would resume.

In February 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the potential reopening of the Azerbaijani embassy in Afghanistan. Nicaragua appointed Michael Campbell as its non-resident ambassador to Afghanistan.

On July 26, 2024, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan accepted Mohammad Sabir as the chargé d'affaires of the Islamic Emirate.

On July 30, 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate declared that consular services provided by the embassies of the previous government in European countries were unacceptable due to the lack of interaction with the Islamic Emirate.

Regarding sanctions, Russia hinted at the possibility of removing the "Taliban" from its blacklist, and in an unprecedented move, Kazakhstan removed

the Islamic Emirate from its list of terrorist groups. Russian President Vladimir Putin stated on June 6, 2023: "There are challenges in Afghanistan that everyone is aware of, but we must establish relations with the current government. The Taliban are the ones governing the country; they hold power in Afghanistan today, and we must follow the realities and establish our relations accordingly."

In the past year, some Islamic Emirate officials have traveled to various countries to improve relations. The acting Minister of Defense traveled to Qatar in February 2024. The acting Foreign Minister visited Iran the same year. The acting Minister of Interior traveled to the United Arab Emirates on June 6, 2023, and met with the Emir of that country.

The United Nations Security Council temporarily lifted the travel ban on four Islamic Emirate officials on June 6, 2023, to perform Hajj. In a recent devel-

opment, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the political deputy of the Prime Minister, asked diplomats in Qatar to reopen their political missions in Kabul. Hamdullah Fitrat, the deputy spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate, told TOLONews on August 5, 2024: "He [Mawlawi Abdul Kabir] asked them to transfer their embassies and representations to Kabul and conduct their work from here."

Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, said on October 4, 2023, regarding relations and his travels: "Diplomatic relations with many countries are very good and are growing day by day. Allah Almighty brought security to Afghanistan after 45 years, and Afghanistan and its neighbors have achieved security." Meanwhile, regional countries, including China, Russia, Uzbekistan, and some others, have consistently emphasized engaging with the interim government of Afghanistan.

Yue Xiaoyong, the special representative of China

for Afghanistan, said on October 7, 2023, regarding Afghanistan: "The regional and international community should ask the United States to fulfill its commitments and responsibilities towards Afghanistan. As we know, the 20-year occupation of Afghanistan by the United States and NATO has caused significant problems for the Afghan people and destroyed this country. The United States and its allies have cut off aid to Afghanistan, frozen the country's assets, and imposed unilateral sanctions, exacerbating the problems faced by the Afghan people."

Asif Ali Durrani, Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan Affairs, said on October 7, 2023, about his country's stance on Afghanistan: "Pakistan believes that by engaging with the current Afghan officials, we can help bring peace to this country and also ensure the prosperity and tranquility of the Afghan people."

However, the fate of the

constitution in the third year of the Islamic Emirate's rule in Afghanistan remains unclear. The Islamic Emirate's spokesperson told TOLONews in February 2024 that efforts are ongoing to draft a constitution, but added that the absence of a constitution does not mean Afghanistan is in a legal vacuum.

Mujahid said on February 23, 2024: "We are not in a legal vacuum. Islamic Sharia is a comprehensive law that defines the duties of every individual in the government and the system."

The Ministry of Justice also stated in a program in Kabul that they have not yet received a decree from the leader of the Islamic Emirate regarding the drafting of a constitution.

In addition to the constitution, the fate of other issues such as the formation of an official cabinet and the tricolor national flag remained unclear in the third year of the Islamic Emirate's rule in Afghanistan.

3 years on, Islamic Emirate's internal, foreign policy reviewed

KABUL (TOLONews): The foreign and domestic policies of the Islamic Emirate during its third year of governance in Afghanistan have witnessed numerous ups and downs.

Expanding relations with some countries, activating 39 Islamic Emirate representations in various countries, and sending ambassadors and representatives to several nations are considered important aspects of the Islamic Emirate's foreign policy.

In its third year of governance, the interim government of Afghanistan has not been recognized by the international community. However, during this period, the Islamic Emirate expanded its interactions with regional and extra regional countries.

Meanwhile, the international community has made the recognition of the Islamic Emirate's government conditional on the observance of human rights, especially women's rights, the formation of an inclusive government, the

initiation of national dialogue, and the fight against terrorism and drugs.

