

Power tariff hiked
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Amid public outcry over inflated power bills, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Wednesday approved a hike of Rs5.76 per unit for K-Electric (KE) consumers. According to the Nepra's notification, the increase in electricity tariff was part of the fuel cost adjustment (FCA) for the months of May and June.



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Driver sent to jail
F.P. Report

KARACHI: A Karachi court on Wednesday sent a driver, involved in a road accident which killed two people, on a 14-day judicial remand. The incident took place at the city's Karsaz Road on Aug 19 when a Land Cruiser had hit three motorcycles and one car which resulted in the loss of two lives while three seriously injured.

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Shehbaz says united efforts imperative for country's progress

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that youth empowerment and the united efforts by the politicians and the national institutions, were inevitable to put the country on the course to progress.

"If we resolve to change Pakistan, it will not be too far when the country will emerge as a great nation. Today's Pakistan and its prevailing circumstances necessitate politicians and national institutions to serve the country unitedly while observing their constitutional limits. If we do so, history will remember us forever otherwise the future generations will never forgive us," he said addressing the National Youth Convention.

The Convention was attended by federal ministers, Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission, teachers, vice-chancellors and students from across the country.

He said it was the government's responsibility to equip the youth with modern education, technology and skills to enable them to change the country's fate and bring about a 'revolution' of progress and prosperity. He said the country's youth had immense potential as for the last three years, Pakistani students were among the top achievers of the foreign scholarships.

Calling the 1973 Constitution a binding force for the nation, he said Pakistani nation also showed unity when the country carried out the nuclear tests in 1998 to make its defence impregnable, setting aside the serious challenges. He told the gathering that Pakistan had sacrificed thousands of lives in its fight against terrorism besides suffering an economic loss of \$150 billion. Not just Pakistan, the whole world has benefited from the elimination of terrorism by Pakistan, he added. He said that besides the common citizens, the security forces played their

PM to address UNGA on Sept 26

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is set to address the United Nations General Assembly's annual General Debate on September 26, according to a provisional list of speakers released by the UN on Tuesday. The high-level debate of the 193-member's Assembly's 79th session will take place from September 24 to 30. It will be the second time Prime Minister Sharif will deliver a speech to the General Assembly -- the UN's main policy-making organ -- he last addressed it in 2022.

fullest role in purging the country of terrorism, which the nation would always remember. Referring to current economic challenges, the prime minister said the government was compelled to privatize the PIA which once used to be a model for other airlines in the region. Similarly, South Korea replicated Pakistan's five-year development plan and boosted its economy while Pakistan still lagged behind.

"We have to decide whether the business will go as usual or we will move forward," he remarked. He assured that despite the challenges of electricity, revenue receipts and exports, the government would dole out maximum funds for youth empowerment and recalled the PML-government's pro-youth steps in the past including the merit-based distribution of laptops, establishment of Punjab Education Endowment Fund to distribute scholarships worth Rs22 billion, and numerous schemes for skill development.

Urging the youth to go into the SME sector, he said the State Bank of Pakistan has been asked to instruct the commercial banks to allocate 40% of their loans for the SME sector. About Bangladesh, he referred to the demolition of Sheikh Mujeeb-ur Rehman's statue during the recent political unrest and said the one who spearheaded an anti-Pakistan movement met his fate.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the federal government had announced Rs 50 billion relief package for electricity consumers using up to 200 units for a

three-month period. He said the Punjab government has also announced a Rs 45 billion package to give Rs 14 per unit subsidy to the consumers using 200-500 units which should also be replicated by other provinces, instead of politicking on the issue.

PM directs institutions to accelerate efforts to do away with smuggling: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressing satisfaction over the reduction in the smuggling, instructed the relevant institutions to accelerate their efforts to purge the country of this menace in toto. The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the measures for the elimination of smuggling, reiterated that the government would never allow the smugglers to damage the national economy. He said the government utilized modern technology to curb smuggling and instructed to apprehend the people involved in smuggling, their facilitators and confiscate the transport vehicles used for the purpose.

He also asked the federal Board of Revenue, interior ministry and other relevant departments to improve their coordination and sought a comprehensive strategy to create employment opportunities in the frontier regions. During the briefing, the prime minister was told that the interior ministry was running a countrywide campaign and effective measures were being taken to curb the smuggling of petroleum products, cigarettes, mobile phones, gold, tea, clothes, commodities, vehicle tires and spare parts.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir distributing laptops among high achievers during National Youth Convention.

Bilawal chairs meeting of Party's Central Punjab chapter

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari chaired a meeting of the Party's Central Punjab Chapter at Zardari House Islamabad on Wednesday. The meeting discussed the political situation and Party's organizational matters in detail. The PPP Central Punjab office bearers apprised the Chairman of the performance of Punjab government.

PPP Punjab President Raja Pervaz Ashraf, General Secretary Hasan Murtaza, Information Secretary Shahzad Saeed Cheema, Rana Farooq Saeed, Imtiaz Safdar Waraich, Chaudhry Manzoor, Maher Ghulam Fareed Kathia, Nadeem Asghar Kaira, Mian Azhar Hussain Dar, Ejaz Ahmed Sammon, Malik Tahir Akhtar, Tasneem Qureshi, Syed Inayat Ali Shah, Rai Shahjahan Bhatti, Samina Khalid Gharki, Neelam Jabbar Chaudhry, Nargis Faiz Malik and others participated in the meeting.

Meanwhile, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed deep sorrow and grief over the tragic accident involving Pakistani pilgrims in Iran, which resulted in the loss of precious lives.

In a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, the PPP Chairman shared that he was heartbroken upon hearing the news of the accident. He extended his heartfelt condolences to the families who lost their loved ones in this tragic incident. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari prayed for the departed souls, saying may Allah Almighty grant them eternal peace and highest place in the Jannat-ul-Firdaus.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari urged Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Pakistani Embassy in Tehran to stay in close contact with the affected families and ensure the swift repatriation of the bodies of the deceased. He expressed hope that the relevant authorities and institutions would fulfill their responsibilities diligently.

COAS reiterates resolve to win war on terror

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Asim Munir on Wednesday reassured young Pakistanis that the country's future was in 'safe hands'.

Addressing the concluding session of the two-day National Youth Convention in Islamabad, he emphasised the importance of unity, education, and resilience in the face of multiple challenges.

The army chief highlighted the importance of understanding the value of an independent state, urging the youth to learn from the struggles of people in Libya, Syria, Kashmir, and Gaza. He stressed that the state had a responsibility to protect its citizens from the harmful effects of social media.

While talking about country's economic situation, the COAS said: "Where are those who had predicted that Pakistan will default?" He urged the youth to remain optimistic,

reminding them that as Muslims, they are forbidden from despair.

He emphasised the importance of the youth as Pakistan's most valuable asset, promising to protect them from any harm. He stressed the need for a strong bond between the people, government, and the army, stating that this unity was crucial for the country's security and progress.

Speaking about the recent unrest in Parachinar, the COAS stated that the army was committed to helping the tribes resolve their disputes through dialogue and reconciliation. He lauded the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for their unwavering support in the fight against terrorism, comparing them to a iron wall standing alongside the army for the past 22 years. Gen Munir concluded his address with a message of hope and faith, expressing his belief that Allah will grant Pakistan

victory over terrorism.

The army chief's statement came after the federal government launched a new anti-terrorism operation, Azm-e-Istehkam (Resolve for Stability), citing a rise in terrorist attacks across the country.

Regarding the new counterterrorism drive, the military's media wing said last month that it aimed at harnessing the national counter-terrorism efforts in a synchronised manner to dismantle the nexus of terrorism and illegal spectrum in the country for enduring stability and economic prosperity.

The Pakistan Army also categorically rejected criticism against the new anti-terror drive, vowing to combat "digital terrorism" conspirators abetted by foreign cohorts sowing discord through the peddling of fake news and propaganda. The institution also clarified that the new anti-terror drive would not be a large-scale military operation.

Imran demands open trial of Faiz

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: A demand made by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan for open trial of former spymaster, retired Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, has taken the flak from "security officials".

"Who is the PTI founder to dictate whether Faiz Hameed's trial will be held in an open court or not? If the founder of PTI is tried in this matter, rest assured it will be open and transparent so that the whole world can see what the founder has done and orchestrated," security officials responded to the former prime minister's demand.

Earlier in the day, Khan, who has been detained in jail for more than one year, called for an open court trial of retired Gen Faiz Hameed. In an informal discussion with journalists, Imran Khan stated that he demanded that the trial of retired Gen Faiz Hameed be conducted in an open court.

He argued that the issue between Gen Faiz and himself was not an internal military matter. He further said that as a former civilian prime minister, taking his case to a military court would damage Pakistan's image.

PTA links internet disruptions to 'fault in undersea cable'

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: After receiving immense flak from netizens and information technology sector bodies over intermittent internet disruptions, the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) has finally commented on the issue linking it with a "fault in the undersea submarine cable".

"Submarine Consortium has informed [us] that the internet [services] are affected due to a fault in the submarine cable which will be resolved by August 27," PTA Chairman Major General (ret'd) Hafeez-Ur-Rehman said while briefing the National Assembly Standing Committee on IT. He added that seven fibre optic cables are connected to Pakistan of which one is damaged.

The PTA chief's remarks come in the wake of the prevailing internet slowdown and limited connectivity that experts and stakeholders have attributed to the purported testing of an internet firewall to rein in social media, which is equipped with filters to block unwanted content from reaching a wider audience. Wireless and Internet Service Providers Association of Pakistan (WISPAP), Pakistan Software Houses Association (P@SHA) and IT experts have slammed the Prime

Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led government over the issue, citing the economic impact on freelancers, IT professionals and the digital economy in general.

With P@SHA estimating a loss of \$300 million loss in light of existing complaints by the businesses and the reputational damage, WISPAP Chairman Shahzad Arshad has said that businesses and individuals who depend on reliable internet connectivity which is an essential pillar of the country's digital economy were now "struggling to maintain operations, and the slowdown is threatening their very survival". However, the government has denied its involvement in the issue with State Minister for Information Technology Shaza Fatima Khawaja blaming the use of virtual private networks (VPN) by internet users as the reason "their phones" slowed down.

"I can swear that the government of Pakistan did not block the internet or slow it down," she said while speaking to the media last week. During the standing committee's meeting today, Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) lawmaker Amin Ul Haq inquired the PTA chairman about the reasons behind internet disruptions.

"The public should be

informed why internet service is affected. It should be informed whether a firewall is installed or not?" the lawmaker asked, adding that the PTA should communicate the matter with the media so that the public is informed. Responding to the query, Gen Rehman referred to IT Minister Khawaja's remarks saying that the reasons behind the prevailing issue were duly addressed in the minister's presser and remarked that the use of VPNs led to the internet being down.

Elaborating on the firewall issue, the PTA chief said that the previous web management system (WMS) was renamed and replaced with the firewall technology after its approval in 2019. "The [internet] firewall system was approved in March 2019," he said adding that the upgradation of the system had started the same year. When grilled by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's National Assembly Opposition Leader Omar Ayub regarding firewall installation, the PTA chairman said: "This system was introduced during your regime." Separately, speaking with journalists outside the NA, PTA chief maintained that the firewall — which he termed "web management system" — is aimed at controlling grey traffic.

Pakistan making good progress with IMF for board approval

ISLAMABAD (Reuters): Pakistan is making good progress with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and hopes to get board approval in September for a new \$7 billion loan programme, Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Wednesday.

Pakistan and the IMF reached an agreement on the 37-month loan programme in July. The IMF said the programme was subject to approval from its executive board and obtaining "timely confirmation of necessary financing assurances from Pakistan's development and bilateral partners". "We are making good progress with IMF for board approval in September," said Aurangzeb in text message to Reuters.

Pakistan is in talks with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and China to meet gross financing needs under the IMF programme, Aurangzeb said in July following a trip to China to seek energy sector debt reprofiling. Rollovers or disbursements on loans from Pakistan's

long-time allies, in addition to financing from the IMF, have helped Pakistan meet its external financing needs in the past.

The IMF did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment on Pakistan's external financing needs and the executive board's meeting on Pakistan's loan programme. During an analyst briefing following the central bank's decision in July to cut rates by 100 bps, the central bank chief said he expected rollovers of \$16.3 billion in the fiscal year to June 2025 - more than half of Pakistan's \$26.2 billion external financing requirement.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb also updated the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue about the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan program. He indicated that the IMF Executive Board is expected to approve the program in September and expressed optimism that negotiations are progressing positively.

The meeting of Senate Body on Finance and Revenue was held at the Parliament House with Senator Saleem Mandviwalla in chair. Governor of the State Bank and the Chairman of the FBR also attended the meeting. The Chairman of the FBR gave an in-camera briefing on the officers appointed as OSD over the past two years. Additionally, an in-camera session addressed measures by State Bank officials to prevent money laundering disguised as solar panel imports.

The Committee intended to review the Deposit Protection Corporation Amendment Bill 2024, which is part of the benchmarks set by the IMF. Finance Minister Aurangzeb stated that the IMF has set a deadline of October 2024 for the legislation. However, Committee member Farooq Naek criticized the bill as unconstitutional, asserting that it was introduced during the caretaker period and accusing the Ministry of Law and Justice of misleading the Committee. Chairman Mandviwalla

clarified that the bill was introduced by the previous caretaker government in January and has not yet been passed. The Committee debated whether the newly elected government should reintroduce the bill. Senator Farooq Hamid Naek condemned the caretaker setup as unconstitutional, noting its rare use outside of Bangladesh. After consensus of all the committee members, the Committee directed that the bill be reintroduced again in the National Assembly on Monday.

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue also reviewed issues regarding digital and plastic currency. Governor State Bank Jameel Ahmed reported that new currency notes are being developed and that the life span of plastic notes is under evaluation. It was briefed that state bank will internally finalise the prerequisites of introducing new currency notes by December. Shahzaib Durrani supported the introduction of plastic currency, while Governor Ahmed stated that plastic currency

will be tested and issued based on public acceptance.

Senator Mohsin Aziz criticized the 5,000-rupee note as a source of corruption, claiming it is hoarded in unaccounted spaces. The discussion highlighted that although the note was initially valuable, its worth has diminished over time. Governor State Bank assured that new currency notes will include enhanced security features.

The meeting also addressed the issue of 800 plus consignments of light aliphatic hydrocarbon solvent (HS CODE 2710.1250) and the problems faced by the FPCCI at MCC Appraisalment Quetta. It was reported that, after extensive deliberation, the Department of Explosives has ordered the release of the tankers upon payment of a penalty of 300,000 per tanker. The issue therefore stood resolved.

Regarding the inclusion of provincial representatives on the EXIM Bank Board, it was noted that the State-Owned Enterprise Governance

and Operation Act 2023 requires the majority of directors to be independent. The federal government may appoint qualified individuals as independent directors, meeting the State Bank of Pakistan's fit and proper criteria.

On the Export Finance Scheme (EFS), it was reported that the transition to EXIM Bank is progressing smoothly and is expected to be completed between FY 2024-28, following the successful conclusion of FY 2023-24. The SBP is gradually phasing out bank limits and advising EXIM Bank on limit allocations to ensure continuity of the export scheme.

The meeting was attended by Senators Farooq Hamid Naek, Sherry Rehman, Syed Shibli Faraz, Mohsin Aziz, Shahzaib Durrani, and Senator Ahmed Khan. Governor of the State Bank, Federal Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb and other senior officials from relevant departments was also in attendance.

Conveners of working groups present initial findings

E.P. Report

KARACHI: As a follow up to the first meeting held last week, the second meeting of the Task Force on Digitalization of Federal Board Revenue was held on Wednesday at FBR Headquarters which was chaired by Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Mr. Ali Pervez Malik and co-chaired by DG C41, Major General Syed Ali Raza.

The meeting was also attended by newest member of the Task Force.

On the occasion, Conveners of the Working Groups, designated in the previous meeting, gave separate presentations along-with their initial findings on their assigned area/TORs. Starting off, Mr. Asif Peer gave presentation on restructuring of PRAL focusing on its governance structure, talent & capabilities, working model and technology. He also presented the analysis and initial findings to turn PRAL into a high performing organization.

trade data sharing interface with trading partners wherein it was stated that true value and quantity of trade data is not captured in Customs system of WEOC/PSW. She also presented her Group's initial analysis.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State appreciated the initial findings and recommendations of the Working Groups. He emphasized the need to harvest the already available data to identify potential taxpayers and bring them under the tax net for enhanced revenue collection and broadening of tax base. He was of the view that improving visibility of data integration will bring transparency in the system. He also directed to invite representatives from Ministries of Foreign Affairs & Commerce, SECP and State Bank of Pakistan in the next meeting.

Chairman FBR called for enabling FBR to optimally utilize IT services of PRAL by transforming the latter into an efficient entity. He stressed upon focusing on improving other areas along-with digitizing FBR. He said that cleansing of retrieved data is also necessary to make it more actionable. He expressed optimism that FBR is committed to enhance revenue collection through implementation of data automation and other innovative solutions.

The presentations were followed by extensive discussion among the Task Force members. The forum decided that all the Working Groups will further firm up their initial findings and submit the final recommendations pertaining to their relevant area (s) in the next meeting of the Task Force which will be then presented to the Prime Minister of Pakistan for their implementation.



Chairman FBR Mr. Rashid Mahmood Langrial, Members and other senior officers of the Board along-with Task Force members including, among others, Mr. Ghazi Akhtar from Lotte Akhtar Beverages Ltd, Mr. Javed Ashraf from NADRA and Mr. Fareed Zafar from LUMS while Mr. Asif Peer from Systems Ltd, Mr. Amir Malik, CEO PRAL, Mr. Waqas Ul Hasan and Ms. Tania Aidrus joined virtually.

In his opening remarks, State Minister for Finance recapitulated that the Task Force is mandated to come up with practicable recommendations to transform FBR into a modern and digitalized organization to achieve sustained growth in national revenues. He also welcomed Dr. Javed Ashraf from NADRA as the

zation. Dr. Javed Ashraf gave his Group's presentation on how to retrieve and integrate data from relevant organizations to develop a systematic and organized data profile to identify potential taxpayers.

His presentation also suggested short, medium and long term recommendations to achieve the desired objectives. This was followed by Mr. Ghazi Akhtar's presentation on supply chain automation and Track & Trace System (TTS) which, among others, laid emphasis on utilizing the already available data to bring wholesalers into the tax net as well as make TTS more efficacious and operative to effectively collect due taxes from the relevant sectors. Ms. Tania Aidrus gave presentation on last TOR i.e.

Children Act 2017, and several other laws are already in place in the province, which needs better enforcements and looking forward to work with the Sindh Human Rights Commission to improve better enforcement through robust mechanisms. The Minister also assured that NILAT will be strengthened which can play an important role through education and training on these important issues.

Iqbal Ahmed Detho, Chairperson, Sindh Human Rights Commission, Government of Sindh, Karachi welcomed the audience and shared insights into the legal framework surrounding bonded labor, referencing Articles 11 and 3 of the Constitution. He discussed the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 1992, highlighting that advances are illegal and noting the development of rules in 1995. The Chairperson informed the audience that, following the 18th Amendment, provinces have legislated their laws, with Sindh enacting the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 2015.

He also stated that the SHRC aims to develop a bench book for labor-related laws and is committed to creating pro-rights legislation and conducting post-legislation scrutiny,

SHRC moot calls for reforms to address bonded labour issue

E.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC), in collaboration with Obun2, organized a consultation on the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 2015, and child domestic labour in Sindh, held at a local hotel in Karachi. The consultation aimed to identify gaps and develop a framework for legal and institutional reforms to eradicate bonded labour and child domestic labour in Sindh.

The Consultation was chaired by the Minister Labour Minister for Labour & Human Resources Department, Government of Sindh, Shahid Abdul Salam Thahim. Key stakeholders, including government departments, trade unions, civil society organizations, human rights activists, and children participated in the consultation.

Minister for Labour & Human Resources Department, Government of Sindh, Shahid Abdul Salam Thahim stated that his office will address the loopholes in existing laws and will incorporate the suggestions from the consultations. He highlighted that the Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 2015, the Prohibition of Employment of

which will be shared with the parliamentary standing committee. He shared that DVC tracking sheets should be developed, and emphasized that SHRC, as an oversight body, can monitor these meetings. He also highlighted a key issue with the DVC: the designated secretary is the labor officer, but the absence of labor officers in districts is one of the reasons that DVC meetings are not held.

Syed Nazar Ali, Secretary General of the Employer Federation of Pakistan, emphasized the need to involve genuine stakeholders in tackling bonded labor. He pointed out that issues like COVID-19, climate change, poverty, and the lack of a strong social support system contribute to this exploitation, stressing the importance of improving Sindh's labor laws.

Qindeel Shujaat, Executive Director, Obun2, highlighted the critical issue of child domestic labor and shared the national and provincial framework addressing child domestic labour. He shared that the issue of child domestic labour is dealt differently in different provinces. In Pakistan, two types of labor laws prohibit child domestic labor: those regulating child employment and domestic working conditions.



KARACHI: A view of female isolation ward for Mpox patients at Sindh disease hospital.

Ex-narcotics traffickers convicted

E.P. Report

KARACHI: AFI & Anti Money Laundering Section of ANF after thorough scrutiny into financial profiles of drug traffickers saif u rehman, abbas khan and their associates registered anti money laundering case in 2020.

Special CNS court convicted accused person saif rehman and his brother abbas khan sentence of 5 years imprisonment along with fine on 30 lacs each plus forfeiture of bank accounts and insurance policies involved in offense of money laundering.

Verdict was announced on 15 Aug 2024 by Sadaf Yousuf Judge Special Court CNS III.

Syed Adnan honoured by PM and Army Chief

E.P. Report


PESHAWAR: At the National Youth Convention 2024, Syed Adnan from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was among the 50 high achievers from across the country honored by the Prime Minister and the Army Chief. He was awarded a certificate and a laptop in recognition of his contributions to youth leadership and peacebuilding efforts.

The National Youth Convention selected 50 high achievers from various regions of Pakistan, and Syed Adnan, a young journalist and youth leader, was one of them. His dedication to the youth and his consistent efforts for peace have made him a standout figure in his community.

Syed Adnan has organized free medical camps in various areas, providing much-needed healthcare services to underprivileged communities. He has been a vocal advocate for addressing the issues faced by young people and has consistently raised his voice in support of the state of Pakistan under all circumstances. His efforts to maintain peace include organizing peace and reconciliation councils (Aman Grand Jirgas) in different regions.

Currently, Syed Adnan serves as an investigative reporter at The Frontier Post. He has exposed numerous corruption scandals and written impactful stories in the national interest, earning him widespread respect in the journalism community. Journalists, bureaucratic officers, young lawyers, and others have extended their felicitations to Syed Adnan for his outstanding achievements.



