

Orya Maqbool remanded
F.P. Report

LAHORE: A court on Thursday handed over senior columnist Orya Maqbool Jan to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on a four-day physical remand in a case related to remarks against institutions. The senior journalist was produced in the court after he was arrested by the FIA Cybercrime Wing in an area of Lahore.

Woman's ears cuts off
F.P. Report

GWADAR: In a horrific incident, a dacoit cut off ears of an elderly woman in the Surbandar area of Gwadar, Balochistan. According to police, the woman was wearing gold earring when the robber attacked her and cut off her ears, taking the earrings with him. The police have arrested the robber and recovered the severed ears, gold earrings, and a knife from his possession.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif presenting a memento to Dr. Anita Zaidi, President, Gender Equality Division, Gates Foundation at the inaugural ceremony of Buna-Raast Connectivity Project Implementation Phase.

Will announce a 5-year economic plan soon: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that he would unveil a five-year economic revival plan in the coming weeks as broad parameters had already been finalised through months-long deliberations with the stakeholders.

The prime minister, addressing the launching ceremony of the Buna-Raast connectivity project, said the "Home-Grown Economic Program" would envisage measures to boost the country's economy by uplifting agriculture, information technology, and other untapped sectors. "Our program is under discussion and I will announce it very soon. Great work has gone into it. It involves discussions and deliberations with all stakeholders over the last many months. Recently we have finalised its broad parameters. By next week or so, we will finalise it. I will go to the people to announce the program for the next five years," the prime minister remarked.

Highlighting the challenges of reforms in the Federal Board of Revenue and power sector, he told the gathering that he was personally monitoring the digitisation of FBR and that the government was hopeful of positive outcomes of power sector reforms. "There is no magic band. It is all about hard work, sacrifice, blood and sweat. Our nation is robust and strong. Our people are full of hope and energy. Let us put our work together. Let us not

Shehbaz directs better airport services, shorter wait times

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday instructed that facilities for passengers, tourists, and overseas Pakistanis at the country's airports be improved and called for an increase in the number of counters during international flights to reduce long wait times for passengers.

Chairing a review meeting on aviation sector reforms, the prime minister directed that the safety audit for the current calendar year be completed as soon as possible. He reminded that during his previous tenure as head of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government, an aviation act was enacted to facilitate reforms in the sector, according to a press release issued by Prime Minister Office. He instructed that all policy measures and reforms outlined in the Aviation Act be implemented. He noted that the aviation sector in Pakistan was moving in the right direction due to these reforms. To promote tourism, the prime minister emphasized the need to provide top-notch facilities for passengers at Skardu International Airport and called for a detailed action plan for the expansion of both Skardu International Airport and Gilgit Airport.

waste time on debates as we had done in the past. Let us now use this time for actual implementation on the ground. Insha Allah, you will see we will have dividends and will find our place in the comity of nations through hard work, hard work and hard work," he said.

Under the Buna-Raast connectivity project, the Raast payment mechanism is being linked with the Arab Monetary Fund's Buna system to facilitate millions of overseas Pakistanis in Arab countries to send remittances through a swift, affordable, and effective mechanism. The prime minister said that besides easing the remittance-sending process digi-

tally, it would also help boost the country's foreign exchange and further strengthen the already cordial relations between Pakistan and the Arab world.

Calling it a great step forward in promoting financial transactions through modern techniques, he said the project would expand the reach of Pakistan's digital payment infrastructure. "This signifies how 21st-century Pakistan is moving ahead by augmenting modern technologies in the people's lives. This is the first cross-border real-time payment system linkage that will make remittances more affordable and accessible," he said.

Zardari directs pension payment to deceased employee's son

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has directed the Employees' Old Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) to ensure lifelong payment of pension to Mr Muhammad Shehzad, a person with visual disability who had been denied pension by EOBI following the death of his father.

The President said that the person with disability (PWD) could not be left in a merciless situation by the State, given the fact that his elders were deceased and were receiving pension before their deaths. He regretted that EOBI displayed grave insensitivity by neglecting a PWD and that too at a time when all his predecessors had passed away leaving him without any support.

Muhammad Shehzad (the complainant), who has been blind since birth, had filed a complaint with the Wafaqi Mohtasib, stating that his father, Mr Muhammad Afzal Zafar, was an Old Age Pensioner of EOBI and died on 20.12.2016. The mother of the complainant had already passed away during the lifetime of his father. He had requested EOBI to grant him a "family pension" for life as a "disabled legal heir" of his late father.

ADB official, envoy call on President

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Country Director of Asian Development Bank (ADB) Yong Ye called on President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday and briefed him about the role of the Bank in the socio-economic development of Pakistan. Appreciating the assistance provided by the Asian Development Bank to Pakistan during the floods, President Zardari highlighted Pakistan's measures to deal with climate change, saying that Pakistan had planted mangrove forests on millions of acres of land.

He also appreciated the services of ADB to Pakistan in the fields of agriculture, irrigation and education. Meanwhile, the outgoing Ambassador of Greece to Pakistan Konstantinos Moatsos paid a farewell call on President Asif Ali Zardari. He emphasized the need to further strengthen bilateral relations with Greece. The president also expressed his best wishes for the outgoing Ambassador of Greece.

EOBI, however, rejected his application by placing reliance on Section 22B (3) (i) of the EOBI Act, 1976, which provides that only male minors under 18 years of age are eligible for a family pension, whereas Mr Shehzad was 44 years old. The Mohtasib closed further investigation of his complaint, after which, Mr Muhammad Shehzad filed a representation before the President of Pakistan.

The President accepted the complainant's representation and emphasised that

keeping in view the letter and spirit of the Constitution of Pakistan, particularly Articles 9 and 25, a Person with Disability could not be deprived of such a pension, since he deserved to be treated on a much better footing and placed in a more deserving category than any other recipient of pension in the country presently. He also endorsed Mohtasib's recommendation that EOBI's law in this regard should be reviewed and brought in line with the Federal Policy.

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered the removal of the controversial paragraphs in the ruling of Mubarak Sani case.

The Supreme Court heard an urgent application from the Punjab government, requesting the removal of certain portions from its July 24 verdict in the Mubarak Ahmad Sani case.

A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, took up the matter. The other members were Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan. The bench accepted the Punjab government's application and ordered the removal of paragraphs No 7, 42 and 49-C.

During the hearing, Allama Taqi Usmani assisted the court and requested the removal of two paragraphs from the decision. He asked for paragraphs 7 and 42 to be deleted. The chief justice also noted that

the Feb 6 decision was left behind after the review, and now it's time to move forward. JUI chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said, "Supreme Court should have limited itself to the matter of bail only; you {CJP} are hearing a second review in the Supreme Court."

The chief justice responded by saying that this is not a second review. Maulana Fazlur Rehman then remarked, "Then this must be a re-evaluation. I am 72 years old, and this is the first time I am standing in court." The chief justice said, "Maulana Sahib! We are not that bad. When my father passed away, your father, Mufti Mahmood, came to our home for condolences." As the people at the rostrum started speaking simultaneously, the chief justice asked Fazlur Rehman to guide them. Fazlur Rehman replied, "This is your court; your order prevails here."

On Feb 6, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court, headed by

Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, annulled the conviction of Mubarak Sani who had been charged in 2019 under the Punjab Holy Quran (Printing and Recording) (Amendment) Act. The court observed in its ruling that the offence for which the defendant was convicted was not actually criminalised until 2021. As a result, the Supreme Court ordered the petitioner's immediate release.

This decision sparked what was described by the government and legal circles as a "malicious and defamatory campaign" against the chief justice, leading the Supreme Court to issue a public clarification. On July 24, the Supreme Court, after considering the appeals from the Punjab government and other parties, reportedly affirmed that "the constitutional right to religious freedom is indeed subject to legal, moral, and public order constraints."

On Thursday, Chief Justice Qazi

Faez Isa stated, "I am not above making mistakes. Our country is an Islamic state, which is why we refer to the Quran and Hadith in judicial decisions. After every prayer, I only pray that no wrong decision is made. Please point out any errors or objections in the court's decision." Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Awan requested that they should now focus on moving forward. He suggested that, since the matter is religious, the scholars should be consulted.

After court's decision in the review of the Mubarak Sani case, parliament and religious scholars contacted the federal government, advising them to approach the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court decided to seek assistance from Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Mufti Sher Muhammad, and other scholars present in the court. Abu al-Khair Muhammad Zubair and Jamaat-e-Islami's Fareed Paracha also assisted the court.

US envoy tells UN: Gaza truce deal 'now is in sight'

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters): A Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal "now is in sight," the US envoy to the United Nations told the Security Council on Thursday, urging members to press Palestinian militant group Hamas to accept a bridging proposal agreed to by Israel.

Months of on-off talks have circled the same issues, but Israel and Hamas have stuck to their demands. US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said a bridging proposal put forward last week by the US, Qatar and Egypt was consistent with a plan outlined by President Joe Biden in May and endorsed by the Security Council in June. "Israel has accepted the bridging proposal. Now Hamas must do the same," she told the council. "As members of this council, we must speak with one voice, and we must use our leverage to press Hamas to accept the bridging proposal."

Disagreements over Israel's future military presence in Gaza and over Palestinian prisoner releases are obstructing a deal, sources familiar with talks told Reuters, stemming from demands Israel has introduced since Hamas accepted Biden's May proposal.

"It's a decisive moment for ceasefire talks and for the region, and so every member of this council should continue to send strong messages to other actors in the region to avoid actions that would move us away from finalizing this deal," said Thomas-Greenfield. The conflict in Gaza put the entire Middle East region on edge, triggering months of border clashes between Israel and Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement, and threatening a wider escalation drawing in major powers.

Iran has also vowed retaliation over the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on July 31, which it blamed on Israel. Israel has neither confirmed nor denied it was behind the killing. "There's very real danger of regional escalation," Thomas-Greenfield said.

Rally cancelled on orders from PTI founder: KP CM

F.P. Report

SWABI: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Ali Amin Gandapur has addressed the cancellation of a planned rally, asserting that the event was scheduled to proceed despite the revocation of the No Objection Certificate (NOC). However, the rally was halted based on directives from the PTI founder.

In a statement following the cancellation, Gandapur emphasized that while the workers remain prepared and their morale is high, the decision to stop the rally was made in deference to the PTI founder's wishes. He reiterated that, despite the NOC being withdrawn, the rally was intended to go ahead today, reflecting the ongoing readiness and determination of the PTI supporters.

Gandapur underscored the importance of upholding constitutional and legal processes, asserting that the PTI founder remains committed to responding to the party's needs, even in the face of obstacles. He con-

firmed that the founder of PTI is still prepared to act upon any call from the party.

Earlier, the PTI has postponed the public gathering (jalsa) in Islamabad scheduled for Thursday. The procession has been called off on the directions of PTI founder Imran Khan.

PTI leader Azam Swati met Imran Khan in Adiala jail and informed him about the current situation and protest of another religious party in the city. Azam Swati conveyed the message of Imran Khan and announced that Imran Khan had instructed to postpone the public gathering to avoid any chaos and untoward situation.

Barrister Gohar and Azam Swati announced that the public gathering would be held on September 8 and it had already been notified. Earlier, PTI insisted on holding a public rally today for administration approval. The Islamabad administration on the direction of the Ministry of Interior has sealed the Red

Zone and closed the routes for other cities traffic with containers in the wake of public gathering.

Heavy contingent of police has been deployed. Only Margalla Avenue is open for entrance in the Red Zone. Motorway at Kalar Kahar Interchange is closed for Islamabad and road to Islamabad from Ravi Toll Plaza in Lahore is also closed for traffic. Public has been facing discomfort amid long queues of vehicles on roads due to suspension of traffic.

The Islamabad deputy commissioner has also ordered closure of public and private schools for the safety of children amid religious parties and PTI public gatherings. Metro bus service in the capital was also suspended and security of metro bus stations have been heightened. The Punjab government has also imposed Section 144 across the province. The section would be enforced from August 22 to 24 and any public and political gathering is not allowed across the Punjab.

Shooting on school van kills 2 children, injures 5

F.P. Report

ATTACK: At least two children have been killed and five were injured after a gunmen opened fire at a school van in Dheri Kot, Attock, rescue officials told media on Thursday. The ages of the children injured in the gun attack are between five and 12 years old, they added.

They have been shifted to the hospital, said the rescue officials. The children killed in the attack included a nine-year-old and a 10-year-old, while the five injured included two eight-year-olds, one was seven, one one was 12 and one child is four years old.

The two children — both girls named Arwa Fatima and Rameen Shafiq — died on the spot. The rescue officials, who reached the site after the attack, shifted the injured children and dead bodies to the Asfandiyar

Bukhari District Hospital Attock.

In the wake of the attack, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has sought a report from Rawalpindi Commissioner Abdul Aamer Khattak. The chief minister has also expressed deep sorrow over the death of the two children in the attack.

CM Maryam also directed relevant authorities to provide the best treatment facilities to the children who have sustained injuries. Attock Deputy Commissioner Rao Atif Raza, in conversation with media, said that the gun attack on the school van was a result of the driver's personal enmity.

He added that a forest official and his friend were killed due to this enmity last month and the van driver — Afzaal — was attacked to avenge the murder. The DC explained that the driver

was injured in the attack, but the children were also attacked.

According to the DC, two girls — seated in the passenger seat with the driver — were killed in the attack, while the driver himself is injured. He added that the police and administration are busy in search operation for the gunmen who fled the scene after indiscriminately targeting the van. DC said that the report of the incident has been sent to the Rawalpindi commissioner.

SALE / RENT OF PLAZA

The said plaza is located at a prime and highly privileged secured location at Mall Road, Peshawar Cantonment.

The owner intends to sell or rent it only to international NGOs, UN Organizations, and Airlines preferably for residential purposes. The said plaza is located at a highly privileged and prime location at 10 minutes walk from American Consulate, Peshawar and about 10 minutes drive from Bacha Khan International Airport, Peshawar. The commercial entities like National Bank of Pakistan, First Women Bank, Telenor and Shaukat Khanum Labs are located in the same premises. A famous shopping market (including Pak Bakers, Medicines, Mobiles shops, Hairdressing Shops and Ladies / Gents Tailors) is located wall to wall to said premises. A military security check post, operational 24/7, is located across the road. The property is lawfully owned by a single individual and is granted clearance from the Cantonment Board. The total covered area of the said premises is about 2903 sqft, which is comprised of: Basement (Two Rooms, a Lounge), Ground Floor (Two Rooms, a Lobby, Bathroom and Kitchen), First Floor (Three Rooms, Bathroom and Kitchen) and Mumtaz area.



Only audio messages (leaving name and company business and contact number) of serious buyers / renters at WhatsApp contact (0323) 9087575, will be entertained, and not from any property dealer(s).



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Greece in Pakistan, Mr Konstantinos Moatsos, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

PHC seeks response from DPO Mardan against police interference

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) sought a response from district police officer (DPO) Mardan and station house officers of Saro Shah and Takhtbhai police stations in a plea regarding police interference and encroachment on a citizen's land without a court order in Takht Bhai tehsil of Mardan district, on Thursday.

PHC's two-member bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Ijaz Sabi heard the case while the counsel Javed Ghani advocate told the court that his client Fakhar Alam had purchased land from a person named Rambil Khan, but during this time, a dispute arose with Zahid Khan over the same plot.

The matter went to court, and during the proceedings, Zahid Khan, with the help of police officers, encroached on the disputed land, which belongs to the

petitioner. On June 30, 2024, Zahid Khan, along with a large police contingent, attempted to encroach on the disputed land and harassed the petitioner, fired shots, and spread fear and panic.

The police also registered a case against the petitioner (Fakhar Alam) and leveled various charges against him. Similarly, on July 2, the petitioner's brother was shot for harassment at and beaten up.

The counsel argued for

stern actions against the police officers for not implementing court orders and for their illegal interference. He also requested that the parties be restrained from interfering with his land and taking any action against him.

PHC's divisional bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Ijaz Sabi issued notices to the DPO Mardan and SHO Saro Shah and SHO Takht Bhai seeking their response after of hearing arguments.



PESHAWAR: Dr. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan, Secretary of Culture, Tourism, Archaeology and Museums giving away shields at the end of the 3-day conference on "Heritage and Hospitality, Prospects of Archaeology and Tourism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" in collaboration with University of Peshawar.

ATC extends interim bail plea of alleged extortionists

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Peshawar has extended the interim bail of renowned religious scholar Mufti Munir Shakir and his son Abdullah Shakir till 31st August in a case related to terrorism and extortion, Thursday.

During the hearing, Mufti Munir Shakir did not appear in court, while his son Abdullah Shakir was present. According to the prosecution, the accused are alleged to have planted explosives outside the house of a person named Misbah-u-Din on 10th July 2024, in the jurisdiction of Bhanamari police station. The blast damaged the main gate of the house, shattered windows, and affected a car parked.

Following the incident, the Bhanamari police registered a case against the accused under the Anti-Terrorism Act. During the hearing, the defense lawyer requested an adjournment, which the court granted, postponing the hearing until 31st August.

ATC Peshawar Judge Muhammad Iqbal Khan also restrained the police from arresting the accused after initial arguments while adjourned hearing till 31st August.

Secretary Industries for allocation of land for cold storage

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Aamir Afaz has directed Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) to allocate land for cold storage in the new industrial estate as a common facilitation centre.

He issued these directives during a briefing here at SIDB headquarters on Thursday. Managing Director (MD) SIDB, Habib Ullah Arif gave him a detailed briefing the operation of the board. Besides, Deputy Managing Directors (DMDs) Zulfikar Ali Sahibzada and Nauman Fayyaz, Director (Finance) Mohammad Sher, Assistant Director Attiq-ur-Rehman were also present on the occasion.

He said that though traditional industries are running successfully in the province, but there is a need to promote industries in the new sectors also.

He said that the purpose of their efforts is to attract investors towards industrialization and provide them the required facilitation. So, to not only usher economic development rather also generate employment opportunities for the people.

During the briefing MD SIDB informed the Secretary Industries that construction work on all new projects particularly Industrial Park Peshawar is in full swing and investors have given robust response in making investment and more response is expected when the results of the construction of the new state are revealed.

Tourism, Cultural activities accentuates prosperity: Bakhtiar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The KP Govt organised 3-day conference on "Heritage and Hospitality, Prospects of Archaeology and Tourism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" in collaboration with University of Peshawar. As part of this event, a concluding ceremony was held at the Baragali Summer Campus of Peshawar University, that provided a podium to review the vast opportunities in the province's culture and tourism, as asserted by the delegates of the conference.

Dr. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan, Secretary of Culture, Tourism, Archaeology and Museums, was chief guest. While Vice-Chancellor Qazi Muhammad Naqem, academicians from various parts of the country and high ups of KP govt participated in the event, sharing their recommendations and suggestions.

Dr. Bakhtiar on this occasion highlighted the importance of tourism and culture in the national economic growth. He asserted that the promotion of tourism and culture pro-

vides employment opportunities to local people while currently a significant portion of the population is employed in tourism and cultural sectors, such as hotels, restaurants, tour guides and handicrafts.