John Kirby, US National Security Council spokesman, said on October 4, 2023, regarding the recognition of the Islamic Emirate: "We have not recognized them as governing power in Afghanistan, they want the legitimacy, but they need to meet their commitments. How can you effectively govern and how can you have an effective economy when basically half you workforce--all women--are prohibited from being part of that process, so we are going to keep holding them accountable for their commitments."

The Islamic Emirate has referred to some of these international conditions as Afghanistan's internal matters and has called on the international community not to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs. Furthermore, the Islamic Emirate has consistently urged the world to recognize the interim government, release Afghani-

stan's frozen assets, and lift sanctions on over 24 Islamic Emirate officials.

Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, responded to some of the world's demands on July 5, 2023: "The issue of an inclusive government is a matter for Afghans. Afghanistan makes decisions based on national interests in all areas. Regional countries and distant nations should discuss how to organize their relations with Afghanistan and how we can create a cooperative environment in the region."

So far, the Islamic Emirate has increased its political representations to 39 and has sent an official ambassador to China. The Afghan embassies in the Netherlands and Spain interacted with the Islamic Emirate in October 2023. The Afghan embassy in New Delhi announced the permanent suspension of its activities in November 2023, but the Afghan Consul General in Hyderabad, India, reported



MOSCOW: Image showS Russian citizens arriving at a railway station to travel to temporary accommodation centres in the Nevinnomyssk, Mineralnye Vody and Shpakovsky municipalities.

As Gaza death toll passes 40,000

Corpses are buried in yards, streets

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP): Tiers of graves are stacked deep underground in a bloated Gaza cemetery, where Sa'di Baraka spends his days hacking at the earth, making room for more dead.

"Sometimes we make graves on top of graves," he said.

Baraka and his solemn corps of volunteer gravediggers in the Deir al-Balah cemetery start at sunrise, digging new trenches or reopening existing ones. The dead can sometimes come from kilometers (miles) away, stretches of Gaza where burial grounds are destroyed or unreachable.

The cemetery is 70 years old. A quarter of its graves are new.

The death toll in Gaza since the beginning of the 10-month-old Israel-Hamas war has passed 40,000, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The count does not distinguish civilians from militants.

They fill morgues and overflow cemeteries. Families, fleeing repeatedly to escape offensives, bury their dead wherever possible: in backyards and parking lots, beneath staircases and along roadsides, according to witness accounts and video footage. Others lie under rubble, their families unsure they will ever be counted.

A steady drumbeat of death since October has claimed nearly 2% of Gaza's prewar population. Health officials and civil defense workers say the true

toll could be thousands more, including bodies under rubble that the United Nations says weighs 40 million tons.

"It seems," Palestinian author Youstri Alghoul wrote for the Institute for Palestine Studies, "that Gaza's fate is to become one large cemetery, with its streets, parks, and homes, where the living are merely dead awaiting their turn."

Israel began striking Gaza after Hamas-led militants stormed across the Israeli border on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking some 250 others hostage. Israel seeks Hamas' destruction and claims it confines its attacks to militants. It blames Hamas for civilian deaths, saying the militants operate from residential neighborhoods laced with tunnels. The fighting has killed 329 Israeli soldiers.

Even in death, Palestinians have been displaced by Israel's offensives.

Palestinians move corpses, shielding them from the path of war. Israel's military has dug up, plowed over and bombed more than 20 cemeteries, according to satellite imagery analyzed by investigative outlet Bellingcat. Troops have taken scores of bodies into Israel, searching for hostages. Trucked back to Gaza, the bodies are often decomposed and unidentifiable, buried quickly in a mass grave.

Israel's military told The Associated Press that it is attempting to rescue hostage bodies where intelligence

indicates they may be located. It said bodies determined not to be hostages are returned "with dignity and respect."

Haneen Salem, a photographer and writer from northern Gaza, has lost over 270 extended family members in bombardments and shelling. Salem said between 15 and 20 of them have been disinterred — some after troops destroyed cemeteries and others moved by relatives out of fear Israeli forces would destroy their graves.

"I don't know how to explain what it feels like to see the bodies of my loved ones lying on the ground, scattered, a piece of flesh here and bone there," she said. "After the war, if we remain alive, we will dig a new grave and spread roses and water over it for their good souls."