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Details:				
Branch	Mansehra	Branch code	0029	
Auction Date	26 th August-2024	Time	10:00 AM	

Customer Name	CNIC #	Address	Gold Weight (GM)	Detail of Gold Ornaments
Wajid Saeed	13503-0679801-5	Lassan Thakral, Tehsil Mansehra, District Mansehra	13	3 Bangles
Khalid Iqbal	13503-4569750-9	Mera Chakya Tehsil, District Mansehra	2.56	1 Necklace, 2 Earrings

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

Mobilink Bank

3 ministers join Urs

E.P. Report

KARACHI: The 281st annual Urs of sufi saint Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (RA) commenced with great reverence and devotion. The Minister for Auqaf, Religious Affairs, Zakat, and Ushr, Syed Riaz Hussain Shah Shirazi, along with Provincial Ministers Saeed Ghani and Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, visited the shrine to pay their respects.

They were accompanied by prominent personalities including Syed Tanveer Haider Shah Shirazi, MPA Raja Razaq, and Syed Fawad Hussain Shah Shirazi. The dignitaries laid ceremonial chaddars on the shrine and offered prayers.

Father's Name Correction

My father correct name is Taimur Karim while mistakenly written in my B.S, F.Sc DM'C and certificates as Tamoor Karim. Please make the required correction in it as Taimur Karim. Bilal Karim S/o Taimur Karim

میں محمد صادق ولد خان غازی سندھ علی آباد کا رہنے والا ہوں۔
چار پر پڑھ کر تحصیل وطن میں داخل ہوئے ہیں۔
میرے دادا کی ممان ولد عمر افغان وقت پاکستان
ہیں۔ ان کے شری دارخان میں ایک ایک پٹا ایک پٹی
مسی خان خان کوئی نہایت زری ہیں۔
علاوہ ازیں کوئی زندہ وارث نہیں ہے۔ لہذا انتقال
دراخت مقصود ہے اگر کسی کو کوئی اعتراض ہو تو وہ
معتدل حلقہ پٹانہ سے 7 ایم کے اندر رابطہ
کرے بصورت دیگر کوئی مدد قابل قبول نہ ہوگا۔

Project Director Office FATA Infrastructure Program
Erstwhile FATA Secretariat Warsak Road,
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Peshawar, Peshawar

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
For procurement of furniture in government schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Project Directorate FIP, SDU, Planning and Development Department Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar invites sealed bids under National Competitive Bidding (NCB) from Manufacturers & Authorized dealers/sole distributors and reflected on Active Taxpayers list of FBR for the purpose to procure School Furniture and Equipment's.

- Bidding shall be conducted in accordance to KPPRA rule 2014 section 6(2)(b) Single Stage Two Envelopes Procedure comprising a single package containing two envelopes. Each envelope shall contain separately Technical and financial bid clearly marked in bold & legible letters and clearly mentioned cluster. The firm shall provide their complete information along with its postal as well as valid email address and phone number/s on each of the respective envelope.
- Interested firms may obtain complete set of bid solicitation documents from the office of the **Chief Resident Engineer, Engineering Consultancy Cell UET Peshawar, Phase-V, Hayatabad**, During office hours on any working day till **17.09.2024**.
- A pre-bid meeting will be held with the interested bidders on **06.09.2024 at 10:00 AM** in the project Director FIP office.
- Interested Bidders must submit sealed bids to the Project Director FIP, Erstwhile FATA Secretariat, Warsak Road, Peshawar on or before **02:00 hours, 17.09.2024**, technical bid will be opened on the same day at **02:30 PM** in the presence of bidders or their representatives, who choose to attend the process.
- Financial bid must be accompanied with **flat Bid Security for Lot-I is PKR 2.5 Million, Lot-2 is PKR 1 Million, Lot-III is PKR 0.5 Million and Lot-IV is 0.5 Million** respectively in the shape of Call Deposit Receipt (CDR) in the name of the undersigned, of the allocated budget.
- Technical bid must be accompanied with an affidavit stating that original CDR for respective lot sealed and placed in financial bid failing which the technical bid will be considered non-responsive.
- All pages of the Tender must be signed and stamped by the bidder/ authorized person.
- Rates quoted must include all kind of levies/ taxes and auxiliary charges (such as delivery charges at site or freight charges are also assumed to be included in the offered/ quoted price).
- All Kind of taxes/ duties applicable by Government shall be charged as per the directives of the Government issued from time to time.
- The bidder shall provide samples of quoted goods at his own cost upon the issuance of letter of acceptance before signing of contract.
- The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all bids a per provisions contained in Rule 47 of KPPRA Procurement Rules 2014.
- NIT is also available at www.kppra.gov.pk and www.pndkp.gov.pk web Sites.

Note: Errors / Omissions are subject to rectification.
Phone no. 091-5200720, Fax No. 091-5200720

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Auction of Gold

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

Details:				
Branch	DI Khan	Branch code	3033	
Auction Date	23 rd August-2024	Time	11:00 AM	

Customer Name	CNIC #	Address	Gold Weight (GM)	Detail of Gold Ornaments
Tanveer Ahmed	38102-1909164-5	hok Khichiyan Wali, PO Darya Khan, Tehsil Darya Khan, District Bhakkar	26	1 Tuls, 1 Haar, 1 Jhumaar
Shafi Ullah	12102-6244264-5	Kot Zaffar Farodasti, Madi, Tehsil Kulachi, District Dera Ismail Khan	8	1 Necklace, 1 Pair Kantay, 1 Pair Baliyan
Muhammad Noman	12102-7872168-5	Jhok Jhundeer Jata, Tehsil Peroa, Dera Ismail Khan	71	5 Katmala
Muhammad Umair Khan	38102-2413629-9	Basti Morani, PO Darya Khan, Tehsil Darya Khan, District Bhakkar	16	1 Mala, 1 Haar
Nawab Khan	38102-6289785-7	Mohala Sheikhwanwala, Darya Khan, District Bhakkar	15.5	1 Tuls, 1 Pair Kantay
Shazia Habib	12101-0455356-8	Basti Gazar, PO Milana, Dera Ismail Khan	12.6	1 Ring, 1 Pair Kantay, 1 Nath, 1 Haar, 1 Pair Kantay
Roshan Zameer	12101-7882613-7	Taank Road, PO T T Mills Korai, Dera Ismail Khan	6.5	1 Mala, 1 Bindiya
Muhammad Shah Bran	12101-9643730-3	PO Jata Jalwala South, Tehsil Proa, Dera Ismail Khan	24	2 Katmala
Yasir Hussain	38102-1219762-5	Morani Sandi, PO Dariya Khan Nashaib, Tehsil Darya Khan, District Bhakkar	12.5	1 Katmala
Gohar Nawaz	12102-7197908-9	Hathala, Tehsil Kulachi, District Dera Ismail Khan	23.5	1 Tuls
Qismat Khan	12102-2386633-9	Hathala, Tehsil Kulachi, District Dera Ismail Khan	107	1 Tuls, 1 Katmala, 1 Mala, 4 Chorian, 1 Jhoomer
Abdul Ghaffar	32103-6041548-9	PO Khas Tarman, Tehsil Tunsu, District Dera Ghazi Khan	54	1 Tuls, 1 Tika, 1 Jhumar, Kantay, 1 Tuls

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

Mobilink Bank



PESHAWAR: Syed Fakhar Jehan, Adviser to Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs, distributed business assistance cheques among person with disability for business at Paraplegic Center Hayatabad.

Shah Mansoor Township Swabi Tordher for speeding up uplift work

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Abdul Karim Tordher, has directed the relevant authorities to speed up the development process of Shah Mansoor Township at Swabi and provide the residents of this important housing scheme, all the necessary facilities.

He said that in the construction master plan of this project, should ensure the availability of complete recreational, communication and social facilities for the residents.

The Special Assistant said that he will provide support on relevant forums to solve the financial needs of the project, while in the future, for the success and sustainability of this housing scheme, its potential commercial zones under a better business model, should be developed so that it become a successful

housing project in the area for urban living and equipped with all the comforts.

He issued these instructions on Wednesday, at his office in Peshawar, on the occasion of a briefing with the officials of the Urban Areas Development Authority of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regarding Shah Mansoor Township Swabi. Rashid Khan Paindakhel, Managing Director of the Authority and other officials were present in the briefing.

The Special Assistant was informed in details by Director Amna Amin, about the overall progress of the development process of this residential project, development of different sectors, proposed future facility plan, ongoing development work and obstacles thereof.

On this occasion, the Special Assistant said that beautification of various parts of the scheme should be taken on priority basis and the views of residents should be

included in the consultation to solve the problems of the concerned inhabitants of township in a better manner.

He said that in this residential project, the availability of parks and suitable places for multi-purpose recreational activities should be ensured for the people, while necessary infrastructure should also be kept in the project for quality educational facilities.

He said that a reasonable business model should be implemented to utilize their commercial locations for the success of this project, in this regard, the services based on the technical experiences of KPEZDMC can also be provided to the authority if required.

He said that this is an important government project for the comfortability of people and urban living in Swabi and we wish that all the facilities required in any standard residential project can be provided to the residents here.

Dr. Aakif Ullah Khan awarded Tamgha-e-Imtiaz

PESHAWAR (APP): The Government of Pakistan has honored Dr. Aakif Ullah Khan, Director of the Institute of Radiotherapy and Nuclear Medicine (IRNUM), with the prestigious Tamgha-e-Imtiaz in recognition of his exceptional contributions to the field of Nuclear Medicine.

Dr. Khan's pioneering work in theranostics, radiation synovectomy, and photodynamic therapy, including the development of specialized equipment and therapeutic creams, has been instrumental in advancing cancer treatment. His efforts, carried out under the umbrella of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) and its network of cancer hospitals, have played a significant role in providing cutting-edge healthcare solutions to patients across Pakistan.

Dr. Khan's groundbreaking work in theranostics—a cutting-edge field that combines therapy and diagnostics—has significantly advanced the treatment of various diseases, particularly cancer.

His innovations in radiation synovectomy have provided new hope for patients suffering from joint diseases, offering a minimally invasive treatment option that improves quality of life. Additionally, his efforts in photodynamic therapy, particularly the development of both the equipment and cream necessary for the procedure, have opened new avenues in the treatment of skin cancers and other conditions.

Pak-German Woodworking Center facing financial problems

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) administered institutions including Pak-German Woodworking Center, Bathkela, Taimargarh, Rahim abad, Swat, Chitral, Karak D I Khan, Haripur, Manshera wood center are suffering from financial problems due to non-receipt of furniture supply orders from government institutions. 150 skilled people are likely to be unemployed due to the closure of these centers.

On the supply of furniture to public institutions by private institutions, not only the public institutions will lose high quality furniture, but also around 30 students who are receiving training in wood technology here will be deprived of training. will go and the process of training will also be stopped.

Hundreds of students have received training since 1790 till now.

Pak German woodworking centers will be obliged to buy furniture, but this decree during the caretaker government a new law was implemented by suspending and implementing that no organization is bound to buy furniture from Pak German Woodworking Center, which not only opened the doors of corruption, but also started the decline of this well-known organization.

KP Advisor Sports visits PCP, distributes cheques among PWDs for business

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Syed Fakhar Jehan, Adviser to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sports and Youth Affairs, distributed business assistance cheques among person with disability (PWDs) for business under "Apna Rozgar Program" during a simple but impressive ceremony held at Paraplegic Center Hayatabad Peshawar on Wednesday. It was jointly organized by Friends of Paraplegics (FoP), US based NGO Equally Able and Paraplegic Center.

On this occasion, 16 people who qualified on the basis of merit from all the districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were given cheques of one hundred and forty thousand rupees each, including a disabled business woman. Paraplegic Center's Chief Executive Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, Director Rehab Amir Zeib, Senior Physiotherapist Gohar Rehman, FoB Chairman Sanaullah, Vice Chairman

Ehsanullah, General Secretary Irfanullah and Assistant Commissioner Peshawar Hasina Kamran were also present on this occasion.

Addressing the event, Syed Fakhar Jehan acknowledged that PCP is the only and unique health institution providing quality and free of cost rehab facilities to the patients despite the lack of resources, including the treatment and complete rehabilitation of people with disabilities, the preparation of wheelchairs and artificial supports according to their needs, children with clubfeet, polio and autism.

He paid rich tributes to the management of the paraplegic center, especially its chief executive Dr. Muhammad Ilyas, in this regard and announced that from this day onwards he himself will work as a volunteer of PCP and Friends of Paraplegics.

He assured to provide sports equipment for sports arena of PCP

immediately while requesting the Chief Minister to allocate at least one billion rupees as seed money for the endowment fund of the center by the provincial government to enable it pay salaries of the staff and bear the routine expenditures.

He said that next month, the provincial government is introducing an interest-free loan of five lakh rupees for the youth through the Department of Youth Affairs, while under the Ehsaas cluster program, a loan scheme of one crore rupees is being introduced, wherein a separate quota will be allocated for PWDs as per recommendation of the PCP. The KP Sports Advisor also assured to visit the center from time to time to solve other problems faced by it.

Chief Executive Dr Muhammad Ilyas in his concluding remarks gave a detailed account of the performance of the institution and thanked the CMs advisor sports and youth affairs and the provincial government for sincere support in this respect.

Govt committed to revitalize higher education sector: Secretary HED



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is fully committed to address the challenges faced by the higher education sector, particularly within the province's universities.

This was emphasized by Capt. (R) Kamran Afridi, Secretary of the Higher Education Department, Govt. of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during a special meeting held here at Khyber Medical University (KMU). Secretary HED, Kamran Afridi highlighted

that the government is actively working on short, mid and long-term strategies to uplift the sector.

He praised the efforts Higher Education Task Force, led by Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq vice chancellor KMU, operating on an emergency basis to address these challenges. "The progress made by the Task Force so far is commendable," said Secretary HED Kamran Afridi.

"It is expected that the Task Force will finalize its recommendations by the end of this month, which will be presented to the

Chief Minister KP in the first week of September."

The special meeting was attended by several distinguished members of the Task Force, including its convener, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq.

In his address, Secretary HED, Kamran Afridi emphasized the crucial role universities play in societal prosperity, particularly through research that guides the assessment and resolution of various challenges. However, he acknowledged that due to the lack of resources and prioritization, the higher

education sector has not yet achieved the level of research excellence required in today's world.

He reiterated the government's awareness of these issues and affirmed that necessary practical steps are being taken to address them.

He further stressed the importance of universities focusing on modern sources of knowledge and research, rather than relying on traditional methods. "Our universities must prioritize the needs of society and the market," he said, adding that universities should explore public-private partnership models, research, innovation, and commercialization approaches to address their financial challenges.

As part of his visit, Secretary HED Kamran Afridi launched the Monsoon Plantation Campaign by planting saplings in the university's lawn. He also visited the university's modern state of the art E-Examination Center, commending the advancements made in the institution.

Major reshuffle in KP govt departments notified

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A notification regarding large-scale appointments and transfers of officers has been issued by the Department of Information and Public Relations, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the notification, Khan Sarwar has been transferred from the position of Deputy Director (Litigation) and Regional Information Officer Peshawar to Deputy Director (Admin). Nizamuddin has been assigned the additional responsibility of Public Relations Officer for the Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along with his current role as Deputy Director (Communication). Additionally, Haroon Rasheed has been transferred from Regional Information Officer Swat to Station Director Pakhtunkhwa Radio Peshawar, with the added responsibility of Deputy Director (EM & P). Furthermore, Mukhtar Ahmed has been transferred from the position of Station Director Pakhtunkhwa Radio FM 92.2 Peshawar to Public Relations Officer for the Minister of Aqaf and Religious Affairs. Habibullah Khan has been transferred from Public Relations Officer for the Minister of Aqaf and Religious Affairs to Deputy Director (Litigation) and Regional Information Officer Peshawar. Sahibzada Hassan Ali, Assistant Director, has been transferred from Deputy Director (Admin) and Assistant Press Registrar to Regional Information Officer Swat. Saqib Nawaz, Producer, has been transferred from Public Relations Officer for the Special Assistant for Population Welfare to Producer Pakhtunkhwa Radio FM 92.2 Peshawar and Assistant Director (EM & P). Rizwan Malik has been appointed In-charge Pakhtunkhwa Radio Abbottabad upon his return from leave. Muhammad Daud Khan, Producer, has been transferred from PRO for the Advisor on Information and Public Relations to In-charge Pakhtunkhwa Radio Kurram, while Khalid Rahman, Producer, has been transferred from In-charge Pakhtunkhwa Radio Abbottabad to In-charge Pakhtunkhwa Radio Wana. Zahidullah Khan, Producer (BS-17), has been transferred from In-charge Pakhtunkhwa Radio Wana and Razmak to In-charge Pakhtunkhwa Radio Razmak. Moreover, Muhammad Quraish has been transferred from Producer FM 92.2 Peshawar and Assistant Director (EM & P) to In-charge Pakhtunkhwa Radio Bajaur. Sajid Mehmood Khan, Assistant Director, has been transferred from Public Relations Officer for the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Station Manager Pakhtunkhwa Radio Mardan. Farhat Irshad has been transferred from Assistant Director (Admin) to Assistant Press Registrar, and Ayaz Khan, Administrative Officer, has been transferred from Administrative Officer Registrar Section to Assistant Director (Admin). Muhammad Jalal, Transmission Engineer, has been transferred from Station In-charge Pakhtunkhwa FM Radio Swat to Transmission Engineer Pakhtunkhwa FM Radio Swat. Muhammad Athar Suri, Transmission Engineer, has been transferred from Transmission Engineer Pakhtunkhwa FM Radio Peshawar to Transmission Engineer Pakhtunkhwa FM Radio Abbottabad. Aftab Ahmed, Transmission Engineer, has been transferred from Station Manager Pakhtunkhwa FM Radio Mardan to Transmission Engineer Pakhtunkhwa FM Radio Peshawar. Meanwhile, Naem ul Haq has been appointed Public Relations Officer for the Special Assistant for Population Welfare. This announcement was made through a notification issued by the Secretary of Information, directing all officers and personnel to immediately report to their new assignments.

PUTA urges for payment of increase in Aug salary

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar University Teachers Association (PUTA) argued Vice-Chancellor, University of Peshawar to ensure the immediate payment of the announced increases in salaries and pensions by the government in the August salary.

In a letter written to the Vice-Chancellor, PUTA stated that the 25% and 20% increases in salaries announced by the govern-

ment since July, the 15% increase in pensions, and other arrears should be paid without delay. Additionally, the letter demanded the payment of conveyance allowance arrears to faculty members.

The letter highlighted that due to recent taxes and restructuring tax slabs, faculty salaries have decreased, causing severe difficulties and hardships in meeting daily expenses, especially for pensioners

and teachers, in proportion to inflation.

PUTA demanded that all announced government increases and arrears be paid in the next salary, as other government employees have already received the July salary increase. Unfortunately, university employees face delays in payment of increases every year.

PUTA warned that if their demands are not met, they will be forced to resort to protest.

Inspections of Patwar Khanas initiated

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has initiated inspections of Patwar Khanas (land revenue offices) in the provincial capital, Peshawar, as part of the government's public agenda aimed at providing relief to the citizens.

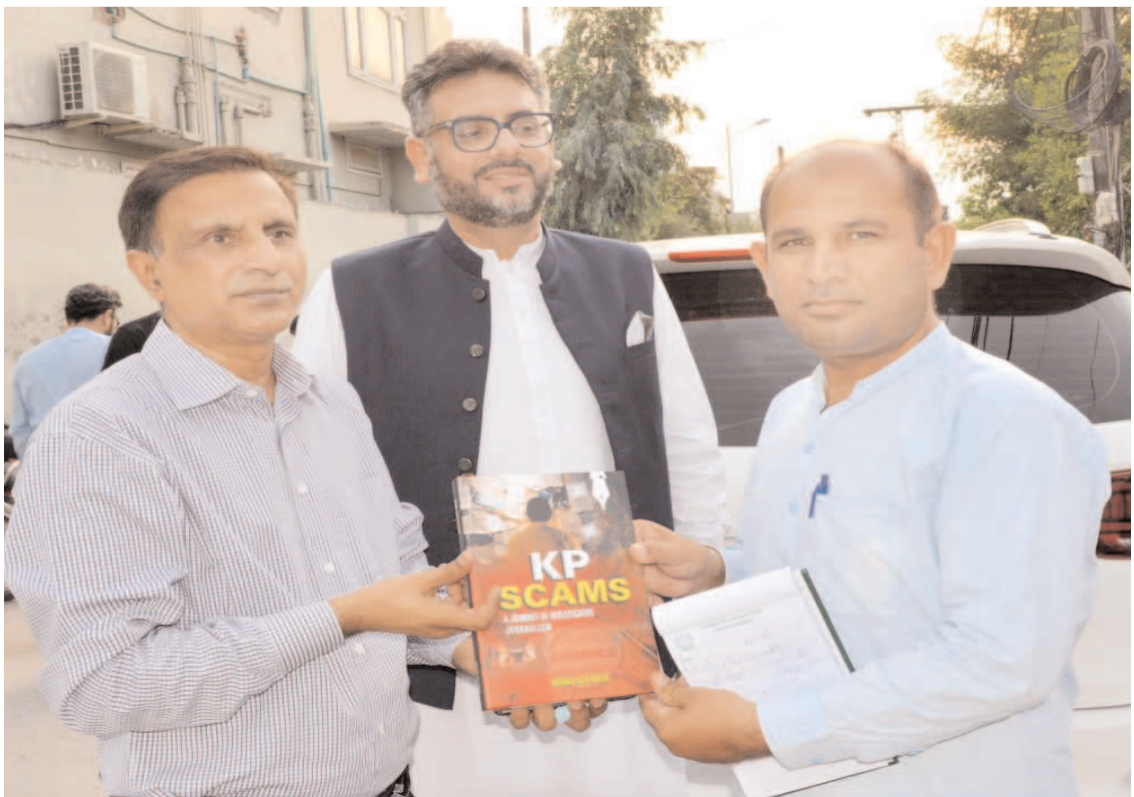
Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Sarmad Saleem Akram, along with other administrative officers, conducted surprise inspections at 32 Patwar Khanas in various areas of Peshawar, including

Mohal Tirai, Wadpacha, Hazarkhwani, Kakshal, Kotla Mohsin Khan, Swati, Charkhana, Mohal Gabri, Surizai Payan, Takra No. 1, Lala Ahmad, Palosi Muqaddar Zai, Tehkal Bala No. 1, Malkandher, Regi Rukizai, Regi Aftizai, Rasheeda, Malogu, Sheikh Muhammadi, Suleman Khel, Mashokhel, Landi Akhun Ahmad, Adeza, Matni, Sharikera, Bahlol Zai, Kara Khel, Mashogagar, Pashtakhra Bala, Sarband, Achini Bala, and Regi Lalma.

During the inspections,

the administrative officers checked the attendance of Patwaris (land revenue officers) and reviewed the revenue records, long-pending property transfers, approved transfers, record fees, Jamabandis (land records), and tax receipts related to these transfers. They also inspected daily registers, Khasra Girdawari (crop inspection registers), and other revenue documents.