He added that the development of tourist sites and the organization of cultural events attract both local and foreign investment, which stabilizes the overall economy.

The Secretary Culture further stated that the influx of foreign tourists not only increases foreign exchange reserves and strengthens the national economy but also enhances local industries through increased sales of local crafts, cuisine and other cultural products, thereby improving the locals standard of living.

Dr. Bakhtiar Khan emphasized that Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with leading universities can bridge the gap between academia and govt departments including the Department of Tourism and Culture. He said that the universities research centers can provide us with

innovation on modern trends and new technologies in the Culture and Tourism industry. Additionally, agreements with universities can lead to the establishment of special training programs and educational courses for those working in the tourism sector, improving skills.

The Secretary Tourism and Culture clarified that based on academia's research and analysis, the Department of Tourism can formulate new policies that will contribute in the promotion of the tourism industry and the development of the local economy.

During the conference, 21 research papers were read out, 2 panel discussions were held and 7 keynote speakers discussed various aspects on the topic.

The Secretary Tourism congratulated Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Muhammad Naqem Qazi, delegates and the organizer Dr. Shakeel, appreciating their roles in making the conference a success story. He also distributed shields among the participants.

KP faces industrial crisis despite local energy abundance: Saifullah

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), a province rich in energy resources, is grappling with a severe industrial crisis due to exorbitant energy costs, with over 75% of local textile spinning units currently non-operational. Eminent business leader, former Senator, and former Chairman of the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) & Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textile Mills Association (KPTMA), Salim Saifullah Khan, has expressed grave concern over the situation, urging immediate federal intervention.

Despite KP's self-sufficiency in gas and the capacity to produce cheaper electricity, local industries are facing an existen-

tial threat due to unsustainable energy costs. Mr. Salim Khan highlighted that the provincial government appears unresponsive to the severe challenges confronting KP's industrial sector. He emphasized that the high cost of gas and electricity is rendering operations unviable, even at break-even points.

"The current energy rates are exorbitant," Khan stated. "Our industries are not 'sick' but are being suffocated by the high costs of utilities. The provincial government seems to be in a state of denial regarding the severe issues faced by our industries."

Adding to the crisis, the federal government has announced plans to disconnect gas supplies to captive power producers starting January 2024,

exacerbating the dire situation. Khan noted that this decision, coupled with the Senate Committee's revelation of over Rs. 100 billion lost to power theft in Punjab, underscores a broader issue of mismanagement and neglect.

Khan further criticized the federal and provincial governments for their contradictory stance: while efforts are being made to attract foreign investment through global solicitations, domestic industries are struggling to stay afloat. "How can we expect foreign investors to take interest when domestic businesses are failing, and 50-60% of industrial concerns have already closed?" Khan questioned.

He highlighted that foreign investors are unlikely to be enticed by an envi-

ronment where domestic industries are battling severe constraints.

The closure of factories has led to widespread unemployment and retrenchment, contributing to a rise in street crimes and social instability. Khan called for urgent action from both the federal and provincial governments to address the industrial crisis and improve the investment climate.

Khan emphasized the need for immediate and effective measures to revitalize the industrial sector, protect jobs, and stabilize the economy. He urged the political leadership and relevant authorities to prioritize this crisis and take decisive steps to prevent further economic and social deterioration.

Study finds nicotine, toxic, carcinogenic substances in Naswar

PESHAWAR (APP): A research study on biochemical composition of Naswar, a type of finely ground, moistened smokeless tobacco product also called as 'moist snuff', has claimed finding of an array of harmful substances including nicotine, heavy metals, aflatoxin constituents with proven toxic and carcinogenic potential.

On basis of finding contents of Naswar, the study recommended an urgent need to enact and implement Smoke Less Tobacco Control policies to curb its use in Pakistan.

The study is conducted with the support of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC), Khyber Medical University (KMU) and Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIIR).

Sharing findings of the study, Supervisor Dr Muhammad Shazad informed APP that the study is conducted in all seven divisions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Peshawar, Mardan, Hazara, Kohat, DI Khan, Bannu, and Malakand.

A total of 14 most-sold

brands of naswar, two from each division were collected using a purposive sampling technique.

The objective of the study was to investigate the constituents of the most commonly consumed naswar brands, he added.

Smokeless tobacco (ST) use is a growing public health concern with an estimated 360 million users across the globe of which, more than 90 % live in the South Asian region. In Pakistan with an estimated 8% of the population using different ST products including Paan, Gutkha, and Naswar.

While Naswar use is mostly common among the ethnic Pashtun population of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, wherein around 15 % of the general population uses it. According to a study, in Peshawar, the capital city of KP, around 60 % of the total tobacco users consume naswar. The researchers while using GC-MS analysis identified 85 different chemical compounds in naswar samples.

Nicotine was the most common constituent present in all samples. Depending

on the extraction solvent, the highest area% of nicotine was 97 % in the N-Hexane extract while the lowest area% (26.1 %) was found in the ethanolic extract.

Of all the compounds isolated in naswar samples, 23 are classified as hazardous and harmful to humans. The majority of the hazardous and toxic constituents were from carbonylic (cotinine, norcotinine, 1,3-Diethylurea) and polyaromatic group of compounds (benzoic acid, 2-ethylhexyl ester, Benzene, 4-ethyl-1,2-dimethyl-).

Urea, N, N-diethyl- was the major hazardous compound frequently reported in eight samples ranging from (1.64-9.78 %), the study divulged.

Of all the organic and heavy metal elements detected in naswar samples, five constituents are carcinogenic based on the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classification.

These include chromium, nickel, tungsten, antimony, and lead. As per IARC classification, nickel and chromium are classified as group 1 compounds that are

carcinogenic in humans. Tungsten, antimony, and lead are in group 2A which are probably carcinogenic in humans.

In the current study, naswar samples also exhibit considerable compositional ingredients that are considered hazardous for human consumption. For example, nicotine, a well-known alkaloid in tobacco that is linked to addiction and health risks including cardiovascular diseases and cancer was the most common chemical constituent.

Another interesting finding of this study was the identification of ethylamphetamine carbamate in naswar samples.

Ethylamphetamine carbamate is an amphetamine derivative and is classified as a drug with addiction and abuse potential. If ingested, it may induce hallucinations, cardiac arrhythmias, blurred vision, and a strong feeling of intoxication.

The presence of amphetamine in these naswar samples raises important questions. It could indicate adulteration of other plant products containing amphetamines with similar properties.



In brief

FC continues relief operation

QUETTA (INP): Frontier Corps Balochistan continues its massive rescue and relief operation in areas of the province which was been adversely affected due to floods caused by monsoon rains. The flashfloods caused heavy damages to properties resulting in displacement of the residents of the affected areas. In district Dera Bugti, Suhbatpur, Sui, Dera Allah Yar, and nearby areas, a large number of residents remained stranded and without shelter. The Frontier Corps continues rescue and relief operations in the flood-hit areas besides organizing a free medical camp for flood victims, providing them with essential medical care. It also provided tents and ration to the affected families in Sui and Dera Bugti besides distributing free ration packages to needy families, ensuring their access to basic necessities.

Shutter down strike observed

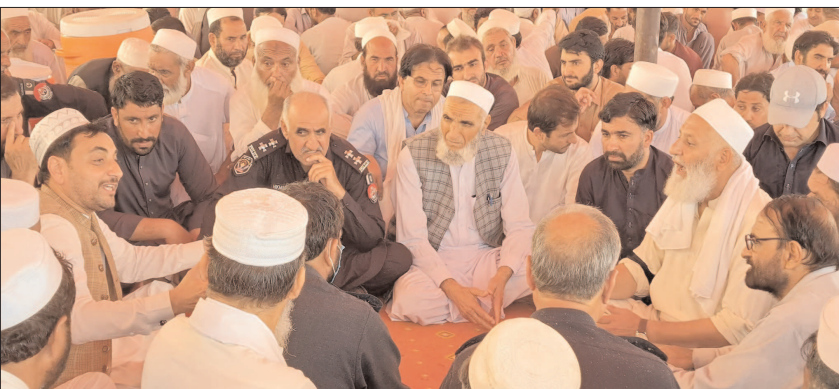
F.P. Report

WANA: A large protest rally was held in the border town of Azam Warsak as residents voiced their outrage over ongoing unrest, terrorism, and what they described as indiscriminate nighttime firing. The protest, which saw participation from all sections of the local community, led to a complete shutdown of businesses in the area as demonstrators took to the streets. Prominent leaders from various political factions addressed the rally, including Noor Zaman of the Awami National Party (ANP), Dr. Hussain, Malik Nazar Shah, Khanzada of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Hayat Khan of the National Democratic Movement (NDM), and Taj Muhammad Wazir. The speakers condemned what they termed as state institutions' attempts to reignite conflict in the region, accusing them of trying to profit from the bloodshed of the Pashtun people. The speakers also highlighted the deep-rooted patriotism of the tribal people. Following the rally, a committee of local elders engaged in negotiations with security forces and police officials to address the community's concerns. The protest reflects growing tensions in South Waziristan, where residents have long been caught in the crossfire of larger geopolitical struggles, and it underscores the fragile state of peace in the region.

Gas connections disconnected

LODHAN (INP): The Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) UFG Control Task Force conducted raids and disconnected eight more connections including two over using gas for commercial purposes without permission, across the region. According to details, two domestic meters were found to be used for commercial purposes. One was located at Hafeez Hospital in Mian Channu and the other in Multan. Both were disconnected, and further departmental action was recommended. Additionally, three consumers' meters were found to be tampered with including two in Khanawal, and one in Multan. All three meters were disconnected. Moreover, three consumers with non-billing meters had their meters confiscated, and departmental action was recommended. These consumers were from Duniyapur and Multan. Further actions included disconnection of illegal extensions for five consumers who were supplying gas to more than one household.

Koki Khel tribe block Pak-Afghan highway



F.P. Report

JAMRUD: The tribesmen of Koki Khel demanded repatriation of Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) of Rajgal, Tirah Valley to their homes in a protest sit-in, initiated at Pak-Afghan road at Bugyari checkpoint, Jamrud on Thursday.

Because of the protest the Pak-Afghan highway was suspended for all kinds of traffic at the checkpoint. It is to be mentioned here that the Koki Khel tribe wanted repatriation of their IDPs to their home towns in Rajgal, Tirah Valley.

Hundreds of Koki Khel tribesmen from different walks of life including

IDPs of Rajgal gathered at Bugyari checkpoint and initiated a protest sit-in on the Pak-Afghan main highway blocking it for traffic in favor of their demands.

Speaking on the occasion head of the protestors, Naseer Ahmad Koki Khel said that they had been agitating for the last three weeks and jirgas had been conducted with high authorities including Chief Minister of Pakhtunkhwa but to no avail.

Our co-tribesmen IDPs serving their lives under poverty therefore it is their right to repatriate them with honor and extend them financial support for their property loss as granted to

IDPs other areas, he added. The protestors went on that they wanted a peaceful solution of the issue and expected the concerned authorities to address their matter on priority basis.

Until acceptance of their demands they will not resume the Pak-Afghan road, they threatened. On the other hand due to blockade export and import was halted and supply of edibles to Landi Kotal, Ali Masjid and other areas was suspended at Pak-Afghan road and the passengers utilized an alternative, lengthy and mountainous, Shelman-Molagori road for their travel.

Parents asked to administer anti-polio drops to children

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali has appealed the parents to administer polio drops to their children under 5 years of age for protecting them from permanent disability and also cooperate with the polio teams in this regard.

He made this appeal while presiding over the meeting of the District Polio Eradication Committee in his office today. ADC Kohat Hamid Iqbal, DPO Umar Khan and officers of other relevant departments attended the meeting.

The meeting was briefed in detail on the anti-polio plain of action. It was told that 213,673 children under the age of 5 years will be given polio vaccinations in the 5-day anti-polio campaign to be held from September 9 to 13, for

which 1057 teams have been formed.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the authorities concerned to ensure security of the polio teams to make the campaign a success in all respects. He also directed the district administration and other government departments to fully cooperate with the health department during the polio campaign and maintain close contact.

Deputy Commissioner said that it is our national responsibility to make the polio campaign a success and everyone should play his role in this regard. He added that the epidemic of polio has been eradicated from the entire world, but unfortunately, its virus is still existing in our country, so elimination of it is our top most priority.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner Kohat

Division syed Motasim Billah Shah along with the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali has under the Chief Minister

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda" visited District Headquarters Hospital Kohat on Thursday. On this occasion, he inspected different wards, including the emergency, and reviewed the stock of medicines, cleanliness and other arrangements.

Commissioner Kohat directed the authorities concerned to provide better treatment facilities to the patients and ensure timely attendance of the medical staff in the hospital. He further directed to keep the staff behaving well with the patients, improve the public services and cleanliness conditions so that general public can be facilitated in the hospital.

Quality education only guarantee for uplift

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The additional deputy commissioner Bashir Khan has urged students to focus on getting quality education for a bright future. He said that without education, the dream of development could not be realized, self-confidence is created by encouraging children.

"There is no lack of talent in the children of Sultan Khel, but they need proper guidance", he said this while addressing 'Da Storey of Sultankhel', a prize distribution ceremony

arranged for position holder students at Toormang as chief guest here on Thursday.

Assistant Director Local Government Amir Nizam Durrani, Lady Lamp College Director Mehmood Zeb, Village Council Chairman Anwar ul Haque and others also addressed the function. Schools' heads, teachers and children of all the schools of the area were present in large numbers.

Addressing the participants of the event, Additional Deputy Commissioner Bashir Khan and Assistant Director

Aamir Nizam Durrani said that these kinds of programs where students were encouraged, always created positive competition among the students and the desire to advance one another.

They said that all the nations and countries in the world had developed because of quality education as it was a key that opened all the closed doors of development. The guests also distributed shields and trophies among position holder students of grade 9th and 10th who belonged to union council Toormang.

FANSA discusss sanitation services resource allocation

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA) Pakistan chapter held a significant discussion in Mardan, focusing on resource allocation for sanitation services. The event, which took place at a local hotel, was chaired by City Mayor Mr. Himayat Ullah and included participation from elected City Council representatives, local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and the Director of Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM).

The discussion highlighted the pressing need for proper resource allocation to ensure the safe management of sanitation services in the city. In response, the City Council announced an initial allocation of PKR 1 million for sanitation services. While acknowledging that this amount is insufficient to meet all the city's needs, the council emphasized that this allocation represents a crucial first step in addressing the sanitation challenges facing Mardan.

Mayor Himayat Ullah stressed the importance of developing a comprehensive resource allocation policy that not only identifies diverse funding sources but also ensures these resources are utilized effectively. The mayor mentioned that a draft sanitation policy would be created, and a stakeholder meeting would be organized to finalize the document once it is ready.

Syed Shah Nasir Khisro, Regional



Co-Convener of FANSA, assured the City Mayor of FANSA's full support in drafting the policy. He praised the City Council's commitment to improving sanitation services, noting that this step is crucial for ensuring a healthier and more sustainable environment for the citizens of Mardan.

This discussion marks a significant move towards prioritizing sanitation services in Mardan, demonstrating the local government's dedication to addressing public health and environmental sustainability.

Arrangement for Governor visit to Buner finalized

F.P. Report

BUNER: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Buner chapter workers finalized arrangements for the visit of Governor Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi scheduled on Monday, this is announced by Secretary Information.

PPP secretary information Abdul Waris Khan added that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, PPP Provincial President Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha along with other party leaders are coming to Buner on August 26. The people of Buner will accord warm welcome to their beloved leaders, he shared.

He has said in statement that on Monday, August 26, the governor along with the provincial leadership of the Pakhtunkhwa Party will reach Shalbandi House, the residence of the district president of PPP Buner and former candidate of National Assembly Yusuf Ali Khan, where he will meet the party workers and to address too.

While the district chapter president Yusuf Ali Khan on behalf of the party leadership of Buner will inform the Governor and party leadership regarding the issues of Buner, problems and difficulties being faced by peoples for long and the performance of the party as well. PPP is the only political party in the country that speaks to the common people and the governor and party leadership will focus in the issues of local peoples, he claimed.

Attack on renowned singer flayed

F.P. Report

TANK: The poets, singers and social figures have strongly condemned the attack on renowned Pashto singer Atta Khan in Dera Ismail Khan. Atta Khan was driving in his car to Dera Ismail Khan (DIK) when more than a dozen armed persons interrupted his way near Geloti area of DIK on main Indus highway and opened indiscriminate fire at his car. Luckily, Atta Khan managed his unhurt escape from the scene. Local police officials have confirmed the mishap and noted that the incident was being investigated further.

The attack on the internationally renowned singer has led the social circles to strongly criticize the government for deteriorating law and order situation in the region and taking no steps to protect the lives and properties of music artists.

Another singer from the restive South Waziristan, Shoukat Aziz said that attack on Atta Khan was an attack on all music artists of the south KP. "The incident is heart wrenching for all music artists and multiplied the worries of musicians in the area" Shoukat Aziz noted.

The Pashto literary scholar and poet Munawar Ghamkhwar has said that singers are the ambassadors of peace and Atta Khan has always promoted love and peace through his melodious voice. "Such attacks on our pride singers are actually the attack on our peace and culture" Ghamkhwar maintained. The social activist, Nageeb Sherani said that such attacks are aimed at suppressing the voices for social rights and cultural promotion. The social and cultural circles of the region have demanded of the government to take notice of the incident and initiate concrete steps for the security and safety of the music artists. It is worthy to mention that Atta Khan is a multilingual singer from DIK district of KP, who has performed in different Asian and European countries and has been awarded numerous pride of performance awards.

2 shot dead

GHOTKI (INP): Two people were shot dead by unidentified armed men near Khanpur railway crossing in Ghotki on Thursday.

The slain persons were identified as Islam and Bachal Gabool, resident of Soomro Moori area of Khanpur Mehr. Police said the motorcycle riding accused managed to escape after firing while police is chasing them.

SIAL alert to tackle Mpox, takes all measures

F.P. Report

SIALKOT: Sialkot International Airport is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all passengers, staff, and visitors amid the global concerns over the Monkeypox outbreak. In light of recent developments, the airport has implemented a series of stringent precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the virus and maintain a safe environment for everyone. Sialkot International Airport has started health screenings for all incoming passengers.

Thermal scanners have been installed at all entry points to monitor body temperature, and medical teams are on standby to conduct further assessments if necessary. Passengers exhibiting symptoms consistent with Monkeypox will be promptly isolated and provided with the necessary medical attention.

The airport has intensi-

fied its cleaning and disinfection routines, with a focus on high-touch areas such as check-in counters, security checkpoints, restrooms, and boarding gates. Hand sanitizing boxes have been placed throughout the terminal, and passengers are encouraged to use them frequently. Additionally, all airport staff are equipped with personal protective equipment (PPE) and are trained to follow strict hygiene protocols.

To keep passengers informed, Sialkot International Airport has launched an awareness campaign across various platforms, including digital screens, social media, and in-flight announcements. The campaign provides critical information about Monkeypox, its symptoms, and preventive measures, ensuring that passengers are well-informed and can take appropriate precautions.

The airport is closely collaborating with national health authorities, includ-

ing the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization (WHO), to stay updated on the latest guidelines and recommendations.