In peacetime, Gaza funerals were large family affairs.

The corpse would be washed and wrapped in a shroud, according to Islamic tradition. After prayers over the body at a mosque, a procession would take it to the graveyard, where it would be laid on its right side facing east, toward Mecca.

The rituals are the most basic way to honor the dead, said Hassan Fares. "This does not exist in Gaza."

Twenty-five members of Fares' family were killed by an airstrike on Oct. 13 in northern Gaza. Without gravediggers available, Fares dug three ditches in a cemetery, burying four cousins, his aunt and his uncle.

PTI founder, Bushra Bibi not cooperating NAB probe: IHC told

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday instructed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB)'s investigation officer to visit PTI founder and his wife in jail and get answers of questionnaire in toshakhana case.

The court adjourned further hearing of the case against the arrest of Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi in new toshakhana case till August 21.

A division bench comprising Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Babar Sattar heard the case. During the hearing, the NAB informed the court that PTI founder and Bushra Bibi didn't cooperate in investigation.

Justice Babar Sattar remarked that how a person in prison could refuse to join investigation in the case. Justice Miangul Hassan asked why an arrest warrant was issued on a magic date of July 13. He said that the first call up notice was not correct and asked the NAB officials to present the second one.

The NAB prosecutor said that arrest warrants and its reasons were part of the record. Justice Miangul Hassan asked that whether the NAB has also initiated inquiries on other gifts of toshakhana.

He remarked that the NAB has to prove its good intention and working independently. He said that how the NAB pick only this case and turned blind eyes on other gifts.

The court questioned whether the NAB assess the role of secretary cabinet. Whether the NAB has completed investigation from other all accused in this case, it asked.

Barrister Salman Safdar argued that PTI founder and Bushra Bibi have joined the investigation. After this, the further hearing of the case was adjourned.

PM for vigilance against flooding

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif directed the NDMA, PDMAs, and other relevant agencies to remain on high alert to address the potential severe flooding in areas near the Chenab River and urban flooding caused by heavy rains in Punjab.

According to a statement from the PM Office Media, the prime minister indicated that he was personally monitoring the anticipated heavy monsoon spell until August 25.

He had directed National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMAs), rescue and relief agencies, civil defense, and district administrations to be prepared to protect residents in the Chenab River catchment area and cities at risk of flooding due to heavy rains.

The prime minister directed the relevant authorities to ensure preparations for the evacuation and rescue of people, as well as for drainage, water, medicines, tents, and other relief items in any emergency situation, besides safeguarding the public.

He directed the relevant agencies to keep the public informed about the anticipated flooding in vulnerable areas and to take precautionary measures to prevent expected floods around canals, nullahs, and rivers.

Ukraine captures town of Sudzha in Russia's Kursk region

MOSCOW (CNN): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Thursday that Ukrainian forces have taken control of the Russian town of Sudzha, over a week after his forces launched a cross-border incursion into Russia's Kursk region.

Kyiv's forces have been in the town, located 105km southwest of the city of Kursk, since last Wednesday, but this is the first confirmation from the Ukrainian president that his army had captured it.

Ukrainian military chief Oleksandr Syrskyi said Ukrainian troops have advanced 35 kilometers (21.7 miles) through Russian defenses since the start of their surprise assault, capturing 1150 square kilometers of territory and 82 settlements.

Syrskyi said a military commandant's office has been set up in Sudzha "to maintain law and order and meet the priority needs of the population in the controlled territories."

Sudzha is located next to a Russian gas terminal, a key point for supplying gas from Russia, via Ukraine, to Europe. This has prompted speculation that one of Kyiv's goals could be to

curtail a lucrative source of funding for Moscow.

Ukraine's ground incursion has forced tens of thousands of Russians from their homes and put Russia on the back foot as it scrambles to repel Kyiv's troops.

Wednesday saw Ukrainian drones target four Russian airfields in the largest such attack of the war. A source in Ukraine's security service told CNN the attack targeted four bases in the southwest regions of Kursk and Voronezh, and Nizhny Novgorod, east of Moscow.

Russia's defense ministry said it destroyed 117 "aircraft-type" drones and four tactical missiles over Kursk and neighboring regions.