The officers met with the public on-site and instructed the Patwaris to complete their tasks promptly.



PESHAWAR: Senior journalist and President of Peshawar Press Club, Arshad Aziz Malik presenting his new book to Anwar Khan Khattak, PRO for Advisor to Chief Minister on Finance, Muzammil Aslam.



In brief

Against corrupt retailer F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Assistant Director Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) Kamalia Muhammad Ali meet Assistant Commissioner and Administrator Municipal Committee Kamalia Iqra Nasir in her office. On this occasion Deputy District Education Officer Kamalia Yawar Ali Khawaja, Tehsildar Kamalia Nasir Mehmood, PRO Bahadur Ali Nonari were present. During the meeting, Assistant Commissioner Iqra Nasir instructed AD BISP that the women receiving stipends from the Fund will be paid from former NADRA office Iqbal Bazar and in this regard, I have appointed DDEO Yawar Ali Khawaja as my focal person. I nominate Yawar Ali Khawaja will make the best arrangements so that the deserving women can get the full amount of stipend for which the Assistant Commissioner has issued a formal notification. Assistant Commissioner appreciated the actions of Assistant Director Benazir Income Support Program Kamalia Muhammad Ali against the corrupt retailer and ordered to continue these actions so that no retailer can deduct from the stipend amount of a deserving woman. The money will be paid to women receiving stipend from Benazir Income Support Fund from Former NADRA office Iqbal Bazar Kamalia. Assistant Commissioner Kamalia Iqra Nasir.

Mentally retarded girl raped

SHAKARGARH (INP): A mentally retarded girl was sexually assaulted by a man in Saddar police station limits, Shakargarh on Wednesday. According to the police, the victim girl was shifted to THQ Hospital. The mother of the victim girl said in her statement that the accused jumped over the wall, entered the house, and raped the girl. After committing the crime, the accused managed to escape from the crime scene. However, the police registered a case against the accused on the complaint of the victim's mother. According to the report, six different incidents of misbehaviour and sexual assault have occurred in Shakargarh Police Circle during the past week. Five incidents of sexual assault took place in the villages of Sadar police station and one in Noorkot police station. In Badwal, two goons molested a young man, while in Afzalpura, the resident girl was sexually assaulted by three men. According to the police, six accused in three cases were arrested, while three escaped. Citizens are concerned about the increasing cases of sexual abuse and rape.

Tribesmen hold protest F.P. Report

WANA: A large rally held in Wana Bazaar against the growing lawlessness and the proliferation of vehicles with tinted windows in the area. The rally, led by leaders from politicians from all political parties drew participants from the Mughal Khel, Kaka Khel, Ashraf Khel, and Shpeshta Khujal Khel areas. Carrying white flags symbolizing peace, the protesters chanted slogans against lawlessness and tinted vehicles. The rally later turned into a sit-in in front of the police line, blocking the Pak-Afghan highway for all traffic. Speaking at the rally, political party leaders stated that the government's authority in Lower Waziristan has collapsed, allowing elements spreading lawlessness to roam free.

Minister inspects development work at Kohat

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate on Wednesday inspected the ongoing scheme after completing the asphalt work on Shekhan Road in Kohat.

The Minister directed the timely completion of work of shoulders of the said road without compromising on the quality and quantity of work.

He also asked the party leadership and the general people to keep a vigil eye on the quality of the ongoing development works in their respective areas and report immediately where

any defect or corruption is seen, so that action is taken against such elements and stop the waste of money. Aftab Alam declared that the national exchequer is the sacred trust of the people and it will be spent purely on the betterment of masses.

Chairman DDAC visits Jabbi area: Chairman District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Kohat and Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Shafiullah Jan, on the complaints and reservations of the people, visited Jabbi area along-with the authorities concerned of C&W Department and inspected the ongoing work on Jabbi Road. He on this occasion

listened to the concerns of the local people. The C&W officials also gave a complete briefing regarding the Road.

Chairman DDAC showed his strong displeasure at the gauge standard of Asphalt on Jabbi Road and directed the authorities concerned not to go ahead with the work till the gauge of Asphalt is ensured. Shafi Jan made it clear that there will be no compromise on the quality and quantity of work and those responsible will be brought to justice. People of the area thanked the Shafi Jan MPA for his quick response to their complaints and assured their full support and cooperation.

Issues of illegal demolish, construction discussed

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: A meeting of Tehsil Council was held at jirga hall on Wednesday aimed to discuss issues of illegal demolish and construction besides collecting of rent of commercial properties and establishment of unlawful taxi stands etc.in Landi Kotal bazaar.

The moot was presided by the Village Chairman Awais Khan and was attended by the Tehsil Chairman Haji Shah Khalid, Axion Zafarul Haq, Tehsil Officer Regulation (TOR) Haris Azhar, Sub-Engineer Mr. Yousaf,

Accountant Officer Ajmer Shah and scores of village and neighborhood chairmen and councilors.

Addressing on the occasion Tehsil Chairman Haji Khalid thoroughly underlined the issue being faced by them and said that sub-committees would be formulated to address issues of health, education etc. in the area. He maintained that being an alien system, they would face hardships in implementation but efforts would be made to work for the welfare of laymen.

Certain resolutions included granting right to Tehsil Municipal Authority

of demolishing and new construction in Landi Kotal bazaar, action against sitting up illegal taxi stands, bidding of state property and collection of rent of commercial properties in the bazaar. Prior to it village and neighborhood chairmen highlighted problems being faced by them and said that years had passed but they were not provided development funds. The councilors also threatened that if their demands were not met then all the councilors across the province would initiate a protest sit -in in front of Chief Minister, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Swat's peaches: Another casualty of climate change

MINGORA (APP): Swat, once renowned for its bountiful peach harvests, is witnessing a severe downturn in production this season due to climate change, farmers say. The region's peach farmers face significant economic losses this year, as climate change induced weather patterns, including fluctuating rainfall, drought, and high temperatures, adversely impacted the peach crop in Swat.

Samad Khan, a prominent peach grower from Barikot Tehsil Swat, has reported a substantial drop in peach yields besides its small size this season due to climate change weather patterns, impacting negatively the growers' income especially at Bahrain, Malam Jabba, Barikot and Kalam. Traditionally, Swat's 20,000 acres of peach orchards produce thousands of tons of peaches annually, with a variety of flavors prized for their taste and affordability. However, this year's production has been severely impacted by the extreme weather events.

Samad Khan noted that heavy rainfall and hailstorms have badly damaged the fruit, reducing its size and quality, adding the catastrophic floods of 2022 had further devastated the peach crop, leaving farmers struggling to recover financially. Despite decades of cultivation, many farmers are now facing losses due to soaring production costs and insufficient KP government support.

Criticism has been directed at the PTI-led government for failing to offer relief or support to the flood-affected

farmers. Peach producers are incurring additional costs to transport their goods to major markets in Peshawar, Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi for better wages. Muhammad Syed, a former agriculture research officer, explained that under normal conditions, peach trees begin fruiting within 2-4 years. The harvest season typically spans from June to August, but this year's harvest has been significantly affected by torrential rains and hail storms.

Swat produces about 80% of Pakistan's peaches, he said, adding the country's economic woes could be minimised by promoting peach farming in Swat, Dir, Shangla and Malakand. The shortage of peach production in Swat has led to an increase in its prices in Peshawar, with one kilogram now costing Rs350 compared to Rs2800 last year, according to Riaz Khan, a former school teacher and consumer of Swat peaches.

Dr. Malik Riaz, Principal Medical Officer at Government Hospital Pabbi Nowshera, emphasized the health benefits of peaches, especially for individuals with diabetes. He recommended including peaches in the diet for their nutritional value. Agriculture Department sources revealed that Swat previously produced around 400,000 kilograms of peaches annually, but this year's yield is significantly below expectations. The region's 15,000 acres of peach orchards, which once thrived, now struggle to meet people demand.

Environmental expert and

former Forests Conservator Gulzar Rehman highlighted the urgent need for action to combat climate change to preserve Swat's peach cultivation. He pointed out that human activities like deforestation and fossil fuel consumption have exacerbated climate change, leading to higher average temperatures that disrupt peach growth cycles.

He said the biology of peach trees makes them particularly vulnerable to climate fluctuations and require specific chilling hours during dormancy to ensure proper bud development. He said warmer winters reduce these chilling hours, leading to poor bud break and uneven fruit ripening. Extreme heat during the growing season can cause sunburn and hinder photosynthesis, further impacting yield and quality.

Gulzar said Pakistan has ranked among the top ten countries affected by climate change, with 139 natural disasters occurring in the past two decades. The experts are calling for immediate measures to address the agricultural impact of climate change especially in Swat, providing soft loans to affected farmers and adopting climate-resilient farming practices.

To safeguard the future of peach cultivation in Swat, experts recommended investing in climate-resilient seeds, reducing pesticide use, and adopting mechanized farming techniques. Immediate action is crucial to mitigate the effects of climate change and ensure the viability of Swat's prized peaches for benefits of Pakistan.



PABBI: KP Minister for Excise and Taxation, Khaliq-ur-Rehman inaugurating BRT Bus service for Nowshera.

Meeting held at KKKUK F.P. Report

KARAK: The first board of study meeting of the Department of Economics of Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak was held in the conference hall of the university under the chairmanship of the Head of Department Dr. Abdul Latif, in which Assistant Professor Dr. Sirajuddin, Lecturer Ashfaq Ahmed, Lecturer Dr. Roman Ullah, Assistant Professor Muhammad Ibrahim ud din (GPGC Karak), Professor Dr. Dilawar Khan (Dean Faculty of Social Sciences KUST), Dr. Zafirullah Khan (University of Science and Technology Bannu) Lecturer Muhammad Yasir Khan (GPGC Karak) and Director QEC Dr. Muhammad Anwar participated as members, besides Prof. Dr. Zilakat Khan and Assistant Prof. Sajjad Ahmed Jan from Peshawar University participated as expert members.

In the first Board of Study meeting of the Department of Economics, the courses as per the new undergraduate 2023 policy of HEC were approved as well as the panel of experts. Abdul Latif thanked all the members and experts for attending the meeting.

Two minors died, 10 injured F.P. Report

LARKANA: Due to various incidents in Larkana district, two innocent children died and more than 10 were injured. According to the details, due to non-disposal of rainwater and incompetence of the management, 9-year-old Ali Raza, son of Manthar Dithu, died in rainwater near Abu Bakar cemetery near Daya Chowk of the city.

The minor died after falling into the pit, which was identified by the passers-by and handed over the body to his relatives, while the body of the deceased was mourned when he reached home, others 9 years old Gulsher Ali Chandio died of his injuries in the hospital after being treated for burns, while mad dogs have injured.

More than 10 people, women and innocent children in different areas of the district, including 10-year-old Mujeeb Rahman. 35 years Sakina brohi, 40-year-old Ghulam Abbas, 10-year-old Aqsa, 62-year-old Habibullah, 14-year-old Nayab, 15-year-old Muhammad Ayan and others are included. According to the incompetence of the administration, the people are helpless and worried.

3 accused charged F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Three accused charged in attempt to murder case in Charsadda district were arrested on Wednesday.

Station House Officer, Sir Dheri police station, Tahir Khan told reporters that the pistol used in the offense was also recovered from their possession. The arrested outlaws include a facilitator were apprehended within 24 hours after registration of FIR case.

WSSC Bannu launches cleanliness campaign

F.P. Report

BANNU: Water and Sanitation Services Company (WSSC) Bannu conducted a special cleaning campaign throughout the district. In the first phase, the government offices were completely cleaned. 20 kilometers of small and large drains and 6 large canals were cleaned in the inner city. Heavy machinery is being used to remove dirt.

Initially, 248 employees and 10 sanitary supervisors have been allocated for special cleaning campaign by WSSC Bannu, for which Bannu has been divided into seven zones, which are daily The district administration has formed a monitoring team consisting of managers for check and balance. For restoration and cleaning of historical status, WSSC Bannu Managers Engineering and Services Jawadullah Kundi, Deputy Manager Operations Shahzeb Khan, Shah Niaz Khan, under the supervision of WSSC Bannu, conducted a special cleaning campaign in hospitals and government offices in Bannu city and adjacent areas.

In this regard, hundreds of employees of the WSSC have cleaned Mandan, Hinjal, Bodwe, Women's Hospital, Mohalla Arya

Social and other small and big canals using heavy machinery. From which debris was taken out in tons, while rain water removal and routine cleaning campaign has been continued separately, in this regard Manager Operations Jawadullah Kundi, Deputy Manager Shah Zeib Khan told the media regarding the special campaign that Deputy Commissioner Under the leadership of Chief Executive Abdul Hameed Khan, all the officers and hundreds of staff of WSSC Bannu are cleaning the city on a daily basis, for which a committee consisting of WSSC Managers Officers reports to the Deputy Commissioner on a daily basis.

He said that the city and adjacent areas are continuing to take steps to restore the historical status and in case of any negligence and omission in this regard, the concerned zone supervisor will be responsible. He said that the chief minister's public. The ongoing campaign under the agenda will be completed before the stipulated period in any case.

Meanwhile, Tehsil Municipal Administration officials visited the city on the orders of the Deputy Commissioner Strict action against wall chalking in the inner city and adjacent areas Operation against the

boards on the walls All wall chalking was erased Complete ban on writing on all walls was imposed TMA authorities will take actions in case of Kurdish writing on any wall. According to the details, on the declaration issued by Deputy Commissioner Bannu Abdul Hameed Khan, Tehsil Municipal Officer Mohammad Yusuf Khan on the walls on roads and different highways in Bannu city and adjacent areas.

Taking actions against wall chalking, TMA formed a team under the supervision of Bannu Senior Sanitary Inspector Wali Ayaz Khan, who cleaned the walls with dirt and ink written on the walls in Bannu and adjoining areas. Tehsil Municipal Officer Muhammad Yusuf Khan said that on the special instructions of the provincial government and Deputy Commissioner Bannu, the TMA officials have started action against the boards written on the walls and TM in the city.





All the boards are being cleaned by the A team, however, in case of violation of the authority of the Deputy Commissioner, the TMA officers will take strict action and will take strict action against those who write on the relevant walls.

Al-Rashid School secure 100% result in BISE exam

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Al-Rashid Modal School operating by Shama Banaspati manufacturer, Associated Industries Limited Nowshera has obtained 100% result in Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Mardan while awards were granted to the position-holders.

According to details, the students of 9th class including Neeza Alam obtained 559, Anam Gul 550, Labina Bakhtawar 549, Fatima Qazi

 Manal Saeed Obtained Marks 1105	 Farayal Saeed Obtained Marks 1080	 Ayesha Sana Obtained Marks 1049	 Manahil Rahman Obtained Marks 1045
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547, Dua Naeem 543, Ireeba Abid 539, Mahnoor 537, Saada Hijab Saeed 532, Meniba Ishfaq 528, Safya 522, Manahil Hayat 511, Hijra Zaman 509 and Sopgmay 504 marks.

Moreover, in 10th class

Manal Saeed obtained 1105, Farayal Saeed 1080, Ayesha Sana 1049, Manahil Rahman 1045, Manahil 1023, Shumail 1022, Mahnoor 1011 and Sara Gulalai 1005 marks in BISE Mardan exams.

Service delivery center operations inspected

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Deputy Commissioner Mardan paid a surprise visit to the Service Delivery Center and reviewed the revenue services provided to the public at the center. On this occasion, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) and Deputy Director SDC accompanied him.

DC Mardan carried out a detailed check regarding the revenue services and government records provided to Cylin at various counters. He met the salesmen at the Service Delivery Center and inquired about the revenue services being provided in the SDC and the problems faced.

Deputy Commissioner issued various suggestions and orders to Additional Deputy Commissioner General and Deputy Director Service Delivery Center on the spot. He directed the people to provide timely delivery of various services and treat people in a friendly manner.

Meanwhile, a resident of

Babini area of Chora police station has repented from drug dealing and vowed to live as a noble citizen for the future while holding a press conference with his children and relatives at Mardan Press Club, Afzal Shah said that he regretted what he had done in the past and vowed on the Holy Quran that he repented forever from drug dealing.

Due to the stigma of drugs, my children had problems in education and we had a lot of problems in social life, due to which I decided to leave this ugly work forever. He said that I will fully cooperate with the police. Some of the opponents are giving applications to the police against me I am appealing to the DPO and other higher authorities to conduct all kinds of investigations regarding me. I have sincerely repented and want to live as a noble citizen for the future.

LG members hold protest against KP govt: The representatives of local governments in Mardan have launched a protest against

their own provincial government, demanding the restoration of their powers and funds. The protest, led by the President of All Chairmen Mardan Local Government City Council Union, Walid Mir Kashmiri was held outside the Mardan Press Club.

The protesters carrying banners and placards, chanted slogans against the provincial government, accusing it of not supporting them despite their better performance compared to provincial ministers, advisors and MPAs. They demanded the immediate restoration of the Local Government Act 2013 in its original form. They threatened the govt to submit their resignations to the founder of PTI outside Adiala Jail if their demands were not met within a month.

The protesters claimed that despite being elected by the people, they were being humiliated by the provincial government which had not provided them with the necessary funds and powers to perform their duties.



HYDERABAD: A devotee performing during Urs of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai.



Pak Independence Day celebration held in Ottawa

E.P. Report

OTTAWA: The Pakistan High Commission, in collaboration with the Canada-Pakistan Association (CPA) and the Honorable Yasir Naqvi, Member of Parliament, proudly organized a "Pakistan Independence Day Celebration" at the iconic Parliament Hill in Ottawa. This event marked a significant moment as it brought together a large gathering of the Pakistani diaspora and Canadian nationals of Pakistani origin, united in their shared pride and joy for our homeland.

In his address, Acting High Commissioner Mr. Faisal Kakar extended heartfelt congratulations to the Pakistani community in Canada on the 78th Independence Day of Pakistan. He reflected on the monumental Pakistan Movement, led by the visionary Quaid-e-Azam

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which culminated in the creation of a sovereign nation where we could live with dignity, freedom, and equality.

Mr. Kakar lauded the Pakistani diaspora in Canada for their unwavering dedication and contributions, which have played a pivotal role in strengthening the bonds between Pakistan and Canada. He emphasized that the Pakistani community has not only fostered greater understanding and cooperation between the two nations but has also been instrumental in showcasing Pakistan's positive image on the global stage.

He also took the opportunity to draw attention to the ongoing plight of our Kashmiri brethren in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Mr. Kakar reiterated Pakistan's commitment to stand in solidarity with the Kashmiri



people in their just cause, urging the international community to fulfill the promises made to them and to uphold their right to self-determination.

This celebration was not just a commemoration of Pakistan independence but also a reaffirmation of the shared values, unity, and the enduring spirit of Pakistanis, both at home and abroad.

Greek authorities detain migrants

ATHENS (AP): Authorities on the southern Greek island of Crete detained 76 migrants after they arrived on three boats, as smugglers seek new routes in the region to evade coast guard patrols.

The migrants from Syria, Egypt, Sudan and Bangladesh included six children and arrived before dawn on the tiny island of Gavdos, near Crete's southern coast, local officials said. Usually, such migrants are detained for identification and processing, after which they can apply for asylum while waiting in refugee camps, with cases accessed on an individual basis.

Smugglers typically target Greek islands close to Turkey's coastline, but in recent months they have increasingly chosen longer routes to Crete and islands in the central Aegean Sea, where coast guard patrols are more relaxed. The Greek government is considering setting up state-funded processing centers on Crete to assist local authorities. Currently, migrants are housed in sports facilities, disused buildings, and schools during the summer months.

The Aegean route remains active, and Greece's coast guard said it had picked up a total 70 people over the past 24 hours in three separate incidents off the country's eastern islands. All made the short crossing from Turkey in small boats. They were taken to migrant reception centers on Samos, Leros and Chios. According to data updated by the United Nations refugee agency, more than 28,000 migrants have arrived illegally in Greece this year, a rate slightly lower than in Italy and Spain. The rate of migrants arriving illegally in Greece has eased slightly so far this year following a post-pandemic spike in 2023, according to UNCHR.

Greece has received backlash from human rights organizations over the treatment of migrants trying to reach its shores. In June, it denied a BBC report that accused its coast guard of brutal practices resulting in dozens of deaths.

Japan's ruling party to pick new leader

TOKYO (AFP): Japan's governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is set to elect its new leader and the country's next prime minister in September. The party's announcement came after Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's sudden decision last week to step down amid low approval ratings and a corruption scandal within the LDP. The internal election must be held by the end of September, which marks the end of Kishida's three-year term, and will include the party's parliamentarians and its 1.1 million dues-paying members. The winner will be the head of the LDP and the next prime minister as the party and its smaller coalition partner control Japan's two-chamber parliament.

Campaigning to become the next LDP president will begin on September 12 and a vote will take place two weeks later, a party official told the AFP news agency. The LDP's election committee chief, Ichiro Aisawa, said the party takes seriously the loss of public trust due to the fraud scandal and has set a 15-day campaign period, instead of the usual 12 days, so voters have more time to study the candidates' policies. The controversy over the LDP centred around unreported political funds raised through tickets sold for party events. It involved more than 80 LDP lawmakers, mostly belonging to a major party faction previously led by assassinated former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Aisawa urged candidates to make their campaign as frugal as possible, "taking into consideration the public criticisms over money and politics". Former Economic Security Minister Takayuki Kobayashi, 49, was the first to announce his candidacy. Other possible contenders include former Environment Minister Shinjiro Koizumi, 43, three of the party's female veterans - Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, Economic Security Minister Sanae Takaichi and former Gender Equality Minister Seiko Noda - as well as former Defence Minister Shigeru Ishiba.



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin, accompanied by Head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov, Prime Minister of the Chechen Republic Magomed Daudov, and Presidential Envoy to the North Caucasian Federal District Yuri Chaika, talks to servicemen during his visit to the Special Forces University in Gudermes, Chechen Republic, Russia.

Ukraine adopts 'historic' law to ban Moscow-linked Orthodox Church

KYIV: Ukraine has adopted a law to ban religious groups linked to Moscow in a move targeting the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which the government has accused of complicity in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The parliament passed the law by 265 votes to 29. Lawmaker Iryna Herashchenko said it was an issue of national security.

"This is a historic vote. Parliament approved a legislation which bans a branch of the aggressor country in Ukraine," she wrote on Telegram. Most Ukrainians are Orthodox Christians but the faith has split between the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), which is traditionally allied with the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow, and the independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which has been recognised since 2019. The UOC says it broke ties with Moscow after the February 2022 invasion, but Kyiv has questioned that claim and launched dozens of criminal proceedings, including treason charges, against the church's clerics. At least one has been sent to Russia as part of a prisoner swap.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy

hailed the vote as a step to strengthen Ukraine's "spiritual independence" and is expected to sign the bill into law. Russia condemned the move as a "powerful blow against the whole of Orthodoxy", while its church, whose patriarch has characterised the invasion of Ukraine as a "holy war", called the bill "illegal". Ukrainian leaders have accused the UOC of abetting Russia's 30-month-old war on Ukraine by spreading pro-Russian propaganda and housing spies. The UOC's spokesman, Metropolitan Klyment, reiterated that the church had no links with "foreign centres" and criticised the bill as targeting the church's property.