This partnership ensures that Sialkot International Airport remains at the forefront of implementing best practices to safeguard public health. Passengers are advised to stay informed about travel advisories and follow the guidance provided by health authorities.

Anyone feeling unwell or exhibiting symptoms of Monkeypox is urged to postpone travel and seek medical advice. Sialkot International Airport remains dedicated to providing a safe and secure travel experience for all. The health and safety of our passengers, staff, and community are our top priorities, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely, adjusting our measures as necessary to respond to any developments.

Dept directed to speed up work on irrigation channel



F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Taking notice of farmers' complaint, deputy Commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan along with Additional Deputy Commissioner Jan Muhammad, executive engineer irrigation Shahid Khan, SDO Irrigation Tayyab Saeed and engineer Nizam Khan on Thursday visited the Balambat Irrigation Channel and examined the ongoing repair work.

The XEN irrigation briefed him about the project on this occasion. He said the Balambat Irrigation Channel was a 76-km long channel that irrigated a total of 11363 acres of land in the Lower Dir district. According to the official Rs 40 million has been earmarked for expansion and repair of the channel. He

said that 3 km out of 10 kilometer work had been completed.

The XEN told that one kilometer long tunnel would also be constructed at Odigram. The Deputy Commissioner checked the ongoing expansion and repair work at Khal, Akhagram and Sacha Bela sites. He directed the officials of irrigation department to expedite the expansion and repair work on the channel to ease the difficulty of lical farmers. The DC also instructed the consultant to increase the number of machinery and manpower so that the work could be completed within the required time. He said that a letter will be sent to the provincial government to release funds for the remaining work.

The local residents and farmers have been com-

plaining that due to closure of the channel they have suffered hard. According to the farmers, repair and extension work on the channel could not be completed during the last two years.

Meanwhile the DC along with Additional Deputy Commissioner (Finance and Planning) Jan Muhammad and SDO communication and works Sajjad Khan visited the Timergara Khwar road and Timergara Jail to Mian Banda road and checked the ongoing work.

The DC directed the concerned officials that Timergara beautification projects should be implemented as soon as possible. He also directed the SDO, C&W to complete the Jail to Mian Banda under construction road and sprinkle water on the road daily.

NPM hold protest against lack of drainage system

F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: National People's Movement (NPM) held protest and sit-in in front of the town committee against the lack of drainage of rainwater in Naseerabad city.

Addressing the central leader of the Awami Movement, Comrade Zamir Mughiri, Mohsin Raza Kalhor, Inamullah and others protested and said that despite the passing of the last five days, the administration has failed to drain the rainwater from the city, while passing through the urban roads is a prob-

lem.

They further said that various diseases have spread among innocent children due to stagnant rain water, due to which many children are admitted to hospitals, but the management of the town committee has turned a blind eye while the annual budget of the town committee is 57 crores despite the city being dirty. A heap has formed and the chairman of the town committee has been made to sit just like a doll.

Meanwhile, as a result of road accidents in different towns of Qamber

Shahdaddkot district, 2 people died and 6 others were injured. 4 people were injured, while a high-speed car traveling from Qambar to New Deru collided with a tree standing on the road near Bye- Pass, Bahamu Kolhi died on the leg, while Ajit Kumar was seriously injured on the other side due to a money issue near Warah 65-year-old Somer Khan was killed due to an ax attack due to the conflict between the parties, while two people each other, Nazir Soomro and Rehmat were seriously injured and were taken to the hospital for medical treatment.

Police held six alleged culprits, recovered 23 motorcycles

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Police arrested six alleged culprits including gang leader of motorcycle lifting and recovered 23 motorbikes in the premises of Gojra police station, on Thursday.

On the Orders of District Police Officer Toba Tek Singh, police are conducting operations against the criminal elements. DPO Ibadat Nisar has given the task of tracing out and arresting the suspects involved in

motorcycle theft incidents in different areas of the District Toba Tek Singh. Station House officer Zubair Khalid, police station headed by DSP Gojra Akhtar Ali, formed a team of police officers who, acting on the information of the informer and with the help of modern technology, arrested 6 accused of the motorcycle theft gang, including the ring-leader.

The alleged culprits identified as Shiraz resident of Sardar colony, Muzammil resident of

Shah Alam colony, Amjad resident of Chak No. 297 JB, Babar resident of Saad Town, Qasim resident of Dastgeer Colony and Muhammad Ahmed resident of Housing Colony.

Moreover, 23 stolen motorcycles were recovered from their possession. During the interrogation, the accused revealed that they had committed several incidents of motorcycle theft in the police station area of City Gojra. Further interrogation of the accused is in progress.



Friday, August 23, 2024



KHARTOUM: Cholera patients receiving treatment at a rural isolation centre in Wad al-Hilu in Kassala state, eastern Sudan.

Nigerians outraged by president's new plane

LAGOS (BBC): Many Nigerians have reacted with outrage after a new plane was bought for President Bola Tinubu at a time when the economy is experiencing its worst crisis in a generation. The purchase comes less than two weeks after thousands took to the streets across the country to protest at rising hunger and the cost of living.

Elected last year to lead Africa's most populous country, Mr Tinubu has introduced several economic reforms, including the removal of fuel subsidies, which have contributed to high inflation, currently over 30%. President Tinubu said the reforms were necessary to cut government spending and stimulate long-term growth. In January, the Nigerian president announced a 60% reduction in the size of official travel delegations, including his own entourage. However, the president departed for France using a newly acquired Airbus A330, which has become the latest addition to the presidential fleet of more than five aircraft. The cost of the plane has not been disclosed, and nor has the reason for his trip. X user @Fdmlearn said it wasn't right that Nigerians were being told to undergo economic pain while the government was buying a new plane for the pres-

ident. "Wait so despite the Tinubu led Government telling Nigerians to bear the economic hardship and wait for a better tomorrow, they were busy paying cash for a new private jet to add to the presidential fleet that has over 6 aircraft's already?".

Another X user @RealOlaudah was even more angry. "Let's tell ourselves the truth. Tinubu's new Airbus presidential aircraft purchase for N150 billion at a time of penury, hunger, and want shows how wicked, selfish, self-indulgent, and insensitive to the plight of the average Nigerian he really is." However, @Timi_The_Law says he supports the president's decision as the plane is not personal but belongs to the office of the president. "Tinubu's decision to buy a new plane is the right one. The plane belongs to the office of the president, and future presidents will enjoy it," he posted. It is not known if lawmakers approved the purchase, which was not mentioned in this year's budget. In a statement on X, President Tinubu's media aide Bayo Onanuga said the new plane would actually save money. "The new plane, bought far below the market price, saves Nigeria huge maintenance and fuel costs, running into millions of

dollars yearly," the statement read in part. The new presidential jet was recently released to the Nigerian government after it was seized by a Chinese firm, Zhangsong Investment Co. Limited, which obtained a Paris court order to seize some Nigerian government assets following an investment dispute with Ogun state in south-west Nigeria.

The 15-year-old plane is said to have an elaborate configuration for VIPs and replaces the country's 19-year-old Boeing BBJ 737-700. Nigerian officials have previously said that the presidential fleet had a high maintenance cost due to the age of its planes. In June, lawmakers recommended the purchase of two new aircraft for the president and his deputy, saying the old ones were not safe.

Last month, lawmakers passed a supplementary budget, which sought to raise the 2024 budget from 28.7 trillion naira (\$18bn; £14bn) to 35.06 trillion naira. It is not known if the purchase of the new plane was included in this budget. The BBC has reached out to the Senate President and the Office of the National Security Adviser but is yet to get a response.

'The honour of my life': Walz accepts VP nomination at DNC

WASHINGTON: Tim Walz has formally accepted his nomination to be the Democrats vice presidential candidate in November's US election, rallying the party faithful in Chicago with a message of freedom and hope.

"It's the honour of my life to accept your nomination for vice president of the United States," Walz said, as he took to the stage at the end of the third day of the Democratic National Convention. "What all we're all here tonight for one beautiful, simple reason. We love this country." Walz, the 60-year-old governor of Minnesota, was a relative unknown until Kamala Harris picked him as her running mate just over two weeks ago.

Walz talked of his upbringing in a town of just 400 people in Nebraska, his service with the National Guard and his experience as a teacher. He stressed the importance of preserving personal freedoms, taking a swipe at Republicans who have rolled back abortion

rights, adding that in his experience most Americans considered such issues to be private matters. "We respect our neighbours and the personal choices that they make," he said of his Midwestern community. "And even if we would not make those choices for ourselves, we have one rule: 'Mind your own damn business.'" The crowd, many holding "Coach Walz" banners in reference to his years coaching football, cheered and waved. Freedom was the theme of the third day of the convention with Democratic luminaries such as former President Bill Clinton taking the stage, as well as celebrities from singers Stevie Wonder to John Legend to comedian Mindy Kaling and media personality Oprah Winfrey.

While the message was overwhelmingly one of optimism as the speakers endorsed Harris and Walz, there were also plenty of swipes at Trump who was portrayed as vain and self-obsessed. "Next time you

hear him, don't count the lies. Count the I's," the now 78-year-old Clinton told the crowd. There were deafening cheers as Winfrey, who later described herself as an independent, walked onto the stage. She rallied the crowd with a powerful endorsement of democracy and the need to get out the vote. "I'm calling on all you independents and all you undecideds," Winfrey said. "Values and character matter in leadership and in life. Decency and respect are on the ballot in 2024." Harris emerged as the Democrats' candidate last month after President Joe Biden stepped aside. The convention has also featured a number of Republicans who have turned against Trump, who was president from 2017 to 2021.

The Democrats put the spotlight on January 6, 2021, with a video that showed Trump calling on supporters to be strong and fight before they stormed the US Capitol to try and block Biden's 2020 victory. The delegates sat in

stunned silence, a sharp contrast to their roars and applause throughout the night. Olivia Troye, who quit her White House national security job under Trump after the Capitol assault, said the Republican candidate was laying the groundwork to undermine the 2024 election. Geoff Duncan, the former lieutenant governor of Georgia, spoke directly to the camera to tell fellow Republicans watching from home that they needed to "dump Trump". "If you vote for Kamala Harris in 2024, you're not a Democrat. You're a patriot," he said. Democrat Nancy Pelosi, who was House speaker at the time of the Capitol assault, said: "Let us not forget who assaulted democracy on January 6: He did. But let us not forget who saved democracy that day: We did." Harris, 59, is due to formally accept her nomination on Thursday when she will speak to the convention on its final night. — Aljazeera

China's fresh urbanisation push may thwart 'birth-friendly society' goal

HONG KONG/BEIJING (Reuters): Mary Meng is so busy and stressed working for a Chinese tech company in Shanghai that she can't imagine having a second child. "The work pressure is such that you don't even have any time to spend with your child," said the 37-year-old mother of a primary school-aged boy. "How can I think about taking care of two children? I have no idea."

That resonates with urban residents anywhere. But given the pace of population decline and ageing in China, the impact of the fast-paced, expensive city life on birth rates should be treated with more urgency by Beijing, demographers say. China is rapidly running out of mothers. The number of women of reproductive age, defined by the United Nations as 15-to-49, is set to drop by more than two-thirds to under 100 million by the end of the century. At a twice-a-decade top political gathering last month, China

announced plans to build a "birth-friendly society" - pledging to implement measures long-called for by population experts, such as lowering childcare and education costs.

But, to the despair of the same experts, Beijing also vowed to encourage more people into urban areas. This policy aims to increase housing demand to prop up the crisis-hit property sector, and revive flagging economic growth through productivity gains and stronger consumption. Urban residents typically produce and buy higher value-added goods and services than their rural counterparts. But the fresh urbanisation push overlooks basic demographic theory. In the cities, people have fewer children due to high housing costs, limited space, expensive education, and because they spend more of their day at work. Couple infertility rates in China have also risen from 2% in the 1980s to 18%, versus around 15% globally - with doctors blaming the

rise on factors such as stress related to urban jobs and industrial pollution.

Fertility rates in China's rural areas are slightly higher at 1.54 versus the national average of 1.3 in 2020, according to the latest breakdown from China's top economic planner, while Shanghai's fertility rate in 2023 was 0.6 versus 1.1 nationally. Authorities are "foolishly" driving young people "to the most birth-unfriendly big cities, which will lead to a continued decline in fertility and exacerbate the ageing crisis," said Yi Fuxian, a demographer at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "The suppression of fertility rates by population density is a biological law." This phenomenon has been most evident in east Asia. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan urbanised and industrialised at a faster pace than most other economies post-World War Two. They also have the lowest fertility rates globally. While

China's birth rates are also very low after decades of a strict one-child policy, not all is lost. At 65%, its urbanisation rate is lower than the 80-90% rates in Japan or South Korea - and this could give it room for manoeuvre, demographers say. Improving rural living standards by providing better public services or liberalising land rights would have a more sustainable impact on economic growth than continuing urbanisation as they could improve birth rates, they say. "The population size is always a multiplier" in the economy, said Samir KC, professor at the Asian Demographic Research Institute at Shanghai University. To have a stable population, countries need fertility rates of 2.1. That means that for every woman like Meng, who only raises one child, another would need to have three. Poppy Yu, 21, who works at film production company in Beijing six or seven days a week, wants none.

NZ's White Island volcano erupts

WELLINGTON: The White Island volcano in New Zealand has erupted sending a huge plume of ash into the sky and grounding a number of flights. National carrier Air New Zealand said 10 flights were cancelled on Thursday as volcanic ash drifted across flight paths at some domestic airports.

Government scientists warned that Whakaari, as it's known to the country's Indigenous Maori, could continue for "weeks to months" to come. The volcanic island lies about 50km off New Zealand's North Island and 200km from Auckland, the country's largest city. Once a popular tourist destination, it has been off limits since 2019, when a massive eruption of ash and steam killed 22 people who were visiting the island as part of a cruise. Satellite images showed "minor eruptive activity" started earlier in the month, research institute GNS Science said in a monitoring bulletin.

The GNS said it believed the latest activity was part of the "typical eruptive cycles" documented on Whakaari. "This activity could continue for some time, weeks to months," they said. Scientists said some people on New Zealand's main islands might smell volcanic gas or suffer mild irritation to their eyes or throats, although the effect was likely to be minor. New Zealand raised its volcanic alert level earlier this month to three, out of a maximum of five levels. — Aljazeera

Five bodies retrieved

SICILY: Divers searching the wreck of a superyacht that sank off Sicily have found the bodies of five passengers and are searching for one more as questions intensify about why the vessel sank so quickly when a nearby sailboat remained largely unscathed. Rescue crews unloaded three body bags from rescue vessels that pulled into port at Porticello.

Salvatore Cocina, head of the Sicily civil protection agency, said two other bodies had also been found in the wreckage. The bodies of British tech entrepreneur Mike Lynch and his 18-year-old daughter Hannah were among those found inside one of the vessel's cabins between two mattresses, The Telegraph reported.

The Bayesian, a 56-metre (184-foot) British-flagged yacht, went down in a storm as it was moored about a kilometre (a half-mile) offshore. Civil protection officials said they believed the ship was struck by a tornado over the water, known as a waterspout, and sank quickly. Fifteen people escaped in a lifeboat and were rescued by a nearby sailboat. One body was recovered - that of the yacht's Antigua-born chef, Recaldo Thomas, Lynch, 59, was one of the United Kingdom's best-known tech entrepreneurs and had invited friends to join him on the yacht to celebrate his recent acquittal in a fraud trial in the United States.

Besides Lynch and his daughter, the other people unaccounted for after the disaster were Judy and Jonathan Bloomer, a non-executive chair of Morgan Stanley International; and Clifford Chance lawyer Chris Morvillo and his wife, Neda Morvillo. The yacht remains lying sideways on the seabed a 50 metres (164 feet) underwater - a depth that required special precautions that complicated the recovery work. Divers are only able to stay in the vessel for 8-10 minutes before having to resurface. Investigators from the Termini Imerese Public Prosecutor's Office were acquiring evidence for their criminal investigation, which they opened immediately after the tragedy, even though no formal suspects have been publicly identified.

Questions abound about what caused the superyacht, which was built in 2008 by Italian shipyard Perini Navi, to sink so quickly, when the nearby Sir Robert Baden Powell sailboat was largely spared and managed to rescue the 15 survivors. Experts want to know about the position of the keel, which on a large sailboat such as the Bayesian might have been retractable, to allow it to enter shallower ports, or if a freak waterspout struck the vessel and simply pushed it onto its side. — Aljazeera

Pressure mounts against judicial overhaul in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AP): President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is facing mounting pressure against his controversial proposal to overhaul the Mexican judicial system, which would have judges be elected. Judges and magistrates joined a strike begun early this week by federal court employees to oppose the proposal, while Morgan Stanley and other financial institutions warned that the overhaul could pose serious market consequences and risks for potential investors in Mexico.

In a response to rising criticism, President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum joined her political ally López Obrador in defending the proposal. "Investors shouldn't be worried. On the contrary, we will have a better justice system in Mexico," Sheinbaum said. López Obrador, a populist leader whose six-year term ends Sept. 30, has long been at odds with Mexican courts.

He contends judges are part of a "mafia" against him, and says the proposal is meant to clean up corruption. He has gone on winding rants against the judicial system, ignored court orders and publicly sparred with judges whose rulings he has disagreed with. Among the changes sought by the López Obrador it to have judges be elected and allow virtually anyone with a law degree with a few years experience as a lawyer to become a judge through popular vote. Given major electoral wins by López Obrador's Morena party in June elections, many academics

have voiced concerns that selecting judges by popular vote would put politically biased judges on the bench and deal a blow to checks and balances. The striking court employees also fear the measure could put their careers in danger. Thousands of employees have camped outside federal court buildings, and the rallies grew with judges and magistrates joining in. The demonstrators gathered under tents chanting and holding protest signs, with Mexicans with court appointments turned away.

"It could do damage to society," said Fernando Rangel Rami'rez, a federal judge on strike. He said the judicial branch "is an institution that historically, and in its nature, should not be politicized. There should be people in it that have enough experience." The National Association of Circuit Magistrates and District Judges said the strike will go on indefinitely, until the president's proposal with "its many imperfections" is blocked. The group said it hopes to redirect "public discussion toward a well-considered comprehensive reform to address the structural causes that have been steadily weakening the quality of justice" in Mexico. The only federal courts not affected by the strike are the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation and the Electoral Tribunal, the group said. The only cases that will be taken are those considered "urgent." The proposal will need to be approved by Mexico's newly elected congress,

which will take office Sept. 1 with Morena and its allies holding a majority.

Morgan Stanley downgraded its recommendation for investing in Mexico this week because of the proposal. "We believe replacing the judicial system should increase risk" for investments in Mexico, it said in a report released. Those concerns were echoed by Citibanamex, which warned in a statement that markets were underestimating the "serious implications" of the proposal, given the Morena party's firm control of both the executive and legislative branches of government. "The contours of this ruling, which are already evident, could mean the cancellation of liberal democracy, based on the rule of law and governed by the periodic electoral change of majority and solidly counterbalanced governments," Citibanamex specialists said.