Ukraine's assault — which poses a major embarrassment for the Kremlin — represents a notable change in tactics for Kyiv, marking the first time foreign troops have entered Russian territory since World War II.

Russia has pulled reserves from key battle-ground areas in Ukraine and Russian-occupied Crimea to repel Kyiv's advances, a Ukrainian military commander told CNN

Wednesday.

The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed in an update posted on Telegram Thursday to have recaptured the first village from Ukrainian forces in Kursk region — the settlement of Krupets.

Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed on Monday to "kick the enemy out" of Russia after it emerged that dozens of Russian villages were under Ukrainian control.

Ukraine meanwhile continues its struggle along the eastern front, where Russian forces have been making incremental gains for months. Ukraine on Thursday reported the heaviest fighting in weeks near the eastern city of Pokrovsk. Serhii Dobriak, head of Pokrovsk city military administration, wrote on Telegram that the enemy was "almost right up close to our community" and little more than 6 miles (10km) from the city.

Dobriak continued to urge all citizens to "evacuate without delay."

Russia beefs up border defences after lightning Ukrainian incursion

Reuters adds: Russia said on Thursday that it would beef up border

defences, improve command and control and send in additional forces nearly 10 days after Ukraine made the biggest attack on Russian sovereign territory since World War Two.

The lightning incursion into Russia unfurled on Aug. 6 when thousands of Ukrainian troops smashed through Russia's western border in a major embarrassment for President Vladimir Putin's top military brass. Russia's military, ranked as one of the most powerful alongside the United States and China, has yet to explain in public how Ukrainian forces were able to carve out a slice of the world's biggest nuclear power.

Putin's defence minister, Andrei Belousov, said the general staff had prepared a series of measures to defend Russia's border regions of Kursk, Bryansk and Belgorod - which cover an area the size of Portugal.

"First of all, we are talking about improving the effectiveness of the command and control system in cooperation with other law enforcement agencies," Belousov was shown telling top generals and officials from the Belgorod region.

CM inaugurates model design, online apply system for solarization scheme

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a groundbreaking initiative aimed at alleviating energy challenges in low-income and remote areas, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has inaugurated the Model Design and Online Application System for the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Solarization Scheme.

In addition to the initial plans, the Chief Minister announced an expansion of the scheme to 130,000 households, with 30,000 exclusively from the

Merged Districts.

This ambitious project will provide complete 2kW solar systems to underprivileged households across the province, significantly enhancing energy access for those most in need. The solarization scheme is part of the provincial government's broader efforts to address energy needs in communities where access to electricity remains a challenge, particularly in backward and remote areas.

By prioritizing the most vulnerable populations, the scheme aims to reduce the energy burden on families, enhance living stan-

dards, and promote the use of clean energy solutions.

Earlier, Chief Minister Gandapur chaired a high-level meeting to review the technical and financial modalities of the scheme. Technical experts briefed attendees on the specifications of the solar machinery, its estimated cost, and the methods for installation.

The meeting was attended by Advisor to the Chief Minister on Finance Mazammil Aslam, Additional Chief Secretary for Planning & Development Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah, and officers from relevant depart-

ments. Chief Minister Gandapur directed the concerned authorities to prioritize the solarization efforts in areas with high electricity feeder losses and hot weather conditions.

He also emphasized the need for a separate solarization scheme for the province's Merged Districts, where power outages are a significant issue.

The Chief Minister highlighted the importance of this initiative in addressing energy problems in far-flung rural areas, which will help improve the quality of life for the poor.

UN team to visit Bangladesh to probe 'atrocities' in deadly protests

DHAKA (Arab News): A fact-finding team from the UN will visit Bangladesh next week to investigate "atrocities" committed during the unrest that toppled Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina earlier this month, the country's interim government said on Thursday.

Student protests that began peacefully in early July soon turned violent when Hasina's followers and security forces clashed with demonstrators and cracked down on rallies, leaving at least 300 people dead and thousands injured. Authorities also arrested more than 11,000 people, mostly student

activists.

The violent uprising that forced Bangladesh's longest-serving premier to resign and flee the country brought political transition, with Nobel-winning economist Muhammad Yunus leading the new interim government as chief adviser.

"The United Nations is sending a UN fact-finding team next week to probe atrocities committed during the Student Revolution in July and early this month," Yunus's press wing said in a statement.