"The Ukrainian Orthodox Church will continue to live as a true church, recognised by the vast majority of practising Ukrainian believers and churches of the world," he told Hromadske TV. Opinion polls show that about 82 percent of Ukrainians do not trust the UOC. The process of banning the church is likely to take months because each Orthodox parish operates an individual entity and would have nine months to decide whether they want to leave it.

After this period, cases could be brought to court to ban it. In Kyiv, believers were praying outside the historic Kyiv Pechersk Lavra monastery, the UOC's former base, which was raided by the authorities in 2022. "There's no politics here. We just come and pray for our children and our loved ones... I've never seen any KGB agents," said 56-year-old Svetlana, who declined to give her surname, referring to allegations of collaboration with security services.

The schism between the Ukrainian and Russian-linked churches was triggered by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the war between Kyiv and Moscow-backed separatists in the east. The Istanbul-based head of the Eastern Orthodox Church granted a breakaway wing, called the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), autocephaly - religious independence - from the Moscow Patriarchate in 2019. In the OCU-affiliated part of the Lavra monastery, 21-year-old Igor told the AFP news agency he supported the ban. He accused the Russian Orthodox Church of being a Kremlin agent that "has metastasized so much that we will be fighting it for decades". — Aljazeera

Putin makes surprise trip to Chechnya amid Ukraine's cross-border incursion

MOSCOW (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin made an unscheduled trip to Chechnya, a mainly Muslim republic within the Russian Federation, his first visit in nearly 13 years, as Ukraine's stunning cross-border incursion into western Russia entered its third week.

Putin was greeted by Chechnya's self-styled strongman leader Ramzan Kadyrov, before visiting a special forces academy bearing his own name and speaking with volunteer fighters who train there prior to being deployed in Ukraine. Putin praised the volunteers and said that as long as Russia has men like them, it will be "invincible," according to reports by Russian state agencies.

Kadyrov said in a post on his official Telegram channels that more than 47,000 fighters, including volunteers, have trained at the

facility since Moscow began what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine. Fighters from Chechnya, whose bid for independence after the Soviet Union's collapse led to years of war with Russian government forces, are participating on both sides of the conflict in Ukraine. Pro-Kyiv volunteers loyal to Dzhokhar Dudayev, the late Chechen pro-independence leader, are the sworn enemies of Chechen forces that back Putin and Kadyrov. The latter joined Russia in the months-long siege of Ukraine's key port of Mariupol and other flash-points in the country's south and east. Also, Putin visited the grave of Kadyrov's father, former Chechen leader Akhmat Kadyrov, a command post and a mosque in the local capital, Grozny. At the end of the day, he held talks with the

Chechen leader, who announced the republic has "tens of thousands" of reservists ready to fight the Ukrainians, according to Russian state media reports. The reports did not specify whether any of these might be sent to repel Kyiv's incursion into the Russian region of Kursk. The Kremlin has relied on Kadyrov to keep the North Caucasus stable following years of turmoil. International rights groups have accused Kadyrov's security forces of extrajudicial killings, torture and abductions of dissenters, but Russian authorities have stonewalled repeated demands for investigations.

The Kremlin scrambled fighters from Chechnya to help protect Moscow from an abortive mutiny launched by mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin last year, but some commentators warned that

Kadyrov's ambitions could also potentially pose a threat to federal authorities. Neither the Kremlin nor Kadyrov shared any details about the purpose and timing of Putin's unexpected visit, with Kadyrov saying only that "a busy schedule" awaited the Russian leader.

Putin later held talks with Kadyrov at the Chechen leader's residence in Grozny. Before his surprise visit to Chechnya, Putin was in Beslan, a town in the Caucasus province of North Ossetia, where he had his first meeting in nearly two decades with mothers of children killed in the 2004 school attack by Islamic militants that left more than 330 dead. At the meeting, he slammed Kyiv's incursion into Russia's Kursk region, accusing the Ukrainians of "trying to destabilize" the country. "We will punish the criminals. There can be no doubt about that," he said.

Court refuses to release Navalny's lawyers

MOSCOW (AP): Russia's Supreme Court refused to release three lawyers who once represented Russia's slain opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, and are now facing charges of extremism. It also refused to transfer their case to a different court, even as the defense alleged a conflict of interest.

Vadim Kobzev, Igor Sergunin, and Alexei Liptser were arrested in October in a case widely seen at the time as a means to ramp up pressure on the Kremlin's fiercest foe. According to Navalny's allies, authorities accused the lawyers of using their status as defense attorneys to pass letters from the imprisoned politician to his team, thus serving as intermediaries between Navalny and what they called his "extremist group."

Navalny's organizations in Russia - the Foundation for Fighting Corruption and a vast network of regional offices - were outlawed and labeled as extremist groups in 2021, a step that exposed anyone involved with them to prosecution. Lawyers for the three attorneys had petitioned the Supreme Court to transfer their case away from a court in Russia's western Vladimir region, claiming it may not be objective or impartial. The defense argued the bulk of the prosecution's evidence was gathered in a law enforcement raid they consider illegal, and that had been ordered by a superior court in the same region - something they said constituted a conflict of interest. It also charged that courts in Vladimir had pressured Navalny's lawyers to disclose confidential commu-

nications with him before the politician's February death in a remote Arctic prison.

Navalny himself had been serving prison terms totaling more than 30 years, including on extremism charges tied to his anti-corruption activism. He and his allies had rejected all charges against him as politically motivated, and accused the Kremlin of seeking to jail him for life. Russian authorities in February also put two more of Navalny's lawyers on a wanted list. One of them, Olga Mikhailova, who had defended the politician for a decade, said she had been previously charged in absentia with extremism after fleeing the country. The other, Alexander Fedulov, also said last year that he was no longer in Russia.

Panama deports 29 Colombian migrants

PANAMA CITY: Panama has deported 29 Colombians with alleged criminal records who had entered the country through the inhospitable Darien Gap, applying for the first time a deal on migrant repatriations signed with the United States in July.

"We have the first flight of the agreement financed by the United States," Panamanian Vice Minister of Security Luis Felipe Icaza, accompanied by US officials, told reporters after the charter flight took off at dawn en route to Bogota. Before boarding the Fokker

50 aircraft, the group was lined up on the side of the runway and each was screened with metal detectors.

The 29 deportees, who had no luggage, were handcuffed and climbed the plane's stairs slowly. Panama President Jose Raul Mulino, who took office on July 1, had originally said the flights would be "voluntary" repatriations, but those deported had criminal records, officials said. Icaza said the next flight could depart under the deal.

Transit countries such as Panama and Mexico have

come under increased pressure from Washington to tackle the highly contentious migration issue in a US election year. Washington pledged \$6m in funding for migrant repatriations from the Central American nation in the hope of reducing irregular crossings at its own southern border. In a first phase, migrants with a criminal record will be deported, but the agreement could see the deportation of any person entering Panama through the notoriously dangerous and rugged Darien Gap region on their way to the US. — Aljazeera

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US nuclear strategy change alarming

CHINA has traditionally maintained a policy of minimum deterrence regarding its nuclear weapons arsenal. This means its nuclear strategy focuses on having a sufficiently small nuclear force to deter potential adversaries from attacking China with nuclear weapons.

China has also been steadfast in advocating for a world free of nuclear weapons. It has consistently called for nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and the prevention of an arms race, urging the nuclear-weapons states to reduce their nuclear arsenals.

It is concerning therefore, that on Tuesday, the White House confirmed media reports that United States President Joe Biden has approved a classified plan to reorient the US' nuclear strategy in a more aggressive way. Spokesperson Sean Savett said that while "the specific text of the guidance is classified, its existence is in no way secret" and that it was "not a response to any single entity, country, nor threat".

In June, however, a senior director of the National Security Council, said the US was preparing to change its strategy from the modernization of existing weapons to expanding its nuclear arsenal. The Nuclear Posture Review released by the administration in 2022 highlighted that the US is fully committed to implementing programs that will begin to field modernized systems later this decade. With the emphasis on a robust experimental approach to the use of emerging technologies and innovative design practices that includes the development of miniaturized nuclear weapons, the US' continued focus on nuclear weapons is alarming.

The change in strategy is being presented by the Biden administration as based on concerns about "possible coordinated nuclear confrontations with Russia, China and North Korea" and the expansion of Chinese nuclear weapons stockpile. Which is a false proposition intended to serve and disguise the latent threat in the US' strategy change. Even by US estimates China's nuclear weapons arsenal remains considerably smaller than that of the US.

Reorienting the US' nuclear posture to target China, which has so far refused to even define bilateral ties as competitive and which adheres to a "no first use" policy on nuclear weapons, does little except bolster and consolidate the aggressive stance the US has adopted toward China. But the move by the current US administration should come as no surprise to anyone who has been following the recent trajectory of global geopolitical developments. There has been a conspicuous change in Washington's perception of China and the bilateral relationship.

Since the US is the only country to have employed nuclear weapons, and since that was against an Asian country, China has grounds for feeling uneasy. And that may be the US' intention, as pushing China into an arms race, as it did with the Soviet Union to the point of collapse, may be part and parcel of the US' strategy. Whatever the rationale, the change to the US strategy is disconcerting to say the least and will certainly have significant implications, since it cannot but have a detrimental effect on global stability and security and affect the strategic calculations of other nuclear-armed states.

It will not only disrupt the relative nuclear equilibrium since the end of the Cold War, but also trigger a new round of readjustments in related countries' nuclear postures as it will inevitably trigger a spiral of increased strategic unease. The US should be playing a key role in global efforts for arms control and nuclear non-proliferation. But the heralded change in its nuclear strategy will adversely influence the international community's perceptions of nuclear weapons and impact efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries.

After the Donald Trump administration launched its trade war to contain China economically, the US has repositioned China as a strategic rival. Since taking office, the Biden administration has pushed the idea of strategic competition into every conceivable realm of ties. The only way for the world's two largest economies to get rid of such a mutually debilitating vicious circle is to communicate better. But it is also crucial that the international community, not just policymakers, but also experts and the public, voice its objections to the US "normalizing" the possibility of nuclear weapons use to avoid another Oppenheimer moment.

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Ukraine is losing the plot in Africa

Tafi Mhaka

On August 5, the government of Mali announced its decision to cut diplomatic ties with Ukraine, citing a Ukrainian official's boastful admission that Kyiv provided Malian rebels with crucial intel for a rebel assault that killed many Russian Wagner Group mercenaries and Malian soldiers.

The northern Tuareg rebels claimed responsibility for the deaths of at least 84 mercenaries and 47 Malian soldiers over three days of fighting in late July in what proved to be Wagner's heaviest defeat since its controversial 2021 entry into the Sahel conflict on the side of the Malian government.

On July 29, Andriy Yusov, the spokesperson for Ukraine's military intelligence agency (GUR), told the public broadcaster Suspilne that the Malian rebels had received "all the information they needed, which allowed [them] to carry out their operation against the Russian war criminals".

As Yusov's statement made its way to Mali and caused immediate backlash, the Ukrainian government tried to deny playing any role whatsoever in the deadly rebel assault, but failed to convince the Malian government. Both Mali and its ally Niger, expressing "deep shock" about a friendly nation's involvement in an attack that cost dozens of Malian lives, swiftly ended all ties with the Ukrainian government.

The rift came at a time when Kyiv is trying desperately to garner support on the global stage.

Ukraine has been engaged in an all-out war against Russia since the latter embarked on a full-scale invasion of its territory on February 24, 2022. In more than two years of the war, Russia's aggression killed tens of thousands of Ukrainians, injured many others and made millions into refugees.

So far, the Ukrainian mil-

itary, with support from its Western allies, has prevented Russia's much larger armed forces from declaring a decisive victory. In fact, it recently adopted a much more assertive stance in the war and even began conducting offensive operations within Russia's borders. On August 10, for example, Ukrainian troops shared footage of themselves removing Russian flags from government structures in villages across Russia's Kursk region.

Over the last 30 months, Ukraine has been working hard to persuade world leaders to condemn Russia, affirm their unwavering recognition of its territorial integrity and support its war effort.

As Ukraine tries to fight off deadly Russian imperialism, one would have expected it to receive enthusiastic support from African states which have been resisting imperial aggression since their very inception. Indeed, it should have been easy for Ukraine to garner support from Africans, as Russia's assault on Ukraine is not only reminiscent of past imperial aggressions on Africa, but it also inflicted a heavy economic cost on the continent, leaving several countries worried about their next wheat shipment.

Yet, Ukraine seems to have decided the elimination of a handful of Wagner mercenaries, whose loss would cause no meaningful harm to the Russian war machine, is more important to its cause than the support of entire African nations. By helping rebels fighting against government-aligned Russian mercenaries score a victory in Mali, Ukraine perhaps slightly embarrassed Russia, but achieved no leverage in its own war against it.

In fact, its open support for the Malian rebels seriously undermined its credibility on the global stage, demonstrating that it is not

just a proud nation resisting a much larger and more powerful imperial invader with everything it has got but a belligerent determined to assert power over its enemy at any cost, including the security of other states thousands of miles away from its territory.

African states and regional organisations, which have been watching Ukraine's actions on the continent closely since the February revelation that its forces have been supporting the Sudanese military in its war against the Wagner-allied Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia, immediately took notice of Ukraine's apparent lack of respect for Mali's sovereignty and the wellbeing of its people.

Following the July attack, regional body ECOWAS released a statement tacitly condemning the apparent Ukrainian overreach in Mali. Although Mali was suspended from the group in 2022, in the statement ECOWAS expressed its "firm disapproval and firm condemnation of any outside interference in the region which could constitute a threat to peace and security in West Africa and any attempt aiming to draw the region into current geopolitical confrontations".

Africans are concerned about Ukrainian actions against Russians on the continent because they still have vivid memories of the Cold War era and the harm the extension of the rivalry between Russia and the United States to the continent inflicted on their countries. They remember, for example, how Western nations helped allied separatist rebels torture and kill Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba, fearing that he would bring his resource-rich Central African nation closer to the Soviet Union.

They also remember how the Cold War rivalries transformed the power struggle between Angola's liberation movements into a 20-year civil war, which ended up claiming the lives of some one million people.

In apparent recognition of the harm its efforts to weaken the Wagner Group, and by extension Russia, has caused to its standing in Africa, Ukraine currently appears to be in a charm offensive to win favour with leaders of the continent. Ukraine's representatives are not only strongly denying Yusov's claims that their intelligence support was behind the success of the July attack in Mali, but working overtime to strengthen ties between African states and their country. Ukraine recently established nine new embassies across the continent and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is said to be planning a visit to the continent later this year.

It remains to be seen whether the backlash it received over its actions in Mali will encourage Ukraine to cut down on its intelligence and other military support activities against Russia's Wagner group across Africa. One thing that is certain, however, is that Ukraine cannot win the support of the global community, and convince them of the righteousness of its struggle, while jeopardising the security and territorial integrity of other nations in the name of weakening Russia.

Today, Ukraine appears to be at a crossroads when it comes to its relations with Africa and much of the Global South. It will either learn to respect the sovereignty of all nations, apologise to Mali, and commit to treating all friendly states as respected equals. Or it will choose to follow the example of its archenemy, continue to operate outside the boundaries of international law, and resign to being perceived by much of the world as yet another belligerent Western state that can never be trusted as an ally.

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Western state that can never be trusted as an ally.

The Democrats' national convention begins

Eyad Abu Shakra

THE Democratic National Convention kicked off on Monday in Chicago, before the echoes of former US president and current candidate Donald Trump's "chat" with his new billionaire "friend," X owner Elon Musk, had gone quiet (will they ever?).

Under ordinary circumstances, the national convention of the president's party is considered the most significant in the lead-up to the US presidential election. However, who said that these are ordinary circumstances?

It is not normal for the Democrats to push their presidential candidate and current president (Joe Biden) out of the race, after he had effectively been confirmed as the party's nominee, due to concerns around his health.

Hastily resolving the issue of Biden's replacement, with his Vice President Kamala Harris nominated even before the

within a prominent and influential voting bloc of the American right, one that the Republicans have heavily relied on since the days of Ronald Reagan: evangelical Christians. Although the vast majority of evangelicals remain loyal to Trump, some projections indicate that we will see small shifts within certain conservative circles that are more focused on personal behavior than the theological dogma that has historically fueled evangelical votes for the Republican Party.

Despite the media buzz that the Democratic National Convention is expected to generate, which could improve Harris' standing in the polls, Musk and X's entry into the ring in support of Trump could cancel out all the points the Democrats have scored.

The Democrats received a reasonable bump in support, as several swing state polls demonstrate, after Biden withdrew from the race following his disastrous debate with Trump.

It is not normal for the Democrats to push their presidential candidate and current president (Joe Biden) out of the race, after he had effectively been confirmed as the party's nominee, due to concerns around his health. Hastily resolving the issue of Biden's replacement, with his Vice President Kamala Harris nominated even before the party's delegates headed to Chicago, is not normal either.

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Moreover, it is not normal, at least for the Democrats, to present a unified front despite the presence of several wings, including Bernie Sanders' progressive wing.

Nor is it normal to postpone discussing a series of prominent contentious issues or to supposedly keep the electorate in the dark with regard to the Democrats' position on the war in Ukraine, the displacement war on Gaza and the unrest in US universities. These are all matters that concern Democratic Party activists, especially youths and minorities.

With all of that in mind, there can be no doubt about what brings the party together: the situation at the opposite end of the political spectrum.

True, the Republicans have once again placed their trust in Trump, despite all the legal issues that have threatened to derail his campaign. However, some say that the borderline consensus he had enjoyed until very recently can no longer be taken for granted.

For the first time in a while, historically significant and influential Republican Party figures are questioning Trump's supposed infallibility and challenging his firm "Make America Great Again" base. Among them are former Vice President Mike Pence, former Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, former President George W. Bush and former Vice President Dick Cheney and his daughter Liz Cheney, who used to be a party leader.

Moreover, some are closely monitoring trends

These modest gains were reaffirmed after a consensus around naming Harris emerged smoothly. No such consensus emerged around Hillary Clinton, who lost the votes of many of Sanders' supporters.

Finally, Harris' choosing of Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as her running mate was seen as a positive step by voters who consider themselves to be part of the traditional base of the Democratic Party. This bloc includes low-income rural farmers and small landowners, as well as the unskilled working class in the Rust Belt, who have been hit hard as a result of the decline in manufacturing and mining.

In fact, Walz's first speech, in which he proudly highlighted his humble family background and hard work, struck a chord with many poor and lower-middle-class Democratic voters. This bloc had abandoned the Democratic Party during the rise of Reagan in the 1980s, being known as "Reagan Democrats" since then.

Anyone familiar with modern American history knows that this segment of the electorate (Reagan Democrats), along with the evangelical religious right and the economic (fiscal) right, is the Republican base.

Trump's current base is also made up of this trio, alongside the isolationist and nationalist MAGA movement. However, the decisive factor this November will be the extent to which Trump benefits from Musk's support and explicit opposition to the Democratic ticket.

Musk's position and the degree of influence he can exert are two very important factors in this battle.

Unconditional love, unmatched resilience: The journey of special mothers

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

IN the heart of every mother lies a unique strength, which becomes even more profound when her child differs from the norm. The boundless love of a mother is tested daily when raising a special child, particularly in a society like Pakistan's, where this love encounters daily challenges that are hard for others to understand. These mothers often endure the harshness of an unsympathetic world with minimal support from those who should be their strongest allies.

Pakistan's societal structure is deeply rooted in family values, with the joint family system being common and relatives typically close-knit. Yet, for the mother of a special child, this support network often fades away when she needs it most. The journey begins with the initial diagnosis, a moment that shatters the dreams and expectations parents have for their child. The news is frequently met with disbelief, denial, and even shame from extended

family members. Instead of rallying to support the mother, offering emotional and practical help, relatives often withdraw, driven by fear, ignorance, or stigma surrounding disability.

Special children exhibit a pure, selfless love, untainted by deception, greed, or concerns about inheritance. They rely solely on their parents for care and affection. However, some parents hesitate to introduce their special children to others or enroll them in specialized centers due to fear and societal pressure. A renowned neurosurgeon, moved by meeting parents of special children, once expressed that Allah entrusts special children to special parents. He shared with the tears in his eyes that he himself had a special child who remained hyperactive despite global treatments, revealing the deep emotional connection and challenges faced by these parents.

Cultural norms in Pakistan emphasize social appearances and societal expectations. A child with

special characteristics is often seen as a misfortune or punishment, isolating the mother further. She becomes the subject of whispers, pity, or blame. Relatives who should offer help and support may instead avoid acknowledging the child, refuse visits, or suggest that the mother is at fault for the condition. Caring for a special child demands extraordinary patience, resilience, and energy. These children have complex medical, emotional, and educational needs that require constant attention. In a country where quality healthcare, specialized education, and support services are limited, the burden falls squarely on the mother. She must navigate a healthcare system ill-equipped to handle special needs, facing unqualified doctors, inadequate facilities, and unclear guidance.

The struggles and emotions of parents with special children are profound. Mothers sometimes pray

that their children will leave this world before them, fearing for their child's well-being after they are gone. This anxiety is exacerbated by the lack of support from relatives, who often show little interest in the child's future. Fathers sometimes also show extraordinary dedication to his special daughter, taking on responsibilities typically managed by the mother, especially during illness of his wife.

The financial strain on these mothers is another overlooked aspect. Raising a special child demands significant resources for medical care, therapies, specialized equipment, and education. Many mothers must choose between working to support their family and staying home to care for their child. Finding a job that accommodates the needs of a special child is nearly impossible, forcing many mothers into financial dependency and further isolating them.

Despite these chal-

lenges, mothers of special children in Pakistan persevere, driven by their love for their child. Their emotional toll is immense, often leading to depression and anxiety, but mental health care is scarce and stigmatized. These mothers are expected to bear their burdens with a smile, embodying selfless love and sacrifice without acknowledgment of the toll it takes on them.

The lack of consistent support from family is perhaps the most painful aspect of their struggle. While friends and neighbors might offer occasional help, the absence of consistent familial support leaves these mothers alone in their journey, burdened by joys and sorrows that come with raising a special child.

The bond between a mother and her child is profound, but it requires family support to flourish. Without it, the burden becomes too heavy for one person to bear.

Even amidst overwhelming adversity, these mothers continue to fight

for their children. They become advocates, warriors, and protectors, striving for better care, education, and futures for their special children. They challenge a society that often sees their child as less than human with a strength that is truly remarkable.