Mexico's peso took another small dip in currency trading following the criticism. López Obrador has maintained his sarcastic tone in the face of increased pressure against his proposals. "If the judges... are not working. At the very least, they are not going to get criminals out of jail," he said. While Sheinbaum has showed herself to be more open to dialogue and held forums for debate on the subject, she questioned concerns about the plan and said Morgan Stanley and others might be "misinformed." "Their investments will be better protected," she said.

Thailand says mpox detected in European

BANGKOK (Reuters): Thailand has detected an mpox case in a European man who arrived from Africa last week and is awaiting test results to determine the strain, health officials said. Thongchai Keerathattayakorn, head of the Department of Disease Control, announced that the 66-year-old patient arrived in Thailand on August 14 from an African country, which was not identified.

The authorities are treating the case as if it were the Clade 1 variant of mpox, Thongchai told the Reuters news agency, which has caused global concern as it appears to spread more easily. The infected person has been quarantined in a hospital while more tests are done to determine the strain. Thongchai said the man had transited in a Middle Eastern country, which also he did not name, before flying on to Thailand.

Thailand has detected 800 cases of mpox Clade 2

since 2022 but has not found any case of the Clade 1 or Clade 1b variants so far. While the World Health Organization (WHO) declared mpox a global public health emergency, it said the outbreak is not another COVID-19, noting that much is already known about the virus and the means to control it. The viral infection causes fever, muscular aches and large boil-like skin lesions. Clade 1b - comparatively a new, more deadly and transmissible strain - has driven the recent surge in cases. Outbreaks have been reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda since July. DRC alone has reported more than 16,000 cases and 500 deaths this year. The United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM) appealed for \$18.5m in assistance to provide healthcare to those affect-

ed in Africa.

"We must act swiftly to protect those at the highest risk and to mitigate the impact of this outbreak on the region," said IOM Director General Amy Pope. Meanwhile, in Argentina, health authorities have quarantined a cargo ship in the Parana River over a suspected mpox case on board, the government said. The Ministry of Health only identified the crew member as an Indian national. He reportedly showed cyst-like skin lesions predominantly on the chest and face and has been isolated. Health authorities in the Philippines said that a recently detected mpox case is of the milder Clade 2 variant. Clade 1b causes death in about 3.6 percent of cases, with children more at risk, according to the WHO. Formerly called monkeypox, the virus was discovered in 1958 in Denmark in monkeys kept for research.

Last elephant at South African zoo freed after 40 years

CAPE TOWN (AFP): The last elephant in South Africa's national zoo has been released back into the wild after 40 years of captivity. The elephant, named Charlie, was captured in 1984 from Zimbabwe's Hwange national park when he was two years old.

He was taken to Boswell Wilkie Circus in South Africa and trained to perform tricks. In the early 2000s he was transferred to the country's national zoo. In recent years, animal welfare groups have pushed for the elephant to be freed due to concern for his health. EMS Foundation, which advocates for the rights of wildlife, announced that after "a nail-biting four-hour trip to freedom" the elephant had arrived at his new home at the Shambala Private Reserve in Limpopo province. It said the "historic event" followed years of negotiation with the South African government, after EMS Foundation and its partners provided scientific evidence to show that elephants suffer in zoos. At the zoo, Charlie the elephant is said to have witnessed the death of four other elephants, including his own calf which was less than a month old.

In 2019, concerns were

raised that the elephant was showing signs of distress common with animals in captivity. The South African National Biodiversity Institute, which runs the zoo, denied it, saying it was behaviour learnt from years of circus life that would never be completely unlearned. EMS Foundation said this was "inaccurate". Animal welfare organisation Four Paws, which collaborated with EMS Foundation, said the elephant's "retirement was an important milestone for elephant Charlie but also for better animal welfare in South Africa". "Together with our partners, we have been working tirelessly to end the loneliness of Charlie to see him thrive in his new species appropriate home," said Josef Pfabigan, Four Paws chief executive. The elephant's new home is a 10,000-hectare reserve with a thriving population of elephants, known to successfully reintegrate animals back into the wild.

While there, Charlie will be closely monitored by veterinary and behavioural experts. "Our dream is that at his own pace, Charlie will learn to be the elephant he was always meant to be, and that soon, he will meet up and integrate into the exist-

ing elephant community on Shambala." EMS Foundation said. Dr Amir Khalil, a veterinarian who led the transfer of the elephant, told the BBC that despite the residual effects of abuse in captivity, "there is always a chance of recovery". On concerns about how Charlie would cope with the new environment, he said there were already positive signs of settling in and Charlie was "very excited to hear other elephants from far away", with whom he had started to communicate. Dr Khalil said it would take a while to prepare the elephant to be self-sufficient, but "we must not forget that Charlie was born in the wild. He has spent almost two years with his mother living in freedom". He said the elephant was under a rehabilitation and feeding programme, and they planned to release him to an even bigger area in the coming months. "We are convinced, that step by step he will get used to all these new experiences." EMS Foundation director Michele Pickover told the AFP news agency there were also three elephants in the Johannesburg Zoo. "We are litigating against Johannesburg over those," she said.

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— Arab News

Sports industry is a game the region cannot afford to miss

THE global hype in sports is expected to drive significant growth in the sports economy worldwide and especially in the Middle East and North Africa. It comes as no surprise that sports events cause such sheer pandemonium. The varied herculean acts that athletes perform make audiences gasp. Moreover, the shift toward health and wellness and the growing appeal of organized sports events that border on the spectacular are contributing to a heightened enthusiasm for sports worldwide.

According to research published by the Business Research Company, the value of the global sports market reached \$484 billion in 2023 and this is expected to almost double to \$862 billion by 2033. Moreover, the PwC Global Sports Survey conducted in 2023 estimates that the Middle East's sports industry is expected to boom by 8.7 percent by 2026, significantly outpacing the global average of 3.3 percent for the same period.

The MENA region already hosts several world-class sporting events. In the UAE, the Abu Dhabi F1 Grand Prix at the Yas Marina Circuit is an enthralling event, while the iconic Dubai World Cup is one of the world's most prestigious horse races. In Saudi Arabia, sports enthusiasts can enjoy year-round action-packed sporting events, including diverse sports such as horse racing, golf, motor sports, boxing, tennis and martial arts. Last year, Cristiano Ronaldo signed up with the Kingdom's Al-Nassr football team, making a global state-

ment about Saudi Arabia's commitment to becoming a hub for international sporting events and boosting the local sports economy. The 2022 FIFA World Cup hosted by Qatar was also a stellar showpiece that significantly boosted the region's sports profile.

Every part of the sports industry hinges on the exceptional talent of athletes. Therefore, policymakers need to lay out scouting, recruitment and training policies so that star athletes are able to reach elite status. To bridge this gap at a grassroots level, it is important to establish networks with physical education coaches at schools and community centers to identify emerging talents. A key takeaway is to ensure that scouting networks have sufficient geographical coverage in order to detect talents in rural regions as well as cities. Sponsoring local and regional sports competitions can provide opportunities for athletes from all areas to compete and showcase their skills in front of scouts and coaches.

Now is the most opportune time for MENA governments to build a greater profile for the sports economy in the region. This entails strategically devising a roadmap for the industry that focuses on star performers in all sports-related professions, as well as tailoring overall sports experiences to new expectations and preferences.

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Sara Al-Mulla

emerging talents. A key takeaway is to ensure that scouting networks have sufficient geographical coverage in order to detect talents in rural regions as well as cities. Sponsoring local and regional sports competitions can

progress into elite sports.

A number of best practices are worth noting, including an emphasis on personalized support and structured guidance to ensure athletes reach their full potential, ongoing athlete education, mentoring and support, access to financial support, and enrollment in targeted training camps, international tours and contests.

Pivotally, regional governments should invest in world-class sports infrastructure in order to elevate the region's global standing and attract local and global audiences. At the same time, top-notch facilities can also be utilized to train high-performing athletes. By simultaneously promoting sports tourism through high-profile global events and building up the excitement through broadcasting channels, regions can draw large audiences, increase international exposure and create long-term economic benefits.

The fashioning of unforgettable experiences lies at the heart of any sporting event. Fans are very keen on immersing themselves in highly curated experiences. As such, the orchestrators of high-profile sports events must sift through their playbooks to create unique moments and memories.

A new era of travel has ushered in legions of sports fans who are committed to attending major sporting events across the world. Organizers should ensure a seamless, hassle-free journey for such travelers. Considerations include reliable transport links to and from venues, special pack-

ages with hotel partners, high-quality amenities and ample food and beverage options. The success of these events also depends on marketing plans, which could include interactive experiences, such as player meet and greets, behind-the-scenes tours and facility tours. The safety and security of such events is a non-negotiable aspect of the overall experience.

Sports laws are pivotal instruments that regulate various aspects pertaining to the professional standards, integrity and safety of sports activities. Typically, such laws would include articles on health and safety standards, arbitration in case of disputes and anti-doping measures. Furthermore, they should detail the basic rights of athletes and employees working in the sports industry, in addition to explaining the procedures for applying for work permits or visas for foreign professional athletes, coaching staff and administrative staff.

For instance, the UAE's Federal Law No. 4 of 2023 Concerning Sports addresses a range of important levers in the sports industry, from talent scouting and development to incorporating physical education within school and university settings, strengthening inclusive sports for people with disabilities, establishing sports federations for various types of sporting activity and incorporating sports-related companies.

Considering these many dynamics, it is important for regional governments to amplify their sports profiles with carefully crafted policies.

Biden's DNC swan song was a master class in presidential humility

IT was bye-bye Biden on Monday night at the Democratic National Convention. US President Joe Biden, rather than being nominated for a second term on Thursday night, was bumped to the first day of the convention. Despite the thunderous chants of "Thank you, Joe" that repeatedly broke out during his address, there was an unstable air of wistfulness. It took the return of former president Barack Obama on the second day of the convention to smooth over the rough edges of what has perforce been a fairly brutal exercise in "out with the old, in with the new."

As Democrats have discovered over the past four weeks, it's exactly what so many of their voters and other Americans have been looking for in a political scene that had felt stagnated and trapped between two familiar figures who are both too old and, in very different ways, unpopular. But the depth of Mr Biden's sacrifice has yet to sink in – no matter how relieved Democrats are that he has stepped aside for his Vice President, Kamala Harris.

Mr Biden delivered the main body of what likely would have been his nomination acceptance remarks. He was careful to strongly endorse Ms Harris and give her credit for being his partner in the administration. But his remarks didn't seem fully up-to-date, apart from a passing repudiation of "all this talk [from Republicans] about how I'm angry at all those people who said I should step down, it's not true." There was, however, a hint of bitterness in his joke about being "too young to be in the Senate because I wasn't 30 yet [when first elected] and too old to stay as president" [now].

But it was mainly his greatest hits, including a litany of his accomplishments as president and sharp denunciations of Republican nominee, former President Donald Trump. Ever since his disastrous debate performance against Mr Trump, Mr Biden has made it clear that he felt, and evidently still feels, that his undoubted accomplishments against considerable odds, especially in domestic policy and legislation, earned him a second term.

There is little doubt that the President is still wrestling with his wrenching and nearly unprecedented agreement to voluntarily surrender his party's presidential nomination and a potential second term. He implicitly framed it as a last act of national service, which it undoubtedly was. And it's understandable that, in a mere month and while continuing as president, he has yet to fully process the depth and historical significance of his own sacrifice.

Many commentaries have recalled the example of the Roman general Cincinnatus who, according to tradition, having been granted complete

power to save Rome from a potentially mortal threat, then gave it up to return to his farm. The founders of the American Republic, steeped in classical traditions of the Enlightenment, regarded this as the apex of political and civic virtue. It certainly informed the decision of George Washington to return his commission to Congress at the conclusion of the war of independence from Britain, and also his choice not to seek a third term as president (even though he would certainly have been easily elected again).

But neither Cincinnatus nor Washington are the best historical analogs to Mr Biden's magnificent and heroic suppression of his own ambition and ego in the party and national interest. A more apt comparison is the decision of the second president under the US Constitution, John Adams, to accept the will of the people and the outcome of an extraordinarily bitter election won by his

Washington was a unique figure in American history, whereas Adams was the first of many subsequent presidents. And it was his decision to accept the will of the voters and voluntarily accept defeat at the ballot box that set the template for two centuries of the rule of law and primacy of elections as the ultimate arbiters in US politics. This tradition remained unbroken until Mr Trump's set of elaborate schemes to unlawfully overturn the result of the 2020 election that culminated in the violent insurrection against Congress on January 6, 2021. Mr Biden did not accept an election defeat. But he did accept the evident judgment of most of his colleagues and much of the public that he was too old and in decline to plausibly stand for another presidential term.

archival Thomas Jefferson and accede, for the first time in US history, to a peaceful transfer of power.

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One of the reasons that Mr Trump has been so discommodated by the sudden emergence of Ms Harris as his opponent – even though this seemed likely long before it happened – may be that he simply couldn't imagine any rational person making Mr Biden's sacrifice. He appears to have been certain that the President

was going to soldier on no matter what in hopes of somehow eventually winning. And, indeed, his chances were never all that bad.

To Mr Trump, the idea of putting the interests of others, let alone abstract principles and convictions, above narrow personal interests, is simply unfathomable. This perspective also informed his notorious reported remarks, which he has unconvincingly denied, describing fallen American soldiers as "suckers and losers," and marvelling: "I just don't get it. What was in it for them?" That's also why Mr Trump was so taken with fantasies that Mr Biden would burst into the convention and somehow try to reclaim his nomination that he aired them in public in both speech and writing.

It isn't just that Mr Trump likely cannot imagine behaving in Mr Biden's civic-virtuous manner. He was projecting his own grandiosity on Mr Biden's humility (no matter how reluctant). It was-

FROM organizational, aesthetic and sports performance perspectives, there is a broad consensus that the Paris 2024 Olympics were a resounding success, benefiting both French society and the international community. As with the 2008 Beijing Olympics and other events of similar scale and evocative power, the images from these occasions will remain in our collective memory and, in doing so, create shared points of reference for humanity. The momentum will continue with the start of the Paralympic Games on Aug 28.

Aristotle (384-322 BC), whom Dante (1265-1321) referred to as "the master of those who know", wrote in his Nicomachean Ethics: "At the Olympic Games, it is not the most beautiful or strongest who are crowned, but those who compete." In this sense, the Paralympics embody the Olympic spirit in its purest form.

The Paris gathering served as a moment of unity and joy, celebrating athletic prowess while fostering a spirit of cohesion across diverse cultures and nations. The Olympics, inherently competitive, showcase a range of outcomes with winners and losers, yet they are underpinned by principles of fair play and adherence to

accepted rules. This competitive nature is accompanied by an overarching ethos of respect and camaraderie among participants, reflecting the ultimate goal of the Games: to bring people together through sport.

Since their inception in 776 BC in Ancient Greece, the birthplace of European civilization, the Olympic Games were accompanied by an Olympic truce, allowing athletes and pilgrims to travel safely to the Games. The last recorded celebration of the ancient Games occurred in AD 393.

When Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937) revived the Games at the end of the 19th century, with the first modern Olympics held in Athens in 1896, it was also a time when the first international organizations were emerging, such as the International Telecommunication Union founded in 1865. These early structures of international governance were both products and drivers of globalization, contributing significantly to human progress.

Coubertin's influence on our understanding of the Olympic spirit is profound. Beyond his remarkable work as a social activist, it's important to recognize that Coubertin was also an educator deeply interested in the personal growth of individuals and the

DAVID GOSSET

advancement of society. He is often quoted as saying: "The important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win, but to take part; the important thing in life is not triumph, but the struggle; the essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well." However, Coubertin, inspired by humanistic values, also believed that "To spread these principles is to build up a stronger, more valiant, and above all, a more scrupulous and generous humanity".

Despite this, the Olympics are not a panacea for the world's persistent issues. Major global challenges such as poverty eradication and climate change remain unresolved, and conflicts did not cease during the Games. However, the spirit of the Olympics offers a glimpse into a more hopeful future and suggests a pathway forward. It reminds us that, while sports may not solve all problems, they can inspire and guide us toward a more unified and cooperative world.

Due to its widespread influence, distinctive popularity, and positive values, sport is well-positioned to support the United Nations' goals for development and peace. To highlight this potential, the UN General Assembly designated April 6 as the International Day

of Sport for Development and Peace. It is clear that the international community is prepared to leverage sport for a purpose that extends well beyond mere physical activity.

The Olympic spirit should not be an ephemeral experience revisited only once every four years. Instead, it is crucial to cultivate this spirit continuously, especially among young people. By fostering values of unity, respect, and fair competition, we can encourage a generation that values cooperation and mutual understanding. This is not just about sports but about applying these values to other aspects of life.

Expanding the Olympic ethos beyond the realm of sport could have profound implications. If humanity can come together for the Olympics, it stands to reason that we might also strive to apply similar principles to other areas of global interaction, such as multilateralism. While trade and politics are undoubtedly more complex than athletic contests, they are still fundamentally human endeavors. The same principles of fair play and cooperation can be applied to these spheres, suggesting that the dynamics observed in the Olympics might serve as a model for broader international relations.

Let us consider trade among nations as an exam-

ple. Competition under agreed-upon rules is actively taking place, pushing companies to deliver better products and services.

The Marrakesh Agreement, which established the World Trade Organization nearly 30 years ago, has been successful despite various challenges. The primary difficulty lies in the negotiation process needed for all parties to agree on the rules, whether they pertain to security, trade, finance or environmental protection. Then comes the implementation of the rules, followed inevitably by their revision when they no longer align with the distribution of power.

In essence, the Paris 2024 Olympics demonstrated that, even amid global challenges, moments of unity and shared purpose are possible. The spirit of the Games provides a valuable lesson in how cooperation and respect can bridge divides.

As we look forward to the Los Angeles Olympics and beyond, it is important to remember and nurture this spirit, not just in the context of sports but in our collective efforts to address the world's pressing issues. By doing so, we can build on the hope and inspiration generated by the Olympics to create a more connected and harmonious global society.

People-to-people tech ties

WANG XINWEI and ZHAI KUN

WHILE deepening their solid foundation for cooperation, China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations also need to upgrade the momentum. At present, technology, education and talents are gathering new momentum for China-ASEAN cooperation. This year is the China-ASEAN Year of People-to-People Exchanges. Promoting a new direction of technology-education-talents integrated cooperation can provide strong support for building a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

The new direction in terms of technology-education-talents cooperation is based on the continuous deepening of China-ASEAN people-to-people exchanges. With the establishment of the 10+1 mechanism, human resources development has become one of the five key areas of cooperation between China and ASEAN.

Road Initiative, the potential of China-ASEAN education-talents cooperation has been continuously stimulated by the cooperation among vocational colleges.

In fact, cooperation in technology-education-talents has already helped China and ASEAN work together in digital transformation, green development and other fields. The share of new energy vehicles in Thailand has exceeded 10 percent. China-Thailand cooperation includes both new production workshops and new vocational and technical schools. Singapore has created a sound business environment, and Chinese companies have actively participated in the development of the e-commerce industry.