It is the first time since Bangladesh's independence in 1971 that the UN is sending a fact-finding mis-

sion to investigate widespread human rights abuses in the country of 170 million people.

Yunus has said human rights will be "the cornerstone of his administration," while the protection of every citizen is his government's "top-most priority," as he seeks UN cooperation to rebuild the country. The government of Hasina, who has been in India since her ouster, has long been accused of human rights abuses during its 15 years in power, including mass detention and extrajudicial killing.

Hasina is facing a rising number of cases in Bangladesh, including

charges of murder, genocide and crimes against humanity that took place during the student-led mass protests.

"An independent investigation is the demand of the time over the incidents of recent atrocities," rights activist Mohammad Nur Khan told Arab News.

"Ensuring justice for these incidents is very important because there is a long history in Bangladesh that these sort of incidents go unpunished. If people get true justice today, it will convey a strong message that no one gets away by committing crimes against humanity."

Trump's campaign called it an economic address

He made big promises but mostly veered off topic

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (AP): Donald Trump made little effort to stay on message Wednesday at a rally in North Carolina that his campaign billed as a big economic address, mixing pledges to slash energy prices and "unleash economic abundance" with familiar off-script tangents on Democratic nominee Kamala Harris' laugh, the mechanics of wind energy and President Joe Biden's son.

The 75-minute speech featured a litany of broad policy ideas and even grander promises to end inflation, bolster already record-level U.S. energy production and raise Americans' standard of living. But those pronouncements were often lost in the former president's typically free-wheeling, grievance-laden style that has made it difficult for him to answer the enthusiasm of Harris' nascent campaign.

Trump aired his frustration over Democrats swapping the vice president in place of Biden at the top of their presidential ticket. He repeatedly denigrated San Francisco, where Harris was

once the district attorney, as "unlivable" and went after his rival in deeply personal terms, questioning her intelligence, saying she has "the laugh of a crazy person" and musing that Democrats were being "politically correct" in trying to elevate the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent to serve as vice president.

"You know why she hasn't done an interview? She's not smart. She's not intelligent. And we've gone through enough of that with this guy, Crooked Joe," Trump said, using the nickname he often uses for Biden.

When he was focusing on policy, Trump pledged to end "job-killing regulations," roll back Biden-era restrictions on fossil fuel production and investments in green energy, instruct Cabinet members to use "every tool" to "defeat inflation" within the first year of a second term and end all taxes on Social Security benefits and income classified as tips.

He promised economic growth so abundant that "we will pay off all our debt," similar to a pledge he made

in 2016 before the national debt ballooned during his presidency. He pledged to lower Americans' energy costs by "50 to 70%" within 12 months, or a "maximum 18 months." But he immediately hedged: "If it doesn't work out, you'll say, 'oh well, I voted for him and he still got it down a lot.'"

At one point, Trump seemed even to question the purpose of giving a speech ostensibly devoted to the economy. "They wanted to do a speech on the economy," he riffed, apparently referring to his campaign aides. "They say it's the most important subject. I'm not sure it is."

Trump spoke at Harrah's Cherokee Center, an auditorium in downtown Asheville, with his podium flanked by more than a dozen American flags and custom backdrops that read: "No tax on Social Security" and "No tax on tips" — a made-for-TV setup to project the policy heft his campaign wanted Trump to convey.

Republicans had been looking for him to focus more on the economy than

the scattershot arguments and attacks he has made on Harris since Democrats shifted to her as their presidential nominee. Twice in the past week, Trump has virtually bypassed such opportunities, first in an hourlong news conference at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, then in a 1 1/2-hour conversation on the social media platform X with CEO Elon Musk.

When he stayed on script Wednesday, Trump contrasted the current economy with his own presidency, asking, "Is anything less expensive under Kamala Harris and Crooked Joe?"

"Kamala has declared that tackling inflation will be a 'Day One priority' for her," Trump said. "But Day One for Kamala was 3 1/2 years ago. Why hasn't she done it?"

Yet throughout his speech, Trump ping-ponged between his prepared remarks and familiar attacks — deviating from the teleprompter in the middle of explaining a new economic promise when something triggered another thought. He ticked through prepared remarks crisply and quickly.