The resilience of these mothers highlights the power of love. They show that every child, regardless of their abilities, deserves love, care, and support. Their fight is not just for their children but for all special children in Pakistan, who deserve to be seen and valued. For this fight to succeed, society and family members must change.

They need to offer support, not shun; love, not judge; and stand by these mothers, who are performing the most important job in the world. Without this support, mothers of special children in Pakistan will continue to suffer in silence, their strength unmatched but their pain unacknowledged.

Killing of children is a cornerstone of Israel’s war on Gaza

CHILDREN have always been a casualty of wars. However, in conventional warfare, combatants rarely target them deliberately. But Gaza is not a conventional war. It is primarily a war against civilians — noncombatants. For the last 10 months, under the guise of Israel’s self-defense, Gaza’s civilians have been bombed in their homes, hospitals, UN schools, makeshift shelters and while running — en masse — for their lives after being given multiple orders to evacuate. More than 80 percent of Gaza’s 2.2 million inhabitants are now displaced, with less than 10 percent of the entire enclave designated as safe.

Under the laws of war, civilians, especially women and children, are to be spared and protected. Gaza has proved to be a cruel and shameful exception.

As the official death toll of the war last week surpassed the ominous 40,000 Palestinian death mark, it should be noted that at least half of the fatalities are women and children. Forty percent of the total killed, 16,000, are children. Of these, 2,100 were aged under two. At least 17,000 Palestinians are now orphaned or have no living relatives to claim them. No fewer than 12,000 children are wounded, with an unknown number having lost at least one limb.

Thousands of Gazan children need psychological help, as they are suffering from trauma and shock. Many will never recover. More than 47 percent of Gaza’s population are children. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau

of Statistics, the estimated number of children under 18 years of age in the Gaza Strip is 544,776 males and 523,210 females, with about 15 percent of them (341,790) being under the age of five. Much has been written about Israel’s war on Gaza

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No war in the last 60 years or so has produced such horrific rates of child mortality or injury. The US

Osama Al-Sharif

war in Vietnam claimed 882,000 Vietnamese lives, including 84,000 children, or less than 10 percent of the total. The Bosnia conflict of 1992 to 95 claimed the lives of 200,000, including 12,000 children, or 6 percent of the total. During the American occupation of Afghanistan, which lasted almost 20 years, at least 100,000 Afghans were killed, including some 28,000 children, or 28 percent of the total; a staggering number considering the US claimed to have relied on surgical strikes. As a result of the US war in Iraq, at least 250,000 Iraqis lost their lives, including 9,000 children, or 3.6 percent. In the three-month Rwanda Genocide of 1994, about 800,000 people were killed, including 300,000 children, a horrifying 40 percent of the total. That

appalling rate set a dismal record, which only Israel has now matched.

It is an understatement to say that Israel is deliberately targeting civilians in its Gaza war. The visuals, the testimonies and the grim facts testify to that. And yet Israel has not altered its policy after more than 300 days of incessant bombing, despite declarations by the UN and other independent observers. The deliberate killing of children is a cornerstone of Israel’s war on Gaza.

However, it is important to note that the facts and figures do not reflect the reality of the slaughter that Israel is carrying out against Palestinian children. We have yet to hear one Israeli official admit that those thousands of children are innocent victims in this conflict. There has been no mea culpa, no apologies and no regrets.

Those children have names and came from families with dreams and ambitions. One such victim was Hind Rajab, a six-year-old Palestinian girl who was killed by Israeli soldiers in January.

The troops fired more than 300 bullets at an ambulance, killing Hind and six of her family members, along with two paramedics as they attempted to rescue her. Under pressure, the US demanded an investigation. Israel never complied. Hind’s tragic murder has become a symbol of Israel’s killing of thousands of Palestinian children in Gaza.

More recently, there was the heartbreaking story of newborn twins who were killed in an Israeli strike in Gaza while their father was at a local government office registering their

births. Asser, a boy, and Aysel, a girl, were just four days old when they were killed as their father, Mohammed Abu Al-Qumsan, went to collect their birth certificates. It is unlikely that Israel will be held accountable for their murder.

As the International Criminal Court ponders issuing arrest warrants against Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant for war crimes, the carnage in Gaza continues, with babies killed and mothers losing their infants. This has become the daily reality in Gaza.

If these two attacks are not classed as war crimes, then what is? Hundreds of similar cases go unnoticed daily. Regardless of the outcome of the ongoing ceasefire talks, Israel must be held accountable for the deliberate killing of Palestinian children. Once the dust settles and independent investigators are allowed into the beleaguered enclave, the total number of civilian deaths will rise dramatically, and so will the percentage of child victims.

Israel’s genocidal war in Gaza would not have lasted so long if it were not for the US and the wider West’s unequivocal support of Israel. Under international law, those countries are complicit in the ongoing slaughter. Will we see a day when such crimes against humanity are punished? That is unlikely. The current world order is designed in such a way that the culprit — Israel in this case — will be exonerated or let off with a mild reprimand. That says all you need to know about such an order. And it also says a lot about an order whose time has passed.

Social media’s incitement problem can no longer be masked

Yossi Mekelberg

ONE way to advance social and political agitation on social media and avoid being suspended from a platform appears to be to own it. When former US President Donald Trump’s Twitter account was suspended in 2021, he started his own platform, Truth Social. Elon Musk, the richest person in the world, later bought Twitter, renamed it X and welcomed back almost everyone. It now seems to be a case of the more incitement and hate speech they supply, the better.

In both cases, the owners of these social media platforms are active and zealous contributors to the spread of fake news and reckless opinions. In the case of Musk, his unwelcome interventions, through his tweets, in the recent racist riots in the UK led a former Twitter executive to suggest that Musk should face “personal sanctions” and even the threat of an “arrest warrant” if found to be stirring up public disorder on his social media platform.

The days of innocence, when we all thought that social media would serve as the “glocal” town square for deliberating social and political matters in the most inclusive and civilized manner, are long gone. Nevertheless, these platforms’ intentional toxicity is unexpected and has resulted in a distorted social discourse, the spread of untruths and the misrepresentation of reality on an industrial scale.

As we witnessed during the recent racist-xenophobic riots in the UK, social media was both a platform for spreading malicious incitement against minorities and migrants and a tool for organizing the many violent attacks against innocent members of the public and the police.

Social media has now existed for more than a quarter of a century and the era of trial and error and of it becoming the wild west of mass communication, promoted disingenuously in the name of freedom of speech and where everything is permissible, must come to an end.

Too much of it, because of the wealth and resultant political power accumulated by its owners, is allowed to spread incitement, malice and libelous claims without any accountability, neither social nor legal. This is not a call to suppress freedom of speech or to abandon social media, as it is here to stay, but it cannot be allowed to operate above the law, especially as it has become a force of disruption and it undermines social order by deliberately distorting reality and putting lives at risk in the process.

Social media must either change voluntarily or it becomes the duty of legislators to protect the public from it. To be sure, for quite some time, major advertisers and many users have been abandoning X,

even before Musk’s antitrust lawsuit against brands that have boycotted it and his controversial activity on the platform during the recent UK riots. It is crucial to understand that freedom of expression is not an absolute freedom, as it carries with it a duty of responsibility.

It took devious cynicism melded with extremism — at a time when a community was grieving over the fatal stabbing of three young girls, as was the case earlier this month in the northern English town of Southport — for far-right agitators to take to social media and spread misinformation and hateful anti-migrant and anti-Muslim narratives with the sole aim of fueling hatred and violence.

Posts appeared on X sharing the fake name of the perpetrator and were viewed by millions, contributing to one of the worst outbursts of mob violence in the country’s history. The role of moder-

ators on social media, people responsible for managing and regulating user-generated content on digital platforms and in online communities, was created specifically to prevent such instances.

When these platforms are used to incite and organize criminal activities that target innocent people and those who serve to protect the public, they must not be allowed to host such criminals with impunity. Proper and effective sanctions must be applied not only against the users that spread hate and disinformation, but also on those who run these social media companies and make a fortune from them.

It gets worse when the owners of these platforms weigh in with their two cents, or 280 characters, or allow those with many thousands and sometimes millions of followers to amplify the initial fake claims of those with much more modest audiences. And it was Musk who welcomed such people back to X. Allowing the presence of characters such as Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, aka Tommy Robinson, and Andrew Tate to have a presence on social media despite their previous antics is as good as endorsing their views. If one wanted to be kind to Musk, one could simply accuse him of being

extremely naive in his belief in absolute freedom of speech, but more likely he is simply exploiting such characters to enhance his brand and his public profile, just as they use him to disseminate their social poison.

In the case of Musk, it is not only that he provided facilitation services to the organizers of the riots, but also that he weighed in recklessly in the most damaging manner, with interventions that some have suggested are worthy of criminal investigation. When the riots erupted, Musk, who has some 195 million followers, took to his X account and suggested that “civil war is inevitable.” When, sadly, too many people see social media accounts — and especially the users with huge followings — as modern-day oracles, the damage is bound to be immense.

Musk also shared with his followers a fake Daily Telegraph article claiming that UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer was consid-

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ering sending far-right rioters to “emergency detainment camps” in the Falkland Islands, a claim that originated from the co-leader of the far-right group Britain First. Doing this during the most volatile period of the riots and calling the prime minister “two-tier Keir,” thereby advancing another baseless conspiracy theory that police are treating white far-right “protesters” more harshly than minority groups, was a deliberate case of adding fuel to the fire with potentially catastrophic consequences.

This irresponsible behavior unsurprisingly led to suggestions that the new Labour government was considering toughening up internet safety regulations in the UK, through legislation that would require tech giants to prevent the spread of illegal and harmful content on their platforms. If the social media companies will not put their house in order, it is the duty of legislators to enter the fray with much more determination. Moreover, the education system must also play its part and coach children from a very young age the responsible use of social media. Then it can perhaps do what it was intended to do in the first place: give a voice to everyone in society and not present a mere Punch and Judy show.

Macron in search of a new government

FRANCE is on tenterhooks, awaiting the proverbial white smoke from the Elysee Palace that will signal the appointment of a new prime minister to succeed Gabriel Attal. While speculation runs rife, the prospect of a left-wing solution appears increasingly unlikely.

The euphoria of the Olympic Games has faded, bringing France back to its everyday challenges.

While the nation showcased its impressive ability to host a world-class event and its athletes delivered outstanding performances, the country now faces the stark realities of post-Olympic life.

Now, the time has come for major political decisions. After snap legislative elections and the Olympic truce, President Emmanuel Macron faces the challenge of navigating what appears to be a political impasse.

The hastily called elections resulted in a fragmented parliament, divided into three main groups: the New Popular Front of the left, the presidential camp, and the National Rally.

Crucially, no group holds an absolute majority, complicating the formation of a government.

Following the results, the left claimed victory and urged Macron to choose a prime minister from its ranks.

The president initially ignored this demand, calling on parties of the “Republican Front” to form a majority, excluding the far-right and far-left parties.

Not only has Macron’s appeal fallen on deaf ears, but the left-wing parties have reached an agreement to propose Lucie Castets, a senior official in the Paris city administration, as his new prime minister.

After complex negotiations, the New Popular Front selected her to form a government and succeed Attal. However, Macron has chosen to disregard this proposal and continues to search within the right and center for his future PM.

The Olympic interlude has come to an end, thrusting Macron back into France’s turbulent political arena.

While the Games provided a brief respite, allowing Macron to justify his silence and inac-

Mustapha Tossa

tion under the guise of an Olympic truce, that sanctuary has now evaporated. The president finds himself at a critical juncture, compelled to act decisively and make challenging choices.

Macron’s steadfast refusal to appoint a left-wing prime minister and government stems from concerns over their potential fragility. Without an absolute majority in parliament, such an administration would be perpetually vulnerable to collapse through a no-confidence vote. This precarious situation threatens to further destabilize France’s already fragile institutional balance, which is a direct consequence of the fragmented political landscape.

The post-Olympic landscape in France is dominated by one crucial question: Has Macron succeeded in his behind-the-scenes negotiations to form an elusive “Republican Front” that is capable of securing him an absolute majority and a strong prime minister backed by parliament?

This ambitious goal

hinged on two major conditions. The first, and arguably less challenging, was to convince the Republicans to fully join the presidential camp. The second, more formidable task, was to persuade the Socialist Party to distance itself from Jean-Luc Melenchon’s France Unbowed. However, neither condition has been met.

The Republicans have balked at the prospect of becoming mere auxiliaries to Macron’s agenda, particularly given the president’s past efforts to weaken them by co-opting their political platform and human resources.

Meanwhile, the left-wing parties, despite their internal differences, have managed to maintain a strategic alliance, effectively dashing Macron’s hopes of attracting the moderate left that is crucial to securing him an absolute majority.

The New Popular Front of the left continued its political maneuvering even during the Olympic Games.

Its candidate, Castets, pressed on with her charm offensive in the face of Macron’s studied

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

ing current NATO members. But the aim, he said, should be to gradually remove all external military presences from Eurasia.

In February, Putin launched the proposed Eurasian security system, stressing the need to form a “new contour of equal and indivisible security in Eurasia.” He said that Russia was ready for a substantive conversation on this topic with interested parties and associations. At the Shanghai Cooperation Summit in Astana, he said: “The multipolar world has become reality. More and more countries support a fair world order and are ready to vigorously defend their legal rights and traditional values.”

That Tokayev presented his new vision just a month later reflects a desire to chart an independent path toward security, notwithstanding what was said at the Astana summit. He is clearly concerned about instability and security

threats in the region, which he believes require a coordinated response that is independent of superpower rivalry.

Central Asian countries gained political independence in 1991 after about 150 years of Russian and then Soviet rule. Since gaining independence, they have sought to preserve their security and independence while promoting trade and investment. As landlocked countries, they lie thousands of miles away from any body of water other than the isolated Caspian Sea. As such, they need to build working relationships with their neighbors to secure supply routes and access to the sea.

Russia remained the Central Asia countries’ main trade partner even after independence. They all joined the Russian-led Commonwealth of Independent States, an economic integration organization, and some of them joined the Eurasian Economic Union. However, the war

in Ukraine and Western sanctions have made it difficult for Russia to maintain its economic dominance in this region. In 2023, China became Central Asia’s top trade partner, pushing Russia into second.

The US has increased its engagement with the Central Asia countries ever since their independence, but especially since the outbreak of the Ukraine war. Last year, the US and the Central Asian states held their first ever summit. Kazakhstan is America’s top economic partner in the region, with bilateral trade of \$4 billion in 2023. This is small compared to its trade with China and Russia, but it is growing. US direct investments in Kazakhstan reached \$5 billion in 2022, with a total figure since independence of more than \$62 billion. Besides its geostrategic location, Central Asia has abundant resources, including oil, gas, uranium and rare earth elements that are essential for high-tech industries and electric cars.

Competition between superpowers has seen them living cheek by jowl in these countries to try to woo them to one pole or the other, but the new security architecture proposed by Kazakhstan shows that Central Asia would like to stay neutral, friends of all and enemy of none. For example, they have not taken sides in the Ukraine war, with Tokayev publicly disagreeing with Putin during the 2022 St. Petersburg Economic Forum.

The main impetus toward closer cooperation in Central Asia has come from Uzbekistan, the region’s most populous country, especially since Shavkat Mirziyoyev came to power in 2016 and saw fresh opportunities for trade and political unity. In an article published last week, former Uzbek foreign minister and presidential adviser on foreign policy Abdulaziz Kamilov wrote that Uzbekistan “had assumed a special responsibility for the future of Central Asia”

by “completely abandoning outdated approaches to establishing relations with neighbors,” meaning replacing animosities and suspicion with trust and cooperation. So, it is natural that Uzbekistan would support Kazakhstan’s proposal.

Azerbaijan, although not part of Central Asia, has also supported the proposal, emphasizing its collective defense aspects. The only negative commentary on the proposal has come from outside Central Asia, dismissing it as a Western ploy.

As Central Asia and GCC ties grow, and as the two blocs prepare for their next summit in Samarkand next year, there will be plenty of exchanges on the idea of collective security. In March, the GCC released its first regional security vision, which also stressed collective defense and its central role in maintaining regional security, while avoiding polarization and confrontation and offering to support like-minded nations such as those in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan calls for a new security system for Central Asia

KA Z A K H President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev last week called for increased defense cooperation among the Central Asian countries known collectively as the C5 — K a z a k h s t a n , Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — potentially leading to a regional security architecture. This is a part of new efforts to reverse the old trend of the region having stronger relationships with external countries, such as Russia, than those within the region.

The new vision also reflects an anxiety Tokayev and other Central Asian leaders have expressed over polarization in international relations and a desire to remain neutral and positive while working with all sides, especially similarly independent midsize players such as the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, with which the C5 established strategic cooperation last year.

In an op-ed published

last week, Tokayev pointed out the complex and persistent military-political challenges surrounding Central Asia and called for closer defense collaboration among the region’s states. He stressed: “The creation of a regional security architecture is becoming especially urgent, including through the development of a catalog of security risks for Central Asia and measures to prevent them.” He added: “As a responsible participant in the world community, Kazakhstan advocates strict adherence to the principles of international law, respect for sovereignty and the inviolability of borders.”

Tokayev outlined several priorities, including the formation of an indivisible regional security space, “comprehensive” approaches to traditional and emerging threats and the development of effective response and prevention strategies, while actively engaging with the UN and other international and regional organizations to enhance regional security.

Tokayev’s proposal

came about a month after the Shanghai Cooperation Organization held its summit in Astana, where Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russia’s Vladimir Putin pressed the case for closer security, political and economic cooperation between the countries of the vast Eurasian region as a counterweight to Western alliances.

“SCO members should consolidate unity and jointly oppose external interference in the face of the real challenges of interference and division,” the Chinese leader said, while warning against a “Cold War mentality.” President Putin reiterated Russia’s call for a “new architecture of cooperation, indivisible security and development in Eurasia, designed to replace the outdated Eurocentric and Euro-Atlantic models, which gave unilateral advantages only to certain states.” He said that the proposed new Eurasian security pact should be open to all countries across the region, includ-



SNGPL's shareholders approve 45% cash dividend for FY 2022-23

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Company is celebrating 60 years of its journey. The Annual General Meeting of shareholders of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) was held on Wednesday at Pearl Continental Hotel, Lahore. The shareholders of the Company approved the Annual Accounts for the FY 2022-23.

During the year the Company earned an after tax profit of Rs. 10,564 million with EPS of Rs. 16.66. The shareholders also approved Cash Dividend of 45% i.e. Rs. 4.50 per share on the recommendations of the Board of Directors. Moreover, the Shareholders of the Company has approved appointment of M/s. A.F. Ferguson, Chartered Accountant as Auditors for FY 2023-24.

The Chairman, Muham-

mad Ismail Qureshi, apprised the shareholders that the Company achieved significant progress during the fiscal year 2022-23, despite stringent challenges.

He added that the Company's profitability has increased from Rs 10.36 billion to Rs 10.56 billion, showcasing resilience in a dynamic regulatory environment.

He also highlighted the key factors contributing to this stable profit stream including strategic operational improvements across several areas, particularly in reducing Unaccounted for Gas (UFG) losses.

The UFG losses dropped from 5.58% to 5.15%, resulting in a volumetric reduction of 5.9 BCF and a monetary saving of nearly Rs 6 billion.

While highlighting operational excellence and tech-

nological advancements, the Chairman stated that the Company made notable strides in operational optimization and digitization initiatives.

He mentioned significant measures to combat UFG losses include the segmentation and isolation of industrial clusters, the installation of advanced monitoring technologies, such as cyber locks and IoT-based pressure transducers.

In addition, mega projects aimed at de-bottlenecking the network were initiated in major cities like Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Lahore, where larger diameter pipelines and new Sales Meter Stations (SMSs) were installed to enhance capacity and reliability. Ongoing digitization efforts include online industrial consumers monitoring through SCADA and

implementation of Company wide GIS- system for improved documentation and network management.

A detailed interactive session with the shareholders was held. A number of suggestions were noted and the shareholders were responded to their satisfaction.

Muhammad Ismail Qureshi, Chairman, Tariq Iqbal Khan, Ms. Faaria Rehman, Salahuddin, Saadat Ali Khan, Directors, Faisal Iqbal, DMD (S), Kamran Akram, Chief Financial Officer and Imtiaz Mehmood, SGM (Corporate Affairs)/Company Secretary, were also present in person while Ahmed Chinooy and Muhammad Ramzan, Directors attended the meeting via video link. Senior Management of the Company was also present at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).



LAHORE: Chairman Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited Muhammad Ismail Qureshi presiding over SNGPL's Annual General Meeting of shareholders.

DGTO dismisses objections

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Directorate General of Trade Organisation (DGTO) has declared the ongoing process for the Election 2024-26 of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry fully transparent and fair and dismissed pleas/objections against it.

According to details, a hearing was held in the Directorate General of Trade Organisation on pleas/objections on the process of election 2024-26 of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said in a statement issued here on Wednesday.

During the hearing, the DGTO thoroughly conducted scrutiny regarding transparency of the SCCI election process.

SCCI secretary general, member of the election commission and counsel in the hearing presented all arguments and evidence.

On the basis of all arguments and proofs, the DGTO in its verdict said that the issued voters list for the SCCI election is accurate.

In this regard, the DGTO dismissed all pleas and objections of Sharafat Ali Mubarak, Muhammad Ishaq, Yousaf Sarwar, Sirajuddin, Khalid Saeed, Arshad Siddique and Minhajuddin.

The DGTO directed the conduct of elections of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry as per announced schedule.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was report at the port where four ships, MSC Positano, Agios Dimitrios, Horizon-I and Madison Eagle carrying Container, LPG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminals, Engro Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Gaschem Mosel, Epic Burano and New Apex are also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on today morning.

A total of ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a petroleum product carrier ship 'Two million Ways' left the port on today morning while four more ships, Navig-8 Gallantry, Suzy, Agios Dimitrios and Horizon-I are expected to sail on today.

Cargo volume of 148,789 tonnes, comprising 103,962 tonnes imports cargo and 44,827 tonnes export cargo carried in 5,258 Containers (2,258 TEUs Imports & 2,338 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 08 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, Bitumen Kosei, Antares, Navig-8 Constellation, Epic Burano and New Apex & two more ships, CMA CGM Pelleas and Maersk Cairo scheduled to load/offload Bitumen, Palm oil, ULSL, LPG, LNG and Container are expected to take berths at MW-2, LCT, FOTCO, EVTL, EETL and QICT respectively on today. Meanwhile two more Container ships, X-Press Anglesey and Tolen are due to arrive at port on Thursday.

SBP decides to replace currency notes

ISLAMABAD (INP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) decided to replace currency notes with denominations ranging from Rs 10 to Rs 5,000.