China is comprehensively promoting Chinese modernization and accelerating the cultivation of new quality productive forces. ASEAN has also issued a new science and technology innovation policy including the Master Plan on ASEAN

Connectivity 2025 and ASEAN Digital Master Plan 2025, which focus on industrial transformation and fostering digital talent.

New spaces for China-ASEAN cooperation need to be unlocked, and the platform for personnel development can be further expanded. The foundation for China-ASEAN technology-transfer and Collaborative Innovation and China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week, China and ASEAN are also actively exploring academic alliances to jointly promote innovation.

The Alliance of National and International Science Organizations for the Belt and Road Regions, led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences and jointly established by 36 national scientific research institutions, universities and international organizations including the National Science and Technology Development Agency from Thailand, promotes international scientific and technological cooperation through joint

mechanisms with nine ASEAN countries and the cooperation network of technology transfer covers 10 ASEAN countries with more than 2,800 members.

In addition to forming a series of annual activities such as the Forum on China - ASEAN Technology Transfer and Collaborative Innovation and China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week, China and ASEAN are also actively exploring academic alliances to jointly promote innovation.

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research, visiting scholar programs and training programs.

Scientific and technological innovation builds up cooperation momentum and further consolidates the basis for education cooperation. The advantage of technology-education-talents cooperation is synergy, but the difficulty is how to cooperate more efficiently and sustainably to benefit the region. Nowadays, the deepening of China-ASEAN technology-education-talents integrated cooperation also faces some challenges.

Market potential and cost advantages make ASEAN attractive for high-tech enterprises. Technology giants from the US have increased their presence in Southeast Asia. However, investment is not just about new factors. Geopolitical factors are also involved.

The US and some other powers are trying to launch artificial intelligence and infrastructure projects to hedge the

BRI and dilute China and ASEAN cooperation in science and technology, which is creating a negative impact on the China-ASEAN technology-education-talents cooperative agenda. In addition, ASEAN countries have their own development advantages. Industrial cooperation supported by technology-education-talents cooperative agenda needs to be classified and reinforced.

The industry chain safety guarantee needs to be strengthened. What's more, the local training system can be further improved.

There is a relative shortage of applied talents in the digital field. The integrated programs of professional training in frontier science and technology need to be further explored. The support measures for continuing education also need to be strengthened.

In the future, China-ASEAN integrated cooperation in technology-education-talents can be jointly promoted by driving upgrading, resources integration and local cul-

tivation.

First, the top-level framework of technology-education-talents cooperation should be promoted. The plan for digital transformation can be strengthened, as well as developing high-quality cooperation in both hard infrastructure and cloud computing infrastructure. It can give full play to the converging role of high-quality projects of the BRI, promoting integrated development of technology-education-talents cooperative agenda.

The stronger industry-university chain can be constructed, which deepens and solidifies regional cooperation.

Second, regional science and technology governance and integrated technology-education-talents resources should be optimized. While focusing on the professional and matching issues, the platform mechanisms such as ASEAN Plus Three Young Scientists Forum and China-ASEAN Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition can be con-

tinuously developed, apart from developing the high-level China-ASEAN Institute of Modern Craftsmanship. The supporting system can be strengthened, promoting the compatibility between Chinese enterprises overseas and the local innovation ecosystem.

Third, a science and technology talent exchange channel based on local cultivation system should be constructed. Cooperating with technology transfer and innovation activities developed on major platforms, training courses for highly skilled personnel such as AI and 5G can be held. The potential of AI to enable vocational skills training can be tapped, effectively constructing the cultivation mechanism for local composite talents.

Both the direct effectiveness and carrier role of integrated cooperation in technology-education-talents should be taken into account to drive people-to-people exchanges, which inject vitality into China-ASEAN cooperation.



SLIC Summit 2024: Unveiling new digital services and showcasing industry leadership

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC) hosted SLIC Summit 2024, a pivotal occasion marking the

official launch of its cutting-edge digital services and communication framework.

The event was inaugurated by the Federal Minister of Commerce, Jam

Kamal Khan and attended by Chairman of the Board State Life Sulaiman S. Mehdi, CEO of State Life Shoaib Javed Hussain and senior members State Life's Senior Management along

esteemed dignitaries, senior government officials, corporate partners and industry leaders.

This gathering highlighted the far-reaching contributions of State Life as a driving force in Pakistan's insurance sector, particularly through its administration of the social health programs running across the country. T

he organization's influence on capital markets is a testament to the impact State Life has had on Pakistan's economic stability and growth.

In his address, Minister of Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan stated, "State Life's continuous innovation and leadership in the insurance and health sectors are instrumental to the nation's wellbeing and the advancement of our markets. The launch of these digital services marks a significant milestone in enhancing accessibility, transparency, and efficiency in insurance services for all Pakistanis."

CEO of State Life, Shoaib Javed Hussain stated, "Our digital services are technological advancements enabling us to deliver the highest standards of transparency, efficiency, and security, ensuring that our services are accessible and beneficial to customers, partners and stakeholders. The SLIC Summit 2024 serves as a testament to State Life's long-standing commitment to progress, innovation, and national development. By integrating digital solutions with our core services, State Life continues to solidify its position as a key pillar in Pakistan's insurance and financial sectors, driving the country toward a brighter and more prosperous future."

The summit spotlighted the launch of SLIC enhanced digital platform, ushering in a new era of convenience and security for its policyholders. This includes the unveiling of a new and improved website

and the introduction of three advanced mobile applications:

MySLIC - Mobile Application - Designed for policyholders, providing seamless access to insurance services and real-time policy management.

State Life Health Plus - Created for corporate health clients, facilitating efficient claims management and streamlined access to essential health services.

SLIC Agent Pro - A comprehensive tool empowering State Life's sales force to enhance client management and optimize operational performance.

These digital innovations are one step forward towards paving the way for a fully paperless insurance journey, allowing users to manage policies, track premiums, and monitor policy maturity with unprecedented ease and efficiency. SLIC's digital infrastructure supports real-time alerts, AI-assisted data analytics, and efficient data man-

agement across all regions of Pakistan, bridging distances and ensuring equitable access to services.

A key focus of the summit was State Life's involvement in Pakistan's national social health programs, which have improved healthcare access for millions of Pakistanis. The Social Health Program Panel featured industry leaders and healthcare experts, including, Muhammad Arshad, CEO of the Federal Sehat Sahulat Program, Dr. Ali Razaque, CEO of Punjab Health Initiative Management Company (PHIMC), Dr. Riaz Tanoli, CEO of the Sehat Card Plus Program, KP and Dr. Asad Kakar, CEO Balochistan Health Card Program.

Panelists explored the pivotal role State Life plays in administering these health initiatives, emphasizing the profound impact on the lives of common Pakistanis. By managing and facilitating access to

health insurance, State Life continues to elevate the quality of life for vulnerable communities across the country.

The summit also showcased a thought-provoking discussion on Pakistan's capital and financial markets. The Capital Markets Panel brought together some of the most influential figures in the industry, including, Fareed Alam, CEO of AKD Securities, Rehmat Ali Hasnie, President of NBP, Farrukh Khan, CEO of the Pakistan Stock Exchange and Shanawaz Nadir Shah, Head of Investments at State Life.

The panel highlighted the critical role institutional players like State Life have in promoting the growth, stability, and sustainability of Pakistan's financial landscape.

The discussion underscored State Life's substantial contributions to economic resilience through strategic investments in the capital markets.



KARACHI: Chairman SLIC Suleman Mehdi and Chief Executive SLIC Shoaib Javed presenting a shield to Federal Minister of Commerce Jam Kamal Khan to honor his presence at SLIC Summit 2024.

SCCI presented proposals to remove hurdles in Pak-Afghan trade

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq presented comprehensive proposals for improving bilateral Pak-Afghan trade and export and removal of hurdles in cross border trade.

In his recommendations, Fuad Ishaq urged government and institutions to enforce policies and orders after making consultation with chambers and the business community to avoid any collision between traders and relevant authorities and lead the country's economy on a path of sustainable growth and stability by enhancing mutual trade and export.

Fuad Ishaq had given these proposals during a meeting upon visit of Chief Collector Customs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Jamil Nasir here at the chamber house.

Collector Appraisal Customs Peshawar Mateen Alam, Collector Enforcement Customs Peshawar Ziaul Shams and Additional Director (Transit Trade) Customs Peshawar Dr Tahir

Iqbal Khattak accompanied the chief collector customs KP on the occasion.

Businessman Forum leader former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, the chamber's senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, former FPCCI president Ghanzfar Bilour, former SCCI's presidents Zahid-ullah Shinwari, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Sherbaz Bilour, former senior vice presidents Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Imran Khan Mohmand, Shahid Hussain, former vice presidents Javed Akhtar, Shuja Muhammad and Khalid Sultan Khawaja, Peshawar Fresh Fruit Market President Haji Alif Jan, Pakistan Agricultural Produce Traders Federation President Malik Muhammad Ali Sohni, Gur Mandi President Ihsan-ullah, PTA provincial chairman Ishaq Ahmad, executive committee members Hamza Ibrahim Butt, Monawar Khurshid, Haji Ghulam Hussain, Affaf Ali Khan, Naeem Qasmi, Mazharul Haq, Atif Rasheed, Khalid Ayub,

Imtiaz Ahmad Ali, Farooq Ahmad, Zahoor Khan, Aftab Iqbal, Saddam Gul, Faiz Rasool, Ishtiaq Ahmad, Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan, Secretary Sohail Anjum, transporters, exporters and traders were present in a large number on the occasion.

Chief Collector Customs KP Jamil Nasir in his address said that steps were being taken for ease of doing business. He assured the dignity of the business community should be kept intact during enforcement of rules and policies.

He stressed the need for establishing an atmosphere of trust between the customs department and business community.

Senior customs officials emphasized the close coordination and liaison between the Customs, chambers and traders to make collective steps to resolve issues and enhance bilateral trade and export to stabilize the national economy.

Fuad Ishaq in the meeting highlighted hurdles in Pak-Afghan bilateral trade and transit trade and briefed about reservations of the

business community on policies and other issues.

The SCCI chief urged the government to revisit policies and make them business/trade friendly to improve the economy.

He called for bringing ease in TAD, Transit Registration System and suggested duties/tariffs of 212 items should be made equal to Afghanistan and asked to allow Pakistani exporters to export these items so that menace of smuggling will be eradicated completely.

In his recommendations, Fuad Ishaq demanded making Azakhel Dryport port fully functional, re-launch of cargo trains from Peshawar and functionalization of the Railways system.

He apprised traders' community reservations about loose cargo and bonded carriers.

He proposed the formation of evaluation committees at the local level.

Fuad said SCCI is taking practical measures for uplift of the Honey sector, which is a major source of foreign exchange and export and asked the

Customs department to address issues attached with the Honey sector on priority basis.

Businessman Forum leader Ilyas Ahmad Bilour also addressed the meeting calling for making policies trade and business friendly to enhance bilateral trade, transit trade and export.

Chief Collector Customs KP Jamil Nasir agreed with proposals of the SCCI president and directed relevant officials on the spot for resolving issues. Jamil Nasir said practical steps were being taken to facilitate cross border trade.

He emphasized reactivation of committees between Customs department and chamber so that issues will be resolved collectively.

He assured actions would be taken in consultation with chamber/trade bodies and will keep the dignity of the traders/taxpayers intact during implementation of rules and policies.

76 more connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: In the ongoing campaign against gas theft, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has successfully conducted a series of raids across Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad, resulting in the disconnection of 76 additional illegal connections and the imposition of fines amounting to Rs 2 million.

In Lahore, the enforcement team disconnected 19 illegal connections and imposed fines totaling Rs 0.68 million.

The Bahawalpur team cut off 24 connections due to compressor usage.

In Faisalabad, 4 connections were disconnected for illegal gas use, and fines of Rs 0.06 million were imposed.

The Sheikhupura team disconnected 2 illegal connections and imposed fines of Rs 1.28 million.

Meanwhile, in Multan, 25 connections were cut off for unauthorized gas use, and in Sahiwal, 2 connections were disconnected due to compressor usage.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fuad Ishaq speaking during a meeting upon visit of Chief Collector Customs KP Jamil Nasir at Chamber's House.

N4HK room inaugurated

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Nestlé Pakistan inaugurated the Nestlé for Healthier Kids (N4HK) room at The Trust School Lahore to foster and promote nutrition awareness. The N4HK program is part of Nestlé's global nutritional awareness initiative to ensure that children understand the value of nutrition as they grow older. So far the program has reached out to 360,000 kids, trained more than 2300 teachers and has developed 17 N4HK Rooms with 11 partners from private and public sector.

Inaugurating the room, chief guest Béatrice Guillaume-Grabisch, Global Head Human Resources Nestlé S.A. said, "It is an honor and privilege to be here today to celebrate the achievements of the Nestlé for Healthier Kids (N4HK) program in Pakistan. This initiative goes beyond simply educating

children about the importance of nutrition and physical activity; it is about shaping a healthier future for generations to come."

"The N4HK program outreach across Pakistan is an endorsement of Nestlé's endeavor to promote healthy nutrition in the country," she added.

Speaking on the occasion, Jason Avanceña, CEO Nestlé Pakistan said, "We are delighted to strengthen our partnership with The Trust school who have been one of our oldest partners, having established 3 N4HK rooms and training more than 400 of their teachers and reaching out to more than 10,000 children across different branches."

Highlighting Nestlé's partnership, Tahir Yousaf CEO The Trust School, said, "We are thankful to Nestlé Pakistan for partnering with us. The Trust School has been providing quality education at subsidized rates or free of cost to

meritorious students from underprivileged sections of society with 13 campuses in Lahore."

N4HK is Nestlé's global nutritional awareness initiative which supports, teachers and caregivers on their journey to raise healthier kids through a curriculum-based education program promoting healthy nutrition, hydration, hygiene and active lifestyle. N4HK has presence in Punjab, the Federal Capital, KP, Sindh and most recently, Gilgit Baltistan. The N4HK program is part of Nestlé's commitment to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 of Good Health and Well-Being.

Nestlé, with its global headquarters based in Switzerland, has had a longstanding presence in Pakistan for over 35 years, and is committed to be a force for good throughout its value chain by Creating Shared Value for communities.

CEJ, Bank Alfalah announce scholarships



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Centre for Excellence in Journalism (CEJ) at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi and Bank Alfalah, announced scholarships for the journalism degree program and capacity building of online content creators in financial literacy. Through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), Bank Alfalah will provide funding for scholarships to five students pursuing the Master of Science in Journalism (MSJ) degree at IBA for the year 2024-25 and workshops for twelve content creators on creating awareness about financial literacy.

The program aims to develop a new generation of journalists equipped with the skills to investigate and

report on financial issues while empowering individuals.

Dr. Asma Hyder, Professor and Dean, School of Economics and Social Sciences (SESS), IBA said, "Journalism is important for an informed society and the strengthening of democracy. The Masters in Journalism at the SESS, IBA Karachi, equips the students with best practices in reporting, investigation, fact-checking, technology and ethics. We are proud of our competent faculty, visiting world-renowned local and international journalists, who guide students in producing well-rounded, accurate, and engaging content that informs the public and supports a vibrant, democratic society. Our alumni are successfully positioned in their careers, upholding IBA's high stan-

dards in the professional world."

Capacity building is crucial for journalists in Pakistan's financial sector to ensure accurate, responsible, and impactful reporting. With the increasing complexity of financial instruments and markets, journalists need specialized knowledge to effectively understand and convey financial information. The program will sponsor five students pursuing the Master of Science in Journalism (MSJ) degree at IBA, providing them with financial assistance to complete their studies. By enhancing their skills, journalists can contribute to financial literacy, promote transparency, and hold stakeholders accountable, ultimately fostering a healthier financial ecosystem in Pakistan.

PBA and NADRA committed to boosting digitalization



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Banks' Association (PBA) and National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) cohosted an insightful session focused on advancing NADRA's national digitalization efforts and to strengthen support for the banking industry. The session was spearheaded by Brigadier (Retd) Dr Monis Akhlaq, Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) - NADRA,

joined by NADRA's team of technical experts. The event saw participation from over 25 banks operating in Pakistan.

This collaborative session provided a common platform for the banking industry to engage with NADRA's leading technical experts. The discussion centered around NADRA's role in enhancing the banking sector's capabilities, particularly in the verification of the existing and onboarding of the new

banking customers.

The team also addressed the enhancement of cybersecurity processes and systems at NADRA. Brigadier (Retd) Akhlaq highlighted NADRA's ongoing efforts to mitigate emerging threats and ensure complete protection of citizens' data; underscoring NADRA's commitment to safeguarding sensitive information in the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Brigadier (Retd) Monis Akhlaq said, "NADRA is

actively developing new Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) and integrating advanced technologies to bolster its national digitalization efforts. These advancements are intended to significantly improve the banking sector's operational efficiency and security, particularly in customer verification and onboarding processes."

Commenting on the initiative, Muneer Kamal - CEO & Secretary General - PBA said, "The session underscores the importance of PBA's ongoing collaboration with NADRA in tackling emerging challenges related to customer data protection. We look forward to future collaborations with NADRA to effectively enhance our cybersecurity efforts, and further strengthen the banking industry's digital infrastructure."

EFU Life, EFU General & Bank Alfalah unite to introduce "Alfa Transaction Insurance/Takaful by EFU"



F.P. Report

KARACHI: EFU Life, a leading life insurance and family takaful operator, and EFU General, a premier non-life/general insurance and takaful service provider, have teamed up with Bank Alfalah, one of Pakistan's largest banks with a network of over 1000 branches across 200 cities, to introduce "Alfa Transaction Insurance/Takaful by

EFU". This unique product combines the benefits of both general and life insurance/takaful, addressing the pressing need for comprehensive financial protection.

The introduction of Transaction Insurance/Takaful aims to safeguard financial transactions, providing enhanced protection beyond traditional customer indemnity. Additionally, this product offers term life/takaful benefits, ensuring

complete financial security by paying a defined amount in the event of a customer's death due to any cause.

At the launch ceremony, Mr. Mohammed Ali Ahmed, the MD and CEO of EFU Life, expressed his enthusiasm: "As a prominent insurance provider on the Alfa App, we are thrilled to strengthen our partnership with Bank Alfalah by enabling them to offer top-tier insurance/takaful coverages to their customers, including Transactional Insurance/Takaful. This proposition holistically protects Alfa customers through innovative general and life protection available on the Alfa App and underscores EFU Life's commitment to digital transformation, transitioning from traditional manual processes to automated, high-precision systems."

Syed Salman Rashid, Deputy

Managing Director of EFU General, highlighted the broader impact by quoting, "This initiative extends beyond just the bank and its customers; it builds a bridge between insurance companies and their customers, fostering trust in insurance providers. Financial stability is crucial, especially in today's challenging times, and Transaction Insurance is a product that will benefit all parties involved."

Muhammad Yahya Khan, Chief Digital Officer Bank Alfalah Limited, "emphasized on Bank Alfalah's award winning Alfa App and the fact that new customers can digitally insure their digital transactions; providing peace of mind to them. Bank Alfalah is committed to continually expanding its innovative product suite to bring ease, security and convenience in the lifestyles of its customers."



Rizwan, Saud shine with centuries against BD

Shahid Afridi

RAWALPINDI: On the second day of the first Test match being played in Rawalpindi, Pakistan strengthened their position thanks largely to the brilliant centuries by Mohammad Rizwan and Saud Shakeel.

The two batsmen put together a remarkable 240 runs partnership for the fifth wicket. By the end of the second day Bangladesh had scored 27 runs without losing a wicket in their first innings after Pakistan declared their innings at 448 for six wickets. Shadman Islam was not out on 12 and Zakir

Hassan remained unbeaten on 11. Bangladesh still trail Pakistan by 421 runs in their first innings.

On the first day Bangladesh's bowlers had managed to claim three wickets for just 16 runs. However a 98- runs partnership between Saud Shakeel and Saim Ayub brought the total to 114 before Saim lost his wicket.

Following this Rizwan and Saud Shakeel extended their partnership to 240 runs. When the total reached 354 Saud Shakeel was dismissed after scoring 141 runs including nine boundaries in his 261 ball innings. Earlier in

1976, Asif Iqbal and Javed Miandad had set a 281 runs partnership against New Zealand at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium.

In this match against Bangladesh Saud Shakeel and Mohammad Rizwan's 240 runs stand for the fifth wicket was a significant highlight.

After Saud's dismissal Salman Ali Agha joined Rizwan and they added 44 runs together. Salman was dismissed for 19 when the score reached 398. During this time Mohammad Rizwan crossed the 150 runs mark for the first time in his Test career.

Pakistan's captain, Shan Masood declared the

innings at 447. Mohammad Rizwan remained unbeaten on 171 while Shaheen Afridi contributed 27 runs adding 50 runs together for the seventh wicket.

Rizwan's brilliant innings of 171 runs came off 239 balls and included eleven boundaries and three sixes. This is his highest score in Test cricket. Shariful Islam and Hassan Mehmmud took two wickets each while Shakib Al Hassan and Mohammadi Hassan claimed one wicket apiece. Shakib conceded 100 runs in 27 overs while Naheed Rana went wicketless after giving away 101 runs.



RAWALPINDI: Shaheen Shah Afridi bowls against Bangladesh on the second day of the first Test match at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Brook battles for England as Fernando thrives after rain

MANCHESTER (Cricinfo): Asitha Fernando continued Sri Lanka's spirited display in the first Test at Emirates Old Trafford, claiming three key wickets in an extended afternoon session as England were made to fight for the ascendancy after an extended rain delay.

By tea, Harry Brook's fighting half-century, in a fifth-wicket stand of 51 with Jamie Smith, had reduced the deficit to 60, but Asitha's interventions, including the prime scalp of Joe Root for 42, had helped to make their first-innings total of 236 look more competitive than it had appeared at the time.

After sweating under the covers for several hours during a rainy morning in Manchester, the Old Trafford pitch was ripe for seam bowling when play finally got underway at 1.15pm, and Asitha was primed to cash in. With his bustling approach and a commitment to a full length, he posed problems from the outset, under still-dense cloud cover and with the floodlights in full beam.

His performance went into overdrive from the first ball of his second over, when Dan Lawrence was pinned on the pad and given out lbw by umpire Paul Reiffel. Although that decision was successfully overturned, with the ball shown to be skimming over the bails, the information was stored away and perfectly progressed

by the bowler.

Two balls later, and now with Ben Duckett on strike, Asitha fired the ball in a good two feet fuller, and was this time the successful reviewee, with the ball shown to be both pitching on and hitting leg stump as Duckett was turned inside-out on his attempted flick across the line.

And in his very next over, Asitha served up the piece de resistance of his new-ball spell, an exceptional wobble-seam delivery, pitching half a foot fuller than the Lawrence ball, and straightening off the pitch to smash into the top of Ollie Pope's off stump. England's captain was gone for 6, and at 40 for 2 in the ninth over, England had a bit of a rebuild to undertake.

Joe Root is no stranger to skinny top-order scorelines, of course, and as he bedded in for the long haul, it was Lawrence who initiated England's counterattack, with a brace of forceful whips through the leg-side as Asitha strayed in length. But, having scored just four of his 30 runs through the off-side, his vulnerability in the channel was superbly exploited by Vishwa Fernando, who nicked him off after a change of ends, using the breeze from the Statham End to push a lifter across his bows from his left-arm angle.

Despite the damp conditions, Sri Lanka were able to find some appreciable reverse-swing off a typically abrasive Old Trafford pitch, meaning that Root and Brook had to be on their mettle even as their 58-run stand clipped along at more than five an over. Milan Rathnayake, Sri Lanka's first-day hero, was picked off for three fours in an over as he strained for that swinging full length, but it was Asitha's return to the attack that would prise the most vital wicket of the day.

Root had reached 42 from 56 balls in another under-stated display of touch and timing when he was undone in expert fashion, climbing into a wider line from Asitha while still playing for the inswing that had been the feature of his over to that point.

This ball, however, held its line and skidded straight on, and Dinesh Chandimal scooped up the low edge to leave England wobbling at 125 for 4.

Brook, however, kept the foot down in his familiarly forceful manner, driving with heavy timing whenever the ball was over-pitched, and working the gaps well, with Sri Lanka's field still veering towards the defensive given England's reputation for boundary-hunting.

By tea, Smith was also settling into his work on 22 not out, with one huge straight six off the spin of Prabath Jayasuriya showing that he too was finding his range in the tough conditions.

Tina Charles rises to No. 2 in WNBA all-time scoring

NEW YORK (Reuters): Atlanta Dream center Tina Charles sank a tiebreaking 3-pointer early in the fourth quarter on Wednesday to become the second-leading scorer in WNBA history.

Charles assisted on two of the Dream's next four baskets and finished with 12 points and 17 rebounds as Atlanta beat the Phoenix Mercury 72-63 in College Park, Ga.

The 35-year-old UConn product ended the night with 7,491 career points, three more than Tina Thompson compiled with the Houston Comets (1997-2008), Los Angeles Sparks (2009-11) and Seattle Storm (2012-13).

Charles was selected first overall in the 2010 draft by the Connecticut Sun, for whom she played four seasons. She won Rookie of the Year in 2010 and was selected the WNBA's Most Valuable Player in 2012.

She subsequently played for the New York Liberty (2014-19), Washington Mystics (2021), Phoenix Mercury (2022) and Seattle (2022) before sitting out last season. Charles is in her first season with Atlanta.

Charles was part of gold-medal-winning U.S. women's teams at the 2012, 2016 and 2020 Olympics.

The only player now ahead of her on the WNBA's career scoring list also was on the floor Wednesday. Phoenix's Diana Taurasi, 42, finished with three points, boosting her total to 10,500.

"To hear my name in the (same) sentence as Diana is unimaginable, what she's meant to me personally, this league, her impact," Charles said postgame, according to The Athletic. "She's definitely the GOAT. I'm just thankful."

Al Attles, former Warriors star, coach and GM, dies at 87

Hall of Fame member Al Attles, a physical point guard known as "The Destroyer" who later became an NBA champion coach and general manager of the Golden State Warriors, died Tuesday at 87.

The team announced Wednesday that Attles passed away at his home in East Bay, Calif., surrounded by family.

"Alvin leaves behind a profound legacy within the game of basketball and the Bay Area community, but especially as a family man and humanitarian," the Warriors said in a statement. "We mourn his loss alongside his wife, Wilhelmina, son Alvin, and all who knew and loved him."

Attles began his NBA career as a fifth-round pick of the then-Philadelphia Warriors in 1960. On March 2, 1962, in Hershey, Pa., he had 17 points against the New York Knicks on a night where teammate Wilt Chamberlain scored 100 points.

He moved with the franchise to San Francisco later in 1962 and remained a player through the 1970-71 season, finishing with career averages of 8.9 points, 3.5 rebounds and 3.5 assists in 711 games.

Hayden: Pushing Smith up to open in Tests is 'crazy'

SYDNEY (Cricinfo): Former Australia opening batter Matthew Hayden is against the idea of Steven Smith playing as a Test opener. Hayden believes Smith should bat where he has scored most of his runs, suggesting moving him to a "completely different position" is "crazy".

Hayden, Australia's most prolific opener in Tests before David Warner went past him in December 2023, believes that the top three positions need to be "protected" in Test cricket. "The rationale that [national selector] George Bailey gave was correct in so far as that he was choosing his best top six batsmen," Hayden said on the sidelines of the CEAT cricket rating awards in Mumbai, of Australia's batting plans.

"Now, you can't argue with Steven Smith, he is averaging 65 [57] in Test-match cricket.... 32 Test-match hundreds. "But, the role of an opening batsman compared to a middle-order batsman is very different. And it didn't take long to discover that when you get into challenging conditions, like they faced in the first series outside of Australia, which was in New Zealand, that opening the batting is very difficult."

Smith played as an opener for the first time in his Test career earlier this year.

First, during the two home Tests against West Indies and then in New Zealand for another two games. In those eight innings, he was out for 12 or less on five occasions and scored just one half-century - the unbeaten 91 in Brisbane - at an average of 28.50. In comparison, he averages 67.07 from No. 3 and 61.50 from No. 4.

"I, personally, as I said at the time, was on record saying that I didn't like changing," Hayden added.

"I think it's crazy to think that you have the world's best-in-class batter in a certain position. And then you change to a completely different position. For a few reasons, I think that's crazy.

Firstly, why? Such a gun in that position, such a coveted player.

"And then it also is not a great nod to the first-class set-up, which is very much in the Australian culture, been driving great results towards key roles, be that any one of the roles - wicketkeeping, batting, spinners, fast bowlers, opening batters.

So the [batting positions of] one, two and three is a category which

needs to be protected in my opinion. It sets up play."

If Australia do move Smith back down the order, they will have to look for a new partner for opener Usman Khawaja. Since Warner's farewell Test at the SCG at the start of this year, Smith and Khawaja have opened in all of Australia's four Tests, and moving Smith out of the opening slot would mean giving that position to an inexperienced batter.

Has that second opening slot been a concern for Australia after Warner's departure?

"Yes, it is. It is," Hayden said. "For the first time, it doesn't feel as secure."

David Warner gave a great service to Australian cricket. He gave a service that was extremely competitive, wonderfully dynamic.

He really took that legacy that I'd created through the 2000s to a new level, strike rates in excess of 80 [70] and gave great momentum to the top order, which otherwise is quite a conservative, very good, but very conservative batting line-up.

So I think he's an enormous loss in terms of how do you replace him.

"Clearly, they've gone

in the direction of Steven Smith and thus far, whether they continue with that strategy, time will tell. And we have guys like [Cameron] Bancroft that are always in the pipeline, Matt Renshaw is in the pipeline.

"Bancroft, when you look at his form in England, has been excellent, but that's domestic cricket. It's not the Border-Gavaskar-type cricket so a bit of a few things to really prove from that engine room in Australian cricket, which has been challenged right now with David's absence."

Smith himself has said recently that he has "no idea" about his batting position for the India Tests, and that a decision would be made after Australia's white-ball tour of the UK starting September 4, where they play a T20I series against Scotland before three T20Is and five ODIs against England.

"I'm happy anywhere and I'll bat wherever for the team," Smith had said. Both Cummins and Bailey have also recently hinted that Australia are likely to go with the same top six as their last four Tests to begin their Border-Gavaskar Trophy campaign.

Zheng and Rybakina among U.S. Open contenders

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Injuries, slumps and the lack of a tennis force of nature like Serena Williams have left the women's field at the season's final Grand Slam wide open.

The U.S. Open has not witnessed a successful defence of the women's crown since Williams won three straight titles at Flushing Meadows from 2012 to 2014.

Unless defending champ Coco Gauff can turn around a recent bumpy streak, that trend looks likely to continue.

"On the women's side, it is very open," said six-time U.S. Open champion turned ESPN tennis analyst Chris Evert.

"I do think that everyone's getting a little tired and it's been a long year," she said. "I can't say

who's going to win with any kind of conviction right now."

Olympic gold medallist and world No. 7 Qinwen Zheng will look to build on her triumph on clay at the Paris Games, where she dispatched top-ranked Iga Swiatek in straight sets en route to an historic singles tennis title for her native China.

A quarter-finals appearance in the 2023 U.S. Open followed by a runner-up finish in this year's Australian Open are testament to the Chinese 21-year-old's hard court acumen.

Victory in New York would stamp her card as the best Chinese singles player since two-times major champion Li Na.

Jasmine Paolini's women's doubles gold medal in Paris with Sara

Errani -- Italy's first-ever tennis gold -- soothed some of the sting of her singles defeat by unseeded Romanian Ana Bogdan at the Games.

But the fifth-ranked Paolini is eager to finally break through for a Grand Slam singles title at Flushing Meadows after runner-up finishes at Wimbledon and Roland Garros this year.

Kazakh Elena Rybakina is looking to notch up her second Grand Slam title since claiming the Wimbledon crown in 2022.

But the U.S. Open's hard courts have so far vexed the big-serving world No. 4, and Rybakina has advanced no further than the round of 32 in five previous showings in New York. Eager to bounce

back after withdrawing from the Paris Games due to illness and crashing out of her first Cincinnati Open match, Rybakina hopes to regain momentum from a quarter-finals showing at Roland Garros in June followed by a Wimbledon semi-finals appearance.

Gauff headlines a strong slate of American women, with five ranked in the top 15 in the world for the first time in two decades.

Fresh from a runner-up showing in Cincinnati, sixth-ranked Jessica Pegula is looking to rebound in New York, while Danielle Collins, ranked 11th in the world, will be playing in her final Grand Slam after announcing that she will retire at the end of this season.



Reds' Elly De La Cruz joins 60-steal, 20-homer club

NEW YORK (Reuters) Cincinnati shortstop Elly De La Cruz made history when he stole third base in the fifth inning Wednesday in the Reds' road victory against the Toronto Blue Jays.

The theft was the 60th of the season for De La Cruz, who became the fifth player since 1901 to have at least 60 steals and 20 homers in a season.

After stealing the base, De La Cruz, 22, subsequently scored to tie game at 6-6.

Three innings later, he hit his 22nd homer of the year, and he finished 3-for-4 as the Reds won 11-7.

He joins two former Reds stars on the list: Joe Morgan (26 homers, 67 steals in 1973; 27 and 60 in 1976) and Eric Davis (27 and 80 in 1986).

Rickey Henderson accomplished the feat three times: 24 and 80 with the 1985 New York Yankees; 28 and 87 with the 1986 Yankees; and 28 and 65 with the 1990 Oakland A's.

Before De La Cruz, the latest to make the list was the Atlanta Braves' Ronald Acuna Jr., who had 41 homers and 73 stolen bases last year.

MLB roundup: Cards' slam in 10th stuns Brewers

Nolan Arenado hit a walk-off grand slam in the 10th inning to lift the St. Louis Cardinals past the visiting Milwaukee Brewers 10-6 on Wednesday.

Luken Baker hit a two-run homer, Tommy Pham drove in two runs and Masyn Winn went 3-for-6 with an RBI for the Cardinals.

St. Louis starting pitcher Kyle Gibson allowed two runs on seven hits in 5 1/3 innings. He struck out five and walked two.

Joey Ortiz drove in three runs and Jackson Chourio went 4-for-5 with two RBIs and a run for the Brewers, who saw their six-game winning streak end.

Yankees 8, Guardians 1

Aaron Judge hit two home runs, Juan Soto homered and drove in five runs and host New York cruised past Cleveland.

Judge upped his major-league-leading homer total to 47 by hitting a two-run drive in the third off Cleveland rookie starter Joey Cantillo (0-3) and a solo shot in the seventh off Eli Morgan to give the Yankees an 8-0 lead.

Nestor Cortes (7-10) allowed three hits in seven scoreless innings to win consecutive starts for the first time since May 17-22. The left-hander struck out four and walked none in his second straight scoreless outing.

Cantillo allowed seven runs on six hits in four innings in his fourth career start.

The left-hander struck out five and walked three. Noel slugged a

homer in the eighth off Tim Mayza, but the Guardians fell to 6-11 since Aug. 2.

Reds 11, Blue Jays 7

Visiting Cincinnati scored five runs in the fifth inning as it overcame a six-run deficit to defeat Toronto in the finale of a three-game series.

Cincinnati's Elly De La Cruz stole third base in the fifth, his 60th theft of the season, hit his 22nd homer in the eighth and finished with three RBIs.

He is the fifth player since 1901 to have 60 steals and 20 homers in a season. Spencer Steer stroked a two-run homer for the Reds. Noelvi Marte and Jonathan India added solo shots. Cincinnati right-hander Nick Martinez yielded six runs on six hits with three walks and three strikeouts in 4 1/3 innings.

Ernie Clement hit a three-run homer, Spencer Horwitz hit a two-run blast and George Springer had a solo shot for Toronto. Yariel Rodriguez allowed five runs on six hits and two walks in 4 1/3 innings. He finished with six strikeouts.

Dodgers 8, Mariners 4

Jack Flaherty won for the third time in four starts since being acquired at the trade deadline as Los Angeles defeated visiting Seattle to complete a three-game sweep.



In brief

NHMP foils smuggling bid

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Motorway Police foiled a bid to smuggle imported liquor and recovered 157 bottles from a vehicle on Thursday. The Islamabad Motorway Police found a suspected and unattended vehicle on a link road. During search of the vehicle, 157 bottles of imported liquor were recovered. The vehicle along with recovered liquor was handed over to Noon police station which after registering a case into the incident started search for the culprits.

ANF seizes 61 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) seized 61 kilogram drugs and arrested six drug peddlers in separate actions in different cities across country. A spokesman of ANF Headquarters said on Thursday that operations against drug peddlers were conducted in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Karachi and Quetta. He said that during six operations conducted in the said cities, six drug pushers were apprehended with 61 kg drugs including 46.6 kg hashish, 14.4 kg opium, 210 gram Ice (crystal meth) and 200 intoxicant tablets. Separate cases against detainees were registered under Drug Act and further investigations were in progress.

Power shutdown

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday issued a power suspension programme for Friday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesperson, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period From 06:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Rawalpindi City Circle, Kurry Road, Shalimar City, Top City, Mumtaz City, F-17/1, F-17/2, Nogzi, Chakral Feeder, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Japan Road, Car Chowk, RA Bazar, Chungi No-22, Tench Bhatta, Kayani Road Feeder, Attock Circle, Garhi Afghana, Pind Pran, Valley, Gulshan Sehat, Sangjani, Shahullah Dutta, Paswal Feeder, Chakwal Circle, Al Qadir Mills, Sakral feeders and surrounding areas.

Hot weather forecast

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast mainly hot and humid weather for most parts of the country during the next 24 hours. However, rain-wind/thundershower is likely at isolated places in Gilgit Baltistan, Kashmir, Upper Khyber P a k h t u n k h w a, Southeast Sindh, Northeast/South Punjab and Northeast Balochistan. According to the synoptic situation, weak monsoon currents from Arabian Sea were penetrating upper and central parts of the country. A westerly wave was likely to affect upper parts. During the last 24 hours, hot and humid weather remained in most parts of the country. However, rain-wind/thundershower occurred in South East Balochistan, Kashmir, Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Northeast/south Punjab. The rainfall recorded was Balochistan: Khuzdar 18mm, Kashmir: Kotli 08, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Kalam 03, Mirkhani 02, Punjab: Bahawalnagar 06, Rawalpindi (Shamsabad), Toba Tek Singh, Jhelum and Okara 01mm. The highest maximum temperatures recorded were Dalbandin 41C, Nokundi, Tarbat, Dadu, Sibbi and Bahawalnagar 40C.