According to details, SBP Governor Jameel Ahmed told the Senate Standing Committee on Finance that the central bank will soon permission from the federal cabinet to introduce the new currency note. He said that new currency note denominations of Rs 10, Rs 20, Rs 50, Rs

100, Rs 500, Rs 1000, and Rs 5000 having all new features will be issued by December 2024.

The Senate Standing Committee on Finance chaired by Senator Farooq H Naik was also briefed by the SBP governor that contrary to rumors, the Rs 5,000 note will not be phased out, but replaced with a new design.

The SBP governor said that besides paper currency note, plastic notes made from polymeric material

will also be issued. "Plastic currency will be used in the future if it proves to be more durable than paper currency," the Jameel Ahmed added.

During the meeting, Senator Mohsin Aziz proposed to phase out Rs 5000 note to curb smuggling, however his suggestion was rejected by the SBP governor.

"The Rs 5,000 note will not be phased out and no such proposals are being considered." The SBP governor said.

PSX turns bullish, gains 515 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Wednesday turned around to bullish trend, gaining 515.34, showing a positive change of 0.66 percent, closing at 78,260.86 points against 77,745.52 points on the last working day.

A total of 552,564,507 shares were traded during the day as compared to 380,717,441 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 14.590 billion against Rs 11.237 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 453 companies transacted their shares

in the stock market, 289 of them recorded gains and 119 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 45 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Kohinoor Spinning with 62,921,008 shares at Rs 11.23 per share, Power Cement with 41,961,669 shares at Rs.5.79 per share and Yousuf Weaving with 37,366,130 shares at Rs 6.82 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.219.46 per share price, closing at Rs 17,819.46, whereas the

runner-up was Al-Abbas Sugar Mills Limited with a Rs 32.55 rise in its per share price to Rs 568.10.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.125.90 per share closing at Rs.1,626.11 followed by Atlas Ismail Industries Limited with Rs 61.50 decline to close at Rs.1,537.50.

Motorbikes, 3 wheelers' sale increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sale of motorbikes and three-wheelers in the country has witnessed an increase of 15.19 per cent during the first month of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to sales of the corresponding month of the last year.

During the month under review, as many as 84,993 motorbikes and three-wheelers were sold against the sale of 73,588 units in July (2023-24), according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA).

The sale of Honda motorcycles rose by 13.29 per cent from 62,012 units to 70,255 units whereas the sale of Suzuki motorcycles witnessed an increase of 71.68 per cent from 957 units to 1,643 units during the month under review.

However, the sale of Yamaha motorbikes went down from 675 units to 302 units witnessing a decline of 55.25 per cent.

Sale of Road Prince motorbikes surged by 6.88 per cent from 1,118 units to 1,195 units while the sales of United Auto motorcycles also increased by 20.17 per cent from 7,657 units to 9,202 units.

Pakistan's Climate Crossroads: OICCI highlights private sector's role in mitigating climate change

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Despite contributing only 0.9 per cent to global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan faces severe climate vulnerabilities and is ranked 5th most affected country. This underscores the urgency of its climate action plans and the pivotal role of the private sector. To provide a roadmap emphasising public-private partnerships to mitigate climate change, the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) has launched an insightful report titled, 'Pakistan's Climate Crossroads: Private Sector Solutions to Pakistan's Climate Challenges'.

Commenting on the report, OICCI President Rehan Shaikh emphasised, "Given the climate vulnerabilities threatening Pakistan, business growth cannot come at the cost of the climate anymore. We

need to link returns on private sector investments with sustainability and consider the green transition to provide new jobs and livelihoods." The report highlights essential components of Pakistan's climate strategy, encompassing climate action plans, needs assessment, vulnerability analysis, resilience, and climate mitigation and adaptation plans. The private sector is recognised as critical in driving climate solutions forward.

During the launch of the report, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) Executive Director and International Advisory Committee Member of COP29 Dr Abid Suleri said, "Addressing Pakistan's climate challenges requires urgent but collective action." He stressed the need to change the perception of the private sector, and maintained that the private sector should be seen

as part of the solution rather than part of the problem, given its pivotal role in driving sustainable solutions that can secure Pakistan's future.

The OICCI Climate Report also discusses how corporates can integrate climate actions into their business operations by adopting sustainable supply chain management, adhering to ESG criteria, promoting investment in carbon markets, and fostering public-private partnerships for green development. The report highlights OICCI members' initiatives in these areas.

"As Pakistan is among the five most vulnerable countries, there is some urgency needed to focus on sustainable solutions that consider local contexts and materials," said OICCI Managing Committee member Andrew Bailey. "The country's focus should be on investing in ideology,

research, and long-term solutions rather than on quick fixes," he added.

With knowledge partnership with the SDPI, the report builds on insights from the OICCI 2nd Pakistan Climate Conference held in 2023. The conference featured global climate experts, policymakers, and corporate decision-makers, including former finance minister Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, SECP Chairman Akif Saeed, Group CEO of Standard Chartered Bank Bill Winters, WWF President Adil Najam, and Managing Director of GuarantCo Philip Skinner.

As Pakistan navigates its climate crossroads, the collaborative efforts of the public and private sectors, bolstered by international support and commitments made at COP28 held in Dubai, are pivotal in advancing its climate journey and achieving Net Zero emissions by 2050.

Founder's Space held meetup for aspiring entrepreneurs



F.P. Report

KARACHI: A packed house of aspiring entrepreneurs turned out for the launch of The Founder's Space at Lincoln Corners, Liaquat Memorial Library Stadium Road, Karachi. The event, dubbed "Exploration 1," brought together hundreds of startup founders eager to network, learn, and find inspiration.

The afternoon was a hive of activity as founders from across Pakistan exchanged ideas and forged new partnerships. The limited-capacity event underscored the growing appetite for collaboration and support within the local startup ecosystem.

To bolster its mission of empowering startups, The Founder's Space announced strategic alliances

with Inspired Solution, Print Eazy, and Live Bits, offering exclusive discounts on their services to member startups. These partnerships aim to equip entrepreneurs with essential tools and resources to accelerate growth.

A panel of industry experts delved into the challenges and opportunities facing Pakistani startups. Syed Azfar Hussain,

Project Director at the National Incubation Center, highlighted government grants available to support entrepreneurs. Nida Athar, CEO of Inno Ventures Global Private Limited, emphasized the importance of sustainable business models, advising startups to focus on generating revenue before seeking venture capital. Saif Ali, Program Manager at Orbit Startups, underscored the need for product-based businesses with scalability and independence.

The Founder's Space team - Kapeel, Javeria, Mahnoor, and Angel - outlined their vision for a thriving startup ecosystem in Pakistan. Their commitment to fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and growth resonated with the audience.

The Founder's Space is dedicated to bridging the gap between startup founders, mentors, and investors. By providing a platform for connection and support, the organization aims to cultivate a dynamic and innovative entrepreneurial landscape in Pakistan.

PCP Chairman visits ICCI

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Press Council of Pakistan (PCP) Arshad Khan Jadoon reaffirmed the Council's commitment to safeguarding freedom of expression and upholding media ethics in Pakistan.

He assured that the dissemination of accurate information and the curbing of fake news would be prioritized at all costs, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

During a meeting with Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, at the Chamber House, Jadoon highlighted

the PCP's pivotal role in promoting press freedom and media ethics in line with the Code of Practice. The meeting also focused on addressing the challenges faced by journalists and resolving them on priority basis.

Jadoon emphasized the importance of collaboration in combating the complications affecting the country and enhancing its global soft image.

He promised to induct a representative from the business community into the Press Council to foster closer ties and address its grievances more effectively.

Furthermore, Jadoon stressed the need for close coordination between PEMRA and the PCP to tackle issues like fake news by strictly adhering to standard operating procedures (Sops).

On his part, President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari commended the Press Council of Pakistan (PCP) for its efforts in promoting the right to expression while maintaining a positive and constructive narrative.

He suggested that the inclusion of representatives from the business community in the PCP would enhance its dynamism and effectiveness.

Bakhtawari said that the country is passing through the most difficult time and needs concerted efforts to pull it out of the existing impasse by stressing the importance of avoiding negativity in news coverage, particularly in reports related to business and the economy, as these are badly harming the country's economic interests.

At the same time he also emphasized the need to address the challenges faced by the journalists' community.



KARACHI: Chairman & CEO Synergy Group Ahmed Kapadia presenting a souvenir to Founder Indus Hospital Dr. Abdul Bari and ED Communication & Resource Development Indus Hospital Mashood Rizwi.



Saim, Saud show resilience on challenging opening day of first Test

ISLAMABAD (APP): Despite early fall wickets, Pakistan managed to score 158 runs in the delayed Test against Bangladesh due to wet outfield at the Pindi Stadium on Wednesday.

Pakistan lost three main key players in nine overs after put into bat but Saim Ayub and Saud Shakeel took Pakistan out of trouble by hitting half-centuries helping Green-shirts to finish 158 for four in 41 overs on a shortened opening day of the first Test.

Ayub went on to score his maiden Test half-century (56 runs) on 98 balls including four 4s and a six while Shakeel remained unbeaten on 57 runs providing a 98-run fourth-wicket partnership. The rescue act between the two south-paws was spread on either side of the tea interval as they batted together for 22.5 overs.

Pacers Shoriful Islam and Hasan Mahmud did the magic for Bangladesh

as they bagged two wickets each for 30 and 33 runs, respectively. Bangladesh bowlers reduced Pakistan to 16-3 in 8.2 overs. Abdullah Shafique was the first to depart as he was caught at gully against Hasan Mahmud in the fourth over.

Skipper Shan Masood hit one boundary during his 11-ball stay before falling prey to Shoriful Islam for six runs in the seventh over. Babar Azam was dismissed in the ninth over falling for a two-ball duck off the bowling of Shoriful with Litton Das taking his second catch of the innings.

Saud Shakeel (57 not out, 92b, 5x4s) and Mohammad Rizwan (24 not out, 31b, 2x4s) will stand guard for Pakistan at the beginning of day two.

Saud contributed 42 runs in the stand with Saim before stitching an unbeaten 44-run partnership with Mohammad Rizwan till the close of

play.

Saud who is also Pakistan's Test vice-captain also completed 1,000 runs in the longest format during his first innings in the game and became the joint-fastest Pakistani batter to reach 1000 runs in Test cricket, achieving this feat in just 20 innings. Meanwhile so far, Pakistan has played 13 Tests against Bangladesh, winning 12 and drawing one.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Saim Ayub spoke after the end of Day 1, about his batting approach in the ongoing Test match against Bangladesh, saying, "My goal was to prolong my innings, but sometimes things don't go as planned."

Saim acknowledged the challenging conditions early on but credited his partnership with Saud for making batting easier. "We had a good partnership, and I enjoy batting with everyone," he said.

Regarding the unpre-

dictable nature of Test cricket, Saim noted, "The behavior of the wickets changes, and sometimes the red ball favors us, while other times it doesn't. It's part of the game."

Bangladesh's Hasan Mahmud praised his team's bowling efforts and said, "We tried to bowl accurately on our length, and the pitch will help seamers if it becomes harder."

Hasan emphasized the importance of taking quick wickets, stating, "We'll come up with a plan to take Pakistan out as quickly as possible."

He also commended his team's fielding, saying, "The boys are excellent in the field, taking wonderful catches. It's great to get help from your fielders."

Scores in brief: Pakistan 158-4, 41 overs (Saud Shakeel 57 not out, Saim Ayub 56, Mohammad Rizwan 24 not out; Shoriful Islam 2-30, Hasan Mahmud 2-33).



RAWALPINDI: Bangladesh players celebrates after taking the wicket of Pakistani batsman Abdullah Shafique during the first day of the 1st Test cricket match between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

West Indies duo big winners in ICC Men's test player rankings

ISLAMABAD (APP): West Indies pair Jayden Seales and Jason Holder have been the big winners on the updated ICC Men's Test Player Rankings.

Seales and Holder both performed well during the West Indies' recent Test series against South Africa, despite the fact the Caribbean side fell to a 1-0 series defeat.

Fast bowler Jayden Seales of the West Indies moved up to a career-best 13th position in the ICC Men's Test Bowling Rankings after finishing as the most successful bowler in the second Test against South Africa in Guyana.

Seales, who finished with nine wickets in a 40-run loss that helped South Africa win the ICC World Test

Championship series 1-0, has moved up 13 places to become the top-ranked Test bowler from the West Indies.

Spinners Jomel Warrican (52nd) and Gudakesh Motie (64th) have advanced two spots each while fast bowler Shamar Joseph has progressed 11 spots to 54th in other significant movements for the West Indies players in the bowling rankings.

Player of the Match Wiaan Mulder has advanced 27 places to 65th position after finishing with six wickets for South Africa while off-spinner Dane Piedt is up nine places to 66th after claiming two West Indies wickets in the second innings of the match.

In the Test batting rankings, South Africa opener

Aiden Markram and wicket-keeper Kyle Verreynne have gained after notching half-centuries in the second innings. Markram inched up two places to 21st while Verreynne has progressed from 62nd to 46th.

Former West Indies captain Jason Holder is up seven places to 60th position in the batting rankings following his knock of 54 not out in the first innings. He is also up two places to fifth in the list of all-rounders.

In the ICC Men's ODI Batting Rankings, Scott Edwards of the Netherlands has moved up six places to 26th position after scores of 72 versus Canada and 65 versus the USA in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2.

Aaron Jones of the USA (up 11 places to 56th) and Vikramjit Singh of the Netherlands (up nine places to 79th) are others to move up the batting rankings while Aryan Dutt of the Netherlands is up five places to 33rd.

In the ICC World Test Championship, South Africa are in fifth position with 38.89 percentage points after six matches while the West Indies are last in the nine-team championship with 18.52 after nine. India lead the table with 68.52 percentage points after nine matches and Australia in second place with 62.50 after 12 outings. New Zealand and Sri Lanka are the other teams ahead of South Africa.

Saud Shakeel joins Saeed Ahmed to score fastest 1000 Test runs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Pakistan's rising star Saud Shakeel on Wednesday etched his name in the annals of cricket history by becoming one of the fastest players to reach 1,000 Test runs.

Saud reached the coveted 1,000-run mark against Bangladesh on the first day of first Test match at Pindi Stadium Rawalpindi, accumulating unbeaten 57 runs off 92 balls.

The 28-year-old left-handed batsman accomplished this feat in just 20 innings, placing him alongside Pakistan cricket legend Saeed Ahmed, who achieved the same milestone on December 4, 1959 against Australia in Karachi.

The achievement not only high-



lights his personal dedication and hard work but also places him in an elite group of cricketers who have reached this landmark in a short span of innings.

Saud's journey to this milestone has been nothing short of spectacular. Since making his Test debut against England on December 1, 2022, he has consistently displayed a blend of solid technique and composure under pressure. His ability to adapt to different conditions and formats has made him a key asset for Pakistan's Test side.

His innings have been characterized by a keen understanding of the game, an astute shot selection, and a temperament well beyond his years.

Chelsea sign Felix from Atletico for £45m as Gallagher leaves

LONDON (BBC): Chelsea have signed Portugal forward Joao Felix from Atletico Madrid for a fee in the region of £45m, with England midfielder Conor Gallagher going the other way for about £33m.

Felix, 24, who has signed a seven-year deal to begin a second spell at Stamford Bridge, scored four goals in 20 appearances during a loan spell in west London in 2023.

"I'm really happy to be back at Chelsea and I can't wait to get started," said Felix. "I can see some familiar faces from the last time I was here, which is always nice."

Gallagher meanwhile has signed a five-year contract with the Spanish top-flight club.

Gallagher joined Chelsea at the age of six and went on to make 90 appearances, scoring 10 goals.

He had entered the final year of his contract at Stamford Bridge so Chelsea wanted to sell now to avoid losing him on a free transfer next summer.

"To everyone at Chelsea, thank you for



making my dreams come true," Gallagher wrote on Instagram. "It's been an absolute honour every time I put on the shirt, and it was a dream come true to captain the team on many occasions."

"I loved every moment. These memories will last forever. I appreciate all the love and support from the fans." The collapse of Chelsea's talks to sign Atletico striker Samu Omorodion had delayed Gallagher's move to Spain, but the Felix deal frees up the required funds for Atletico to complete the transfer.

Gallagher spent five days in a hotel in Madrid earlier this month expecting a deal before flying

back to London when the move stalled.

Gallagher had loan spells at Charlton, Swansea, West Brom and Crystal Palace before breaking into the Chelsea first team at the start of the 2022-23 season.

He has won 18 England caps since making his debut in 2021 and was part of the Three Lions squads for the 2022 World Cup and Euro 2024.

Conor Gallagher's exit will leave a bitter taste in the mouths of some matching Chelsea supporters who absolutely adored him. They held up a banner in the match against Tottenham, a club many thought he might join, in May in protest of his

expected departure.

That exit has happened, but a crumb of comfort is that Chelsea have sold him outside the Premier League to Atletico Madrid in Spain, avoiding the kind of pain some fans still feel when watching Mason Mount line up for Manchester United.

Chelsea have also handled his departure well by putting together an emotive video package that highlights his bond with the club and wishing him well for the future on all their channels.

It reads and feels like a celebration of the career of the boyhood Chelsea fan, who has been with the club since the age of six, as he departs for Wanda Metropolitano.

It's a positive end to a strange transfer saga which saw Gallagher training alone at Cobham in limbo as the two clubs tried to pull off a bizarre swap deal.

Gallagher will again be able to focus on his football and could be a good fit for Diego Simeone's dogged, high energy and physical style of play.

KARACHI (APP): Two more matches were concluded in the ongoing Master Oil Inter Club Cricket Tournament at different venues.

The standout performance of the day came from Meer Afzal Baig, whose all-round effort helped

Agha Khan Gymkhana secure a 78-run victory over Dawood Sports Colts. Meer Afzal Baig

scored 46 runs and took 4 wickets for 26 runs.

The tournament is organized by the Regional Cricket Association Karachi in collaboration with Master Oil Lubricant.

Match Summary: At Agha Khan Gymkhana Ground: Agha Khan Gymkhana defeated Dawood Sports Colts by 78 runs.

Agha Khan Gymkhana: 196 all out in 32.4 overs (Sannan Noor 61, Saleem A. Raheem 47, Meer Afzal Baig 46; Sameer Baig 4/41, Abdul Rehman 3/34, S.M. Mohtisham 2/24).

Dawood Sports Colts: 118 all out in 27 overs (Ameer Nawab 38, Uzair Nisar 27; Meer Afzal Baig 4/26, Nabeel Rehmat 4/38).

At Student Sports Ground:

Student Sports defeated Wireless Gymkhana by 7 wickets.

Wireless Gymkhana: 71 all out in 20.1 overs (Muhammad Shafiq 20; Syed Rayyan 3/7, Sher Khan 3/20, Umer Zafar 2/23).

Student Sports: 73/3 in 11.1 overs (Umar Zafar 26 not out, Bilal Shareef 16).

Medvedev, Zverev out to play spoiler role at U.S. Open

NEW YORK (Reuters): Daniil Medvedev and Alexander Zverev are among the contenders who can upend pre-tournament favourites Carlos Alcaraz and Novak Djokovic at the U.S. Open while Taylor Fritz is the best bet for ending America's long wait for a men's Grand Slam champion.

Former U.S. Open champion Medvedev may not have had the best lead-up to the U.S. Open but the self-proclaimed Russian hard-court specialist has the tools to deny Alcaraz and Djokovic another New York title.

World number five Medvedev, whose sole Grand Slam title came at the 2021 U.S. Open where he beat Djokovic in the final, has made no secret of his preference for hard courts and the ease with which he moves on the surface has been evident this year. On the hard courts, Medvedev reached this year's Australian Open final, where he lost to Jannik Sinner, made the semi-final in Dubai, lost to Alcaraz in the Indian Wells title match before falling again to Italian Sinner in the semis at Miami.

While Medvedev lost his opening match in a pair of U.S. Open tune-up events in Montreal and Cincinnati, he has a knack for turning up his game at the U.S. Open where he has become a fan-favourite after once basking in boos from the New York crowd.

French Open finalist Zverev, still seeking his first Grand Slam title, comes into the U.S. Open on the heels of a tune-up in Cincinnati where the German lost in the semi-finals to eventual champion and world number one



Sinner.

Zverev is one of the sport's most consistent performers this year and his 49 wins in 2024 leads all players on the ATP Tour.

Russia's Andrey Rublev, who has made the New York quarter-finals in the last two years, will also arrive in New York full of belief after reaching the Montreal final and the last eight in his other two tune-up events.

Meanwhile, no American man has won a Grand Slam since Andy Roddick triumphed at the 2003 U.S. Open, and this year Fritz appears to offer the best shot at a homegrown winner. The 26-year-old used to struggle at Grand Slams but has changed the narrative and made the quarters in three of the last four blue-ribbon events, including last year's U.S. Open.

But Fritz's lead-in has been far from ideal as he lost in the second round at the Canadian Masters before suffering a first-round exit at the Cincinnati Open.

Among the other American hopefuls in New York will be Frances Tiafoe, who finished runner-up to Sinner in Cincinnati, and big-hitting Ben Shelton,

who electrified the home crowds last year with a spirited run to the semis.

Sinner hopes to tune out the noise for U.S. Open campaign

Top-ranked Jannik Sinner overcame injury woes to win Cincinnati but is set to arrive at the U.S. Open with a cloud hanging over his head after the revelation that he avoided a suspension despite testing positive for a banned substance months ago.

The world number one player typically rides into Flushing Meadows on a wave of positive headlines, basking in a U.S. Open spotlight that shines brighter than the Times Square billboards.

Instead, Italian Sinner spent the lead-up to New York tamping down injury concerns and on Tuesday became embroiled in controversy after the International Tennis Integrity Agency said that he tested positive twice for an anabolic agent in March.

An independent tribunal convened by Sport Resolutions accepted his claim that the positive tests were the result of contamination, clearing him of wrongdoing, after Sinner maintained his innocence.

"I will now put this challenging and deeply unfortunate period behind me," the 23-year-old wrote on the social media platform X.

Seven-times major winner and ESPN analyst John McEnroe called the news - and its timing - "surprising and shocking," while some of Sinner's fellow players cried foul.

"Can't imagine what every other player that got banned for contaminated substances is feeling right now," said Canadian Denis Shapovalov.

The saga marks the latest dip in a rollercoaster 2024 for Sinner, who started the year on a high by picking up his maiden major in Australia before winning in Miami but saw his season shortened due to a hip issue he picked up in May.

The injury forced him to pull out of Madrid before his quarter-final and to miss Rome entirely. He also backed out of the Olympics due to tonsillitis.

Sinner on Monday showed he could still find some form as he beat American Frances Tiafoe in Cincinnati, a key U.S. Open tune-up event, despite limping around the court on several occasions in the first set.

Maruyama named International Team's assistant for Presidents Cup

NEW YORK (Reuters): International Team captain Mike Weir named Japan's Shigeaki Maruyama as the fifth and final assistant on his staff for this year's Presidents Cup showdown against Jim Furyk's U.S. squad, the PGA Tour said on Wednesday.

Maruyama, a three-times PGA Tour winner career who compiled a 6-2-0 record in two Presidents Cup appearances, joins fellow assistants Ernie Els, Trevor Immelman, Geoff Ogilvy and Camilo Villegas.

"I am thrilled to announce Shigeaki as my fifth captain's assistant for the 2024 Presidents Cup," Weir said in a news release.

"His record in this event speaks for itself, but



more importantly, he adds a trusted voice in our team room and is someone who will inspire these 12 players through his unwavering support and dynamic

personality."

Maruyama, whose last victory on the PGA Tour came in 2003, posted three top-10 finishes in majors, including a

career-best share of fourth place at the 2004 U.S. Open.

The 54-year-old Maruyama is one of only six players in Presidents Cup history to post a 5-0-0 record on the week, doing so in 1998.

"Representing the International Team in the Presidents Cup as both a player in 1998 and 2000 and later as a captain's assistant in 2013 was one of the most valuable experiences in my golf career," Maruyama said. The 2024 edition of the biennial competition, which pits a 12-man U.S. team against a lineup of international players from outside Europe, will be played from Sept. 26-29 at The Royal Montreal Golf Club.



In brief

ANF seizes drugs; held 15

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) seized 37 kilogram drugs and arrested 15 drug peddlers in 10 operations conducted in various cities across country. A spokesman of ANF said on Wednesday that crackdowns were launched against drug pushers in Islamabad, Quetta, Karachi, Peshawar, Nowshera and Lahore. During the operations, 15 drug peddlers were apprehended with 37 kg drugs including 16.15 kg heroin, 2.5 kg hashish, 7.5 kg Ice (crystal meth), 2.5 kg opium and 150 intoxicant tablets. Separate cases were registered against the detainees under Drug Act and further investigations were underway.

415,200 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 415,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 440,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1550.00 feet (maximum conservation level) and was 152.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 264,100 cusecs and 263,600 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1214.70 feet, which was 166.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 32,600 cusecs and 8,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 311,900, 339,500, 391,700 and 377,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 60,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 57,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Health reforms top priority

RAWALPINDI (APP): CM's Advisor on Health, Major General (Rtd) Azhar Mehmood Kayani on Wednesday said that health reforms in Punjab are the top priority of the government. He said that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has a special focus on improving health facilities. The advisor remarked this during his visit to HFH. He emphasized that CM's vision is to provide quality health facilities to the people for which all resources must be utilized. He expressed satisfaction that after revamping and renovation, the hospital is fully functional. "The hospital is equipped with modern facilities where standard treatment facilities are available to the patients", he added. He observed that according to the CM's vision, provision of free medicines is being ensured in the hospitals. The health advisor made a detailed visit to the hospital's various departments including emergency, OT and OPD. He reviewed the provision of health facilities in the hospital. He met and inquired from the patients about the treatment facilities being provided in the hospital. The advisor also checked the attendance of the staff, record of supply of medicines, cleanliness situation and other issues. He categorically inquired about the provision of free medicines to the patients. Medical Superintendent HFH, Dr. Ejaz Butt briefed the advisor regarding treatment in the hospital and other issues. Vice Chancellor RMU, Dr. M. Umar informed the Health Advisor regarding the ongoing educational activities in RMU.

Senate Body criticizes CDA over lack of action

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change has criticized the Capital Development Authority (CDA) over lack of action regarding Rawal Dam pollution which is being inundated with 9 million gallons of sewage daily.

Chairing a meeting of Senate Body here on Wednesday, Senator Sherry Rehman along with other Committee members raised serious concerns over the supply of polluted water of Rawal Dam to the residents of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, posing a significant public health risk.

Senator Rehman unpacked the severe environmental and health hazards associated with Rawal Dam's contamination, which includes sewage, toxic substances, and chemicals. "Will the residents of Islamabad and Rawalpindi continue to receive this contaminated water until sewage treatment plants are installed,"

Senator Rehman questioned the CDA underlining the urgency of the situation.

The chair criticized the CDA for its failure to make substantial progress on the installation of sewage treatment plants, despite three years of tendering processes. "It's unacceptable that after three years, we are still discussing plans for treatment plants while human lives are at risk," she remarked.

To address these concerns, Senator Rehman has mandated that the water testing report of Rawal Dam be presented at the next committee meeting. Additionally, she has formed a two-member sub-committee, headed by Senator Shahzaib Durrani, to inspect the pollution at Rawal Dam and submit a detailed report. This inspection aims to provide a clear assessment of the pollution levels and recommend immediate actions to mitigate the damage.

The Chair Senate Body

also stressed the need for the CDA to disclose the cost of de-silting Rawal Dam, which was crucial for maintaining its capacity and ensuring the quality of water supplied to residents. She called for the initiation of a "Recharge Rawal" project, emphasizing that all the naalas (drainage channels) carrying toxic waste into the dam must be halted immediately.

Moreover, Senator Rehman directed the Ministry to provide a comprehensive report on the progress in renewable energy and fossil fuel sectors. She stressed that Pakistan cannot afford to lose further market influence and emphasized the importance of evaluating the sustainability of these industries, with a particular focus on ensuring provincial cooperation. Ministry officials reported that \$441 million has already been approved for the National Adaptation Plan, and a complete costing analysis will be avail-

able by the end of November 2024.

However, Senator Rehman expressed concern that climate change issues were not prioritized in the previous Economic Survey of Pakistan, noting that they were relegated to the margins rather than being integrated into the main report. She pointed out that, in other countries, climate issues are central to policy-making, with future exports being increasingly tied to environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) was highlighted as a critical issue, with Senator Rehman noting the potential impact on Pakistan's market access in the EU. She called for provincial cooperation to ensure compliance with the new regulations and mitigate any negative effects on the country's industrial supply chain due to carbon footprint.

The Chairperson Senate Committee on Climate

Change further highlighted that despite being a low emitter, Pakistan was on the frontlines of climate change, experiencing severe impacts such as rapidly melting glaciers. While Pakistan's concerns were voiced at COP27, she emphasized the need for ongoing dialogue with relevant stakeholders to keep the country's climate challenges in focus. She pointed out that Pakistan was considered one of the hottest places during summer, contributing to accelerated glacier melt. However, she noted with concern that climate financing often overlooks the need for mitigation.

Senator Rehman also suggested that the government should prioritize community resilience in response to glacier melt, given Pakistan's heavy reliance on glaciers for its water supply. She stressed the importance of conducting a detailed analysis of this issue and announced

that the Committee would visit Skardu to gain firsthand knowledge of glacier melt and evaluate the actions taken in this regard.

Senator Rehman expressed concern over the Ministry's lack of clarity regarding its responsibilities, evolution, compliance with international treaties, and overall scope of work. She noted that the Ministry suffers from a shortage of technical experts, which hinders its effectiveness. To address this, she suggested establishing a dedicated occupational group for Climate Change within the civil service, similar to other specialized groups, to ensure the Ministry has the depth and expertise required to tackle the country's pressing environmental challenges.

In addition to the issue of the Rawal Dam pollution, Senator Rehman expressed her disappointment at the ongoing use of single-use plastics in various ministries, despite pre-

vious directives for regulation. "The ministry was told to brief on plastic regulations, but even today, no briefing is being given," she stated, emphasizing the need for immediate action. "Take the committee's orders seriously. If non-seriousness is shown now, strict action will be taken."

The Committee's strong stance on both the unchecked pollution of Rawal Dam and the continued use of single-use plastics in government ministries reflects its commitment to enforcing environmental regulations and safeguarding public health.

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister's Coordinator for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, Member (Administration) CDA Talat Mahmood, Senators Shahzib Durrani, Manzoor Ahmed Kakar, Bushra Anjum Butt and other senior officials of relevant departments were also in attendance.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal addressing a conference on 'Empowering a Digital Pakistan'.

ISSI, NIMA sign MoU for closer collaboration

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) amid further enhancing its institutional collaboration has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA).

The signing ceremony, held at ISSI, marked the commencement of a new chapter in academic and research cooperation between the two Institutes. Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood and President NIMA Vice Admiral (Retd) Ahmad Saeed, signed the MoU on behalf of their respective institutions. The event was moderated by Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ADCDC, a news release said.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood warmly welcomed the NIMA delegation, highlighting the

importance of formalizing the relationship between the two think-tanks. He lauded NIMA's contributions to Pakistan's maritime and security policies and expressed confidence that the MoU would pave the way for enhanced mutual collaboration, including impactful research, conferences, and capacity-building initiatives.

Ambassador Mahmood concluded by reaffirming the commitment of both institutions to leverage their combined expertise and resources for the advancement of Pakistan's interests in the maritime and related domains.

Vice Admiral Ahmad Saeed reflected on past collaboration between NIMA and ISSI and expressed optimism for a higher level of collaboration through this formalized partnership.

He highlighted that the joint endeavours would

introduce a fresh perspective on policy orientation, particularly in maritime affairs.

He concluded by stating that the collaboration would yield positive outcomes in influencing the policy process, aligned with the strategic objectives of both institutions.

Earlier, Malik Qasim Mustafa noted that ISSI and NIMA had a history of active collaboration, and this Memorandum of Understanding will facilitate cooperation in a more structured manner with a focus on maritime security, Blue Economy, and broader maritime interests.

The MoU sets out a framework for future collaborative efforts, encompassing the exchange of researchers, the organization of joint events, and the initiation of research projects covering subjects of mutual interest.

Pak-EPA confiscates banned plastics

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) on Wednesday conducted a targeted operation in I-8 Markaz and confiscated a significant quantity of banned single-use plastics and fined Rs10,000 each on two shop owners for flouting the prohibition. The enforcement operation, led by Director (Legal/Enforcement), Aamir Abbas Khan was part of the agency's ongoing efforts to ensure compliance with Single Use Plastics (Prohibition) Regulations, 2023, a news release said.

During the operation, five shops, including Juice Land, Shah G Foods, One Pound Shop, Quetta Tea Café, and SFC Refreshment, were inspected. The Pak-EPA team seized a total of 90 kg of banned single-use plastic items including straws, glasses, bowls, and polythene bags.

Two shop owners were fined Rs. 10,000 each for violating the ban, while three other shops were issued warning letters for non-compliance. Pak-EPA remains committed to enforcing the ban on single-use plastics and protecting the environment.

AIOU announces results

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced the results for the Associate Degree Programs (General, Commerce, Education, Mass Communication, Library Science, and Dars-e-Nizami) and the BA (Old) Program offered in the Autumn 2023 semester. The results have been uploaded to the students' portals.

The students who have completed their programs will soon have their provisional certificates available on their portals, enabling them to enroll in the next academic phase.

It is important to note that the second phase of admissions for the Autumn 2024 semester will begin on September 1st.

Ahsan for catching up with pace of digital revolution for national development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday stressed the urgent need to keep pace with the global digital revolution to achieve development across all sectors and put the country on a sustainable growth trajectory.

"The world is advancing at the speed of electrons. We cannot afford to lag behind, as in the next 22 years, we will be evaluating our development in the context of our 100 years of independence," he stated while addressing the opening session of the conference titled "Empowering a Digital Pakistan."

Citing historical examples, the minister noted that nations embracing global changes achieved progress and prosperity, while those that ignored these changes faced failure.

He highlighted that the world was now undergoing a digital revolution after the industrial revolution. "In the industrial era, the big used to eat the small; in the digital world, the fast eats the slow, regardless of size," he remarked.

"Today, Pakistan stands at a defining moment. The

future of a nation or an individual hinges on the choices made. These choices determine the destiny of that person or nation," he said.

Ahsan Iqbal explained that if the choices were wrong, one could not blame others for their circumstances. Conversely, if the choices are right, the credit for success belongs solely to the individual or nation that made those choices, he added.

He also pointed out that Pakistanis were once known globally for their hardworking and intelligent reputation. However, this image was tarnished by the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, which labeled its opponents as "thieves and dacoits."

In 2018, he noted, ambassadors from major countries, including the United States, Britain and European states, were actively seeking investment opportunities in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. "For the first time, Pakistan was the darling of international investors, eager to be part of CPEC, but we squandered this opportunity by entrusting power to the

PTI," he said.

He recalled that the PML-N government had introduced Vision 2010 in 1998 and Vision 2025 in 2013 but was later disrupted by the so-called change in 2018.

Subsequently, the minister said, the governance was handed over to someone with no experience even at the union council level, severely damaging the national economy. "The negative impact of this decision is still being felt."

Emphasizing the importance of adapting to modern trends and maintaining agility, he reminded that no country has achieved development without consistent policies over at least 10-15 years.

To achieve developmental goals, Ahsan Iqbal reiterated that Pakistan needed peace, stability, consistent policies and continuous reforms.

"The nation now needs a healing touch. We must come together, set aside smaller identities, and embrace a larger identity as Pakistan," he remarked quoting "Coming together is a beginning; staying together is progress and working together is success."

PR collect Rs79.2m from ticketless passengers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has collected an amount of Rs 79.2 million from ticket-less passengers in a crackdown during the last seven months with the help of railway police and train staffers.

"Around 61,352 passengers found traveling without tickets in different trains and collected the said amount from them, which is deposited in the official bank account of the department," sources in the Ministry told APP.

They said Pakistan Railways has not the first time conducted an operation against ticketless passengers on a large scale, adding that these types of crackdowns had taken

place daily.

The sources said that ticketless traveling was illegal, and those who were caught without a ticket were charged a ticket price for the whole journey of the train besides the penalty. Those who do not pay are handed over to the railway police.

To a question, they said that Pakistan Railways Police claimed to have arrested a total of 43,84 accused due to their involvement in violations of rules and laws and also registered some 3,803 cases against them in eight Railways divisions in one and half year.

"Around 688 cases were registered in Peshawar Division, 584 in

Rawalpindi, 11,03 in Lahore, 369 in Mughalpur workshops, 378 in Multan, 238 in Sukkur, 365 in Karachi, and 78 in Quetta Division," they added.

They said the Railways Police Help Desks had been established at all the major railway stations across the country, and the performance of the Railways Police has been quite satisfactory during the last year.

Regarding the performance of the railway police, they said, "Police are performing duties efficiently despite the limited resources, and the performance of the railway police will be further improved to the optimum level during the next year."

RDA forms special enforcement squad

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, has formed a special enforcement squad to remove encroachments.

According to a RDA spokesman, RDA had intensified its crackdown against encroachments across the city.

He informed that chairing a meeting, the DG RDA, Kinza Murtaza formed a special Enforcement Squad to take strict action in accordance with the law against encroachments.

The squad, comprising six Inspectors and other staff members, would launch operations under the

supervision of the Assistant Director Building Control, RDA, he said adding, the team has been directed to take strict action against encroachments in all areas.

The spokesman further informed that the DG also instructed the Additional Director General RDA to monitor the squad's performance daily.

The squad would be held accountable for their effectiveness in dealing with encroachments, ensuring that prompt and decisive action is taken, he added.

The spokesman informed that the DG during the meeting emphasized the importance of this initiative, stating that encroachments were a blot on the

beauty of the city and vowed to clear the city of them. RDA would not tolerate encroachments that cause inconvenience to the citizens, he added.

Additional DG, RDA Awas Manzoor Tarar, Director Admin and Finance RDA, Asif Mahmood Janjua, and Director Building Control Jamsheed Aftab pledged their support to the newly formed squad in its mission to restore the city's order and beauty.

Meanwhile, RWMC on Wednesday organized a camp in the area of Commercial Market, Satellite town to create awareness among the masses about the importance of cleanliness and prevention of dengue.

Health products exported

KABUL (Ariana News): A private company in Afghanistan has for the first time exported a consignment of health products to Uzbekistan, officials confirmed. According to Nazir Ahmad Noor, head of manufacturing company, the products to be exported will be done in stages. Currently the total value of the contract with Uzbekistan is \$250,000. "Our contract is \$250,000 and today we have two 40-foot cargo trucks moving there today," said Nazir Ahmad Noor.

Uzbekistan to build school

KABUL (BNA): Uzbekistan has begun construction on a large religious school in Balkh province. The foundation stone for the "Imam Bukhari Khair-ul-Madrasah Great School" was laid this week in the New Town area of Mazar-e-Sharif, the provincial capital. The religious school will be constructed under the supervision of the Uzbek Ministry of Construction at a cost of \$6 million, as revealed by Farkat Nazarov, the Uzbekistan Consul General in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Fitrat: IE army capable of defending country



BALKH (TOLONews): Fasihuddin Fitrat, Chief of Staff of the Army of the Islamic Emirate, stated that the Islamic Emirate's army has the capability to respond to any invading country. Speaking at a graduation ceremony for security forces in Balkh province, Fitrat added that the Islamic Emirate has successfully trained a well-equipped force, and the country now has a strong system in place. The Chief of Staff of the Army of the Islamic Emirate said: "This army has the ability to defend its land, Afghanistan, and we are confident that if anyone again dares to set their eyes

on occupying our homeland, we warn them that if they cast their gaze upon our country, we certainly have an army that will blind that eye and crush it with an iron fist." More than 800 soldiers from the 209th Al-Fath Corps graduated after completing a three-month training course. Sediqullah Nusrat, the spokesperson for the 209th Al-Fath Corps, said: "This is the fifth group of hundreds of soldiers graduating from this corps, with more than 800 mujahideen completing the three-month course and graduating in a special ceremony." Naqeebullah Azizi, Chief of Staff of the 209th

Al-Fath Corps, said: "We who have learned these exercises and trainings are not doing so just to gain knowledge and graduate, and eventually earn a salary. Be aware that joining the army means a covenant with God to be ready to serve our people and our country." The newly graduated soldiers from the 209th Al-Fath Corps stated that they will spare no effort in protecting the lives and property of the people and the territorial integrity of the country. Soldier Safatullah said: "I assure the people that during this time, we have been strengthened, and God willing, we will serve them

so that they can live in a safe environment." Soldier Hamidullah said: "We received three months of training here and learned many things. We have undergone significant changes, both ideologically and mentally." Soldier Abdul Basir said: "Let the world know that Afghanistan stands on its own feet, and our enemies should be aware that our people have an Islamic, well-trained army that knows how to deal with its people and how to defend them." Officials from the 209th Al-Fath Corps stated that they will continue to train more forces as part of this ongoing program.

IE supreme leader stresses Islamic governance

KABUL (BNA): The spokesman for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Zabihullah Mujahid, has announced that the Esteemed Supreme Leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan held a meeting with all provincial governors in Kandahar. In a statement, Mujahid reported that during this meeting, the Supreme Leader addressed the governors on the importance of good Islamic governance, emphasizing their responsibilities, the protection of the Islamic system established through jihad, and the primary objective of the Mujahideen's sacrifices, which is the implementation of sacred Sharia. The statement further highlighted that the Supreme Leader instructed the governors to ensure that the Islamic system remains strong, Sharia law is enforced, and divine commands are revived. He also emphasized that no un-Islamic practices should be allowed in the provinces. According to the statement, the Esteemed Supreme Leader also listened to the governors' views on maintaining the Islamic system and implementing

Mujahid announces ban on Rapporteur's entry into Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): A Taliban spokesperson has stated that Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur on gross human rights violations in Afghanistan, is no longer permitted to travel to Afghanistan. Zabihullah Mujahid accused the UN Special Rapporteur of spreading "propaganda" against the Taliban. Mujahid claimed that Richard Bennett exaggerated minor issues and provided incorrect information to other organizations. The Taliban spokesperson added, "Mr. Bennett is banned from coming to Afghanistan. He was appointed to spread propaganda against Afghanistan. We do not trust what he says." In several of his reports to the UN Human Rights Council, Richard Bennett accused the Taliban of widespread human rights violations in Afghanistan, including violence against women, civil society members, the media, former military personnel, and ethnic and religious minorities. In his latest report, Bennett, citing human rights activists, described the Taliban's treatment of women as creating gender apartheid in Afghanistan. He also called for the prosecution of Taliban officials involved in human rights violations at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. This week, in an interview with Deutsche Welle, the Taliban spokesperson accused international organizations,



including UNAMA, of conducting "propaganda against Afghanistan." He argued that these organizations ignore the positive aspects of the Taliban regime and only report its weaknesses. Mujahid claimed that these organizations "have been hired for propaganda purposes." The Taliban's ongoing rejection of international criticisms and calls for inclusivity reflects their firm grip on power and disregard for global norms. The tension between the Taliban's narrative and international demands underscores the deepening isolation of the regime. The accusations of propaganda from both sides highlight the growing rift, with the Taliban's refusal to engage with opposing viewpoints further complicating Afghanistan's political and human rights landscape. As the Taliban continue to reject calls for elections and political inclusivity, the prospects for a peaceful and representative government in Afghanistan remain bleak.

Fight against drug trafficking: Iran and Afghanistan agree to cooperate

100 children with heart defects treated

KABUL (TOLONews): Officials of the Afghan Red Crescent Society said that over the past month, they have facilitated the treatment of more than 100 children with heart defects within the country. The spokesperson of the society said that they have provided healthcare services to over 19,000 people through mobile health teams and clinics. Mudassir Hamraz, spokesperson for ARCS, said, "In the past month, approximately 107 people with heart defects were treated in various hospitals within the country." At the same time, several families with children suffering from heart defects said they are facing numerous economic challenges and are happy that their children are being treated by this society. Ehsanullah, the father of a sick child, said, "We had economic problems; we registered last year, and 10 days ago they contacted us and asked for the patient." But what are the causes of heart defects in children? Nematullah Zafari, a heart surgeon, said, "This disease can have various causes, from family marriages to the unauthorized use of medications by the mother during pregnancy, or the mother being exposed to certain diseases, which increases the risk of heart diseases in the fetus." According to ARCS, the cost of treatment for children with heart defects ranges from two to three and a half thousand dollars.

KABUL (Ariana News): Iran's deputy director of its anti-narcotics department, Mohammad Zarei, announced Wednesday that Tehran and Kabul have agreed to share information in the fight against drugs and drug trafficking. Zarei told Iranian media that the decision was made during a meeting between both parties. He said the fight against narcotics, prevention, reduction of demand and treatment of drug addicts were also discussed in the meeting. He also said that the exchange of information regarding the fight against drugs; as well as the provision of educational services and the formation of joint committees to



tackle the problem were agreed upon. Zarei stated that the two sides agreed to strengthen coordination so that the sides can use the information to counter and dismantle drug trafficking gangs.