Aurangzeb invites Dubai Islamic Bank

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb here on Thursday invited the Dubai Islamic Bank to enhance its investment in the country; reaffirming the government's dedication to maintaining a stable macro-economic environment and ensuring that all necessary measures were in place to facilitate foreign investment.

The minister was talking to the Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO), Dr. Adnan Chilwan during a virtual meeting to discuss Pakistan's economic trajectory and explore potential avenues for increased investment in the country.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State, Ali Parvez Malik, Secretary of Finance, and other senior officers from the Finance Division, according to a press release issued by the Finance Ministry.

The finance minister expressed gratitude for Dubai Islamic Bank's continuous engagement with Pakistan's financial sector, the press release added.

He highlighted the government's commitment to strengthening economic ties with international partners, particularly in Islamic banking, and expressed optimism about future collaborations with Dubai Islamic Bank.

Aurangzeb provided an in-depth overview of Pakistan's current economic scenario, emphasizing the progress made in stabilizing the economy and fostering a conducive environment for business and investment.

He highlighted key initiatives taken by the government such as broadening the tax base, enhancing the ease of doing business, the digitalization of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR),

and ongoing reforms and restructuring in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and privatization.

On the occasion, Dr. Adnan Chilwan expressed appreciation for Pakistan's economic policies and initiatives and emphasized that Pakistan remains a strategically important market for Dubai Islamic Bank.

He reiterated the bank's interest in playing a larger role in the country's financial growth, particularly in sectors such as Islamic banking, infrastructure and SME development.

The discussion underscored the importance of strengthening economic cooperation between Pakistan and Dubai Islamic Bank.

The meeting reflected the shared commitment of both parties to fostering sustainable economic development and further deepening financial ties between Pakistan and the UAE.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb in a virtual meeting with Group CEO of Dubai Islamic Bank Dr. Adnan Chilwan.

FIA holds workshop on anti-money laundering

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) organized a 3-day training event including a joint workshop on financial intelligence for hawala and a zonal conference on anti-money laundering and countering financing of terrorism with the assistance of FICOD's UPSCALE Programme.

The workshop was also participated by officers of Intelligence & Investigation-Inland Revenue (FBR) and Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU).

The opening and closing ceremonies were addressed by Additional Director General Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Jan Muhammad, Director General AML/CFT Authority, Dr. Ehsan Sadiq, Director General Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) Ms. Lubna Farooq Malik and Counsellor for Security and Justice, British High Commission Mr. Joseph Whittle.

The workshop and the conference focused on the capacity building of the officers in investigating money laundering, particularly about hawala/hundi, and the implementation of FATF standards.

The chief guests lauded Pakistan's commitment to implementing FATF standards and underscored the sustainability of efforts.

This initiative by Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) reaffirms their mission to continue investigating of financial and cross-border crimes including money laundering and financing of terrorism.

Rule violations:

Excise deptt moves to cancel registrations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the Excise & Taxation Department, Islamabad, has chaired a meeting and decided to take firm steps to tighten vehicle registration rules, aiming to curb practices that inconvenience the public and breach regulations.

According to the spokesman of the ICT department, the meeting was attended by the Director of Excise and other key officials to discuss significant changes to vehicle registration policies.

The primary focus was on ensuring compliance with new regulations concerning vehicle registration

and number plates.

One of the key decisions made was the immediate cancellation of registrations for vehicles using fancy number plates. The Director General (DG) of Excise emphasized that any vehicle found with a fancy number plate would have its registration revoked.

Another critical point addressed in the meeting was the misuse of large lights on vehicles, which pose a safety risk to other road users.

The DG Excise stated that vehicles with such lights would also face registration cancellation.

The department highlighted that only specific

government institutions are allowed to install rotating lights on vehicles. Any private vehicle found with such lights will have the registration canceled, and the lights will be confiscated.

Additionally, modifications to a car's windows, such as unauthorized tinting, were discussed. The meeting concluded that these changes would also result in the cancellation of the vehicle's registration.

The meeting resolved that re-registration fees would be charged according to a newly established schedule, as stated by the district administration, ensuring that all procedures align with updated guidelines.

Six vendors arrested in ICT for price gouging

ISLAMABAD (INP): Islamabad's district administration has launched a crackdown on vendors overcharging customers in local markets and arrested six violators.

In a recent operation led by Assistant Commissioner Pothohar, Aneeq Anwar, six traders were arrested for not adhering to the official price list in the vegetable market. The accused shopkeepers were found charging customers more than the rates prescribed by the

government.

During the inspection, it was discovered that many vendors had failed to display the official rate list, which is a mandatory requirement. The absence of this price list led to customers being charged higher rates, prompting immediate action from the authorities.

Assistant Commissioner Anwar emphasized that all shopkeepers must prominently display the official price list to avoid legal consequences.

sequences.

The District Commissioner has appealed to the public to report any vendor who fails to display the rate list or charges more than the official prices. This action is part of a broader effort to regulate prices and protect consumers from unfair practices in the market.

The public is encouraged to remain vigilant and report any violations to ensure that all transactions are fair and within the legal framework.

PAC holds Jashn-e-Azadi Mushaira

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Arts Council (PAC) organized Jashn-e-Azadi Mushaira in collaboration with Bazm-e-Ahbab-e-Qalam Pakistan to celebrate Independence Day.

The event was presided over by the distinguished writer, poet, researcher, and critic Professor Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir while Professor Shakir Kunda was the guest of honor.

The special guest was Professor Obaid Bazgh Amar.

On this occasion, an honorary shield was presented to Ali Asghar Samar, the founder and president of Bazm-e-Ahbab-e-Qalam Pakistan, in recognition of his more than fifty years of literary services.

The founder and president of Bazm-e-Ahbab-e-Qalam Pakistan expressed his gratitude to all the guests at the end.

Indus River continues to flow

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Flood Commission (FFC) has said that Indus River continues to flow in "Medium Flood" in Guddu-Sukkur reach while maintaining "Low Flood" in Tarbela-Taunsa reach as well as at Kotri Barrage.

According to daily FFC report on Thursday, similarly, River Kabul is also experiencing "Low Flood" at Nowshera while other rivers of IRS (Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi & Sutlej) are discharging normal flows.

Tarbela reservoir is maintaining its Maximum Conservation Level (MCL) of 1550 feet since August 19, 2024 whereas Mangla Reservoir is at an elevation of 1215.25 feet (26.75 feet below its MCL: 1242.00 feet).

According to Flood Forecasting Division (FFD), Lahore, yesterday's Low Pressure Area over North Bay of Bengal and

adjoining -Bangladesh remained stationary there while another Low Pressure Area is presently positioned over Central Uttar Pradesh (India). Trough of Westerly Wave previously over Northeast Afghanistan has now shifted to Northern Pakistan with Seasonal Low over Western Balochistan. Presently, light moist currents were penetrating into upper parts of Pakistan up to 3000 feet at the reporting time.

For the ensuing 24 hours, FFD, Lahore has predicted isolated thunderstorm rain of Moderate Intensity over Islamabad, Punjab (Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Gujranwala, Lahore & D.G.Khan Divisions), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan (Zhob and Kalat Divisions) including upper catchments of all major rivers of IRS.

NCGSA to host Pak's first-ever workshop on Space Law, Policy

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Center of GIS and Space Applications (NCGSA), in collaboration with the Institute of Space Technology (IST), is set to host Pakistan's inaugural Workshop on 'Space Law and Policy' on September 03-04.

According to the NCGSA, this groundbreaking event will be the first of its kind in the country, focusing on the critical and emerging domains of space law and policy.

With the increasing relevance of space activities in global geopolitics and national security, this workshop aims to equip participants with the knowledge needed to navigate the complex legal and regulatory frameworks governing space.

Resource persons from renowned organizations including Access Partnership, Singapore; Pakistan Space Activities Regulatory Board (PSARB); National Defence University (NDU), Pakistan; Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO), China; and the National Center for Cyber Security (NCCS), Pakistan, will share their expertise and insights during the two-day event.

The key topics on the agenda include International Space Treaties and Agreements, Space Governance and Regulatory Frameworks, National Space Policy of Pakistan, Space Diplomacy, Liability and Insurance in Space Activities, and Space Sustainability focusing on

debris and environmental protection.

The workshop will also address the increasingly critical issues of Space Security and Cyber Security, reflecting the intersecting challenges that lie at the forefront of contemporary space law and policy discussions.

This landmark event represents a significant step forward for Pakistan in the global space community, aligning with the objectives of the newly approved National Space Policy.

It positions the country to actively engage in and contribute to international space law and policy, fostering a vibrant exchange of ideas and setting the stage for future developments in this essential field.

Constant protests, traffic chaos undermine idealized vision of life

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad, once revered as a sanctuary of serenity and peace, is now entangled in a web of daily strife. For its residents, the idealized vision of life in the capital has become an increasingly elusive dream.

The city, previously a symbol of tranquility, is now marred by ceaseless political protests, religious demonstrations, and the ever-present specter of commuting chaos. What was once seen as a haven has transformed into a battleground where daily existence is overshadowed by unrest, making life for its citizens an ongoing struggle.

Doctor Alina Nasir, a 42-year-old medical practitioner, who moved to

Islamabad from Azad Kashmir ten years ago for its reputed calm and better employment opportunities, now finds herself grappling with a relentless cycle of stress. "I imagined a peaceful life here, but it's been anything but that," she shares, her frustration palpable. "Every day, I worry about my children's safety, especially when they travel to and from school. The political rallies and roadblocks are constant, making the daily commute a nerve-racking ordeal."

The city's infrastructure, once designed to accommodate its growing population, now buckles under the strain of frequent demonstrations and political unrest. The roads are often clogged with traffic as pro-

testers stage rallies, leaving residents stuck for hours. This has led to a deteriorating quality of life, where every journey feels like a gamble.

Ali Raza, a 45-year-old businessman, echoes Alina's sentiments. "I used to think of Islamabad as a place where I could grow old peacefully. Now, I'm not sure if I can even get to work on time. The protests that break out with little notice create havoc on our streets. It's not just inconvenient; it's dangerous."

For families like Jaffrys, a school teacher who also relocated to Islamabad from Rawalpindi's far-flung village Kallar Sayedan to provide their children with better educational opportunities, the

reality is far from ideal. "We moved here hoping for a safer environment for our kids," says Mrs. Riffat, her eyes reflecting concern. "But now, every day, we face the anxiety of whether they'll be able to get to school safely or if they'll be caught in a protest."

Adding insult to injury are the frequent VIP movements, ongoing road construction projects, and high-profile cricket matches. These events often lead to road closures, making daily struggles of Islamabad's residents more stressful.

"It feels like we're constantly living in a pressure cooker," complains Anis ur Rehman, a 47-year-old IT professional. "VIP convoys speed through our

neighborhoods, roadwork is a never-ending saga, and cricket matches turn the city into a traffic nightmare. It's as if every aspect of daily life has become a series of obstacles. And unfortunately, I am residing near Faizabad, the epicentre of all the political and religious demonstrations."

The impact of this unrest extends beyond daily commutes and safety concerns. The constant disruptions are eroding the sense of community and well-being that once characterized Islamabad. Social gatherings are now rare, and the vibrancy of public life has been overshadowed by the grim reality of political and religious discord.

Doctor Maryam, a local

psychiatrist, provides insight into this growing malaise. "The persistent stress and uncertainty are taking a toll on people's mental health. The idealized image of Islamabad as a peaceful capital is crumbling, and with it, the psychological well-being of its residents is suffering." And it must be a matter of concern for the relevant authorities, she forcefully stressed.

Islamabad's transformation from a symbol of calm to a center of turmoil reflects broader socio-political changes in Pakistan. The city, envisioned in the 1960s as a serene administrative capital, now grapples with the pressures of rapid urbanization and political instability.

Efforts to address these issues have been inconsistent. While city officials occasionally announce plans to improve traffic management and enhance security, the effectiveness of these measures often falls short, leaving residents to steer the chaos largely on their own.

The daily trials of its residents—from navigating the maze of traffic caused by protests to ensuring their children's safety—paint a picture of a city struggling under the weight of its own idealization.

As Islamabad faces this ongoing challenge, it begs the question: can a city truly reclaim its peace, or is it destined to be perpetually trapped in its own contradictions?

IE seeks Qatar cooperation

KABUL (BNA): The Acting Minister of Information and Culture of Afghanistan Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwā, discussed potential areas of cooperation with the Adviser of the Embassy of Qatar, Murdif Al Qashuti. Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwā welcomed the Qatari official and expressed the Islamic Emirate's desire for Qatar to cooperate in organizing exhibitions showcasing Afghanistan's rich historical monuments.

Kabul hosts exhibition

KABUL (Khaama Press): In line with the ongoing national and international exhibitions in the country, a national exhibition showcasing the economic progress of Afghanistan was inaugurated on Thursday in Kabul. The exhibition, which opened on Thursday at the International Exhibition Center of Afghanistan, was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the private sector of the country.

Law on propagation of virtue, prevention of vice approved

KABUL (Ariana News): Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada, supreme leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), has approved a law on propagation of virtue and prevention of vice, the Ministry of Justice announced.

The law has four chapters and 35 articles. Barakatullah Rasouli, a spokesman for the Ministry of Justice, said on X.

He said that the law regulates the affairs of the Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and duties and powers of Muhtasibs (inspectors). The law calls for advis-

ing people softly, avoiding revelation of private sins and avoiding violation of privacy except in cases allowed by Sharia.

The law calls for Muhtasibs to prevent vices such as adultery, gambling, holding animal fights, misusing radio cassette player, using and dealing with drugs, hijablessness, refusing to offer prayer and to fast, shaving beard or trimming it smaller than a handful, cutting hair against Sharia, and making friends with infidels or assisting them.

According to the law, if a person commits a vice, they shall be advised, warned,

be imprisoned from one hour up to three days, or any other punishment deemed suitable by the Muhtasib.

Muhtasibs are also required to advise against publishing pictures of living creatures with stories. They are also required to prevent preparing and watching of pictures and videos of living creatures on computers, mobile phones and other devices.

The law states that it is necessary for women to cover their entire body and that covering of face is also necessary due to moral corruption.

UAE accepts credentials of IE's new Ambassador

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has announced that the United Arab Emirates has accepted the credentials of the Islamic Emirate's Ambassador.

According to a press release from the Ministry, Mawlawi Badruddin Haqqani, the Islamic Emirate's Ambassador, presented his credentials to Saif Abdullah Al-Shamsi, the Assistant Minister for Protocol at the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during a formal ceremony.

Mawlawi Badruddin Haqqani described the relations between Afghanistan and the UAE as historical and expressed gratitude and satisfaction for the ongoing cooperation and assistance provided by the UAE.

Additionally, Saif Abdullah Al-Shamsi also expressed hope that the relationship between the UAE and Afghanistan would be further strengthened with the appointment of the new ambassador.

According to the press release, the new Islamic Emirate's Ambassador will soon present his credentials in a formal ceremony to the Emir of the United Arab Emirates.

KM unveils 220m AFN commercial market

KABUL (BNA): A new commercial market, primarily focused on textile sales, has been completed in Kabul and officially inaugurated by various officials.

Constructed by the Kabul Municipality, this market is located in the Mandawi area of the city's First District.

During the inauguration, Deputy Urban Services of Kabul Municipality, Mawlawi Mohammad Khalid Sajistani, emphasized that this market holds significant value for economic growth and job creation. He reiterated Kabul Municipality's support for private sector investment to ensure secure and sustainable development.

Private sector representatives also attended the event, praising the construction of such commercial buildings as beneficial and valuable for economic growth and investment.

The market is equipped with urban and solar electricity, a fire protection system, a mosque, restrooms, and other facilities.

The contracting company will collect rent from entrepreneurs and shopkeepers for three years, and the government rent of the shops will be handed over to the Kabul Municipality. Spanning 4,200 square meters, this market includes five blocks, three floors, a basement, and 474 shops.

EU Chargé d'Affaires concludes mission

— new appointee announced

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced the conclusion of the mission of the European Union's Chargé d'Affaires for Afghanistan, Ms. Raffaella Iodice.

According to a press release, Ms. Iodice held a farewell meeting with Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During the meeting, Ms. Iodice expressed her gratitude for the support and cooperation received from the Ministry throughout her two-year tenure. She announced the end of her mission and the appointment of Mrs. Vieranica Boskovic as the new European Union Chargé d'Affaires in Kabul.

The press release further noted that the EU Chargé d'Affaires emphasized the continued cooperation



between Brussels and Afghanistan. Ms. Iodice mentioned her plans to travel to Doha to participate in a detailed meeting with embassies regarding Afghanistan, followed by a comprehensive meeting with European Union offi-

cials in Brussels.

In the third session in Doha, Iodice expressed appreciation for the Islamic Emirate's participation and conveyed satisfaction with the progress made in Afghanistan's economic sector.

At the same time, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the country expressed appreciation for the European Union's assistance in various fields and assured Iodice of continued cooperation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Tehran and Kabul reach agreement on anti-drug measures

KABUL (TOLOnews): An Iranian delegation, after concluding their visit to Afghanistan, has announced an agreement between Tehran and Kabul for the exchange of information to combat drug trafficking.

Iranian media, citing Mohammad Zarei, Deputy Head of Iran's Drug Control Headquarters, reported that the latest agreements between Kabul and Tehran include the sharing of experiences, provision of educational services, and the formation of joint committees in the field of drug control.

Zarei added: "The exchange of information regarding the fight against drug trafficking, the transfer of experiences in this area, the provision of educational services for combating drugs, and the establishment of joint committees for information exchange are the most recent agreements reached with the interim Afghan government. Afghan officials had also requested these measures."

Kamran Aman, a military affairs expert, said: "We hope the Islamic Emirate will pay more attention to the issue of drugs and eradicate it."

The Deputy Head of Iran's Drug Control Hqrs emphasized that a serious and targeted fight against drugs will be carried out.

Meanwhile, some political experts praise the joint fight against drugs, adding that this cooperation will have a positive impact on the relations between the

two countries.

Sayed Moqadam Amin, a political affairs expert, stated: "This initiative can contribute to the security of both countries and help build trust between them."

The Ministry of Interior of the Islamic Emirate said that although no formal agreement has been made with Iran on this matter, they had previously assured that all forms of cultivation, production, and trafficking of drugs from Afghanistan would be prevented.

Kazakhstan accepts IEA diplomat as Charge d'Affaires

KABUL (Ariana News): Kazakhstan this week accredited Muhammad Ur Rehman Rahmani as Afghanistan's Charge d'Affaires.

Accepting Rahmani's credentials was Kazakhstan's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Alibek Bakayev.

Speaking at the event, Bakayev stated that Kazakhstan accredited Rahmani as Charge d'Affaires based on the goal of both countries to expand trade, economic and humanitarian cooperation.

Active involvement of Afghanistan into regional relations creates additional conditions for restoring the country's economy and social stability by improving the situation of the Afghan people, as well as maintaining peace and security in the region, Bakayev said.

He also said Kazakhstan advocates for the consoli-



dation of international efforts to provide assistance to Afghanistan and resolve its complex humanitarian problems.

He stated that to this end, Kazakhstan has proposed to establish the UN Regional Centre for Sustainable Development for Central

Asia and Afghanistan.

Turkmenistan, another important country in Central Asia, also accepted the Islamic Emirate's diplomat as Charge d'Affaires in Ashgabat last month.

Russia and Central Asia countries have taken the lead in expanding relations

with the Islamic Emirate government.

The President of Kazakhstan announced in June that he removed the Islamic Emirate from the list of terrorist groups in order to develop economic relations with Afghanistan.

UN urges need for 18,000 midwives in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has issued a warning regarding the high maternal mortality rate in Afghanistan, stating that the country urgently needs 18,000 midwives.

The organization has warned that failing to address this urgent need in Afghanistan endangers many lives. Globally, UNFPA estimates that 900,000 skilled (trained) midwives are needed, with the immediate requirement for 18,000 midwives in Afghanistan being highlighted as "urgent."

According to the report, the number of health centers supported by UNFPA, which was active in 2021, has increased sixfold this year. Over the past three years, the organization has assisted in treating more than five million Afghans in remote areas.

Despite the increase in healthcare facilities, Afghanistan's health system suffers from significant deficiencies, with a shortage of skilled midwives being a serious concern contributing to high maternal mortality rates.

The UN emphasizes the urgency of recruiting

skilled midwives in Afghanistan's health system, asserting that their inclusion will help prevent maternal deaths and improve overall healthcare outcomes in the country.

Meanwhile, addressing the shortage of midwives in Afghanistan is crucial for improving maternal health and reducing mortality rates.

The international community's support and immediate action are essential to ensure that this pressing need is met and to enhance the country's overall health infrastructure.

Six killed, five injured in explosion in Nangarhar

DARA NOOR, Nangarhar (Khaama Press): In an explosion targeting a police ranger vehicle in the Dara Noor district of Nangarhar, at least six students from a religious school were killed, while another student and four Taliban members were injured.

A spokesperson for the Taliban police command in Nangarhar stated that these students and their teachers were traveling to the Dara Noor district for educational purposes.

According to a statement released by the Taliban, the explosion occurred at 12:30 PM on Thursday on the route of the Taliban ranger in the village of Shimal.

The statement reports that four students were killed instantly, and two others, all minors, succumbed to their injuries on the way.

The Taliban police spokesperson in Nangarhar reported that five students and one teacher from the religious school were killed in the explosion.

Abdul Basir Zabli mentioned that all the victims were residents of Nooristan and were traveling to Dara Noor for educational purposes.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for the explosion, and detailed information about the nature of the incident remains unclear.

The increasing frequency of such attacks reflects a broader pattern of violence. ISIS, as a major adversary of the Taliban, has escalated its campaign of bombings and targeted assaults against the Taliban, contributing to the instability in the region.

The lack of clarity about the perpetrators highlights the ongoing challenges in ensuring safety and security in volatile areas.

Efforts to address these threats must be intensified to protect innocent lives and mitigate further violence.

Devastating floods in several provinces claim lives

KABUL (TOLOnews): As a result of recent floods in several provinces of the country, at least ten people have lost their lives and eight others have been injured.

These floods have hit parts of the provinces of Logar, Laghman, Panjshir, Ghazni, Maidan Wardak, Nangarhar, and Kabul.

Officials said that in addition to the human casualties, these floods have also caused significant financial losses in some provinces. According to preliminary

information, around 100 houses have been partially or completely destroyed.

Janan Saiq, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Disaster Management, said regarding the recent floods: "Ten of our compatriots have lost their lives in these floods, and eight people have been injured across the country. More than one hundred homes have been partially or completely destroyed, and our compatriots' agricultural products have also been damaged."



Saifullah Khalid, head of Disaster Management Department in Nangarhar, said: "Last night, the seventh district of Jalalabad city was affected by rain and floods."

The floods have caused significant financial losses to the residents of these provinces.

"The flood destroyed our bean field; we had planted beans on a plot of one jerib of land," Sher Mohammad, a resident of Logar, said.

"The land we had was ruined by the flood. We had planted potatoes in this land," Mir Noman, another resident of Logar, said.

Saeedullah Badr, the head of Natural Disaster Management in Logar, said: "The floods have destroyed people's crops and also damaged several houses."

Former President Hamid Karzai has called for aid and assistance to those affected by floods, expressing hope that the relevant agencies will address their challenges.

"Along with expressing sympathy with the affected people, I hope that dear compatriots, especially aid organizations and national traders, will rush to the aid of the victims and pay attention to meeting their needs," the former president said.

Afghanistan is one of the countries affected by climate change, with natural disasters causing significant financial and human losses to its citizens every year.

Afghan refugees in Iran complain of mistreatment

KABUL (TOLOnews): Several Afghan refugees in Iran claim that the country's security forces not only mistreat them but also forcibly take their money.

These refugees have asked the interim government to provide job opportunities in Afghanistan.

Mustafa, a deported refugee from Iran, said: "Last Saturday they arrested us, we arrived here today. We were severely oppressed, beaten, and treated in a way that no one would even treat animals. If the Islamic Emirate provides job opportunities for us, we would not be unfortunate to have to work in neighboring countries."

Hamid, another deportee, said: "In one camp, they bring in 500 refugees. They provide food twice a day, which is just beans. All the restrooms are broken, and another issue is that we paid money through a card once, and they even gave us a receipt. But half an hour later, when our group was full, they came and demanded cash."

Meanwhile, local officials in Nimroz said that in the past two months, at least 130,000 Afghan refugees have voluntarily or forcibly returned from Iran to Afghanistan.

Mohammad Ehsan Visal, the financial director of the Directorate of Refugees and Returnees in Nimroz, said: "Two to two and a half thousand refugees return to the country daily, and in the past two months, 120,000 to 130,000 refugees have returned. At the Silk Road Bridge, the Islamic Emirate and charitable organizations jointly provide financial assistance to our compatriots."

We sought to obtain the views of the Iranian Consulate in Kandahar on this matter but were unsuccessful.

In the past, Afghan refugees have repeatedly complained about the mistreatment by Iranian forces.



RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff in a group photo with a delegation of 44 students from Harvard Business School (HBS) Trek-2024 at General Headquarters.

HBS students meets COAS

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: A delegation of 44 students from Harvard Business School (HBS) Trek-2024, representing 9 different countries, met General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at the General Headquarters on Thursday. The interactive session provided a platform to share perspectives on Pakistan's pivotal role in promoting regional peace and stability, its unwavering efforts against terrorism, and its commitment to upholding democratic values.

COAS General Syed Asim Munir emphasized the significance of education, critical thinking, and innovation in addressing contemporary security challenges. He highlighted Pakistan's vast potential and encouraged the attendees to form their own opinions based on personal experiences. The COAS also cautioned against the perils of misinformation and fake news in the digital age, urging the students to navigate this landscape with discernment. The Harvard students expressed their gratitude to the COAS for facilitating a constructive and enlightening interaction. This engagement follows the COAS's earlier interaction with students from various universities at the General Headquarters on 20 August, underscoring his commitment to nurturing and inspiring the nation's youth.

JI chief for power relief to country

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Hafiz Naeem has said that Punjab government could not diffuse the problem with two months relief in electricity bills. Talking to media in Lahore, the Jamaat Islami chief said, "They are trying to make the people fool with this charity." "You have to give relief to whole Pakistan," JI Ameer said.

He demanded permanent relief to people in electricity bills. JI chief also demanded forensic audit of the IPPs. He said that August 28 will see an extremely successful protest strike. "The 'Tajir Dost Scheme' has been a scheme to destroy traders," he said. He said Jamaat Islami also wants expansion in the tax net. "There is corruption in the FBR," he further said.

Hafiz Naeem said that promised relief amount has been lower than the capacity payment to the IPPs of the people close to the Sharif family. JI leader said that in our and the PTI's alliance, the PTI would have more benefit, but they made U-turn. "Alliances could not run long with confusion," Naeem said. He also demanded judicial probe of the May 09 incidents. "I am saying from the very first day that the government must go to home," he said.

Court seeks answers in disappearance

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Lahore High Court Rawalpindi Bench, led by Justice Raza Qureshi, conducted a hearing on the petition concerning the disappearance of former Deputy Superintendent Adiala Jail, Muhammad Akram.

During the session, the Additional Attorney General asserted that the missing officer is not in the custody of agencies. An affidavit of ignorance was also submitted by the CPO, denying any knowledge of the Deputy Superintendent's whereabouts.

The Ministry of Defence presented a written statement, while senior officials from the IB, Police, and other agencies submitted affidavits, unanimously declaring that Muhammad Akram is not in the custody of any provincial or federal authority.

In a decisive move, the court ordered the CPO to personally record the statement of the current Superintendent of Adiala Jail and delve deeper into the matter. The FIR related to the case has already been registered, but the court is now questioning the necessity of further hearings. The proceedings were adjourned until August 27, with the court seeking additional arguments from the petitioner's side.

VCs appointment process re-initiation

PHC declares KP govt decision null and void

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Ijaz Khan Sabi has declared the decision of government to reinstate the appointment process for Vice-Chancellors of 19 public sector universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as null and void, on Thursday.

During the hearing, Advocate General Shah Faisal Ottomankhel, Deputy Attorney General Sana Ullah, and lawyers for the petitioners, including Amer Javed, Mubashir Manzoor, Tariq Afridi, and Saifullah Mohib Kakakhel advocates, appeared before the court.

The petitioners, including Dr. Aurangzeb, argued that the posts of Vice-Chancellors in various universities of the province have been vacant for over a year. The previous provincial government had initiated the appointment process, which was completed by the caretaker government. However, the current provincial government has restarted the appointment process, which the petitioners have challenged in court.

During the hearing, the lawyers argued that the appointment process for Vice-Chancellors had already been completed and the government wanted to restart it. They pointed out that the provincial cabinet had approved the formation of a new search committee, but instead of forming a committee, they had re-advertised the posts. The lawyers argued that the entire appointment process had been completed and only the governor's approval was pending. They also mentioned that the provincial government had taken the same stance in the Supreme Court, stating that the appointment process was complete and would be finalized soon.

Justice Ijaz Anwar inquired about the first advertisement for the appointment process, to which it was replied that it was published during the previous elected government, and the process had started, which was later approved by the caretaker government. However, the current government wants to restart the entire process.

The counsel Amer Javed advocate argued that firstly, a search committee needs to be formed, and then an advertisement can be published. He pointed out that the academic search committee consists of 7 members, 2 from outside the province and 5 from within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He argued that the government wants to amend the law to remove the two external members and appoint all

members from within the province.

Advocate General argued that the caretaker government did not take permission from the Election Commission to appoint members of the academic search committee. The committee was incomplete, and five members had resigned before the interviews and shortlisting of candidates. PHC after hearing the arguments, declared the decision to restart the appointment process for Vice-Chancellors as null and void.

Meanwhile, similar PHC bench dismissed a writ petition against the appointment of a Pro-Vice Chancellor at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan and ordered the provincial government and parties to continue the process of appointing a Pro-Vice Chancellor.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Ijaz Khan Sabi heard the writ petition filed by Professor Zahoor ul Haq, who argued that the post of Pro-Vice Chancellor should be filled by a senior professor. According to the rules, one of the three senior-most professors should be appointed as Pro-Vice Chancellor. The petitioner was top on the list, being the most senior professor.

The Advocate General, Shah Faisal Atmanzai, stated that when the process for Pro-Vice Chancellor began, the government said that if a Dean is not available, a professor can be appointed. The Vice Chancellor's job is administrative, which a Dean can handle well.

Justice Ijaz Anwar asked, "If a professor has been a Dean and is also senior, then why can't they be appointed as Pro-Vice Chancellor?" He added, "Your explanation suggests that you don't want to appoint anyone from the professors or lecturers, but only want to appoint a Dean."

The university's lawyer, Mansoor Tariq, explained that a Dean is the head of a faculty, and Abdul Wali Khan University has five faculties. Currently, there are three Deans in the university. The most qualified member is appointed as Pro-Vice Chancellor.

Justice Ijaz Anwar pointed out that the petitioner had also been a Dean and was senior, to which the university's lawyer replied that the petitioner should have been appointed as Pro-Vice Chancellor when they were a Dean. He added that three names would be sent to the government, including the petitioner's name, and whoever the government appoints would become the Pro-Vice Chancellor. The court dismissed the writ petition after hearing the arguments.

PTA reveals reason behind internet slowdown in country

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) on Thursday gave another justification for intermittent internet disruptions across the country, blaming the issue on fault in "two of the seven international submarine cables connecting Pakistan internationally".

The statement came amid strong criticism from netizens and information technology (IT) sector, attributing the prevailing internet slowdown and limited connectivity 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.

According to an official statement issued by the

telecommunication authority today, the AAE-1 cable has experienced a 250G outage due to rerouting between Iran and Qatar. "Similarly, SMW 4 cable (1.5T) has been out of service due to faults near Karachi." The PTA further said that operators were rerouting traffic on other available cables to "minimise the impact on internet users in Pakistan".

"The concerned teams are fixing the fault and PTA is monitoring the situation till internet speeds are normalised in the country," the statement concluded. A day earlier, PTA Chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Hafeezur Rehman admitted that upgradation of the National Firewall System (NFS) or Web Management System (WMS) was under way for controlling or removing

contents from social media, following directions received from executives or courts.

He said the PC-1 for the NFS upgradation was approved in March 2019, when Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was ruling the country. He also said that social media messaging service X, formerly Twitter, was banned for not complying with the directives issued by the interior ministry, as there was a defined mechanism to slap a ban or remove content on social media under the law of the land. Under the Web Management System, it is the mandate of PTA to comply with the orders of the executive or superior courts and cited examples that they removed contents related to pornography or blasphemy, the PTA chief said.

'Structural reforms' under IMF committed'

ISLAMABAD (INP): Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday said that the government remained "very committed" to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s structural reforms amid uncertainty regarding the IMF's \$7 billion bailout schedule.

Speculation arose when the country's name did not show up in the IMF executive board's schedule for August 28. Previously, the finance minister had anticipated IMF board approval by the last week of August, contingent on confirmation of about \$12bn in debt rollovers from China, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. However, aside from a \$1bn rollover by the UAE, the remaining \$11bn in debt extensions have yet to materialise.

The IMF's executive board is now expected to approve Pakistan's \$7 billion bailout programme in September, while the finance minister has said that the government was in "constant contact with the IMF". "The fund will help bring further permanence to this macroeconomic stability and under that, we remain very committed," he said at the inaugural ceremony of the Bunkara Connectivity Project today.

On the remittances side, the finance minister said that the informal market still captured a "sizeable share of the remittances" and that they "must do more", remembering the administrative measures that were taken previously to curb illegal channels in September.

"Addressing this challenge is a pre-priority for reducing economic leakages," he said, adding that "digitalisation is not an end in itself its a means to an end — it brings transparency, it brings client friendliness and it certainly helps reduce leakages in the system." Leakages, he said, were not just in the context of remittances but also in the tax and power system. "We call it leakages but all of this is ultimately about corruption and people processed technology," he said.

Tarar for providing opportunities to youth

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Thursday stressed the need to provide maximum opportunities to the youth by correcting the priorities in the fields of information technology (IT), agriculture, education, and sports arena.

Addressing the National Youth Convention here he said Pakistan was a lucky country as its 60% population consisted of youth below 30 years of age who could change the destiny of the nation. "There is a need to correct the direction and economy of the country, bring IT revolution, and promote quality education to the new generation", the minister said.

He urged the young generation to understand the vision behind the creation of a separate state for Muslims in the subcontinent. He remarked that Indian atrocities in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and on Indian Muslims across the border had vindicated the stance of Muslims for an independent state. He said that Kashmiris were still struggling to become part of Pakistan with great resolve, resilience, and determination despite the brutality and oppression of Indian rulers.

He told the participants of the convention that the

Quaid-e-Azam was supported by a large number of youths in the Pakistan Movement. "The youth contributed to the creation of this country, and the youth will change the destiny of this country", the information minister remarked. He said that Muslim migration from Makkah to Madinah and from India to Pakistan had a lesson for everyone. He said that about 12,00,000 people sacrificed their lives during migration to Pakistan in 1947 as trains carrying Muslims were attacked and passengers butchered mercilessly.

He said countless women and girls were raped and molested during the process of migration. He said the holy blood of tens of thousands of martyrs was in the foundations of Pakistan which was created on the 27th of Ramazan. He said that Allah Almighty had created Pakistan on the holiest night of Laila Tul Qadr and he had the belief that this country would prosper, develop, and survive till eternity. He said now it was the responsibility and duty of the new generation to work hard to make Pakistan a strong, modern, developed nation.

"Pakistanis are a determined and hardworking nation and Arshad Nadeem's success is a beacon and a source of inspiration for youth", he maintained. Referring to the determina-

tion and hard work of Arshad Nadeem, the minister said he made the first javelin by breaking a tree branch in his village near Mian Channu.

He said overcoming all hardships Arshad Nadeem brought the entire nation together by winning the gold medal as the entire nation celebrated his historic victory in a befitting way. He said under the Prime Minister's Laptop scheme, free-of-cost laptops were given on merit to students of educational institutions. He said that laptops given to youth under the PM scheme played an important role in keeping the national economy stable during Covid 19. Similarly, he said that the PML-N government launched the Danish School system in Punjab for deserving students in the most backward areas and this step paid dividends.

Making long and alluring speeches was easier than doing something practical for the welfare of the people of the country, he opined. He said that unfortunately in this digital age, controversies and sensational things attract the attention of the users and constructive achievements fail to get proper coverage. He stressed the need to fight the tendency of despair and despondency through the creation of hope and providing opportunities to the youth so that their talent could be utilized in a better manner for nation building process.

PNS Hunain visits Jeddah

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The newly commissioned Pakistan Navy Ship HUNAIN, during maiden voyage from Romania to Pakistan, visited Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and participated in bilateral exercise with Ship of Royal Saudi Naval Forces.

Upon arrival at Jeddah port, the ship was received by senior officials of Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) and officials of Pakistan Embassy. During stay at port, Commanding Officer PNS HUNAIN called on RSNF Navy Western Fleet Commander Rear Admiral Mansoor Bin Saood Al Jayyad and Commander King Faisal



Naval Base Rear Admiral Saleh Bin Abdullah Al-Amri. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest and bilateral cooperation between both the navies were discussed.

Later, PNS HUNAIN conducted Passage Exercise with HMS AL RIYADH of RSNF and rehearsed various Joint Maritime Drills and

Operations. The aim of exercise was to provide an opportunity to enhance interoperability between the navies.

Visit of PNS HUNAIN to Saudi Arabia and participation in bilateral exercise provided an opportunity to flourish and strengthen existing brotherly relations and defence collaboration between the two countries.