8 Afghans executed in Iran over past 20 days

KABUL (Khaama Press): A Norway-based Iranian human rights group has published statistics showing that in the past 20 days, 85 Iranians and 8 Afghans were executed in Iran. The Iranian Human Rights group in Norway released a statement stating that among those executed in Iran were one woman and eight Afghan citizens. The officials from the Iranian Human Rights group did not specify the exact crimes for which these individuals were executed. However, the Iranian government has often cited its opposition to criminal activities such as drug trafficking and other serious crimes as the main reasons for these executions. Meanwhile, the Iranian

Human Rights Organization also reported on Saturday, August 3, that at least 300 people, including 42 Baluchi citizens, 20 Kurdish citizens, 20 Afghan citizens, and 15 women, have been executed over the past seven months. On Tuesday, August 20, Human Rights Watch issued a statement highlighting the "alarming increase" in executions in Iran and called for the abolition of the death penalty. According to this organization, the judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran has executed at least 87 people in the month following the recent presidential election. Amnesty International has also reported that the Islamic Republic of Iran was responsible for 74%

of all recorded executions worldwide last year. The executed individuals included ethnic minorities, particularly Baluchis, women, and people who were minors at the time of committing the crime. The recent surge in executions in Iran, particularly involving ethnic minorities and foreign nationals, has drawn sharp criticism from human rights organizations worldwide. The high number of executions, often without transparent legal processes, raises serious concerns about the use of the death penalty in the country. These developments call for urgent international attention and dialogue to address the ongoing human rights violations in Iran.

TVET-A signs agreement with 2 Uzbek educational institutions



KABUL (BNA): The Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVET-A) has announced the signing of a

cooperation agreement with two educational institutions in Uzbekistan. According to a press release, the agreement was

signed by the Acting Head of the Authority, Mawlawi Ghulam Haidar Shahamat, and Oybek Abdulmuminov, the heads of the Dinau and

Afghan Nationals' Education and Training Center in Uzbekistan. The press release noted that these two institutions operate in the field of education in Uzbekistan. Under the agreement, the institutions will cooperate with the TVET-A in various areas. Additionally, the agreement stipulates that Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority will send teachers and students from technical and vocational education centers to Uzbekistan for educational programs. It is worth noting that cooperation between the two institutions and the authority regarding educational curriculum development is also part of the agreement.

Doctors call for urgent action on monkeypox awareness

KABUL (TOLONews): Several professors and doctors are urging the Ministry of Public Health to raise public awareness about the monkeypox virus. During a scientific seminar, they emphasized the importance of awareness and preventive measures to stop the spread of the virus. Rafiullah Ata, the Deputy Academic Director of the Afghan International Islamic University, said: "The purpose of this program is to educate people

about a contagious disease called monkeypox, which has been detected in neighboring countries, so that our citizens can be prepared." Some doctors have called on the Ministry of Public Health to take information dissemination about this disease seriously. Dr Habib Ur Rahman Masoud said: "The Ministry of Public Health needs to do more in this area. In the capital, resources are

limited, and this shortage is even more pronounced in remote areas." Professor Mohammad Bashir Omar added: "Now this disease is present in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan, there should be health teams at airports and border crossings." Meanwhile, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Health says efforts to prevent the virus in Afghanistan are ongoing. Sharafat Zaman Amarkhil, the spokesperson for

the Ministry of Public Health stated: "At zero points, in places where we share borders with other countries, and along the hypothetical line, screening sections are activated. The goal is to prevent the disease at zero point. For patients who show symptoms of this disease, we have measures in place." Recently, three positive cases of the virus were reported in Pakistan, raising concerns about its spread to Afghanistan.

Jerjerak Waterfall: Hidden gem of Kohistanat district

KABUL (TOLONews): Jerjerak Waterfall is one of the natural attractions in the Kohistanat District of Sar-e Pol, which has recently gained popularity among domestic tourists. Several local tourists who have visited this natural attraction are requesting the provision of facilities in this recreational area. Abdul Saboor, one of the tourists, said: "Our request from the Islamic Emirate is to repair this road. The roads are in terrible condition, making travel very

difficult. Vehicles struggle to move, and most of the time, we have to come by motorcycle." Another tourist, Safiullah, stated: "We request the Islamic Emirate to repair and reconstruct the roads leading to the recreational and scenic areas of Sar-e Pol so that people do not face difficulties when coming for leisure." Tourist Faiz Mohammad remarked: "The roads are in very poor condition. The roads are bad, and people suffer a lot while coming

here. There are no restaurants or clinics here either. Our request to the Islamic Emirate is to pay serious attention to this area." Local officials in Sar-e Pol say that despite the poor road conditions, at least 12,000 domestic tourists have visited the natural attractions of this province in the past month. Abdul Malik Baloch, the Head of Culture and Tourism at the Department of Information and Culture of Sar-e Pol, said: "In the past month, 12,000 people

have visited the recreational and scenic spots of this province, including Jargarak Waterfall. As you mentioned, there are problems with the roads, and we have discussed this issue with the central government for resolution." It is worth noting that in the past three years, the tourism industry in the country has seen unprecedented growth, with more citizens visiting natural attractions, historical sites, and recreational areas in various provinces.

Russian humanitarian aid arrives in Kandahar



KABDAHAR (Khaama Press): Continuing the humanitarian aid efforts to Afghanistan, officials in Kandahar province have announced that humanitarian aid from Russia has arrived in Kandahar. Abdul Shakoora Haqqani, the head of foreign

affairs in Kandahar, informed the media that the aid includes 25 tons of flour. According to the report, the flour arrived at Ahmad Shah Baba International Airport at 4 PM yesterday. In a related development, the British Embassy

for Afghanistan announced on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day that it has provided aid to more than 2.7 million people in Afghanistan in 2023. The embassy stated in a message on Monday, August 18, on its X (formerly Twitter) account

that this humanitarian aid has reached 1.3 million women. The British Embassy for Afghanistan emphasized, "On World Humanitarian Day, we continue to work with our partners to improve the difficult humanitarian situation faced by the people of Afghanistan." Meanwhile, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has recently reported that 23.7 million Afghans have requested humanitarian assistance this year. In a report, UNICEF stated that during the first six months of this year, it provided aid to 2.8 million children and their families. The ongoing international humanitarian efforts underscore the severity of the crisis in Afghanistan, where millions of people, including vulnerable women and children, are in desperate need of assistance.

Israeli strikes kill dozens in Gaza

Blinken ends visit with truce deal still elusive

CAIRO/JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israeli airstrikes across Gaza killed at least 50 Palestinians in the past 24 hours, Palestinian health authorities said on Wednesday, as the military said troops continued to target militants and seize weapons and ammunition.

As last-ditch diplomatic efforts continued to halt the 10-month-old war between Israel and Hamas, the Israeli military said jets hit around 30 targets throughout the Gaza Strip including tunnels, launch sites and an observation post. It said troops killed dozens of armed fighters and captured weapons including explosives, grenades and automatic rifles.

The military issued new evacuation orders in the heavily overcrowded area of Deir Al-Balah, in central Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced by the fighting have sought shelter. The evacuation orders, which the military said were needed to clear civilians from what had become "a dangerous combat zone," were soon followed by tank fire with at least one person killed and several wounded by machine gun fire, medics and residents said.

The conflict churned on as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken ended his latest visit to the Middle East with no clear sign over whether a deal to end the fighting is in sight. At stake in the talks Blinken had with leaders of ceasefire mediators, Egypt and Qatar, as well as in Israel, is the fate of tiny, crowded Gaza, where Israel's military campaign has killed more than 40,000 people since October according to Palestinian health authorities, and of the remaining hostages being held there.

The war in Gaza began on Oct. 7 last year when Hamas gunmen stormed into Israeli communities and military bases, killing around 1,200 people and abducting about 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. For the displaced left exposed in Deir Al-Balah, the lack of progress toward a ceasefire compounded the misery as they searched for space away from the fighting.

"Where will we go? Where will we go?" said Aburakan, 55, a displaced person from Gaza City in the territory's north who has had to change refuge five times since October. "We feel they are closing in. I live a few hundred meters from the threatened areas, and I have been searching since the early morning in vain for a space in western Deir Al-Balah, Khan Younis, or Nuseirat," he told Reuters via a chat app.

"Unfortunately, we may die before we see an end to this war. All ceasefire talk is a lie." Palestinian and United Nations officials say most of the 2.3 million popula-

tion have become internally displaced by Israel's ongoing military offensive and bombardment that have also flattened swathes of built-up areas across the enclave.

Meanwhile, US official criticized "maximalist" remarks attributed to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on maintaining control of the Gaza-Egypt border, saying it was not helpful to reaching a ceasefire with Hamas. "Maximalist statements like this are not constructive to getting a ceasefire deal across the finish line," said the senior official traveling with Secretary of State Antony Blinken in the Middle East, requesting anonymity to talk about sensitive discussions.

Such remarks "certainly risk the ability of implementing-level, working-level and technical talks to be able to move forward (once) both parties agree to a bridging proposal," he said. The official said that Blinken stood by his public statement in Tel Aviv on Monday that Netanyahu had agreed to a US proposal to bridge the gaps on a ceasefire laid out on May 31 by President Joe Biden.

Netanyahu, in reported remarks to families of victims of attacks, said that Israel would insist on maintaining control of the Philadelphi Corridor between Gaza and Egypt which Israeli forces seized from Hamas in the more than 10-month war. "We saw the prime minister's comments, especially on some of these items. We're not going to negotiate in public," the US official said.

The official said that such "technical" issues would need to be ironed out in further discussions. "The only thing Secretary Blinken and the United States are convinced of is the need for getting the ceasefire deal across the finish line," the official said.

"There will be additional conversations on technical specifics, many of which of course are being discussed in the press, which is certainly not helpful to the process," he said. The United States expects diplomacy to move forward this week between Israel and Hamas on reaching a ceasefire, despite uncertainties in particular on Hamas's response, the official said. "We fully expect this process to continue into this week," the official said, without confirming any formal meeting this week involving Israel and Hamas. The White House last week, when presenting the bridging proposal in Doha, said that it expected new talks on finalizing the deal to take place later this week in Cairo. Blinken arrived in Doha late Tuesday for talks with Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, after meeting the leaders of Egypt and Israel.

PTI founder meddles in military affairs: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, Culture and National Heritage Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday said PTI founder had meddled in the affairs of Pakistan Army by demanding an open trial for ex-Spy Chief.

The minister, in a news statement, regretted that the PTI founder had made multiple attempts to make the matter related to Faiz Hameed controversial. Instead of giving statements in defense of Faiz Hameed, the PTI founder should better make his position clear in the 190 million pounds case, Tarar said, adding his controversial statements showed that he was suffering from "serious anxiety and uncertainty".

The minister said the PTI founder was reluctant to accept that the issue of Faiz Hameed was internal matter of the Army, which proved that the ex-spy chief was his "asset". He said it seemed that the PTI chief was in mental disarray as sometime he called Faiz Hameed an "asset or a hero", while on some occasion took completely an otherwise stance.

In the Faiz Hameed case, he said it appeared that the PTI founder had no qualms about using people for his own personal interests. The minister said the PTI founder was expert in ditching his own well wishers.

SBP decides to replace currency notes

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) decided to replace currency notes with denominations ranging from Rs 10 to Rs 5,000.

According to details, SBP Governor Jameel Ahmed told the Senate Standing Committee on Finance that the central bank will soon permission from the federal cabinet to introduce the new currency note. He said that new currency note denominations of Rs 10, Rs 20, Rs 50, Rs 100, Rs 500, Rs 1000, and Rs 5000 having all new features will be issued by December 2024.

The Senate Standing Committee on Finance chaired by Senator Farooq H Naik was also briefed by the SBP governor that contrary to rumors, the Rs 5,000 note will not be phased out, but replaced with a new design.

The SBP governor said that besides paper currency note, plastic notes made from polymeric material will also be issued. "Plastic currency will be used in the future if it proves to be more durable than paper currency," the Jameel Ahmed added. During the meeting, Senator Mohsin Aziz proposed to phase out Rs 5000 note to curb smuggling, however his suggestion was rejected by the SBP governor. "The Rs 5,000 note will not be phased out and no such proposals are being considered." The SBP governor said.

Terrorists attack police station

F.P. Report

TAKHT BHAI: Terrorists launched an attack on the local police station in Takht Bhai, resulting in the injury of a constable in Takht Bhai on Wednesday. According to initial reports, unknown terrorists threw a hand grenade at the station before fleeing the scene.

The channel reported that the hand grenade explosion caused damage to a police van parked at the police station. A month ago on July 19, a policeman was also killed and two others were seriously injured in an attack by terrorists on a police checkpoint in Takht Bhai.

Miscereants attacked the police checkpoint at the archaeological site located at the Malakand Road. The dead body of a policeman and two injured policemen were shifted to the hospital while the local police started search operations against the terrorists in the area.

Takht Bhai's original ancient name is Takht-i-Bahi, and it is an Indo-Parthian archaeological site of an ancient Buddhist monastery in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



ISLAMABAD: President elect of Oxford Union, Israr Khan Kakar, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

PHC seeks response on internet disruption plea

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprised Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Muhammad Ijaz Khan has ordered Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and Federal Secretary Information Technology (IT), for submission of their response to a writ petition filed against the disruption and slow speed of the internet across the country, on Wednesday.

The petition filed by Nauman Mohib Kakakhel advocate and informed the court that the internet speed is extremely slow throughout the country, causing difficulties for internet users. He added that the internet has become a necessity for everyone, and its slow speed is affecting not only the general public but also students and researchers.

During the hearing, Justice Ijaz Anwar inquired about the concept of a "firewall," to which the counsel replied that the firewall is a system which is used to control or block contents on digital platforms. He explained that once a firewall is installed, certain audio and video content cannot be downloaded, and only messages can be sent.

Justice Ijaz Anwar remarked that the issues related to internet are reporting for several days. The lawyer Nauman Mohib Kakakhel replied that the problem persists across the country, and the government is not taking any action to address it.

Justice Ijaz Anwar observed is the government is unaware of the reasons behind the slow internet speed. The counsel responded that the government claims that the slow speed is

due to the use of VPNs, but in reality, the government has forced people to use VPNs, which is also dangerous and risky.

PHC subsequently issued notices to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and the Federal Secretary of IT, directing them to submit their responses and adjourned the hearing.

Court observes what will be left once university's land sole: Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ijaz Anwar remarked that the provincial government is planning to sell university lands to pay employees' salaries, but what will happen in the future? Once the land is sold, what will be left? If the land is needed for establishment of another department in university in the future, will the varsity buy new land at high prices? The government should adopt a comprehensive policy to run universities efficiently instead of selling land.

Moreover, Justice Ijaz Ahmed Sabi observed that if the provincial government fails to pay employees' pensions and claims that they don't have funds, it means they have surrendered. What solution can be found? The bench made these remarks during the hearing of a writ petition filed by over 100 applicants, including Professor Anwar Khan, and other staff of the Agricultural University regarding pension issues and non-payment of annual increments.

The Additional Advocate General informed the court that the Finance Department has raised objections to the summary sent by the Higher Education Department, stating that the matter should be presented to the cabinet since the government lacks funds and cannot pay the required amount of one billion rupees.

The petitioners' counsel argued that the retirees have not received their pension amounts and annual increments for the past five years. Justice Ijaz Anwar asked about possible solutions, and Professor Anwar Khan replied that universities need reforms, which can be achieved if the government empowers them. However, the government is not paying attention to universities, and there is a need for focus on this sector.

PHC further observed that unfortunately, our educational standards have deteriorated, and now students are going abroad even for LLB degrees. The government should find a way to solve this issue instead of selling university lands, as financial problems will persist in the future.

Justice Ijaz Sabi added that if the government refuses to pay, it means they have surrendered. The Additional Advocate General informed the court that the Higher Education Department has addressed the Finance Department's objections and will resubmit the summary, which will be presented to the cabinet.

Justice Ijaz Anwar noted that universities' financial conditions are poor, and employees face problems on routine basis. One reason for this is the unnecessary hiring of staff and favoritism in appointments, which has worsened the situation. The petitioners agreed, stating that while they had produced PhD students, they were now facing pension issues. PHC's divisional bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Muhammad Ijaz Sani summoned the Secretary of Higher Education and ordered them to provide details of the summary presented to the cabinet.

Safety of Chinese citizens to be ensured: CCPO

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Capital Police Officer (CCPO) Peshawar, Qasim Ali Khan, has stated that to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens, the Federal Ministry of Interior has directed them to obtain NOCs to provide full security and protect them from any untoward incidents. He expressed these views during his visit to China Window, a Chinese cultural center established in Peshawar.

During his visit, CCPO Peshawar toured various galleries of China Window, signed the friendship wall, and recorded his comments in the guest book. While speaking to the media on this occasion, he said that there are no restrictions on any foreign nationals entering Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Peshawar. However, after obtaining an

NOC from the concerned security agencies, they are provided with security to ensure they do not face any difficulties.

Qasim Ali Khan emphasized that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police are taking all possible measures to protect Chinese citizens. In response to a question, he stated that the friendship between Pakistan and China is eternal and unparalleled, adding that China is assisting Pakistan in every possible way in its economic development.

He dismissed the notion that Peshawar is surrounded by terrorists, stressing that the Pakistan Army and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police are always ready to protect their citizens. He noted that security forces are making great sacrifices, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police officers donning

shrouds on their heads, which is a source of pride.

Qasim Ali Khan further stated that no effort is being spared to control street crimes, and areas surrounding Peshawar are being targeted to apprehend criminals involved in such activities. He acknowledged that there are various reasons for street crimes, which can be discussed at length, but also emphasized the need for citizens to play a positive and constructive role alongside the police.

Qasim Ali Khan described the Chinese Cultural Center in Peshawar as an important symbol of Pakistan-China friendship and shared his observations of his visit to China. Earlier, he had visited different galleries of China Window and expressed deep interest in Chinese culture.

Three killed in Bosnia school shooting

SARAJEVO (Reuters) At least three staff members have been killed in a shooting at a school in the northwest of Bosnia and Herzegovina, authorities say. Among those killed in Wednesday's shooting were the principal, secretary and a teacher at the Sanski Most High School Center, Adnan Beganovic, a spokesman for the Ministry of Internal Affairs, told Al Jazeera.

The shooting took place at 10:15am (08:15 GMT). The Reuters news agency reported quoting police that a school employee was involved in the shooting. The Sanski Most town is located approximately 200km (124 miles) northwest of the capital, Sarajevo.

Schools in Bosnia are closed for the summer holiday, which means no classes were being held at the time of the shooting. While no students were present, teachers were meeting to prepare for the upcoming school year. The suspect "used a military firearm, an automatic rifle, to kill three school employees and tried to kill himself", Beganovic told national radio.

The wounded man was reported to be in serious condition and was taken to Banja Luka Hospital. The employee allegedly had a dispute with the school management. The Associated Press news agency said. Police are yet to provide a motive for the attack.

Police and emergency services were deployed to the site. The Balkan region has been awash with small arms and weapons since the wars of the 1990s, which saw Yugoslavia break up, particularly in Bosnia, a country of about 3.5 million people. But mass shootings are rare. According to a 2010 study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), there were about 750,000 weapons in illegal possession in Bosnia. The last school shooting in the Balkans took place in May 2023 in Belgrade, Serbia, when a teenager shot dead 10 people, including nine classmates.

KP CM wants massive crowd in PTI's rally

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur presided over a meeting to discuss arrangements regarding much awaited public rally of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) scheduled on Aug 22 (tomorrow) in the capital, Islamabad.

The meeting was attended by the members of the national and provincial assemblies. Besides, the KP CM met separately with divisional leaders of the party. CM Gandapur directed all party leaders to bring as many people as possible to the rally, urging them to take face mask along to avoid any untoward incident.

"The time has come to settle scores with the government over injustices with us," he said. He informed the participants that conveyance for the

Insaf Student Federation (ISF) would be arranged by the party while instructing the workers to gather at Swabi at 2pm from where he would lead the caravan to Islamabad.

Besides, a meeting of central leadership of the PTI was held in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa House, Islamabad to review preparations for the upcoming rally. The meeting was attended through the video link by information secretary Rauf Hassan and Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan. PTI leader Sheikh Waqas Akram and party lawyers also participated in the meeting.

Meanwhile, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar says a peaceful rally will take place on Thursday (Aug 22) in compliance with the Islamabad High Court's orders.

Expressing his response

to the suspension of the rally's NOC, Barrister Gohar stressed the party's commitment to holding a peaceful rally in accordance with the High Court's orders. The central leadership, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CM Ali Amin Gandapur, is scheduled to address the rally.

Barrister Gohar pointed out that the NOC cannot be withdrawn in light of the High Court's orders. He clarified that the gathering would be held at Tarnol Sangiani, located 30 kilometers away from the Red Zone. He also affirmed that only a rally will take place at five o'clock on Thursday, with no sit-in planned.

Likewise, Barrister Gohar highlighted the religious party's planned protest at D-Chowk at eight in the morning. He labelled the suspension of the NOC as unlawful, unconstitutional, and a contradiction to democracy.

Iran parliament okays president's entire cabinet

TEHRAN: Iran's parliament has approved all 19 ministers of President Masoud Pezeshkian, the first time in more than two decades a leader has been able to get all of his officials through the body. The cabinet approved on Wednesday after days of debate is cross-factional, reflecting the president's focus on consensus.

In contrast to former President Ebrahim Raisi's team, which was considered hardline, the new cabinet includes reformist figures, such as Health Minister Mohammadreza Zafarghandi, who secured his position despite receiving the lowest number of votes at 163. The parliament's approval of the ministers is not a formality. One minister proposed in 2021 by Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash in May, lost the confidence vote due to lacking experience.

"The road to our salvation is unity and solidarity," Pezeshkian said on Wednesday in his speech to the 285 parliamentarians present to give their vote of confidence to the cabinet, which had been debated since Saturday.

Getting his officials approved shows Pezeshkian picked a cabinet of consensus with names palatable to all of the power centers within Iran's theocracy as opposed to going for controversial choices. Former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who campaigned for Pezeshkian during the election, later resigned as a vice president for the new leader over the cabinet selections.

Farzaneh Sadeq was approved as minister of roads and transportation, becoming the second female cabinet minister since the Islamic republic's establishment in 1979. Mohsen Paknejad was approved as minister of oil. He served as deputy minister of oil from 2018 to 2021.

Abbas Araqchi was approved as minister of foreign affairs with 247 votes after persuading parliamentarians wary of his key role in negotiating Tehran's 2015 nuclear agreement with six world powers. During deliberations with the parliament, Araqchi asserted that he holds the same world

view he held during his time serving with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and expressed support for a 2020 parliamentary bill hardening Iran's nuclear stance.

In 2018, the United States under then-President Donald Trump withdrew unilaterally from the nuclear accord, which restricted Tehran's nuclear programme in return for sanctions relief. Trump then reinstated US sanctions on Iran. Indirect talks between the US and Tehran to revive the deal and lift the costly US sanctions have stalled.

In an address to parliament on Sunday, Araqchi stressed that Tehran would continue its policy of good neighbourliness and negotiations to lift sanctions. "China, Russia, Africa, Latin America and East Asia are priority regions in our foreign policy," Araqchi said, adding that Europe could become a priority if it changed its "hostile behaviour" and relations with the US would be informed solely by "conflict management". — Aljazeera